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TRANSLATION

Between
Text and Image

*Updating research
in screen translation*

edited by
Delia Chiaro
Christine Heiss
Chiara Bucaria

■ LIBRARY

Between Text and Image

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Between Text and Image. Updating research in screen translation

Edited by Delia Chiaro, Christine Heiss and Chiara Bucaria

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Updating research in screen translation

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Preface

The University of Bologna's *Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori* in Forlì is very proud of being the first academic institution in Italy to seriously carry out research in screen translation. In fact, in 1993, inspired by a love of cinema coupled with a concern in translation, a group of researchers led by Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli began merging these two interests by investigating the area of screen translation. Initially, research mostly consisted of a series of contrastive case studies on films (see Baccolini *et al* 1994, Heiss and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1996, Bollettieri Bosinelli *et al.* 2000) which clearly tended to reflect the interests of individual researchers. However, as time went by, and especially with the birth and growth of the research department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Languages, Translation and Cultures (SITLeC) in Forlì, individualistic research soon developed into two strong research groups which were soon to produce what can now be defined as cutting edge research in the field. In fact, the audiovisual database set up by Christine Heiss, Marcello Soffritti, Cristina Valentini and their collaborators is unique in its type not only because it is possible to retrieve elements which are beyond the verbal code (e.g. mimicry, facial expression, etc.) but also because of the possibility of being able to align two visual codes and two languages in real time on a single screen. The power of such a tool for research purposes is self evident. Equally innovative is the work carried out in the same department by Delia Chiaro, Rachele Antonini, Chiara Bucaria and associates in the field of perception (see Chiaro 2004, Antonini and Chiaro 2005, Antonini 2007, Chiaro 2007, Bucaria and Chiaro 2007) in which empirical research designs and methods commonly used in social sciences, such as psychology, sociology and marketing are applied to the area of end-user perception of multimedia products.

The rationale behind the conference which took place in Forlì in the autumn of 2005 was first and foremost to see what others were doing elsewhere in terms of originality and newness, hence the title of Updating Research. Surely, we thought, there were other people out there doing things which were also forward-looking. Our initial call for papers resulted in over forty proposals of which under half were selected for presentation. As for written contributions, the essays included in this volume are each the result of blind refereeing by two external arbitrators. Thus, the papers are all the result of rigorous selection.

The book opens with Jorge Diaz Cintas' fresh outlook on screen translation in which he reminds us that "Not surprisingly, we speak about the 'viewer' rather than the 'reader' or 'hearer' of films..." (p. 2) making the point that the verbal message plays very much second fiddle to the visuals for the consumer of audio-visual products. In effect, while the 'audio' part of the term 'audiovisual' precedes the 'visual' part, it only does so morphologically because the words 'film', 'television' and 'programme' are lexically primed to concord with the verb 'watch' – and of course *voir, vedere, sehen*, etc. Despite this, as Gambier points out, most research limits itself to the verbal code (p. 13, 16). However, the essays by Heiss and Sofritt, Valentini and Chiaro all address the visual elements in their studies and applications, thus treading on new ground in attempts to bridge the gap between what audiences see and what they hear while privy to audiovisual translations.

Yves Gambier's essay leaves no audiovisual stone unturned as he presents a wide and thorough overview of the state of the art in research in screen translation from its birth in 1995 to the present day. And as mentioned previously, like Diaz Cintas, Gambier also refers to studies "... restricted to an examination of language content...". Furthermore he adds that language is "... (inevitably seen as problematic), in isolation from its audio and visual context..." (p. 13). With many screen translation researchers wearing the additional hat of linguist, this emphasis on verbal language is hardly surprising, as semiotically 'broader' approaches are left to the field of film studies. Again, an essay such as Elena Di Giovanni's, in which the photographic metaphor of lightness and dark refers to the submerged practice of subtitling in the traditionally dubbing country of Italy, certainly plays ample tribute to visuals. Chiaro, too, in her suggestion of applying Kano's model of quality to screen translation, sees the attributes connected to visuals as a significant part of the whole product presented to audiences, arguing that the perception of translational quality is only one of many characteristics of a screen product and that in judging quality the non-verbal also needs to be considered.

Gambier's comprehensive overview sets the tone for the diverse contributions which follow, each of which has been attributed to one of the two broad sections: the first containing a collection of studies based upon corpora and data bases specifically constructed for the study of audiovisual translation, and the second on studies based upon psycho-socio-economic issues.

The authors who contribute to the first section, Electronic Databases and Corpora, have all produced data-driven research which is either the result of more traditional, hand written corpora (Pavesi, Pedersen and Valdéon) or else based upon the yield of highly elaborate electronic corpora and multimedia data bases (Heiss, Sofritt and Valentini & Matamala and Lorente). More than just well organized collections of audiovisual data, the latter corpora are characterised by interfaces which allow for indicization and interrogation of corpus content, together

with advanced systems of data extraction. These features have the advantage of allowing the researcher to examine all the semiotically relevant components of materials at the same time and thus arrive at richer and more ample studies than those of the past.

Having argued in favour of high technology, we must admit that a simple corpus consisting of transcriptions of spoken language in films may, with the right insight, already represent a significant step forward in terms of research tools. For example, Maria Pavesi adopts a data-driven approach to investigate the translation of syntactic structures in film, an area that has received little or no attention. Her corpus, while being low-tech, does nevertheless permit her to quantify and compare her data with accuracy. So, too, do the essays by Roberto Vald on and Jan Pedersen who both work from a corpus of transcriptions for their respective analyses of inserts in Spanish dubbing and quality assessment in subtitling in Sweden. Naturally, corpora and data bases specifically conceived for this purpose, such as the one proposed by Matalama and Lorente and Heiss *et al.* represent a new boundary of research in multimedia translation. While these systems may still be in need of fine tuning in terms of relative options pertaining to IT management, and presumably researchers in this field are still awaiting the possibility of major automaticity, (the manual labour involved in the indexing of data is lengthy and complex and must be entrusted to specialists purposely trained for it), the use of such resources for research purposes is surely endless. The essays in this volume are simply a starting point of suggestions for research. Furthermore, databases that are indexed to retrieve words connected with gesture, movement etc. respond to D az-Cintas and Gambier's underscoring of the prominence that screen translation scholars have given to the word rather than the ocular; however, as we have said, this is perhaps only to be expected of those who are occupied with languages, thus the "visual" morph of the "audio" is not to be neglected.

The studies presented by Rachele Antonini, Chiara Bucaria and Flavia Cavaliere derive from a rigorous empirical methodological foundation. Working from the assumption that viewers are consumers, they borrow and adapt methods of research design commonly adopted in the area of marketing research to investigate different aspects of end-user perceptions of audiovisual products. Largely ignored by mainstream research, the results of studies in end-user awareness can provide enormous input for operators in screen translation. Adopting more conventional methodology, Elisa Perego focuses on a different aspect of perception, namely the difficulties that film subtitle readers may encounter as a result of arbitrary line-breaks. The results of this and the previous studies provide insight into what viewers do and do not distinguish from a translation and, used judiciously, could bring about significant improvements to such an important service. Another traditional standpoint on perception is employed by Diana Bianchi who, in

a lively essay on “Buffyspeak” shows us how subtly censorship employed in the series’ Italian dub tones down the sexuality of the popular teenage TV vampire killer. Ideally, such in-depth investigations of products could go hand in hand with more empirically based end-user studies to provide further input for operators. None of these studies treat AVT “as if it were merely a question of dealing with dialogues and commentaries in a vacuum” (Gambier p. 13) but all tackle the real life social existence of these translations, their consumers, and all the operators involved in their fabrication.

All such investigations are directly linked to the controversial issue of quality, discussed in depth by Delia Chiaro who proposes a model of quality already adopted for many goods and services, but as she argues, screen translation presents a *Catch 22* situation in commercial terms which renders it unlike other services. Also linked to the economics of screen translation, Elena Di Giovanni proposes to bring more obscure films to light to wider mainstream audiences.

Nearly all the contributions in this volume either explore filmic or televised products. Only Cristina Valdés tackles a different area of AVT by investigating the practice of promotional hypertexts in commercial websites. Exploring virgin ground, her overview provides a springboard for further investigations into the exciting world of the computer screen. More research is called for in the area of translations which we see on our computer screens, our play stations, our mobile phones, as well as the myriad of other screens in our homes and workplaces, on public transport, in libraries, bars, restaurants and museums, to mention just a few habitats of the ubiquitous talking monitor.

Delia Chiaro
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Audiovisual translation comes of age

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Although ignored by academics and teachers alike, audiovisual translation (AVT) has existed as a professional practice for many years and, since the 1990s, has gained well-deserved visibility thanks to the proliferation and distribution of audiovisual materials in our society. The value of images is of crucial importance in our daily lives and we are literally surrounded by screens of all shapes and sizes. Television sets, cinemas, computers, portable DVD players, and mobile phones are a common and recurrent feature of our social environment, heavily based on the omnipresence of the image. We come across screens at home, in our work place, on public transport, in libraries, bars, restaurants, museums, and cinemas. We spend a fair amount of time watching screens and consuming audiovisual programmes to carry out our work, to develop and enhance our professional and academic careers, to enjoy ourselves and to obtain information. It would not be an exaggeration to talk of the ubiquity of images in this age, and to state that their power is here to stay and live on via screens.

It all began a long time ago, on the eve of the 20th century, with the invention of the *cinematographe* by the Frenchman Louis Lumière in 1895. This new contraption signalled the start of the motion picture era and with it the illusion that cinema could become a sort of universal Esperanto, able to travel across linguistic borders and to be understood by everybody in the world thanks to the 'unequivocal' universality of the image. This new art was perceived as independent from literature and photography, as an innovative language with its own complex visual code, articulated around a new set of parameters. However, these dreams of what could be seen as an early attempt at globalisation were rather ephemeral and soon to be totally shattered by the arrival of sound. The word became a close, inseparable ally of the image when silent movies turned into talking movies – known as talkies – in the late 1920s and translation became an imperative if distribution companies, chiefly from the United States, were to overcome language barriers around the world and conquer new audiences.

Despite the little interest that it seems to have raised, the language issue has always been present in the film industry ever since the very beginning. As a compensation for the lack of sound and dialogue, the silent cinema built up an elaborate system of visual and audio, filmic and extra-filmic coding, that was based mainly on montage, live music during the screening and, last but not least, the use of intertitles and the presence of a compère or explicator in charge of 'reading' the film – including the intertitles – to the audience. Despite the aversion of some directors to intertitles as something essentially anti-cinematic (Van Wert 1980), the truth is that these 'title cards' were used systematically in most films and needed, therefore, a translation when the film was distributed abroad. Though it is generally agreed in academic circles (Izard 1992, Díaz Cintas 2001a) that intertitles are the immediate predecessors of subtitles, very little research has actually been carried out on the topic. The gamut of possible uses of intertitles, their aesthetic and communicative values, and their translation into other languages are vastly unknown, demonstrating that the historiography of subtitling, and of all audiovisual translation practices for that matter, is without a doubt an area in need of further scrutiny.

The voices that rose against the invasion of sound were soon drowned out by the enthusiasm shown by the general public to new talking films. As cinema became more established, viewers from all over the world wanted to watch and hear their favourite stars and understand what they were saying. Production and distribution companies feared their global revenue would dwindle unless they were able to find a successful way to translate their productions into other languages. Multilingual versions, subtitling and dubbing were the methods first explored as a way to overcome the language barrier, and whereas the first one was short-lived and died out towards the mid 1930s, the other two have survived and have been joined by newcomers.

Today, the different forms of audiovisual translation have multiplied (subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, narration, interpreting, surtitling) and although their main function remains the same, i.e. to allow audiovisual programmes to travel across linguistic borders, their impact on viewers is increasingly far reaching. AVT has recently found synergies with multimedia translation (video games, Internet communication, fansubs, fandubs, webtoons) and especially with accessibility (subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, audio description and audio subtitling for the blind and the partially sighted, signed language interpreting), thus opening up new horizons and possibilities for certain sectors of the audience, and creating unforeseen potential in the field of audiovisual communication in general. From the point of the view of the trainer and the researcher the opportunities are also enormous as discussed below.

The multimedia nature of audiovisual programmes allows the combination of acoustic and visual channels which, together with the verbal and the nonverbal

dimensions of communication, results in four basic elements that define the audiovisual text and establish a basis for its semiotic texture (Delabastita 1989):

1. The acoustic-verbal: dialogue, monologue, songs, voice-off.
2. The acoustic-nonverbal: musical score, sound effects, noises.
3. The visual-nonverbal: image, photography, gestures.
4. The visual-verbal: inserts, banners, letters, messages on computer screens, newspaper headlines.

Although, *a priori*, all dimensions could be thought to be equally important in terms of communication, the reality is that the visual-nonverbal, i.e. the image, seems to carry more weight than the word, at least in the production of most of the big blockbuster films touring the world. The priority given to the star system and to special effects testifies this unbalance. Another factor that can help explain this situation is the little literature traditionally available on screenwriting or translation when compared with the number of works on editing, photography, and other technical dimensions. It could be argued that this state of affairs is normal as we are dealing with an art form which started with the movement of images and is by and large based primarily on the power of the image. The obvious downside for us, translators and scholars of the (translated) word, is that if images are the most important variable in the equation, words – and consequently our role – tend to take more often than not a secondary, marginal position. This would help explain the trend in the industry towards the creation of ever more unbelievable special effects of missions impossible to the detriment of the quality of the script and the dialogue. It would also explain the media phenomenon of worshipping stars and celebrities, with audiences going to films simply because their favourite actors appear on screen, irrespective of what they actually say, what the film is about, or who the director is. Not surprisingly, we speak about the ‘viewer’ rather than the ‘reader’ or ‘hearer’ of films or other audiovisual programmes.

This perception of the word relegated to the back stage justifies, to some extent, the traditional approach found in cinema and media studies circles which have mostly focused on the aesthetic and diegetic dimensions of film (editing, representation of stereotypes and cultural values, etc.) and have paid very little attention to the linguistics of film on the whole, be it in its original language or in its translated version. In our case, despite the potential cross-fertilisation between cinema studies and translation studies very little has actually crystallised beyond the concerted efforts of authors like Chaume (2004b), who has tried to build a bridge between both disciplines by researching the way audiovisual texts are constructed and its implication in translation, and Remael (2000), who has directed her efforts to underline the crucial links between screenwriting and translation.

Sadly, the two areas have historically followed parallel paths that do not seem to come to any junctions: collective volumes on cinema hardly ever include contributions on the translation of films, and audiovisual translation conferences do not seem to want to know about the intricacies of cinema by looking at the papers presented. Programmes of study at university level very rarely offer students the possibility to choose subjects that combine both cinema and translation interests.

Nowadays, the situation seems to be changing for the better, and the power of the word is being increasingly acknowledged. Creative writing and scriptwriting are blooming disciplines with roots in the cinema industry and are finding their way in the educational world with the launch of many academic programmes, books and conferences on the topic, all of which have literally mushroomed in recent years. Most crucially, these courses and events are appealing and attract large numbers of students enticed by the prospect of becoming part of the 'sexy' media world. And the same can be said for audiovisual translation.

For some, 'in the beginning was the word', which, religious connotations set aside, recognizes the power of words to travel and to enter people's minds and consciousness. In fact, words may do so in a much more sibilant way than images, sometimes unnoticed but nevertheless carriers of meaning and messages. They may rest for a period, remain inactive, but they slowly work their way into the conscience of the viewers/hearers/readers, moulding their behaviour, their stereotypes and their perception of their socio-cultural environment. Hearing the same or similar narratives time after time ends up bringing the message home. It is through repeated exposure that people become automatons, emulating certain attitudes and manners that they have seen on television or in the cinema. It is life that ends up emulating cinema and not the other way round. This power of the media to mould people's behaviour and habits has not passed unnoticed, and publicists and marketing gurus make a handsome living out of catchy slogans and phrases.

Words are powerful and their manipulation, be it in the original text or in the translated version, can be dangerously easy. Recent geo-political events in the world have made it painfully clear that the abuse and manipulation of information is not an occurrence of the past, nor is it the sole propriety of totalitarian, undemocratic regimes. The idyllic conception of translation as a bridge between cultures and communities needs urgent revision as it has been proven once and again that it can also emphasise differences and perpetuate the wrong stereotypes (Norouzi 2007), hence dynamiting those very bridges it was supposed to build. The act of translating can never be neutral and this is the reason why translation has been and is being used as a political and manipulative tool.

Luckily, this fact has not passed unnoticed, and scholars are now awakening to the reality that the media are an immensely powerful tool not only in the original but also in their translation. Scholars' interest in power and translation has deep

roots that reach back several decades when many academics worldwide began to explore issues in this area. The collective volume entitled *The Manipulation of Literature*, edited by Theo Hermans in 1985, is considered by many the seminal work which initiated this trend and opened the doors to other anthologies of essays by authors like Álvarez and Vidal (1996), Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002) and more recently the singled-authored book by Baker (2006). As can be expected from pioneering works, the focus of these volumes is rather heterogeneous, with a clear slant towards the analysis of printed (literary) texts, with very few case studies centred on audiovisual material.

The practical difficulty of having to deal with multimedia texts together with the fact that research in our field has for many years been printed-text oriented are some of the reasons that explain this state of affairs. For some, this activity falls short of being a case of translation proper because of the various spatial and temporal limitations that restrict the end result and they prefer to talk about adaptation – an attitude that has stymied the debate about AVT. The situation is, however, changing rapidly as translation has evolved into a more flexible and inclusive concept, capable of accommodating new realities rather than disregarding practices that do not fit into a corseted, outdated notion of a term coined many centuries ago, when cinema, television and computers had not yet been invented.

Audiovisual translation is a field that has been growing in significance and visibility in recent decades, and many young, enterprising scholars are directing their interests and efforts to the analysis of audiovisual programmes. The project *Translation in Global News*, led by the University of Warwick, is one such new development investigating the multifaceted nature of global news as well as the politics and economics of translation in the global media (Bassnett 2006). The launch of projects like YouTube, with its staggering pre-eminence in the online video market, the emergence of new digital formats in the shape of newsbytes, audio reports and video clips for most online newspapers, and the move by corporations like the BBC to offer their programmes on Internet and to open up their archives and audiovisual material as downloads to the general public (BBC, 2003) are also proof of the remarkable increase experienced in Internet broadcasting. ‘TV on the move’ is proliferating, too, thanks to the possibilities opened by mobile technology and the popularity of podcasts, i.e. media files and programmes in digital format that are distributed by subscription (paid or unpaid) over the Internet for playback on mobile devices like phones and personal computers. Broadcasters like MTV (www.mtv.com/podcasts) and the BBC (<http://bbc.podcast.com/home.php>) seem to have taken a lead in this new niche of the media market, and while most downloadable videos are presently available only in English some experiments have already taken place using subtitled programmes.

This pervasive presence of the image and the word in our society brings along the need for translation into other languages. This has traditionally been the primary role of AVT, namely, to act as a means for us to fully understand a programme that was originally shot in another language. But the possibilities of AVT have easily expanded beyond this *prima facie* role. Through its many manifestations, AVT can be used to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism in countries with ever more diverse and heterogeneous communities. Schools and universities worldwide seem to have finally discovered the benefits of AVT for foreign language teaching and learning. *Learning Via Subtitling* (<http://levis.cti.gr>) is a European Commission-funded project whose main focus is the development of educational material for active foreign language learning based on film subtitling. It aims to cover the need for both active learning where cultural elements are involved effectively through real-life (simulated) activities and for the productive use of multimedia not as a nice add-on but rather as the core element of an activity.

Literacy is another of the added values of AVT, as an ever-increasing number of migrants round the world can learn the language of their host countries by watching subtitled programmes broadcast on television or distributed on DVD or via Internet. And subtitles also help make reading entertaining as well as educational for children. The successful project of same-language subtitling carried out in India by Kothari, Pandey and Chudgar (2004) has led to the marketing of BookBox (www.bookbox.com), a web-based jukebox of digital books in 18 languages from around the world. Involving same-language subtitling of an audiovisual programme, BookBox synchronizes the written text, the audio, and the visual media to create an educational and entertaining reading experience for children who can relate the phonetic sounds with the visual subtitles, thereby accelerating reading development. This approach has also proven to motivate non-literates toward literacy, through entertainment and popular culture, to make reading an automatic and reflex phenomenon in everyday life, and to create a reading culture and an environment for reading.

The combination of new information and communication technologies with new professional translation practices is finally improving access for certain social groups to information and entertainment as well as emphasising the role of AVT as a tool for social integration. The deaf and hard-of-hearing as well as the blind and the partially sighted are gaining access to the audiovisual world through tailor-made subtitling, both intralingual and interlingual, audio description and audio subtitling. The lobbying of various interest groups has been instrumental in bringing about changes in this field, which has evolved fast in some countries but is still in its infancy in many others. It will only be through pressure groups demanding changes in this area that social advances in facilitating access to the media for all can be achieved.

The fast pace of change taking place in this field is one of the major challenges. AVT is closely linked with technology, which to a degree determines it. The extensive technical advances of recent decades have had a considerable impact in our field, visible in the way professional practice has changed, the profile of translators and other people involved has evolved, and existing forms of AVT have adapted and developed into new hybrid forms. Far from being an eclectic melting pot, this sort of *métissage* of forms and conventions can be considered an attempt at targeting the needs of user groups that are growing increasingly more specific. We are witnessing the rise of practices that often bridge the gap between traditional AVT and localisation, as in the case of media accessibility and video games.

And the changes can be even more daring. With Internet having fully come of age, subtitling and dubbing software programmes have become much more affordable and accessible, with many of them available free on the net. These programs have facilitated the rise and consolidation of translation practices like fansubs and fandubs, whose underlying philosophy is the free distribution over the Internet of audiovisual programmes which have been subtitled and dubbed by fans for fans. These new forms of subtitling and dubbing lie at the margins of market imperatives and are far less dogmatic and much more creative and individualistic than what has traditionally been done (Ferrer Simó 2005, Díaz Cintas and Muñoz-Sánchez 2006). They pick and mix among the conventions and parameters traditionally applied in the various modes of audiovisual transfer and come up with hybrid forms that could well be the seeds of future conventions and norms.

This flurry of activity that we are witnessing in audiovisual translation these days is a clear indication that AVT has certainly come of age. From an educational as well as from a professional and economic perspective it is evidently attracting more interest and becoming more visible. Now, more than ever, there is a need for engaging in serious research in our field, away from hackneyed, over-discussed topics. This is not to mean that some dimensions are not worthy of analysis and discussion (e.g. technical constraints or professional issues), but we must make a concerted effort to ensure that the discipline is covered from a plurality of angles if we really want to help advance knowledge.

In such a practical and applied discipline as translation, the word ‘research’ can sometimes take on a tainted, negative mantle in certain circles. This is particularly true in the case of audiovisual translation, a professional practice which has always been profit driven and determined to a very large extent by what is lucrative. The economic imperatives of the industry dictate on occasion the line of research to be conducted, with the overriding objective of finding ways that will in the end help cut costs, irrespective of the quality of the final product or the potential benefits for viewers and translators. This skewed approach could be responsible for an unnecessary chasm between professionals and academics, a most

unfortunate situation that we cannot afford since practice without a solid theoretical basis runs the risk of being blind.

The tension between theoretical and hands-on approaches is a recurrent issue in the relationship between the academic world and the profession, which is by no means unique in translation circles. Research is a worthwhile enterprise and we should not shy away from it. In my opinion, the happy medium has to lie in a balanced marriage between theory and practice. Engaging in intellectual pursuits that do not have an empirical foundation, that are wilfully disconnected from the practical concerns of the profession and the industry, or do not take into consideration the needs of the final users and consumers seems to me to embark in a rather unrewarding, otiose adventure.

The present volume wisely avoids falling into this trap and presents itself as a bold attempt at correcting such an erroneous view by addressing the issue of research head on. From this perspective, it is a most welcome step forward in helping bridge the (unnecessary) gap between theory and practice.

The title of this collective anthology is particularly telling on two fronts. Firstly, the interaction *Between Text and Image* clearly and prominently places a distinct emphasis on the multimedia nature of the object under scrutiny, stressing the semiotic dimension of audiovisual programmes and the need to consider both text and image as carriers of information and messages. Working with multimodal products differs greatly from the approaches which have been applied to date to the analysis of written texts and which tend to forget these communicative dimensions, hence offering rather skewed results.

Secondly, by complementing the main title with the subtitle *Updating Research in Screen Translation* it limits its scope and focuses on an area – research – that has seen a rather slow development in AVT. A rather felicitous paradox is the fact that most of the contributions do not content themselves with simply ‘updating’ information but prefer to go a step further, testing and ‘opening’ new research horizons, such as the application of corpora studies to the field of audiovisual translation in all its dimensions, verbal and visual, with an aim to infer translational routines and strategies at work in the dubbing process.

The volume is divided into two main, distinct parts, the first one devoted to *Electronic Databases and Corpora* and the second one to *Perception and Quality*, perhaps two of the most neglected topics in our field. In both sections, the research is sound and substantiated by solid empirical approaches that draw from real data in order to reach their findings, lending an applied ethos to the whole. Of great interest is the excursus into the field of perception of translated programmes by target audiences and of the rather slippery concept of (high) quality, so closely related to professional and economic factors.

This volume brings together scholars and practitioners, for the very breadth of the field of research necessarily involves a plurality of approaches and opinions, whose contributions explore multimedia translation in theory and practice, discuss the linguistic and cultural dimensions of audiovisual translation, and investigate the relevance and application of translation theory to audiovisual translation. Much has been done in AVT research in a relatively short span of time, but much still needs to be done. No doubt, there are conceptual and methodological gaps in the research that has been covered, and no doubt scholars need to carry on conducting research in the field to try and fill those gaps. The contributions compiled here certainly contribute to that overall aim, providing food for thought, reflecting some of the developments of our rapidly changing times, helping to frame some of the current trends, promoting new perspectives and pointing to new research avenues. In short, a most welcome addition to the study of audiovisual translation.

Recent developments and challenges in audiovisual translation research

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The paper is organized into two main parts: (i) an overview of background research topics in the field of Audiovisual Translation studies (AVT), which allow us to clearly delimit the main research trends which have emerged in the last decade, along with their repercussions, limits, and conceptual and methodological gaps; (ii) a prospective discussion combining Audiovisual Translation together with some specific trends in Translation Studies, which will force us to (re)view some key concepts such as text, accessibility, norm, and so on.

Finally, we further investigate factors and conditions that may help define new research paths

Keywords: accessibility, AVT modality, digitization, reception, subtitling.

Over the last decade, numerous studies of language transfer for television, cinema and videos have often been limited in scope. Few systematic studies have examined the production and reception or the cultural and linguistic impact of audiovisual translation (AVT), still mostly regarded as essentially “practical” in nature. It is also paradoxical that the dominant research perspective is linguistic, though AVT is actually a multisemiotic blend of many different elements such as images, sounds, language (oral and written), colours, proxemics and gestures – all incorporated into various audiovisual codes to fulfil creative needs such as stage/screen adaptation, arrangement into sequences and shots, play of voices and lighting, scenery or narrative conventions. Two factors probably explain this paradox and the limited scope of the research: on the one hand, the linguistic and literary background of most researchers; on the other hand, the practical constraints of (printed) publication in two dimensions. The increasingly varied ways in which language transfer is achieved and the potential of CD, DVD and Internet-based technology should gradually change these trends.

Having mapped out the domain of study as a recognised discipline in its own right (section 1), this paper will outline various trends in AVT research over the

last decade (section 2); the relationship between AVT and translation studies will then be examined (section 3), followed in section 4 by the challenges for AVT. The paper reflects the fundamental conviction that AVT should be seen not as a constellation of problems, but as a valuable asset addressing the need for multilingual and multicultural communication in the international arena.

1. A domain in its own right

1.1 A key year: 1995

A number of phenomena can explain the rapidly increasing recognition of AVT as a domain for research.

The first of these is the celebration of the centenary of cinema in 1995, marked by a variety of events which included a Forum in Strasbourg under the auspices of the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Gambier 1995). Also important was a landmark publication on the dimensions and implications of the issue of languages in the AV media, edited by Luyken *et al.* (1991). This was published by *The European Institute for the Media*, an organisation set up in 1983 to collect and analyse data and documents on media communication, shedding light on the increasing interdependence among European countries in this field. The Institute, originally based in Manchester, moved to Düsseldorf in 1992. Since 1989, it has coordinated the European TV and Film Forum, an event of particular interest to public and private broadcasters.

Several other publications have also drawn attention to AVT. However, these have mainly been dissertations (examples at doctoral level being Whitman-Linsen 1992, Machado 1993, Tomaszkiwicz 1993 and Danan 1994) or M.A. theses and, as such, have not enjoyed widespread distribution. Others (reports by d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1985, 1989, a manual by Ivarsson 1992, works by Laks 1957, Fodor 1976, Pommier 1988, Izard 1992, Baccolini *et al.* 1994, Licari 1994 and Herbst 1994) address only a small specialist readership.

Finally, mention should be made of studies on subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, particularly in the UK. This limited list of miscellaneous texts is completed by a few subtitling guides which have remained to all intents and purposes confidential, their availability on the Internet still being more the exception than the rule.

Thus AVT was still a little explored domain until 1995, the only studies prior to that date being sporadic and often anecdotal in nature; even though television has long been a support for the dissemination of information, entertainment and education, cinema boasts a long history as a popular art form, and the video market has continued to grow. In other words, until the mid-nineties, television and

films were analysed from a variety of perspectives – but the majority of researchers seem to have regarded the language dimension as a hurdle to shy away from.

Another two factors also explain why 1995 was a watershed. One was the mobilisation of minorities who became increasingly aware of the possible role to be played by the AV media in promoting their identity, as in the cases of the Welsh and Catalan-speaking communities. The other important factor was the boom in technologies which were still referred to as “new”, leading to a vast increase in electronic products and services, whether on line (Internet) or off line (CD-ROM) (see section 4.1).

Alongside the role of linguistic minorities, the European Union has also played a part, e.g. through the Office for Languages of Limited Diffusion in Dublin, Television without Frontiers Directive (1989) amended in 1997 (which should have been amended again in 2004), the publication in 1996 of the Commission’s 1992–93 Eumosaic report, as well as various documents and debates in the European Parliament, particularly during the 1980s. The Council of Europe has also been active, particularly with the Charter on Regional or Minority Languages, adopted in 1992, and the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, which was approved in 1996 at the Barcelona World Conference on Linguistic Rights. This document reaffirms and consolidates the fundamental principles of the 1992 Charter.

All these factors (centenary of the cinema, minorities, technologies) have led to the emergence of AVT as at least a sub-domain of Translation Studies. Other major changes (internationalisation of distribution, targeted programming packages, deregulation and copyright) have also affected AVT. The translator’s working conditions, the volume of material for translation and the potential effects of AVT have all shifted in response to changes in production, distribution and consumption of AV products.

The rapid evolution of technologies, markets and legislation affects the demand for AVT and probably also our relationship with language itself. AV “texts” are always by nature short-lived and volatile. It is not that the translated texts will be read time and again for decades or stored in national archive collections for frequent consultation (see section 3). However a problem remains amidst this burgeoning of activity: how to establish reliable statistics and charts which keep track of the work done for television and cinema? The European AV Observatory in Strasbourg, for example, aims to collect such data but has to tackle problems regarding the definition and identification of programme types, the origin of films (co-productions), categories of viewers and broadcast times (www.obs.coe.int); Dries 1996; Jäckel 1995, 2001). Media power in the “global village” is wielded by a small number of players, while audiences are extremely varied. Lying in the middle between the two, AV translation shifts with the sensitivity of a seismograph needle monitoring tensions, contradictions and developments within AV communication.

1.2 Rapid institutionalisation

AVT has enjoyed relatively rapid recognition since 1999, to judge by the conferences, theses and manuals on the subject. In less than ten years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of conferences on AVT. No year goes by without its crop of such meetings, not to mention dedicated workshops or sessions within conferences and seminars on broader professional issues. Worthy of mention are the Forlì conferences – in June 1993 (Baccolini *et al.* 1994), October 1995 (Heiss and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1996), April 1998 (Bollettieri Bosinelli *et al.* 2000) and (October 2005); the biennial Berlin conferences, starting in November 1996 to the present day (Gambier 1998, Gambier and Gottlieb 2001); the conferences at Vitoria in the Basque Country (1993, 1996, 1999, May 2004), at Granada in July 1996 (Mayoral and Tejada 1997), at Trieste in November 1996 (Taylor 2000a), at Castellón in October 1999 (Chaume and Agost 2001), at Vigo in 1999, Catania in June 2000, Hong Kong in June 2001, London in February 2004, Alicante (1999, 2000, 2001, 2004. cf. Sanderson 2001, 2002), Rieti in September 2005, and Pavia in May 2006.

Another sign indicating a certain degree of recognition is the increasing number of dissertations and M.A. theses, from countries such as Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Finland and Italy. Listing them has become a practically impossible task, as has keeping track of how relevant they are (cf. section 2). This trend is not necessarily limited to universities offering training in AVT, although these too have increased in number over the past few years (Barcelona, Brussels, Copenhagen, Forlì, Granada, Helsinki/Kouvola, Leeds, Lille, London, Manchester, Mons, Saarbrücken, Strasbourg, Vigo, etc.). Such training is above all concerned with subtitling and does not necessarily match market needs, whether in terms of translation mode or in quantitative terms – the situation is no longer one of dearth, but of inflation.

In terms of publications too, there has been a rapid evolution. While Ivarsson (1992), Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) and Dries (1995) stood out as pioneers, there is today an appreciable range of manuals and introductory works. In Spain alone, examples of this trend include Avila (1997), Agost (1999), Lorenzo and Pereira (2000 and 2001), Duro (ed. 2001), Díaz-Cintas (2001a and 2003) and Chaume (2003 and 2004b). In Scandinavian countries, an example is the recent manual by Tveit (2004). A number of journals have also dedicated a special issue to AVT (*Circuit* 1991, *Il Traduttore Nuovo* 1994, *Rila* 2002, *The Translator* 2003, *Meta* 2004), many years after *Babel* set the ball rolling in 1960.

This brief overview highlights not only the fact that AVT has benefited from rapid development of research interest and of institutional commitment, but also that the discipline remains essentially European. However, other parts of the world have also to a certain extent shown growing awareness of the linguistic challenges,

technical options and competences which AVT entails – examples being Latin America (e.g. Argentina, where the first meeting on this topic took place in Buenos Aires in October 1995) and South Africa, which has no fewer than eleven official languages.

2. Piecemeal research

2.1 Before the turning point of the 1990s

It is fair to say that most writings before the 1990s were prescriptive in nature.¹ They focused either on now outdated technical issues, or on a case study – generally examining films based on a literary source, or presenting an interview with a subtitler or dubber shortly after the release of an experimental art feature film. Such texts, often very short, abound in working anecdotes and specific details or difficulties, never offering a systematic vision of AVT or of its distinctive features by comparison with other forms of translation. The usual outlets for such articles are either in-house publications by television companies or film magazines like *British Film Review*, *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Cineforum*, *Cinema*, *Filmcritica*, *Images et Son*, *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, *Le film français*, *Revue du cinéma*, *Screen*, *Screen Digest*, *Sight and Sound* and *Sonovision*.

When these articles adopt a broader perspective, they mostly do so to take sides in the long-running debate on the respective merits of subtitling or dubbing, with examples spanning the years from 1934 (Delisle) right through to 1998 (Guardini) and 2000 (Carotta and Tampieri, Mailhac). The most frequent arguments in favour of one mode are understandably reflected as drawbacks for the other – a plus for subtitling is a minus for dubbing, and vice-versa.

This long-running *querelle* is based more on argumentation than evidence. The playoff between subtitling and dubbing has nevertheless often prompted a generalised division of Europe into two groups, countries which favour subtitling (Belgium, Scandinavia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Wales, Catalonia, Slovenia, etc.) against those where dubbing is the name of the game (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, etc.). This geographical division reflects the ideological belief that language and culture coincide with national boundaries, ignoring factors such as broadcasting between neighbouring states, languages not confined to a single state (e.g. German in Germany, Austria, Belgium and Switzerland) and flexibility in terms of technology-based translation options like DVD.

1. For references prior to 1997, see Gambier, Yves (ed.) 1997.

2.2 A genre which has gained gradual recognition

The place of AVT, both within translation studies and in relation to other disciplines (semiotics, media studies, etc.) is not yet definitively established. On the one hand, there are efforts to defend and promote the interdisciplinary dimension of AVT, for example, in a privileged relationship with film studies (Chaume 2003, 2004a, Cattrysse 1992, 2000, 2001) or discourse studies and pragmatics (Remael 2000, 2001a, 2003); on the other hand, a thrust to achieve a detailed focus on the different modes of AVT, which are rapidly developing in step with new technologies, and make it possible to offer increasingly targeted services (Gambier 1996, 2003, Gottlieb 1992, Luyken *et al.* 1991).

The practical applications of AVT and its sheer volume of material, together with the theoretical and conceptual issues it raises, have led to its gradual appreciation as a new “genre” (Gambier 1994a), though issues relating to its specificity within translation studies remain problematic (cf. section 3).

Many studies have limited their focus to interlinguistic subtitling, in an attempt to achieve a global characterisation of AVT. From Dollerup’s (1974) categorisation of errors in the English-Danish subtitles of various TV programmes, to Marleau (1982), Titford (1982) and Mayoral *et al.* (1988) with their view of subtitles as “a necessary evil” and “constrained translation,” it can hardly be said that subtitling has been favourably perceived. These early studies did in fact perpetuate a certain stereotyped vision of translation, still seen essentially as a problem and considered subordinate – or, indeed, inferior – to the original. In opposition to this restrictive view, Gottlieb (1994a) proposes the notion of “diagonal translation,” Gambier (2006) speaks of “selective translation,” in which any translation is necessarily “constrained” by the medium concerned, whether it be a comic strip, an illustrated book, a children’s book, a scientific paper or an exhibition catalogue, while Reid (1978) defends subtitling as “the intelligent solution”.

In a broader perspective, other authors have sought a more appropriate positioning of AVT, particularly in the media landscape as a whole. This trend is exemplified in studies by Delabastita (1989, 1990), Lambert (1989, 1990) and the two authors together (1996). The rationale in this case is to see AVT as one solution to internationalisation, situating it within the context of power-related, cultural and linguistic issues in contemporary societies. Starting from these early works, the questions raised have no longer been limited to professional ability but have also highlighted the decision-making, production and distribution processes which make translation a feasible, living and significant entity. Culture, language and national borders are sometimes equated, a relatively frequent trend in this perspective being to take a factual rather than a truly descriptive-explanatory approach. The pattern in such cases is to provide information on the current AV state of the

art within a given country, the emphasis in practice often being on broadcasting channels (both private and public) – Canada/Quebec, Catalonia, China, Finland, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Latvia, Nigeria, the Netherlands, the Basque Country, Romania, Taiwan (Gambier 1996, 1998, 2004) and Spain/Catalonia (Zabalbeascoa *et al.* 2001). There have also been a number of studies attempting either to justify the choice of a given AVT mode in a given historical context (Danan 1994, 1996, Gutiérrez Lanza 1999, Ballester Casado 2001, Karamitroglou 2000, 2001, Rabadán 2000, and the TRACE [Traducciones Censuradas] 1935–1985 project, Vandaele 2002) or to relate the mode concerned to the linguistic policy of a region or minority (Paquin 2000, Meylaerts 2001, O’Connell 2003). In both cases, AVT is situated against the background of the power relations between different languages and cultures, as well as market forces. Determinants and constraints are thus no longer centred on the translator alone, as illustrated, for example, by studies examining the role and influence of English in AVT (Grigaravičiūtė and Gottlieb 1999, Chaume and Garcia de Toro 2001, Gottlieb 2001, 2004a).

2.3 Interlinguistic subtitling: The fragmented nature of studies

Interlinguistic subtitling is undoubtedly the AVT mode which has been most widely analysed (Vertanen 2001). It implies the shift from the oral to the written medium, generally occupying one or two lines, and transposition from one language (or from several, if the film “speaks” a number of languages) to another or perhaps to two others, as in the case of the bilingual subtitling for Finnish, Israeli or Belgian audiences, a variant all too seldom taken into account (Gummerus 1996). Alongside these features of subtitles, another distinctive characteristic which depends to a certain extent on cultural preferences is their position on screen – the convention of placing them at the bottom of the screen can be compared with their arrangement to one side, in a vertical column, as is the case with Korean.

Irrespective of these characteristics, certain issues are always present:

- division of labour: the whole process may be entirely the responsibility of the translator, or s/he may share the work with a technician who will be responsible for “spotting” and synchronising the subtitles but may not know the language of the original; many studies glibly generalise on the basis of an individual’s experience, without so much as entertaining the thought that the working conditions described might not necessarily be universal;
- the “source text”, which may be a post-production script, a dialogue list, a transcription of dialogues, previous subtitles in another language which will thus provide a pivot (e.g. Persian-French-Finnish), audio in the original language or in a dubbed version, or subtitles in another language for bilingual versions (as when French is used as a basis for Dutch subtitling in Belgium, or

Finnish for Swedish in Finland). Defining the source and its status not only means pinpointing power relations between languages, but is also a prerequisite for explaining similarities and differences between bilingual subtitles of the same film.

Translation strategies can be affected by constraints upstream. Many studies nevertheless go no further than a comparison of oral input and subtitled output, the main – and in many cases by deliberate choice the sole – aim being to criticise “bad” solutions, ignoring actual working conditions and the semiotic complexity of the AV medium. Such studies are thus restricted to an examination of language content (inevitably seen as problematic), in isolation from its audio and visual context, and irrespective of the function it fulfils between its creators (producer, screen writer, dialogue writer, director, actors, etc.) and its viewers, with their differing social backgrounds, education and reading habits. In other words, AVT is treated as if it were merely a question of dealing with dialogues and commentaries in a vacuum.

Studies on interlinguistic subtitling can be broken down into the following categories:

- a large number deal with case studies, for example: *Pygmalion*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Coming to America*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Fanny ja Alexander*, *Dracula*, *An Officer and Gentleman*, *La haine*, *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, etc. (over 120 films or TV programmes are mentioned in Gambier and Gottlieb 2001); the work of directors such as Woody Allen, Almodóvar, Bergman, Coppola, Godard, Hitchcock, the Marx Brothers and Orson Welles; or film adaptations of classics, particularly Shakespeare (Diaz Fernandez 2001). Some studies focus more on one particular medium, but seldom offer a rationale for this choice, as if the differences between cinema, television and video required no comment. The various case studies on the whole give the domain a higher profile, but come nowhere near to developing specific issues in AVT. The proliferation of M.A. theses could be mentioned in this respect. Some, for example, take subtitles more as a pretext for addressing a general problem (strategies for translation of humour, taboo language, sociolects, allusions, cultural references, politeness, etc.) than as a specific corpus where verbal content and images work together and the rhythm of sequences and dialogue takes priority over linguistic perfection;
- some studies examine subtitling strategies (Lomheim 1999, Gottlieb 2001). There are differences, both in the number of strategies examined and in the labels applied to them (reduction, neutralisation, omission, generalisation, paraphrase, expansion, etc.) (Gambier 2006). This is perhaps because there is a mixture of different levels of analysis and different problems. Often, however,

the emphasis is on subtitling as a series of losses and omissions, forgetting or overlooking such strategies as expansion, condensation, or reformulation. This perception is often based on the presumed uniformity between oral and written expression: a given number of spoken words should be conveyed by the same number of written words. Accounting exercises of this sort fail to recognize that the two codes differ in status and in the way they work, and consider subtitling merely as a mimetic process, an attitude rejected both by the subtitlers themselves (Kovačič 1997, 2000) and in a small number of theses at Leuven (K.U.L.) on written representation of oral expression, with or without translation and whether in a fictional or non-fictional setting. Linguistic compression, which can take a variety of forms (from concision to suppression, from hyperonymy to paraphrase), is related to considerations such as the type of film or programme being subtitled (children's programmes, drama, sitcoms, talk shows, series, etc.), the viewer's presumed knowledge and how fast s/he can read subtitles.

An alternative to the case study is an approach focusing on a specific issue. Thus, many analyses of interlinguistic subtitling address one or another of the following issues:

- types of dialogue (Remael 2003; 2004), slang and swear-words (El-Sakran 2000, Chen 2004), dialects and sociolects (Vanderschelden 2001);
- sayings (Gottlieb 1997a), features of orality and discourse markers (Biq 1993, Assis Rosa 2001), expressions of politeness (Mason 1989; Hatim and Mason 1997a), coherence (Mason 2001), degrees of explicitation (Smith 1998, Perego 2003);
- cultural references and allusions (Santamaria Guinot 2001, Ballester Casado 2003);
- irony and humour, a fairly popular area of study which has also found favour with students (Fuentes Luque 2000, 2003, Pelsmaekers and van Besien 2002, Vandaele 2002, Lorenzo *et al.* 2003);
- finally, psycholinguistic aspects of subtitling, including the time taken to read, the strategies involved, legibility of subtitles on screen, their comprehension and their visual perception, particularly in studies by Céron (2001) and by d'Ydewalle and co-workers at the University of Leuven's psychological research centre (de Linde and Kay 1999). Many more tests, experiments and observations have yet to be made in order to better understand how subtitles are received and how they affect reading proficiency, particularly if one thinks how greatly target audiences can differ (see section 4.2).

2.4 Isolated studies on other AVT modes

While subtitling has its supporters and above all its daily users, other equally common AVT modes are also used and sometimes studied. These include not only the various forms of oral reformulation (dubbing, interpretation, voice-over, commentaries), but also other modes which entail their own respective challenges (intra-linguistic subtitling, audio-description, surtitling).

Dubbing has on the whole been relatively little studied, probably to some degree because of the division of labour and responsibilities which it implies (Bollettieri Bosinelli 1994; *I Traduttore Nuovo* 1994; Di Fortunato and Paolinelli 1996; Heiss and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1996; Chaves Garcia 2000; Pommier 1988), and also to a certain extent because any analysis entails a considerable initial effort of transcription. Dubbing nevertheless raises a number of theoretical and practical issues:

- cultural appropriation or domestication, narrative manipulation and censorship at the dubbing stage (Goris 1993, When 1998, 2001, Rodriguez Espinosa 2001, Di Giovanni 2003, Zitawi 2003). A reference can be suppressed, added or made explicit, the dialogue can be segmented in a different way, a quotation can be cut, a political or philosophical allusion left out (Pisek 1994 and Whitman-Linsen 1992, writing about Woody Allen);
- synchronisation (lip-sync and temporal synchronisation), often a give-away for dubbing, starting from early studies by Caillé (1967) and Fodor (1976) (Li 1998, Heikkinen 2001, Chaume 2004b);
- to a lesser extent, cost issues and non-verbal aspects (Salmon Kovarski 2000);
- an issue which is still underestimated is the relationship between linguistic policy, language status and the decision to use dubbing (for example, in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Quebec); historically, dubbing has been used for purposes of linguistic protectionism (Danan 1994, Ballester Casado 2001). It remains to be shown to what extent dubbing today engenders a linguistic type or register, the language of dubbing often being perceived as “artificial” (Herbst 1994 and 1997, Baccolini *et al.* 1994, Patou-Patucchi 1999, Cros *et al.* 2000, Duro Moreno 2001, Agost 2004, Elefante 2004);
- other topics which deserve attention are reception and tolerance of dubbing, multilingual films (Heiss 2004a) and parodies;
- a favourite subject is humour, as it is for subtitling, perhaps because it is a salient feature, readily identified and found (Fuentes Luque 2003).

Other oral forms of AVT have yet to generate a similar volume of literature. Thus, TV (and to a certain extent radio) interpreting is relatively little studied and sometimes literature on the topic is not easily available (e.g. in Japanese). However, it has been in use for many years and is increasingly in demand today, albeit in many

cases very inconspicuously, as in reports from theatres of conflict or war, when journalists might maintain the illusion that they were able to interview locals in their own language. There have been studies of how TV interpreting of this kind differs from simultaneous conference interpreting, the differences being mostly based on user expectations and their reactions to voices. The quality of the interpreters' performances is thus to a large extent dependent on relatively uncontrollable variables and deliberate strategies (Alexieva 1997, 1999, 2001; Monacelli 2000). A number of studies have addressed interpreter selection, the skills involved and the constraints of working in the studio (Katan and Straniero-Sergio 2001, Mack 2000, 2001, Jääskeläinen 2003,), while others have looked at the conditions the interpreter experiences on a film set or in the cinema (Guardini 2000, Simonetto 2000).

Parameters and strategies involved in voice-over have been only occasionally studied (Grigaravičiūtė and Gottlieb 1999, Mailhac 1998, 2001), although companies and in some cases even international institutions use video to promote their products or services. There have, however, been a number of efforts to analyse documentaries, whether in voice-over or with subtitles (Franco 2000, 2001a, 2001b, Espasa 2002, 2004). The same is true of commentaries adapted for a new audience, for example in the case of children's programmes or documentaries. Studies here are still few and far between. This is perhaps surprising given the increasing availability of educational, promotional and entertainment products formatted for a variety of media (CD-ROM, Internet). The state of the art and the limitations of these AVT modes deserve to be studied in greater depth.

Three types of AVT involved in recent developments have not yet given rise to any major examples of methodical research. The first of these is intralinguistic subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (see section 4.2), a field where there is some research on conditions and constraints of user reception (Franco and Santiago 2003, Kurz and Mikulasek 2004) carrying on from older studies such as those in Sweden or the Netherlands (Nederlandse Omroep 1977). The other two forms of AVT worthy of mention in this respect are audio-description and surtitling.

Audio-description, still referred to as audio-vision, is for the blind and partially sighted. This modality does not boast the same tradition as intralinguistic subtitling, having emerged in relatively recent years (Benecke 2004; www.afb.org (afb = American Foundation for the Blind), www.audiodescribe.com). Like subtitling for the deaf, however, it has gained considerable impetus from technological progress and legal obligations, though the audiences in the two cases differ in their expectations and communicative abilities (Gambier 2003: 176–177). Audio-description can be used for TV programmes, cinema, video games, DVDs, web sites, exhibitions (museums and galleries) and theatres.

Finally, surtitling can be used for plays and operas. It has been examined from a variety of perspectives, e.g. the constraints and specificities of the translator's

task, surtitling of a given work, audience reactions (Hay 1998, Dewolf 2001, Low 2002; Mateo 2002a, 2002b). In Finland, this modality has been studied by Sario and Oksanen (1996), Vallisaaari (1996) and Virkkunen (2001, 2004).

3. AVT and Translation Studies: Underlying research concepts

Certain concepts in Translation Studies should arguably be revised, extended and rethought when they are applied to AVT. For example:

- the notion of *text*: Screen “texts” are short-lived and do not fit readily into the traditional dichotomy between source text and target text. They are also distinctive in that they are multimodal. But is this not true of any “text”? Tourist brochures, press releases, art books, children’s books, instruction leaflets, exhibition catalogues, illustrated books and advertisements all combine writing and illustrations (photos, drawings), with considerable scope for variety in the way printing, punctuation and the arrangement of space on the page are used. Is it appropriate, then, to continue speaking conventionally of text as a linear arrangement of sentences, or as a sequence of verbal units? Does *text* mean the same thing in literary translation, conference interpreting and AVT?

In addition, a film can be freely (or not so freely) adapted from a literary work, involving a process of intersemiotic translation or film translation in the strict sense of the expression. The literary work may in turn be a translation; in addition, the film is subtitled or dubbed, sometimes, but not always, from the script (Gambier 2004). This process involves various types of shifts, at different levels – possibly from oral to written, or from written to oral. Just where is the “original” to be found in this process (cf. section 2.3)?

- Another concept to be revisited is that of authorship. In the literary tradition and in Translation Studies, this issue has often been underestimated in that the author is perceived as a single individual. In AVT, the issue cannot be overlooked, given that a number of groups or institutions are part of the process: screen writer, producer, director, actors, sound engineer, cameraman, scenery artist, etc. Each has a specific area of competence (financial, technical, legal, aesthetic) and a variable degree of authority in the process. This accounts for the complexity of copyright issues, for example, when a film is co-produced, or when the subtitled version is rerun on TV or made available on the Internet;
- AVT researchers also have to think critically about the concept of *sense*, since this is produced neither in a linear sequence nor with a single system of signs. There is interaction not only between the various figures involved in creating the AV product, but also between them and the viewers, even between different

AV productions (references, allusions). The hierarchy of original and subsequent distribution or broadcasting becomes questionable, given that intellectual property rights on a film often allow various versions. In the USA, for example, there might be one for TV, one for use as an airline feature film, and yet another version in which offensive language has been censored in compliance with the demands of political correctness. Digital technology could allow different users (parents, educators, religious associations, ideological groups, etc.) to have access to their own personalised final cut. And what about the concept of *loss* so often mentioned when referring to AVT? It cannot be restricted to verbal elements. Isn't there a certain loss in the meaning of pictures when one reads subtitles? Can't we talk about language hypertrophy, paying less attention to camera moves, viewing angles, editing, soundtrack, tones of voices, facial expressions, gestures, gazes, body movements, which are also meaningful?

- The issues of text, authorship and sense also entail questions regarding *translation units* in AVT, and regarding the notion of *equivalence* (Card 1998, Kruger 2001).
- The very concept of *translation* highlights a lack of consensus, overlapping as it does those of *adaptation*, *manipulation*, *censorship*, *transfer* and *remake*;
- The notion of translation *strategies* (at the macro level) (Gambier 2006) also deserves more detailed examination (section 2.3), since it is often confused with translation *methods* or *techniques* (at the micro level) and the socio-political and cultural effects of translation. For example, does domestication necessarily and systematically reflect conservatism regarding target language usage?
- It is also necessary to reconsider the links between translation *norms*, which originate and are passed on against a social background, and technical *constraints* (Fawcett 1996, 2003). In this respect, it is already possible to speak of “abusive” subtitles, for example, those accompanying Japanese animated cartoons on the Internet, produced by amateurs who ignore accepted subtitling conventions and introduce typographic variations, adding glosses or commentaries or changing the position of lines (Nornes 1999). We already know that films are less and less seen in cinemas and more and more released in DVD form and on the Internet. Therefore changes in norms are expected.
- Another relevant issue is the *relationship between written and oral*, *between written norms, dominant conventions and the written language of subtitles*, *between ordinary speech and dubbese*. In a broader perspective, this leads to the long-term effects of written communication based on symbols and abbreviations, as those used in text messaging and on-line chatting. The quality of a language cannot be taken for granted; just how far and how fast it can shift depends on the period. Not so long ago, suggesting subtitles with emoticons, pictograms and abbreviations might well have seemed provocative. Today, the

Portuguese commercial TV channel SIC uses smileys to depict different moods in its subtitles for the hard of hearing. Changing attitudes to spelling are reflected in the city of Montreal's Internet site, which can be accessed in three different ways (www.ville.montreal.gc.ca -> click on "accès simple"), including what is called "ortograf altêrnativ", matching letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) to facilitate access for "people with intellectual incapacities" (*sic*). Examples of such spelling in French are "dan bokou de kartié", "lê list dê z'aktivité é dê sêrvis son fêt for le situayin" or "alé vouar". "Simplicity" of this kind is distinct from a simplified version of the text's content, which is also available.

This provides an argument for viewing the output of automatic translation programmes (whether commercialised or shareware) in a different light, in that they satisfy a certain number of users who are far from illiterate but who do not need a polished, finely honed text.

- Finally, *reception* of AV products is an idea on which there is nothing like consensus, since this broad notion might include *reactions* on the cognitive level, *responses* in behavioural terms and *repercussions* of a cultural order (Chesterman, forthcoming). The large number of broadcasters, whether individual or institutional, is matched by the socio-cultural diversity of audiences. In this context, the customary range of parameters like *acceptability*, *legibility* and *synchronisation* has to be broadened to include others like *accessibility* (see section 4.2) and *relevance*, ensuring that the quantity of information to be conveyed, omitted, added or clarified does not imply excessive cognitive demands on the viewer. The final steps in creating a film, and thus the coproduction of its sense, depend on a number of parameters. From programmes adapted for in-flight viewing to feature films automatically censored of taboo language, there is room for a whole range of possibilities. What a surprise in recent months, for example, to watch a DVD version of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, starring Clint Eastwood. The international version, distributed in 1967 by United Artists, was 20 minutes shorter than the Italian original, the violent scenes from the American Civil War having been excised – losing many of director Sergio Leone's stylistic innovations into the bargain. In other words, the globalisation of the film industry does not necessarily mean increasing uniformity in terms of thematic content, narratives and audience reactions.

When and how can these concepts be revisited? For the moment, as we have seen (section 2), most explorations in this field have given rise to isolated descriptions, running the risk of intellectual fragmentation. A part of AVT research aspires to a certain "neutrality" by an approach which is intended merely to be informative. Thus the Catalans tell us about Catalan TV, the Italians about Italian TV, and so on.

But what about studies on the dominance of English as a source language and pivot language, on the convergence between the AV industry and Internet providers, or on the vertical concentration between production, distribution and programming (cf. section 4.1)? What about the links between economy and technology, with their inevitable repercussions on costs? Who does the research on the language of AV products and their translation?

Translation studies in turn can help AVT research develop more fully, for example by bringing relevance theory, Skopos Theory, descriptive TS and the polysystemic perspective to bear on the task, with the concepts of norms and of position (central/peripheral) within a given system. Other theoretical constructs such as Lefevere's (1992) identification of powers (e.g. ideological, economic) and patronage, or Venuti's notion of domestication, could also prove relevant: does an AV product not have to make its way through a number of "filters", such as legislation, production quotas, broadcasting licences, financial support, production and distribution policies, programming agents and critics (Cattrysse 1992; Delabastita 1989, 1990; Goris 1993, Gutiérrez Lanza 1999, Karamitroglou 2000, Remael 2000, Ballester Casado 2001, Zaro Vera 2001, Bartrina 2004; Díaz Cintas 2004)?

Even if research on AVT is to a certain extent recognised and acknowledged, and despite its potential in terms of conceptual innovation, the domain is still in doubt about how to label itself (Gambier 2003: 171–172): film translation, language transfer, audiovisual versioning (thus avoiding the word "translation" associated with word for word), screen translation, media translation and multimedia translation. At the same time, this terminological indecision might be a sign of vitality, reflecting recent technological developments.

4. New challenges

4.1 The digital challenge

Another probable factor in gaining recognition for the role of AVT is the move from analogue technology to faster, more flexible and more compact digital technology in the 1990s. Digitalisation has, and will continue to have, an increasingly marked effect on writing for the screen, the production of images and sounds, settings, costumes, make-up, filming and editing, distribution and screening. This development has (and will continue to have) implications for cinema architecture, the type of venue in which films can be shown, the quality of film photography and sound, film and video piracy (and thus, indirectly, copyright issues), and storage and restoration of AV products, an increasingly major part of our collective cultural memory. The history of this memory was for many years the history of the

supporting medium, whereas it is now tending more and more to become that of the rights pertaining to it. The implications of these changes can be readily imagined in terms of investments, marketing and AV product aesthetics, opening up an ever increasing gap between a cinema and TV industry which is rapidly globalising (blockbusters and international format programmes being the name of the game) and the experimental or cultural aspirations of those involved in production. For television, digitalisation will also continue to change production and distribution methods (digital terrestrial television, DTT).

Thanks to digital technology, a DVD (Digital Versatile Disc) can now have as many as 32 subtitles (in different languages, or in the same language but for different user groups: youngsters, the deaf, [elderly] people unable to read fast, etc.). DVDs can also be dubbed in eight languages. Throughout the short history of consumer electronics, DVD players are the product which has come down in price more quickly than any other. Some DVD recorders can store three to four films in Mpeg4 (each film taking up about one gigaoctet (Go) in this format, as against 4–5 Go with Mpeg2), or a number of TV programmes. Other advances include DVB (Digital Video Broadcasting), allowing distribution of a large quantity of digitalised information, and Internet distribution, offering the translator the advantage of no longer having to work with video cassettes (VHS).

For dubbing, digital technology can be seen as having a real future, for at least two reasons:

- sound quality, improved by the analysis and re-synthesis of the actors' voices used for the dubbed version, and by the possibility of retaining the sound effects and music of the original, which can now be isolated from dialogue. An example is the prototype voice compression software *ReelVoice*, developed in the USA by VoxWorks Technologies. Programmes like this allow a dubbed voice to be readily assimilated to that of the original actor, irrespective of the source language, by recording first a sample of the original voice and then the dubbed dialogues. The software matches the first recording with the second, giving the impression that the original actor is speaking the target language with its characteristic intonation patterns.

This sort of cloned voice raises the issue of voice rights, just as the issue of the individual performer's rights over the use of his or her image had to be addressed in the past. Such technology can be used for applications like films (new or restored, for cinema distribution or DVD), advertising (using videos, clips, the telephone or Internet), toys or electronic games and political speeches.

- It will also be possible to improve dubbing by manipulating the original image, for example, by modifying lip movement so as to achieve better synchronisation with the sounds being articulated in the target language.

Another innovation which deserves mention is the creation of virtual characters who look like the real thing thanks to 3D digitalisation. An actor's gestures and facial expressions are cloned so as to produce special visual effects or for Lara Croft-style video games. With an expressive face and perfectly synchronised lips, these virtual characters can even become newsreaders on the Internet, like Ananova, Eve Solal and Kyoto Date. The Franco-German channel Arte currently has a project for replacing subtitled programmes with an animated face whose lips can be easily read by the hard of hearing.

One area where language technologies could be useful is subtitling of multimedia content (films, video games, Japanese animated cartoons, etc.). To date, however, there has been all too little testing and progress in this direction. Examples are the use of speech recognition to produce live subtitles (sports programmes on BBC and Sky), attempts at automatization of intralinguistic subtitles, especially for TV news, and the efforts of researchers like Minako O'Hagan (2003) to test software for translation memory and automatic translation, particularly for subtitling films based on works of fiction which had been previously translated.

The *MUSA* project (*MULTilingual Subtitling of Multimedia content*) should also be mentioned. This is based on documentaries, current affairs programmes and BBC World Service broadcasts. It involves development of a specifically conceived strategy for the different stages of subtitling, involving several types of software (Musa project 2004):

- software for voice recognition which can convert the flow of sounds into a sort of written transcription (English-English), its degree of precision varying according to how easily background noise, music and verbal content can be isolated, and how much vocabulary has been stored in the programme;
- an automatic compression software, using a parallel corpus of transcriptions and subtitles, a table of paraphrases (e.g. in a few years' time → soon) and a series of syntactic rules regarding omission of items like adjectives and adverbs; the purpose of this compression is to generate condensed utterances, with a current success rate above 70%;
- finally, a translation memory software and an automatic translation programme (Systran) for production of subtitles in Greek and French, dialogues or monologues that are segmented into semantic units on the basis of punctuation and parsing. The acceptability of these subtitles is currently rated at 45–55%.

Automatization of this kind reduces working time, but does not do away with the need for someone to edit the final version. Working from the spoken word as opposed to the keyboard nevertheless offers considerable advantages (in economy, productivity and efficient use of technology).

e-title is another project, funded, like *Voice*, by the European Union. Its goal is to demonstrate the potential application of certain currently available computerised tools, with a view to creating largely automatized multilingual content. Other types of software have been tested for functions like speech-to-text transcription, sentence compression, automatic translation, translation memory, electronic corpora and different ways of positioning subtitles (in several languages) on the screen. Their cost-effectiveness has also been assessed. With its five members, it is natural that the *e-title* consortium should be working on various language and translation combinations in this 2-year project (2004–2005): from English into Spanish, Catalan and Czech, as well as from Spanish into Catalan.

When all is said and done, there are two reasons which justify the increasing use of digital technologies in subtitling: increasingly tight deadlines for distribution of extremely varied material, and the cost reduction in language transfer, despite the increasing volume of material for subtitling, as a result of digital TV and DVDs. This threefold constraint (deadlines/costs/volume) obviously creates a challenge in terms of quality requirements. But this is not the brief of the translator alone (cf. section 4.3).

On a global scale, digitalisation will continue to change not only certain technical aspects of the translator's task, but also the relationship between copyright holders and distributors. Those who actually control the circulation of AV products will have greater power than the producers, since no one will want to invest in a project for which there is no guarantee of satisfactory distribution. The same is true of other media sectors, like the printed press. What place will languages, and thus translation, have in the marketing of the future?

The AV scenario is not changing in response to digital technology alone. Other factors contributing to the brisk pace of change in AV are the mergers and alliances among distributors, together with the rapid increase in types of programme available (pay-TV, theme channels, ethnic and local broadcasters, cross-border TV). In a 15-state EU, the number of TV channels increased from 47 in 1989 to over 1500 in 2002. Such changes are already affecting distribution strategies and AV translation, for example, in the use of a lingua franca (English) for sales and exchanges of programmes (section 3). If most AV products (co-products and others) are in English (contract, description or synopsis, dialogue list, etc.), certain forms of automatization will become even more important as language combinations requiring AVT (e.g. transfer from Czech to French) are increasingly superseded by the use of English as a pivot language (i.e. Czech-English-French).

4.2 The challenge of accessibility and reception

Accessibility has for a number of years been a legal and technical issue in various countries, with a view to ensuring that disabled persons can enjoy physical access to transport, facilities and cultural venues (ramps, inclined surfaces, seating, parking, etc.). Recently, accessibility has also become an important issue in the computer and telecommunications industries, the aim being to optimise user-friendliness of software, web sites and other applications. Distribution of AV media is also involved in this trend, since it is important to cater for the needs of user groups such as the deaf. The issue of accessibility is, however, not merely a question of providing for special visual, auditory, motor or cognitive needs; such a view of the issue is far too restrictive in the light of the digital divide, income-related differences in Internet use, and the exclusion of certain sectors of society from access to information. Accessibility means that AV or electronic products and services must be available to all users, irrespective of issues such as where they live, their level of experience, their physical and mental capacity or the configuration of their computer. In the USA, this technological accessibility is specifically addressed in section 508 of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act Amendment. The EU has also been active since 1999 to ensure the development of an information society (action plan adopted in 2000; e-Europe 2000: accessibility of public web sites and their content, etc.). France has had its national Charter of accessibility since 2004, when the first national meeting was held to raise awareness of this issue among different professional categories.

In a sense, the implications of accessibility (in the narrow sense of the term) coincide to a certain extent with those of localisation: in both cases, the aim is to offer equivalent information to different audiences. Advances in language technologies mean that audio-books, set-top boxes, DVDs, tactile communication, sign language interpreting and other systems are now complemented by more recent introductions such as voice recognition and oralized subtitles.

In the UK, the 1996 Broadcasting Act required that 50% of TV programmes should be subtitled for deaf users within ten years of digital programming being introduced. The requirement rose to 80% in 2001, with a concurrent requirement of at least 10% in audiodescription and 5% in sign language. Today, following an EU recommendation, member states have approved a variety of laws along similar lines, confirming previous declarations on equality of status and non-discrimination. By 2010, provision of translation on European screens should gradually increase to satisfy the needs of the hard of hearing and the partially sighted. In some states such as Portugal, this is a considerable challenge, requiring not only appropriate translator training and investments in viewing facilities, but also the involvement of key players such as distributors. In 2004, the European Broadcasting

Union published a report including recommendations for implementation of access to digital TV services and sharing of best practices.

This social dimension of AVT services demands a better knowledge of viewers' needs and reception capacity. Much work remains to be done in this area, in order to ensure that technological progress can best satisfy users' demands and expectations. A number of studies can be mentioned in this respect: a 2000 survey involving viewers of subtitled films in Vienna (Wilder 2004), followed in 2004 by surveys of responses to surtitles among opera-goers in Tampere (Finland) and Vienna and theatre-goers in Valence (France), and an ongoing doctoral dissertation in Tampere on audience response to subtitles in *Bridget Jones' Diary*. While there is relatively little academic research (the studies mentioned above being unpublished, except for a short article by Wilder), some of the slack has been taken up by other forms of research, e.g. commercial and advertising studies based on Audimat, marketing surveys among distributors, feasibility studies involving electronics and telephone companies. User reactions, demands and expectations are thus not totally unknown. However, the example of just one category (the deaf and hard of hearing) and one AVT mode (intralinguistic subtitling) highlights the limitations of current research (Gambier 2003: 174–177).

Estimates on how many people the deaf community comprised in a 15-member EU vary from 4 to 80 million, reflecting the lack of consensus in definition. There are of course varying types and degrees of deafness, which can be congenital or related to factors such as ageing, disease and accidents. Ability to read, understand speech, lip-read or understand signs made with hands and fingers differs, and, as a result, so do communication needs. One ear or both can be affected, and deafness may be total or partial, temporary or permanent. In each case, mastery of language and development of speech can be affected to varying degrees. It is thus hard to generalise about what the deaf and hard of hearing want when they watch TV, a film or a video. Some are intolerant of any background noise like applause; others who cannot read subtitles find that their attention is distracted by sign language. The question thus arises as to how translation can best be adapted to the needs of these audiences, bearing in mind that technology can help target each user group more specifically. How can producers and suppliers of these services make the most informed decision when there is so little reliable research on the subject?

Further examples could be given by examining the case of the blind and partially sighted, or specific needs regarding documentaries (whether for experts or for children). Audiodescription for the former and voice-over or commentaries for the latter could be adapted for these different groups and subgroups if we had better knowledge of their capacities, habits and technological literacy.

The challenge is vast and goes far beyond the customary discussions among translators, more concerned with their problems of linguistic transfer than with the wider effects and functions of their work.

4.3 The challenge of applied research

The AV media certainly play a major linguistic role today, above all in the home, just as school and literature did in the past. However, what has been focused on to date has been mostly the indirect didactic role played by such media. Looking at subtitled programmes, it is as if one were reading the television, not only maintaining or even reinforcing the ability to read but also learning foreign languages by protracted immersion. There is still no research on the possible correlation between the viewing or reading of subtitles and the absence of illiteracy in a given society. Channels like TV5, BBC4 and TV4 nevertheless offer their audiences (intra-linguistic) subtitles, irrespective of the degree of mastery of the language concerned. On the other hand, a number of hypotheses and experiments have focused on the question of whether programmes and films with (interlinguistic) subtitles help viewers assimilate foreign sounds, expressions or accents (Vanderplank 1988, 1990, 1994, Heiss 2000a, Van de Poel and d'Ydewalle 2001, Danan 2004) (29). Other studies have focused on the possible role of subtitles in language acquisition by the deaf and hard of hearing. Finally, some educationalists are strongly in favour of AVT in the initial training of translators (Klerkx 1998, Neves 2004)

Another field of applied research is quality, an issue which has been widely debated in recent years in translation generally but which has not yet prompted much research in AVT, whether as a process or as a finished product (Gottlieb 1997a, Gambier 1999, Soukup and Hodgson 1999, Gummerus and Paro 2001). Quality goes hand in hand with reciprocal cooperation and trust between service providers and their clients. It is the result of a collective and joint effort, although many translators think that they hold the monopoly on quality. Producers, distributors and viewers are also involved, their expectations and demands not necessarily coinciding with the translators' since they are not bound to stem from language considerations or to be based on the written language of the subtitlers (cf. section 3). The social implications of this are important: between the producer or screen writer who does not give a single thought to translated dialogues and the young SMS or chat enthusiast, it will not always be the translator who has the last word – particularly if s/he fails to explain the role s/he should play in cultural mediation and in the development of subtitle users' reading and language learning skills.

Quality is thus defined by both external parameters (linked to viewers' needs and expectations) and intrinsic criteria (linked to such factors as translators' skills, labour organisation and the specific features of the AVT mode). Localisation has

quality assurance thanks to LISA (Localisation Industry Standards Association), the automobile industry has its SAE J2450 quality norms, but the work done to ensure legibility, information content and precision in subtitling has still not led to a code of conduct for AVT (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998, Chiaro this volume).

4.4 The challenge of training

All these challenges should come to a head in training. The AV translator's profile, in terms of skills and behaviour, has already been examined (Gambier 2000). In the intervening years, AVT and translation have become more and more closely linked in the multimedia setting (websites, software, on-line assistance, CD-ROMs, etc.) as the role of multimedia communication has taken on increasing importance. Not only do AVT and translation have to address similar problems (limited space and tight deadlines; multimodality; teamwork based on "half-way" documents, short life span; importance of target user groups), but they also share a number of technical options to upgrade productivity. They must have a recognised place in the curriculum, given the range of applications that the translation of video games (digital games), like localisation of websites, implies (O'Hagan 2004a and 2004b). It is not just a question of conveying dialogues, songs and illustrated items with texts; it is also necessary to translate instruction manuals, on-line assistance, menus and warning messages. Localisation of video games is now a more successful industry than cinema, to such an extent that vocal dubbing of games is in some cases carried out by actors of the calibre of Al Pacino, Sean Connery, Clint Eastwood and Kiefer Sutherland. One of its main features is that the products concerned often borrow from and parody familiar forms of entertainment or story-telling; another is that the products are often created by video game fans, thorough in their attention to details such as vocabulary, style, register and setting. Hence, the importance of testing with users before the product is marketed.

AVT, translation of multimedia products and services, localisation of software, sites and games are all part of a major training challenge. Cooperation with journalism courses, proposed in the early 1990s (Gambier 1994b: 76–77), would certainly not be an inappropriate way to address this challenge. Translators and journalists both work with written and oral media, raising social and cultural implications which go far beyond the immediate production of utterances. Both professional categories need an aptitude for documentary and terminological research; both are increasingly dependent on their ability to interact and work side by side with other experts. Joining forces for training purposes would be mutually enriching: translators-localisers-editors could learn much from the communicative effectiveness of journalists, who in turn could benefit from the quality and precision of expression required in translation. Journalists are, after all, increasingly required to sight-

translate or summarise texts (especially in English). In both cases, learning a working method is more important than acquiring knowledge which will quickly date; in both cases, autonomous decision-making and self-assessment are fundamental.

5. Towards a conclusion

The selection of references in this paper is admittedly questionable. The intention was not to be exhaustive, but to look at how the domain of AVT can be positioned, in which directions it is developing or not developing (corpus research, comparative analysis of AVT modes, historical study of AVT, the implications of having English as both pivot and source language, socio-cultural implications of AVT for a minority, linguistic effects of each AVT mode, AVT and AV genres, etc.). A chronological presentation might have been preferred, but this would have made it more difficult to clearly highlight directions and trends. Suffice it to note that the number of entries for AVT in Bitra's data-base² was 452 for the period 1991–2000, i.e. 4.3% of all entries for the decade concerned, as compared to 1.3% for the 1980s and 0.7% for the 1970s.

AVT is an expanding and changing research domain. It is still certainly far too focused on translated AV products, failing to perceive the possible broader implications of AVT in terms of linguistic policy and socio-cultural behaviour (section 4.2) in a world which is increasingly dependent on images. The discipline is also certainly fragmented, both in organisation and in the scope of research undertaken, reflecting and perpetuating as it does the minor role which TS continues to play in the overall understanding of contemporary communication. This twofold observation means that the role and power of the cultural mediators who provide AVT are still not properly recognised, although on-screen communication plays an increasingly conspicuous role in our daily lives.

In the current media scenario, there is a transfer of power under way, from media owners to distributors and professionals who manipulate the multiple codes. Translators are part of this new group but do not yet realise what this implies or recognise its full effects. In a way, they tend to freeze in reaction to technological innovations, dismissing them with the usual arguments about culture, quality and language. Their reluctance to embrace change, understandable though it may be, is certainly not the best way to take up all the challenges which have been examined in this overview, nor to ensure that the importance of linguistic transfer in AV is fully acknowledged.

(Translated from French by Peter Mead and revised by Jackie Välimäki)

2. Base edited by Franco Javier http://www.ua.es/dfing/tra_int/bitra_en.htm.

PART 1

Electronic databases and corpora

ICT approaches

Forlìx 1 – The Forlì Corpus of Screen Translation

Exploring macrostructures

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Forlìx 1 (Forlì Corpus of Screen Translation) is an ongoing project of the University of Bologna's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Translation, Languages and Cultures, for the collection and study of data pertaining to film translation. After a brief summary of the main characteristics of the data base tools and of the ways data can be retrieved, the problem of a necessary methodological refinement will be tackled. In particular, the present contribution will aim to define a methodology for the comparison of original and dubbed versions of Italian and German films, through statistical analysis and discussion of macrostructures pertaining to peculiar linguistic and communicative occurrences. This will eventually help make the case for emphasizing the difference and higher reliability of such an approach compared to simple case studies.

Keywords: multimedia database, empirical research, dubbing, corpus linguistics, contrastive studies

1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is a relatively new area of academic research, and has gradually emerged as an independent research topic within the broader context of translation studies (Gambier 2003, 2004a). As a new multi-faceted field of scientific investigation, including different translation modalities, it has become apparent that the methodologies used in translation studies cannot be altogether transferred to this field and that, consequently, new methodologies have to be devised in order to mirror technical constraints and peculiarities of this new form of linguistic transfer (Chaume 2004a). To this end, a thorough analysis of sufficiently extensive audiovisual data is needed to account for systematic similarities and/or differences

in the dubbing process. Moreover, just as translation studies have significantly benefited from the development of translation corpora (Baker 1995, Ulrych 2001), audiovisual translation can similarly take advantage of organized collections of data available in their aural and visual entirety for scientific observation.

The present contribution will set out to present the recent developments of the Forlixt 1 (Forli Corpus of Screen Translation) project of the University of Bologna's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Translation, Languages and Cultures.¹ First, a brief overview of the main characteristics of the data base tools and of the ways data can be retrieved will be specifically tackled. Second, a description of data annotation methods and problems will be provided, with particular regard to the issue of the annotation of suprasegmental elements. Third, exhaustive hit lists concerning specific linguistic and communicative features will allow us to infer sound and accurate generalisations about the regularities (and peculiarities) of speech translation strategies. In so doing, a possibility will thus be offered to define a methodology for the comparison of original and dubbed versions of Italian and German films, through the analysis and discussion of macrostructures relating to peculiar linguistic and communicative occurrences.²

2. Forlixt 1 – The corpus

Forlixt 1 is essentially a corpus or, in other words: An electronic collection of audiovisual material (films) and transcripts of film dialogues/subtitles allowing the user to retrieve data through dedicated query tools, and to display concordances with both in their textual and audiovisual support.

One major benefit of Forlixt 1 is that the combination of audiovisual and textual data permits the user to access primary data for scientific investigation, and thus no longer exclusively to rely on pre-processed material such as traditional annotated transcriptions. As Heritage (1995) affirms, transcription, whatever the technique employed and despite the controversial issue of the representation of orality through a written medium, is inevitably carried out according to the transcriber's specific point of view, as well as in accordance with the purposes of his/her particular research, representing *de facto* a biased approach to empirical observation.

1. Forlixt 1 has been developed by Christine Heiss, Marcello Soffritti, Cristina Valentini (database design and corpus construction), Piero Conficoni (software engineering) and Sabrina Linardi (data entry and scene indexing).

2. I would like to personally thank the two referees who helped me structure this paper and add consistency to the text.

With this regard, Forlixt 1 can be positioned at the crossroads of traditional speech corpora, that is corpora that give access to audiovisual registrations in their entirety, and spoken corpora, i.e. collections made up of transcribed material from original video-recordings (Zanettin, unpublished paper). The innovation this feature introduces and the fact that this study will predominantly be centred on a descriptive and contrastive translation-oriented approach motivate our choice to adopt a literal method of transcription, naturalizing spoken discourse and actually producing a *verbatim* of film dialogues that will permit the user to conduct full-text queries on the whole transcribed corpus.³ Moreover, this database relies upon flexible and scalable architecture that will be gradually implemented so that the textual corpus can be queried at different levels and with different purposes. In effect, the system will allow us to associate different sets of textual information to audiovisual data, thus making it possible in the future for the database to feature specific annotation rules for filmic adaptation, Conversational Analysis transcription techniques (Bazzanella 1994) as well as tagging standards such as TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) for a more thorough processing of lexical, grammatical and syntactic information.

Forlixt is at present composed of 30 films, 7 of which are original Italian products, another 7 are German and 2 are French full-length films, including the complete transcription of film dialogues. The corpus currently amounts to approximately 51 hours of fully transcribed audiovisual material (equivalent to about 300,000 words).⁴ When compared to other Italian spoken corpora, Forlixt, although still in its infancy, has already paralleled the most important corpora of spoken Italian. As a matter of fact, the LIP corpus (Spoken Italian Frequency Lexicon) gathers data for an overall amount of about 500,000 words; BADIP (Database of Spoken Italian) similarly reaches 500,000 words, whereas CIR (the Frequency Lexicon of Radio Broadcast News for Italian) and the Television Italian Corpus respectively contain around 250,000 words each. It should be noted, however, that, these are not generally multimedia corpora, but spoken corpora in the sense previously described. The specific issue of representativeness of multimedia corpora has been tackled more in detail by Heiss and Soffritti (2005), and Valentini (2007).

3. The possibility of conducting *full text* queries is offered by the choice of MS SQL2005™ as software engineering language and of a server side database, encompassing two specific options: on the one hand, it allows the researcher to conduct *full text* queries and to retrieve textual information; on the other, it allows for the management and processing of structured data through a network of interrelated tables. Moreover, MS SQL2005™ has been selected in that it offers high structural performances and integrates a customizable option permitting the combination of queries on the textual corpus as well as on structured data.

4. Updated to June 2006.

The main features of Forlixt 1 satisfy most of the requirements generally acknowledged to be of importance in translational corpora used in traditional bidirectional comparable studies (Zanettin 2001). They can be summarized as follows: parallel, multidirectional, reciprocal, comparable, bilingual, dialogue-based, “made up of spoken language.” However, the latter feature needs further discussion. Film dialogue cannot be properly considered as a variety of spoken language due to the particular conditions in which it is produced. In most of the cases, it is to be regarded as a particular form of “written to be spoken as if not written” language variety (Gregory and Carroll 1978). Film dialogues are in fact essentially hybrid by their very nature since they are often written by scriptwriters to reproduce spontaneous speech and natural face-to-face conversation. The success or failure of this attempt depends on the power of observation of filmmakers, but also on their idiosyncrasies and the impact they want to achieve on the public. Be this as it may, the final product should by and large reflect the norms and rules characterising oral speech in order to capture and retain the public’s attention. The resulting scripts are then performed by actors. In this process, dialogues are once more changed and adapted to the constraints of *real* interactions and further enriched with an array of paralinguistic features (mimics, body language, prosody) which help construct the full meaning of the film.

3. The Database: General architecture

The present section provides a very general overview of the technical characteristics of the database with particular focus on the browsing system. For more extensive considerations regarding Forlixt software design, data entry and audiovisual data encoding, see Linardi and Valentini forthcoming.

Two distinct databases, one for storage of multimedia material and one for textual data, comprise the Forlixt architecture, both of which are Web-based systems, in the sense that they allow us to insert and retrieve data through a Web interface.⁵ The database (Figure 1) can thus be searched via an *html* interface, applying a possible preliminary filter to restrict the corpus, by pre-selecting a portion of it according to one or more of the following criteria: film title, language, genre, director, dubbed/original versions. These criteria can also be further combined using the Boolean operator AND. Alternatively, the user can opt for a free-text

5. Forlixt 1 is currently available at the following address: <http://forlixt/homepage.asp>. For copyright reasons, the database has restricted access and is protected by password.

search or a guided search. Having decided to enter a free-text search query (*full text* search type), the database allows to further restrict the domain by selecting:

1. dialogues and subtitles;
2. just dialogues;
3. just subtitles;
4. entering the word or string of words searched (selecting the *full word* or *any part of word* option).

At this point, the system displays an array of textual occurrences where the query is highlighted (KWIC format). The user can choose to analyse the hit list, as s/he would do with a normal table of concordances, or choose to view the scenes in selected multimedia pages. These pages show the video segment identified more specifically, the transcription of spoken discourse and provide the option to view the video shot of this scene in one of the different language versions (available) of the same film and to view the corresponding video shot and the relative transcription.

The other search utility is the guided search or the search by attribute.

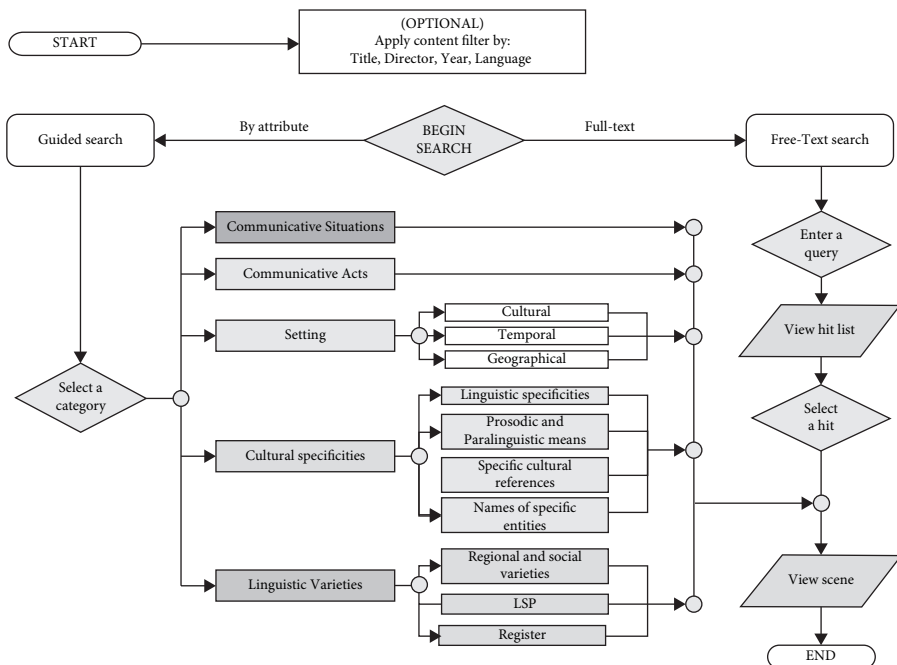


Figure 1. Browsing system

Once an appropriate domain has been selected, it is possible to choose one category out of the tree inventory used to annotate the corpus. In particular, categories can be clustered into four main groups:

1. Pragmatic categories (communicative acts and situations);
2. Encyclopaedic categories (temporal, geographical and cultural setting);
3. Linguistic-cultural categories (linguistic specificities, prosodic and paralinguistic tools, specific cultural references, names of specific entities);
4. Linguistic varieties (regional and social varieties, LSPs, register).

Each of these first-level labels actually represent a *macro-category* or, as it is called by software engineers, a *node* to which an unlimited number of second-level labels, called *leaves* or *attributes* can be assigned. For instance the path labelled *cultural specificities>prosodic and paralinguistic means* contains the labels *specific prosody, mimics and facial expressions, body language*. From a technical perspective, this tree can be modified at will, allowing the researcher to customise the investigation of the corpus by marking up cultural, communicative and linguistic items to which s/he assigns importance for the purposes of his/her research. As a consequence, each of these macro-categories may in turn contain an array of sub-categories and a whole set of specific labels that can be constantly enlarged and rearranged according to the specific needs that arise during the data annotation process and the specific features of a given genre.

Some examples are now provided for each of the above groups:

1. Pragmatic categories include communicative situations and communicative acts. Communicative situations are situations characterized by a prototypical location in which a scene unfolds and which often features predictable patterns of behaviours of characters, linguistic conventions and formulae.⁶ Such a list is constantly enlarged and strictly depends on the genre of films treated. It presently includes film *topoi*, such as *court hearing, declaration of love, argument, shooting, robbery, police interrogation*. Communicative acts have been selected according to the classical definition of Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969). Similarly to communicative situations, the list of communicative acts cannot be regarded as exhaustive and currently includes speech acts, such as *to agree, to apologise, to challenge, to bid farewell, to give instructions, to inquire, to insult, to mock, to persuade, to reassure, to refuse, to threaten, to curse, to urge, etc.*

6. Prototypical communicative situations are nonetheless often altered by filmmakers willing to attain a specific goal, i.e. humour, alienation, surprise, fear, or simply as a strategy of film narration and plot structuring. Nonetheless, this subversion does not prevent the researcher from identifying them since it originates from the alteration of widespread schemes and as such may be considered all the more significant for the observation of translational processes and strategies.

2. The second group includes encyclopaedic categories, such as temporal and geographical setting, which often cling to non-verbal elements of film narration. In particular, these labels are applied to scenes in which visuals (location, clothes, etc.) and acoustic effects (soundtrack, etc.) evoke a country-specific setting and time or age. The cultural setting macro-category comprises instead labels that identify recurrent themes or topics in films related to historic events, movements, facts, society (*the war in ex-Yugoslavia, labour movement of the 70s, mafia, patriarchal family, juvenile delinquency, etc.*). Here, too, labels in this second group are potentially infinite.

3. The third group clusters hybrid linguistic-cultural categories,⁷ i.e. linguistic specificities, prosodic and paralinguistic tools, specific cultural references, names of specific entities, each of which contains a third-level set of labels used to describe the verbal correlate, as well as the paraverbal and kinetic features that accompany it. The *linguistic specificities* category comprises *figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, linguistic formulae in specific situations, official announcements, verbal humour, terms of address, terms of endearment, discourse markers, stock/pet phrases, interjections/onomatopoeia, abbreviations/acronyms*. Sometimes descriptors may seem to overlap one another as is the case with *discourse markers* and *interjections/onomatopoeia*, and to some extent with *verbal humour* and *figures of speech*. The reason for keeping both labels lies within the fact that translation contrastive description can be carried out with different purposes and under different viewpoints. In order not to limit the many approaches that can be applied to analysis as well as long-standing classification systems, it was thus established that for some linguistic phenomena a double classification, i.e. pragmatic and grammatical, was to be retained. Plus, to date, in the corpus, traditional POS tagging methods are not applied in the *full-text* search. The macro-category *prosodic and paralinguistic tools* features *specific prosody, body language, and mimics and facial expressions* for which a deeper analysis of their application methods is conducted in the next section. The label *specific cultural references* gathers together labels which hint at different types of intertextual references or references to a speaker's encyclopaedia, as well as cultural innuendos, i.e. *allusions, quotes, maxims, aphorisms, proverbs, songs, lyrics/rhymes, ethnic jokes, cultural stereotypes*. Finally, the last macro-category of this group, names of specific entities, includes descriptors that refer to citations of specific cultural entities, like *famous people and characters*,

7. Unlike previous groups, the list of the labels of these last two groups can almost be regarded as conclusive. With the exception of some re-arrangement of the tree hierarchy or re-designation of labels, fewer changes are likely to be made in the future.

*names of places, patronymics, hierarchies, trade and cultural products, education, holidays and festivities, sports, currency and measures, etc.*⁸

4. The last group deals specifically with the sociolinguistic description of variation from a diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic point of view. Labels have been added to scenes with the aim to account for *regional and social varieties*, i.e. *ethnic variety, regiolect, dialect, sociolect, jargon, idiolect, lingua franca, language spoken by non-native speakers*. Again, each category comprises a set of more detailed labels to annotate specific phenomena. For instance, the category *jargon* needs further specification, according to the group of users and/or field of reference: i.e. *young people, army, mafia, football, etc.*, as well as the category *dialect* for which different national dialects need to be identified (Italian: Sicilian, Tuscan, etc.; German: Koelsch, etc.). The second set of categories includes languages for special purposes (LSPs), which again requires a more detailed classification of fields, i.e. *medicine, bureaucracy, law, advertising, finance/economy, politics/trade unions, etc.* This label has been applied to scenes in which specific terminology and syntax were used. Finally, register variation has been accounted for by providing a sub-list of attributes, which so far include *formal, vulgar, colloquial/sub-standard, diachronic variant*, as well as language-specific labels used to pinpoint the differentiation and distribution of French registers in contrast with Italian and German, which has eventually led to the introduction of labels such as *language familier/populaire* and *argot/verlan* (Elefante 2004).

A number of advantages can be directly associated with the use of such a database for academic purposes. One major benefit lies in the immediate availability of macro and micro information at the query stage. Corpus data can be filtered according to a pre-established inventory of categories. In addition, it is possible to find information at a micro-level, that is to explore each phraseological or textual unit – words or strings of words – and to analyse their occurrences in their linguistic co-text, as well as in their multimedia context. Finally, the verbal message is always integrated with multimedia information of a visual, situational and auditory nature, thus allowing the researcher to interface the verbal and discursive information with the multimedia context.

8. Some of these phenomena were first classified by Antonini (2005) with regard to the subtitling process under the name of “lingua-cultural drops”.

4. Methods of analysis: How to investigate the link between linguistic data and the multimedia context

From its very beginning, audiovisual translation research has mainly relied upon a case-studies approach. Nowadays, digital technology and many recent developments in computational linguistics offer the possibility of accessing multilingual audiovisual material in a contrastive way, of which Forlixt 1 represents one recent experience. Nevertheless, as Zanettin (unpublished paper) summarizes at the end of his presentation of currently available multimedia corpora tools, quantitative analysis in this field cannot be exclusively based on formal features of transcribed texts (i.e. lexical and syntactic tagging), but should instead refer to semi-manually annotated analytical categories. Accordingly, multimedia corpora should satisfy specific requirements of codification and representation, by adopting a format aimed at fostering data readability and exchangeability, and applying labelling standards consistent with the purposes of the research in question. To conduct quantitative analyses on audiovisual translation strategies, it is therefore necessary to process and compare occurrences of categories that can refer both to lexical and syntactic items of dialogues, as well as to the whole meaning that can be inferred from the surrounding non-verbal elements co-occurring in the filmic sequence. This method allows the researcher to apply a qualitative filter at the data annotation stage and subsequently analyze statistical instances of isolated phenomena. The specific methodology adopted for the annotation of this corpus is based on this rationale. Nonetheless, a distinction is to be made between categories that can be applied to scenes characterised by the presence of particular linguistic phenomena which help construct the verbal meaning of the text (*idiomatic expressions, linguistic formulae used in specific situations*) or which hint at specific cultural items (clustered under the category *names of specific entities*) and categories that strictly depend on audiovisual support, i.e. *prosody, body language* and *facial expressions/mimics*. With this regard, two distinct approaches have been adopted to account for these specific features. The label *prosody* has been considered for tagging scenes that showed a significant deviation from a prosody considered as prototypical in relation to a given communicative situation, and/or in which some prosodic elements, such as onomatopoeic expressions, replace the verbal correlate or add a specific meaning to the utterance, also in combination with some grammatical elements. In Italian films, this is the case of interjections which, if associated to a particular intonation, often replace short answers, remarks, comments, such as *yes, no, ok*, etc., or which, if placed at the beginning or end of an utterance, modify or reinforce its perlocutionary effect. The same can also apply to other grammatical parts of the sentence, such as adjectives, verbs and nouns. Another example of prosodic phenomena worth noting is provided by prosodic loans found

in some films, for example in the German version of the Italian film *Mimi metalurgico ferito nell'onore* (Lina Wertmüller 1971) where the peculiar regiolectal intonation of Italian actors has been imitated by German dubbing actors probably as part of general strategies aimed at retaining the specific Italian cultural setting (Heiss 2000b).

The category of *body language* is attributed to scenes where body language elements create the verbal meaning *ex novo*. To give an example, in *Nordrand/Periferia Nord* (Barbara Albert 1999), Jasmin is packing her things to leave her family's home for ever. Just as she is about to leave, her brother René gives her a letter from her father. She takes the letter but René stands in front of her for a while as if he would like to get something for his service. In the original German version, the disappointment of Jasmin is verbalised using the expression 'Was is'? *Ksch*'. On the contrary, in the Italian version, she does not verbalize her refusal/dismissal, but says *ssh* and raises her hand backwards as if to suggest something like 'go away'. René understands her reproach and leaves. Body language and mimics are thus the vehicles of the communicative act and replace the linguistic expression, which is conveyed only through the culturally-connoted onomatopoeic expression *ssh*.

5. Examples of macrostructures

Having clarified some major methodological aspects, we will now show how it is possible to substantiate traditional qualitative observation with empirical data for the investigation of dubbing strategies. This first study will be anchored to the analysis of categories which more consistently than others tend to show the potential associated with the use of a multimedia database of this kind, namely *prosody*, *body language* and *discourse markers*. These categories are in fact to a broader extent associated with the non-verbal elements of the situation, that is to say, to what the user sees or perceives from the scene, and tend consequently to combine verbal support with non-verbal aspects of film grammar (linguistic code, musical code, iconographic code, photographic code, mobility codes, graphic and syntactic codes, etc.).⁹

The data which follow have been retrieved via the guided search described previously by selecting some specific labels. The results of the analysis we are about to discuss are not complete or finalized yet; they are being proposed nonetheless in order to exemplify the methodology and procedure we have adopted.

9. Cf. Chaume (2004) for a more conclusive list of cinematographic codes which have a bearing on the verbal production.

For the purposes of the present section, the term “macrostructure”, as opposed to “microstructure” described in detail by Heiss and Soffritti (this volume), means any pattern, and subsequent statistical representation, derived from the selection and combination of categories used to annotate multimedia data. Here the concept of macrostructure differs from the traditional meaning assigned to it by text linguistics in that it is applied to larger chunks (scenes) which are the outcome of segmentation of audiovisual texts. In this process, segmentation is subject to a number of technical constraints concerning the need to electronically deal with both audiovisual and textual data, specific film editing constraints and readability of scenes in relation to annotated phenomena. As a consequence, data presented hereinafter will be analysed with a macrostructural focus, that is to say on the basis of categories assigned to scenes, in contrast with the microstructural approach retained by Heiss and Soffritti in the analysis of lexical and phraseological units.

In the category of prosody, it has been observed that original Italian films show a higher number of annotated prosodic elements, especially if compared with original German films (Figure 2).

The same trend can be seen for the *body language* category (Figure 3), as well as, predictably, for the *facial expressions/mimics* category. This means that a careful description of dubbing strategies, in particular with Italian being retained as the source language, should not overlook the impact of kinetic elements and peculiarities of pitch, intonation and prosodic rhythm, on the meaning of dialogic interaction and overall film discourse. Similarly, the choice of a specific dubbing strategy depends on a careful assessment on the part of the translator of the importance of all these elements, whose understanding significantly depends also on the interplay of shots, their organization and editing. A one-to-one translation of lines in order to look for specific and recurrent translational behaviour is therefore not recommended. Instead, the researcher would benefit from the exploration of the translated text in its overall context, going beyond single lines and embracing the more exhaustive cinematographic concept of the “scene”. This may seem obvious, especially if we consider that most of the films in the database can be ascribed to the genre of comedy, however it is nevertheless worth noting that German dubbed versions of Italian films present a higher proportion of scenes where paralinguistic means affect the overall communicative function of discourse in respect to a comparable sample of original German films. This finding can give rise to a series of questions as far as the assessment of the dubbed product is concerned. For instance, if there is a scene in an Italian film where a great number of elements of body language exist and this scene is to be dubbed into German, should there be any compensatory strategies in German at the verbal level? If so, do these strategies mirror the author(s)’s intention to adhere to target language, and therefore

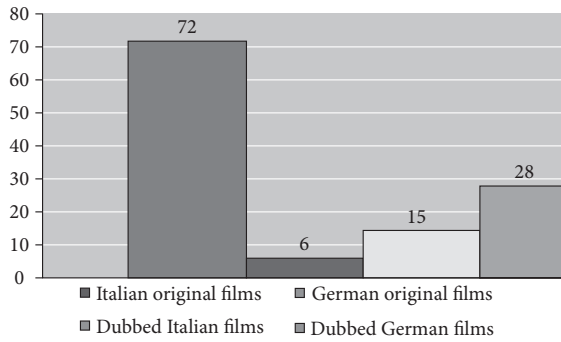


Figure 2. Distribution of the category *prosody* in the corpus

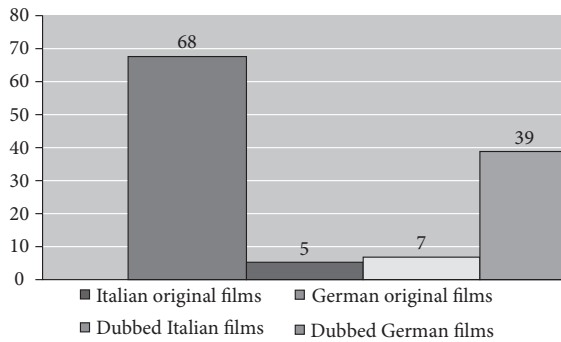


Figure 3. Distribution of the category *body language* in the corpus

cultural norms? To what extent can we safely speak of a foreignizing or domesticating method being applied?¹⁰

Using these remarks as a starting point, it is possible to outline some further research questions by taking into account the distribution of the label *prosody* in each pair of original/dubbed films (Figure 4):

	Lola corre	Donne senza trucco	Good bye Lenin!	Caro diario	Nordrand	Storie di ragazzi	Mimi	La stazione	Caruso
IT	3	4	3	12	4	2	20	7	17
DE	4	2	0	10	0	2	2	0	7

Figure 4. Distribution of *prosody* among original and dubbed films

10. See Venuti (1995).

1. With some films, like *Caro Diario* (1993 Nanni Moretti) and *Storie di ragazzi e di ragazze* (1989 Pupi Avati), almost all prosodic elements are preserved in the dubbed German version (12:10 and 2:2). However, because, as we have observed in the previous table, original German films are usually poorer in prosodic elements, what effects do these elements produce in dubbed films? How do they influence the verbal level? Are they the result of specific translation strategies of addition/compensation, or do they represent an exotic element that contributes to culturally connoting a film setting?

2. Other films, on the contrary, like *La Stazione* (Sergio Rubini, 1990) and *Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (Lina Wertmüller, 1972) lose many of their prosodic features if translated into German, and all the more so when they occur together with a specific idiolect and regiolect. Perhaps, this loss of information in dubbing is inevitable and if so, possible compensation strategies at other levels need to be considered (Heiss 2000).

3. Vice versa, if we look more closely at the direction of translating from German into Italian, it is clear that many German films dubbed into Italian, such as *Good Bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), *Abgeschminkt* (Katja Von Garnier, 1993) and *Nordrand* (Barbara Albert, 1999), are richer in prosodic elements even with respect to the original films.

According to these first results, the Italian adopted in dubbed German films is closer to spontaneous speech than it is generally thought to be. Two reasons can be given to explain this trend: on one hand, this could simply be associated to prominent characteristics in Italian in terms of prosody and intonation; on the other, it could be the result of specific crystallized translational conventions and thus domestication strategies.

To further substantiate these research hypotheses, let us examine the joint distribution of prosody/discourse markers. From the first chart (Figure 5), we see that as far as original versions are concerned, Italian films comprise a greater number of prosodic elements, as previously observed.

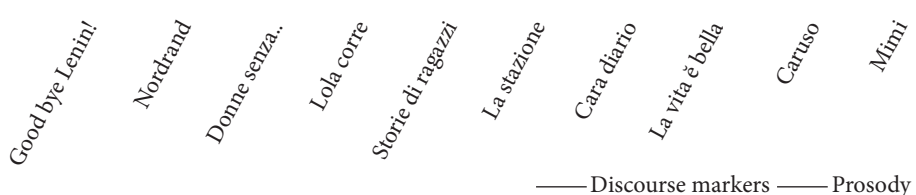


Figure 5. Joint distribution of the category *prosody* and *discourse markers* in original films

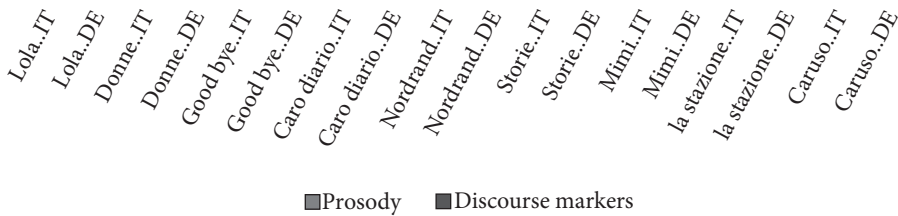


Figure 6. Joint distribution of *prosody* and *discourse markers* in original and dubbed films

By comparing original films and dubbed versions (Figure 6), we observe that in the translation from Italian into German, even dubbed German films show, if not the same proportion, at least a relevant number of discourse markers (Nadiani 1996).¹¹ On the contrary, in German films their presence was not so high. Is this the result of a “cultural adaptation” of prosody to body language which is considered to be overwhelmingly and above all culture-specific? And what repercussions does it have in terms of reception? Does it represent a linguistic and cultural stereotype or a stereotypical way to conceive and connote a certain film genre?

All these research issues need to be substantiated with further data as well as further generalizations. Nevertheless, they represent an important step forward to show how from a still tentative study of empirical audiovisual data, we may arrive at inferring translational routines and strategies at work in the dubbing process.

6. Conclusions

The present paper has dealt with some methodological considerations on the possible uses of Forlixt 1 as an instrument to access empirical AV data and to infer generalisations about dubbing strategies and patterns of AV constructs. In this respect, the results of a first statistical study conducted on the whole corpus at a macro-structural level have been presented for discussion. The findings show some interesting trends regarding the occurrence of significant communicative and paralinguistic elements, namely prosody, body language and discourse markers, which more significantly than others, are situation-oriented and mainly dependent on the meaning of the multimedia context.

11. The English translation “discourse markers” is herein used to refer both to the Italian grammatical category of “segnali discorsivi” (Renzi *et al.* 1995, Bazzanella 2001) and the German category of “Modalpartikeln” (Heinrich and Heiss 2001, Thurmair 1989), together with an array of other linguistic items used conversationally at the beginning and end of an utterance.

Forlixt 1 – The Forlì Corpus of Screen Translation

Exploring Microstructures

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This paper will complete and conclude the Forlixt presentation, linking with that of Cristina Valentini in this volume. In a bank of multimodal and multilingual data about film dialogues the methodology for extracting and analyzing data differs fundamentally from the approaches which have to date been applied to corpora of written texts. In addition to the methods and examples used for a macrostructural analysis which Valentini's paper has already stressed, we show all the aspects of research that are possible on a microstructural level through a complex system of tagging which can be combined with a free text search. In particular, the potential for microstructural analysis is fully apparent when linguistic information is linked with iconic, aural and situational details accessible from video clips. We will thus present an analysis (contrasting Italian with German) which relates to a discourse element closely connected with the pragmatic aspect of communication in diverse situations. The different stages of analysis have the aim not only of broadening knowledge about one specific case, but chiefly to illustrate one of a number of possible ways in which dialogue can be studied. As well as indicating differences and similarities between the linguistic and pragmatic structure of the two languages, the system allows for a focus on all the problems that characterize the strategies for translations and adaptations. Finally, we will also give examples of how to seek out clues, on a diachronic level, about the appearance and disappearance of linguistic phenomena, which may at the same time refer back to semiotic codes according to the relative social and ethnocultural context.

Keywords: multimedia data bases, screen translation, contrastive linguistics, corpus tagging, query interfaces

* M. Soffritti is responsible for pp.1–6, Christine Heiss for pp. 6–18 of this article.

1. New patterns in exploring microstructures

In this paper our aim is to show what can be analysed at a microstructural level using Forlixt 1 and to illustrate how to work with this system. Due to the complexity of the subject and the limited space available, we are providing only selected examples of descriptive, contrastive and combined analysis at a microstructural level. Thanks to the flexibility of the system, it is also possible to visualise a number of alternative approaches and analytical models, the methodology of which has yet to be fully explored. In particular, ideas which have to date been devised for work on parallel bidirectional corpora (as for example in Zanettin 2001) have been modified and extended to fully utilize audiovisual elements directly linked to textual and communicative segments which have been specifically tagged. We can see that this not only allows a step forward but, as has already occurred with spoken language corpora, it also results in a new and autonomous working environment and research field, with its own specific rules and regulations. One aspect of these innovations may be compared to a certain extent with what has been illustrated within a multimodal corpus (Taylor 2004).

In general, we propose to draw substantial descriptive insights from all the instances in which linguistic structures interact very closely with the aural, visual, spatial and situational elements within a scene. The 'direct' experience of a communicative situation observed in an audio-visual clip is not merely an opportunity to resolve ambiguities in the sequence of verbal communication. Rather, it is a possible starting point for a series of new operative hypotheses which are not as easy to develop when utilising a straightforward transcription. Thus this database will provide new kinds of data which will enable us to answer to intricate questions constantly posed and rarely treated in an empirical way. Finally, it will provide a starting point toward further theoretical approaches.

1.1 Words, dialogue and prosody

One of the first new findings derives simply from prosodic tags (see Valentini, this volume). Thanks to annotation to prosodic aspects, scenes which are particularly significant in terms of intonation, regional dialects and sociolects can be selected and compared. On a number of occasions, German dubbing imitates the prosody of the original Italian dialogue, producing a foreignizing effect. Many examples of this are in scenes which are deliberately 'folkloristic' in tone, noted particularly in the German version of *Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (Lina Wertmüller, 1972,

'*Mimi, in seiner Ehre gekränk't*'), but also in certain parts of *Caro Diario* (Nanni Moretti, 1993, *Liebes Tagebuch*), confirming what Heiss discussed in 2000b.¹

A German audience is supposed to accept a 'foreign' prosody especially in scenes involving heightened emotions (thus occasionally creating a grotesque effect). However, this foreignizing prosody in most cases affects only the intonation curve and does not alter either the way vowels and consonants are articulated or the correct use of accent for words and sentences. Furthermore we can verify in sequences of dialogue dubbed in German whether such culturally foreignizing effects are related also to retained original Italian words or other features such as sound, writing, etc. and which words are involved. At this stage, it is possible to check any anomalies in the intonation in scenes more generally classified as belonging to the area of close interaction. From such an analysis it is apparent that, at least in the films processed so far, this imitation does not occur in situations where there is not much theatricality: innuendoes, teasing, offering of condolences and other situations, despite an equal amount of cultural and emotional connotation, in the German dubbing take on a 'domesticated' prosody.

In addition, the Forlirt 1 system helps to describe how accents are generally treated (i.e. those characteristics of pronunciation which signify ethnic, national and cultural groups). This is the case of potential neutralization through the process of dubbing in this specific pair of languages (that is, German accents, including social and regional variations, when dubbed into Italian, and Italian accents when dubbed into German). Furthermore second generation ethnic² dialects, spoken for example by young Turkish or Arabic immigrants, will be perceived and assessed differently in accordance to the cultural relationship deriving from stereotyping and experiences of German and Italian audiences. All this can only be investigated when scenes are studied alongside each other and can in some way be referenced through index systems or other methods of labelling (such as by the name of a character, by a scene or by a cultural reference within an inventory of categories).

1. Retained Italian expressions in German dubbed dialogues are typically, among others: allocations, valedictions, names of dishes and drinks, exclamations, insults, names of places and short formulae. They are often incorrectly pronounced and uttered in a foreign accent.

2. We refer here to "tertiäre Ethnolekte", as defined by Dürscheid 2003.

2. Approaches towards the classification of discourse markers

Forlixt 1 also opens up the potential for a vast, large scale, in-depth research of discourse markers.³ For the linguistic-cultural classification (descriptive and contrastive) of a topic that is still the subject of much debate, we initially propose a **bottom-up** approach. Although not without complications, this tagging system offers a way to extract a complete list of the occurrences of words or parts of words which the user requests. As the paper by Valentini (this volume) explains, this list is then viewable as a page of 'hits' according to the KWIC standard. Apart from this established use of concordance (or KWIC results), we are also able to obtain information which is fundamental to clarify the linguistic and pragmatic status of individual discourse markers, in that it verifies:

- a. how they relate to other linguistic and pragmatic categories contained in the same scene;
- b. which distributional patterns can be gathered from the complete list of occurrences;
- c. how they relate to audiovisual factors;
- d. how the corresponding dialogues are formulated in the dubbed version (language B);
- e. starting with the original dialogues in language B, the way in which the corresponding elements in the dubbed versions (language A) are used.

Obviously one could also adopt a **top down** approach, utilizing as a starting point one or more of the pragmlinguistic categories offered by a menu-guided search according to pre-established categories. As shown in Figure 1, these categories are available within the appropriate menu.

For example, searching within the *speech acts* category and selecting the sub-category *valediction*, we can access a general list of all the scenes which contain some form of saying goodbye, and using this as a basis we are then able to establish which elements recur in selected scenes in both languages, in relation to lexis and prosody as well as related facial expressions and gestures. However, a top down approach reveals its limitations in relation to the tagging system and the catalogue of categories presently used. In the case of Forlixt 1, it has been necessary to reach a sensible compromise between a traditional tagging system with pre-established linguistic-pragmatic labels, and the limitless catalogue which would have been necessary to include visual cues, such as clothes, posture, hair-styles and other accessories, and all the unique nuances of intonation, gestures and body language in every culture.

3. We do not offer, for reasons of space, a conclusive definition of this category, and we wish simply to affirm that certain linguistic elements can be tagged, both as interjections and as discourse markers (Cf. Bazzanella 1994, Renzi *et al.* 1995).



Figure 1. Tree of categories for guided search

This compromise does not necessarily signify a weakness. The nuances and details not catalogued may still be retrieved in further combinations of analytical steps: from single lexical items to concordancing, from search filters to scenes, from scenes to dialogues, from the original to the dubbed version and so on. The following example proceeds in just such a manner.

3. “dai” as a discourse marker

The Italian discourse marker *dai* was explored, initially by making use only of the Italian films currently contained within the corpus: *Caro Diario*, *Caruso Paskoski di padre polacco* (Francesco Nuti, 1988), *La stazione* (Sergio Rubini, 1990), *La vita è bella* (Roberto Benigni, 1997), *Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore*, *Storia di ragazzi e di ragazze* (Pupi Avati, 1989).

Our initial observations deriving from single ‘hits’, indicate that *dai* very often occurs as a form of the verb *dare* or as a preposition combined with the plural

masculine definite article. The first selection was carried out by using a preliminary filter, utilizing the general tree of attributes. By this we mean that instances were taken into consideration where *dai* is regularly connected with certain relevant pragmatic-discourse categories. In fact, a previous free text search had already revealed that many scenes containing *dai* were linked to the label of ‘discourse markers’.⁴ This effectively confirms that *dai* is a relevant discourse marker (or interjection) in spoken Italian.⁵ By limiting our research to scenes that can be attributed to the label ‘discourse markers’, we obtained 45 results.⁶



Figure 2. Hits after guided search

4. Other relevant categories here could be *body language*, *specific prosody*, *mimics*, *persuasion*, *advice*, and so on.
5. See the paraphrase of *dai* = *ti incoraggio a fare questa cosa* (I encourage you to do something) (Renzi *et al.* 1995: 405).
6. The label in question (*discourse markers*) is paired with a ‘scene’, i.e. a conventionally delimited timed segment of a movie, but which, for technical reasons, and to provide sufficient context, is a little bit longer than is strictly relevant for the linguistic analysis. In this regard, and at this level of analysis, an additional *ad hoc* intervention may be necessary to ‘manually’ eliminate elements which are not relevant to the actual research.

Within this specific selection a short scene emerged where the word *dai* appears repeatedly, which we can analyse with reference to the visuals and the German translation (*Caruso Paskoski*, Francesco Nuti, 1988, *Einstweilige Verführung*):

Maresciallo

[Ita] *Ci penso io. Ho detto: "Ci penso io". Vieni, dai, vieni con me, ti porto a casa. Ti fai una bella doccia, un caffè doppio e vedrai che ti passa tutto. Perché te non sei pazzo. Nooo, non sei pazzo. Te hai solamente alzato un po' il gomito. Dai, vieni con me. C'ho la macchina laggiù. Quella con le lucine che girano, eh. Scommetto che ti piace. Dai, vieni con me. Dai, andiamo a casa. Dai!*

Kommissar

[Ger] *Ich kümmere mich um ihn. Ich sagte "ich kümmere mich um ihn". Na komm her. Was ist, komm her zu mir. Ich bring' dich nach Hause. Da stellen wir dich erstmal unter die kalte Dusche, du bekommst einen starken Kaffee und schon siehst du die Welt mit neuen Augen. Glaub mir: Du... ehee... du bist nicht verrückt. Nein, du bist auch nicht kriminell, du hast nur ein bisschen zu tief ins Glas geguckt. Na los, komm schon mit. Siehst du da mein Auto? Mit dem blauen Lämpchen, das sich dreht? Ich wette, es wird dir gefallen. Na los, komm mit mir mit. Na, was ist? Wir fahren jetzt hübsch nach Hause. In Ordnung?*

It is apparent from this scene that the system makes it possible to identify different levels of contextualization which are not just linguistic: the word *dai* is in synchrony with the hand gestures of the officer, it can be pronounced with a range of micro-intonations (in this instance with a 'persuasive' intonation typically adopted when interacting with children or people who are slow), and can occur next to other imperatives as well as by itself. At the same time, even considering the limitations imposed by dubbing, it is evident that the dubbed version of the scene contains a number of different translations of *dai*:

Na los; Komm schon; Na komm her; Komm her; Na komm; Na los, komm mit; Na was ist?; In Ordnung?

Even without a detailed discussion of each translational choice, it can be observed that in spite of the limited situational context in which the officer interacts with the drunk, the German version contains quite a few variations (generally word clusters, prosodically joined and firmly linked to the imperative forms of the verb or to other expressions of exhortation). In addition we can observe that, as well as giving a tone of exhortation, the last use of *dai* also serves the function of obtaining 'closure' at the end of this speech turn. This function becomes more obvious in the German translation through the use of the pseudo-question *in Ordnung?* In

this sense the function of the discourse marker is certainly distinct from that of an interjection.

Looking for further translations of *dai* we find the following correspondence in another film (*Storia di ragazzi e di ragazze*, 1989 Pupi Avati):

<p><i>Giulio[Ita]</i> <i>Perché dovremmo litigare, scusa? dai, sbrigati, vai a prendere un po' d'acqua.</i></p>	<p><i>Giulio[Ger]</i> <i>Warum sollten wir uns streiten? Na mach schon. Hol mir das Wasser.</i></p>
--	--

Both the pragmatic category tags and the direct analysis of *dai* in this scene confirm that it performs the function of giving weight to a request rather than marking turn taking.

The general figures show that, all in all, the relevant occurrences of *dai* in the corpus stand at 181, out of an overall total of 202 (which indicates that the word *dai* in 90% of cases is an interjection or a discourse marker, and that in only 10% of cases is it used as a verb or preposition). Of the 181 occurrences, 44 occur in dubbed dialogues, which accounts for approximately 24% of the total. In our corpus, however, 4 films are dubbed into Italian out of a total of 9. It follows that in the dubbed films the use of *dai* is, at present, far less frequent than it is in films that are originally shot in Italian.

3.1 "dai" in original Italian dialogues

With regard to the pragmatic and communicative functions that can be attributed to *dai*, we can observe some regular features which are not entirely obvious. Firstly, in our corpus *dai* rarely occurs "alone", that is either as a single word imperative expression or as a prosodic unit between perceivable pauses. In most cases *dai* occurs in combination with: an imperative form of a verb, placed before, after, and both before and after (*dai, dillo; finiscila dai; andiamo, dai; dai, andiamo*); with the proper name of a person (*dai, Flavia*); preceding a form of address (*dai, vigliacco; dai, zio*); as an exhortation not expressed with a verb (such as *forza, avanti, presto*); with short conjunctions, particularly *e, ma*, occasionally to form a sort of prosodic-phonetic fusion (*eddai, maddai*); with other occurrences, even contiguous, of similar short parts-of-speech (*si, su, no, ecc.*), or as simple repetitions (*dai, dai*).

In almost all these combinations, looking solely at the verbal context would not be sufficient to make a reliable interpretation of all the meanings of the words and connected implications; it is only when it is linked to other audio-visual aspects of the scene that there can be a full understanding of what has actually been expressed. At the same time we can observe that it makes little sense to single out *dai* as a lexeme or autonomous pragmatic element. A correct analysis, on the

contrary must almost always treat it as a component of an organised chain at both the prosodic and morpholexical level. In this sense a certain affinity between *dai* and *Abtönungspartikeln* (Ziforum 1997: 1215) becomes visible, and this can be confirmed through the evaluation of translational choices actually made for the dubbed version. A certain level of confirmation has already been obtained from occurrences of the word *schon* in the dubbed German dialogues we have analysed, and this would be further reinforced by the results of this specific study.⁷

Another equally important aspect which can only be explored through a corpus like Forlìx1, with its wealth of audiovisual options, is prosodic modulation. In actual fact, each of the combinations indicated on the *dai* list involves particular modulations at a prosodic level, which in turn occur alongside specific facial and gestural indicators. In any case, as we have shown above with reference to the scene with the police officer, the specific aim of the speaker in using the word *dai* (on its own or in combination with other elements) is clearly recognisable thanks, above all, to the prosodic features (length of the diphthong, level of intonation, speed, rhythm and subtle modulations, and possibly also regional nuances). Needless to say, noting these details in the dialogues is only possible through close viewing and concentrated listening.

3.2 “dai” in dubbed dialogues

A comprehensive picture of the contexts located in relation to the use of *dai* in translated dialogues provides first of all a confirmation as to how this element is used in order to reinforce or earmark speech acts in a different way with regard to a request, a prayer, an order and so on. This function of ‘earmarking’ is obviously also applicable to other expressions, either in Italian (*su, forza, avanti, etc.*, each of which is subject to other particular nuances), or in German (*doch, schon, mal*).

Here is an example of *doch* taken from *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, 1998, *Lola corre*):

Lola [German]

Ja, ich. Ist doch jetzt egal.

Manni:

Jetzt sag doch mal!

Lola [Italian]

Già, io, dai, ma non importa.

Manni:

Dai rispondi!

The aspects in which we are primarily interested here are the particular nuances of the spoken language and especially the possible features which cannot yet be registered using traditional tools. We can see for example that along with the particles

7. Because of the limited space available it is not possible to attach the respective tables.

of standard variations already referred to, there is also an example of the Austrian particle *geh*, which frequently occurs also in *Nordrand* (Barbara Albert, 1999, *Periferia Nord*), and which obviously represents one of the challenges to translators' and adaptors' sensitivity. Italian has no lack of analogous regional particles which have the same pragmatic function of adding weight to an exhortation or an order; but, as almost always happens, the particle *dai* is chosen here by the translator/adaptor of *Nordrand* as a solution which is familiar to all Italians, whilst at the same time being clearly a colloquialism. In addition, it can take different positions within an utterance and at the same time can be subject to prosodic modulation where desired:

Jasmin
Geh, erzähl noch was

Jasmin
Dai va avanti a raccontare ...

In similar contexts, as with the following examples taken from three different scenes, the Austrian *geh* can be accompanied by other particles (*na geh, geh bitte*), in a kind of 'modality chain', not unlike the Italian *dai*:

Wolfgang[Ger]
geh bitte, Jasmin, jetzt sei realistisch ...

Wolfgang[It]
Piantala, Jasmin, dai, cerca di essere realistica

Sonja[Ger]
Na geh, frag den René

Sonja[It]
Dai, vallo a chiedere a René

Jasmin [Ger]
Na! geh, jetzt kommst, mir zuliebe. Tamara!

Jasmin[It]
No, dai, resta, per favore Fatelo per me! Tamara!

Or, it can assume other communicative functions, beyond those of a simple request or instruction, and it may even signal a general comment or disapproval:

Jasmin [Ger]
Geh, ihr könnt mich doch nicht so allein gehen lassen

Jasmin [It]
Dai venite anche voi, mi fate andare da sola?

Finally, *geh* is subject to some prosodic variations, particularly with regard to the length (and perhaps also the openness) of the vowels, and typically combines with the rest of the utterance in relation to its rhythm and intonation.

3.3 “dai” in compensatory strategies

On another level, the analysis of the context alongside the visuals of these scenes indicates that *dai* is also included in the Italian dialogue as a part of a reformulating translation (not, in other words, influenced by particles in the original German dialogue). On the basis of our audio-visual data we can propose at least two interpretations:

- it is inserted to give a more spontaneous quality to the Italian dialogue, either to add weight to a request or to modify the tone of the dialogue;
- it can represent a form of compensation where it is impossible to reproduce dialect words or regional features contained in the original version (such as in the dubbing of *Nordrand*; Heiss 2004a). One very significant example occurs in a context in which, in the original version, another typical Austrian particle (*eh*) appears (for a detailed description see Heinrich 1996: 35 *passim*). In this case *dai* is used to emphasise colloquialism in the otherwise standard Italian version:

Michi [Ger]
Weiß eh ein jeder...

Michi[It]
Dai, lo sanno tutti...

Here again, pragmatic-linguistic tagging combined with audio-visual elements allows one to refine hypotheses, check nuances and establish connections. All this confirms the significant advantages this system has over any which make use only of a basic, annotated transcription or which do not allow the dialogue to be studied in parallel with the visuals.

4. Forlixt and the sociolinguistic description

In conclusion, we will briefly highlight additional ways in which Forlixt facilitates wider understanding in this field. We can think of work on hypotheses regarding diachronic development and sociolectal collocations of spoken language variants, as applied to the analysis of a film dialogue in relation to ‘real’ language in use. The descriptive advantage of the system is apparent when, for example, language variants are indelibly linked to behavioural models and cultural stratification. Behavioural models and cultural stratification are actually in turn linked with proxemics, gestures, prosody and generically stylistic aspects (both from a verbal perspective and from codes in clothing and other ‘accessories’). We can illustrate this with a transcription of an original dialogue taken from *Kanak Attack* (Lars Becker, 2000). This scene focuses, in a combination which is perhaps somewhat excessive, on a

number of typical elements of communicative behaviour of young, second-generation Turks in an urban environment in Germany during the 1990s. It reflects highly significant aspects with regard to the development of the German language in the past 10 years or so, characterized by the way in which elements of English and, especially, the immigrant's own language, in this case Turkish, are intermingled with German.

Ertan

Ich sag': nur mit diesem Spezialdraht kannst du die Automaten entleeren. Du fährst von Stadt zu Stadt und von Spielhalle zu Spielhalle. Steckst den rein und gedreht und kling kling kling kommt die Kohle nur so raus. Is' ne Sache von 'ner halben Stunde, sag'ich, und drei Automaten drei Mille. Der Typ hat gleich Augen wie Bugs Bunny: Cash und Dollarzeichen und ich sag, der Spaß kostet dich zehn Riesen. Sagt der Knaller glatt, ja, okay, scheißegal, den Draht muss ich haben. Okay, kriegt er also die Fahrradspeiche, schön krumm gebogen, für zehn Riesen und ich sag noch zu ihm, aber beschwer dich nicht, wenn's nicht gleich hinhaut, weißt du, weil wir sind Profis und das Fingerspitzengefühl kann ich dir nicht mitverkaufen.

(Kanak Attack, Lars Becker, 2000).

Apart from a complete contextualisation of linguistic and prosodic elements, once a sufficient number of films have been added, the system provides a straightforward means by which the researcher can verify when specific linguistic trends related to certain cultural elements occurred. Even examples of onomatopoeia (*kling kling kling*), which began to occur in youth language from the 1980s/1990s,⁸ can be identified with the same ease as that offered by a large-scale, text-based corpora.

8. Cf. Schlobinski 2001.

New tools for translators

INTCA, an electronic dictionary of interjections

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This paper presents INTCA (Interjeccions Català-Anglès, i.e. Interjections Catalan-English), a prototype for an electronic dictionary of interjections in English and Catalan, aimed at the needs of language professionals in general and audiovisual translators in particular. This proposal is based on a theoretical framework developed by Cuenca (2004), who includes cognitive postulates to define interjections. The audiovisual corpus used for the analysis of interjections and the collection of lexicographical data for the prototype are also described.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, corpus linguistics, electronic lexicography

1. Introduction

A variety of resources are available for translation problems: lexicographical tools, terminological databases, internet sites, corpora, etc. Nevertheless, few of these resources take into account the specific needs of translators, in particular those working in the audiovisual and multimedia fields who are confronted with oral language. Matamala (2005)¹ attempts to solve one of these problems by focusing on a specific marker of orality (interjections) and by proposing a prototype version of a dictionary of interjections called INTCA (*Interjeccions Català-Anglès*, i.e. Interjections Catalan-English). The structure of this article begins with the background (2), the definition of interjections (2.1), and the theoretical framework (2.2). The next part is dedicated to the aims and applicability of this prototype (3), the real needs behind an electronic dictionary of interjections (3.1), and its general characteristics (3.2). Finally, some conclusions about the relevance in developing such a tool are discussed (4).

1. This essay is based on Matamala's doctoral thesis, supervised by Mercè Lorente and developed within the PhD in Applied Linguistics at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), published online in 2005.

2. Background

This paper is based on previous work (Matamala 2001 and 2005) involving the importance of interjections in audiovisual products and their poor representation in dictionaries. The aims of these investigations included 1) a comprehensive description of interjections based on a corpus and 2) the design of a lexicographical prototype compiling interjections and useful information to language professionals dealing with oral language, and especially for audiovisual and multimedia translators.

A corpus was needed to achieve these goals, but as no adequate sample was found, we created an aligned corpus in 2002. As for genre selectivity, sitcoms were considered an appropriate product in that they represent spontaneous oral language, offering an approximation to real spontaneous speech, and as Fischer (2000: 204) points out, “The dialogues constituted by playwrights or authors of film scripts may display their authors’ competence in communication even more overtly than real dialogue do since the displays can be seen as a kind of typical interaction”.

The corpus currently contains two subcorpora: (1) a monolingual subcorpus and (2) a bilingual subcorpus. The monolingual subcorpus (sitcoms originally shot in Catalan) allowed us to analyse interjections from a monolingual perspective and to collect data for the dictionary. The series selected were 25-minute sitcoms broadcast on Catalan Television (TV3): *Plats Bruts* (episodes 2 and 3) and *Jet Lag* (episodes 1 and 2). The selection of the episodes was based on the availability of the pre-production script given to the actors and the final video recording. The subcorpus includes the transcription of the final broadcast version aligned manually with audiovisual excerpts of the sitcoms, as well as extra materials such as the original scripts given to the actors, which were substantially changed during the shooting, as discussed in Matamala (2005a and forthcoming a).

The bilingual subcorpus includes sitcoms in English with a dubbed version in Catalan, and provides not only equivalents to be considered in the dictionary, but also a good source for translation analysis. According to the availability of the scripts at different stages of the dubbing process² and the recordings in both languages, three sitcoms were chosen (one episode each): the British series *Coupling*, and the American series *Working* and *Normal Ohio*, all broadcast on Catalan television. This subcorpus includes both the transcriptions of the English version and the Catalan dubbing aligned with video excerpts of the sitcoms. The text/video alignment was carried out manually, although software developed by De Yzaguirre *et al.* (2005) was used to align both written transcriptions. The elusive nature of

2. The scripts available correspond to three key stages in the dubbing process: non-synchronised translation, synchronised translation, and the linguistically revised final version.

interjections and their rare occurrence in dictionaries made it impossible to apply tagging or annotation procedures to the corpus.

2.1 Interjections: A definition

Interjections have been studied from different points of view and with different denominations: traditional grammars include interjections among word classes and highlight their phonological anomalies, syntactic independence, morphological invariance and exclamative nature (Crystal and Quirk 1964, Quirk *et al.* 1972, Leech and Svartvik 1975, Huddleston 1986, Greenbaum and Quirk 1990). Some of these units called interjections in traditional grammars are also found in studies on phraseological units (Sancho 1999, Lorente 2002), and certain monographic articles and theses have considered interjections as an important topic (James 1973, Ameka 1992, Wierzbicka 1992, Wilkins 1992). They also appear in the literature under the label “discourse markers” and are analysed from a pragmatic and discourse perspective (Schourup 1982, Schiffrin 1987, Fraser 1990 and 1999, Redeker 1990, Brinton 1996, Fischer 2000, Andersen 2001, Aijmer 2002) and even within a conversation analysis framework (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1990, 1996, Cal-samiglia and Tusón 1999). Finally, interjections are also found in articles on paralinguistic, although with different denominations such as “vocalizations” (Trager 1958, Crystal and Quirk 1964) or “alternants” (Poyatos 1993). Nevertheless, the previous frameworks are not comprehensive and do not embrace all the units that we include under the same term. In fact, interjections are sometimes peripheral and do not comply with the strict conditions inherent in a traditional model of categorization which imposes necessary and sufficient conditions in order to assign a unit to a category.

2.2 Theoretical framework: Moulding two perspectives

This article is based on the cognitive perspective adopted by Cuenca (1996, 2000, 2004), which encompasses a wider array of units under a single label by means of a definition based on prototype theory (Kleiber 1990, Taylor 1995, Ungerer and Schmid 1996) and on the theory of grammaticalization (Traugott and Heine 1991, Lehmann 1995, Hopper and Traugott 2003). The former theory makes it possible to consider interjections as a peripheral class of the category “sentence”, since they “correspond to communicative units (utterances) which can be syntactically autonomous and intonationally and semantically complete” (Cuenca 2000), generally expressing pragmatic values. However, unlike prototypical sentences, they do not consist of a subject plus a predicate and are highly context dependent. The latter

theory, i.e. the theory of grammaticalization, is used to account for the evolution of secondary interjections through a process of subjectification (Traugott 1995).

Following Cuenca's proposal, and resulting from prototype theory (which states that boundaries are fuzzy and members of a category can share only a small number of attributes with other members of the same category), different units are included under the heading "interjections": paralinguistic features, according to certain authors (Poyatos 1993), such as "mhm" or "tut;" prototypical interjections such as "oh" or "ah" and even expressions close to phraseology such as "damn" and "holy shit".

Depending on their form and function, interjections can be classified into various subcategories. As far as the form is concerned, Cuenca adopts a classification often found in traditional grammars and distinguishes between primary interjections, i.e. simple and fixed units which can only be used interjectionally, and secondary interjections, i.e. units deriving from other grammatical classes which can be used interjectionally due to a process of grammaticalization. Regarding function, Cuenca (2004) adapts Jakobson's (1960) functions and classifies interjections into: expressive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic, and representative.

The framework chosen to support the development of the tool was also based on the concept of applicability (Lorente 1994), derived from the idea of circularity between theoretical and applied linguistics (Slama-Cazacu 1984), which envisages that different expressions of applied linguistics must ensure a certain coherence between theoretical assumptions and the design of applied tools.

3. Aims and applicability of this prototype

INTCA is a multifunctional tool addressed to language professionals whose working language is Catalan and who need a dictionary when producing texts. However, when dealing with interjections, we realized that the problem was not understanding their meaning (evidently easily inferable from the context) but finding an equivalent or their transcription. Thus, considering a future commercial development, the target group of users was widened from translators to other professionals with similar needs. In fact, when the commercial version of INTCA will be fully implemented, a translator will be able to find equivalents for a particular interjection or even interjections that express a particular feeling. Likewise, a Catalan writer will be able to find the transcription of a certain onomatopoeic interjection.

3.1 Is there really a need to create a dictionary of interjections?

Kühn (1989) identifies different reference needs regarding dictionary consultation, as summarised by Hartmann (2001: 88): for checking linguistic competence, text

reception, text production, translation, technical knowledge, research, edification and language acquisition. That interjections pose problems concerning both translation and text production is evident not only from our own experience but also from the opinions expressed by other academics (Cuenca 2004) and professionals such as the Catalan television linguists (Televisió de Catalunya 1997) or the renowned translator Xosé Castro (1999). As stated by Cuenca (2004: 3209),

*Les imprecisions en els doblatges de pel·lícules i sèries en anglès són responsables de l'extensió d'aquests calcs. Així, doncs, es fa necessària una descripció acurada i completa de quines són les formes interjectives genuïnes i quins són els usos que tenen. Només d'aquesta manera es podrà aturar l'entrada d'interjeccions alienes, que es produeix amb poc control i amb escassa prevenció, ateses les característiques fonètiques i el significat pragmàtic (poc precís i determinat contextualment) de les interjeccions.*³

Likewise, Televisió de Catalunya (1997: 53) points out that,

Tot i que podríem trobar algunes coincidències esporàdiques, els recursos expressius vocals i no vocals no són idèntics en totes les llengües. Aquest fet, que pot demostrar qualsevol anàlisi contrastiva, es manifesta especialment en el món del doblatge. Quan es tradueixen els diàlegs pensats originalment en una altra llengua, cal, doncs, tenir presents els recursos propis del català.

Finally, Castro (1999) considers that,

Encuentro cada vez con más frecuencia onomatopeyas mal traducidas (o sin traducir) en las traducciones de películas españolas e incluso en libros.

Moreover, questions addressed to Internet lists are commonplace and examples of queries concerning interjections have been found in e-groups such as Traducción,

3. We provide our own translation for this and the following quotations.

Cuenca 2004: "Inaccuracies in the dubbing of English films and series are responsible for the spread of loan translations. Therefore, an accurate and complete description of genuine interjective forms and their uses is needed. This is the only way to avoid the introduction of foreign interjections, which is taking place with little control and insufficient prevention, due to the phonetic features and pragmatic meaning (rather vague and context-bound) of interjections."

TVC 1997: "Despite sporadic coincidences, expressive resources – both vocal and non vocal – are not the same in all languages. This is provable by any contrastive analysis, and is especially obvious in dubbing. When translating dialogues originally conceived in another language, translators should bear in mind expressions specific to Catalan."

Castro 1999: "I find more and more badly translated (or even non-translated) onomatopoeias in films translated into Spanish or even in books."

Zèfir and TRAG.⁴ Users ask for the translation of certain units (for example, “wow” or “tsch”) or for the transcription of onomatopoeic interjections (for instance, a kiss).

These are evident needs that led us to design this dictionary of interjections. In fact, current general monolingual and bilingual dictionaries do not cover this grammatical category widely (Matamala 2001), and only a few specific printed dictionaries include this particular unit (Kloe 1976, Arana de Love 1985, Riera-Eures and Sanjaume 2002), although no English-Catalan combination is offered. Furthermore, as shown in Bach and Matamala (2004), printed dictionaries usually offer restrictive access to information, generally by lemma, which is very often what translators are looking for (i.e. translators often look for an entry word which conveys a specific value instead of looking for the meaning of a certain unit). For example, if a translator needs an equivalent for an onomatopoeic interjection which imitates the sound of an animal, he/she will have difficulty finding it in semasiological dictionaries, that is in dictionaries which offer a list of alphabetically organised entry words. On the other hand, certain synonym and thesaurus dictionaries adopt an onomasiological approach and offer alternative ways of accessing information, via synonyms or semantically related units, though interjections are usually discarded for their lack of referential meaning. Therefore, if audiovisual translators were to look for a certain interjection which expresses a particular feeling (for example, surprise), what could they resort to? The solution does not lie in current monolingual or bilingual dictionaries, as inferred from the previous statements, but in new lexicographical works with innovative proposals for accessing information. The prototype that will be described next attempts to be one of these.

3.2 General characteristics

The general features of the project concept are presented according to a traditional lexicographical classification, i.e. superstructure, macrostructure and microstructure (Hartmann 2001: 59), the notion of “*vía de acceso*” (*‘ways of accessing information,’* Fuentes Morán 1995), similar to Hausmann and Wiegand’s (1989) “access structure” and “addressing structure.”⁵

INTCA is a descriptive tool and includes both English and Catalan, although it is clearly a single directional dictionary (Kromann 1989: 273) with the direction English>Catalan as its priority. However, its open structure allows it to include not

4. *Traducción* is a Spanish list devoted to translation in general (<http://www.rediris.es/list/info/traduccion.es.html>); *Zèfir* is a list addressed to Catalan language professionals (<http://www.lleocat.com/zefir/>), and TRAG is the only list for audiovisual translators in Spain (<http://xcastro.com/trag/>)

5. This corpus can be found at <http://pdl.iec.es>.

only other languages in future developments, but also prescriptive notes about the presence of certain units in the normative dictionary. Furthermore, this hypermedial tool (i.e. hypertextual tool with multimedia features) contains multiple links and no space restrictions.

Though the information used for the prototype derives from the previously described corpus, the future dictionary should have this data complemented with a real oral language corpus, or reproductions of the same, such as comic strips or theatre plays, as “there is hardly any alternative to corpora as the primary and main resource for lexicographers now” (Cermák 2003: 20). The great number of interjections found in comic strips make this kind of product an interesting candidate to be digitally included in the corpus as scripts (in GIF or JPEG formats) along with audiovisual video-clips, both aligned with their transcriptions to facilitate their textual processing. Nevertheless, we must take into account that enlarging the corpus is a time-consuming task, and the extensive corpus needed to develop a complete dictionary with a wide selection of interjections and communicative situations would involve high costs. Consequently, whereas the audiovisual corpus has proven to be sufficient for the prototype, the commercial version will probably need to (a) resort to different corpora (lexicographical, textual, audiovisual) to select the entries, (b) use this nomenclature to develop a list of hypothetical functions and communicative situations, and (c) search for those functions and situations in textual and audiovisual excerpts which document each linguistic instance and provide examples for the dictionary.

3.2.1 *Superstructure*

Superstructure embraces the global structure of the dictionary, and traditionally contains introductory documents, a main body and back matter. However, this view is biased by the linear structure traditionally followed by printed dictionaries and does not make sense in a prototype created as an electronic tool. Consequently, these items will be described from a hypertextual point of view, accentuating the links established between its various sections.

Having considered two languages, the first key issue to be solved was whether two parallel superstructures, both in English and Catalan, or a single superstructure was needed. According to the aim of the project – the development of a monodirectional prototype – the Catalan superstructure was favoured and the main page links to: (a) an introduction with the objectives and sources of the dictionary aimed at intended users who are able to send suggestions through a feedback function, (b) a help page, (c) the dictionary itself, and (d) a page with links to monolingual dictionaries.

3.2.2 Macrostructure

The macrostructure refers to the way in which the entries are organised (Fuentes Morán 1995: 51) and two elements concerning macrostructures must be clearly defined: the selection, delimitation and lemmatisation of the units, and their presentation. In this prototype, the criteria used for unit selection was its inclusion in the word class “interjections”, following Cuenca’s proposal, although its structure can be opened up to other pragmatic and phraseological units in future versions. Four access ways are proposed for the presentation of information: (a) direct access, (b) access by English lemma, (c) access by Catalan lemma, and (d) access by function.

- *Direct access* allows users to search for a specific interjection by typing it directly into a dialogue box that pops up after clicking on the “direct access” button, and the system automatically retrieves the lexicographical entry.
- *Access by English* and *Access by Catalan lemma* involve accessing the information knowing beforehand what interjection is being looked for. The proposed interface includes a column with the list of interjections in the left frame. Once a unit is selected from the list, the microstructural information appears in the right frame. At the top of the page there is always a group of links giving access to other sections of the tool.



Figure 1. Access by function

- *Access by function* enables users to look for those units expressing a given function, without having a certain form in mind, in a wide range of registers. First, the user selects whether he or she is looking for a unit which expresses a feeling, encourages somebody to do something, and interacts with or imitates a sound or a movement. Once a general function has been selected, the user can choose a subfunction and limit the search by marking a variation constraint (e.g., taboo, slang, etc.), as shown in Figure 1.

For instance, a user can search for a unit which expresses a feeling like “surprise”, without restrictions, and the final result will be a list of proposed units in the left frame organized according to their connotations, whereas the microstructural information will come up in the right frame (Figure 2).

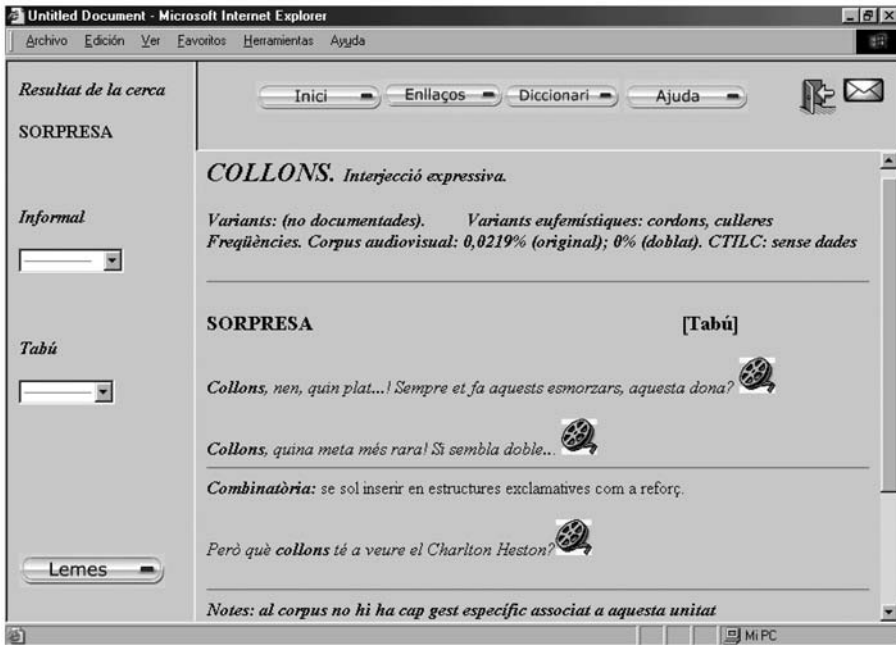


Figure 2. Example of an entry

3.2.3 Microstructure

The microstructure includes all the items within the article, and the challenge in this case is integrating an exclusively monolingual interface (search by function or by Catalan lemma) with a complementary search starting from the English unit, resulting in two slightly different microstructures which will be described next.

3.2.3.1 Access to a Catalan unit.

If the user searches for a particular unit in Catalan, either by lemma or by function, the final result includes the following microstructural information:

- *Word class and type of interjection*: the label “interjection” in a dictionary of interjections seems to make no sense. However, as space is no longer a problem in an electronic dictionary, it seems quite useful to use the label. In Figure 2 this item has been included with the label “*interjecció expressiva*” (expressive interjection) next to the entry word.
- *Formal variations of the entry word*: sometimes, interjections do not have an established form, and formal variations of the entry (such as “*cordons*” or “*culleres*” in Figure 2) are included.
- *Links*: regardless of the page consulted, there is always a series of links at the top (button “*Enllaços*” in Figure 2) which not only gives access to other sections of the tool, but also to external links, such as dictionary web pages. This allows users to consult whether a certain interjection occurs in descriptive and normative dictionaries. Moreover, an asterisk is added to those units not compiled by the normative dictionary (*Diccionari de la llengua catalana*, by the Institut d’Estudis Catalans), so that users know that the interjection is not considered correct from a prescriptive point of view although found in corpora or descriptive works and, therefore, used by speakers and writers.
- *Frequency data*: this information is essential for various reasons. First, different units might convey the same meaning as an English interjection and frequencies are crucial in selecting the most adequate one. Second, if a writer is looking for the transcription of an onomatopoeic interjection and finds it in our dictionary, it is important to know whether it is an established form found both in dictionaries and corpora, or a rare unit with a low usage frequency. At this initial stage, the percentages based on such a limited corpus are not representative, but data from the CTILC (*Corpus Textual Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana*), a reference corpus in Catalan⁶, have been included, when available, in order to overcome this initial setback.
- *Definition*: defining interjections by means of the traditional definition based on *genus plus differentiae* (Lara 1994), i.e. based on the first metalanguage (Rey-Debove 1967), is not effective because they lack referential meaning. A definition based on a second metalanguage (Rey-Debove 1967) whereby the functional features of these units are elucidated (Kipfer 1984: 103–104) is the only alternative to overcome the definitions currently found in dictionaries,

6. The previously described corpus was used to obtain information for the prototype and both the corpus and the prototype are accessible from a single interface in a DVD which is included in the thesis. Hopefully, they will be available on the Internet in the future.

which “are not of the kind that could help anyone to learn how to use them” (Wierzbicka 1992: 160). Our proposal is a special type of definition that embraces “core” and “additional” elements. The core element is a keyword expressing the value transmitted by the unit, and additional elements would be subspecifications, i.e. specific constraints or peculiarities to this general idea. For instance, the noun “*porta*” (literally “door”) can be used interjectionally to make someone go. In this case, the core meaning would be to “incite somebody to an action”, and the additional element would be “to go out”.

- *Variation elements*: these are what are traditionally known as pragmatic labels and following the fourth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (1989), a five-point scale of rethoric, formal, informal, slang, and taboo label for the units is proposed (see the label “*tabú*” in Figure 2).
- *Examples and pronunciation*: current examples derive from the corpus presented in section 2. As shown in figures 2 and 3, the examples have the icon of a reel next to the transcription, a link to an audiovisual clip from the corpus.
- *Collocations*: although interjections are independent units equivalent to a sentence, they tend to appear next to certain units in semi-fixed collocations, so this information is also provided by the interface. For example, it is quite common to find the interjection “*d’acord*” (“ok”, “alright”) preceded by the interjection “*ah*,” and this is clearly stated in the prototype, as well as the usual position, lexical combinations, and syntactic relationships of interjections (Matamala and Lorente 2007).
- *Remarks*: this field is used to integrate complementary items which might be relevant, such as the body language related to a certain interjection.

3.2.3.2 Access to a Catalan unit through an English interjection.

When searching for a unit through an English interjection, information is presented slightly differently. The user selects an interjection from different folding menus (see Figure 3), so that a lexicographical article appears on the right of the screen. This article provides the same microstructural information plus a list of possible translations with pragmatic labels (“*propostes de traducció*” in Figure 3) and clicking on these equivalents (“*mira*”, “*escolta*”, “*aviam*”, a “*veure*”, “*daixò*”, “*escolti*” and “*miri*” are proposed equivalents for the interjection ‘look’ in Figure 3) a lexicographical article in Catalan appears and the same microstructural information is found.

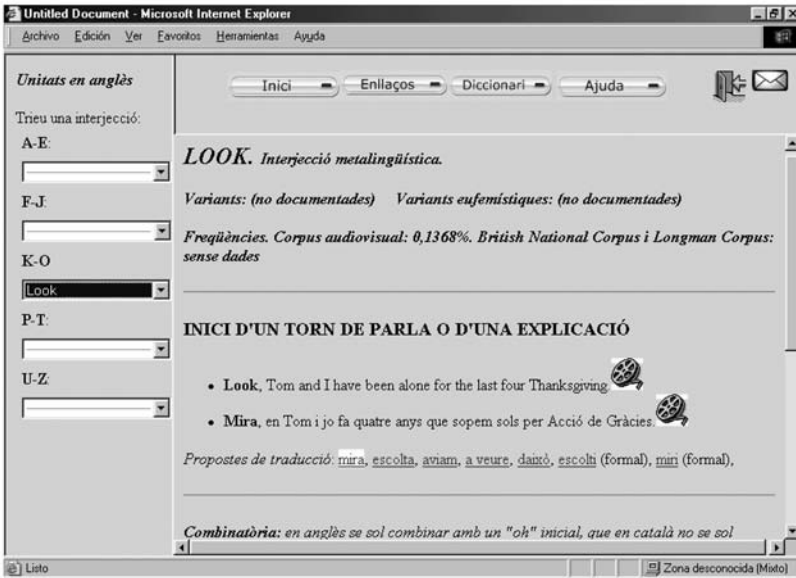


Figure 3. English lexicographical article

4. Conclusions

To sum up, interjections (Cuenca 1996, 2000, 2004) are key items in audiovisual products such as films, cartoons and TV series which often try to imitate spontaneous colloquial oral language. However, dictionaries do not always fulfil the needs of language professionals working with these types of texts. Thus, the creation of an electronic dictionary of interjections from English into Catalan, covering a wide range of information seemed a useful and practical idea. As the initial data come from a collection of aligned sitcoms which include video files, this corpus might serve not only to develop a lexicographical prototype, but also to carry out systematic studies on screen translation. The cognitive approach by Cuenca has shown to be an adequate framework for explaining the categories and functions of interjections, since it encompasses a wide variety of units under a single label and accepts fuzzy boundaries in categorizations. The theoretical idea behind this dictionary is that linguistic tools should address the needs of the user and the development of friendly interfaces that both represent and give access to relevant information, making the most of hypertext and audiovisual possibilities.

What has been described is a prototype. Prototypes are characterized by their ability to offer a whole range of innovative features which prove their eventual feasibility on the marketplace. Nonetheless, in order to turn INTCA into a

commercial dictionary, two basic preparatory actions are required: (a) the information available for each interjection should be evaluated, giving priority to the most relevant data for translation, and (b) the hypertextual navigational systems should also be evaluated by professional translators in real or simulated working situations in order to improve information access, taking into account the most common search strategies used.

To conclude, it should be pointed out that this is just a hint of what we hope will be an important field of research in Translation Studies, a line which develops, or at least proposes, tools which translators will be able to use to their advantage.

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Linguistic approaches

Spoken language in film dubbing

Target language norms, interference and translational routines

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One main feature which distinguishes film translation from other translation types is the need to produce a text which quite closely mimics spoken language. To which degree this is achieved and, more feasibly, which features are involved in doing so deserve in-depth investigation. Taking a small corpus of American and British films translated into Italian, a quantitative analysis of selected instances of spoken Italian associated with the constraints and situational factors of face-to-face communication has been carried out. The results suggest that major syntactic features of spontaneous spoken Italian tend at present to be reproduced in Italian film dubbing from English, with some features being systematically chosen as privileged carriers of orality. At least in some language areas and in the period investigated, dubbed language appears to result from the interaction of target language norms, which play the most significant role, source language interference, to a restricted extent, and formulaic language, a feature that has been widely recognized as typical of the language of audiovisual translation.

Keywords: spoken language, target language norms, routines, interference

1. Introduction

In this paper I will address some issues involved in the study of dubbed language, with specific reference to features which may play a role in the shaping of the translated product. In dubbed, as in original film dialogues, similarities to real dialogues are assumed to help viewers' identification with the fictional world portrayed on the screen (e.g. Delabastita 1989, Heiss and Loporati 2000, Kozloff 2000, Chaume 2001). Thus, one main feature distinguishing film translation from other translation types is the need to produce a text which quite closely imitates spoken language, although the claim that film language is required to exhibit a degree of

similarity to spoken language cannot overrule the specificities of the two forms of communication. Linguistic differences between natural speech and speech on screen are in fact expected as a result of the tasks that dialogues have been identified to perform in films as opposed to spontaneous communication (Rossi 2002).

In films, different interlocutors interact on various planes in what, on closer inspection, are unidirectional exchanges. Thus, successful communication cannot be taken for granted; the relations between discourse referents and interlocutors must be made explicit, and language must be clear (Taylor 1999, Rossi 2002, Chaume 2004d). Moreover, unlike what happens in real life, speech acts are not performed; but are represented; language is never impromptu but is always carefully pre-planned; and events never actually take place but can only be narrated (Cresti 1987: 64). These crucial pragmatic differences between spontaneous and simulated interactions are reinforced by temporal constraints which control the unveiling of the characters' relations and the unfolding of events. Films are narrative condensations in which information must be supplied succinctly, inserts cannot override the linear development of the plot, and semantic continuity must be guaranteed over unmotivated side comments or abrupt changes in topic (Taylor 1999).

At least two main requirements, therefore, interact in shaping film dialogues: representation of orality on the one hand and time-constrained narration on the other. The trend toward truthfulness in film translation is further constrained and shaped by the expressive and phatic functions, which may take on a central role in some films, in this way contributing to the differentiation in film genres (cf. Chaume 2003). Any discussion of language use in audiovisual translation must consider the variation in degrees of approximation to spontaneous spoken language even within the same audiovisual type (e.g. Heiss 2000a: 184), with thrillers, fantasy or costume films presumably differing from comedies or psychological films in their effort to simulate impromptu speech.

As already pointed out by Delabastita (1989), linguistic realism, like the related phenomenon of styling (e.g. Coupland 2001),¹ a cultural construct which is likely to differ from country to country and evolve historically within the same culture (cf. Rossi 1999). In Italy, for example, dubbed language has been observed to have shifted away from literary standards in the 1970s, presumably either under the influence of the greater linguistic realism in American cinema, from then onwards massively translated in Italy (Cresti 1982), or as a reflection of major economic and structural changes affecting Italian society at the time. Of course the

1. Georgakopoulou (2005: 165), discussing the "styling of other", provides the following description that can be easily applied to the linguistic reconstruction of spoken language by scriptwriters, translators-adaptors and actors as well: "[...] speakers do complex identity work through creatively and strategically mobilizing diverse (often incongruous) language resources that are typically associated with speakers and situations other than the current ones".

various factors may have interacted in enhancing the move towards realism in film translation in Italy in recent years (cf. Raffaelli 1994, Alfieri *et al.* 2003).

The need for linguistic realism is also to be assessed in relation to the degree of acceptance of the inherent features of film language by target audiences. Descriptive and empirical investigations, in particular by Chiaro and her co-workers, have shown viewers' relative readiness to accept unrealistic features, including so called dubbese (Herbst 1994, Pavesi 1994, Antonini and Chiaro forthcoming, Chaume 2004d). Some of the general linguistic trends – sometimes identified with translational norms – have been described for a few languages and appear to be shared across national borders: among them, geographical underdifferentiation, register and style neutralization, less textual cohesion, lexical permeability to the source language, repetitive use of formulae (cf. Goris 1993, Pavesi 1994, Herbst 1994, 1997, Heiss 2000a, Karamitroglou 2000, Chaume 2004d, Gottlieb 2005b).

In an overview of the issues involved in research on spoken language in film translation, a provision must finally be made for modal variation in source texts. Approximation to orality is to be expected in the translated script as a reflection of the approximation to orality in the source script. That is, other things being equal, greater realism is likely to be achieved in the translation of texts which already exhibit a high degree of naturalness in the source language. Conversely, if the source text contains very unrealistic language, the translated text will not be expected to strive for naturalness either. The Italian translation of the following extract from *Sliding doors* can be taken as an example. Here the lack of realism has its climax in the long list of attributive adjectives (1), which conflicts with a preference for right branching in spoken English, where referents are typically described through successive additions to the head noun (cf. Miller and Weinert 1998). The same carefully tailored, unrealistic list of adjectives is unsurprisingly found in the Italian translation (2):

- (1) But instead of being/ of being grateful, instead of being romanced, you're instantly convinced that I'm ensconced in some *decrepit, tacky, underhand, clandestine* affair!
- (2) Ma invece di mostrarti/ di mostrarti grata, invece di sentirti corteggiata, sei immediatamente convinta che nascondo qualche *decrepita, volgare, subdola* relazione *clandestina*!

1.1 A target-language perspective in the study of spoken language in dubbing

In any discussion of film language, identifying similarities to the spoken language is necessary for a full understanding of the mechanisms underlying viewers' acceptance, and, ultimately, for assessing the quality of the translated product. If

translated films like all translated products first of all belong to the target language system (Karamitroglou 2000, Ulrych 2000, Díaz Cintas 2004), the first aim of research is to define their status and their characterization within that system. In practice, the researcher's task includes identifying which target language features are systematically made to convey orality in the target text and what functions they serve (Pavese 2005). In this framework the search for regularities of linguistic behaviour in translated film texts may correspond to the search for translational norms. These may yield repeated and systematic patterns of selected features shared by translated products belonging to the same genre, for specific language pairs, in given periods of time. Some norms may also transcend genre, language or time restrictions and work across a wider translational range.

Many features of the spoken language have in fact been found to be shared across languages: not only dysfluencies, repetitions, repairs, turn-taking, but also syntactic and discourse features like freer word orders, more deictics, more focusing devices. These linguistic similarities are presumably due to the similar social and cognitive constraints responsible for shaping interaction and the grammar of spoken varieties (e.g. Biber 1988, Miller and Wienert 1998, Biber *et al.* 1999, Shergloff 2000, Sidnell 2001). Along the same lines, we can predict that there will be some features of spoken language which are conventionally carried over to original as well as translated scripts irrespective of the languages involved. A degree of uniformity in film language is to be expected also as a result of both translational universals (Baker 1998, Mauranen and Kujamäki 2004) and, within Europe, the same centripetal forces that account for the ever-growing koine of European languages known as Standard Average European (Ramat 1993). There are thus several translational and linguistic reasons to investigate the patterns of spoken language in film translation.

2. A selection of spoken features

To explore the position of translated film language in relation to other relevant systems of the target language and target culture, a few clusters of phenomena commonly found in Neo-standard spoken Italian have been investigated as they occur in dubbing from English. These phenomena include: personal pronouns, overall syntactic organization, weak connectors and marked word orders.² All the phenomena investigated are connected with some functional variables of face-to-face communication such as participants' involvement, on-line production and sharing of context. They have been selected for the present analysis because they

2. A first analysis of these features was reported in Pavese (2004).

typify spontaneous spoken Italian as opposed to other, more formal varieties of the language. They are obviously only a sample of the many features that shape spoken language. As a choice had to be made, very frequent and pervasive features were picked which also offer grounds for comparison with similar or related phenomena in English.

The empirical basis for analysis is provided by a small corpus of five Italian translations of successful American and British films released between 1995 and 2000.³ Results are discussed primarily in terms of the comparison with the norms of spontaneous spoken Italian (mainly, De Mauro *et al.* 1993), with the initial aim of assessing the degree of realism of simulated translated Italian in relation to the target language. The results will also highlight some aspects which typify dubbed language and place it close to original audiovisual language (Rossi 1999a, Morucci 2003). It was further hypothesized that the study of spoken language features may show which functions performed by spoken language are taken on and exploited in simulated translated speech. These four clusters of phenomena may thus be taken as measures of interactivity among characters, emotional involvement, overall level of formality in textual structure as well as discourse connectivity (cf. Biber 1988, Biber *et al.* 1999, Finegan and Biber 2001, Xiao and McEnery 2005).⁴

After this first presentation of how Italian dubbed language may place itself within the repertoire of Italian in a given period of time with reference to a few phenomena, a group of features will be focussed on and examples provided of the interaction between target language norms, source language transfer and routines in the translation of spoken language features in dubbing.

2.1 Personal pronouns

Pronouns are more frequent in spontaneous spoken language than they are in more formal registers, mainly due to the increased deicticity of face-to-face communication as well as the interlocutors' greater emotional involvement (Biber 1988, Bazzanella 1994, Biber *et al.* 1999, Xiao and McEnery 2005). Because the

3. The corpus is made up of the following films, whose English and Italian versions have been orthographically transcribed: *Secrets and Lies* (Mike Leigh, 1996, *Segreti e bugie*), *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998, *Sliding doors*), *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999, *Notting Hill*), *Dead Man Walking* (Tim Robbins, 1995, *Dead man walking – Condannato a morte*), *Finding Forrester* (Gus Van Sant, 2000, *Scoprendo Forrester*). The corpus contains 55,830 words in English and 51,538 words in Italian. Further information on the corpus can be found in Pavesi (2005).

4. Of course, as the findings come from a small corpus, they will have to be validated by further investigations before wide-ranging generalizations can be drawn. It is believed, however, that this analysis can be an initial step in the search for distinctive features of translated film language.

subject is hardly ever grammatically compulsory in Italian, the use of first and second personal pronouns conveys further emphasis and contrast, expressing the empathy and self-centredness of spoken discourse (Berruto 1985, cf. also Serratrice 2002). These features are thus good candidates as markers of simulated orality, and have been described as such for recent Italian TV series (Morucci 2003). The analysis of the translated corpus shows in fact that first and second person singular pronouns together occur in the five translated films with a frequency and use similar to those of conversational Italian (see Figure 1 in the Appendix⁵). First and second person pronouns express emphasis on the participants to the interaction, emotional involvement and contrast. Two examples are given in (3) and (4):

- (3) *Sì, sì. Era nell'ascensore poco fa, le è caduto un orecchino e io l'ho raccolto.*
 Yes, yes. You were in the lift just now. You dropped your earring, I picked it up. (*Sliding doors/Sliding Doors*)
- (4) *Se ci soffri tanto perché non lo chiami tu? È tuo fratello!*
 Well, if you're that bothered, why don't you ring him yourself? (*Segreti e bugie/Secrets and Lies*)

However, a count of the individual pronouns shows that second person pronouns are relatively more frequent in the dubbed films than they are in spontaneous spoken Italian. This is presumably due to the dialogic nature of film language, which is characterized by short turns and frequent questions (cf. Rossi 2002, Stewart 2003), signs of a greater orientation towards the listener. Consistently with stronger interactivity in film language, the second person pronouns of respect *lei* are much more frequent in the translated film corpus than they are in spontaneous spoken Italian (Figure 2).

The peculiarity of film language as reflected in second person pronominal usage is confirmed by the frequencies of third person masculine and feminine subject pronouns (see Figure 2). Both *lui*, 'he', and *lei*, 'she' occur in the film corpus less frequently than in the reference corpus of spoken Italian. The higher frequency of second person pronouns, coupled with fewer occurrences of third person pronouns, shows a greater emphasis on the people who actively take part in the one-to-one interactions portrayed on the screen. It also suggests that in film dialogues

5. Comparisons are drawn with *Lessico di frequenza dell'Italiano Parlato* (LIP), a major corpus of spoken Italian (De Mauro *et al.* 1993). The LIP corpus consists of five subsections of 100,000 words each, for a total of about 500,000 words. From the LIP corpus the frequencies in the first subsection, which includes face-to-face conversations in various settings (at home, at work, at school, etc.) are reported. The frequencies of the whole corpus are also reported here, which come from all the five sections and include telephone conversations and more formal interactions as well as monological speech in different institutional settings (De Mauro *et al.* 1993: 39–41).

characters are involved in talking to one another more than talking about a third, absent party, whose exact reference may in fact be less accessible to viewers.

This increased interaction between participants does not appear to be simply a byproduct of the translation process but may be an inherent feature of film language in general. An analysis of the occurrences of personal pronouns in the five source film dialogues in fact shows greater frequency of second person pronouns coupled with a smaller frequency of third person pronouns in the simulated dialogues in comparison to conversational English (Figure 3).

2.2 Syntactic organization

There has been a long debate on whether spoken language is syntactically simpler or less elaborated than written language (e.g. Halliday 1987, Finegan and Biber 2001). Some features have typically been used to assess the degree of language and textual complexity. Among them we find the ratio between dependent and independent clauses as well as the type of subordination (e.g. Biber 1992, Miller and Weinert 1998, Milroy 2001, Masi 2003). With reference to Italian, research has further shown that a distinction must be drawn between different registers of spoken language, with conversation consistently exhibiting a lower share of subordination than more formal written and spoken registers of the language (Voghera 1992, Berretta 1994a, Berruto and Bescotti 1995). In conversation, subordination is relatively rare, with explicit clauses being realized through few, very frequent connectors (Berretta 1994a).

When assessing the resemblance of dubbed language to spontaneous spoken language, two aspects can thus be quantified: the ratio of dependent/independent clauses and the type of subordination used. First of all, an analysis of dependent and independent clauses over the total number of clauses in a sample of about 2500 words (500 words in each film) has yielded 22.4% dependent clauses as opposed to 77.6% independent clauses. These percentages correspond to the results from a corpus-based study of spoken Italian (Voghera 1992), in which conversation can be compared with more formal spoken genres (Figure 4). From the sample analysed it appears that the overall level of syntactic complexity of the five films translated from English is very similar to that of spontaneous spoken Italian,⁶ as also suggested by similar percentages obtained for *Born yesterday*, a film translated in the 1950's (Rossi 1999) and an American TV series dubbed into Italian in the late 1990s (Brincat 2000). A follow-up study on the whole transcript of *Notting Hill*

6. It should also be noticed that the analysis of the parallel English extracts from the corpus has yielded a ratio of dependent/independent clauses comparable to the Italian sample (23.4% versus 76.6%).

has confirmed the alignment of dubbed Italian with conversation both in terms of the percentage of dependent and independent clauses and in terms of other measurements of syntactic complexity such as level of embedding and number of words per clause (Liparota 2005).

The degree of similarity in overall syntactic structure between dubbed Italian and spontaneous speech can also be tested on the rank and frequencies of the most common subordinators in the spoken language: *che*, 'that' complementizer, *se*, 'if' and *quando* 'when', exemplified in (5), (6), (7) respectively.

- (5) È mortificata *che* quattro persone qui sono state colte da avvelenamento da cibo.
You're sorry *that* four of the staff here have been cut down with food poisoning. (*Sliding doors/Sliding Doors*)
- (6) Io sono qui Gerry, *se* hai bisogno di parlare con me, di qualsiasi cosa.
I'm here, Gerry, *if* you need to talk to me about anything.
(*Sliding doors/ Sliding Doors*)
- (7) Ma, lui mi ha chiesto di fargli da guida spirituale e di stargli vicino *quando* morirà.
But... he asked me to be his spiritual advisor, to be with him *when* he dies.
(*Dead man walking – Condannato a morte /Dead Man Walking*)

The frequencies of the three major subordinators shown in figure 5 do in fact suggest that dubbed Italian reproduces some structural aspects of Italian conversation, with comparable occurrences of major subordinate clauses, and no substantial increase in level of formality in dubbed films.

Further evidence of restrained formality in dubbed texts is given by the frequency of a few formal connectors, which are remarkably rare in the five films investigated (21 altogether), in line with what happens in unplanned speech. These formal conjunctions include *benché*, 'although', *nonostante* 'notwithstanding', *sebbene* 'although' (cf. De Mauro *et al.* 1993), concessive connectors typical of the written language, which, if frequent, would have brought greater formality on a syntactic level.

These results on both dependent and independent clauses as well as subordinators and formal connectors in the translated film corpus point to an evolving, underlying norm⁷ in Italian dubbed language. According to this norm, the general structure of translated film language is moving closer to that of spontaneous conversation than to more formal varieties of the language. More investigations

7. Norms are here to be interpreted as a descriptive notion which is typical and recurrent usage, rather than what people think should be done in given contexts.

are needed to confirm the trend and evaluate its status as a translational norm in Italian and other languages as well.

2.3 Weak connectors

Textual and pragmatic relations in spontaneous speech can also be established through the use of so called “weak” connectors, general linking words which do not create syntactic dependencies between clauses and often function as discourse markers with a variety of pragmatic functions (Berruto 1985, Chafe and Danielewicz 1987, Beretta 1994a). Weak connectors in Italian include the conjunctions *e* ‘and’ and *ma* ‘but’ (Testa 1988, cf. also Chafe and Danielewicz 1987, Dorgeloh 2004), the adverbs *allora* ‘then’ or ‘so’, and *insomma* ‘in conclusion’, ‘so’, ‘well’ (e.g. Bazzanella 1994), the reformulation marker *cioè* ‘that is’, ‘I mean’. Weak connectors are very frequent in Italian conversation (Fig. 6), where they contribute to the cohesion and interactivity of discourse, in terms of both textual structure and participants’ involvement (8).

- (8) *e poi vorrei sapere che ci fanno con sei camere... Allora, che fanno i tuoi amici questa sera?*
 what’s he want with six bedrooms, anyway? What’s all your mates doing tonight, then? (*Segreti e bugie/Secrets and lies*)

On the other hand, weak connectors are quite limited in number in the corpus of translated films (Figure 6), where they appear with an overall frequency of just over a third of the number of weak connectors in spontaneous Italian speech. Only the very common conjunctions *e* (‘and’) and *ma* (‘but’) have frequencies which come quite close to those reported for Italian conversation (Figure 7), where they perform basic turn-taking as well as linking functions (Berretta 1994a) and where they are the most frequent items in the group of weak connectors (cf. De Mauro *et al.* 1993, cf. also Pavesi 2004). *E* and *ma*, ‘and’ and ‘but’, often initiate turns (Testa 1988, cf. also Dorgeloh 2004) and in this function they serve interpersonal interactivity in film dialogues where they are used in the quick shifting of turns, as shown in (9). Interactivity thus appears as a feature of conversation taken on in dubbed language through the selection of the most frequent weak connectors of the target language.

- (9) CYNTHIA Sono famosa per le mie gambe.. Sì certo, c’è chi può.. Esci stasera?
 I’m known for my legs. If you’ve got it, flaunt it. You going out?

ROXANE	<i>E dove vado?</i>	Course I ain't.
CYNTHIA	<i>Chi sarà?</i>	Who's that?
ROXANE	<i>E che ne so? (Segreti e bugie)</i>	Well, I don't know. (<i>Secrets and Lies</i>)

As the other weak connectors are, however, markedly less frequent in the Italian translations than in conversational Italian, there generally appears to be reduced discursual cohesion in dubbed texts, as already observed for other dubbed languages, including German (Herbst 1997, Heiss 2000a) and Spanish (Chaume 2004d). Few weak connectors in the translated corpus confirm what has already been observed for both original film language and dubbed texts, where fewer discourse markers, fewer interjections and fewer expletives have been reported in comparison to either the source text or the target language (cf. Brincat 2000, Pavese and Malinverno 2000, Rossi 2002, Taylor 2004, Chaume 2004d). In particular, as pointed out by Chaume (2004d), the reduction of discourse markers in film translation requires greater reconstructing work by the viewer. I do not believe, however, that it can be simply attributed to the multimodal nature of film texts. Film dialogues share with most real life dialogues a multimodal setting as spoken language typically takes place in a shared context in which verbal signs co-occur with non-verbal signs. The observed regularity shared across different target languages thus points to a norm whereby some items are systematically left out in dubbing, although the reductive behaviour in specific areas still calls for an explanation.

2.4 Marked word orders

The last group of structures to be analyzed for the present purpose concerns marked word orders (e.g. Berretta 1995, Miller and Weinert 1998). Marked word orders feature among the syntactic constructions most frequently recognized as typical of spoken discourse. These constructions, which involve a non-canonical or marked order of clause constituents, include clefts (10, 11, 12), right dislocations (13) and left dislocations (14):

IT-CLEFTS

- (10) If it's romance we're looking for, I believe I have just the thing.
(*Notting Hill*)

WH-CLEFTS

- (11) What I have here is an adult male. (*Finding Forrester*)

REVERSE WH-CLEFTS

- (12) that's when I started writing. (*Finding Forrester*)

RIGHT DISLOCATION

- (13) always imagined it's a pretty tough job, though, acting. (*Notting Hill*)

LEFT DISLOCATION

- (14) Elisabeth, that's my middle name. (*Secrets and Lies*)

Due to their split structure, marked constructions distribute information on more elements in the utterance and thus produce less dense discourse. Through this dilution both production and comprehension in on-line communication are facilitated (Miller and Weinert 1998). As marked word orders are also used to emphasize one element or part of the utterance, they qualify as means of expressing the speakers' greater convergence and involvement in conversation (Berruto 1985, Downing 1995, McCarthy and Carter 1997, Zamora 2002, Herriman 2004). Furthermore, each marked word order performs specific functions, which in Italian include focussing on individual elements or whole propositions in *it*-clefts, building on shared knowledge in right dislocations and positioning a non-subject topic of discourse initially in left dislocations (cf. Berretta 1995). These structures are very frequent in conversational Italian and occur in spoken English as well, although not as frequently (cf. Berretta 1994b, Biber *et al.* 1999, Cresti 2000).

As already suggested by previous non-quantitative studies of dubbed language (Pavesi 1994, Malinverno 1999, Heiss 2000b, Heiss and Leporati 2000), marked word orders appear to be quite frequent in the corpus of film translations, with an overall distribution that with the exception of left dislocations reproduces quite closely that of spontaneous spoken Italian (Figure 8 and 9). In agreement with the norm of Italian speech, *it*-clefts occur very frequently in the five films, whereas *wh*-clefts are quite rare (cf. Bazzanella 1994, Cresti 2000). Right dislocations too occur repeatedly in the films in question, with a rate comparable to that of spontaneous spoken Italian, unlike left dislocations, which score well below their frequency in the target language. Right dislocations are even more frequent in the dialogues of original Italian films (Rossi 1999a).⁸

Thus *it*-clefts and right dislocations act as markers of orality in translations. That is, viewers' attention is directed to specific features of the dubbed text from which the

8. Even on a finer level of morpho-syntactic analysis, translated texts present patterns of clefts and dislocations which are similar to those found in the target language (cf. Pavesi 2005). Left dislocations in dubbed Italian are mainly on direct objects and avoid subject positions, which are most common in English. Right dislocations often occur in questions and involve semi-lexicalized patterns. *It*-clefts tend to be formulaic.

general impression of spontaneity is derived. More specifically, *it*-clefts partition utterances and foreground some elements within them, in this way helping speakers to emphasize the perspective they are taking. Right dislocations impress strong interactivity to film dialogue and perform a phatic, listener-oriented function, which is shared by second person pronouns and the conjunctions *e* and *ma*.

2.5 Summary of findings

The data presented for the four areas suggest that some major syntactic features of spontaneous spoken Italian tend at present to be reproduced in Italian film dubbing from English. Internal dubbing norms may in fact account for reliance on some features to represent orality – like pronouns and utterance structure – the deletion of others to keep within the constraints set by films' compressed time scale – like connectors – and the choice of only some features to convey and emphasize the interactionality of face-to-face communication witnessed from a distance – second person pronouns, *e* and *ma*, right dislocations. As shown by the quantitative analyses just reported and also attested to in previous descriptive studies of Italian film language translated from English (cf. also Pavese 1994, Malinverno 1999, Brincat 2000), marked word orders in particular are typical carriers of orality in Italian dubbed from English and are readily identified as “spoken features”. Their mimetic role can be extended to different language pairs including German and French (Heiss 2000b, Salibra 2000) and also applies to original Italian audiovisual productions, dating back to the 1950s (Rossi 1999a, Morucci 2003). There is thus initial evidence suggesting that specific language features conventionally represent orality in simulated dialogues in different language communities in Europe.⁹

9. In this respect it should be stressed that there is a convergence between the trends described here for some structural and discursive features of dubbed Italian and what has been suggested by Chaume (2001, 2003, 2004d) for at least one other dubbed Romance language (i.e. Catalan): frequent use of deictics, short utterances and few subordinate clauses, preference for simple juxtaposition with a reduction of discourse markers, reliance on marked word orders. Chaume's work on features of spoken language in the prefabricated spoken language of film translation partly relies on empirical observation (Chaume 2004d) and is partly based on the recommendations found in style manuals issued for Catalan television (Chaume 2003: 102–103). Although the generalizations that he puts forward are thus derived from both direct and indirect sources (cf. Toury 1995), they are well documented and offer grounds for comparisons across languages.

3. A closer look at marked word orders

3.1 Interference

So far dubbed language has been investigated from the perspective of the alignment or lack of alignment of target texts to the target system. Two further factors can be explored: interference and formulae, which can be seen as playing a role in the shaping of film language and may thus interact with target language norms and cinematic conventions in defining the type of orality which is portrayed on the screen. A linguistic as well as a crucial translational question concerns the influence on the final product of the source language through the source text. It is hard to deny the potential impact that this transfer process may exert on the shaping of any translated text. As a matter of fact, audiovisual translation appears to be strongly susceptible to source language interference (e.g. Gottlieb 2001). According to Toury (1995), interference in translation is in fact related to the modality of approach to the translation task. "The more the make-up of a text is taken as a factor in the formulation of its translation, the more the target text can be expected to show traces of interference" (*ibid.*: 276). As we know, translation for dubbing is highly constrained by various types of synchronization, which will automatically impose a strong dependence exactly on the make-up of the source text. More specifically the need to maintain the same length and the same pause structure as that of the original is likely to encourage a structural patterning which mirrors source texts. Goris's (1993) seminal investigation has empirically shown that with the narrowing of shots and focusing on the speaker's upper half and mouth there is an increasing matching of linguistic structure between the source and the target texts.

Furthermore, the permeability to the source text in audiovisual translations has been amply demonstrated by the calques which have been reported to occur systematically in dubbing and subtitling in various target languages, such as Danish, German, Italian and Spanish (Menarini 1955, Herbst 1994, 1996, Duro 2001, Gottlieb 2001, 2005, Zaro 2001, Bollettieri Bosinelli 2002, Alfieri *et al.* 2003, Pavesi 2005). However, the levels which have been mostly discussed in this respect are lexis and pragmatics, whereas very little is known about syntax, apart from some general statements on the close reproduction of the source structure in the target texts in dubbing as well as in other translation types (e.g. Garzone 2004). At the same time, among syntactic phenomena, word order has been suggested as a typical locus of interference starting from Weinreich (1953 and more recently, Muysken 2005: 24¹⁰, cf. also Gottlieb 2001: 252). Word order has also been shown to be liable to transfer in written translations (e.g. Schmid 1999).

10. The author reports a few cases of word order changes due to language contact.

In order to investigate these issues in more depth, the structural patterns of dislocations and clefts in the translated film texts have been analyzed and the occurrences of marked word orders have been compared to parallel features in the original scripts. As marked word orders are also a feature of spontaneous spoken English, a legitimate question has to do with the dependence of the translated Italian text on patterns of the source text to convey spontaneity to the target audience.¹¹ A close analysis of the parallel texts shows a good degree of independence of the target texts from the source texts. Most marked word order constructions are “added” to the translations, as the following examples from the English and the Italian texts show:

IT-CLEFT

- (15) è lei che mi ha denunciato. (instead of ‘mi ha denunciato lei’ or ‘lei mi ha denunciato’)
gloss was her that has turned me in.
 She turned me in. She called the cops. (*Dead man walking – Condannato a morte /Dead Man Walking*)

RIGHT DISLOCATION

- (16) Non la voglio una tazza di tè (instead of ‘non voglio una tazza di tè’)
gloss not it (I) want a cup of tea
 I don’t want a goddamn cup of tea (*Notting Hill/Notting Hill*)

LEFT DISLOCATION

- (17) *la prima stesura la* devi buttare giù col cuore (instead of ‘devi buttar giù la prima stesura col cuore’)
gloss the first draft it (you) must jot down with the heart.
 you write your first draft with your heart. (*Scoprendo Forrester/Finding Forrester*)

Only 16% out of a total of 286 main marked word orders are directly derived from the English texts: no direct transfer occurs for right dislocations, only 6.3% of left dislocations come from equivalent structures in the source texts. However, there is an increase in permeability for *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts: respectively 24.6% and 90.9% of the marked constructions match equivalent ones in the source texts.¹² Closer

11. A survey of marked word orders in the original texts has shown that these features occur with a frequency similar to that of conversational English (Pavesi 2005).

12. Only a negligible number of these transferred constructions are deviant, one example being *Elastic Thrombosis*. *They’re guilty of lyric poaching.* → *Gli Elastic Thrombosis. Questi sono colpevoli di plagio* (SD).

textual analysis reveals, however, that most transferred constructions are the ones placed more at the periphery of Italian spontaneous speech, such as *it*-clefts on the subject and object and *wh*-clefts, definitely quite rare in conversational Italian (Berretta 1994b) as well as in the translated films.

There thus appears to be only quite limited and selected transfer from the source films to the dubbed films for the morphosyntactic structures investigated.¹³ Thus the naturalness of the target language solutions is not carried over from English but comes from within the target language. This constrained effect of direct interference in marked word orders should be compared to what has been found for personal pronouns. As Italian is a pro-drop language, personal pronouns are almost never obligatory, unlike English where they almost always are. More specifically, in Italian, first and second person pronouns in verbal clauses tend to be grammatically redundant as in most cases person is unambiguously marked on the verb. If the source language had a wide-ranging and strong impact on the target language, there should be a very high and unnatural number of subject pronouns in the Italian texts dubbed from English, as suggested in fact by recent research on the translation of pronouns in written Italian (Cardinaletti 2004). On the contrary, first, second and third person pronouns are globally less frequent in the translated film corpus than they are in spontaneous spoken Italian. Thus, from the data presented here direct transfer does not appear to be a major factor in shaping some aspects of spoken language in dubbing.

3.2 Routines in dubbed language

Formulaic language has been described as typifying film dialogue first of all as a result of the use of conversational formulae or routines, often taken over from everyday language (e.g. Maraschio 1982, Chaume 2001, 2003, Araújo 2004). A more in depth analysis of marked word orders shows that many of these constructions are formulaic. Instances are provided by clefts on interrogative words, and by polarity clefts starting with *è che/non è che* ('it's that', 'it's not that'), both formulaic constructions repetitively used in dubbed Italian similarly to Italian unplanned speech (cf. Pavese 2005). Thus film translation conveniently latches onto target language prefabricated speech and uses it to convey spontaneity:

(18) Ah, e allora *cos'è che* volevi dire? (instead of '... *cosa* volevi dire?')

Gloss Oh, and so what is that (you) wanted to say?

Oh, and what were you gonna say? (*Scoprendo Forrester/Finding Forrester*)

13. According to Muysken (2005: 25), as grammar is inherently much more structured than lexicon, it is more resistant to external influence.

- (19) Okay, va bene, è *che* non ho altre domande da minestra. (instead of ‘Okay, va bene, non ho ...’)

Gloss Okay, all right, is that not (I) have other questions for soup.

All right, man, I guess I don’t have anymore soup questions. (*Scoprendo Forrester / Finding Forrester*)

Film translation also amplifies the formulaic nature of spontaneous spoken language through the use of stock translations or translational routines (Maraschio 1982, Pavese 1994, 2005), that is, recurrent solutions to translation problems which tend to become overextended (Tourey 1995, Gellerstam 2005). Translational routines offer some of the advantages of formulae in spontaneous interactions as they save the translator’s time, allowing the translator to choose from a pre-determined set of options, as well as reduce the viewers’ effort to understand by offering them highly repetitive and predictable language (Karamitroglou 2000).

An interesting example from the corpus of translated films is provided by right dislocations, which start from the verb *to know* in the English texts. *Do you know (that)* followed by a complement clause can be translated with *sai/sa che* ‘you know (that)’ plus a clause, or else using a right dislocation with a clitic pronoun, *lo sai che?* – ‘it do you know that ...?’. The dislocation of clauses actually accounts for a noticeable number of right dislocations in the translated film texts. This convenient stock equivalent, which also has the advantage of guaranteeing quantitative synchronization: *Do you know* → *Lo sai che* thus contributes to the impression of spontaneity, emotional involvement and interactivity in dubbed texts.

Right dislocations with *sapere* ‘to know’ are not an isolated case in film translation in which features of the source text and the norms of the target language may interact to create formulaic patterns of language use. When successful, this strategy contributes to the naturalness and acceptability of dubbed films and ultimately improves the quality of the translated products.

4. Conclusions

At least in some language areas and in the period investigated, dubbed Italian appears to result from the interaction of target language norms (which play the most significant role), source language interference (selectively and to a restricted extent), and formulaic language, a feature which has been recognized as typical of film language. These results confirm the possibility for audiovisual translation to reproduce some of the major patterns of orality of the target language. Imitation of the spoken language should in fact be taken as one of the parameters used to assess the quality of audiovisual products.

What has been discussed here, however, should not automatically be extended to all audiovisual translations. Texts dubbed for TV, for example, may well be constrained by different norms: these may include greater permeability to the source language (Alfieri *et al.* 2003), more routinized behaviour due to the serial structure of many programmes, and a weaker approximation to the spontaneous end on the formal-informal, written-spoken continua (Brincat 2000). Furthermore, the films which have been analyzed here still belong to a period in which film translation in Italy was regulated by implicit rules of translation quality (Pavesi and Perego 2006). Since 2000, we know that there has been a liberalization in translation commissions, with more and more people working in the field, a fact which may have caused a drop in the quality of dubbed texts (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005). At the same time, such widening of film translation practice may turn out to provide an excellent testing ground for assessing the strength of the translational conventions or norms that have been suggested by research so far.

Appendix

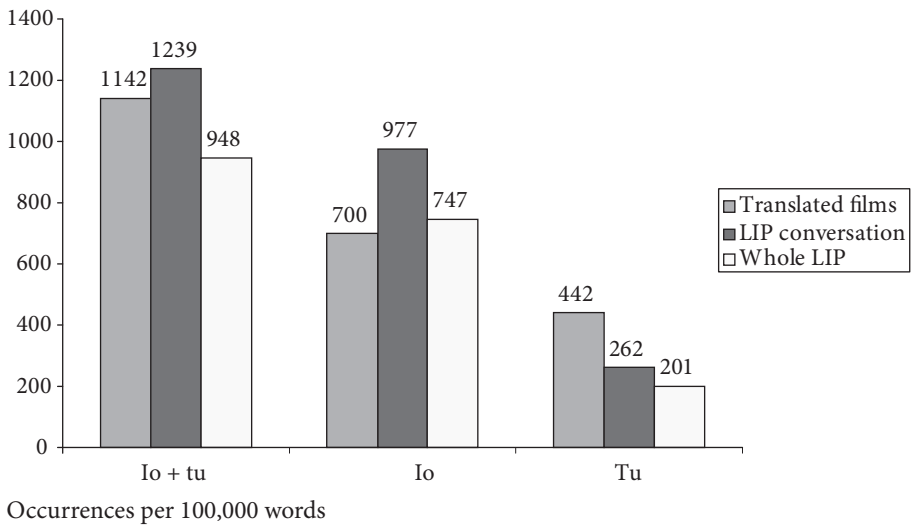


Figure 1. First and second person pronouns

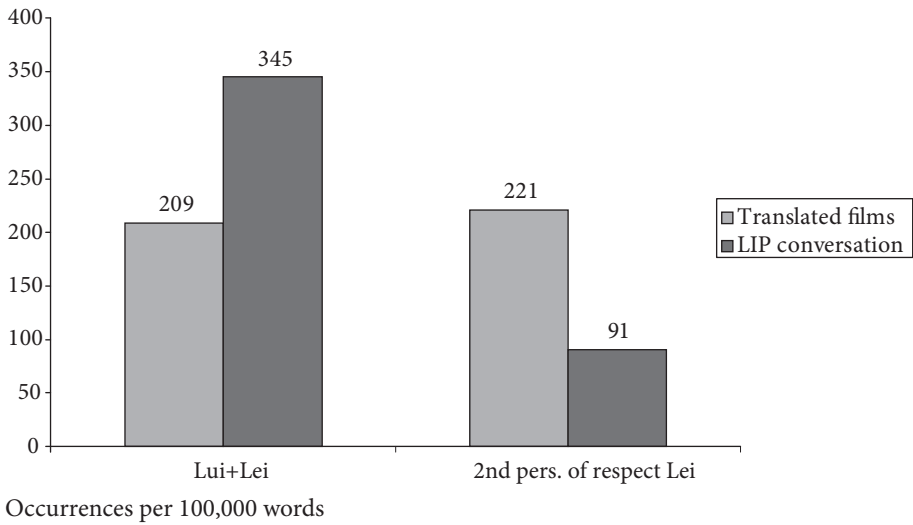


Figure 2. Third person subject pronouns

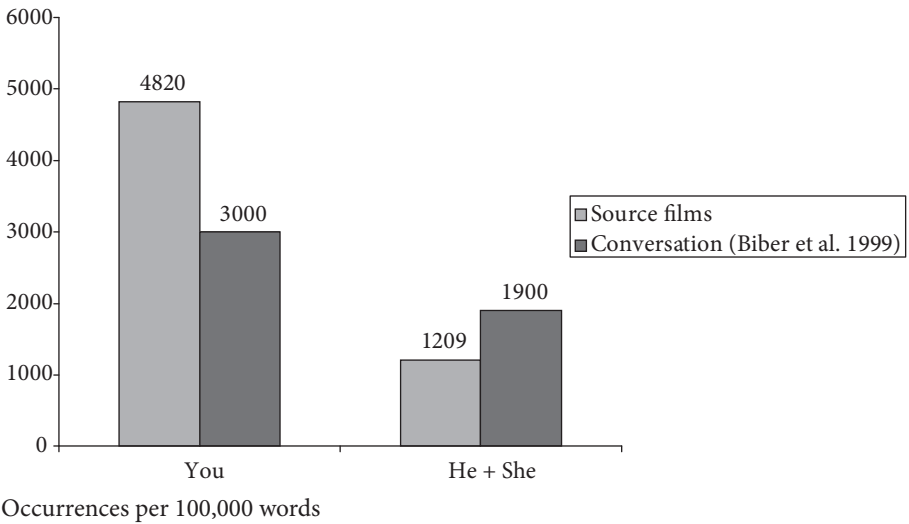


Figure 3. English second and third person pronouns

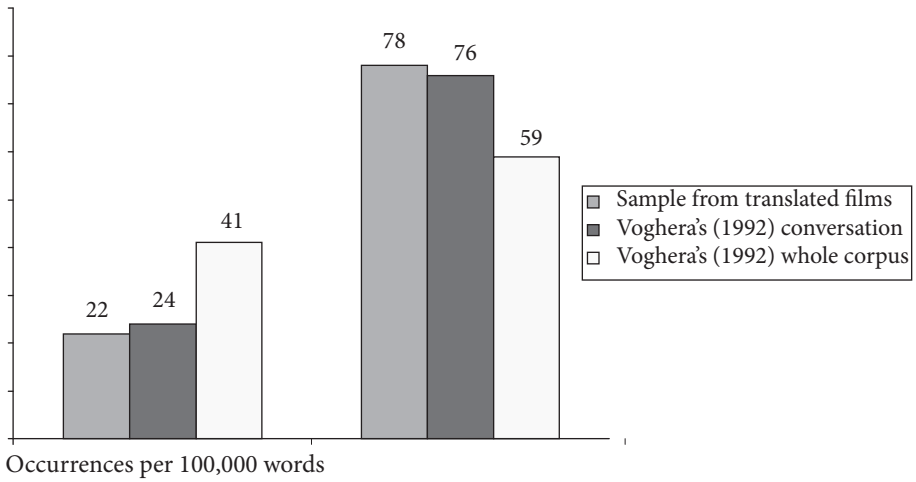


Figure 4. Percentages of dependent and independent clauses

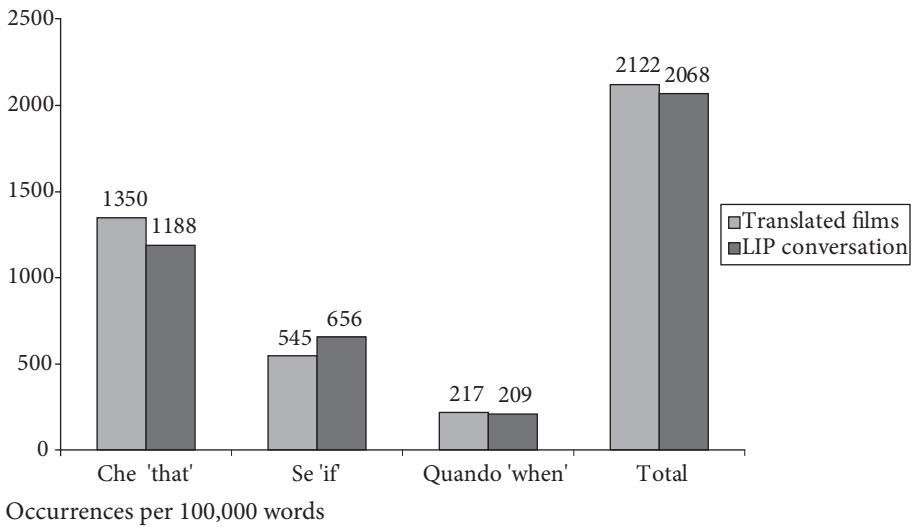
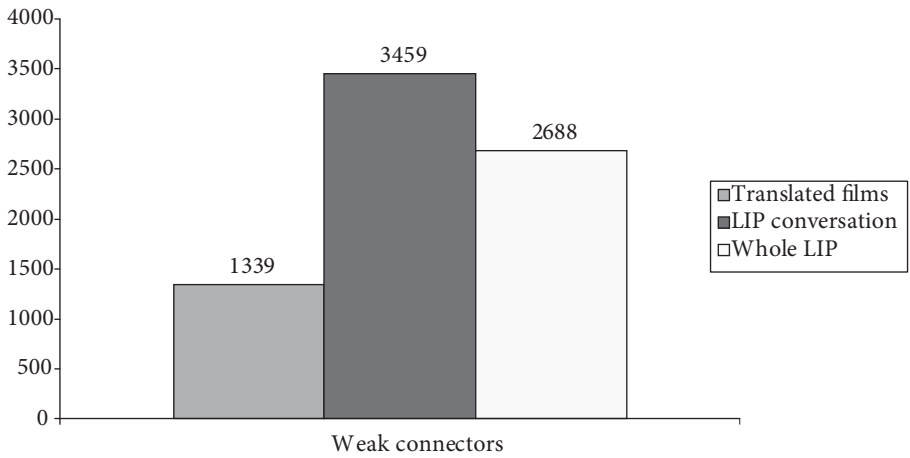
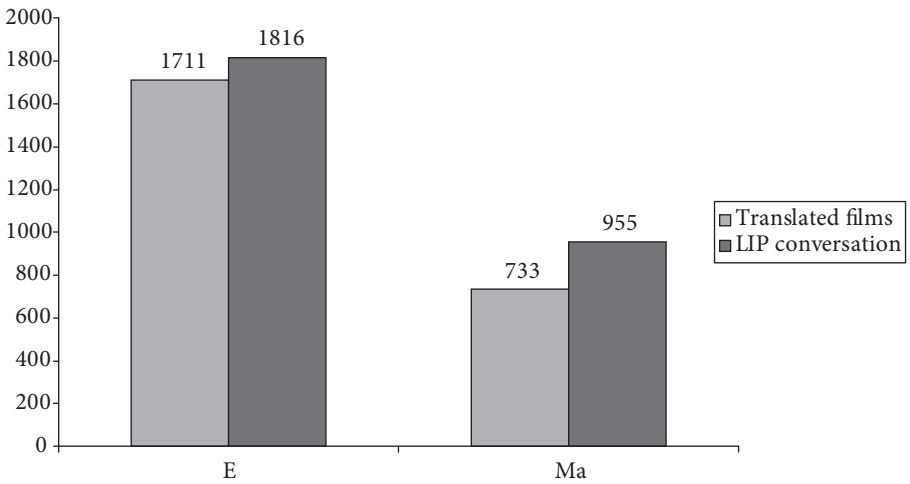


Figure 5. Major spoken language subordinators



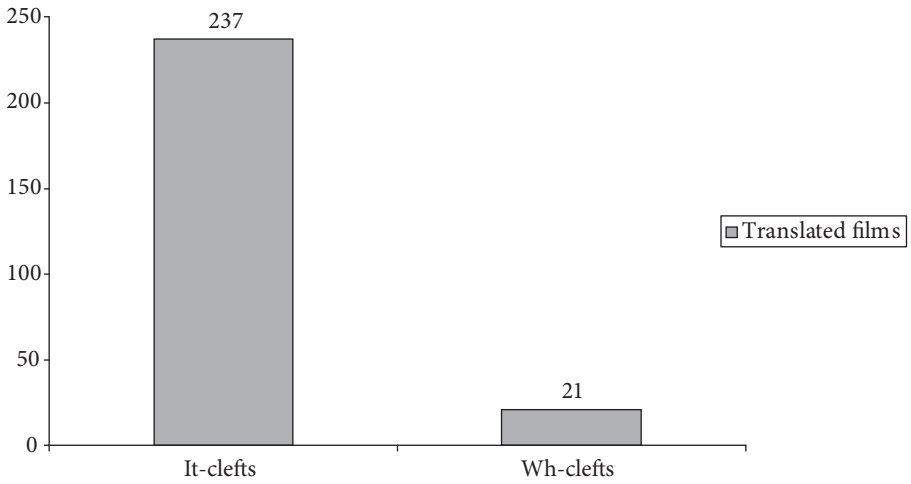
Occurrences per 100,000 words

Figure 6. Weak connectors: allora, cioè, comunque, e, insomma, ma, però, poi



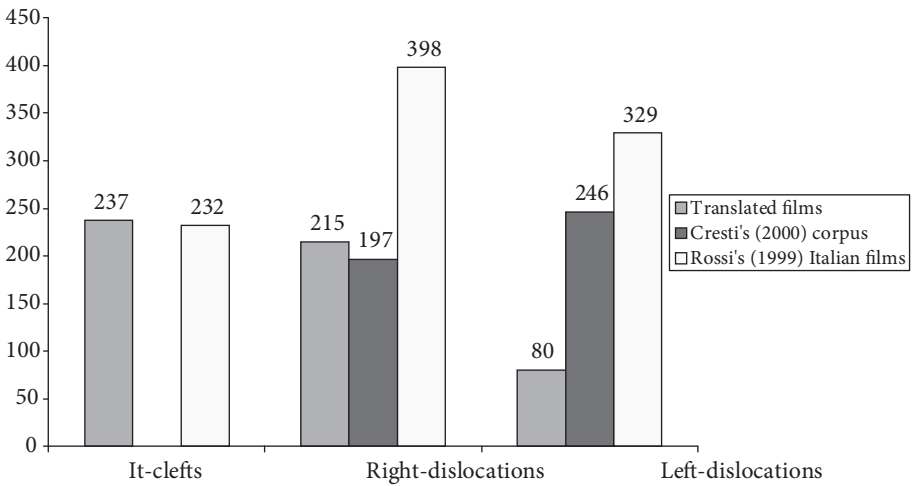
Occurrences per 100,000 words

Figure 7. E ('and') and ma ('but')



Occurrences per 100,000 words

Figure 8. Clefts in the corpus of translated films



Occurrences per 100,000 words

Figure 9. It-clefts, right and left dislocations

High felicity

A speech act approach to quality assessment in subtitling

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This paper contains some thoughts on how an approach based on speech act theory can be used for quality assessment in subtitling. It is assumed here that subtitling is a pragmatic form of translation and that it might be more felicitous to give a speaker's primary illocutionary point (what is meant to get across) precedence over what is actually said, if there is a conflict. Analyses of subtitled utterances containing Extralinguistic Cultural References (ECRs) illustrate the approach, showing that there is a difference in kind between more or less felicitous translations and translation errors. By considering the sender's primary illocutionary point first, a felicitous subtitle is faithful to the original message, despite the media-specific constraints, while giving the viewer/reader guidance to access the message. In this way, high fidelity is achieved through high felicity.

Keywords: subtitling, quality assessment, speech act theory, culture, illocutionary points

1. Introduction

When subtitling TV programmes and films, subtitlers regularly come across what can be called 'Translation Crisis Points' (such as puns, songs or slang), where they have to take extra special care, and make active decisions on how to render the item in a way that makes it accessible to the viewers. In these cases, the subtitler has to make decisions on what aspect of the translation s/he will give priority: information content, stylistics, humour or other aspects. At the same time "the famous and infamous time-and-space constraints of subtitling" (Gottlieb 2004b: 219) are ever present to the subtitler.

In this paper, we will look at how an approach based on aspects of speech act theory and skopos theory may be used for quality assessment in subtitling. It will

be claimed that subtitling is a pragmatic form of translation and that what a speaker intends to get across to her/his addressees (and the TV audience) – his/her primary illocutionary point – takes precedence over the surface structures that are the vehicle which conveys this point. A good (or felicitous) translation would be one that takes this into account, and displays fidelity to the spirit, rather than the letter, of the original message. It will also be shown that there is a difference in kind between more or less felicitous translations on the one hand and translation errors on the other.

The approach will be illustrated by analyses of utterances which contain a special kind of Translation Crisis Points, which I call Extralinguistic Cultural References (or ECRs for short). ECRs complicate the translation process for the subtitler; s/he has to make an active decision on how to bridge a gap between two cultures. Like all translators faced with this sort of problem, s/he has to help the Target Text (TT) audience make sense of the utterance of which the reference is a part, but unlike other translators s/he works in a very special and restricted medium.

2. Background

2.1 Extralinguistic Culture-bound References (ECRs)

Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (ECR) is defined as reference that is attempted by means of any culture-bound linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process, and which is assumed to have a discourse referent that is identifiable to a relevant audience, as this referent is within the encyclopedic knowledge of this audience. In other words, ECRs are expressions that refer to entities outside language, such as names of people, places, institutions, food and customs, which a person may not know, even if s/he knows the language in question. Examples could be Guy Fawkes Day as well as Doris Day. It should be pointed out that even though ECRs refer to extralinguistic entities, i.e. entities ‘outside language’ they are still verbal, i.e. they are expressed by means of language. When an ECR appears in the ST, the subtitler needs to make a decision on how to bridge this cultural gap between the presupposed encyclopaedic knowledge of the ST audience and the TT audience.

2.2 Taxonomy of subtitling strategies

The main ways in which ECRs can be rendered in subtitles are displayed in Figure 1. This taxonomy was designed to deal with the transfer strategies of ECRs, but it

is based on earlier attempts at classifying translation strategies¹ and could be viewed as a general attempt at classifying translation strategies, as the strategies are not exclusive to subtitling.

In short, the subtitler has the options of either using a Minimum Change strategy (cf. Leppihalme 1997: 200), where the ST ECR is more or less left as it is, or an Interventional strategy, where the subtitler intervenes in order to guide the TT audience. The Minimum Change strategies are:

Official Equivalent. Either through common usage or by some administrative decision, a Source Culture ECR may have an Official TL Equivalent. In these cases, the obvious strategy is to use this equivalent.

Retention. Here the ST ECR is retained unchanged, or slightly adapted to meet TL requirements, in the subtitle.

Direct Translation. With this strategy, the only feature that gets changed is the language; no semantic alteration is made. Proper nouns are rarely translated, but direct translation may be used e.g. for names of government agencies.

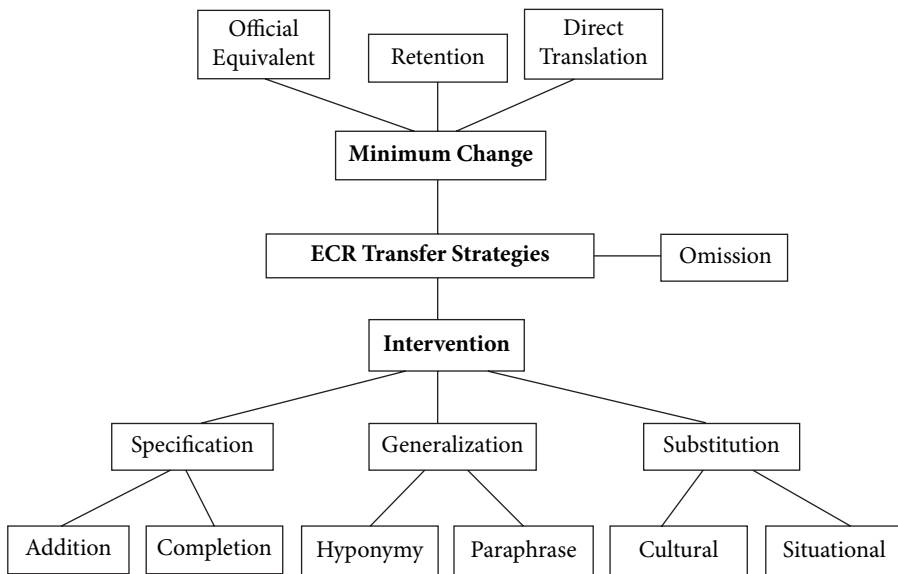


Figure 1. Taxonomy of translation strategies

1. For a discussion of how the present taxonomy relates to earlier ones, e.g. Vinay and Darbelnet's, and a fuller discussion on the strategies, the reader is referred to Pedersen (2007)

The Interventional strategies are:

Specification. More information is added, making the subtitled ECR more specific than the ST ECR. This is done by completing a name or an acronym (Completion) or by adding more semantic content, such as adding someone's occupation or an evaluative adjective (Addition).

Generalization. This strategy makes the subtitle less specific than the ST ECR. It can be done either by using a Hypernym, a Holonym or a Paraphrase.

Substitution. The ST ECR is replaced by another ECR, either from the Source Culture or the Target Culture. Alternatively, the ST ECR can be replaced with something totally different that fits the situation.

Besides these strategies, Toury (1995: 82) has successfully shown that Omission is a legitimate translation strategy, and it is perhaps more used in subtitling than in any other form of translation, due to the restrictions of the medium.

2.3 Limiting parameters: Media-specific constraints and Transculturality

Media-specific constraints. The constraints that need concern us here are time and space, which on average necessitate a condensation of the verbal material by a third (cf. e.g. Gottlieb 1997b: 73). For further discussion on these issues, the reader is referred to the works by Luyken *et al.* (1991), Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), or Gottlieb (1997b, 2000).

Transculturality (cf. Welsch 1999). The notion of Transculturality deals with the point that not all ECRs cause Translation Crisis Points. Some ECRs, which I call Transcultural ECRs, are more or less equally known to the TT audience as to the ST audience. Then there are what I call Microcultural ECRs, which the producers of the ST cannot expect the majority of their audience to know. These two categories of ECRs do not normally cause any Translation Crisis Points. There is a scale between these two points and in the middle of this scale are Monocultural ECRs, which are known to the ST audience, but inaccessible to the TT audience, and these often call for an Interventional strategy.

3. Quality assessment

When analyzing solutions to translation problems caused by ECRs (and also other coupled pairs [cf. Toury 1995: 87], for that matter), the analyst regularly comes

across translation shifts between ST and TT.² These shifts are among the most important reasons for doing translation research in the first place; without them, translation would be unproblematic, a mere matter for machines.

Consider the following examples from the *Scandinavian Subtitles* project.³ The first example comes from the movie *The Fugitive* (Andrew Davies, 1993). There is a St. Patrick's Day parade in Chicago, and many references are made to traditional Irish culture. In the background, a voice on the P.A. comments the parade and he makes the following suggestion:

- (1) Maybe we ought to dress the alderman up as a shamrock
one of these days.

Swedish subtitle:

Vi måste klä ut våra gamla till troll nån gång.

Back translation:

We must dress up our elderly as trolls some time.

(*The Fugitive*: 1:20:44)

In example (1), 'the Alderman' has been translated as 'the elderly', and 'a shamrock' has become 'a troll'.⁴

The second example is from the sitcom *The Office* (Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant, 2002 BBC) where they are having a "Red Nose Day", i.e. behaving in supposedly funny ways in order to raise money for charity. One of the characters, Tim Canterbury, is against the idea, and instead he mentions a few cases of more dignified charity:

- (2) ...or, I don't know... an old bloke selling poppies.

Danish subtitle:

– eller I ved, en gammel mand står og sælger hvalpe...

Back translation:

– or, you know, an old man selling puppies...

(*The Office*, 11 3.34)

In example (2) the paper poppies that are sold on and before Remembrance Day to support war veterans have become young dogs.

2. "By 'shifts' we mean departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL (Source Language) to the TL (Target Language)." (Catford 1965/2000: 141).

3. *Scandinavian Subtitles* is a comparative study of 100 Anglophone films and TV programmes and their Danish and Swedish subtitles, which is the basis for my dissertation, by the same name (2007).

4. An alderman is a person holding a high public office in Chicago, similar to that of mayor or councilor.

The third example is from the movie *L.A. Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, 1997) where a politician is opening the construction of the final stretch of freeway to the Pacific Coast by using a famous quote from the expansionist past of the USA:

- (3) “Go west, America” was the slogan of Manifest Destiny.

Swedish subtitle:

“Åk västerut, Amerika” var Manifest Destinys slogan.

Back translation:

“Go west, America” was the slogan of Manifest Destiny.

(*L.A. Confidential* 1.02.05)

There is no translation shift at all in example (3); it is a verbatim translation. The only problem is that even though all culturally literate Americans, according to Hirsch (1987: 186), are familiar with the expression ‘Manifest Destiny’, it means absolutely nothing to the majority of Swedes, and the term is in no way self-evident.

The fourth example is from the beginning of the movie *The Last Boy Scout* (Tony Scott, 1991). Some unknown person or persons have just blown up the hero’s car (and the hero’s wife’s lover), and his wife Sarah wants to know:

- (4) Sarah: Who the fuck did this, Joe?

Joe: Mr. Rogers. (Pause) How the hell should I know?

Danish subtitle:

– Hvem fanden gjorde det?

– Anders And.

(New subtitle) Hvor skulle jeg hvide det fra?

Back translation:

– Who the hell did this?

– Donald Duck.

(New subtitle) How should I know?

(*Last Boy Scout* 18.07)

In example (4), Mr. Rogers has become Donald Duck, probably because the subtitler deliberately made a Cultural Substitution here, in order to present the viewers with an ECR which is (a) better known (b) unlikely to have blown up the hero’s car.

Even if the translation shift is just as great in (4) as it is in (1), and perhaps greater than the shift in (2), at a pre-theoretical level, it would seem like there is an important difference between them. One might even want to call (1) and (2) “errors” and (4) “creative”. Example (3) is not an error; it has been rendered verbatim, but in some ways it is inferior to the solution in (4), which has much in common with (1) and (2). The question is: how can we account for differences linguistically?

4. The basic unit of translation in subtitling

The answer may lie in what we consider to be the basic unit in subtitling. Due to the constraints of the medium of subtitling, candidates such as the word or the sentence are not really suitable as basic units of translation here. Instead, the speech act could be considered a good unit of translation for subtitling, as the need for condensation makes subtitling a pragmatic form of translation. Gottlieb advocates speech act-based translation: "In subtitling, the speech act is in focus; verbal intentions and visual effects are more important than lexical elements in isolation." (2000: 19). There are problems with speech acts, however. One problem has to do with indirect speech acts (Searle 1979: 30ff.), which are often turned into direct speech acts in subtitles, because they are often more concise. Therefore, I would like to suggest that one look beyond the speech act, to Gottlieb's "verbal intentions" or what Searle calls a speaker's "primary illocutionary point" (1979: 33)

5. Locution

Let us briefly wander into the domain of mainstream speech act theory, to get our terms straight. In his book on "Understanding Pragmatics", Verschuren illustrates the notion of primary illocutionary point as follows: If the speaker says "Can you call me a taxi?", the literal or direct speech act is a question, which concerns the hearer's taxi-calling abilities. However, "the 'primary illocutionary point' is that of a request: the utterance counts as an attempt to get the hearer to call a taxi" (1999: 25). If the speaker is lucky, and the hearer is favourably disposed to the speaker, the perlocutionary effect may be that the speaker gets the taxi. What is particularly useful here is the notion of illocutionary points, or what the "[s]peaker intends to achieve by making the particular utterance U_i in the particular context C_i " (Allan 1998). Verschuren indicates that there may be more than one illocutionary point; he mentions e.g. that the question (about the hearer's ability to call a taxi) "is secondary at best" (1999: 25). Let us for the moment then consider a speaker's primary illocutionary point as the basic unit of translation in subtitling. What the speaker wants to get across is the most important thing to subtitle. But who is the speaker?

6. Communication structure

The problem with films, and particularly subtitled films, is that the traditional speech act scenario is too simplified. What needs to be done here is to expand the theory to include more participants. This has been done before (e.g. by Clark 1996 and

Goffman 1981). They include “side participants”, who are ratified participants and who may take part in the conversation if they choose to. “All other listeners are overhearers, who have no rights or responsibilities in it [the conversation]. Overhearers come in two main types” (Clark 1996 :14). First, there are “bystanders”, who are not ratified participants, but the speaker is aware of them. Second, there are “eavesdroppers” (Goffman 1981: 132), who can listen in on the conversation without the speaker’s being aware of their existence. This model (reproduced here as Figure 2) is better, but it still falls short of the participant structure of the subtitled film.

An example from the sitcom *Friends* (Gary Halvorson, 2003 NBC) may illustrate the problem. In example (5), Chandler has just entered the coffee shop Central Perk, where all his friends are, and announced that he has great news:

(5) Phoebe: What’s your news?

Chandler: Thank you. I got a job in advertising.

(*Friends*, 9 15 00:10)

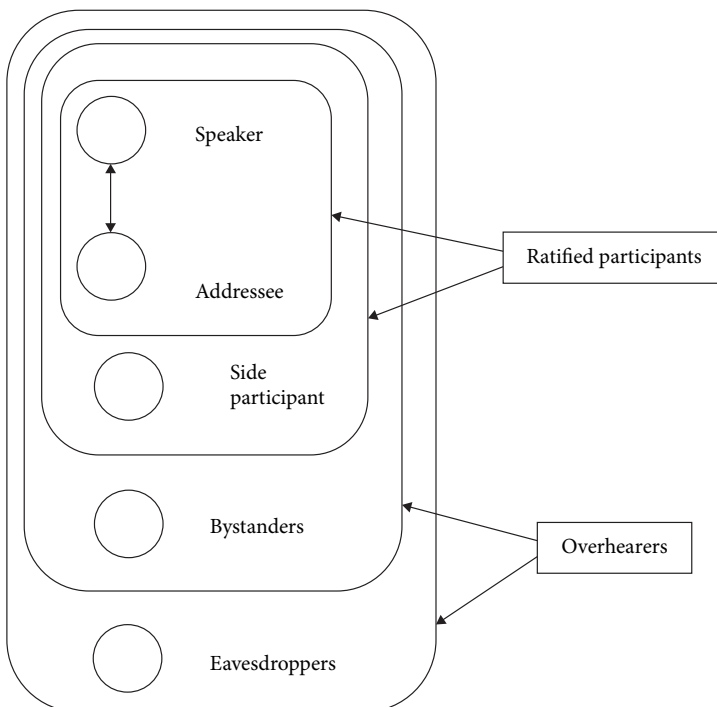


Figure 2. Clark’s participant model (adapted from 1996:14)

In example (5) Phoebe is the speaker and Chandler is the addressee and then vice versa. Phoebe makes a speech act by asking her question and her primary illocutionary point is to learn what Chandler's news is. The rest of the friends are all ratified side participants, who can, and do, take part in the conversation at various times. Central Perk is full of people, who are bystanders. An eavesdropper might be someone hiding behind the sofa, trying to listen in. So far, so good. The problem is that this is all fictional and the potential person behind the sofa is not the only eavesdropper. According to this model, everyone with a TV set and an interest in American sitcoms is an eavesdropper, and more importantly, these eavesdroppers are the main reason for the conversation. So, the model needs to be expanded further.

The model I propose here is based on Goffman 1981, but it further elaborates the audience design in television. The speaker and the addressee are still at the centre of attention; their (speech) action affects the immediate audience, which is composed of side participants and overhearers. This is what happens on screen. The real communication takes place on a higher level, though, where someone decides what the speaker is to say. Let us just call this someone the original sender (or "author" in Goffman's terms; 1981: 144), because this someone is really an amalgam of people: foremost the script writers, but also directors, producers, actors, and perhaps even the executives at NBC, who are ultimately responsible for the production. They communicate indirectly to the final (TV) audience (Goffman 1981: 138) through the characters in the program. One of the original sender's most powerful tools for reaching the desired perlocutionary effect is what I call the intermediate audience, which consists of a studio audience or "canned laughter." Finally, there is a second final audience, which the original sender rarely considers: the overseas market, which has to rely on screen translation to access the message.⁵ So, to sum it all up: A speaker produces a speech act, an addressee reacts to it, the immediate audience may react to the speaker and the addressee, the intermediate audience reacts to everybody on stage, and the final audience reacts to everything.

5. One of the reasons for varying quality in subtitles is that the subtitlers work independently of the original senders (NBC has nothing to do with the subtitling of *Friends*), often without any possibility of getting information or clarification from them.

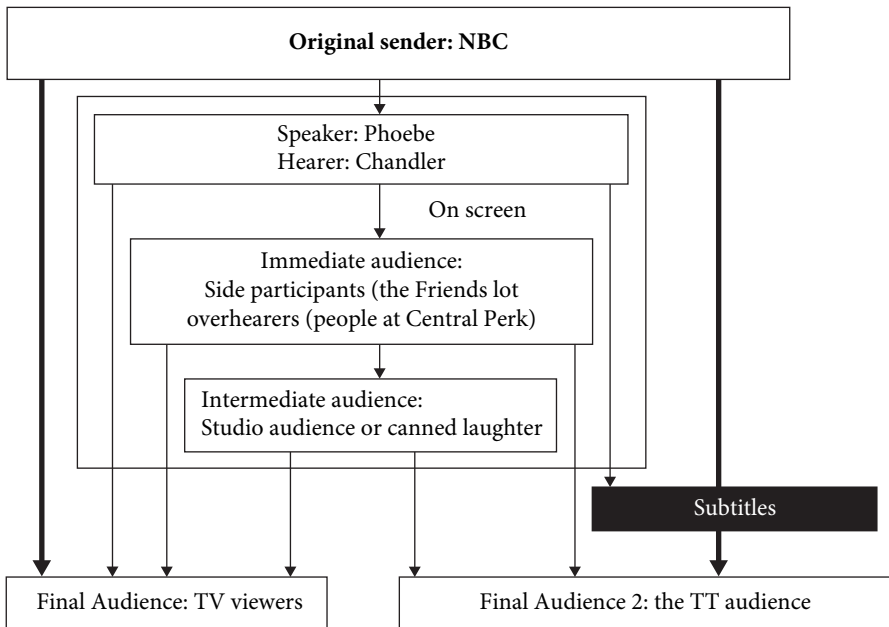


Figure 3. Communication structure in television

All this is important because sometimes we need to know whose illocutionary point we consider to be primary in the subtitles. Consider example (6) where Phoebe and Joey are discussing the future of their friends Ross and Rachel:

(6) Phoebe: They should be a family. They should get married and have more children.

Joey: Yes, and they should name one of their kids Joey. I may not have kids; someone's gotta carry on the family name.

(*Friends*, 9_14: 3: 02)

On the surface level, Joey's illocutionary point is to voice his desire for his family name to survive. But surely that is not the ultimate purpose of the utterance. The ultimate illocutionary point here is to make a joke based on his being stupid, by making him disclose the fact that he does not know what his family name is. This can hardly be Joey's primary illocutionary point, though, for two very obvious reasons: (a) It is not normally people's intention to appear stupid (b) Joey is fictional. The ultimate illocutionary point of the joke is thus not Joey's, but the original sender's. In line with Vermeer (1989/2000) and Nord (1997), we will call this ultimate illocutionary point, this ultimate purpose of the utterance, the *skopos* of

the utterance.⁶ This means that if there is a conflict about whose illocutionary point we give priority to in the subtitles, the original sender's illocutionary point, which is the *skopos* of the utterance, may be more felicitous to consider as the primary one.

Looking at the "other end" of this model, which is where the subtitles come in, we have to consider what Searle calls "illocutionary effect", which is not the same as perlocutionary effect, which is the change that a speech act brings about. Searle puts it like this: "[...] the illocutionary effect (to distinguish it from the perlocutionary effect) [is] an essential part of the successful and nondefective performance of the speech act. Illocutionary effect is a matter of understanding the utterance" (Searle *at al.* 1992: 140). The task of the subtitles is then to make sure that the TT audience gets as much of the illocutionary effect as the original audience, insofar as this is possible.⁷ The illocutionary effect of an utterance may be impossible to achieve if any ECRs therein are inaccessible to the TT audience.

7. Primary illocutionary point analysis

According to Searle, a speaker may convey two illocutionary points in the same (indirect) speech act, one primary, which is non-literal and a secondary one which is literal (1979: 34). He goes on to explain how a hearer uses inferential strategies to decide which is which: "The inferential strategy is to establish, first, that the primary illocutionary point departs from the literal, and second what the primary illocutionary point is" (1979: 35). The implications for subtitling, and for this approach to quality assessment is hierarchical; it is important to transfer the secondary illocutionary point, but not as important as transferring the primary one. This means that a series of translation priorities can be established, as suggested and pioneered by Zabalbeascoa in 1994 (91), and further developed in 1999.

The model would then look like this: In a felicitous translation, the speaker's illocutionary points ought to be preserved. If there has to be a choice between primary and secondary illocutionary points, it is more felicitous to transfer the

6. *Skopos* usually refers to the purpose of an entire text, but it is "not only valid for complete actions, such as whole texts, but also apply as far as possible to segments of actions, parts of a text" (Vermeer 1989/2000: 222). This is particularly true when, as in this case, the *skopos* of the text (the *Friends* episode) and the *skopos* of the subtext (Joey's utterance) coincide: the *skopos* of the text is to amuse, as it is a comedy, and the *skopos* of the subtext is a joke.

7. Absolute equivalence of illocutionary effect between original and TT audience is probably an absolute impossibility, due to differences of composition, cultural background, expectations, etc. between the two audiences. For a fuller discussion on this topic, the reader is referred to Chesterman's criticism of the notion of equivalence (e.g. 1997: 10f).

primary one. The problem for subtitlers is naturally that the primary illocutionary point has to be inferred, and it can sometimes be hard to see which point is primary, or even that there are more than one. The context, however, could enable the subtitler to decide whether there are conflicting illocutionary points. Then a proper translation strategy would be used to render the primary illocutionary point, thus achieving a translation that is felicitous in that it is true to the primary illocutionary point of the speaker, while at the same time securing the illocutionary effect for the TT audience, by helping it access this illocutionary point. Thus, high fidelity is achieved through high felicity. Furthermore, if there is a conflict between the speaker's primary illocutionary point and the *skopos* of the utterance, it would be more felicitous to give priority to the *skopos*. This hierarchy of translation priorities is illustrated in Figure 4. If a translation renders neither the primary nor the secondary illocutionary point, it is an erroneous translation. This hardly needs to be analyzed, as in most cases it is obvious when an error of translation has been made: there simply is no reason for the translation shift.

Let us now return to our first four examples, and try to analyze them by using the primary illocutionary point as the basic unit of translation.

In example (1) from *The Fugitive*, “Maybe we ought to dress the Alderman up as a shamrock one of these days” was turned into the Swedish equivalent of “We must dress up our elderly as trolls some time.” The speaker's primary illocutionary point would have been to make a joke at the alderman's expense. The alternative is that he actually wants to dress the alderman up as a shamrock, but that is clearly

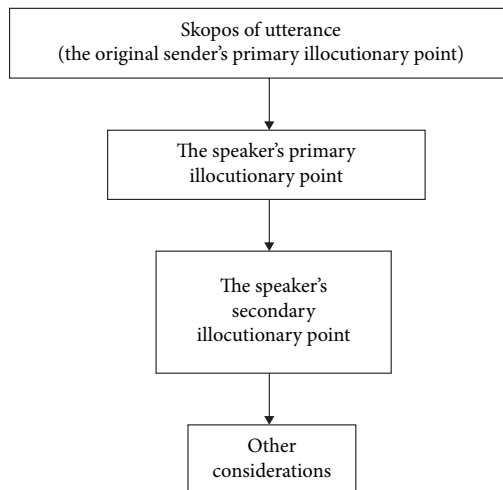


Figure 4. Hierarchy of translation priorities based on illocutionary points

secondary. The translation reflects neither of the illocutionary points. It is an error. A more felicitous translation solution was used by a Danish subtitler of this sequence: Omission. The message on the P.A. is barely audible and the *skopos* of the utterance would have been to have a verbal complement to the parade. Subtitling it gave it higher prominence for the TT audience than it had for the original audience, so the illocutionary effect is different for the two audiences. The subtitles may even have confused the TT audience, who may have thought that the message had some bearing on the plot, which it did not. Omitting it is just as warranted as omitting the lyrics of a song in the background. Subtitling it may have been counterproductive to the *skopos* of the utterance.

In example (2), from *The Office* “an old bloke selling poppies” turned into the Danish equivalent of “an old man selling puppies.” The Speaker’s primary illocutionary point was to share his views on forms of dignified charity, and his secondary point was to achieve this by mentioning a canonical case of such charity. The translation reflects neither the primary, nor the secondary illocutionary point. It is an error, probably caused by mishearing. A more felicitous translation was produced by a Swedish subtitler of the same sequence, which was:

(2’) en krigsveteran som säljer Vallmoblomman

Back translation:

a war veteran selling the Poppy Flower

This translation renders the Monocultural ECR ‘poppies’ accessible to the Swedes, who need guidance, as there is no equivalence of Poppy Day in Sweden. The subtitler has used Specification (Addition) by explicitly mentioning war veterans, and even if there is no institution of “Vallmoblomman” in Sweden, it bears a resemblance to “Majblomman”, which is a similar Swedish charity, albeit with children and not war veterans as beneficiaries.

In example (3) from *L.A. Confidential* “Go west, America’ was the slogan of Manifest Destiny” was rendered verbatim in the Swedish subtitle. The speaker’s primary illocutionary point was to appeal to his audience’s sense of tradition and patriotism. His secondary illocutionary point was to achieve this by evoking the memory and slogan of Manifest Destiny. The translation does not reflect the fact that ‘Manifest Destiny’ would be inaccessible to the majority of the TT audience. It is not an error; the secondary illocutionary point was reproduced in the subtitles: the TT audience now knows what the slogan of Manifest Destiny was. The primary illocutionary point is not reproduced, however; the TT audience cannot access the connotations of tradition and American patriotism that the speaker wanted to evoke. This is thus not a very felicitous translation. A more felicitous solution could look like the one a Danish subtitler of the same utterance has chosen:

(3) “Go west, America” was the slogan of Manifest Destiny.

Danish subtitle:

“Drag vestpå, Amerika,” sagde de i gamle dage.

Back translation:

“Go west, America,” they said in the old days.

In (3'), the ECR ‘Manifest Destiny’ has been replaced by a paraphrase which has kept only one of the connotations of the ST ECR, that of tradition. Thus, the illocutionary effect of the secondary illocutionary point, that of actually mentioning ‘Manifest Destiny’ is lost to the TT audience, but the primary illocutionary point, that of evoking feelings of tradition is retained (the patriotic connotations are retained in the word ‘America’ in the same utterance; there is some redundancy here.)

In example (4) from *The Last Boy Scout*, the person who was stated as having blown up the hero’s car, “Mr. Rogers”, was rendered as the Danish equivalent of ‘Donald Duck’. The primary illocutionary point in the utterance is to give a sarcastic answer to a stupid question. The secondary illocutionary point was to achieve this by naming Mr. Rogers as the highly unlikely, or even impossible perpetrator. The subtitler has sacrificed the secondary (literal) illocutionary point in order to salvage the primary one. The translation still ironically names an impossible perpetrator, so the translation is highly felicitous. The only drawback to this solution is that it disregards a feature of a subtitled film that Gottlieb calls “the feedback-effect from the original” (1994b: 268), as the TT audience can hear the words “Mr. Rogers”. I have analyzed two independent Swedish subtitled versions of this sequence, and both opted for Retention here. The advantage of this solution is that there is no incongruity that can get picked up by the feedback-effect, and the secondary illocutionary point is preserved. However, as ‘Mr. Rogers’ is inaccessible to the Swedish TT audience, the primary illocutionary point is completely lost. Instead of the illocutionary effect of sarcasm, the Swedish TT audience is bound to take the statement at face value, and think that ‘Mr. Rogers’ is a villainous character in the film. That makes this solution less felicitous than the Danish one. This movie is an action comedy, so it has the dual *skopos* of being exciting and funny. Thus, it is important to endeavour to retain or recreate the jokes in the film. This was not done in the Swedish subtitles, so that makes this solution even less felicitous.

Finally, I would like to persist in my conviction that there is a difference not in degree, but actually in kind, between the translations in examples (1) and (2) and (3) and (4), respectively. The translations in (1) and (2) are errors, defined as non-obligatory translation shifts that are unmotivated and which render neither the speaker’s primary nor his/her secondary illocutionary points.⁸ The translations in

8. For the difference between free and obligatory shifts in translation, the reader is referred to Vinay & Darbelnet 1958/2000.

(3) and (4) are more or less felicitous, as they render either the primary or the secondary illocutionary points. There is thus a difference in degree (of felicity) between (3) and (4), but a difference in kind between (4) and (1). Felicitous translations are based on awareness of translation strategies and efforts to get the original primary illocutionary point across. Errors are caused by factors like mishearing, lack of lexical or cultural knowledge or pure incompetence.

8. Conclusion

This paper has put forward an approach to quality assessment of subtitles based on aspects of speech act theory and *skopos* theory. It has shown how utterances containing ECRs can be rendered in a felicitous way, so that the speaker's intentions – if not her/his actual choice of words – can get through to the TT audience. The approach is, however, meant to be general, and not limited to utterances containing ECRs. It has been claimed that by considering the sender's primary illocutionary point first, a felicitous subtitle is faithful to the original message, despite the constraints of the medium, while, at the same time, it gives the viewer/reader the guidance needed to access the message. In this way, high fidelity is achieved through high felicity.

Inserts in modern script-writing and their translation into Spanish

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In this paper we study the translation of six types of inserts (Biber et al. 1999: 1082ff); namely peripheral elements to the clause structure, traditionally regarded as secondary in descriptive grammars and which have received the attention of corpus linguists in recent years. Interjections, greetings and farewells, attention signals, hesitators, polite formulae, and discourse markers will be covered. After a short introduction on the relevance of these elements within spoken English, we proceed to analyze the translational strategies used in the Spanish versions of the British films 'Four Weddings and a Funeral', 'Bridget Jones' Diary' and 'Notting Hill' selected for the study because of the contemporary texture of their scripts, which attempt to imitate the spoken mode in its informal variety. In a final section, we make some concluding remarks about the findings.

Keywords: conversational mode, inserts, screen translation.

1. Introduction

Among the many specific problems of screen translation identified since it became the object of interest and analysis by researchers, we can mention the translation/adaptation dichotomy (Delabastita 1989: 213), the difference between subtitling and dubbing (Pettit 2004), the difficulties posed by multilingual films (Heiss 2004a), the pressure under which translators are forced to work (Mayoral 2002) and the influence of political factors in the transformative process (Zabalbeascoa 1994: 95). Gambier mentions, amongst others, transfer processes involving strategies such as reduction, omission, neutralization and expansion, the problem of translating humour, irony and metaphors, the use of different languages within the same film, the effects of the voices and the relationship between intonation and non-verbal behaviour, and the question of registers (2002: 102–103; 2004a: 9). The prefabrication of orality (Chaume 1999: 217; 2002: 9) and its relay into the target language is the issue that we shall be examining.

In this paper we shall concentrate on the transfer of certain linguistic and paralinguistic elements that are fundamental in the creative process of the oral texture of dialogues, because as Leech and Svartvik suggest (2002: 12–14), very often these elements can carry essential meaning for the understanding of the text, and, in some cases, they will be used to carry all the meaning, even if this is done to create certain effects on the audience. An example of this can be found in the following extract from the British comedy programme *Next of Kin* (1997):

- (1) Speaker 1: Right!
Speaker 2: Yeah. What?
Speaker 1: Gonna see you later?
Speaker 2: Yeah!
Speaker 1: Nice?
Speaker 2: Why not??
Speaker 1: Right!
Speaker 2: See ya!
Speaker 1: Yeah!!

In this short conversational exchange, most of the information is conveyed by means of peripheral elements of some type: responses, discourse markers and other formulae. It attempts to ironically reproduce the speech of young speakers, reduced, as can be seen, to the minimum. However, this exchange does carry important meaning for future developments in the plot, and the difficulties that the translator faces are connected with the need to maintain the message with all the constraints posed by the short utterances, and the need to adapt them to the target language.

The conversational features of this extract can be extreme (i. e. very short stretches, unfinished sentences, mostly peripheral elements) but this is by no means unusual in modern script writing. Contemporary films are much keener to use the spoken informal word than their predecessors. This implies the use of linguistic elements regarded as marginal until recent decades. In this sense the grammar of spoken English has been described as “dynamic” since “it is constructed and interpreted under real-time pressure, and correction and reformulation is possible only through hesitations, false starts, and other dysfluencies” (Biber *et al.* 1999: 1066). This certainly poses problems for the translator, who is faced with the need to transfer prefabricated informality into a foreign language (Chaume 2001: 78–81). The writing process of a film script in any given language already implies the deletion of a number of elements of orality, because some of the characteristics of spontaneous speech (such as repetitions, rephrasings, etc.) would render the final text inadequate for the requirements of an audience in search of entertainment. Thus, the translator’s task involves transforming language that has already undergone intralingual transformation processes.

Linguistic markers of informality have been covered by researchers in recent decades (Quirk *et al.* 1985, Quirk and Stein 1990, Langford 1993, Quirk 1995), but it is the advent of corpus linguistics that has allowed us to become familiar with authentic informal and/or colloquial discourse (McCarthy and Carter 1994, Biber *et al.* 1999, Carter *et al.* 2000). This knowledge about the workings of the language can be instrumental in the understanding of the difficulties posed by translational processes in general, and screen translation, with its own peculiarities, in particular. Hatim and Mason also mentioned the importance of conversation analysis for the translator and the translation scholar (1990: 80ff), as recently underlined by Remael (2001b) and Fraile (2003).

In this study, we shall cover those elements of speech which have been traditionally viewed as marginal to grammar. Classifications of these elements have been far from consistent, particularly in the case of discourse markers. For the study of the translation of these elements we shall be using the taxonomy proposed by Biber *et al.* (1999: 1082–1099), who speak of nine different types, labelled “inserts”. These elements are characterized by six defining features:

1. They are not part of a larger grammatical structure.
2. On the other hand, they may appear attached to a larger structure, which may be a clausal unit or a non-clausal unit.
3. They rarely occur medially in a syntactic structure.
4. They are morphologically simple.
5. They are not homonyms of words in other word classes.
6. Semantically, their use is defined rather by their pragmatic function. (*op. cit.*: 1082)

This classification is not without problems (*op. cit.*: 136, 1083), but its practicality might contribute to the clarity of the study of the translational options used in the target texts.

We selected the British films starring Hugh Grant *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1993), *Bridget Jones’ Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Mitchell, 2000), which have enjoyed an enormous success in recent years and meant the revival of the quintessentially British comedy adapted to the present day. As contemporary motion pictures, they may be more likely to offer examples of conversation strategies than older films. This may be partly responsible for the interest that, for instance, the script of *FW* and its various dubbed versions have aroused in researchers (Chiaro 2000a; Denton 2000: 145–155; Cuenca 2005).

Before proceeding, we should underline two points. Firstly, this study takes the original and the dubbed versions as final products. Many factors intervene in the process, but here we shall concentrate on the linguistic and (verbal) paralinguistic components. The film text has been defined as polysemiotic by Gottlieb (2003:

167–187; 2005a),¹ but in films we are translating words, even if other non-verbal components are essential in the transformative process. Secondly, it should be noticed that, in order to focus on this aspect, the majority of the examples have been extracted from scenes where other non-linguistic elements (such as synchronization problems) did not affect the final product. However, whenever other constraints could have an effect on the translated version, this will be considered and mentioned. Thus, references to factors such as the visual component or prosodic elements will be made if relevant.

2. The translation of inserts into Spanish

Below we cover six of the nine categories in Biber *et al.*, that is, all except response forms and response getters because their occurrence is too negligible to be considered here. We shall not analyse the use of expletives either because most elements within this subcategory carry out grammatical functions in the sentence. It should also be noticed that we shall focus on those examples characteristic of British English, the most important regional variety used in these films. In *FW* Hugh Grant plays the part of Charles, who falls in love with Carrie, a sophisticated American woman played by Andie MacDowell. In *Notting Hill*, Grant takes up the role of bookshop owner William Thacker, who falls for an American actress, played by Julia Roberts. Another American actress, Renee Zellweger, plays the leading role in the third film, although *Bridget Jones* is, in fact, a British character. Hugh Grant plays Daniel Cleaver.

The examples below will be followed by the abbreviation of the film from which they have been extracted. Thus, *FW* stands for *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *NH* for *Notting Hill* and *BJ* for *Bridget Jones' Diary*.

2.1 Interjections

This term is defined as having “an exclamatory function, expressive of the speaker’s emotion” (Biber *et al.* 1999: 1083). *Oh* is by far the most common interjection, conveying some degree of surprise or unexpectedness. In the original dialogues of the films in question, *oh* is used in a wide variety of contexts, often in combination with other peripheral elements, discourse markers and expletives in particular. Spanish speakers might also use it, but mostly in isolation. Therefore, the translator needs to be careful with the function it plays in the source text since its effect tends to depend on other peripheral elements accompanying it. Very often the target

1. I would like to thank Henrik Gottlieb for providing me with a copy of his paper “Semantics Turned Semiotics” and John Denton for kindly sending me a copy of the paper quoted.

text simply omits it, even though its complementary function would have required more careful consideration:

- (2) – Oh, well! Please yourself. –Right, odd decision. (FW)
 – *De acuerdo, que te vaya bien. –Bien, me la juego.*

In some other cases, the interjection is maintained, although it hardly combines with the following insert in the dubbed text. In example 3, the combination *Oh* and *God* is fairly frequent in many varieties of English to express some degree of disappointment or shock. Conversely, this combination would be very unlikely to occur in Spanish in a similar context, except when used ironically. In the dubbed version, the same combination features in utterances where the original script did not even use it, as in example 4:

- (3) Oh God. This is ridiculous. (FW)
Oh, Dios. Esto es ridículo.
- (4) God! You are drunk. You can't even remember you have a wife. (FW)
¡Oh Dios! Si no recuerdas que tienes mujer es que estás borracho.
- (5) Oh Jesus! It must have been the string. (BJ)
¡Oh, coño!

In example 5, the combination is simply unacceptable. *Oh* in Spanish often sounds pedantic and unnatural. It would not combine with an expletive aimed at showing anger or disapproval. A much more natural choice, if we were looking for an item that might reinforce the strength of the swear word, would be “¡Vaya! ¡Coño!”

In other contexts, the interjection appears in isolation, where Spanish would have been likely to prefer *¡Vale!*:

- (6) You want one? (FW)
 Oh, Thank you
*¿Quieres una?
 ¡Oh! Gracias*

Less frequent interjections (such as *Oops* and *Whoops* for minor mishaps) which would have required specific and distinct renderings in Spanish are less common in the target texts, except in *BJ*. The discursive features of the protagonists are reminiscent of the ones found in the other two films, but here Jones and Cleaver have recourse to more colloquial elements, notably interjections as well as impolite inserts such as response getters or attention signals. Let us consider a couple of extracts:

- (7) Yummy! (BJ)
¡Qué bueno!

- (8) F.R. Leavis? (BJ)
 Aha.
 Wow.
 ¿F.R. Leavis?
 (Assenting noise).
 ¡Vaya!

The translational choices transform the interjections into exclamatory items or phrases with a similar function and semantic content. The only noticeable difference, although minor, is the pragmatic deviation in example 7. In the original the interjection *Yummy!* emphasizes the characterization of the protagonist as childish. This is the opening scene of the film, at her mother's Christmas party, where Jones has made the wrong moves and uttered the wrong words. The Spanish version neutralizes this effect by using *¡Qué bueno!* while something like *Ñam, ñam* could have had the same effect. On the other hand, the choice in example 8 manages to maintain the ironical tone implied in Cleaver's response to Jones' alleged telephone conversation with deceased literary critic F. R. Leavis.

2.2 Greetings and farewells

Forms such as *hi, hello, morning*, etc. are repeated symmetrically in conversation. They are characterized by their tendency to be combined with vocatives. Biber *et al.* mention that the shorter the expression the more informal the greeting (1999: 1086). Farewell forms include *goodbye, bye* and others that are much more colloquial and restricted to British use such as *cheers* and *cheerio*. As for the films in question, *FW*, because it presents five different social events in which speakers keep meeting and leaving, is the picture where most of these inserts are used. The differentiation between longer and more formal greetings and farewells is lost in the target text, since Spanish does not have such a range of formulae for these situations. This should have no effect on the degree of informality of the text, as Spanish speakers would not require any distinct markers of familiarity for these contexts. However, in certain parts of the Spanish script the function of a given greeting element is somehow altered. In example 9, Charles returns to the pub where he expects to meet Carrie. He sees no one around, so the first *Hello* that he utters does not function as a greeting here but as an attention signal:

- (9) Hello
 Hi
 Hi (FW)

Hola

Hola

Hola

Then, as Carrie emerges from behind an armchair, the symmetrical use of the greeting formula is re-instated. In the target text, prosodic elements, such as the use of rising intonation, attempt to perform the function of an attention signal, but the repetition of the word for its usual function lacks the degree of surprise that was intended in the original.

Similar reduction processes occur in the other two films. For instance, in *NH* six of the main characters celebrate William Thacker's sister's birthday. As they come and go, the variety of salutations in English is wider than in Spanish, with *Hello* and its colloquial forms *Hi* and *Hiya* being used, whereas *Goodbye* and *Bye* are the preferred farewell formulae. The Spanish version reduces these forms to *Hola* and *Buenas noches*. While being true than the target language has a smaller range of items, we should also notice that speakers might have recourse to other more colloquial forms such as *Hasta luego* or even '*Ta luego*. This is quite surprising since other lexical items characteristic of the informal variety of the language are generously used in the dubbed version, particularly in the case of expletives. It is also noticeable that the colloquial form for *Buenos días*, *Buenas tardes* and *Buenas noches* does not feature in any of the films:

(10) Afternoon, Bridget. (BJ)

Buenas tardes, Bridget.

(11) Evening, Daniel. (BJ)

Hola Daniel.

(12) Night, Daniel. (BJ)

Adiós Daniel.

These extracts exemplify informal greetings and farewells commonly used in the films, where the speakers have omitted the adjective *Good*. Spanish could have done similarly by maintaining the adjective *Buenos* or *Buenas*, and omitting the nouns, the standard procedure in informal discourse. The translators have opted for more neutral formulae, including the relatively rare *Adiós* (*Hasta luego* being more common in colloquial Spanish nowadays).

Additionally, it should also be pointed out that Spanish is less likely to break the symmetry of greetings, with some notable exceptions. That is the case of *It's nice to meet you*, which can be used in two different situations: for first meetings and also for unexpected encounters with already known people. In the first case, more formal in tone, the greeting would be rendered in Spanish as *Encantado* or *Encantado de conocerle*, which would be met by a similar greeting as a response.

However, for the second situation, Spanish would require a different formula such *Me alegro de verte* and the interlocutor could answer *Yo también*. That is, the translator might have to alter the symmetry of the greetings, since keeping it in Spanish would be unusual. The following example is closer to the latter, so the dubbed version might sound inappropriate without considering the context:

- (13) It's nice to see you. (FW)
 It's nice to see you.
Me alegro de verte.
Soy yo el que se alegra de verte.

Here Charles bumps into Carrie when trying to buy a present for the third wedding (Carrie's). The greeting is taken as an expression of surprise on both parts. It might seem that Charles' translated words have altered the implication of his greeting in the original film. The change even poses synchronization problems since the Spanish sentence is considerably longer and *Yo también* or *Yo también me alegro* would have fitted the length requirements. In fact, the addition in the target text is attempting to render the prosodic indication in the source text whereby Charles places emphasis on the object pronoun *you* and creates a contrast between Carrie's greetings and his own reaction to the unexpected meeting. Thus, the translator here has been particularly attentive to words, prosody and context.

There are other cases where the translation seems less appropriate, though. At the reception of the first wedding in the same film, Charles introduces himself to another guest by saying *How do you do, my name's Charles*. He is addressing an older man he has not met before, so his choice is a formal variety of the language. The Spanish version does attempt to translate the formal variety, *¿Cómo está? Me llamo Charles*, by using a formal form of the verb (*está* instead of *estás*). However, the translator seems to have overlooked the semantic and pragmatic differences between *How do you do!* and *How are you?*, two expressions that are used in different situations and with different implications in English, but a hasty literal relay into Spanish might disregard those variations. Thus, *How do you do* would have required different treatment in the target text.

2.3 Attention signals

These inserts, e.g. *hey*, *hey you*, are used to attract someone's attention. They tend to be more impolite than other forms such as *Excuse me*, which are not listed in Biber *et al.*'s classification. This might be the reason why scarcely any attention signals of the first type are used in these films, set in upper and middle-class ambiances, with only a few of the second type. An interesting example of the first type follows:

- (14) Oi, oi. Sorry, the mike's not working. (BJ)
Eeh, eeh. Perdonen. El micro no funciona.

This is Bridget Jones trying to attract the attention of the guests at the launch of a new book by the company she works for. The impolite inserts set the colloquial tone of her speech, which continues with another feature of informal English, the abbreviation and corruption of *microphone* to *mike*. The Spanish version manages to capture it by using a similar impolite attention getter (*eeh*) and the abbreviation *micro*. Less successful, though, is the choice for *sorry*, rendered here as *perdonen*, marked for formality and, therefore, incoherent with the rest of the speech. A neutral *perdón* would have avoided this.

As for the second type, we have not found much ground for discussion either. For example, in *FW* Charles uses *Uh... Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt* in the shop to call the assistant's attention, and is rendered in the target text as *Disculpe, siento interrumpir*. It is a straightforward relay, certainly repetitive in Spanish, which would have been enough with one of the two expressions. The repetition could have been justified if there had been a need to synchronise the utterance to the time slot, but it is not the case in this particular example. As regards the function these inserts perform, the discussion in the polite formulae section below would also apply here.

2.4 Hesitators

Also called pause fillers, hesitators such as *uh* and *er* signal the speakers' intention to continue talking while trying to gain time to enable them to order their train of thought before doing so. These gap-filling elements are particularly difficult to convey in Spanish, since it does not have recourse to them as often as English. The tendency is to use full words such *bueno* in order to gain time and gather one's thoughts before continuing (Briz 2001: 201ff). Spanish speakers may also lengthen vowels or resort to repeating syllables or even full words. But, although these strategies are more common than English gap fillers, Spanish may also use "noises" that carry out similar functions to the English ones. Briz transcribes them as *mmh* and explains that they "retardan la contestación ante la duda" (2001: 212). However, the Spanish versions do not contain many examples of any of these strategies. The most frequent option is the deletion of the hesitators used in the source text, altering to some extent the characterization process, notably in the case of the protagonists. In *FW* Charles often finds himself in unexpected situations, which lead him to make frequent use of hesitators. In the following extract, for example, he has just opened the invitation to Carrie's wedding. His disappointment is realized by means of two hesitators, which have a dual function. They aim to introduce the

topic without sounding too enthusiastic and, thus, hide Charles' feelings for the girl. The Spanish version does not signal hesitation, only disappointment, as the two inserts have been deleted and no alternative has been provided:

- (15) It's that girl, um... Carrie. You remember the uh... The American. (FW)
Es aquella chica. Carrie. ¿Te acuerdas? La americana.

However, there are instances where the abundance of hesitators used in the original cannot simply be omitted because, as seen in example 1, they carry most of the semantic content of the utterance. Thus, when Charles meets Carrie in the shop, he finds himself in an awkward position, struggling to use the right words. The original script signals this by means of numerous hesitators, which are relayed in the dubbed version with awkward noises and in the subtitled version without any graphic representation:

- (16) Well, I never! Um...Um. Nothing yet. (FW)
¡Vaya! (noise) ¡Qué sorpresa! (noise)

The Spanish version also needs to show some degree of surprise on the part of the protagonist, achieved through the exclamations as well as the strange noises, which, however, do not manage to fabricate natural language for the audience. In the target version the translators have simply imported the English strategy. The subtitled version in Spanish, of course, does not even attempt to reproduce those sounds, although researchers into colloquial Spanish have provided us with a written representation of a discourse marker also used in Spanish in cases of doubt or uncertainty (Briz 2001: 212). Additionally, as mentioned, conversational Spanish may have recourse to lengthening some of the syllables instead of uttering unintelligible sounds (Briz 2001: 94–95), but neither strategy is present in the dubbed or subtitled versions. Other strategies that may contribute to express doubt, uncertainty or simply allow the speaker to gain time such as the use of *bueno* or the repetition of a sentence element are combined in the following extract to great effect:

- (17) Look, um I live just over the street um you could get cleaned up. (NH)
Verá, yo vivo, vivo aquí al lado y tengo, bueno, agua y jabón para que se limpie eso.

Here William Thacker has literally bumped into film star Anna Scott and spilt orange juice over her clothes. The bookshop owner is mortified and tries to somehow compensate the mishap. The original script projects the situation onto the audience by means of pause fillers. The Spanish dubbed version manages to convey it by using pauses, the repetition of the verb *vivo* and the use of the discourse marker *bueno*. That is, the dubbing translators have resorted to different means in order to achieve a similar effect.

Quite different is the next scene in the same film, when the main characters have just entered the house. Thacker sees the state of the kitchen and is nonplussed. The English version expresses his inability to speak by resorting to gap-fillers (mostly *um*), which are maintained in the Spanish version, producing an unnatural stretch of oral discourse replete with far too many *mmh* noises for the target language.

2.5 Politeness formulae

These will typically include expressions to thank, apologize, request and congratulate, of the type *thank you* or *sorry* as well as more colloquial ones such as *ta* or *cheers*. These formulae usually prompt a response by the interlocutor. Researchers on politeness have noticed marked differences in the way English and Spanish speakers react to politeness formulae. Following Brown and Levinson (1987), Hickey postulates that Spanish speakers tend to be closer to the positive-politeness end whereas English ones would be nearer the negative-politeness end (1991; 2000). If that is so, it would have certain implications for the translator, since Spanish speakers, or film-goers in this case, would “barely perceive [any of these formulae] as having anything to do with any form of politeness” (Hickey 2000: 237) but rather with being “good-mannered” or “having been properly brought up”. This would imply that many of the politeness formulae used in English would simply be unnecessary in Spanish, since they do not signal politeness and might be viewed by Spanish speakers as “ironical, pedantic (...) even ridiculous” (2000: 238). Bearing this in mind, the formulae used in the Spanish version of the film show no evidence of adjustment to the likely perceptions of the target viewers, as in the following extract, where the politeness formula used would be rare in spontaneous Spanish:

- (18) Get in position, please! (*FW*)
Miren aquí, por favor.

Haverkate (1994), Briz (2001) and Díaz (2003: 134ff) also claim that Spanish is far more direct than other languages. Briz even points out that speakers might resort to some politeness formulae forced by social conventions but their use might hide other objectives (2001: 146). If that is so, there is a need to ascertain the implications of some of these formulae before transferring them into Spanish. For instance, in *Notting Hill* William Thacker is visiting Anna Scott at her hotel room. In the lift he meets one of the many journalists interviewing the actress that day:

- (19) Which floor?
 Third please. (*NH*)

¿A qué piso?
Al tercero, por favor.

The journalist signals politeness by using *please* in the source text and the Spanish version follows the same line, even if the omission would not be considered impolite. The use of *por favor* here does not necessarily convey a certain image of the speaker. However, a few seconds later he resorts to *por favor* again when Anna Scott's assistant asks both men to sit down while they are waiting. Once again the journalist utters *por favor*, following the original *please*, used here as an invitation to move in the direction of the seats. In natural Spanish the speaker would have opted for a question functioning as an invitation: ¿Nos sentamos? (literally *Shall we sit down?*). The abuse of Spanish polite formulae continues a few seconds later when Thacker eventually joins Anna in her room. Anna's manager asks her then:

(20) Everything OK?
Yes, thank you. (NH)
¿Va todo bien?
Sí, gracias.

The reply follows a well established pattern in the source language whereas the Spanish version simply relies on the source text rather than attempt some readjustment to the target culture where, for example, *Sí, todo bien* would have been more natural.

2.6 Discourse markers

There is not much agreement about what elements to include under the heading "discourse markers". Leech and Svartvik view them as synonymous of inserts (2002: 13), whereas Swan would include words and expressions (1995: 151–158) that others would regard as adverbials (Biber *et al.* 1999: 136). For the present discussion, while retaining Biber *et al.*'s classification, we shall also allow for a certain flexibility as regards what elements to include as discourse markers. The definition they provide of discourse markers as "loosely attached elements that facilitate ongoing interaction" (1999: 140) can be complemented with other aspects mentioned by Swan, namely that they are flexible in meaning and indicate the attitude of the speaker to what has been said or is going to be said (1995: 151).

One of the main interactive functions of discourse markers is gaining time when the speakers are unable to continue with their reasoning. In *FW*, this is often the case of the protagonist, as already mentioned. In the following extract, after having slept with Charles, Carrie suggests the possibility of getting married.

Charles is, once again, taken aback. His response shows his difficulties to interact with Carrie:

- (21) Gosh! You know, that takes a lot of thinking about, that kind of thing. Obviously, I... You're joking. God! For a moment there I thought I was in *Fatal Attraction*. (FW)

Eso es algo que, bueno, que hay que pensar mucho. Además, yo obviamente no... Bromeas. Dios. Por un momento me he visto en Atracción fatal.

Three elements are indicative of his indecision. Firstly, following his characterization for moments of insecurity, Charles opts for the euphemistic expletive *Gosh* to signal surprise, rather than for a stronger expletive that could have been felt as offensive by Carrie, after having spent the night with him. Besides *Gosh* is an upper-middle class insert, polite or even childish.² This insecurity is made obvious by means of the discourse marker *You know* and, later on, by the phrase *that kind of thing*. The Spanish version loses all the hesitation signalled by this combination of elements, as in the TT the combination is reduced to one single insert, *bueno*.

But very often discourse markers combine not just among themselves but also with other inserts. Amongst the various discourse markers upon which researchers do seem to agree, *well* is perhaps the most flexible (Schiffrin 1985; Fuller 2003). It is used with a number of different functions that might range from introducing a new topic to expressing hesitation. It is extremely common in spontaneous conversation, as shown by Biber *et al.* (1999: 1086), and modern script writers attempt to reproduce their various uses. This implies combining *well* with other discourse markers in cases when the speaker wants to express some degree of agreement or disagreement with the interlocutor, as in:

- (22) Well, yes, of course. (FW)

Sí, claro, desde luego

- (23) Well, exactly, quite. (FW)

Bien, estoy de acuerdo, claro

Here the translator has resorted to a rendering of the term that reproduces the function of the original source text. In other cases, though, the combination of tentative discourse elements undergoes greater transformations, with clear semantic implications that seem to go unnoticed in the dubbed version. For example, in *Well, I don't know, Charlie* the script reflects a high degree of tentativeness by using two discourse markers plus the diminutive of the protagonist. The Spanish version,

2. I thank two anonymous reviewers for pointing out this and other implications regarding the use of certain inserts.

Pues no sé que decirte, while exposing the difficulty of the speaker to respond, as mentioned by Briz (2001: 175), lacks the tentative nature of the original.

In other cases, the discourse marker is omitted altogether. For instance, the omission of tentative *well* can make the utterance sound much more aggressive:

- (24) Well, anyway, I'm *not having* it. (BJ)

Da igual. No pienso aguantarlo.

Here, the English speakers use the discourse marker to soften a comment or opinion. A Spanish discourse marker is necessary for the audience to appreciate a similar effect since there are no paralinguistic elements likely to compensate for the loss.

Discourse markers can, of course, have other functions, such as to introduce a passing remark or reinforce the position of the speaker. For example, *by the way* is one of the most common items used to provide the interlocutor with additional information, which could be relayed into Spanish as *A propósito* (more formal) or *Por cierto* (colloquial). On the other hand, *honestly* is often used to claim sincerity but it can also introduce critical remarks (Swan 1995: 159, Biber *et al.* 1999: 857). It may emphasize the speaker's disapproval, annoyance or impatience. Spanish would indicate this negative stance on the part of the speaker by means of the phrase *De verdad...* or *Mira, de verdad*. In the following examples, the discourse markers have been omitted:

- (25) Because, honestly, I don't know what could be so important. (BJ)

Porque no entiendo qué puede ser tan importante.

- (26) I very much enjoyed your Lewisham fire report, by the way. (BJ)

Me gusto mucho tu reportaje desde el parque de bomberos de Lewisham.

The reasons for the use of this strategy in these extracts differ. In example 26 the length of the Spanish version requires the elimination of certain elements, so the deletion of the discourse marker, which "merely" informs the audience about the attitude of the speaker seems the natural choice. Conversely, in example 25 the emphasis is lost as *honestly* has been removed without any apparent justification.

Tentativeness is another function carried out by an important number of discourse markers and modern script writers have recourse to these elements which help the characterization of their protagonists. Tentativeness is achieved by combining two, three or even more markers, as in the following example:

- (27) I will take this one.

Right, right. So, uh... Well, on second thoughts, um, maybe it's not that bad after all. Actually, it's a sort of classic, really. (NH)

Me llevo esta.

Oh, bien, bien, no sé pensándolo mejor, quizás no sea tan mala. Es casi un clásico.

In this extract, the preferred strategy has been the reduction of the number of markers, although neither synchronization constraints nor the length of the exchange require it.

3. Conclusions

Among the many problems posed by screen translation, the shift over the past three decades from the use of neutral-formal conversation exchanges to the preference for a more colloquial mode that attempts to reproduce everyday speech in informal situations has meant an additional source of difficulties for translators. New research has provided us with a detailed description of the grammar and vocabulary of the informal variety of the language. Linguists have identified discourse elements that do not belong with the grammar of the sentence, but which do have an influence in the comprehension of a given utterance. Colloquial English, and Spanish, is ripe with these inserts, which are now an integral part of the script-writing process.

Screen translators and/or adaptors are, thus, faced with a new challenge: they need to relay into the target language not only grammar and lexicon, but also expressions, and even paralinguistic elements, that were once regarded as superfluous, and are, indeed, peripheral to the sentence structure. The classification proposed by Biber *et al.* has allowed us to analyse whether specific strategies to render these elements into Spanish exist, bearing in mind that many of the elements studied share the same form but can perform various functions within spoken discourse, both intra- and interlinguistically. The examples from the three films analysed seem to indicate that, along with other problems identified in the film, particularly in the translation of idiomatic expressions, there is no consistent approach to the problem posed by these inserts. In fact, it could be argued that the specific functions of these discursive elements, which are in need of specific treatment as part of the transformative process into the target language, are largely ignored or, at least, overlooked.

Let us take the case of hesitators as an example. The films presented deficiencies in the translation of this type of inserts to the extent that the main strategy used was to delete them altogether, or else to reproduce them as “noises” in the target text. Even if we admit that their transformative process is probably more complex than the translation of well-structured linguistic units, the audience would

expect “the characters in the film to produce spoken language like people in real life” (Delabastita 1989: 202–203). This does not merely imply a high degree of synchronization but also a sound knowledge of the implications of using these elements in the source film and the effects caused by deleting them in the target text.

For these reasons, and as with other linguistic features in audiovisual translation (Pineda 2002: 182), the study of such markers of informality might produce guidelines capable of offering the screen translator a clear set of recommendations for the relay of these tricky but essential elements into the target language, which could become an integral part of teaching syllabuses (as indicated by Mailhac 2000: 46). This would certainly contribute to assist translators, often pressured by deadlines that might constrain their creativity. In this sense we do not agree with Chaume’s view that their omission can be compensated by other extralinguistic elements (2004d: 854), since peripheral elements are amongst the few that provide the Spanish final product with the texture of informality present in the source text. We feel, as Díaz Cintas (2001b: 207), that the dubbing of a film is part of the whole production and artistic process and “not a mere appendix subject to market forces”. The findings published in recent years in the discipline of corpus linguistics have provided us with ample and sound knowledge of the number of elements used by speakers and their functions. It would be desirable to carry out further research into the translation of each and every one of these inserts in order to identify the deficiencies in this area as a previous step to produce those guidelines that might contribute to facilitate the relay of these elements into Spanish (e.g. Matamala this volume).

PART 2

Perception and quality

Empirical approaches

The perception of dubbese

An Italian study

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Every day Italian TV viewers are exposed to a vast amount of heavily mediated audiovisual texts translated into their native language which contain a wide array of references to all the specific aspects and features of the source languages and cultures. Dubbese is the hybrid language used by the Italian dubbing industry to transpose both fictional and non-fictional foreign TV and cinema productions. This paper will illustrate the results of a large scale research project based upon a corpus of over 300 hours of dubbed TV programmes which set out to assess what Italian TV viewers perceive and understand of the culture-specific references contained in dubbed filmic products.

Keywords: dubbese, perception, audiovisual translation, e-questionnaire

1. Introduction

Italy is a dubbing¹ country which, on average, broadcasts more than 350 weekly hours of dubbed programmes on the seven main national terrestrial private and public TV channels. Programmes imported from English-speaking countries (mainly the USA) account for approximately 80% of the vast quantity of foreign films, series, serials, soap operas, situation comedies and documentaries broadcast by Italian television networks, while the remaining 20% are bought from other European and Latin American countries. Every day, Italian TV viewers are exposed to a vast amount of heavily mediated audiovisual texts translated into their native language, which, obviously, contain a wide array of references to all the specific aspects and features of the source languages and cultures, but what do they

1. For the purposes of both this paper and the research here illustrated, the term dubbing is defined as a post-production service provided by the broadcaster and, more precisely, as “the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movement of the original dialogue” (Luyken *et al.* 1991: 31).

make of such references? Moreover, while watching one of these programmes, they will probably hear a member of a street gang using the same sociolect, register and vocabulary of his/her lawyer. Are Italian audiences aware of the artificiality of this language? And even if they are, does this matter?

This paper will illustrate the results of a large scale research project which set out to assess the perception of the quality of dubbing in Italy. The study was based upon a corpus of over 300 hours of dubbed TV programmes and was carried out by means of an e-questionnaire and Web Technology. For the purposes of this paper the author will present the results obtained by testing a robust sample of Italian viewers on their perception of dubbed Italian and, in particular, on their declared and actual perception and understanding of a specific number of language-specific, culture-specific and lingua-cultural drops in translational voltage.

2. Dubbese

Over the past six decades since the inception of television broadcasting, Italian viewers have witnessed and, subsequently, become increasingly accustomed to the emergence of a new variety of spoken Italian: dubbese. Dubbese is not the language spoken, for instance, by Italian TV presenters and journalists, but the Italian spoken in all those films, series, cartoons, sitcoms, and any other imported foreign product, which are translated for the big and the small screen.

As a consequence, it is quite common on Italian TV to hear a member of a US street gang and his/her lawyer speak in the same way, i.e. using the same register, vocabulary, accent, or to hear US school kids discuss in Italian a different marking system, the Scholastic Aptitude Test or football games. Dubbese is the language variety that most Italian screen translators resort to when they translate and adapt a film or any other fictional and non-fictional programme.

The term dubbese (in Italian *doppiaggese*) was coined by Italian screen translators and operators to negatively connote the linguistic hybrid that over the years has emerged as the 'standard' variety of Italian spoken by characters in dubbed filmic products both for TV and cinema (Cipolloni 1996, Rossi 1999b). Indeed, the use of dubbese for the transposition into Italian of both fictional and non-fictional filmic products has become so widespread that Italian screen operators themselves in 1996 (D'Aversa 1996) started expressing the concern that it might leak out and affect authentic, every day spoken Italian, particularly that of children. Indeed, the recent massive development of digital television in Italy (satellite,

terrestrial and, to a smaller extent, cable television), may have contributed to making this concern a fact (<http://www.sat-net.org>).²

Even though no studies have been carried out so far to test whether Italian children do speak dubbese or not, the impact that the work of screen translators may have on viewers in terms of ‘contamination’ of the current spoken language should not be underestimated. However, this paper and the study upon which it is based, do not intend to carry out a witch hunt of the mistakes that screen translator and operators may have made while translating a filmic product. What is more noteworthy is that over the past 20 years academics and researchers of screen translation have turned their attention to the study of various aspects and issues that regard multimedia translation and, more specifically, dubbing, with an approach that was mainly “de corte descriptivo o prescriptivo, con limitada fundamentación o aplicación fuera del ámbito de estudio en cuestión” (Fuentes Luque 2001: 69).³ The attention devoted to translated films and the translating process used to transfer a filmic product from one language into another has produced a substantial number of research and case studies which have dissected and scrutinized the many aspects and facets that characterize the process of dubbing and the resulting language, dubbese (Galassi 1996: 13). Very little attention has so far been devoted by either academia or the multimedia market itself to what television and cinema audiences think and perceive of dubbed products (Luyken *et al.* 1991). Even less attention has been dedicated to the language viewers hear spoken by characters on the screen and the cultural references contained in their dialogues. Only a handful of studies and academic projects have ventured into the almost unexplored area of research devoted to the perception of dubbed and/or subtitled products by testing a sample of the targeted audience by means of questionnaires and dubbed material (Bucaria 2001, Fuentes Luque 2001, Antonini *et al.* 2003, Antonini and Chiaro 2005).

By tackling different aspects of dubbed and subtitled products, all these studies reveal that while viewers think they understand many of the cultural and linguistic references they are exposed to, in reality they do not.

2. According to the data published in the Audistar-Eurisko survey (carried out between September 30 and October 27 2003) Cartoon Network is the satellite channel with the widest audience. It is more popular than Sky Cinema, Sky Sport1, Calcio Sky, Fox and Disney Channel. It is, obviously, the most popular among viewers in the 4 to 14 age cluster, followed very closely by Disney Channel.

3. “that are either of a descriptive or prescriptive kind, with limited scope or application outside their specific field of study” *my translation*.

3. The audiovisual market in Italy

The data provided by the European Audiovisual Observatory (2003, <http://www.obs.coe.int/about/oea/pr/a02vol5.html>) provides us with a good idea of the situation and the volume of business generated by the huge amount of imported fictional products. In 2001, the five largest European audiovisual markets imported at least 65% of the total volume of fictional and filmic products they broadcast. Moreover, the bulk of programmes dubbed and subtitled into each European country's national language(s) is imported from the United States.

Despite the lack of official figures and data on the amount of dubbed programmes broadcast on Italian television, rough calculations gathered from weekly TV guides (which refer to the seven main terrestrial broadcasters we used for our research project: the three state-owned channels *Radio Televisione Italiana (RAI)* and the three privately owned *Mediaset* channels, *Rete 4*, *Canale 5* and *Italia Uno* plus *LA7*) show that in Italy an average of 350–400 hours of dubbed and subtitled products are broadcast on a weekly basis.

As reported by Antonini and Chiaro (2005), the lion's share belongs to two of the *Mediaset* TV channels (the private television network), *Italia Uno* which broadcasts mainly programmes aimed at children (cartoons) and young adults (series and serials), and *Rete 4* whose programming is directed at an older target audience with soap operas, *telenovelas*, and series. Public television (*RAI*) only broadcasts 24% of the total.

Despite the lack of official data, two studies have helped depict the current situation and latest developments of the Italian audiovisual market.

The first one, a statistical survey carried out by Istituto Piepoli (2006), shows that compared to other audiovisual markets in Europe, the penetration of digital television (satellite and terrestrial digital TV) in Italy amounts to 39% (19% and 10% respectively).⁴ These data are confirmed by the second study, carried out by the E-media Institute (2005), which reports a slightly higher penetration rate (42%, i.e. 15.6% of total TV households) and places Italy in sixth place on a ranking of the ten Digital TV European Countries.

According to a report by *Sky Italia* (<http://www.skytv.it>), the number of satellite subscriptions in Italy reached 3.7 million in March 2006 for a total of 1.5 million decoders and 800,000 smart cards (2006, <http://www.satexpo.it>).⁵

These data are particularly relevant because they show two important trends: that Italian audiences are increasingly exposed to a huge amount of foreign

4. It is important to note however that these data do not take into account an important phenomenon in Italy, namely the use of illegal smart cards for satellite connections.

5. Third in the ranking of the 10 top European PAY-TV operators.

products available to them either in their original language or dubbed and/or subtitled versions; and the fact that programmes are broadcast in one or more of these three modes means that there is a demand for this kind of service that the broadcasters cannot ignore.

4. The study

4.1 Research questions

The potential and the volume of business created by the market of audiovisual translation in Italy and the lack of both market and academic research in the field of audiences' perception of dubbed programmes led us to attempt to measure and assess what Italian television viewers make and think of dubbed products available on terrestrial television.

Our research project was spurred by a few questions we started asking ourselves. Specifically,

1. Are Italian TV end-users of foreign fictional programmes aware of the artificiality of the language they hear spoken on such programmes (i.e. not the real standard nor a spontaneous variety of spoken Italian) as, for instance, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, or *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *ER*, *Buffy*, *the Vampire Slayer*, etc.?
2. What do Italian TV viewers make of the plethora of culture-specific, linguistic and lingua-cultural references they are exposed to on a daily basis when watching TV?

By means of an e-questionnaire and a corpus made up of 300 hours of Italian dubbed fictional programmes we decided to approach the issue from the consumers' point of view and to focus on the perception of dubbed products and the impact of dubbese on Italian TV viewers.

4.2 The methodology

4.2.1 *The corpus*

The assessment and evaluation of Italian audiences' perception of dubbed fictional products was carried out by gathering data by means of an e-questionnaire and Web technology.

The first stage of the study, the recording of 300 hours of fictional dubbed products, was carried out according to specific criteria. We tried to include all

possible i) viewing times, ii) target audiences, iii) age groups, iv) source languages, and v) genres.⁶

4.2.2 A working taxonomy: Four operational categories

All the clips that were finally selected for inclusion in the questionnaire were divided into four main operational categories, i) culture-specific, ii) language-specific, iii) lingua-cultural references, and iv) non strictly verbally expressed cultural references. The first three categories were then divided again into 16 subcategories as shown in Figure 2.

In order to try to explain the ‘turbulence’ which is created when specific culture and language specific references are translated from one language into another for the screen, we decided to expand on Leppihalme’s (1997) definition of culture bumps and to resort to a metaphor that describes such turbulence as Drops in Translational Voltage (Chiaro, this volume). When watching and listening to a translated filmic product something which does not sound quite right can be explained in terms of Drops in Translational Voltage (DTV), i.e. any instance when the intended message does not fully get across. In its turn, a DTV can be more or less serious according to how much viewers are able to understand or infer from the translated text. All those aspects of language and culture that are untranslatable,

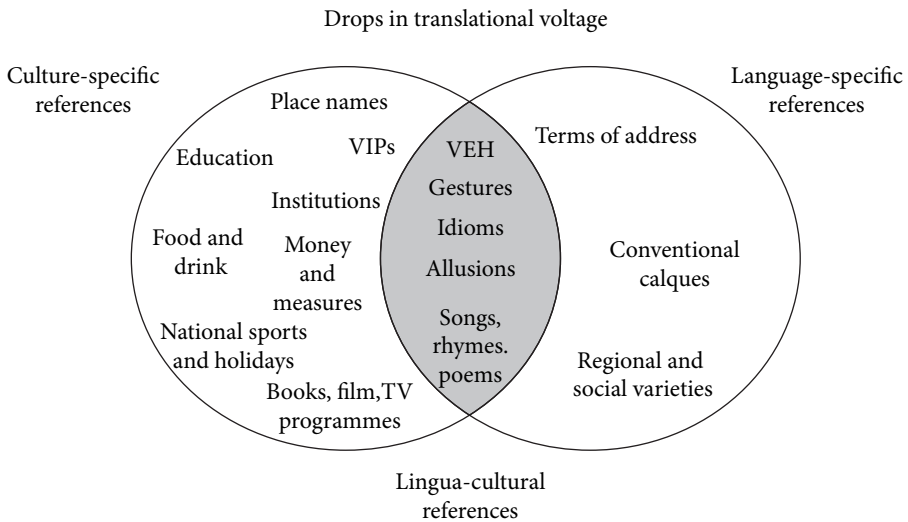


Figure 2. The three main categories

6. For a more detailed account of the methodology employed see Antonini and Chiaro forthcoming.

but that, obviously, must be translated in order to make audiovisual products marketable in other countries, can thus be defined as power failures, short-circuits and black outs.

This metaphor can also be employed when non-strictly verbally expressed instances of culture-specific references are involved. For this reason a (smaller) fourth category comprising ten clips of cultural references based more on the visual rather than the spoken element was also included as part of the study material. These ten clips contained images of cultural references and allusions (e.g. a pet's funeral, a wedding shower, and a Thanksgiving dinner) that have no counterpart in Italy and were not accompanied by any kind of explanation in the form of either dialogue or caption.

4.2.3 *The questionnaire: Design and administration*

The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by inviting respondents to access the questionnaire website. The reasons for these methodological strategies are quite obvious to anyone who has ever worked with this methodological tool. The administration of a questionnaire on a wide scale in the traditional way, that is with a person-to-person approach, is time-consuming and cost-consuming. The use of an e-questionnaire helped solve all those problems concerned with having to administer the questionnaire personally. Moreover, by resorting to the web in order to diffuse and publicize the questionnaire and the research project, we were able to contact and have the questionnaire filled in by hundreds of people in a very short time. This was done by publicizing our research project through a pop-under that was designed and programmed to appear on the Homepage and other thematic pages (e.g. Culture and Books, Music, News, Cinema and TV, etc.) of one of the most important and popular Italian web domains: www.virgilio.it.⁷ When Virgilio's visitors chose to click on the pop-under they were directed to the website created on our Department server, where they completed the questionnaire.⁸

After answering a question on their Internet connection, respondents could start filling out the questions contained in the six blocks in which the questionnaire was structured (one block for each category, a block containing general questions on dubbing and subtitling, and a block aimed at eliciting demographic and socioeconomic data and information).

By clicking on either the TV screen or the blue link (see Figure 3) of each of the four web pages linked to the four categories (and characterized by a different

7. At the time part of the European Fast Web.

8. The Web site remained accessible for the completion of the questionnaire from February to May 2004. At the end of this period, a total of 253 responses were deemed valid for the purposes of the research project.

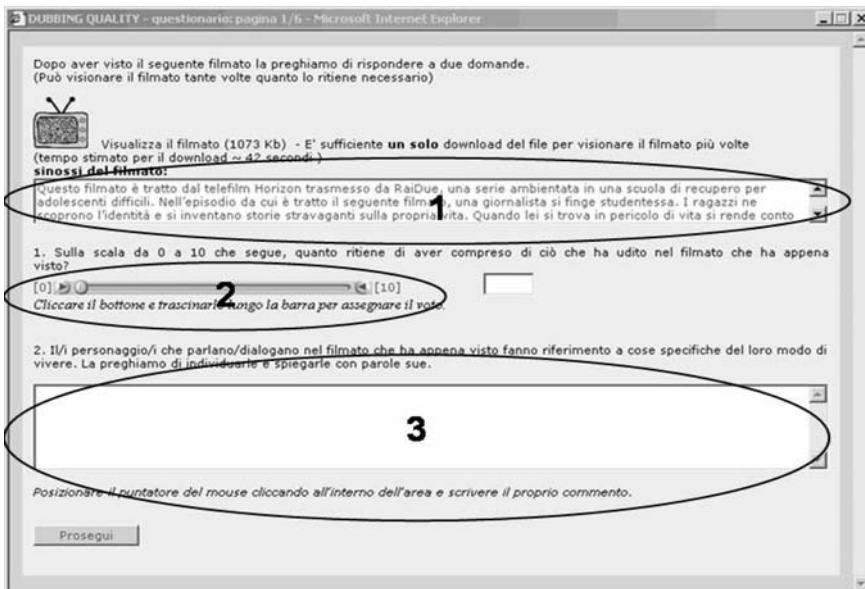


Figure 3. A sample of one of the pages of the questionnaire

background colour) the respondents were able to view a clip selected at random from a pool of 170 *mpg video files (each clip was on average 8 to 15 seconds long).

As Figure 3 illustrates, each clip was contextualized by a short synopsis that gave the title of the series and the episode it was taken from, as well as the channel that had aired it (step 1). After viewing the clip, they were asked to rate their level of understanding of the reference on a 0–10 graphic rating scale (step 2) and then to explain the reference it contained in their own words (step 3).

They could move on to the next page of the questionnaire only when they had provided an answer to all the questions.

4.2.4 The sample

The sample profile illustrated in Figure 4 shows that 40% of the respondents are female, 60% male; their age ranges mainly between 18 and 40; 60% hold a secondary school diploma, and they are mostly white-collar and professional workers, students or other.

Moreover, most of them (93%) have studied English at school (mainly at high school), and have visited an English-speaking country (70%). They like to watch films, and their favourite *genres* are, in this order, science fiction (e.g. *X-Files*, *Roswell*, etc.), cartoons (*Futurama*, *The Simpsons*, etc.), and 'medicals' (e.g. *ER*).

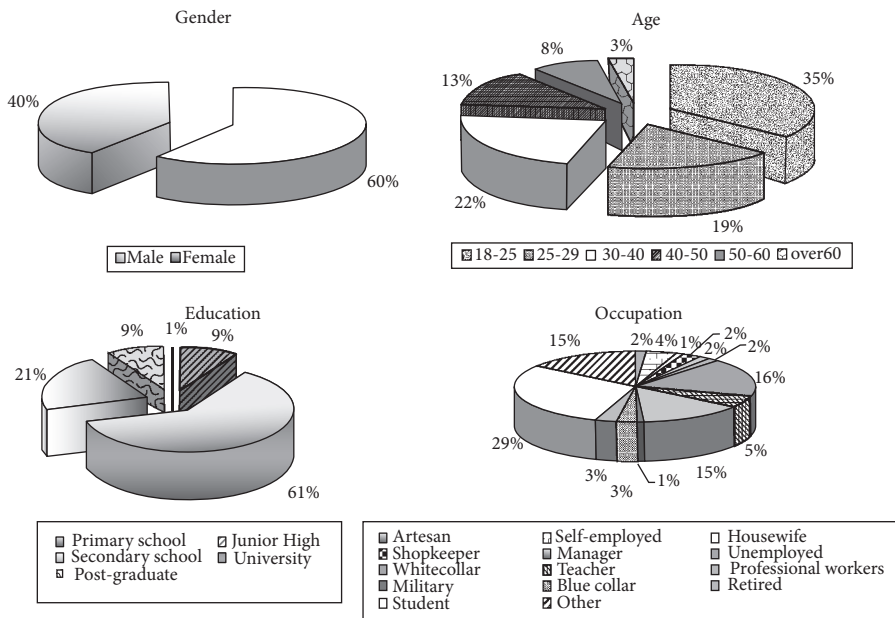


Figure 4. The sample: demographic and socioeconomic data

The sample is representative of the Italian Internet population,⁹ but we are aware that it is biased with regard to the overall Italian population of TV viewers. Nonetheless, even though it cannot claim to represent the view of all Italian viewers, it certainly gives a clear insight into what this sample of Italian viewers make of the plethora of cultural and linguistic references contained in the programmes they choose to watch on TV.

5. The results

On the basis of the answers provided to the general questions contained in the last block of the questionnaire, it was possible to assess that 70% of the sample generally watches between 1 to 5 hours of TV every day, while 27% reported that they watch less than one hour per day, 2.8% from 5 to 10 hours, and 0.4% more than 10 hours. The respondents also stated that their preferred programmes are films (89%), science

9. For a more detailed report of the data related to the general Internet population see CNIPA (2006), while a description of Virgilio's population can be viewed on http://virgilioadv.alice.it/contenuti_profilo.ctr.

fiction (47%) and sitcoms (45%), and that 96% of them are generally able to identify the country and thus the original language of the programmes they watch.

5.1 Attitudes and preferences

On a five-point scale ranging from 'poor' to 'excellent', 75.5% of the sample expressed a positive attitude towards the quality of dubbing in Italy by rating it as adequate (26%), good (37%) or excellent (12.5%). Only 25% of the respondents expressed a negative opinion¹⁰ by rating it mediocre (18%) or poor (7%).

By cross-tabulating the answers given to this question with the most relevant independent demographic and socioeconomic variables (age, gender, educational and professional status) it was possible to assess that these attitudes tended to correlate mainly with age and gender. Females in all age groups took a more moderate stance in judging the quality of dubbing (while still judging it positively, their answers tended to converge more towards the centre of the scale, within the 'mediocre-to-good' range). Contrariwise, while males in the 40–60 age cluster shared the female respondents' same attitude, male respondents in all the other age groups tended to express a more positive attitude.

Respondents were also asked to state their preference with regard to dubbing and subtitling by answering a multiple-choice question on the kind of translation they would opt for if they had the possibility of choosing between a dubbed and/or subtitled version of a programme. 40% of the sample stated that they would like to be able to choose from both and to watch foreign programmes in both their dubbed and subtitled adaptation. 25% would still opt for dubbing only.

In this case too, responses correlated mainly with age and gender. While females in all age groups (except for the 40–50 cluster which was divided between a preference for dubbing only and subtitling only) tended to choose the middle of the range answer, i.e. dubbing and subtitling; younger males (18–40) showed a more conservative position by choosing largely three options, namely: dubbing only, mainly dubbing, and dubbing and subtitling.

5.2 Declared versus actual understanding

The declared and actual understanding of the clips contained in each of the blocks representing the four categories illustrated above were obtained by analyzing two sets of data. The former, declared understanding, was calculated on the basis of the level of understanding expressed by the respondents on a graphic rating scale from

10. The five-point scale provided to rate this attitudinal statement supplied five adjectives to describe the quality of dubbing: poor, mediocre, adequate, good, excellent.

0 to 10. The latter, actual understanding, was calculated by dividing the descriptions provided to explain the clips viewed into two categories: understood and not understood.

As the chart in Figure 5 shows, self-rated understanding of the clips in the four categories, though differing in terms of individual scores, follows the same pattern for all categories with a gradual increase towards higher scores, with a peak recorded by culture-specific, lingua-cultural and non strictly verbally expressed cultural references (with more than 25% of the sample declaring a perfect understanding of the clips viewed in these three blocks). Linguistic references were rated with a perfect understanding that was slightly above 15%.

By dividing these scores into two main categories, declared lack of understanding (for scores from 0 to 5.5) and declared understanding (scores from 5.6 to 10), and comparing them to the actual understanding of the clips (assessed by categorizing the descriptions the respondents wrote to explain the reference contained in the clip into 'understood' and 'not understood') we were able to assess the discrepancy between what the viewers thought they had understood and what they actually had understood.

As summarized in Table 1 below, declared and actual understanding diverged for all categories. Eighty percent of the sample (203 respondents) in general experienced a total black out when confronted with the references contained in the

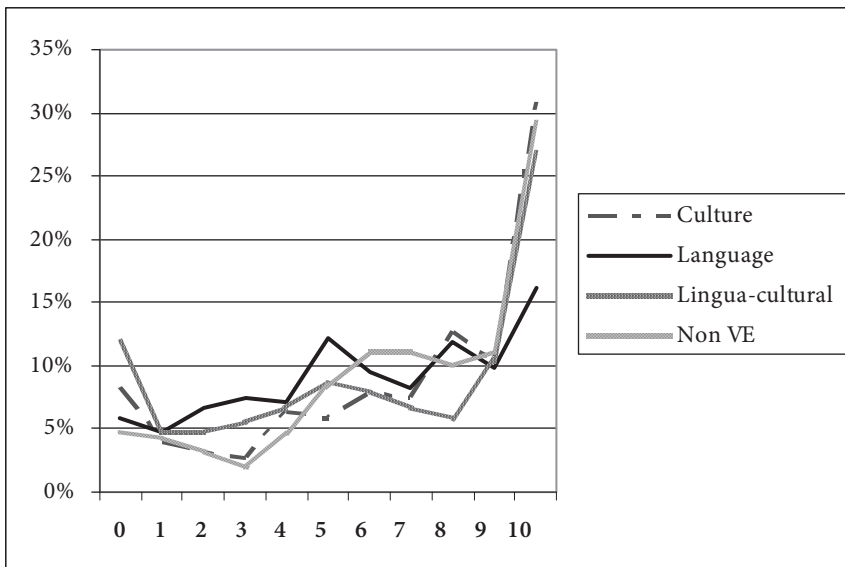


Figure 5. Declared understanding of the four categories on a 0 to 10 scale

Table 1. Declared vs. Actual understanding

	Declared understanding	Declared lack of und.	Actually understood	Actually not understood
Culture-specific	70%	30%	20%	80%
Lingua-cultural	64%	36%	27%	73%
Language-specific	65%	35%	17%	83%
Non strictly VE	79%	21%	21%	79%

culture-specific category. Only 50 respondents experienced no drops of translational voltage and understood the clips. The same applies to all the other categories: respondents declared understanding (above 60%) of the references but in fact (above 70%) failed to understand them.

By cross-tabulating the ‘actual understanding’ variable with classification and other independent variables we were able to assess that a correct understanding of the clips correlated with age, gender, education, and profession. A higher number of female respondents, as opposed to their male counterparts, understood the clips. In both cases, however, understanding was directly linked to younger age (18–29 for females and 18–40 for males). With regard to the education and profession variables, understanding was concurrent with a higher education (secondary school diploma, degree and postgraduate education) and two main professional profiles: students and free lancers.

Moreover, actual understanding also correlated with the fact that the respondents had studied English at school and that they had visited an English-speaking country.

6. Conclusions

An important aspect that emerged from this research is the fact that the attitudes of Italian TV viewers towards alternative methods of translating filmic products are changing and are substantially more positive towards subtitling as compared to the results obtained by other studies. Luyken *et al.* (1991), for instance, reported the results of a series of audience surveys carried out in five European countries (Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland) which pointed to the fact that viewers tend to accept what they are used to. Likewise, the data gathered by the Eurobarometer report (2001) on the language skills of European citizens and their attitudes towards language learning confirmed that viewers support the form of audiovisual translation with which they are more acquainted. Therefore, while, in general, 60% of Europeans prefer to watch dubbed (as opposed to subtitled) foreign films and programmes, support for one of these forms

of language transfer was expressed by the respondents according to which block (the so called dubbing or the subtitling block) their country belonged to. In Italy, more than 70% of the respondents expressed support for dubbing.

Our data indicate that preferences might be shifting. This change can be ascribed to many reasons, but perhaps the most logical explanation is that having been exposed to a substantially wider choice of language transfer modes offered by broadcasters, Italian viewers are becoming increasingly accustomed to watching a film or any other filmic or fictional product in either its original or subtitled version. As Luyken *et al.* concluded “preferences may not be unalterable and [...] they might be transformed by familiarization with other alternatives” (1991: 112).

Another important aspect that was emphasized by the descriptive analysis of the data is that despite being sure of having understood them, the respondents missed out on most of the references they viewed as part of the questionnaire.

It could be argued that if viewers are happy with the quality of dubbing and are not aware of the huge amount of DTV they are experiencing, then why should broadcasters bother to offer alternative modes of language transfer? But is it fair to leave viewers in this blissful ignorance? Are they not still entitled to be made privy to the pieces of information that are neutralized or that go missing in the process of dubbing? After all, the huge technological developments in the audiovisual sector (e.g. digital television, DVDs, etc.) have made available a wide array of services that can aid the viewers in recovering whatever they miss in whatever version they choose to watch a filmic product.

Further in depth research into end users’ perception of translated filmic products and their attitudes towards the different modes of language transfer for the small and the big screen may help address these issues in a more comprehensive way.

Acceptance of the norm or suspension of disbelief?

The case of formulaic language in dubbese

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This paper presents the results of an experimental study aimed at investigating audience perception of a specific aspect of dubbing in Italy, namely the influence of source language structures and expressions on target language audiovisual texts. Viewers were first shown selected examples of Anglicisms and dubbese found in US TV programmes and were subsequently tested on their perception of such expressions, with particular focus on an assessment of the likelihood of occurrence of these expressions in everyday Italian. Data collected by means of questionnaires following viewing proved that, on average, respondents found the expressions and phrases quite unlikely to occur, with the sub-sample composed of audiovisual translation (AVT) professionals indicating the lowest levels of likelihood.

Keywords: dubbing, perception, formulaic language, end-users

1. Introduction

Although, as we know, audiovisual translation is characterized by multiple levels of difficulty inherent in the semiotic structure of the source text, translating an audiovisual text is as much about the source text as it is about the target text (Pavesi 2005). In other words, although the translation and adaptation processes to which an audiovisual text is subject are obviously worth studying (among others Baccolini *et al.* 1994, Heiss and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1996, Bollettieri Bosinelli *et al.* 2000, Taylor 2000a), there is no reason why AVT research should avoid investigating the target text produced as a consequence of these processes and of their compliance, or lack thereof, with the target language norms. In particular, the present study is based on the premise that one of the tasks of audiovisual translation is that of trying to reproduce, when present, the source text's spontaneous oral

component, in compliance with the means available in the target language system¹ (Pavesi 2005). This postulate often seems to be neglected when it comes to adapting dialogues from English into Italian through dubbing since, as is often the case, words or expressions that sound perfectly natural in the source language (SL) are rendered with unnatural equivalents in the target language (TL). Indeed, interference from the SL, for example in the form of lexical and syntactic calques, shifts between formal and informal register, and translational clichés in general have often been identified (e.g. Raffaelli 1994, Rossi 1999a, Pavesi 2005) as one of the main characteristics of the language of dubbing, or *dubbese*.² In other words, although cultural references, examples of humour, and social and geographic varieties remain among the most widely recognized difficulties for the translator of audiovisual texts (Benincà 1999), apparently less important features in the target text are those that give away a film, sitcom, etc. as a dubbed product. This statement is supported by Pavesi's observation that:

...it is clear that the most difficult choices for a translator/dialogue adaptor are not the ones related to the structure of the linguistic code or those imposed by technical restrictions [...] It is the rendering of expressions carrying strong cultural or pragmatic connotations that require additional effort on the part of the translator.

[my translation]
(1994: 138–139)

Formulaic language clearly qualifies as one of these categories of phrases and expressions, with a consequent lack of correspondence between the level of spontaneity in the SL and TL versions of a text. The author is not trying to equate spoken Italian and fictional Italian, which are no doubt two very different instances of the language, where the latter is unavoidably a result of the process of trying to imitate orality, e.g. in film dialogues.³ However, even allowing for these differences, there is no denying that examples abound in which awkward phrasing in dubbed Italian and the consequent lack of correspondence with everyday speech is likely to attract the attention of even the least attentive viewer. Moreover, one cannot help noticing

1. Pavesi observes how the degree of orality present in the source text varies across genres, and that, as a consequence, its rendering should be reflected accordingly in the dubbed version. According to this suggestion, TV series like the ones analyzed in this paper, which often portray highly familiar situations and use everyday language, should be particularly subject to a demand for more natural and spontaneous language use in the TL.

2. Although the term *dubbese* was originally used with a negative connotation, here it is simply meant to refer to the language variety used in dubbed audiovisual texts.

3. For a thorough review of the differences and similarities between spoken and written-to-be-spoken language, and between spontaneous vs. film dialogue, see Pavesi 2005 and references therein.

that translational clichés and calques from English have been creeping into original Italian-language productions, such as TV series and soap operas.⁴ Although it is outside the scope of this paper to analyze the historical origins of present-day Italian fictional language, it seems clear that the relationship between this phenomenon and the language of dubbing needs further investigation.

Recent research in the field of AVT has moved some steps towards an investigation of audience perception of translated texts (e.g. Fuentes Luque 2001, Antonini *et al.* 2003, Chiaro 2004, Antonini and Chiaro 2005, Bucaria 2006, Chiaro 2006, Bucaria and Chiaro 2007). Some of these studies start from the premise that translation in general and audiovisual translation in particular (in the forms of dubbing, subtitling, voiceover, live interpreting, etc.) is a service (Antonini and Chiaro 2005, Antonini and Chiaro forthcoming) and that, as providers of this service, AVT professionals and scholars have a chance to cultivate an interest in how the end-users, i.e. the viewers, perceive what they are exposed to on a daily basis. More specifically, researchers could benefit from an investigation of whether audiences understand the end-product, whether they enjoy it, and more in general, if the translated product is a pragmatically successful equivalent of the source text. Furthermore, the issue of the preponderance of dubbese in translated audiovisual texts also calls for quality standard controls. Whereas technical and other types of translation welcome quality controls of this kind, the practice of audiovisual translation does not seem to be subject to them, with attention to dubbing quality often focused only on the actors' performances (see Chiaro this volume).

Based on some of the premises outlined above, this paper analyzes the way in which some words and phrases found in TV series dubbed from American English into Italian are perceived by samples of Italian viewers. In particular, the results of a survey, which investigated, among other aspects, the use of calques from the SL, unnatural-sounding Italian, frozen translational routines and other examples of formulaic language in Italian dubbing will be reported. The main hypothesis for this section of the survey was that viewers were bound to perceive these words and phrases as unlikely to occur in everyday Italian, and consequently lower scores were expected on the perception of likelihood scale. In the following paragraphs the author will first focus on a description of the project as a whole and then will move on to report the results obtained as far as the perception of formulaic language is concerned.

4. Recently noticed examples are the use of the word *già* as an affirmative answer (TV movie *Fratelli*, RAI 1, 22nd February 2006) and of the phrase *lo voglio* as meaning 'I do' at weddings (from an episode of the Italian soap opera *Un posto al sole*, RAI 3) reported by Antonini and Chiaro (2005). The use of *già* is also frequently attested in subtitles from English into Italian, where the lack of necessity for lip synchronization clearly points to its highly conventionalized use.

2. The study

The results reported here were part of a larger study conducted by the author for her graduation dissertation,⁵ which set out to examine the attitude of Italian audiences towards the dubbed TV programmes they watch every day. In particular, the study focused on TV programmes, namely sitcoms, TV series, and soap operas produced in the United States and broadcast in Italy in their dubbed versions.⁶ Carried out in the form of a survey, the study aimed at achieving a better understanding of whether and, if so, to what extent, Italian viewers managed to make sense of what they heard on a daily basis on dubbed TV programmes which were originally created for an English-speaking audience. More specifically, we looked for scenes that we thought might challenge viewers either on a cultural comprehension level or on a linguistic level, or on a combination of both. For instance, we looked for scenes in which in the Italian version cultural-bound references from the source culture were left unchanged, or where typically English words or phrases were literally reproduced into what was supposed to sound as spontaneous, everyday Italian, thus creating lexical and syntactic calques. Another example of a particularly complex cross-cultural aspect that we tried to exemplify in the corpus was humour in the form of wordplay.

The project was carried out with the help of (a) a videotape containing significant clips from US TV series dubbed in Italian, and (b) a questionnaire in which respondents were tested on their understanding of different aspects in the above-mentioned clips. After taping roughly 100 hours of material from Italian national channels and one satellite channel (*CANAL JIMMY* in the *SKY ITALIA* package), 20 short video clips were selected with the help of a focus group composed of Italian native speakers. Each of the selected clips contained an element that could potentially disorient viewers in terms of one or more of the aspects mentioned above. The nature of the questions in the questionnaire will be explained in greater detail in 2.1.1 below.

2.1 The methodology

2.1.1 *The questionnaire*

The questionnaire was organized in three parts: cultural references, cultural and linguistic aspects, and exclusively linguistic aspects. The first section included

5. A more thorough report of the whole study can be found in Bucaria and Chiaro 2007.

6. The choice to take into consideration US programmes, and therefore to focus on the perception of dubbed American English, was dictated by the fact that the majority of dubbed products in Italy comes from the United States.

specific references of the source culture, such as food and drinks, institutions, holidays and celebrities. The aim here was to test the audience's ability to understand such references and to illustrate how the Italian audience often perceives foreign dubbed products as culturally levelled (Antonini 2007). The linguistic and cultural aspects section included examples of diatopic and diastratic varieties (i.e. related, respectively, to geographic and social variation), of verbal and visual humour and of gestures, namely of all those verbal and non-verbal aspects that contribute to the full enjoyment of a dubbed product. In this section, subjects were also asked to comment on whether or not the lack of understanding of such features reduced their enjoyment of the product. Finally, the category of exclusively linguistic aspects included examples of linguistic artificiality, that is, of phrases and expressions that sound unnatural or unlikely in the target language (Italian), because their translation underwent some sort of interference from the English source version. The subjects were tested on their awareness of these discrepancies and, in some cases, on the level of dissatisfaction with the dubbed product the audience might have experienced because of them. The results obtained through this specific part of the questionnaire are the object of this paper and will be dealt with in detail below (paragraph 2.2).

2.1.2 *The sample*

The tape containing the 20 video clips was shown to a sample of 87 subjects selected by the author. This self-selection technique, in which respondents were chosen mainly by way of personal networking, was adopted in order to facilitate and quicken the questionnaire-administration phase, since sampling based on a purely random method, for example, would have required time and effort well above our means. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face whenever possible. In the other cases, respondents were first contacted by telephone in order to ask for their participation in the survey. They were subsequently sent a copy of the questionnaire and tape, which were then returned to us in the self-addressed and pre-stamped envelope that we had provided. The selected sample was composed of three distinct categories of respondents:

- (1) the general audience
- (2) experts in the field of TV and cinema, journalists and linguists/translation scholars
- (3) professionals from the dubbing and subtitling industries.

Sub-sample (1), the general audience (46%), was composed of respondents who were considered as representative of the average Italian viewer who is exposed to dubbed audiovisual material virtually on a daily basis. Sub-sample (2), composed

of both experts in the field of TV and cinema, journalists and linguists/translation scholars (30%), represents the point of view of professionals who are familiar with the audiovisual medium or with the language of translated texts. Finally, sub-sample (3) was included to test the perception of professionals working in the dubbing and subtitling industries (24%), who are not only exposed to the language of dubbing as viewers but also actively contribute to the creation of such language, for example through dialogue translation and adaptation. Needless to say, the three sub-samples were included in order to collect and compare data on the perception of different categories of viewers in Italy.

2.2 Formulaic language

As already outlined above, for the purposes of this paper, attention will be focused only on the results for the last category of clips, those concerned with the perception of words and phrases heavily influenced by the source language (US English). These included lexical and syntactic calques, and other translational clichés that are often accompanied by contextual artificiality and inappropriateness in the target language (Italian).

The following expressions were taken into consideration in the study:⁷

tesoro	<i>honey</i> as a term of endearment, even between female friends
amico	<i>man</i> as a term of address
lo voglio	<i>I do</i> as pronounced at weddings
già	<i>yeah</i> as an affirmative answer
dannazione!	<i>damn!</i> or <i>damn it!</i>
fottuto bastardo	<i>fucking bastard</i>
sono molto spiacente	<i>I'm very sorry</i>
rammenti?	<i>do you remember?</i>

7. A ninth example was present in the original study, i.e. the use of the V-form *lei* followed by the addressee's first name, which was included because of its perceived artificiality in Italian and often seen as a compromise to indicate the specific degree of familiarity given by the use in English of *you* followed by the addressee's first name (for further details see Pavesi 1996). However, this expression was excluded from this presentation of the data since it has in the meantime become quite frequent in everyday Italian as well, so much so that the results would have been skewed.

These eight words and phrases from the same, larger category that we labelled “formulaic language” were then divided into 4 subcategories:

1. Terms of address *tesoro, amico*
2. Translational clichés *lo voglio, già*
3. Swearwords *dannazione!, fottuto bastardo*
4. Shifts in register *sono molto spiacente, rammenti?*

Within the category of terms of address we mean words or expressions used to attract somebody’s attention, among which we included terms of endearment such as *tesoro* (‘honey’), which was taken from a scene from the sitcom *Friends* and used between female friends, and *amico* (‘man’). This specific example comes from a scene in the sitcom *That ’70s Show*, although it is used both as an actual term of address or as an interjection throughout the collection of clips. For both examples of terms of address and endearment Pavesi notes that their use in English does not correspond to their use in Italian. Specifically, they have a different frequency and use in the two languages and, for sociolinguistic reasons, “the use of terms of address among people who know each other seems thus to be almost compulsory in English” [my translation] (1996: 118).

Translational clichés involve choices that have been consolidated by recurring use through time, despite their lack of correspondence with actual language use. We included the phrases *lo voglio* from the sitcom *The Nanny* and *già*, again from *The Nanny*, as clear calques from, respectively, ‘I do’ and ‘yeah’. It is to be noted, however, that in the first case the common answer given at an Italian wedding by a bride or groom is usually a simple *sì* and not *lo voglio*. In the second case, *già* is probably the clearest example in which the articulatory similarity to the source text (yeah), especially when pronounced in a close-up shot, prevails on actual real life use in the target language (Pavesi 1994: 137).

The third category presents swearwords which were translated literally from English into Italian but that are not very likely to be pronounced by the average Italian.⁸ Curse words translated literally from English include *dannazione!*, from the series *Ally McBeal*, and *fottuto bastardo* from *Seinfeld*. In both cases, the results are not commonly used Italian swearwords, but calques that allow to partly reproduce the source text’s lip movements, especially in initial position (Pavesi and Malinverno 2000, Galassi 2000).

Finally, the shifts-in-register category contains the two examples in which, for different reasons, syntactic or semantic calques from the source language produce a change in the stylistic register of a phrase. This last subcategory includes *sono*

8. For an interesting corpus-based analysis of swearwords in dubbed films, see Azzaro 2005.

molto spiacente from the soap opera *The Guiding Light* and *rammenti?* from *Caroline in the City*, in which an apparently closer translation from a syntactic point of view results in the use of a higher and unnecessarily more formal register than the one used in the source text. In the case of *sono molto spiacente*, the English syntactic structure “I’m very sorry” is reproduced, although in everyday Italian the form *mi dispiace molto* (literally “it displeases me very much”) would probably be preferred. As far as the phrase *rammenti?* is concerned, it is clear how this more formal equivalent of the commonly used *ti ricordi?* (‘do you remember?’) was adopted because of reasons linked to lip-synchronization and, specifically, to the closer resemblance to the labial sound [m].

Considering the very frequent occurrence of these and other examples of formulaic language in the language of dubbing or *dubbese*, the aim of this section of the study was, on the one hand, that of establishing whether or not Italian viewers are aware of any discrepancies between the language of dubbing and naturally occurring Italian, and secondly, if so, to what extent they are aware of them or even, in some cases, annoyed by them. In order to answer these questions, we asked respondents the following question: “on a scale from 0 to 10, how likely do you think it is that this word/phrase occurs in every-day Italian?” For two of the eight expressions (*già* and *sono molto spiacente*) the respondents were also asked to indicate if in real life situations similar to those portrayed on the screen they would have used those expressions or if they would have chosen different ones. In these cases alternatives were provided so that respondents could choose from a set of answers. For the term of endearment *tesoro* audience annoyance at the use of this word in a dubbed scene was also tested.

For questions in the fourth part of the questionnaire, which all required an answer based on different degrees of intensity, respondents were asked to indicate scores on graphic metric rating scales (Figure 1) in which the lowest possible likelihood level was *per nulla* ‘not at all’ and the highest possible level was *moltissimo* ‘very much’.



Figure 1. Graphic metric rating scale

The data collected from the questionnaires were statistically processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with which both frequency analyses and a t-test for independent samples was performed on indices-constructed

summing scores regarding the four subcategories of formulaic language. In particular, by summing all these scores a general index – which we called GPLO (General Perception of Likelihood of Occurrence) – was obtained. This index allowed us to measure the total likelihood of all the expressions and phrases brought to the respondents' attention. This index is given by the following formula:

$$\text{GPLO} = \sum_i^n \chi_i$$

where χ is the value assigned to every single phrase by each respondent and i is an index varying from 1 to 9.⁹ Therefore, the value of this index can vary within a 0–90 interval, that is, the total sum of the maximum score which it was possible to assign to the nine expressions taken into consideration.

3. Results and observations

As far as respondents' personal information is concerned, women represented 58.6% of the interviewees, while men constituted 41.4%. The age of respondents ranged between 19 and 74, with the average age being around 40. Forty-two percent of respondents had a high school diploma, 36% had a college degree, while the rest of the sample had only completed elementary or middle school. 66.2% declared they watched TV every day, while the average number of hours spent watching TV was about two. As far as the respondents' TV preferences are concerned, 39% declared they preferred only dubbed programmes, 37% both dubbed and Italian programmes, and 5% only Italian programmes.

Figure 1 shows a summary of the overall results for eight of the nine words/expressions taken into consideration in the original study in terms of their likelihood of occurrence in everyday Italian. Results stress the fact that, based on the index described above, overall average scores for each of the eight examples of formulaic language were generally quite low. In fact, none of these scores is above 5 out of 10 points. However, the expressions that resulted as the most likely to occur in everyday Italian were respectively: *già* (4.9), *lo voglio* (4.6), *tesoro* (3.8), *amico* (3.7), *sono molto spiacente* (2.9), *fottuto bastardo* (2.7), *dannazione!* (2) and *rammenti?* (2).

9. The original number of phrases included in this section of the study.

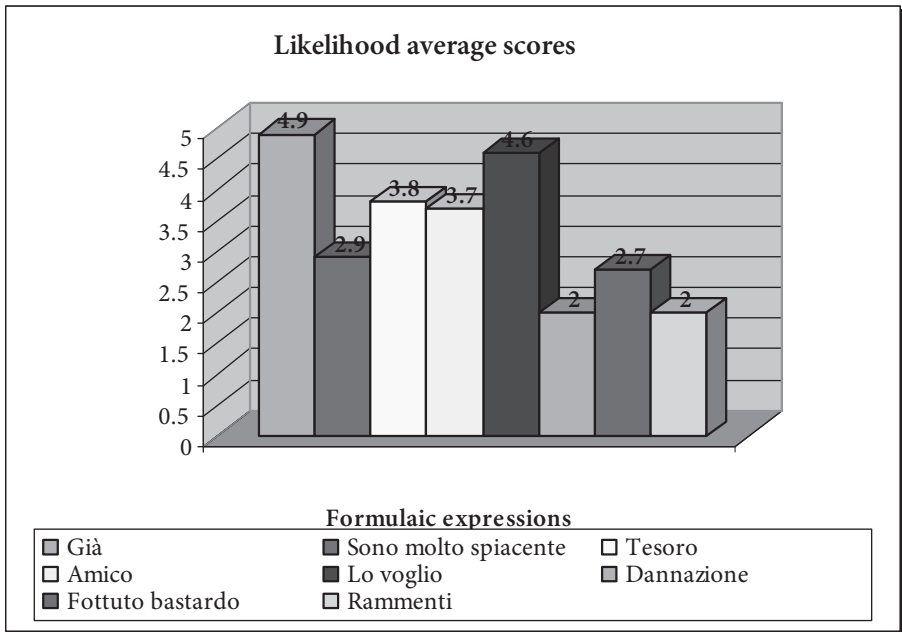


Figure 2. Likelihood of occurrence average scores

Già was considered by the overall sample as the most likely to be used in everyday situations in Italian, while the two examples of swearwords *fottuto bastardo* and *dannazione!* and the expression *rammenti?* were considered the least likely to be heard in everyday Italian.

Discrepancies in the average scores assigned by viewers were found between the likelihood values indicated by the different subcategories of the sample. Table 1 shows average likelihood scores for the three different groups that composed the sample. In particular, the results in bold are the highest average scores indicated by each audience sample. *Già* was indicated by experts and AVT professionals as the most likely to be heard in everyday Italian, with 5.9 and 4.1 average scores respectively, while the general audience thought that the phrase *lo voglio* (“I do”) was very commonly heard during weddings in Italy. On the other hand, as expected, the unlikelihood of occurrence of literally-translated swearwords and of the two cases of shift in register was generally recognized by all the three samples, with *dannazione!* and *rammenti?* being perceived as the two most unlikely expressions in the corpus.

Table 1. Average likelihood scores for the three audience samples

	General public	Experts	AVT Professionals
Tesoro	4.7	2.7	3.4
Amico	4.6	3.2	2.6
Lo voglio	5.4	3.9	4
Già	4.5	5.9	4.1
Dannazione!	2.8	1.5	1.1
Fottuto bastardo	2.9	2	3.4
Sono molto spiacente	3.3	2.6	2.2
Rammenti?	2.6	1.5	1.6

Although statistical cross-tabulations with such variables as sex, age, hours spent watching TV, and others reported in the first section of the questionnaire did not prove to correlate positively with the perception of likelihood of the overall sample, education seemed to be the one variable that affected respondents' answers on this matter. In order to simplify, we clustered the six education levels (none, elementary school diploma, middle school diploma, high school diploma, university degree, post-graduate) into two categories. Under the label 'non-graduate' we included respondents without a university degree, while the label 'graduate' refers to respondents with a university degree or higher level of education. As table 2 shows on average, respondents with a higher level of education indicated likelihood values that are systematically lower than those indicated by the rest of the respondents. Amongst the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, education is the only variable able to discriminate formulaic language. In fact, table 2 shows a similar pattern for all four categories of formulaic language, i.e. scores obtained from less educated people are always greater than those obtained from people with a degree or higher level of education. Thus, in order to explore whether these differences were statistically significant a t-test under the assumption of equal variance was performed.¹⁰ Results showed that terms of address, swearwords, and shift in register were statistically significant respectively at 0.09, 0.06 and 0.003 under the null hypothesis of equal variance assumed and non equal variance assumed. Translational clichés was the only subcategory of formulaic language which was not statistically significant to the t-test.

10. T-testing proves that the same test carried out on 100 or 1000 different people would yield the same results. It is significant for independent samples at 0.05 or less.

Table 2. Comparison of partial GPLO scores according to education

Type	Education	Likelihood score*	t-test		
			<i>t</i>	<i>d. f.</i> †	<i>p-value</i>
Terms of address (<i>amico + tesoro</i>)	Non-graduates	8.4	1.71	84	0.09
	Graduates	6.7			
Translational clichés (<i>già + lo voglio</i>)	Non-graduates	10	0.45	79	0.65
	Graduates	9.5			
Swearwords (<i>dannazione!</i> + <i>fottuto bastardo</i>)	Non-graduates	5.6	1.91	83	0.06
	Graduates	3.7			
Shift in register (<i>rammenti?</i> + <i>sono molto spiacente</i>)	Non-graduates	6.4	3.1	80	0.003
	Graduates	3.8			

* Mean values are indicated out of 20 points, which result from the clustering of the maximum score for each phrase/word.

† Degree of freedom.

This datum seems to point to the fact that, regardless of their sex, age group, or even profession, viewers with a higher level of education also have a higher linguistic awareness when it comes to the kind of language to which they are exposed when watching dubbed (and, presumably, also non-dubbed) programmes. In particular, significant discrepancies can be noted between values indicated for the last two categories of formulaic language, swearwords and shift in register, which respondents with a degree found considerably less likely to be heard in everyday language. The higher incidence of graduates in the 'AVT professionals' and 'experts' sub-samples might of course also explain why respondents from these categories, on average, assigned lower likelihood values to the eight examples of formulaic language.

Finally, after assigning a 0–10 likelihood score to the two items *già* and *sono molto spiacente*, respondents were also asked to indicate if in real life situations similar to the ones portrayed in those specific scenes they would have used those phrases or if they would have chosen different ones. The alternatives provided for the former expression were *già*, *certo* ('of course'), *sì* ('yes'), *sicuro* ('sure'), and 'other', where interviewees were required to indicate their own alternative. Statistical analysis of answers from the whole sample returned the following percentages: *già* (30%), *certo* (30%), *sì* (28%), *sicuro* (7%), and 'other' (5%). On the one hand, these data show that almost a third of the sample considered *già* as the most natural response in everyday Italian, thus confirming how the word obtained the

highest likelihood average score among the eight taken into consideration (see figure 2). On the other hand, these percentages also point to the fact that almost two-thirds of respondents chose the much more common responses *certo* and *si*, while leaving *sicuro*, which is another blatant calque from English and was included specifically for this reason, as their fourth choice.

Alternatives to *sono molto spiacente* included *sono molto spiacente, mi dispiace molto, scusa tanto, sono costernato*, and ‘other’, which are all variants of ‘I’m very sorry’ but with different levels of formality. Half of the respondents (50%) understandably indicated *mi dispiace molto* as the most common response instead of *sono molto spiacente*, thus supporting results showing low likelihood scores for this phrase. Other percentages include *scusa tanto* (32%), *sono molto spiacente* (9%), ‘other’ (7%), and *sono costernato* (2%).

As far as terms of endearment were concerned, we noted above that, similarly to terms of address, they appear to be much more common in English than in Italian and that this difference, if reflected in the language of dubbing, might result in awkward phrasing. The example used here, the word *tesoro* used between female friends, is particularly significant in terms of the interference of the source language on the language of dubbing. In the English version Monica, one the characters from the sitcom *Friends*, says “sorry, Phoebe,” while the Italian version offers “scusa, tesoro.” The substitution is quite surprising, considering that keeping the character’s first name would have guaranteed more accurate lip synchronization. A good explanation is offered by Pavese’s observation:

The weight of common usage can be so strong as to allow for the insertion of typical terms of address even if these were not there in the original version.

[my translation]
(1996: 128)

In other words, because of the high frequency of this kind of term of endearment in this series, but not only for that reason, it is possible to hypothesize that the AVT professionals responsible for the translation and adaptation of these dialogues might have taken as a starting point not so much the source text but, rather, other already established translational choices.

When asked to express their level of annoyance at the use of the term of endearment *tesoro*, respondents indicated scores which were not on average higher than 4 points out of 10. If we run cross-tabulations with the interviewees’ sex, we find that the expression is considered slightly more likely in everyday Italian by women (3.9) than by men (3.5), with annoyance levels respectively of 2.8 and 3.3. It is also interesting to note that *tesoro* is considered quite likely and not annoying especially by respondents in the 30–40 age group, while AVT professionals

indicated the lowest levels of likelihood (2.7) and the highest levels of annoyance (3.9) at the use of this term of endearment.

On the basis of the results described above, it is possible to make some general observations. Firstly, it is evident that on more than one occasion the general audience indicated a higher likelihood score than the one indicated by the other two audience typologies considered here. Although, as we have seen, this finding is most probably influenced by the higher level of education of members from the 'experts' and 'AVT professionals' sub-samples rather than by their professional activity per se, it certainly merits further comment. Specifically, such low likelihood levels assigned to these expressions by AVT professionals leave us wondering why the use of these formulaic expressions is still so widespread in the language of programmes dubbed from US English, and also from elsewhere. These data seem to suggest that audiences, and especially AVT professionals, consider dubbese as a language with its own rules and norms, which not only is completely separate from everyday Italian but does not even try to emulate it. Ultimately, the data presented here seem to support Pavesi's suggestion that the language of dubbing is in compliance with what she calls "the third norm" (1996: 128), i.e. dubbese takes as a reference not the source language or the target language, but dubbese itself, a third language that keeps reinforcing its repertoire of formulae, translational clichés, and other examples of formulaic language through repeated use. Although this inference will have to be supported by further investigation, it is clear, however, how the implications of this state of affairs risks frustrating any attempt to bring everyday language and dubbese closer together, and to respect the pragmatic intent of the source text (Herbst 1987).

From the point of view of the AVT professional, it is legitimate then to wonder how powerful this third norm is, or to what extent dubbese is affecting and is going to affect the language of future dubbed and even non-dubbed products. If we take for granted that on a sociolinguistic and pragmatic level it is desirable to bring dubbese and everyday Italian closer together, this raises the question of whether anything can be done to make this process as painless and effortless as possible. Since many AVT professionals denounce the detrimental influence of time restrictions on the quality of their work, a possible suggestion might be the creation of constantly updated databases of formulaic expressions, where equivalents could be offered for the most common examples of dubbese, although the individual cases, in which variables such as the presence of close-up shots might come into play, should of course be left to the creativity of the translator/adaptor.

Finally, from the point of view of audience members regularly exposed to dubbese, the issue at stake seems to be whether or not their low appreciation of the language of dubbese (as highlighted by the results of the empirical study reported here), even in the event that larger-scale studies are performed, is likely to affect

the choices made by AVT professionals or, more importantly, by the individuals or institutions commissioning their work. In a field in which the commercial success of an audiovisual product is the top priority this possibility seems highly unlikely.

4. Conclusions

To sum up the main results of this study as far as formulaic language is concerned, we found that all three audience samples attributed low levels of likelihood to the eight examples of formulaic language translated from English into Italian, thus confirming our main research hypothesis. More precisely, the expressions that obtained the highest levels of likelihood on behalf of the total sample were *già* and *lo voglio*. Also, discrepancies were found in the average scores indicated by different audience typologies in the sample, with the sub-sample of AVT professionals attributing some of the lowest scores. However, the fact that translators and dubbing script writers also agreed on the artificial nature of the expressions included in the study clashes with the extensive use of similar clichés in most dubbed programmes. This could be interpreted as evidence of the fact that the language used in dubbed products is considered completely separate from spoken Italian, and that no attempt is made to bring the two closer together. Attention was consequently drawn to the need for a more functional approach to the translation of filmic texts, especially from the point of view of qualitative linguistic standards.

Measuring the perception of the screen translation of *Un Posto al Sole*

A cross-cultural study

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This paper presents and discusses the results of a study designed to investigate to what extent the places where viewers live and the role of the national community to which they belong, interact and influence the perception of culture-bound issues in the fictional context of a famous Italian soap opera, *Un Posto al Sole*. Although deeply rooted in the Neapolitan cultural context, this programme is assiduously watched in all parts of Italy, and also translated into English. In order to measure the degree of comprehension, and consequently of appreciation, of the programme, some scenes of this soap were shown to a group of Neapolitans, a group of Milanese, and a group of Americans based in Naples who were exposed to the episode in its subtitled version. A careful analysis of data obtained through a questionnaire submitted to the three groups has shown that in *Un Posto al Sole* there is a significant residue of untranslatable culture associated with the linguistic structures of source language which is only partially conveyed, or is not conveyed at all. Our survey verifies that this affects the degree of appreciation.

Keywords: audience perception, subtitling, soap opera, culture-bound issues

1. Introduction

The tendency for media systems worldwide to become increasingly homogeneous, with cultural and structural differences among nation states disappearing in favour of a global pattern of commercial media, journalistic professionalism and marketing-oriented policies have progressively led to what has been labelled audiovisual 'modernization' (Schroder and Skovmand 1992). In particular, the economic Goliath of the American entertainment industry has enhanced the process of "Americanization" (Mancini and Swanson 1996), i.e. the effect upon a local culture of the long-term and large-scale importation of elements of a culture founded

in the USA. The global expansion of mass media industries based particularly in the United States has, as a consequence, substituted local cultures with a single, standardized set of cultural forms shaped to the American world (Hallin and Mancini 2000). However, despite the common assumption that European television is being subjected to American cultural imperialism, the local production of European television series is clear evidence of Europe's willingness to 'fight back' against the threat of television capitulating to globalization (Silj 1988). According to Liebes and Livingstone (1998), the undisputed success of locally-produced programmes, in particular soap operas, is a concern related to the new relevance of the issue of cultural identity in Europe. In their words (1998: 150–1) "With the growing economic integration of the European Union, and, in parallel, the ethnic and cultural segmentation within national states (not only the extreme case of the former Yugoslavia but also in Belgium, Spain and the UK) – there is a new urgency in dealing with matters of national identity. How do the multiple member states, and ethnic and cultural communities within these states, preserve their own language, art and history? One possible though not purist answer is producing home-soaps".¹ Domestic soap operas preserve their own cultural diversity *vis-à-vis* the multitude of imported, globally diffused soap operas, and differ quite fundamentally from the American 'glam soaps' both in style and content, and maybe this is exactly where their success lies, as in the case of the Italian-produced soap opera *Un Posto al Sole*. However, since these locally-made programmes are so intermingled with the cultural identity of the country where they are produced, the question is raised of what happens when these programmes are translated, whether it is dubbed or subtitled. However, while "dubbing has become the subject of a growing number of studies and research projects, [...] the art of subtitling, possibly due to its lower profile on the international circuit, has received rather less attention" (Taylor 2000b), and even though it has been around since the beginning of the 'talkies' in the late 1920s, very little theory has been developed.

2. About the research

What remains relatively unexplored is, in particular, the field of end-user perception and appreciation of the translated product.² Within this perspective this work

1. The national characteristics of each domestic soap opera are so unmistakably local that Quebecois journalist, Denise Bombardier (1985: 180), in relation to Quebecois identity, has written 'if we could have a soap, we would have a nation'.

2. Only a few scholars (Karamitroglou 2000, Fuentes Luque 2001, Antonini *et al.* 2003, Chiaro 2004, Antonini and Chiaro forthcoming) have so far oriented their research in this perspective.

aims to contribute to 'perception analysis' by analysing precisely what happens when we come to translate and culturally decode verbal (or even non-verbal) signs outside the socio-cultural context in which they originated, as in the case of *Un Posto al Sole*, which is also subtitled in English. Does translation allow the transmission of all the intended messages and culture-bound issues (and if so to what extent), or are they totally lost? Is social understanding lessened? While providing definite answers to the more general question of Italian cultural-specific soap translatability is beyond the scope of this study, a careful analysis of obtained data has shown that in *Un Posto al Sole* there is a significant residue of untranslatable culture associated with the linguistic structures of source language (SL) which is only partially conveyed, or is not conveyed at all. This, as we will demonstrate, may affect comprehension and appreciation.

3. About the programme

3.1 Ratings and audience composition

*Un Posto al Sole*³ has been broadcast on Italian state-owned channel RAI 3 since 21st October 1996, and thanks to a combination of its cast, intriguing plots and the Neapolitan setting, it has enjoyed a high level of success since then; today its success still continues: updated figures demonstrate that during the second week of January 2006 the daily serial drama attracted an audience of approximately 3.2 million viewers per episode, with an audience share rating of 11%. The programme is broadcast from Monday to Friday during prime time with every episode having an average length of 27 minutes. It is produced by Grundy Productions Italy, one of the most successful television production companies, with more than three hundred people involved in the making of this soap, and featuring about 18 main characters. In addition, from the data collected via our questionnaire, the notoriety of the programme among people living in Italy seems indisputable, since all the Italian participants admitted to having already heard about this 'home-made' soap opera, including those who had never watched it, and 17 out of the 30 American respondents involved in the study knew about it too. The huge popularity of the programme is also witnessed by the numerous chat lines exclusively devoted to *Un Posto al Sole*. The core demographic group of the 18 to 45-year-old audience

3. Although the title of *Un Posto al Sole* becomes 'A Place in the Sun' when translated into English, it has nothing to do with George Steven's 1951 film, starring Montgomery Cliff and Elizabeth Taylor with the same title.

includes “experienced” viewers (Allen 1985: 70),⁴ though in recent times an ever-growing number of teenagers are becoming ‘addicted’ to this series. The viewing public includes a high percentage of graduates, with a large proportion of male viewers,⁵ who generally do not watch other soap operas. The programme is watched throughout Italy and, predictably enough, as the soap is deeply rooted in the Neapolitan socio-cultural context, a high percentage of viewers are in Campania, the region of which Naples is the chief city; what is surprising to note is that Veneto, despite being in northern Italy, also registers a very large audience.⁶

3.2 Settings and content

Shot on location in Naples, this long-running serial, like many of its American counterparts, is a microcosm of an exaggerated world where everyone you live near is your friend, enemy, lover or a combination of all three. This soap displays a series of social, cultural, historical and political characteristics entrenched in the Neapolitan socio-cultural context, and presents an ongoing series of overlapping situations, which develop following many plots and sub-plots at the same time. The programme is traditionally based on the close study of personal relationships and revolves around a set of characters who live the everyday life of typical Neapolitan families, and, while coping with their daily problems, they all strive to find their own ‘place in the sun.’ Dramatic events are also introduced into the script, and episodes often tackle critical issues such as drugs, abortion, AIDS, violence, juvenile delinquency and rape. Particularly while dealing with these critical themes, the authors send mixed messages containing an explicit surface content and a covert hidden content conveying socially-edifying messages and pedagogic aims. This is additional evidence of a patent audience-centeredness, that is to say the audience is kept foremost in mind at every stage in the preparation and presentation of the programme, adhering to a public service broadcasting ethos.

There are two main sets where the intricacies of the plot develop, and where the loose ends of all the simultaneous plots are tied together: *Palazzo Palladini* and the *Vulcano* coffee bar. In this soap two subtypes of the genre merge: the dynastic, focusing on one powerful family, and the community framework, in which a number of middle and working-class, multigenerational families and single

4. According to Allen’s definition “experienced” viewers are long-term viewers who know the back-story, as opposed to “naïve” viewers who tune into a soap episode for the first time.

5. This partly seems to confute Modleski’s claim (1992) that soap operas constitute a uniquely feminine narrative form, mainly viewed by isolated working-class housewives.

6. The author wishes to thank Lavorgna, one of the production assistants of *Un Posto al Sole*, and Tanturri, for the information generously supplied.

characters all live within one geographical neighbourhood and are intimately connected with one another (Liebes and Livingstone 1998).⁷ In *Un Posto al Sole* most of the characters live in the same building: a beautiful old Neapolitan *Palazzo*, facing the sea and Vesuvius, named *Palazzo Palladini*, after the owner of the whole building, while the *Vulcano* café/wine bar is the characters' favourite meeting place. Filmed with few outside scenes, and centring, as we have said, mainly on these two focal points, *Palazzo Palladini* and the *Vulcano*, the story line relies consistently on dialogue. This is a typical feature of soap opera since, like many other television genres (e.g. news and quiz shows), this genre is originally drawn from radio rather than film, originating in American radio serials of the 1930s (Hagedorn 1995). The repeated use of the same settings, which viewers associate with particular linguistic genres (e.g. *Vulcano*: pub talk), contribute to create a sense of community among the characters. Neapolitan dialect is also sometimes used, but generally in specific comedy scenes and only by certain stock character types who generally embody the often comical style of the Neapolitan urban reality, or by criminals linked to the *Camorra* underworld. Dialectal expressions, however, serve only to add a Neapolitan 'flavour' to the situations depicted and, thanks to the general context in which they are used, are generally, but not always, as we will demonstrate, comprehensible to a wider Italian audience.

4. Subtitles

4.1 Chosen strategies

While Italy lies firmly among the so-called dubbing countries as far as English-language films are concerned, Italian-to-English films for DVD and the TV market are invariably subtitled. *Un Posto al Sole* follows this trend and actually supplies two types of subtitling: intralingual subtitles, which transform the soundtrack of the television programme into written captions for deaf viewers, and interlingual subtitles which, in this case, translate the Italian dialogue into English.

In *Un Posto al Sole* interlingual subtitles, however, tend to use an inclusive language, i.e. a language that does not connote people on the basis of gender, place of birth, age, social status or other factors, so that important markers like class-related accents, ethnic or geographical dialects undergo reduction. As is commonly known, the translation and adaptation of regional and social varieties represent one of the main challenges for operators involved in any translation sector.

7. These two models are the most commonly adopted forms with regard to the production of soap operas in Europe, even though, from the beginning of the 1990s, this trend has successfully been developing in the direction of a third form, the dyadic one.

Generally, the main strategy employed for the translation of any fictional product, be it a serial or a cartoon, is a “general inevitable flattening out” (Bucaria and Chiaro 2007) of any difference in accent, dialect and pronunciation. This is precisely what happens in the case of English subtitles for *Un Posto al Sole*, where regional and social variants present in the Italian text are generally replaced with a standard variety of the English language. Moreover, too often the culture-specific elements present in the script are neutralized. In this regard translators adopt the technique of ‘chunking up’ (Katan 1999: 147–57). Chunking is one of the most important strategies translators resort to when rendering cultural terms; this expression, taken from computer science where it refers to the changing in size of something, “is a simple operation of finding a (more or) less culture-bound, or rather, more (or less) culture-inclusive superordinate” (Katan 1999: 147), and comprises three different options: ‘chunking up’, ‘chunking down’ and ‘chunking sideways’. ‘Chunking up’ means that translators, in rendering a specific term, decide to put it into a more general context, while, ‘chunking down’ is a reversed strategy where the SL generic term is translated into the Target Language (TL) with a more specific one; ‘chunking sideways’, which is of particular interest when rendering cultural terms or any so-called ‘untranslatables’, occurs instead when the size is not altered and the translator manages to find other examples which are on the same level or belong to the same class. In our case, as far as culture-bound elements are concerned, as has been said, subtitlers generally ‘chunk up’, and thus move from a narrowly-defined term to a broader definition, from hyponymy to hyperonymy, as when *pastiera*, a typical cake eaten in Naples at Easter time that carries very heavy cultural connotations, in the English subtitle simply becomes “pastry”. Another significant example is an utterance such as *Non lascerà che nessuno le tolga la polpetta dal piatto*, which is an idiomatic expression (*togliere la polpetta dal piatto*) meaning ‘to take something precious away from somebody’. This is translated literally as “She will never let anyone take away the meatball from her plate”, which appears totally out of context, and is thus meaningless.

4.2 Formal and textual constraints

Ideally, each utterance needs to be translated not only in full, but also explicitations (Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy 1998, Pym 2005) when needed, should be added. However, a complete transcription of the dialogue is not possible since the medium imposes what Gottlieb (1992:164) terms formal (quantitative) and textual (qualitative) constraints which indicate, respectively, limitations imposed both by space and time factors and the visual context of the film. The number of visual verbal signs on the screen are restricted by the space available (and television screens being smaller than film screens the reduction of the text volume is, in our case, even

greater): each line must consist of approximately 40 characters or typographic spaces and, although proportional spacing (e.g. more space for 'm' and 'w', less for 't' or 'l') allows more room for words, this influences the choice of lexicon, as subtitlers very often opt for the shortest synonym with as few wide characters as possible.

Other constraints are those imposed on the subtitles by the visual channel: on the changing screen, the captions disappear in a few seconds; in addition, to ensure synchronization with the spoken word and the image, conversations have to be condensed in a layout which helps viewers to identify different speakers. As a consequence, in order to respect this time-frame, the subtitler is often forced to present the SL dialogue or narration in condensed form, so that, as highlighted by de Linde and Kay (1999), as much as half of the literal, original dialogue is lost owing to these spatial and time constraints.⁸ Concision may lead to the loss of much of the meaning and pragmatic effect (Blum-Kulka 1985), with obvious consequences on the general appreciation of the programme. Typical features of spoken language (such as reformulations, greetings, information recoverable from the visual channel, or politeness phrases, false starts, digressions, sentence fragments, the repetition of words and phrases) which are systematically omitted on the grounds of their being redundant, contribute nonetheless in maintaining cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Kachroo 1984); by the same token, colloquialisms and conversational markers, though they convey important information about the level of formality involved and the relations between the speakers, are often left untranslated, and this can considerably modify interpersonal dynamics. Minor subtractions and omissions of culture-specific references in single episodes, which may appear insignificant, can, however, drastically alter meanings and affect comprehension of further episodes. In particular, as claimed by Taylor (2000b), the cultural scenario is crucial to an understanding of the characters' thought processes. Nonetheless, Baker and Hochel (1998: 76) claim that "the transmission of cultural values in screen translation has received very little attention in the literature and remains one of the most pressing areas of research in translation studies."

5. Methodology

5.1 Main hypothesis

Within this perspective, the aim of this study is to investigate to what extent the places where viewers live and the role of the national community to which they

8. Besides, it is not uncommon for subtitles to be further adjusted by technicians, so that the end product receives its final revision not by translators, but by mere craftsman who, with due respect, are ignorant of translation theory.

belong interact and influence the perception of culture-bound issues in a fictional context. In particular, our work focuses on analysing how individuals from cultures as distinct and distant as those of Naples, those of Milan and the United States might perceive a programme which portrays a very peculiar socio-geographic context, that of Naples, and, most of all, if, or to what extent, subtitles can improve the appreciation of the programme. Our hypothesis is based on Katan's assumption (1996: 7): "The meta-message, the message about how the message is to be interpreted, depends on where you have been en-cultured", so that significant rates of appreciation among the different groups will appear: the nearer the audience is to the socio-geographical context on screen, the greater their understanding and perception of how that culture is. Vice-versa, the further the audience is from the context displayed on screen, the wider the gap in understanding will be. In particular, we aimed at demonstrating that in *Un Posto al Sole* culture-bound elements are definitely numerous, so that non-Neapolitan viewers, to different degrees, being unfamiliar with many culture-bound issues presented in the episode shown, such as dialectal utterances, colloquialisms, customs and traditions, will have to tackle dialogues and situations which cannot be totally understood and thus appreciated.

In our case, translators tend to be mainly informative and attempt only to convey the mere core of the script; in too many cases, specific matters and expressions are omitted in the subtitled version and thus remain unexplained to those lacking the background knowledge necessary to understand the scene fully. This results in different levels of reception and enjoyment. Our survey verifies that the vagueness and linguistic standardization of English subtitles do not affect the amount of general comprehension as a whole, but rather the degree of appreciation.

5.2. The videotape

The first crucial stage of the investigation was to record a number of episodes subtitled in English. Our corpus included 30 episodes recorded over a period of 8 weeks. Some scenes were then selected among those presenting highly culture-specific issues with which the audiences might not be familiar.

5.2.1 *Out-of-awareness elements*

The contents we specifically looked for were mainly what Hall (1990) in his triad of culture terms "out-of-awareness" elements, i.e. core cultural issues for which there are no frames of references; these elements cannot be traced in dictionaries or grammar books, and, as such, represent a major challenge for translators. In particular we took into consideration:

- references to food, drinks and their inextricable socio-cultural value (we are referring, for instance, to what a sentence such as “Let’s have a coffee” implies in Naples);
- customs, institutions, events, festivities, famous people and so on;
- locations and geographical landmarks (e.g. Mount Vesuvius, the Amalfi coast): the messages to be conveyed may be contained not only in the language but can be found visually and orally, for example, enhanced by a carefully chosen soundtrack.⁹ Connotations that are included in the image on the screen may include geographical references which presume knowledge by the spectators which are part not only of the SL culture in general, but which, above all, are peculiar to the Neapolitan geographic context. When translating these terms, subtitlers must be aware that the TL audience may not be familiar with the expression, and that additional information might be needed to clarify the term since very often geographic references are not simply places as such, but may have been chosen on the basis of the cultural connotations they may convey;
- “culture bumps”, as Leppihalme (1997) calls them, i.e. Neapolitan utterances and puns;
- metaphors, proverbs, idioms and allusions; Verbally Expressed Humour (wordplay, jokes, irony, etc.); songs, poems and rhymes and gestures;
- stereotyped Neapolitan habits of mind (e.g. Neapolitan mothers being extremely protective of their adult male offspring).

5.3 The sample

The chosen scenes, recorded on DVD, were then shown to a sample of three different groups, each group composed of thirty viewers. As far as the sampling method is concerned, we opted for convenient sampling, which allowed us to save the cost or time required to select a random sample.¹⁰ Participants were thus chosen conveniently from acquaintances who are autochthonous Neapolitans, autochthonous

9. The relevance of soundtracks is highlighted by Altman (1986 :34) when he claims that: “The auditor must be convinced that the sound track provides sufficient plot or informational continuity *even when the image is not visible*. For example, it must be possible to follow the plot of a soap opera from the kitchen.”

10. Convenience sampling is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in obtaining an inexpensive approximation of the truth. As the name implies, the sample is selected because they are convenient. This non-probability method is often used during preliminary research efforts to get a gross estimate of the results, without incurring the cost or time required when using a random sample. Random sampling, on the other hand, is the purest form of probability sampling where each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected (Groves *et al.* 2004).

Milanese and Americans living in Naples.¹¹ Thirty-nine percent of participants were female, 61% male, with an age range of 18 to 79; as far as their level of education was concerned, 3.3% had attended only Junior High School, 26.7% had attended High School, while 70% were graduates. Participants were asked to watch the videotape and answer the questions.

5.4 The questionnaire

After watching the chosen scenes, participants were instructed to fill in a questionnaire which set out to measure their understanding and appreciation of the scenes; the questionnaires were administered face to face, except for respondents living in Milan, whose questionnaires were sent and collected by post. A total of ninety questionnaires were thus distributed between April and July 2005 to the three sample groups.

In the questionnaires we utilized both yes-no, and/or multiple-choice questions, and, mainly, a 0–100 graphic metric rating scale which allowed us to measure the pitch of respondents' opinions. Such a scale is composed of a 10cm long horizontal axis with two opposing options at each end, such as 'Enjoyable' (corresponding to 100) and 'Irritating' (corresponding to 0). Participants were asked to place a cross at the point which most closely corresponded to their feelings or opinions.

Responses were stored directly in an SPSS 10.0 software solution, and subsequently processed statistically. When using yes/no or multiple-choice questions, figures indicate the percentage; when referring to the 1–100 point scales, we used a mean index, specified by the following formula:

$$M = (\sum_{i=1 \text{ to } n} x_i)/n.$$

The index can vary from 0 to 100, so that between 'Enjoyable' (corresponding to 100) and 'Irritating' (corresponding to 0), a mean value of 53 (see 6.5) indicates 'Indifferent'. The lower the score, the lower the appreciation and/or the function of subtitles in fostering understanding.

In our questionnaire-style test, questions were divided into three sections. The first concerned not only socio-demographic classification questions (i.e. sex, age, job, place of birth, place of residence, and so on), but also questions aimed at measuring participants' familiarity both with Neapolitan culture and dialect, and the programme itself. The second and the third blocks presented questions devised on the content of segments edited from scenes of the series. In particular, with the second block we intended to evaluate the perception of elements such as Neapolitan

11. Due to the presence of NATO headquarters in Naples there is a large American community consisting of more than 72,000 US citizens.

utterances or shifts in dialectal inflections, and to analyse if and to what extent subtitles are of help in perceiving and/or understanding them. The last block, based on a comic scene, was devised in order to assess the appreciation of the scene, with particular reference to its humorous dimension.

6. Survey queries and results

6.1 Familiarity with Neapolitan culture

The most striking feature to emerge from the findings of the survey is that, as a general trend, the answers of the Neapolitans and the Americans do not differ so much as compared to the responses of the Milanese, who do not share the same cultural context, and were chosen as speakers of a different dialect within the same national scenario. Neapolitans affirm they are remarkably proficient in the Neapolitan dialect (66.7 out of 100), which is no surprise, and to be slightly less familiar with Neapolitan culture. Americans declare they have a greater familiarity with both Neapolitan dialect and culture when compared to the Milanese; the Americans' knowledge of the Neapolitan lingua-cultural scenario corresponds to 40.7 out of 100, while the understanding of the same features by the Milanese is far lower (32.9). These data imply that, even if born and educated in a distant continent, being even temporarily residential in a place fosters not only integration but a much greater familiarity with that specific cultural context than the one possessed by Italian people of other regions, such as the Milanese.

6.2 Knowledge of the programme and of its subtitled version

Participants were first asked to indicate if and how often they watched the programme, on a scale ranging from 'Always' to 'Never'. Neapolitans and Milanese admitted to watching *Un Posto al Sole* sometimes, both with a value of 43%, while for the Americans, the data (12 out of 100) are nearer to 'Never'. As for subtitles, neither Neapolitans, nor the Milanese, nor Americans watch episodes with English captions. From our interview it emerged that the small percentage of American

viewers utilize television programmes as a way to improve their Italian, so that they prefer to avoid the English subtitled version.¹²

6.3 Neapolitan dialectal expressions

After watching scenes containing Neapolitan utterances and typical dialectal expressions, respondents were asked to assess the way they perceived the use of Neapolitan dialect, if it affected their overall understanding and whether or not it modified their appreciation of the scenes at issue. For Neapolitans and Americans, the use of Neapolitan dialect makes the scene realistic (respectively 88.5% and 81.7%), while for the Milanese Neapolitan dialect does not add particular realism to the scenes (72.9%), but makes them particularly amusing (80.3%), a little bit funnier than for Neapolitans (80), and quite captivating (78.0%). Neapolitan dialect is also perceived as quite enjoyable for both Neapolitans (79.6%) and the Milanese (78.5%), while for Americans (60.3%) Neapolitan dialect does not convey any particular comic flavour, nor does it make the scenes more captivating (68.4%), and does not enhance their appreciation, since Neapolitan utterances generally remain untranslated, or are rendered and/or summarized in Standard English, as can be seen from the following Table.

Table 1. Examples of Neapolitan utterances translated into standard English

Neapolitan Utterances	Standard English
<i>Arò vaj?</i>	Where are you going?
<i>Io invece ti farei una bella faccia di paccheri e posso cominciare pure subito</i>	And I'd slap your face
<i>T piac é pazzia</i>	You like acting the fool
<i>T stai facenn un gruoss</i>	You're becoming important

12. The programme, however, is watched abroad via satellite, not only in the United Kingdom, but also in the USA. Italian producers do not have the technical means to measure exactly the size of their audience outside Italy with official data, but the popularity of the programme in America is witnessed, for example, by an evening with the director and some actors of the TV series organized on April 15th 1999 by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of New York. The presentation, which was very crowded, featured the screening of a promotional video on the programme and a videotape segment for each of the participating actors edited from scenes of the series.

6.4 The shift from standard Italian to dialectal inflections

Subsequently we aimed at measuring whether different dialectal inflections are perceived (since the characters are mostly Neapolitans, but many others are from all over Italy, so that, apart from Neapolitan, in this soap there is a great variety of regional accents); 28 out of 30 Neapolitans recognize distinct dialectal inflections and consider them quite amusing; only 18 out of 30 Milanese grasp these differences and regard them as considerably amusing, while the Americans noted no variances, since subtitles once again are no help at all in highlighting sociolects and/or dialectal inflections. Lack of linguistic nuances results in a considerable loss of enjoyment.

As for the Neapolitan utterances, obviously the Neapolitans' understanding is extremely high (84.6%), while Americans (55.2%) and Milanese (54.4%) show sufficient comprehension; the Americans' understanding is slightly higher than that of the Milanese. Subtitles, however, do not appear to help Americans (1.8%) to perceive the shift from Italian to the use of Neapolitan dialect, but rather, in order to grasp it, they rely on a change in cadence (70%), gestures (60%), facial expressions (40%), the setting of the scene (10%) and background music (0%).

6.5 The 'caciucco' scene

All respondents were then asked to evaluate the humour of a particular sketch, the so-called *caciucco* scene. This scene, chosen on the basis of its culture-bound elements particularly concerning Italian and Neapolitan cooking, represented a real challenge for translators mainly because of its numerous puns and allusions. For example, when the *caciucco*, a fish soup, is lovingly prepared by Giulia for her husband Renato, in the English version many of the gags, and possibly the gist of the whole scene is missed, i.e. Renato's pretending to be ill so as not to be forced to taste the *caciucco* which he thinks will taste disgusting. When Renato, smelling fish in the kitchen, says to Giulia "*No, ma dico, e quando mai cucinare il pesce è stato arte tua*", the Italian audience immediately understands that his wife is totally unable to cook fish; whereas the subtitles just inform us that she "never cooked fish before", which does not necessarily imply that the result will be unpalatable. Renato uses an Italian idiomatic expression *non è arte tua* (literally 'it is not your craft') which probably could have been more successfully rendered with the English 'it's not your speciality', thus properly giving the idea of Giulia's inexperience as a cook. In the same vein, to quote some more examples, when Renato, pretending to be sorry he cannot eat the *caciucco*, says "*E va bè dal momento che non posso fare da cavia, ehm, da prescelto*" (literally "since I can't act as your guinea pig, ehm, your chosen one") in the English version the humorous allusion to the guinea pig is

omitted, and the sentence is colourlessly translated as “and as I can’t do the tasting”; again, the rosé wine brought by a guest is presented in subtitles as a “Salento rosato”, with no further explanations, and when Renato reproaches their guest for bringing wine instead of some typical Neapolitan food to be eaten rather than the *caciucco* – namely “*altro che vino, tu dovevi passare in rosticceria e prendere due croquettes, pizzette e suppli, questa roba qua*” – the English subtitles omit any reference to the wine and, apparently out of context, translate “You should have brought some rice balls”, as if this were some peculiar Neapolitan custom.

The whole, long, sketch, rich in gags and comic situations, made most of the Neapolitans laugh (81%), appeared to be quite funny for the Milanese (62.4%), but left the Americans relatively indifferent (53%), as shown in Figure 1.

This confirms what a hard task translating Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) is, particularly when it occurs on the screen;¹³ as highlighted by Chiaro (2004: 35), the translation of VEH “has received even less attention in issues regarding how it is mediated across cultures and languages”. Here many culture-specific references instrumental to producing laughter, as seen, are either not translated, or are translated very vaguely. Unavoidably, “lingua-cultural drops in voltage” occur, which, according to Antonini and Chiaro’s definition (forthcoming: 38), take place when

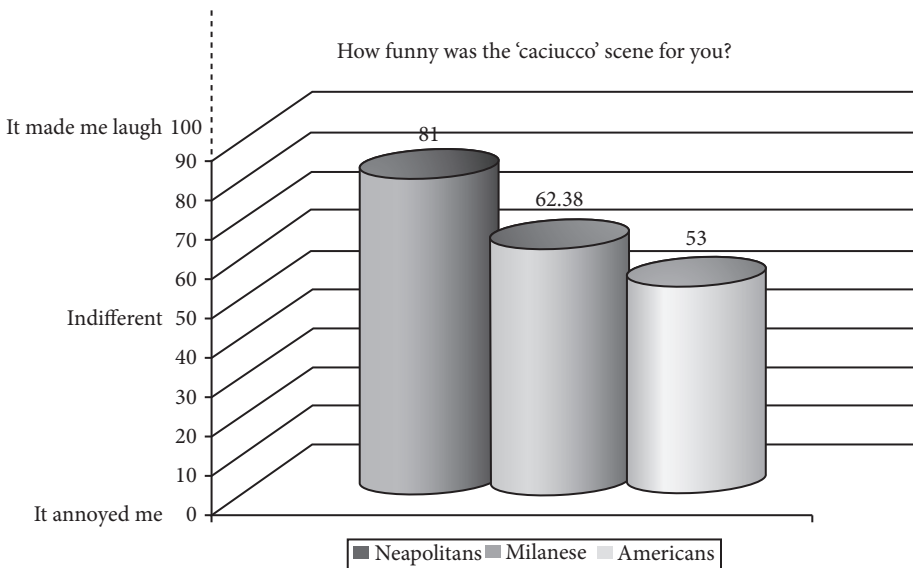


Figure 1.

13. A survey carried out by Benincà (1999) on a sample of 96 Italian screen translators demonstrated that they unanimously rated the translation of VEH as the knottiest problem they had to cope with in the dubbing/subtitling process.

cultural references and idioms are not completely understood, and jokes slip by unnoticed. As a consequence, the Americans' reaction to the humorous references is neutral, and the comic effect is totally lost. Nonetheless, most Americans rate the quality of these subtitles, on a scale ranging from excellent to terrible, as extremely high (81%).

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study is an attempt to pinpoint the main difficulties involved in translating texts for subtitling in the field of domestic soaps; in particular, by doing this, we have tried to demonstrate that the poor translation, or the absence of translation, of culture-specific elements strongly affects the appreciation, and in some cases also the understanding, of the subtitled text by the TL audience. This proves to be particularly true in the case of 'home-made' soap operas which are mainly based on dialogue, and have a high concentration of cultural issues. One significant factor emerging from our study is that dialects, sociolects, shifts in register, alliterations, metaphors and cultural clues are all important factors, which convey the subtlety of the full content of a dialogue, and can fulfil functions which lie outside the simple storyline. When these elements are not translated, or translated inadequately, as seen in our examples, comprehension may be affected but, most of all, the enjoyment of the scenes is notably lessened, particularly in terms of comic effect. This is particularly highlighted by the fact that the Americans totally missed the humorous dimension of the *caciucco* scene in the analyzed soap opera. What translators failed to do in this case was to be sensitive to cultural differences; by not translating them properly (or worse, leaving them un-translated) the translators created a gap in communication. If we must accept that sometimes untranslatability can be part of the cultural incompatibility between the two languages involved in translation, in some other cases, however, a closer search for equivalence between the two languages (as when *non è arte tua* could have been more successfully translated with 'it's not your specialty', or, perhaps with 'you don't know the tricks of the trade'), i.e. 'chunking sideways', could have helped enhance, in our case, the intended humour. By the same token, the generalization (Katan 1999: 413) of the *caciucco* scene, where the translator glosses over many connotative and cultural references, could have been avoided with some expansions (Gottlieb 1992), for instance by explaining that the 'Salento rosato' is a 'southern rosé'. Translators should never overestimate the target-audience's familiarity with the source-language culture, and "must be at home in two cultures, they must be bilingual and bicultural" (Snell-Hornby 1988 :42). In Neubert and Shreve's words (1992: 54) translators are "knowledge breakers between the members of disjunct

communities” and, as such, they must understand what is different in a foreign cognitive environment and recognize any collateral material, or presupposed information. It is necessary for translators to accommodate the culture of the SL text, if they want to enable the TL audience not only to follow the straight narrative, but to appreciate as far as possible the subtleties of both dialogues and situations. In cross-cultural research areas, especially where humorous issues are concerned, concepts relevant to the source culture setting are to be made explicit in the target culture setting, or semantic equivalents must be found. Therefore, in the screen translation process, emphasis must be placed on retaining/transmitting the essence of the represented worlds rather than simply providing a denotative translation.

I believe that the results of this study can offer a useful springboard for further research in the field of perception analysis. A more varied sample of data which could highlight the many difficulties inherent in such translational processes could at the same time provide possible solutions to foster communication and promote understanding across cultures through viable entertainment products. Additional studies and further investigation in this field may well lead to the elaboration of articulated frameworks and tools to compare data from reception analyses of different inter-cultural-specific screen products.

Cultural and psycholinguistic approaches

Taming teen-language

The adaptation of *Buffyspeak* into Italian

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This paper examines the Italian dubbed version of the US TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, focussing in particular on the translation of the show's idiosyncratic slang, the so-called Buffyspeak, and the representation of unconventional femininity embodied by the character of Buffy. Our analysis shows how the changes made in the adaptation radically alter two of the most debated elements of the programme: its youth language and its 'feminist' content, resulting in what we argue is a 'tamer' version of the show. We believe that linguistic and technical problems are insufficient to explain the normalisation strategies adopted throughout so other factors have been considered. In particular, we focus on current working practices in the Italian dubbing industry, the importance of clear generic labelling on TV and the difference between US and Italian teen series, all of which have been cited as elements that are likely to have affected the adaptation of the programme. Ultimately this illustrates that, when analysing dubbing for television, it is necessary to take into account the socio-cultural context to understand how certain strategies are chosen and why.

Keywords: dubbing, teen TV, slang, youth language, normalization

1. Introduction

The way in which ideological issues and questions of representation affect textual production in a given culture has been the focus of many studies in the field of translation in the last few decades (for example Bassnett and Lefevere 1990). Many case studies are available as examples of how the receiving culture manipulates and adapts imported texts to make them coherent with the beliefs and dominant thinking circulating in that culture. In the field of screen translation such concerns and studies are still rare although, given the high level of adaptation made necessary by the particular constraints of this translation modality, such a field represents an ideal area to examine manipulations caused by ideological pressure in the target culture (cf. Fawcett

2003: 145). In the case of television, because of its popular and populist nature, it may be expected that the adaptation of imported texts is more deeply affected by ideological constraints than would occur in other media. In addition, such manipulations are more likely to take place with respect to 'sensitive' areas of representation that are especially important from a symbolic point of view, as they are the repositories of hopes and anxieties. The representation of youth is certainly one of these 'charged' cultural areas and one that in recent years has found increasing embodiment in the figure of the teenager, particularly in many TV fictional series produced in the USA. By looking at the Italian dubbed version of one of these series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, this paper will show how changes in the adapted texts reflect a normalising drive which is due to social, economic and cultural factors, resulting in a representation of youth closer to dominant widespread imagery in the target culture.

2. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, language and teenage identity

The US TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was broadcast on US TV networks from 1997 to 2003 (WB: 1997–2001; UPN: 2002–3003). The series, created by screenwriter Joss Whedon, follows the current aesthetic of generic hybridization in US TV and combines the conventions of teen-comedy with those of horror movies. Set in the imaginary Californian town of Sunnydale, it follows the life and adventures of Buffy, a student in the local high school who is also the Chosen One, the last descendant from a stock of heroines who have to fight the forces of evil, such as vampires and demons. Intended by Joss Whedon as a metaphor of the "horror of growing up",¹ the series has become a cult in the USA and many countries and has also triggered widespread critical debate raised by the many wider issues that the series, in spite of its apparent juvenile character, tries to deal with. The representation of teenagers and particularly the presentation of Buffy as a positive role model for young women has been at the centre of this debate. Buffy has often been seen as a symbol of "female agency",² escaping the traditional portrait of women as victims and passive receivers of male help and protection. In *Buffy*, women are generally more powerful than men and in what is clearly a reversal of stereotypes they are often those who save 'males in distress'. At the same

1. Quoted in "The Fearless, Po-Mo, Grad School *Vampire Slayers*", Fiona Morgan, The Independent website, October 2002, [<http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase>]

2. Buffy's feminist content has been a matter of contention. See: Karras, I. "The Third Wave's Final Girl: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in *Thirdspace* 1.2 (2002). 25 Nov. 2002 [<http://www.thirdspace.ca/articles/karras.htm>] and Bodger Gwineth, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer? Constructions of Femininity in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*", in *Refractory*, March, vol.2, 2003 [<http://www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/journalissues/vol2/vol2.html>]

time, in spite of its irony and humorous scenes, the show, especially in its later seasons, offers a fairly pessimistic and dark view of life and of the adults world. Grown-ups are not portrayed in a particularly favourable way and authority, represented by institutions such as school, family or religion, is often a source of repression and evil. As David Graeber says:

If the series has an ultimate message for the youth of America, it is that whatever instinctual revulsion you might feel toward those who claim to be your betters is not only justified--but things are likely far worse than you could possibly imagine.

(Graeber 1998)

One of the elements that highlights the separateness between adults and teenagers is their different speech, so, for instance, Wilcox observes how teen language “starkly contrasts with that of the adults” (2001), while Adams describes the show as “linguistically potent” (2003: 11). The language of the adults, with their crystalized forms and ‘institutional’ speech styles, validated by traditions and social conventions, ends up being closer to the way in which vampires speak (Wilcox 2001) in contrast with the inventive, creative and ultimately subversive language of the youth. This language, or Buffyspeak³ as it has come to be known, was defined as slang by Michael Adams, who compiled a glossary of all the morphological, syntactical and lexical deviations and innovations from standard US English that can be traced in the show (Adams 2003). Buffyspeak was important in defining the series’ specific identity as well as that of its protagonists whose speech form is not just an accessory to their characterization, but a metaphor of who they are, “Buffy needs slang (...) she IS slang, as are those who associate with her” (*ibid.*: 3). In making this equation Adams draws attention to the particular relationship between youth identity and slang, something that has also been confirmed by recent research investigating the language of young people (for example Stenström *et al.* 2002).⁴ In the same way that real teenagers need “their own language” as a means of provocation and as a means of keeping the older generation outside” (*ibid.*: 67), Whedon’s teenagers need slang as a weapon to keep their monsters (real or metaphorical) at bay. In a show where the relationship between the real and the metaphorical interweaves all the time, it is not difficult to see how Buffyspeak

3. Together with “Buffyspeak” to refer to the special language spoken by the show’s teens, the terms “Slayer Speak” and “Slayer Slang” are used; the latter has recently been introduced by Michael Adams in his homonymous study (2003).

4. The need to speak a different language from adults as a means of peer bonding and to establish the subject’s identity seems to be a common trait in the language of youth in current Western society, although it is difficult to say whether this is a phenomenon contingent to this time and place, caused by the emergence of the teenager as a distinct figure in our society or if it has more universal characteristics (cf. Banfi and Sobrero 1992).

perfectly achieves “slang’s dignity-lowering, stuffiness-demolishing effect” (Peters 2006) contributing to disrupt pretences of authority and power.

Therefore, although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is often grouped together with other recent, successful US teenage series such as *Dawson’s Creek* and *Beverly Hills 90210*, it is very different in the way it subverts gender stereotypes and undermines accepted hierarchies of power, both linguistically and socially. However, what may be considered an acceptable, although controversial, representation of teenagers in one culture, both in visual and verbal terms, is likely to differ in others. Teenagers, together with children, can be defined as a social group ‘under surveillance’⁵ and cultural products targeted at them, either original texts or translations, will reflect adults’ ideas of what teenage and young adulthood is, or should be, like. In the next section we will see how the representation of teenage identity in *Buffy* was negotiated through translation when the series was screened in Italy in its dubbed version.

3. The Italian adaptation of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

The series first appeared on Italian TV screens in 2000, broadcast by *Italia 1*, part of the *Mediaset* network, which has identified itself as the ‘youth channel’ with programming consisting mostly of cartoons, national and imported teen TV series and comedy. Although *Buffy* in the US was deemed unsuitable for those under-14, in Italy it was identified as a show for young teens as the pre-watershed programming indicates but, with the series’ increasing darkening of tone and content, it was moved to a late night screening (for Seasons Five, Six and Seven). These changes in programming, together with tight censorship that led to the suppression of an episode dealing with female homosexuality (*New Moon Rising*) and the toning down and erasure of most sexual allusions, show how very sensitive the Italian producers were to the possible controversial aspects of the show. If such a policy may be explained by the need to conform to Italian legislation in the matter of young viewers (cf. Poli 2003: 210), the reasons for the standardization of most of *Buffy*’s characteristic slang are less clear, especially since such language was an essential part of the show’s identity and greatly contributed to its appeal and success.

3.1 Normalizing Buffyspeak

Buffyspeak consists of a lively blend of current American youth slang and invented lexis that Joss Whedon and his team created by making up neologisms and working on morphological and syntactical features of existing words. Kirchner divides

5. See Davis and Dickinson (2004: 1–13).

Buffy's slang in seven categories: jargon and new vocabulary, affixation, changing the part of speech, syntactic changes, truncation, semantic shifts, pop-culture reference (Kirchner 2006) showing the variety of strategies employed by the writers to come up with a language that would make the show's protagonists "sound like hip teenagers" (*ibid.*). It is beyond the scope of this article to make a detailed analysis of how all aspects of Buffyspeak were rendered in Italian. In our analysis we will look at two aspects that are particularly important in relation to the show's dynamics: the contrast between teenager and adult/vampire speeches and neologisms.

The linguistic distinctiveness of Buffyspeak is not reproduced in the Italian version, where teenagers' speech style is, at most, characterized by an informality which does not have any particular connotation as 'youth language'.⁶ In fact the register may sometimes be so high as to seriously affect characterisation. In the following sequence⁷ Buffy and 'bad girl' Faith comment on the suitability of a place for romantic encounters (Table 1):

Table 1. Register differences in the adaptation of Buffyspeak

English Version	Italian Version
Faith: Nice place. Do you ever catch kids doing the diddy out here?	Faith: Bel posticino. Mai trovato nessuno che venga a pomiciare qui?
Buffy: No. There's a smooch spot up by the woods. That's usually where kids go.	Buffy: No, c'è un posto più appartato fra gli alberi. I ragazzi vanno sempre lì.
Faith: Yeah? Bet you and Scott have been up there kicking the gearshift .	Faith: Sì, scommetto che tu e Scott siete requentatori abituali .

(*Beauty and the Beasts* – 3.4)⁸

With the exception of the Italian slang "pomiciare" (petting) to render Faith's idiosyncratic neologism "doing the diddy" (having sexual relations), the dialogue in Italian sounds much more formal as slang "smooch spot" and neologism "kicking the gearshift" are rendered with expressions that are too precise and correct, particularly in relation to Faith whose anti-conformism is always marked by a direct and provocative way of speaking.

6. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that one of the adapters, Mauro Pelliccioni, was aware of the language problem and explained that the translation 'team' tried to reproduce a language closer to that of the young people in the programme (Personal communication, January 2006).

7. English and Italian transcriptions have been made from the DVDs of the series released in Italy and cross-referenced with the transcriptions appearing on the following web sites: <http://www.buffyworld.com/> and <http://www.buffymaniac.it>.

8. References to the episodes report first the title, then the season and the episode number.

Another result of such standardization is that there is little difference between the way in which teenagers and adults speak. This appears as particularly problematic in those sequences where Buffyspeak functions as a commentary on adults' speech and social structures. For instance in the following example (Table 2) the language difference that characterizes Buffy's speech and that of her Watcher, Rupert Giles (a sort of mentor to the Slayer), is not just a way to characterize the speakers along the age axis. As so often happens in this series, it provides an important meta-linguistic/thematic element. Since Giles has just made a remark about the linguistic style of the Watchers, Buffy's short, sharp and slangy replies provide an ironic counterpoint to what in the Buffyworld is the "institutional talk" of the Council of Watchers, and by implication a critique to the "institutional style" of the adult world.

Table 2. Standardization of Buffyspeak

English Version	Italian Version
Giles: [...]I've been, uh, indexing the Watcher diaries covering the last couple of centuries. You would be amazed at how numbingly pompous and long-winded some of these Watchers were.	Giles: Sai, questi sono i diari degli Osservatori di questi ultimi due secoli. È incredibile scoprire quanto fossero pomposi e verbosi alcuni Osservatori.
Buffy: Color me stunned. (....)	Buffy: Chi l'avrebbe mai detto? (...)
Buffy: Yeah! They had tools, flashlights, whole nine yards. What does that mean anyway? 'Whole nine yards'? (Giles begins to pace) Nine yards of what? (whines) Now it's gonna bug me all day. Giles, you're in pace mode. What gives? (<i>What's My Line</i> 1 – 1.9)	Buffy: Sì, avevano attrezzi, torce, tutto l'armamentario. Ma che significa poi tutto l'armamentario. Armamentario per cosa? Eh, ci penserò tutto il giorno. Signor Giles, è di umore strano. Che succede? (<i>L'Unione fa la forza</i> 1 – 1.9)

In the adaptation Buffy's replies to Giles are in standard Italian, expressing at most a sort of benevolent irony (*Chi l'avrebbe mai detto?* – "Who would have thought so?") and slight concern for her Watcher (*Giles è di umore strano. Che succede?* – "Giles you are in a funny mood. What's wrong?"), and showing, on the whole, a more respectful attitude towards adults than the character has in the English version.

The reduction of linguistic variation also affects the scenes between teenagers and vampires. As many commentators have noted Buffy and her friends often use slang as a weapon. So, for example in *Prophecy Girl* (1.12), the heroine, after defeating the Master, a very old and dangerous vampire, calls him *loser* while looking

at his disintegrated body, using slang to seal her victory after the Master had taunted her (“Where are your jibes now?”). In the Italian adaptation *Buffy* simply says softly: *È finito* (“He’s gone”) after declaring rather pompously: *Ora non potrà più fare del male a nessuno*. (“Now he won’t be able to hurt anybody any longer”) thus using a clichéd verbal closure, positioning her in the world of the formulaic language which characterizes both adults and vampires.

Table 3. Neutralization of pop culture references

English Text	Italian Adaptation	Definitions ⁹
<p>1. Buffy: I cannot believe that you, of all people, are trying to Scully me. There is something supernatural at work here.</p> <p>(<i>The Pack</i> – 1.6)</p>	<p>Buffy: Non posso credere che proprio lei stia cercando di voltarmi le spalle. Qui c’è qualcosa di sovrannaturale.</p> <p>(<i>Il branco</i> – 1.6)</p>	<p>To Scully – reference to Dana Scully of the X-Files; explain paranormal activity with scientific rationale</p>
<p>2. Xander: [...] Does anybody else feel like they’ve been Keyser Sozed?</p> <p>(<i>The Puppet Show</i> – 1.9)</p>	<p>Xander: Non avete la sensazione di essere stati fregati?</p> <p>(<i>Il teatro dei burattini</i> – 1.9)</p>	<p>To be Keyser Sozed – reference to imaginary character in the film <i>The Usual Suspects</i>; duped by an actual bad guy into believing in a villain that doesn’t exist;</p>
<p>3. Forrest: ...Yet we must Clark Kent our way through the dating scene never to use our unfair advantage.”</p> <p>(<i>Hush</i>- 4.10)</p>	<p>Forrest: ..Tuttavia dobbiamo usare con parsimonia sia questo vantaggio che il tempo da dedicare a loro.</p> <p>(<i>L’urlo che uccide</i> – 4.0)</p>	<p>To Clark Kent – reference to Superman’s alter ego; to disguise</p>
<p>4. Buffy: Stay back... or I’ll pull a William Burroughs on your leader here.</p> <p>Xander: You’ll bore him to death with free prose?</p> <p>(<i>New Moon Rising</i> – 4.19)</p>	<p>Buffy: State indietro o faccio un bel ricamino al vostro capo.</p> <p>Xander: Hai deciso di mettermi a fare la sarta?</p> <p>(<i>New Moon Rising</i> – 4.19)</p>	<p>To pull a William Burroughs – reference to American author William S. Burroughs who shot and killed his wife accidentally</p>

9. Unless otherwise indicated, definition of terms in Buffyspeak are taken or adapted from Michael Adams’ glossary, *Slayer Slang*, OUP, 2003

Neologisms form a consistent part of Buffyspeak, especially the ones created by turning proper names (usually pop culture references) into common names and verbs (Table 3. above).

These lexical items are important in the show for two reasons. On the one hand they have a poetic function in that they provide humorous imagery and expressiveness to the teen language, on the other hand they function as a social “gauge”, by signalling that Buffy and her friends are ‘competent teens’ who have a solid knowledge of the popular culture of their time. We would argue that this element is particularly important in teen shows as it allows viewers to bond with the characters in relation to the shared world of pop culture, contributing to maintain fan-loyalty to the programme. However, in the Italian adaptation most of these references are neutralized. This may be an understandable strategy when they are too obscure to be recognized by the TT (target text) audience as in 4 and possibly 2. On the other hand the references to the *X-Files* TV series and Superman in 1 and 3 are certainly well known also to Italian teenagers and it is not clear why a greater effort was not made to retain them.

It must be stressed that in the Italian adaptation there are instances of adequate translation of Buffy slang, with translators working on morphological features and finding creative solutions for neologisms. In Table 4., for example we see how “Totally dead. Way dead” is rendered in Italian by semantically deviant “mortissimo” and “tutto morto.”

Table 4. Slang features retained in the Italian adaptation

English text	Italian Adaptation
Buffy: Dead.	Buffy: Morto?
Cordelia: Totally dead. Way dead.	Cordelia: Tutto morto. Mortissimo
Xander: It’s not just a little dead, then? (<i>Welcome to the Hellmouth</i> -1.1)	Xander: Non era morto solo un po’? (<i>Benvenuti al College</i> – 1.1.)

Equally interesting are the neologisms “chiama-mamma” to render “doing a round-robin” (to call everybody else’s mom and tell them they’re staying at everyone’s house – *Innocence* 2.14) and the reference to John Travolta and *Saturday Night Fever*, well known to the Italian audience, to render the neologisms Slut-O-Rama and Disco Dave to describe a girl and a boy who look and dance as if they were from the 1970s:

Cordelia: Check out Slut-O-Rama and her Disco Dave. What was the last thing that guy danced to, K.C. and the Sunshine Band? (*Faith, Hope and Trick* – 3.3)

Cordelia: Ma guarda quella smorfiosa e quel John Travolta dei poveri.
Dove crede di essere, alla Febbre del sabato sera? (*L'incantesimo*
– 3.3)

However such instances are too few and far between for the Italian version of the show to acquire the 'distinct flavour' of youth language.

3.2 Normalizing gender

The normalization of Buffyspeak was not limited to the way in which Buffy and her friends speak but also affected what they actually say when this does not conform to widespread ideas about gender identities and youth sexuality. In Table 5., we see how the adaptation radically changes the image of active 'female sexuality' projected in the original lines to one that is closer to traditional sexual images:

Table 5. Normalization of gender in Italian adaptation (1)

Spike:	You were amazing.	Spike:	Mi fai impazzire.
Buffy:	You got the job done yourself.	Buffy:	Si può sapere cosa vuoi da me?
Spike:	I was just trying to keep up. The things you do... the way you make it hurt in all the wrong places. I've never been with such an animal.	Spike:	Sei davvero un mistero. A volte sei dolce, a volte ferisci chi ti vuol bene. Sei un animale così strano.
<i>(Dead Things – 6.13)</i>		<i>(La sfera magica – 6.13)</i>	

In this scene the two characters are in bed commenting about their sexual prowess. Spike's words make it clear that Buffy was the more active sexual partner both in terms of stamina and desire to experiment. The Italian translation not only erases this image but it replaces it with a conventional idea of femininity conveyed through the use of stock phrases that highlight on one hand her passivity (*Cosa vuoi da me?* – "What do you want from me?") and on the other the 'eternal mystery' that women are (not to mention their illogical, irrational behaviour: *A volte sei dolce, a volte ferisci chi ti vuol bene* – "Sometimes you are sweet sometimes you hurt those who love you").

The same happens in another scene (Table 6.) where Buffy admits to her sexual exploitation of Spike. In the Italian version this is replaced by a more stereotypical image of a woman consumed by wild passion (*attratta selvaggiamente da lui*), unable to control herself, an idea of 'female behaviour' that has been solidly canonized in our culture by countless romantic narratives and as such is more culturally acceptable.

Table 6. Normalization of gender in Italian adaptation (2)

Tara: You're going through a really hard time, and you're...	Tara: Stai attraversando un periodo difficile, per cui sei...
Buffy: What? Using him? What's okay about that?	Buffy: ...attratta selvaggiamente da lui? Dimmi, è giusto fare una cosa simile?
(<i>Dead Things</i> – 6.13)	(<i>La sfera magica</i> – 6.13)

It is difficult to understand the reasons for such changes and, in truth, it is possible that they were caused by technical constraints. In both scenes characters are generally in the foreground when they speak and the need to maintain lip sync is more critical in these instances. On the other hand one may conclude that these radical alterations have been made in order to 'clean up the text' and meet with the demands of the network producers¹⁰ in relation to the most explicit sexual allusions and swearwords. Even though the characters do not strictly speak 'dirty' in these scenes, the way in which Buffy is described and defines herself is rather unpalatable and in contrast with traditional representations of correct sexual behaviour for young heroines.¹¹

4. Television dubbing, ideology and the representation of teenagers

In the previous sections we have seen how the Italian adaptation of *Buffy* has changed the original text in significant ways, with an ideological slant of which the adapters were most likely not aware. Again, such changes may well have been due to technical and linguistic constraints. As a matter of fact, the adapters indicated how *Buffy's* adaptation was made particularly difficult by the number of obscure cultural references and puns which necessitated substantial research and the need to maintain lip sync while unravelling the semantic density of such references (Pelliccioni M. and Dall'Ongaro C., personal communication). However, Hatim and Mason in their discussion of ideology and translation observe that "it is the effect of a particular strategy employed in a particular socio-cultural situation which is likely to have ideological implications" (1997b: 146). The socio-cultural

10. Two of the adapters of the series, Carlo Dall'Ongaro and Mauro Pelliccioni, responded by e-mail to some questions about the adaptation of *Buffy* in January 2006. Both adapters wrote dialogues for episodes of all the seasons. Carlo Dall'Ongaro also wrote the pilot, while Mauro Pelliccioni was the sound engineer for the entire series.

11. Interestingly, Vivien Burr, analyzing the cuts to the BBC's sanitized 6.45 pm screening of *Buffy*, argues that these were done so that all the references to "women's sexual agency" were erased from the text. In "*Buffy* and the BBC: Moral Questions and How to Avoid Them." *Slayage* 8 (March 2003): <http://slayage.tv/essays/slayage8/Burr.htm>.

context of the dubbing of series like *Buffy* which tend to be perceived as fillers for a non-discriminating audience¹² is one where the work is quickly and cheaply adapted and is often rushed for a market that favours non-controversial products (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 42). The request for programmes that are linguistically non-sophisticated (*ibid.*: 42) leads to the use not only of standard language but the ready-made language of the most formulaic popular narratives. Linguistic and technical problems resolved in such working conditions lead to a sort of back door ideology, where a difficult expression or an over-explicit term is rendered with the language of cliché. This, however, is not neutral and when used in narratives cannot but be the language of the most stereotypical genres (cf. Nash 1990). The replacement of “loser” with “È finito” that we discussed earlier is not just a matter of replacing slang with standard language, because it changes the text in a more radical way. Instead of the ‘textual frisson’ provided by *Buffy*’s unexpected jibe at the defeated enemy the viewer is exposed to a much more familiar and conservative closure, one where the victor declares the end of the fight by stating the obvious.

The second point we want to make is that dubbing for television has to take into account the specificity of the medium in relation to the programming of fiction. Genre is particularly important in television as it is thought of as a way to predict the potential – and the economic value – of a show (Fiske 1987: 112). Genres, however, are also culturally and socially bound (*ibid.*: 110) so, while current US TV series are increasingly sophisticated and have made hybridization their winning ticket, elsewhere such blurred generic identity may be re-defined and programmes made to fit existing labels to capitalize on audience segmentation, hence facilitating programme scheduling and the selection of appropriate sponsors. This, however, has linguistic consequences, with adaptation playing an important role in enhancing certain generic elements. For example, one of the effects of the normalisation of gender identity that we showed earlier is that it highlights the romantic relationship between two characters and by doing so it enhances the soap-opera element of the story.

This leads us to consider the inter-textual relationship that the show has with other similar texts. The representation of teenagers in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is rather different from the way in which youth were imagined in other US series that have been very popular in Italy, such as *Dawson’s Creek* or, to go even further back, *Happy Days*. It especially differs from the way in which original Italian programmes conceive teenagers. In 1991 Milly Buonanno, in describing the representation of

12. Paolinelli and Di Fortunato underline how cartoons and other TV shows for children and young people are hurriedly adapted in order to fill television programming schedules (2005: 21).

social groups on TV shows made in Italy during the previous year, points out that all teen series – *Classe di ferro (Italia 1)*, *College (Italia 1)* and *Aquile (Rai Due)* – represent youth in a very conventional and reassuring way, with sexual roles clearly defined along traditional lines and the young protagonists conforming to common notions of good behaviour:

They don't generally drink and rarely smoke; drugs are out of the question; they are healthy and athletic; they usually get on well with their family and are respectful of institutions.¹³

(Buonanno 1991: 80 *my translation*).

Although in other Italian TV programmes and genres (for instance the drama *La Piovra* or the cop show *La Squadra*) there is a more realistic image of contemporary youth, we would argue that original Italian teen series, even popular and acclaimed ones such as *I ragazzi del muretto* (1991 – *Rai Due*) tend to represent their young protagonists in a more conventional way than, for example, their American counterparts.

This does not necessarily mean that Italian TV writers and producers have an idealized view of young people, but it certainly shows that there is more resistance towards representing them on TV in ways that are too radical. To what extent this cultural element affects foreign representations of youth is obviously very difficult to establish, but, if it does, the translation and adaptation of foreign programmes constitute an obvious ground for such negotiations to be carried out. We believe that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is one of these cases and that adaptation played a fundamental role in smoothing down potentially controversial aspects of the show, as we tried to show in the previous sections.

5. Conclusions

As we have seen *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in its original version offers a representation of youth that is complex and often challenging, dealing with many difficult issues and using language in a highly creative way to highlight its themes. The Italian version alters many aspects of the show, ranging from its innovative language to the way in which it represents gender identities. Although technical and linguistic factors have to be taken into consideration for such changes, we have argued that other elements may have had a role to play, ranging from socio-economic factors related to the dubbing industry in Italy, to television practices, to the issue of

13. “Generalmente non bevono e raramente fumano, di droga neanche a parlarne; sono sani e sportivi; hanno di solito buoni rapporti con la famiglia e sono rispettosi delle istituzioni.”

institutional and social control. By extending our analysis to these elements, we have sought to contextualize the reasons behind certain choices with the aim of showing how the study of dubbed products can benefit from an examination of the social and cultural context in which they are placed.

From darkness to light in subtitling

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This paper focuses on the status of subtitling in Italy, an activity which is often neglected by researchers as well as audiences, notwithstanding its being on the increase thanks to DVD distribution, the proliferation of satellite channels and, more significantly, of film festivals.

In referring to Abe Mark Nornes' advocacy of "abusive subtitling", this paper wishes to bring the practice of subtitling in Italy out of the darkness, shedding light on some of the most interesting opportunities it offers for the diffusion of otherwise ignored cinematic products as well as for subtitlers' training and academic research. Drawing inspiration from the experience carried out at the Advanced School for Interpreters and Translators in Forlì, Italy, in the production of subtitles by students involved in an international film festival on human rights, this paper sets out to advocate the power of subtitling in Italy and strive to bring it out of its position of obscurity. Even though its force can still be felt on a limited scale, subtitling can go far in enhancing knowledge of extremely remote cultures and, from an academic perspective, it ought to encourage more systematic, interdisciplinary research while also contributing to students' individual and professional growth.

Keywords: darkness, light, subtitling, human rights, film festivals

The past few years have seen an increase in the attention devoted to audiovisual translation in Italy. However, most research has focused on dubbing, the traditionally dominant method for the transposition of audiovisual products. Research in subtitling has, in turn, been rather scanty and intermittent, favouring linguistic-oriented perspectives and ultimately yielding evaluations of the phenomenon which do not take into account the complex mechanisms which are involved at each stage prior and subsequent to the mere process of linguistic transfer.

The limited attention devoted to subtitling by Italian academics seems to reflect a more general tendency to neglect this activity, which is not often given proper consideration in theoretical and practical terms by the media and, as a consequence,

by audiences. Paradoxically, the latter are increasingly exposed to subtitled products, due to the increasing distribution of DVDs, satellite and digital television, and film festivals, all of which are on the increase at a national level. Therefore, it is true to say that subtitling in Italy still holds an “ancillary, even hidden position” (Nornes 2004: 448) not only, as again Abe Mark Nornes says, in the film or TV product’s journey from production to exhibition, but also within academic research and in viewers’ minds. It goes without saying that this hidden position is proportionally reflected in investments, subtitlers’ working conditions and, ultimately, its impact on the quality of subtitled products which circulate across the country.

These negative trends have been clearly revealed by the results of a market-oriented research on subtitling carried out at the School for Interpreters and Translators of the University of Bologna in Forlì, where students and researchers have been involved, since 2003, in a project aiming to evaluate the state of the art of subtitling in Italy as well as the quality of subtitled products, with a view to applying the information thus obtained to research and to create more targeted training schemes for subtitlers.¹

In making reference to this research project, as well as to one of its applications which involved students in the production of subtitles for an international film festival on human rights, this paper sets out to lay emphasis on the importance of subtitling in Italy. In particular, the power of subtitling will be revealed in connection with the diffusion of previously neglected films and realities, which have now been brought to viewers’ attention through film festivals and translated by means of subtitles.

In terms of theory, this paper is inspired by *Video for Change. A Guide for Advocacy and Activism* (2005). However, the main inspiration as well as the departure points for the analysis here undertaken are provided by Nornes’ (2004) insightful article² which, unlike most other essays on the subject, considers films and their translation for subtitling from a somewhat revolutionary, sociologically-imbued perspective. Therefore, borrowing Nornes’ words, this paper wishes to be an attempt to “bring subtitling from its space of obscurity” (*ibid.*: 452), showing the important contribution it can give to the diffusion of otherwise unknown cinematic products, to the spreading of direct cultural testimonies through unique translating experiences and, last but not least, to the training of translators or would-be subtitlers.

1. Most of the data gathered and analysed so far have been obtained through interviews and questionnaires which have been administered to almost all directors of Italian subtitling firms as well as to a number of professional subtitlers.

2. The article appeared for the first time in *Film Quarterly* in 1999, but it has recently been included in the second edition of *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited for Routledge by Lawrence Venuti (2004).

1. From darkness to light in subtitling

Before briefly analysing two of the films which were featured in the 2005 edition of the Human Rights Nights³ (HRN) festival and their subtitling process, let us briefly go back to the rather narrow theoretical background this paper relies on.

When considering such huge and cogent issues as human rights, but also when venturing into the realm of film studies and audiovisual translation, the amount of literature available for study seems to be endless. However, the first two domains will be here only touched upon, while the latter will be assumed as a sort of distant background, because the focus of this paper is on subtitling from a rather unusual perspective. The practice of subtitling is here under investigation not in terms of technical and linguistic constraints, but rather its socio-cultural impact and its great value in the training of translators as well as in academic research. Therefore, what is sought and hopefully unveiled is the value of such an activity even in a typical dubbing country like Italy, where it allows for the appreciation of otherwise unknown audiovisual texts, occasionally through television but, most significantly, through cinemas and international film festival circuits.

The connection with Nornes' essay seems almost automatic, as its very essence is somehow naturally linked to the object and purpose of this paper. Nornes calls for research in subtitling which ought to explore the cultural and ideological issues at stake in this activity, which are the outcome of a complex interchange, a unique relation between the film, the subtitler and the audience.

Nornes' essay is centred upon the notion of corruption, which he proposes to fight by means of what he defines as abusive subtitling. Looking at the specific case of Japanese art films subtitled into English, Nornes denounces the widespread, "corrupt" attitude in subtitling which wants to make the translated product as transparent as possible, in order to "smooth over its textual violence and domesticate all otherness while pretending to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign" (*ibid.*: 449). In this sense, Nornes' approach seems to reflect a more general view of translation which was first expressed in terms of invisibility by Venuti

3. The Human Rights Nights international film festival, organized by the Cineteca di Bologna with the support of the municipality of the same town and a number of other institutions nationwide, saw its first edition in 2000. The main goal of the festival, whose success has been on the increase over the past years, is to provide a "forum for filmmakers who use their cameras as instruments of visual and verbal resistance against an unjust world" (www.humanrightsnights.org), promoting reaction by arousing the interest of large audiences. Human Rights Nights is recognized at an international level within the Human Rights Film Network, of which the Bologna festival is a founding member. Others within this network include the Amnesty International Film Festival (USA), the Festival International du Films sur les Droits Humains (Geneva), 3 Continent (Johannesburg), Seoul International Film Festival (Seoul) and DerHumALC (Buenos Aires).

(1995), in which the activity of translators operating in the Western world, especially in English-speaking countries, was denounced for their working towards the invisibility of the translation process and a sort of self-effacement of the translators themselves. As Venuti, and inspired by Derrida and Berman, advocates for self-conscious, visible and somewhat 'critical' translations, with the ultimate aim of highlighting the specificity of foreign texts, Nornes embraces this point of view and applies it to subtitling, laying emphasis on its strong cultural implications and its reflections on society. The minoritizing translation suggested by Venuti (1998) as a critical act, as a wish to highlight the foreign in each text, is somehow reflected in Nornes' abusive subtitling, which proposes to fight the corruption of current practices and "push the fact of translation [subtitling] out of the darkness" (2004: 448).

Going back to our object of study, the attitude advocated by Nornes becomes unavoidable, almost obligatory for subtitlers working on films which are centred on human rights. The experience of the foreign, the unknown, the obscure, is at the very core of these films and is thus perceived by those who are involved in the linguistic adaptation as well as by viewers.

Films which are centred upon the violation of human rights are not only a tool for action for the producers; they often aim to "turn viewing into action" (Gregory *et al.* 2005: 243), getting potentially large audiences involved in such a joint effort thanks to international distribution which is, in turn, made possible by subtitling. Therefore, built into the very essence of these films and the subtitling activity they require is an abusive power which, perhaps not always explicitly, aims to fight corruption and fake visibility, leading events, communities and whole cultures from darkness to light.

Several words which have been used so far (hidden, obscure, darkness, light) may have already captured the attention of the reader, pointing to one of the main aims of this paper. As a matter of fact, in the following pages an attempt will be made to explore the power of subtitling in Italy in terms of a passage from *darkness* to *light*. Darkness and light will be found to apply in various degrees to a number of elements which are at stake here: to the very nature of the films, to the trainee subtitlers' experience in translating them, to the value of such an experience in terms of training and research, and to the scope of subtitling in Italy.

Starting from an exploration of the very nature of the films, we shall embark on an evaluation of the subtitlers' experience in conjunction with some of the most meaningful and recurring features of these kinds of audiovisual texts, to finally discuss the great potential of these subtitling activities for academic training and research.

2. Human rights and films:

Activism through production, distribution and translation

around the world, video is increasingly embraced as a tool to support education, reinforce cultural identity and encourage organizational and political participation.

(Gregory *et al.* 2005: 12)

Filmmaking has the capacity to transform the way people think, to orient choices and create social change. The most evident proof of such potential, which often translates into a strong impact over audiences, can be found in the supremacy of the USA over the last century, especially in the field of media production and distribution. Taking into account the film industry alone, Hollywood has been setting the standards for production and perception by international audiences, shaping tastes and expectations since its very early days.

However, a silent, albeit limited but potentially powerful revolution seems to have been spreading throughout the world over the past decade or so, favoured by the reduction of film production costs which has been brought about by the development of digital video and laptop editing (*ibid.*: 10). Although such a revolution has not yet systematically affected mainstream cinema, where the predominance of North American films is still largely unquestioned, it has fostered the creation of budget films and documentaries worldwide, stimulating recourse to audiovisual productions to assert cultural identities, display often hidden truths and, last but not least, denounce power asymmetries. Thanks to these technological advances, most countries have seen an increase in independent productions, which often amount to little more than amateur videos but, nonetheless, have been often supported in their diffusion by film festivals. As the authors of *Video for Change* suggest to would-be independent filmmakers, referring to this distribution channel as “a traditional way to get videos seen by a wide audience” (*ibid.*: 248), “the scale of a festival can range from fifty people watching three or four videos on a television monitor in a community centre, to a three-week event spanning seventy locations” (*ibid.*: 249).

In Italy, film festivals have been constantly increasing over the past few years, with a plethora of approaches and a variety of issues now being featured in the hundreds of festivals which are held throughout the country. Built into the very essence of festivals is the idea of bringing to light unknown audiovisual texts, their directors and their country of origin: cultural roots and values are normally much more emphasized in small-scale, independent productions than in mainstream cinema, which incidentally seems to be going towards an increasing cultural standardization and neutralization.

The passage from darkness to light is all the more evident when taking into account films which focus on the discussion of human rights, where audiences are involved in an experience of violations, abuses and forced obscurity. Making use of evocative imagery and editing, archive material but also artwork, the producers of these films wish to unveil often hidden, forgotten realities, drawing viewers' attention while also being aware of the fact that video can be a powerful source of evidence for whoever might be able to take a stance and seek to create change (*ibid.*: 209).

All of these features can be found in the films featured in the HRN international festival, held in Bologna as one of the main venues in an international circuit designed for unique, often artistically valuable cinematic products. The wish and need to push out of the darkness the important humanitarian issues these films are built around appears evident from the topics selected for the 2005 edition of the festival: freedom of expression, indigenous and minority rights, slavery and the plague of AIDS in Africa.

In the following paragraphs, only two of the 25 films featured in the edition described above will be taken into account, both of them having received huge acclaim by the Italian audience. The techniques used to shoot and edit the films were extremely different, just like the two issues they wished to portray: the lack of freedom of thought and action of women in southern Iran (Island of Qeshm), as featured in *The Other Side of Burka* (Mehrdad Oskouei, 2004), and the brutality of atomic bombs and the dangers of nuclear weapons in *Original Child Bomb* (Carey Schonevegel, 2004), the film which won the 2005 edition of the festival.

3. The multifarious language of the films and the subtitlers' experience

Before looking at some of the special features of these films, let us briefly discuss the students' experience as subtitlers for the HRN film festival in terms of a passage from darkness to light.

First of all, the very opportunity to try their hands at 'real' subtitling and cope with often hard but realistic working conditions resulted in an *enlightening* experience in the personal and professional growth of the students involved. Working hand in hand with the organizers and also being involved in the launching of titles during screenings, trainee subtitlers acquired self-confidence in linguistic and technical terms as well as a high degree of personal satisfaction, as was revealed by a questionnaire given to each participant after the completion of the project. In their answers, all of them praised the value of the experience; some of them gave prominence to the acquisition of technical expertise and self-confidence, while others laid emphasis on the intense emotional involvement it implied. Clearly,

coping with burning humanitarian issues and being responsible for their best possible expression through condensed strings of text to match powerful images implied reflecting upon, and bringing to light, often obscured values and emotions, on a personal level but also with a view to making them visible to large audiences.

In order to get a better glimpse of the nature of this subtitling experience, let us take into account the two films mentioned earlier, making reference to the constraints they imposed on the subtitlers from a broad viewpoint where linguistic, ideological and socio-cultural features are all equally and simultaneously involved. Therefore, we shall not linger on the quality of the Italian subtitles, nor propose strictly linguistic-bound reflections, but rather see the subtitlers' efforts as more complex actions which yield a strong socio-cultural value and, ultimately, bring about the passage from darkness to light.

3.1 Original Child Bomb

The first film under scrutiny is *Original Child Bomb (OCB)*, based on a poem by Thomas Merton and defined by critics as a poem in its own right, or rather as a series of poetically constructed sequences on the brutality of bombing. The film has enjoyed great success worldwide, contributing to bringing the issue of nuclear weapons and testing to the fore in many countries and contexts.⁴ Its main feature is its structural and semiotic complexity, which certainly increases its effectiveness, but also makes the subtitler's task harder. As for the language used in the film, there is great variation in terms of register as well as mode of expression, with a frequent shift from oral to written form or a mixture of the two.

The film opens on a sequence of images dominated by nuances of grey, with flowers and other symbols moving across the screen while a narrating voice utters short sentences which appear on screen as if emerging out of an old-style typewriter. In this first part, the subtitler's task is first of all constrained by the text appearing on screen, but also by its strong emotional density as well as by its great relevance in setting the context for subsequent developments. Figure 1 features a screen shot from the opening sequence of the film: we can clearly see the layout and notice that the English text uttered by the narrator is not fully transcribed on screen therefore requiring an integration by the subtitler (the Italian subtitles for the text in Figure 1 are featured in Table 1).

4. For this, see the "Take Action" section of the film's official website (www.originalchildbomb.com), with a number of links to associations and commissions which are active in the field of the reduction of nuclear weapons and have connections with the creators and producers of the film.

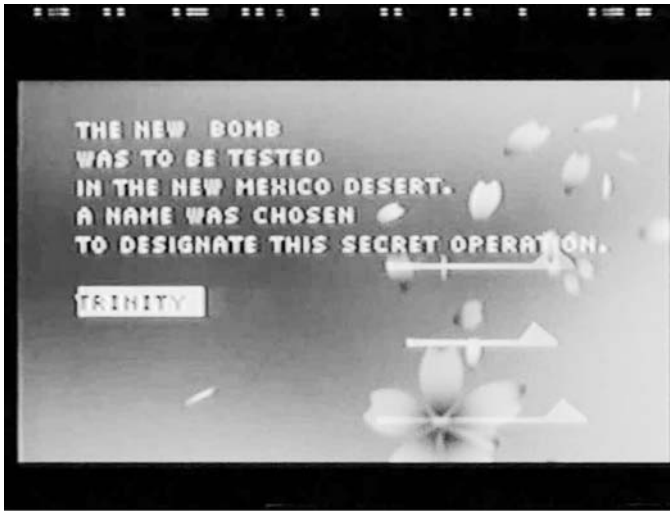


Figure 1. Shot from the initial sequence of Original Child Bomb

Table 1. Original Child Bomb: Italian subtitles accompanying the scene in Figure 1

[10.31]
3) La bomba
doveva essere testata...
...nel deserto del New Mexico.
Si scelse un nome per designare
Questa operazione segreta:
il nome era “Trinity”.

The second part of the film offers viewers the accounts of several Japanese people who witnessed the atrocities of the Hiroshima bombing. This series of scenes is provided with English subtitles for the Japanese speech (see Figure 2), which accompany a highly varied sequence of images featuring drawings, rough sketches and real-life shots with characters in full colour moving against a black-and-white backdrop.

Table 2 contains a few English subtitles and the corresponding Italian translation. It is worth pointing out that the use of punctuation has, in the original English subtitles, been adapted to serve a specific purpose: the dots are not used to signal a syntactically uninterrupted passage from one subtitle block to the next, but rather to convey emotions and highlight the auditory effect provided by the tone of voice of the female speaker, who cries while she recounts her own, tragic memories of the bombing. In this case, the subtitler decided to preserve such a

meaningful choice, in spite of the more commonly acknowledged subtitling conventions which use suspension points for the deferral of subtitled discourse. She only decided to eliminate some of the suspension points in order to enhance readability for the Italian viewers and, whenever possible, to use them for the double function of signalling an uninterrupted discourse between two subtitle blocks as well as conveying the speaker's feelings.

Table 2. Original Child Bomb: English subtitles and their Italian translation

[30.36]	
I saw so many corpses drifting in the water...	Vidi tanti corpi andare alla deriva.
Countless bodies came floating...	Corpi che galleggiavano...
I couldn't bear to look.	non riuscivo a guardare.
People without heads...people without arms...	Gente senza testa, senza braccia...
...people with their guts hanging out...	...gente sventrata,
...without eyes...	senza occhi...



Figure 2. Tales of Japanese survivors as subtitled in Original Child Bomb

The final part of the film brings the effects of these atrocious events to the present, with comments and opinions expressed by several American students filmed in a classroom. As can be expected, the settings are made to change again, with no special

effects being used in what looks like a handheld camera sequence. The subtitler was, in this case, faced with new challenges, mainly due to the total lack of written material on which to base her translation (no dialogue list had been provided and no subtitles appear on screen), but also due to the great speed at which students take turns and speak in the sequences, often using very informal slang expressions.

3.2 The Other Side of Burka

The second film from the HRN festival which is here analysed is *The Other Side of Burka* (*OSB*), an Iranian production centred upon the denunciation of the rights denied to women in some parts of southern Iran, particularly in the island of Qeshm. The film, released in 2004, has won its young director Mehrdad Oskouei great acclaim and a number of international awards. Often defined as a documentary rather than a feature film, *OSB* focuses first and foremost on the testimonies of women who, on a small, faraway island, are made to wear a special kind of burka, a pinching mask of black bands pressing against the eyebrows and nose, and ending in a point just above the mouth, which looks like a muzzle for dangerous animals.⁵

In structural terms, this film is totally different from *OCB*: it is constructed around the brave, short monologues delivered by a number of women which are interwoven with family life scenes and shocking declarations by men,⁶ as well as with evocative landscape images. The photography, editing and dialogues, though simple and straightforward, contribute to producing a very intense emotional effect on the subtitler as well as the viewers.

OSB was shot in Farsi and the version which was shown at film festivals carries English subtitles. The latter appear to have been rather hastily produced, probably by non-native speakers of English with a limited knowledge of subtitling; they feature a large number of mistakes in grammar and syntax as well as in the use of subtitling conventions. The meaning of the English subtitles is often unclear, obscure, and left the Italian translator with a number of open, often radical choices.

With the two sequences taken from *OSB* and commented below, the passage from darkness to light (implied in subtitling films which denounce the abuse of human rights) should be made more evident, appearing in a twofold guise.

The first excerpt aims to highlight some of the linguistic and technical difficulties the trainee subtitlers are often faced with in the adaptation of films which

5. For more insightful comments on *The Other Side of Burka*, reference can be made to Amnesty International's American website and its review of the film (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/filmfest/weho/2005/05262005.html>).

6. "As the saying goes a woman is like footwear," a grieving husband says in the film "when one pair is gone, you can find another one. But what am I supposed to do with the children?"[7:20].

come from all corners of the world and are frequently supplied with no dialogue list. In these cases, the translators can only rely on the pivot titles in English. The second sequence, on the other hand, is primarily aimed at providing a glimpse of the emotional as well as ideological burden placed on the subtitlers working on this and similar films, underlining the importance of bringing to light strong, intense messages regardless of the grammatical and syntactic mistakes.

Table 3 shows several examples of pivot titles from *OSB* and gives evidence of the semantic obscurity and ungrammaticality which had to be tackled by the subtitler. This sequence of titles accompanies the testimony of an old Iranian man, the father of three young women who committed suicide within a very short time. The man is trying to justify the events leading to the death of his youngest daughter. The pivot titles are anything but clear and they display a non-standard, inconsistent use of subtitling conventions which the Italian subtitler has strived to redress.

Table 3. The Other Side of Burka: The pitfalls of interpreting incorrect pivot titles

[8.42] I saw “Ali” & “Molla Omar” arguing. I asked what was going on.	Vidi Ali e Molla Omar che litigavano, e chiesi quale fosse il problema.
Ali was saying, “ Be careful & don’t let your	Ali diceva “Stai attento, non lasciare...
wife leave the house” & “Omar” said, “	...che tua moglie esca di casa”. E Omar rispose:
She is my wife & you as a brother are not allowed to meddle with my life”.	“È mia moglie e tu, da fratello, non dovresti intrometterti”.

Table 4 contains the titles matching some of the lines uttered by two of the women documented in the film. In terms of subtitling conventions, these two short excerpts still reveal several uncommon features, but the message conveyed by the English wording is nonetheless straightforward and effective. The short, incisive sentences strengthen the emotional impact of the images (see Figure 3), where close ups of unsmiling women wearing their face masks and veils are juxtaposed with shots of their daily lives.

The Italian translation for the subtitles in Table 4 reflects the simple and straightforward wording of the English version. However, if in this case the subtitler did not need to go beyond the English words in order to clarify the meaning of the utterances, the perception of what lies beyond these statements has left a mark on her, as was stated in the questionnaire she submitted after the completion of the project.

Table 4. The Other Side of Burka: The burden of emotional words in translation

[11.35] The local women here consider it WRONG TO come in front of a camera, But we do so to make others UNDERstand that we are here & we are alive We breathe & we are human.	Stare davanti a una telecamera, per le donne locali, è sbagliato, Ma noi lo facciamo PER dimostrare che siamo vive, CHE respiriamo e che siamo umane.
[13.19] I am 19, I got married At the age of 12.	Ho 19 anni. Mi sono sposata a 12.
[14.45] For a 7 year old girl who goes to school growing up means the elevation of the jail bars. The older she gets, THE tighter they become.	Per una bambina di 7 anni CHE va a scuola, crescere comporta finire dietro le sbarre di una prigione. Più cresce, e più le sbarre diventano strette.

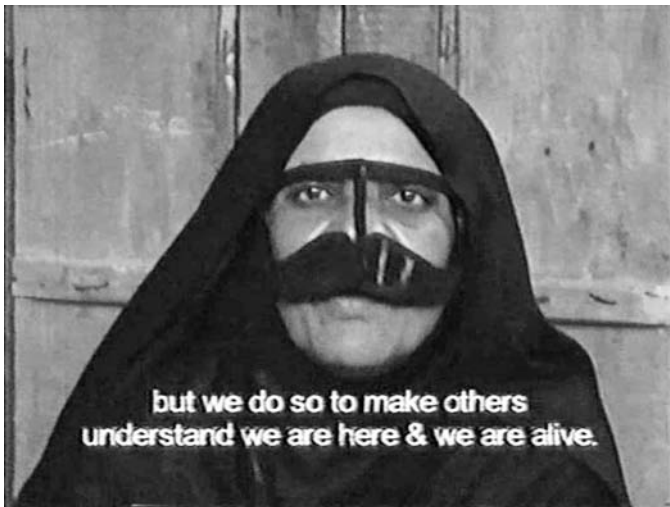


Figure 3. A woman speaking out on her rights in The Other Side of Burka

This section has involved a more direct observation of the nature of films which bear potentially abusive power, their multifarious language and the trainee subtitlers' efforts. However one more reflection is necessary. In a paper where a few

words and their metaphorical value, darkness and light, have been assumed as mainstays in the description of processes whose implications go well beyond operations of linguistic transfer, one more word needs to be highlighted. When referring to the trainee translators' active involvement in subtitling for the HRN festival, the word 'experience' has been recurrently used, and not by chance. Besides acquiring technical expertise, students taking part in this project were brought to an awareness of important socio-cultural issues by being involved in the linguistic and cultural adaptation for the benefit of a potentially broad audience. Moreover, throwing light on the often obscured violations which are denounced in the films has also led to a personal 'enlightenment', which incidentally has not failed to touch those involved in the supervision of the project.

4. Subtitlers' training and research: Opportunities and hopes

So far darkness and light, as well as the passage from one state to the other, have been referred to the films' construction and distribution as well as to the students' experience in subtitling for festivals featuring cinematic products with a highly emotional, socio-cultural value.

However, as mentioned earlier, darkness and light can also refer to the insights the overall activity provides for the trainers of translators, as well as for researchers who wish to go beyond the analysis of linguistic and technical constraints and highlight the potentially abusive power of subtitling, with all its implications and in all its forms.

As for subtitlers' trainers, supervising projects such as the one which has been briefly described implies a number of advantages. First of all, it enables them to offer students hands-on practice, thus providing the best possible completion for classroom training. Secondly, by following each stage of the project, trainers get the opportunity to monitor the development of students' performances, to directly evaluate their requirements and shortcomings and to provide constructive feedback. Moreover, by administering a questionnaire to the students after the completion of the project, trainers can obtain information which can subsequently be applied to improve course design as well as the management of all practical activities. Finally, it goes without saying that the possibility to come into contact with such valuable, original films and documentaries has an ideological and emotional impact on trainers as well as trainee subtitlers. By supporting the latter in the complex task of subtitling films on human rights, by coming to grips with previously unknown situations and shedding proper light on them, trainers themselves realize the value of such an enlightening experience, the films' potential and also the importance of non-corrupt, abusive subtitling even in a typical dubbing country like Italy.

In terms of academic research, the advantages of studying this kind of experience, taking into account the enormous growth of film festivals and the flourishing of productions which call for activism⁷ in Italy and beyond, ought to encourage a certain shift in focus, or rather a broadening of the theoretical framework which is commonly applied to the study of subtitling.

If it is undeniable that linguistic-oriented analyses can give an important contribution to the diffusion of research in audiovisual translation in general (whose scope is still limited in Italy as in a number of other European and non-European countries) the need to put subtitling in a broader context, taking into account cognitive, socio-cultural and ideological factors can do much more to push this activity out of its position of obscurity. Deeper, more complex and systematic research, with insights from disciplines such as cultural studies and sociology, can truly help bring to light the relevance and potential of subtitling, perhaps going as far as reflecting on market conditions and leading to an increase in attention from critics and viewers.

Undoubtedly, the project briefly discussed in this essay is very limited in scope, as is the amount of research presented in this paper, thus making the statements above appear rather optimistic and somewhat presumptuous at this early stage. However, the main goal here pursued is to open up new paths of research and lay emphasis on some extremely important, too often neglected implications of subtitling, especially in this new millennium.

To support our views and hopes let us refer to the final words of Nornes' essay, in which he states that "time is ripe for abuse" and foresees that "it is likely that abusive translations will begin with animation, comedies, *the art film*, and *the documentary*" (2004: 467), thus somehow confirming what has been maintained so far with reference to films and documentaries featured in film festivals, within and outside Italy.

Having perceived the potential abusiveness inherent in subtitling experiences such as the one here described, and having considered their socio-cultural and ideological value as well as the positive effects on translators' practice, training and research, we can only hope that similar projects, which see the joint effort of young translators, academics and professionals, will flourish in the years to come while their systematic investigation contributes ever more to a passage from darkness to light.

7. Gregory *et al.* (2005: 4) introduce the notion of 'video advocacy', which they define as follows: "[...] the process of integrating video into an advocacy effort to achieve heightened visibility or impact in a campaign. 'Advocacy' itself is the process of working for a particular position, result or solution."

Subtitles and line-breaks

Towards improved readability

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Psycholinguistic literature shows that reading is so highly structured and formalized as to make it a routine and automated task. So long as the syntax and lexicon of the text both remain within normal variation, the flow of reading is not interrupted. When accustomed patterns are violated, this produces an immediate and substantial increase in the level of strain placed upon the reader. This paper focuses specifically on the difficulties that film subtitle readers may encounter as a result of arbitrary line-breaks, i.e. text segmentation that does not follow the principal rules of syntax. A qualitative analysis on a varied corpus of film subtitles allowed us to identify instances of arbitrary line-breaks, to comment on them and to formulate hypotheses concerning possible ways to resolve such issues by employing a more suitable target-oriented subtitle layout.

Keywords: subtitling, parsing, segmentation, reading, quality

Introduction

This study is a reflection on the possible effects of line-breaks on subtitle readability and usability. It offers evidence that subtitle processing might be enhanced by careful segmentation of lines, i.e. a segmentation that is made in accordance with the principal rules of syntax. Although our considerations technically relate to film subtitles (cf. Table 1), they might also be extended to cover all other types of audiovisual subtitles.

We have carried out a qualitative analysis of text distribution over more than one line. This enabled us to detect various types of unusual or arbitrary line-breaks in film subtitles. Instances of arbitrary line-breaks were then grouped according to the traditional micro- to macro-levels of language organization (i.e. word to sentence) with the aim of conducting further research with regard to how serious each of them is as a violation of both common syntactic patterns and readability criteria. This should be carried out by experiments to record eye-movement, which

is known to be the best way of studying behaviour and the reading process (Rayner and Pollatsek 1989; cf. Praet *et al.* 1990). User satisfaction surveys, however, might also be considered as a means of testing whether arbitrary line-breaks might be detrimental to fluent reading and inhibit readers' satisfaction.

We believe that readability issues deserve to be addressed and explored primarily for the benefit of the audience making use of audiovisual products. This could include viewers, who deserve to have access to a quality product and to enjoy it fully without being unduly aware of or disturbed by subtitles. Other groups who merit consideration are second language learners, for whom a coherent and comprehensible organization of information can contribute to transforming complex input into intake, thus enhancing the mechanisms of language learning (cf. Krashen 1982, 1985, Long 1996, Caimi 2002); and, last but not least, deaf and hearing-impaired viewers, for whom readability is a prerequisite for accessing any sort of audiovisual product.¹ For all these reasons, improving subtitle quality in both typically subtitled countries, as well as in any predominantly dubbing country (of which Italy is one among many), is not only worthwhile but necessary.

1. Subtitling and reading

On the whole, multiple parameters need to be taken into account in order to deliver user-friendly subtitles. The general requirements for subtitle display are those of rhythm, visibility, layout and sequencing. Considerable importance is placed on most of these criteria in the specialized literature, and most are duly respected by subtitlers. Nevertheless, to the author's knowledge there appears to be a tendency to disregard subtitle line-breaks both in theory and in practice. The literature on this specific topic is limited (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1985: 379, Ivarsson and Carroll 1998: 76–78, Karamitroglou 1998, Rundle 2000, Díaz Cintas 2001a: 120–121, 2003, Perego 2005: 57–58) and all films analyzed (Table 1) present instances of arbitrary line-breaks at different levels. In particular, the issues of preferred line number per subtitle flash,² disposition and breaking have been addressed in the literature in such a way as to show that we still have no established unanimously recognized and valid criteria, and perhaps never will, given the uniqueness of each subtitling situation and the tendency to rely upon the subtitler's expertise and common

1. The different requirements of this heterogeneous community and the specific features of subtitles meant for a hearing-impaired audience will not be tackled here for lack of space. See de Linde and Kay 1999, among many, for further details on this topic.

2. With the expression "subtitle flash" we refer to a single uninterrupted one or two-line subtitle shot that appears on the screen between specific in and out times.

sense. Nevertheless, we would suggest that knowing how the reading process works can be helpful in determining the most effective ways of segmenting a text.

Reading is a highly complex perceptual cognitive activity that consists in acquiring information from a written source. It involves a number of inter-related processes: readers decode a written text by accessing, identifying and holistically combining letters into words, words into phrases and phrases into sentences. This is an essential process in understanding written texts which is known as *parsing* (Coltheart 1987, Frazier 1987, Holmes 1987: 587, Rayner and Pollatsek 1989, Ferreira and Henderson 1995: 120).

Normally readers analyze (i.e. parse) written texts automatically in terms of syntax (Flores d'Arcais 1987). They do not read word by word but in chunks, i.e. word-groups corresponding to syntactic units (Coltheart 1987), they structure linguistic input grammatically during comprehension (Frazier 1987: 560) and recognize particular syntactic configurations while reading (Holmes 1987: 587–588).

Subtitle readers find themselves in a particularly complex perceptual situation. The process of viewing a subtitled film entails a situation where “the same verbal information may be available at the same time in two modalities: speech and printed text” (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1991: 650) i.e. readers of subtitles are provided with extra, multi-semiotic stimuli in contrast to readers of text alone. The former divide their attention between visual stimuli (which are both linguistic and spatial, in the form of reading and watching respectively) and auditory information (listening to the soundtrack) (Grillo and Kawin 1981: 27, d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1987: 313, Gielen and d'Ydewalle 1991). This is a complex skill which calls for repeated switching mechanisms from text to image and vice versa (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1987). It is therefore important to guarantee an appropriate presentation layout as well as time to allow for the smooth processing of subtitles (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1987) and to limit any possible disruption in meaning and text processing.

Film reception is affected by the way subtitles are displayed, especially when a subtitle flash comprises two lines (Karamitroglou 1998). In the present study we consider both one- and two-line subtitles split over different flashes, as opposed to self-contained monolineal or bilineal subtitles, and focus on text distribution over lines in terms of syntactic breaking. In doing so, we merge the traditional theories of syntax and models of reading behaviour to assess how the former can affect the latter.

2. Premises

Since subtitles, like any other text, present the reader with a linear structure of sentences, the reader is supposed to analyse them automatically in terms of syntax, as normally happens during silent reading. In view of the fact that perceivers

construct a grammatical representation of sentences during comprehension (Frazier 1987), and that the way in which linguistic information is laid out affects to some extent the way it is processed (Henderson *et al.* 1995, Huang *et al.* 2003, Rayner *et al.* 2006), we hypothesize that abnormal layout would be particularly disruptive in a subtitle reading situation as well. This is a situation where (1) reading is not self-paced, (2) subtitles are automatically read by all viewers, including those who know the spoken language (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1987, 1991), (3) the average presentation time is not equally suitable for all viewers, (4) the presentation time and the spotting³ for each subtitle flash are occasionally not ideal, and (5) a number of other constraints combine to make subtitle reading a challenging and stressful perceptual activity.

In particular, we would suggest that subtitle reading may be particularly demanding when the line-break is arbitrary, with the term 'arbitrary' standing for unpredictable, illogical, inaccurate or implausible.

Line-break is arbitrary when coherent groups of words are split and segmentation does not coincide with the highest syntactic node (Karamitroglou 1998). We assume these conditions to be disruptive because they may (1) favour conscious confusion or *garden pathing* (cf. Holmes 1987, Spivey-Knowlton *et al.* 1995), i.e. the wrong interpretation of a syntactically ambiguous sentence; (2) produce *spill-over effects* (cf. Rayner and Morris 1990, Wilbertz *et al.* 1991), i.e. unwanted side-effects or complications "represented by increased gaze duration not on the critical word itself, but on the one next to it" (Wilbertz *et al.* 1991: 353); and (3) imply difficult text-processing, resulting in extra eye fixations,⁴ a larger number of unnecessary eye regressions and corrective movements (cf. Rayner and Pollatsek 1987: 329; Rayner *et al.* 2006). It is therefore possible that all this would hinder readability and a smooth line-to-line transition. This, in turn, could also force reanalysis and make it necessary to abandon the current interpretation (or analysis) of the sentence in order to reformulate it (Frazier 1987: 571).

Although the subtitler, responsible for creating easily readable subtitles, ought to resort to all possible strategies to avoid any ambiguity (Díaz Cintas 2001a: 120), discontinuity at different levels of constituency has been detected in all the subtitled films analyzed.

3. The specialized terms *spotting*, *cuing* or *timing* are typically used as synonyms and "describe the process of defining the in and out times of individual subtitles" (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998: 178).

4. During reading, our eyes do not move smoothly across the page. They "make a series of jumps [...] along the line. Between the jumps the eyes remain relatively still, for about a quarter of a second, in what is referred to as a *fixation*" (Rayner and Pollatsek 1989: 6, original italics).

In this paper we shall discuss a few representative instances of arbitrarily broken subtitles taken from a heterogeneous corpus (Table 1). We selected these particular films because they represent a stratified sample in terms of release time (from the early 60s to the present day), they comprise different source and target languages (English, Dutch, German, Italian and Hungarian), and they include subtitles prepared for different media (cinema and DVD) as well as different film genres. We expect such a heterogeneous corpus to provide sufficiently unbiased results.

Table 1. Corpus

Type of subtitles	Film details
Italian & English DVD subtitles (for distribution in Italy)	<i>The Graduate</i> , Mike Nichols, 1967 (Drama/Comedy) <i>Annie Hall</i> , Woody Allen, 1977 (Comedy/Romance) <i>Saturday Night Fever</i> , John Badham, 1977 (Drama/Music) <i>East is East</i> , Damien O'Donnell, 1999 (Comedy) <i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i> , Scott Hicks, 1999 (Thriller) <i>The Talented Mr Ripley</i> , Anthony Minghella, 1999 (Drama/ Thriller) <i>About a Boy</i> , Chris & Paul Weitz, 2002 (Comedy)
Italian subtitles for cinema (<i>Ombreletteriche</i>)	<i>E-Dreams</i> , Wonsuk Chin, 2001 (Documentary) <i>Confituur</i> [Sweet Jam], Lieven Debrauwer, 2004 (Drama/ Comedy) <i>Sideways</i> , Alexander Payne, 2004 (Comedy/Drama) <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> , Joel Schumacher, 2004 (Drama/ Fantasy)
Italian DVD subtitles (<i>Ombreletteriche</i>)*	<i>Herz aus Glas</i> [Heart of glass], Werner Herzog, 1976 (Drama)
Italian subtitles for cinema (Hungarian National Film Archive)	<i>Szerelem</i> [Love], Károly Makk, 1970 (Drama) <i>Szerelmesfilm</i> [Love film], István Szabó, 1970 (Drama)
Hungarian subtitles for cinema (Hungarian National Film Archive)	<i>Mamma Roma</i> , Pierpaolo Pasolini, 1962 (Drama)

* *Ombreletteriche* is a subtitling company founded in Rome in 1994 and run by Elvira De Majo. See www.ombreletteriche.com for additional information.

3. Analysis and discussion

Linear discontinuity has been observed both at phrase and clause level. Indisputably, long stretches of text necessarily have to be split somewhere. Moreover, subtitling is open to a large number of technical constraints. In this paper, we should like to specifically highlight the line-break issue in the hope that, as long as other technical constraints are respected, they will be taken more seriously into account by subtitlers whose final aim is high quality and target-orientedness.

Since Rayner and colleagues (2006: 321) have demonstrated “the importance of the continued presence of the word to the right of fixation [...] and possibly throughout a fixation in its entirety, in order for fluent reading to occur”, we assume that phrases could be best processed if presented as homogeneous chunks according to their orderly arrangement. Such a layout presumably allows the perceiver to take them in with a single fixation: “[r]eaders obtain significant preview benefit from the word to the right of fixation, and when it is disrupted in some way, reading suffers” (Rayner *et al.* 2006: 321).

Nevertheless, much of the subtitling analyzed fails to show consideration for the conceptually autonomous structure of phrases or multiword sequences. This flaw may be responsible for contingent disruptions and for reductions to reading speed in the form of garden-pathing or spill-over phenomena.

3.1 Noun phrases

In order to reduce such phenomena, frequent instances of determiner-head or pre-modifier-head splitting in noun phrases (underlined in 1 to 4) should perhaps be reduced to a minimum.

- (1) Exactly how do you mean? – There’s a great future there. Think about it. (Graduate)
- (2) You only talked about your married sister. And your other married sister. (Saturday)
- (3) So we were always stuck watching some crap made-for-TV movie about a kid with leukaemia. (About)
- (4) Like hell! 25 years in construction work. I’ve always had a paycheque. (Saturday)

Presenting visibly comprehensible input might help optimize response processes, without impacting on the potentially positive effects of subtitling as a means of access to (foreign or same language) audiovisual productions.

On the other hand, modifiers that follow the head noun are supposed to be easily processed even if separated from it and moved to a new line (e.g., “of yours” in example 5). Their relation with the head is usually more distant than that of pre-modifiers.

- (5) Hey. I want this job
of yours, Tommy (Ripley)

Also, words are not independent of each other, and different levels of fixity or idiomatity exist (Cruse 1986, Casadei 1995, Sinclair 1996, Cowie 1998, Jackson and Zé Amvela 2000, Gramley and Pätzold 2004). Especially in a reading situation that puts perceivers under pressure, then, it would be useful to make the best possible use of layout. In other words, it might be useful to visually respect the consistency of the expressions that speakers feel are typical or conventional (Casadei 1995: 344, Gramley and Pätzold 2004: 55), and of those expressions whose constituents are constrained in terms of co-occurrence and distribution (Casadei 1995: 344). In particular, we argue that it might be advantageous for subtitlers to be sensitive to the different degrees of lexico-semantic and syntactic fixity, crystallization and frequent co-occurrences (i.e. collocations, cf. Sinclair 1996: 89) in order to avoid the disturbing effect of violating customary patterns as, for example, in (6) and (7), where “*martedì scorso*” and “*un essere vivente*” are fairly stable word combinations (cf. Cowie 1998).

- (6) *Ho visto il film di Fellini martedì*
scorso. Non è uno dei suoi migliori. (Annie Hall)
 I saw the Fellini film last
Tuesday. It is not one of his best.
- (7) *Non posso mettere un essere*
vivente nell'acqua bollente! (Annie Hall)
 I can't put a living
thing in hot water!

The same pertains to idiomatic expressions, whose processing is different from single-word processing. Understanding an idiom requires going beyond simple word-by-word comprehension so as to integrate figurative meaning into contextual information (Levorato *et al.* 2004; see also Nippold and Duthie 2003). Splitting an idiomatic expression, as in the case underlined in (8), would therefore force the reader to interpret its constituents literally in the first instance, and then to reconsider their analysis in a second phase. This may be reasonably linked to the Minimal Attachment Principle whereby “readers assign phrasal structure to a

word string so that the ‘simplest’ structure results” (Frazier 1987: 561–562; cf. also Holmes 1987: 588). In view of that, we can observe (8).

- (8) *Perché sapevo che avresti dato
i numeri e non saremmo partiti!* (Sideways)
 Because I knew you would have gone
mad and we wouldn’t have left!

The transitive verb *dare* ‘to give’ at the very end of the upper line would call for the presence of a non-figurative direct object after it (cf. *dare qualcosa a qualcuno* ‘to give something to someone’). Readers who eventually encounter the noun phrase *i numeri* (lit. ‘numbers’, but cf. *dare i numeri* ‘to go mad’) will presumably have to spend a longer time to disambiguate the meaning of the idiomatic expression *dare i numeri*.

3.2 Prepositional phrases

We noted that, technically, presenting prepositional phrases in a row should not be a problem, since both simple and complex prepositions are short enough to be moved around conveniently without upsetting the established norms governing the maximum number of characters per line. However prepositional phrases are not necessarily displayed in order to help the reader. This is illustrated and underlined in (9) and (10). Two alternatives (a. and b.) are given to each original arbitrarily broken subtitle, where the hanging preposition might be distractive. Patently, in most instances at least one of the alternatives, and often both, would do. They respect characters-per-line conventions (the figures are given in parentheses in the examples below), coherent segmentation (whereby the preposition is not separated from its complement [Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 603–606, 620–621]) and preferred line layouts. Curiously, this consideration could raise the question of why alternative text organization patterns were not considered in these cases (cf. note 5).

- (9) There was a letter from (23)
Dickie in with my perfume. (26) (Ripley)
 a. There was a letter (18)
from Dickie in with my perfume (30)
 b. There was a letter from Dickie (30)
 in with my perfume (18)
- (10) ... *nel portabatterie della* (25)
barca di Myamoto? – Certo. (26) (Snow)
 ... in the battery well of the
boat of Myamoto? – Sure.

- a. ... *nel portabatterie* (19)
della barca di Myamoto? – *Certo.* (32)
- b. ... *nel portabatterie della barca* (31)
di Myamoto? – *Certo.* (20)

It may happen, of course, that no best options are available, and it is not possible to achieve any truly suitable line-break with the same linguistic material, as in (11). Here, the distribution of characters is unbalanced from the start and remains so even if recourse is made to different phrase arrangements (cf. a. and b.).

- (11) I was having lunch with some guys from (38)
NBC. So I said “Did you eat yet or what?” (41) (*Annie Hall*)
- a. I was having lunch with some guys (33)
from NBC. So I said “Did you eat yet or what?” (46)
- b. I was having lunch with some guys from NBC. (43)
 So I said “Did you eat yet or what?” (36)

In such cases, a possible effective solution would be rephrasing, i.e. saying the same thing with different (and possibly fewer) words, and rethinking the distribution of the whole text.⁵ However, this raises the question of whether exceeding the accepted number of characters per line, i.e. slightly manipulating technical constraints, might nonetheless be considered a possible alternative to arbitrary splitting whenever the original linguistic material does not allow for suitable alternatives and rephrasing has to be ruled out.

3.3 Verb phrases

In line with what has been suggested thus far, verb groups are supposed to maintain their own graphic consistency too, by maintaining the main verb and its auxiliaries well coupled visually and not disjoined over different lines. Examples (12) to (15) show that a contrary trend is often at work in cases where either plain auxiliaries or modals are used (cf. 12 and 13). This, though, also occurs when structurally and semantically fixed verb patterns (e.g. causative structures and phraseological

5. It appears that this is the way subtitlers work in typical subtitling countries, where the practice is well-established and quality is a primary concern (I would like to thank Henrik Gottlieb for confirming this for me). Nevertheless, the process of message reformulation is a complex and time-consuming one, and a number of subtitlers in Italy are of the opinion that formulating and considering different options is unfortunately an unaffordable ‘luxury’ under typical current working conditions (Serena Paccagnella, personal communication). Hence the need to investigate the possible connection between subtitlers’ working habits and environment and their linguistic choices, as per a recent study on dubbing (Pavesi and Perego, forthcoming).

verbs) are at stake (cf. 14 and 15), even though their breaking could cause a great degree of irritation to the reader.

- (12) Do you have a grudge against me? Do
you feel a strong resentment? – No! (Graduate)
- (13) *Glielo dirò, ma forse dovrai
accontentarti delle patatine. (East)
 I'll tell him, but perhaps you'll have to
be satisfied with chips.*
- (14) *Mai un solo francobollo, ti fanno
fare la fila per 3! Aspettate da molto? (Ripley)
 One stamp is never enough, they make
you queue for three! Have you been waiting for long?*
- (15) *È una bomba, e tu stavi
per dirle che mi sposo! (Sideways)
 She's terrific, and you were
about to tell her I'm getting married!*

3.4 The sentence level

Moving on to sentence level, the literature shows that sentences are more easily read if each clause or sentence takes up a single line of a two-line subtitle flash (Mayoral 1993: 56, Ivarsson and Carroll 1998: 78, Díaz Cintas 2001a: 120, 2003). However, we were able to identify arbitrary text segmentations in the presence of coordinators and subordinators. Both are often separated from the clause they introduce, although they are naturally closer and belong more to that than to the root clause (Fabb 1994, Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1277).

Interestingly, instances of both arbitrary and satisfactory segmentations sometimes co-exist in the same film(s) (cf. 16 and 17).

- (16) *Questa è la chiave
e vorrei risuolare queste scarpe. (Confituur)
 This is the key
and I'd like to resole these shoes.*
- (17) *Come puoi fare la marmellata e
 fingere che non sia successo niente? (Confituur)
 How can you make jam and
 pretend nothing happened?*

This could be interpreted either as betraying a lack of sufficiently strict in-house subtitling guidelines in subtitling companies, scant attention or underestimation of the problem on the part of the subtitler, or indeed excessive reliance upon subtitling programmes which split lines exclusively according to pre-defined technical instructions.

Looking back at the two examples above, the former (16) might well be preferable to the latter (17), where the sentential conjunction *e* ‘and’ functions as a non-target stimulus. The position of the conjunction presumably activates in the reader the expectation of a new sentence which does not come right after it, but on a different line. This circumstance could produce an unwanted effect on reading time, though not necessarily on comprehension. The same applies to all coordinators and to subordinators. In particular, we found evidence that default ‘all purpose’ markers of subordination, for instance, are not systematically shifted to the second line as expected (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1056–1057) (see 18, 19).

- (18) *Oggi sono 14.600 giorni che*
Tuur ed Emma stanno insieme, (Confituur)
 Today it's been 14.600 days that
 Tuur and Emma are together,⁶
- (19) And your third married sister. I felt that
 you just wanted to be a married sister. (Saturday)

Interestingly enough, although our analysis is not a quantitative one, it seems that more attention is paid to relative rather than to default subordinators: the former appear misplaced only occasionally, the latter much more frequently. This might be ascribed to a clearer perception of relative clauses as an indivisible adjective-like constituent (cf. Fabb 1994: 92, Yule 1998: 240, Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1058). Except in a scant number of examples, then, relative pronouns are not normally separated from the clauses to which they naturally (i.e. syntactically, semantically and prosodically) belong (20).

- (20) *Saleem, dov'è il vestito*
che ti ho preso per la scuola? (East)
 Saleem, where's the dress
that I bought you for school?

In the presence of *if*- and comparative constructions, a tendency has been observed in the former case to disrupt the integrity of the clause that contains the

6. i.e. ‘Today, Tuur and Emma have been together for 14,600 days’. We have provided a literal translation, awkward though it may be, to suggest the effect of the dangling subordinator in the original.

if-element, in cases where it follows the clause that expresses what will happen if the hypothesis expressed in the *if*-sentence is fulfilled, thus splitting off the *if*-element from the remainder of the clause (21).

- (21) *Quello che ci serve è un frigorifero. Se sei d'accordo ti sarò per sempre amica.* (Ripley)
 What we need is a fridge. If
 you agree, I'll always be your friend.

Finally, with comparative constructions, we assume that eye-strain could be caused when comparative conjunctions (*che*, *di* and *a* in Italian, *than* in English) preceding the clause they introduce are not visually attached to it (22) despite an alternative line-break being possible that is satisfactory and complies with technical criteria (22 a).

- (22) #Sono le uve Syrah più vecchie di#
 #Santa Barbara County, lo sapevate?# (Sideways)
 #These are the oldest Syrah grapes in #
 #Santa Barbara County, did you know that?#
 a. #Sono le uve Syrah più vecchie #
 #di Santa Barbara County, lo sapevate?#

4. Concluding remarks

Specialized literature in the field of cognitive psychology shows that the reading process relies heavily on sequential and holistic procedures. If the reader has to stop and consciously identify a word, then the reading flow may be halted. In this paper we argue that this could also be the case when reading subtitles. A failure to edit the target text appropriately, specifically with regard to arbitrarily broken lines, has nonetheless been observed throughout a heterogeneous corpus. A few instances of arbitrary text segmentation have been presented and commented on here. This has allowed us to illustrate an aspect of subtitling which, as long as other technical constraints are also respected, might be taken into more serious consideration.

Furthermore, this work lays the foundation to further research designed to shed light on three specific issues:

1. whether subtitle layout truly has an effect on reading behaviour
2. whether syntactic constraints should prevail over technical ones
3. why text segmentation is often arbitrary

Empirical evidence (i.e. eye-movement recording in a subtitling environment) and user satisfaction surveys would help shed light on viewers' actual preferences. Furthermore, we believe that interviewing professional subtitlers would help to focus on the connections between their working habits and routines and the development of specific issues that have been observed in subtitles (cf. Pavesi and Perego, 2006 and 2008).

Socio-economic approaches

The localization of promotional discourse on the internet

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The localization of promotional discourse on the Internet offers an interesting case for study as it entails many of the challenges translation studies are facing nowadays and, most particularly, multimedia translation.

The paper is divided in three parts; the first will deal with a description of the main features of promotional discourse with particular reference to web promotion. The second part will examine the several possibilities that the Internet offers as a medium for promotion in terms of its impact, the changes it is bringing about in terms of reception and reading modes and the linguistic implications which derive from its worldwide use. Thirdly, the discourse elements of website texts as well as other considerations about the medium are discussed when focusing on the description of translation strategies in promotional material on the Internet. Finally, the conclusion will highlight some of the needs and shortcomings entailed by this kind of translation which still raises and requires further research.

Keywords: Localization, promotion, multimedia translation, discourse, reception, hypertext

1. Introduction

Inspired by the growing demands of a more global society, the concept of localization has recently gained the attention of translation scholars (Esselink 2000, Lingo 2000, O'Hagan & Ashworth 2002, Pym 2004). Likewise, there has been an increasing concern about different forms of promotional discourse, particularly in the case of the World Wide Web. Therefore the traditional notion of translation as an activity involving two languages and two cultures has necessarily changed.

Delabastita (2003) lists a number of new forms of translation that have already captured the attention of scholars. Localization is a kind of intersemiotic or 'cross-medium translation' as it is a transfer that involves more than one language, but also

more than one medium, that has become a fast-increasing social and economic reality which LISA, the Localization Industry Standards Association, has defined as: “taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold” (<http://www.lisa.org/info/faqs.html>). This organization differentiates the notion of localization from that of ‘straight’ translation, using the latter exclusively for linguistic transfer and the former as the process of adapting visuals to the target locale.

2. Promotional discourse

While much of the existing literature has been concerned with diverse forms of advertising, especially in tourism texts, further research and observation show that the function of promotion is performed by a combination of elements which are common to more than one text type (Valdés 2004). There is evidence that certain features determine a wider form of discourse than that of advertising as such, a form marked by higher social impact. Its frequency varies according to the type of text, such as brochures, political propaganda, advertisements, technical manuals and drug inserts. This particular kind of discourse, whose main purpose is to promote a product, a service or an institution by exploiting the verbal and non-verbal resources of the medium and establishing a relationship between sender, main object and receiver of the message, is referred to as promotional discourse.

In order to approach this subject, I will use Guy Cook’s list of elements to define the discourse of advertising, as these can be extended to the broader category of promotional discourse. Cook (1982: 1) distinguishes several components and factors: substance; music or images; paralanguage; situation; co-text; intertext; participants; and function.

As regards the substance, in the particular case of promotional discourse, it is the physical medium that carries and transmits the text and can be as numerous and varied as there are media used for promotion: written material typically found in press adverts, leaflets, and technical manuals; a combination of written and iconic material in billboards, DVD and CD cases; written and audio elements in radio slots; and written, audio and pictorial material on television or the Internet, as well as in CD-ROM and DVD media. When deciding which physical medium should be used, the ultimate factor to consider is the *target*¹ of the text in question,

1. The term *target* in advertising is used to refer to the intended audience of a promotional campaign.

since different types of target customer or audience would require different media, messages and campaigns. This is known as promotional mix.²

Likewise, music and/or images are essential in promotional discourse for the effects they trigger in receivers. For example, technical manuals and web pages performing a promotional function also benefit from the use of images, as illustrated on the Canon homepage (www.canon.com), where the red colour of the Canon logo is used to highlight the main innovations in the technical specifications of the brand. Red is also the colour of the clothes worn by the people shown on the screen, who are accordingly identified as Canon users. It serves to reinforce and relate the different parts of the hypertext. Therefore, colour is a visual code which acts as a textual link and produces mental associations in viewers.

Canon



(http://www.canon-europe.com/For_Work/Solutions/index.asp)

Other paralinguistic dimensions that accompany language, such as voice quality, gestures, facial expressions and, in the case of writing, font type and size, play a key role in on-line promotional discursive materials, as the graphic and oral dimensions of the language contribute to communicating the promotional message effectively on websites as well. This paralanguage is essential in the case of advertising messages on the web since they trigger particular effects in viewers and make the text more appealing. One particular example of the use of paralanguage is the font type associated with a particular brand, as in the case of Coca-Cola (www.coca-cola.com). We all identify the brand and any text related to it by the presence of this graphic representation of the brand name:

The iconic Coca-Cola logo, featuring the brand name in its signature, flowing script font. The letters are black with a white outline, and a registered trademark symbol (®) is visible at the end of the word 'Cola'.

2. An overview of the options available for a promotional mix is offered in <http://www.va-interactive.com/inbusiness/editorial/sales/ibt/promotio.html>.

As far as the notion of situation is concerned, we refer to the properties and relations between the objects and people that surround the text, traditionally known as 'context' (Cook 1992: 1). In the case of promotional translation for the Internet, this notion acquires a new dimension, as it is difficult to set up a situation other than the global village that the Internet brings together. When we talk about the target culture of a multilingual website, for instance, it is difficult to identify the relationship between the translated text and a particular group of readers, as website viewers can be located in different parts of the world and contexts.

Another discursive element is the co-text, which is made up of concrete properties and relations between the objects and people that are related to the text itself, i.e. the text that precedes or follows the stretch of text that is being analysed and that participants perceive as belonging to the same discourse. The multiplicity of texts, or text variety, that floods the web has an immediate effect on the reception of the text, and thus on its translation. It is essential that the several textual items that are part of a web page or website maintain a cohesive relationship to reinforce the theme or goal of the website by sharing similar style features and by means of links to relate one to the other. In any linear-structured text, we would use cohesive devices such as linking words of the type 'however', 'thus', or 'in addition'; but in non-linear discourses such as Internet hyper-discourse there are other strategies to establish suitable connections, such as the 'clicked-on' hyperlinks, which should not be 'broken'.

An essential property of promotional discourse is the intertext, i.e. the text that participants perceive as part of a discourse and that affects their interpretation. This poses interesting challenges to copywriters and text designers, who frequently use elements imported from other discourses such as songs, film pictures, or literary quotations in order to connote a particular meaning or trigger a particular association in the reader's mind. However, the connotation may not be recognized in another culture when the text is translated and used interculturally.

The main defining factor of promotional discourse is its function, as every discourse pattern or individual element shares a number of specific goals to fulfil the function of promotion: (1) building an awareness of the product (in a broad sense) being offered; (2) building comprehension of what the product offers; (3) establishing the conviction that what is offered is the solution or something attractive to try, or a source of benefits; (4) establishing a market position by enhancing the value and positive associations of the product.

How this promotion is built in discourse terms is another main concern, particularly when the medium, in this case the Internet, provides so many and varied opportunities, which makes translation for this medium a complex task. Promotional discourse can be defined as containing qualitative or comparative language, calls to action, price or quality information, inducements to buy, sell, rent or lease,

or endorsements, that is, any element that helps to achieve the ultimate goal of promotional copy: to promote, to position the product on a higher level than other products, and thus to generate interest and action. Getting the target audience to respond is the primary goal, which is referred to as the 'Desired Action Response'.³ As it is part of a process of persuasive communication, the particular way the different components are related to each other and combined to form a discourse will also contribute to obtaining that Desired Action Response among the readers and potential customers. Therefore, the text function depends on the participants in the communication process, as the function can be either assigned to the text by the sender, or can be a different one perceived by the receiver. Participants in promotional discourse are essentially of three kinds: i) the person, company or institution which wishes to promote something, ii) the target of the promotional message, and iii) the 'accidental' receptor of the promotion, who accidentally becomes part of the reception process. In the case of the Internet, the promotional discourse is characterized by the collective personality of the sender and the obscure identity of the receiver, since it is hard to decide who the real receiver of the website is.

To illustrate all this, the web provides some examples of different textual strategies aimed at promoting the product.

2.1 Hybridity based on the combination of non-verbal and verbal elements

The first example shows that the hybridity of the informative and operative functions of promotional websites is characterized by the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements and the stylistic features of the text. A good example of this is the Bosch website. In the Bosch Group website, the Facts and Figures section contains pictures, text and figures presented in the form of a table, visually configured as in a technical report: <http://www.bosch.com/content/language2/html/2226.htm>.⁴ Content and language jargon also resemble that of a report, which in traditional functional taxonomies (Reiss in Chesterman 1989) is a text type that is placed at the heart of the informative pole and quite distant from playing an operative function. While, according to Reiss (1971), the main focus of an informative text lies on the content and on the objects and facts which are represented, an operative one is concerned with making the receiver react, eliciting the desired response.

3. <http://www.uc.edu/ucomm/documents7PromoWriting.pdf> consulted February 2008.

4. Consulted in February 2008.

However, in spite of its appearance as an informative text about facts and figures in a table, the Bosch text offers a certain promotional touch. The combination of non-verbal elements aims at enhancing the credibility of the company:

- The picture placed above the table creates the impression that the company staff are diligent professionals carrying a portfolio full of positive facts and figures about the company.
- The pale blue background colour is the colour of stability and calm, which is only interrupted with the deep red of the brand name Bosch, thus associating these two positive features with the name of the company.
- The language too is noteworthy. The section is introduced in the form of a slogan-like headline: “Bosch in figures”, a short, to-the-point phrase.
- Below this headline, the text is structured in a parallel form, with a particular speech rhythm produced by means of repeating the verbal form “has” three times.

Special emphasis is also placed upon the possessive adjective and pronoun making reference to the brand and hence to the company, the promoter, which is reflected in the use of “Our” and “We”: “*Our* company *has* grown strongly in recent years, *has* succeeded with pioneering innovations and *has* a global network of customers and suppliers. *We* constantly seek to maintain and develop that position” (my italics). The informative and appellative functions are kept in perfect harmony to promote the company.



(<http://www.bosch.com/content/language2/html/2226.htm>)⁵

2.2 Hybridity based on language selection

Similarly, another example can be seen in the Canon website, whose main colours are again pale blue to highlight the deep blue of web links, and the red for the brand name. When selecting the link to the Be Bit Digital Camera (<http://web.canon.jp/Imaging/psa95/overview-e.html>),⁶ there are references to Canon’s main website, as this new hypertext belonging to the Canon site preserves the colour and display of columns on the homepage. Using the same colours and format is one of the recurring strategies that contribute to establishing co-textual relationships

5. Consulted in February 2008.

6. Consulted in February 2008.

between the different linked pages on the Internet. About the promotional features of the Be Bit Canon page, the combination of the pictures and words to describe the benefits of their cameras demonstrates the hybridity of the promotional discourse, as the language selection and the style show. The selection of language is aimed at building the confidence of the customer in the camera and at pointing out its assets, by using expressions such as “enhancement of high quality and functions”, “the best image control”, or “the most appropriate settings for the scene”. This use of superlative language without specifying more about the quality and functions of the product, about how to control the image, or about the best settings is another feature of advertising language, as Cook posits (2001). The strategic combination of technical jargon with superlative and positive language leading to the promotion of the product’s qualities has become a trend of the times in technical manuals and specific technical product advertisements. Smith (1999: online), when talking about promotional copy⁷ for high tech audiences, debunks the myth that “There’s no place for ‘technical jargon’ in promotional copy”, by suggesting: “(1) Use it only when you’re sure everyone in your audience will recognize it. (2) Cover your bet by clarifying the term with plain language that doesn’t condescend. Readers already in-the-know won’t be insulted – you’ll just make them feel smarter” (<http://www.connectdirect.com/articles/copy.html>).⁸

Likewise, an excessive use of positive language or ‘marketese’ is not desirable, as Nielsen (1997: online) points out in a study on web communication: “Credibility suffers when users clearly see that the site exaggerates. [...] [P]romotional language imposes a cognitive burden on users who have to spend resources on filtering out the hyperbole to get at the facts.” Consequently, translators should be acquainted with this effect and control the use of exaggerated language to reduce the degree of hyperbole effect and to avoid this marketese.

3. The Internet as a medium for promotion and translation

One of the main advantages of making the world global is undoubtedly to be able to promote and sell extensively to the largest number of clients, and the Internet, as a medium for commerce, has reached a particular status within globalization advocates (Anobile, in Sprung 2000: vii).

Although the Web only dates back to 1992, it has grown exponentially and its enormous potential has brought us into immediate contact with a world of global information of gigantic dimensions, particularly when being addressed in the local

7. *Promotional copy* is the term used to refer to the text written for promotion.

8. Consulted in February 2008.

'language' of the target audience. A localized website brings the company closer to the target audience and improves the company's business profile, allowing the company to speak directly to future customers and to expand their global business. In terms of impact, the Internet is by far the medium with the largest expansion. Worldwide, the number of recorded Internet users on 31 March 2006 was over 1,000 million.⁹ Besides its impact, it serves as a means of communication, and a channel for transactions and distribution, as it is the only medium that allows consumers to get information, make choices and transfer payments.

3.1 A new concept of text

While the main material used is still predominantly written text and pictures, it is increasingly backed by more efficient audio and video support which makes it ideal for high-impact branding. The way the web is approached by its users and developers has had significant effects for the concepts of language, text, reading, writing and hence translation. It has particularly entailed a change in the concept of text, as it has challenged its linearity. The textual structure of the web is that of a hypertext with websites and pages in which texts make up the whole via links to other nodes of information in multiple directions, thus providing access to related information more dynamically (Hoffman 1997). Each site is in fact a text that leads to other new texts.

In addition to preserving the pragmatic function of promoting, it is necessary to consider other aspects that directly affect the way web pages are read and translated:

1. People rarely read web pages word by word; instead they scan the page, picking up individual words and sentences and looking at pictures, colours and diagrams, or hearing tunes. Perception is thus superficial, as in general terms we pay attention to surface elements. The particular words and symbols that are used to guide the reading process should necessarily be carefully translated into the target language to perform the same function.
2. If the reading and interpretation of a web page entails a short period of time, then copywriters and translators should be aware of the need to help the audience with visual resources by: (1) highlighting words (typeface variation, colours, links, etc.); (2) creating meaningful sub-headings, like press headlines, drawing attention to certain elements and increasing the viewer's interest; (3) creating bulleted lists; (4) presenting one idea per paragraph, trying to catch the attention of the web user towards the main idea to reinforce the promotion of the product. It has been demonstrated that "users tend to skip over additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words of the paragraph"

9. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

(Nielsen 1997: online). The design of these visual resources is often a responsibility of web designers while the translator merely translates the text from one language into another. However, translators should intervene in the whole process and contribute their expertise in text production and reception and above all as experts in the two cultures involved.

3. A recurrent writing feature in discourses by the press and advertising is the inverted pyramid style which opens with the conclusion (Nielsen 1997: online).
4. Internet texts tend to have half the number of words as conventional writing, favouring brevity and complying with the medium restrictions of space. It is well known that the web page design allows a specific slot for each kind of information which is particularly relevant for translation, as translators need to adapt the word choice and the design to the space allotted to the text.
5. The web writer has to effectively use web design programmes and check the links belonging to the hypertext are not 'broken' and they allow readers to continue reading the text. Similarly, the translator needs not only to translate and localize, but also to review the whole hyper-textual configuration of the site and ensure that communication is not interrupted.
6. Not only should the style and discourse structure be a main concern, but the relevance of content is also a key question. This is often a nightmare for web designers, as suppressions and replacements in the visual dimension may be required. When localising a website there might also be elements that are not relevant for the target group, although the trend is to preserve the identity of the homepage as much as possible. Besides, it is difficult to know exactly who is going to have access to one's website. However, target language and cultural constraints should be considered and verbal and non-verbal elements localized. It is therefore fundamental either that translators and web designers work together or that translators/localizers design web pages to better adapt them to the internationalized target context.

What really makes a difference in Internet is what has been called the 'Internet Divide' (Argaez 2004), that is, the different languages that are spoken by the 1,000 million web surfers. According to Internet World Statistics, "the language barrier presents implications to a really global Internet and to the Internet marketing campaigns" (Argaez: online). The distribution of Internet language use places English at the top, followed by Chinese, Japanese and Spanish as the top languages used (<http://www.glreach.com/globstats/>).¹⁰ As some of the Internet users from non-English-speaking countries have the ability to read and understand English, the English language may be considered by far the main language of the Internet.

10. Consulted in February 2008.

However, from a marketing point of view “a company may well be alienating a large number of potential customers” by adopting a unilingual approach (Chapman 2005: online). Translation experts should also be aware of the need for localization in order to communicate successfully to different markets and cultures.

4. The translation of promotional discourse on the internet

The previous examples have already pointed to some of the main questions related to the translation of Internet texts. Localization has become an important issue in both translation and marketing areas. Localizing software packages and providing translations of promotional web texts is much more than replacing words; there must be an in-depth study of the target market and culture, of business practices and customs, and, undoubtedly, of the target language norms (De Bortoli and Maroto 2002). This might sound obvious, but evidence of multilingual promotional web pages shows that this knowledge and this expertise are often lacking. Translation companies try to convince customers about the benefits of using their services to promote their products on the web by optimizing homepages in order to build traffic to their site in the target language of the viewer. Although English is still the preferred language for Internet communication, the percentage of other languages used to promote products has been increasing steadily, and big brands struggle (and pay) to have an effective multilingual website in the languages of the markets in which they operate. As multimedia texts, hypertexts pose the added difficulty of having a graphic component that should be localized. Some graphic elements must be resized to accommodate the new language, when the languages involved require it, and, although free online translation services are available and used extensively, they are not reliable on all occasions, as Chapman (2005) mentions in the case of Spanish:

You have to allow space on your button for the word with the maximum number of characters. As an example you may have a link entitled “Home” and the translation into Spanish as “Principal”. If your menu doesn’t allow space for 9 characters, you may have problems with alignment, so it’s best to think about your second language right from the start. An alternative for the translation could be “Inicio”.

(Chapman 2005: online)

4.1 The localization of a website: Lancôme

The choice of the Lancôme website stems from the study of different promotional websites and it is analysed below as an emblematic text of the prevailing translation

norm within the paradigm of this kind of websites. Other examples of global and international brands with a similar approach to localization are the Coca-Cola, Audi or Ikea websites.¹¹

When approaching the multilingual website of Lancôme, a major brand (www.lancome.com) as an example of promotional web localization, we find a multiple-choice exercise where we can choose the site of the country we wish to enter and hence the corresponding language version. There is even an international link with two versions, one in the language of the brand, French, and the other in English. Lancôme also shows it is a company that has understood the benefits of being multicultural as well as the convenience of approaching different audiences using their own referential culture, as can be seen from the distinction of websites for different language communities within the same country (Canada), or for different countries with the same language (Spain, Mexico, Argentina).

4.1.1 *The product*

When visiting the Lancôme sites of different countries, the product which is promoted varies depending on the stage of the commercialization process or on the product range which is marketed in each country (www.lancome.com, May 2006).¹² Thus, at the time of writing, in Spain the website was last updated in February 2006 and the product on the opening screen is the perfume *Hypnôse*, while in the site for the United Kingdom the promoted product is a new range of lip gloss. The first sign of localization is already evident as there is an adaptation of the object of promotion. The product shown has to necessarily coincide with the offer the target consumers can find marketed in their own culture. This choice also affects the selection of non-verbal elements such as the colour of the page: colourful bubbles resembling the juicy crystal-shine lip gloss for the English version, and the mysterious atmosphere evoked by the dark colours and the name of the *Hypnôse* perfume on the Spanish site, reinforcing the products which are promoted in the target market at the particular time the website is visited. Thus, the translator should be familiar with the marketing strategies of the company and be particularly careful with making references to the name of the latest products. Localizers are thus urged to have a thorough knowledge of what the company is promoting on the web at that particular time, and which products the target audience can find on their market, as products are not commercialized or promoted in the same places at the same time, or using the same message. A quick check of the web pages of different markets shows that some countries are one step ahead of others since a product advertised some time before in a country may be presented as

11. www.coca-cola.com; www.audi.com; www.ikea.com

12. Consulted May 2006.

brand new in another. This information should be either included in the translation brief or given during the team-based production process of the website, involving localization as a major step in the process.

4.1.2 *Medium restrictions*

The “Intro” section of both the English-language international site and the French international page share the same layout, use the same picture and colours, and the textual material is embedded in the cells that have been reserved for it in both web pages, which leads us to consider both versions as parallel texts, created and updated simultaneously. The translation is almost literal, with a few lexical and stylistic differences, and preserves the same image, which, in general, is the main translation norm on the Internet, since medium restrictions (space, non-linear structure and the dependence on the active intervention of viewers) do not allow many radical changes in the screen layout. Besides, the globalized appearance of the brand should be preserved on every page of the site.

The use of computer-assisted translation for the linking buttons on the table rows at the bottom of the Lancôme page seems to be the source for undesirable renderings of ‘sitemap’ such as *plano del sitio* on the Argentinian site, *plano sitio* on the Spanish site or *plano de la web* on the Mexican one. They are all word-for-word translations of the two terms which form the compound ‘sitemap’, but they have been mistranslated as ‘map of the place’, ‘map location’ or ‘web plan’, respectively. An inaccurate use of capital letters is present in these versions as well, since nouns in noun phrases are unnecessarily capitalized in the Spanish versions (*Preguntas Frecuentes*, *Plano Sitio* or *Servicio al Cliente*), and other symbols such as ‘1º’ to indicate ordinal ‘1st’ appears as *1os* (<http://www.lancomespain.com/es/>). This illustrates the need for a higher-quality localization of web pages to enable a better and more effective approach to the target consumer, avoiding any sign of interference of spelling norms from the source language, namely English, the *lingua franca* of Internet software.

4.1.3 *Lexical choice and style*

The question of interference is still one of the main flaws of website translation, as the Lancôme site page for *Primordiale Optimum* demonstrates. When we click on ‘Skincare’ and *Tratamiento rostro* and follow the track to the ‘Anti-Ageing’ and *Anti-edad* sections on both the British and Spanish sites, in the section ‘First fine line and wrinkles’ and *Alisar – Primeras arrugas*, there is, first of all, a misuse of capital letters in Spanish nouns: *la Estimagrina y un Extracto de Alga Verde*, *Nanocápsulas* or *Mixtas*. There is also a direct borrowing of English terms in the Spanish text such as ‘Expertise’, ‘Glycerol’, ‘Adaptive’ and ‘UV’, which should be localized unless they are legally protected under the trademark form TM. However, the

strategy is not even consistent, since the abbreviation UV appears as UV and UVA, and the prefix 'Thermo' is rendered in the Spanish version as *Thermo* and *Termo*.

Punctuation marks such as the initial exclamation ; in Spanish are also misused, as both in initial and final position of the exclamation phrase the English final ! is inserted, leaving out the ; mark at the beginning. This is probably the result of using an English language keyboard that lacks the opening symbol, but it is once more evidence of a lack of efficient localization quality standards in promotional websites. To conclude this brief analysis, it is worth mentioning that there is a balanced combination of technical jargon, when describing the main components and effects of Lancôme expertise, with direct promotional and persuasive language, which aims at reaching the target audience and at bringing them closer to the product.

5. Conclusions

As has been mentioned earlier, the same flaws and features described for the Lancôme website are commonly found in other international promotional websites, which highlights the need for rethinking the way localization or translation is being carried out at present. Therefore, one important conclusion is the need for further research in such a complex field as promotional translation, which goes beyond the genre of advertising, covering and also interrelating with other discourses with the same pragmatic function, as has been previously shown.

A certain lack of quality standards in Internet translation has been noticed. The most common problems we find are not only technical, but on most occasions derive from literal translations or from solutions that are too close to the source hypertext and are source-culture oriented. In general, there is an excess of literalness without paying much attention to cultural and language differences. Internet target texts, like other advertisements, are created as parallel texts by means of computer technologies that leave aside the specific cultural idiosyncrasies involved.

After analyzing a number of promotional multilingual websites for different product sectors, we may conclude that it is not a question of merely designing a source text in English and translating it into several target languages, which Gilham and Maroto (2003: online) consider "the arrogant approach"; English can be the *lingua franca* of business communication and the one which facilitates contact and problem-solving between international companies, but it is not the exclusive language for online promotion. While English is used by 31.2 per cent of all Internet users, the use of Chinese and Spanish has rapidly increased and 15.7 and 8.7 percent of all Internet users employed these two languages in 2007

(<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>).¹³ These figures point to the need to improve the quality standards applied to websites in Chinese and Spanish.

Localization involves expertise in the discourse of promotion, in the discourse of the Internet and in the way Internet viewers should be addressed, particularly in the specific challenges of website translation procedures. As argued previously (Valdés 1997, 2004), translation and localization should play a key role in the design of promotional material from an early stage of the process in order to ensure the quality standard that is required. If translators of promotional hypertexts had the necessary expertise in the discursive aspects highlighted in this essay, blunders, cultural misunderstandings or dull and ineffective websites could be avoided. Despite the efforts of organisations like LISA, there is still a long way to go on the path of raising quality standards in promotional web localization.

13. Consulted December 2007.

Issues of quality in screen translation

Problems and solutions

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Scholarly debate in screen translation (ST) regarding quality issues often hinges on the complexity of specifying quality standards for such a heterogeneous market in terms of typology of translation (i.e. dubbing, subtitling, voice-over etc.) and the wide range of credence attributes which might contribute to the creation of quality standards for these products. Moreover, the situation is further complicated by the issue of “Quality according to whom?": operators; service providers; end users, or all three? However complicated these problems may seem, this paper attempts to look for answers.

Total Quality Management (TQM) and attribute-based approaches already widely used to measure customer satisfaction in media studies will be put forward as tentative instruments to determine quality in ST.

Keywords: audience satisfaction, credence attributes, Kano Model, quality, screen translation

1. Introduction

As the process of globalization coupled with technological progress continually allows more people to easily access vast quantities of sundry texts, translations and translators appear to be increasingly stepping into the global limelight (see Sabbah 1985, Sprung 2000, Cronin 2003). Furthermore, in an age which has generated so many new forms of communication, the time-honoured typology of translation in which written words on paper were converted from Language A into language(s) B, C and D seems outnumbered by ‘other’ forms of translation which go from the various categories of interpreting to present-day digital translations required for videogames on portable consoles and mobile phones. It is especially the latter category of translations, namely those for the screen (i.e. film, TV, DVDs, videogames, hypertexts on the World Wide Web, etc.) which may well be among the most abundant translations carried out at present. It is sufficient, for example, to consider

the infinite number of terrestrial, cable and satellite channels available, as well as the vast number of DVDs being constantly produced to have an idea of the sheer quantity of translation which is taking place for televised products. In addition, owing to the dominance of US products in both movies and TV, translations tend to occupy a large segment of the small screen in communities in which English is not the official language. The majority of EU countries import most of the fictional products they broadcast from the USA and consequently, with the exception of the UK, these products require translation, yet little is known of the quality of these translations. Moreover, the translation of fictional products for the small screen simply represents the tip of a translational iceberg. Documentaries, reality shows, political debates, news and weather forecasts, interviews, large media events (e.g. events as disparate as the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005, the Olympic Games and the yearly Oscar ceremony in Los Angeles) and advertisements are all translated for the linguistically heterogeneous European TV market. This market is a truly large one both in terms of operators and financial turnover, yet there appears to be little or no quality control in this area, with the issue relegated simply to consumer (in this case, viewers') trust in the adequacy of each translation.

The debate on quality and translation is complex and extensive. Leaving aside intuitive, atheoretical positions largely based on the concept of equivalence and mainly put forward in discussions on literary translation, the area which, for the purposes of this essay, I shall loosely label 'Demonstrably-Service-Oriented' translation, is beginning to receive serious attention both within academia (e.g. Stecconi 2000, Sprung 2000) and commercial circles (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005). 'Demonstrably-Service-Oriented' translations (DSOT) are those which clearly provide some kind of public service. And, even if televised products serve functions as dissimilar as education, acculturation and entertainment, translating for the small screen must surely be considered a service for the general public, yet, so far this service has operated in the absence of any overtly recognized quality control.

Following a brief overview of approaches in quality assessment in TS and, more particularly, ST, I shall outline the issue of the pursuit of and difficulty in achieving ST quality standards in Europe, after which I shall discuss the hypothetical application of Total Quality Management and attribute-based approaches to customer satisfaction as tentative proposals for testing out quality. The complexity of the nature of screen products and the difficulty of singling out translation as a distinct attribute of these poly-semiotic entities will be highlighted. However, for reasons of convenience, particular emphasis will be placed on the case of Italy, a country which, like Austria, France, Germany and Spain belongs to the so called European 'Dubbing Block', as it has traditionally preferred dubbing as opposed to subtitling on screen, although there is no reason to believe that such a

model could not also apply to situations in nations affiliated to the so-called 'Subtitling Block.' What is at issue here is not the translational mode, but the quality of the translations, which can be either good, poor, adequate or, at any rate, whether dubbed or subtitled somewhere along such a cline. But how are qualitative notions such as 'good', 'poor' and 'adequate' to be defined? Qualitative adequacy calls attention to the importance of pragmatics and requires the target text to fulfil a similar communicative function as the source text (Nord 1991); however, I would like to suggest that good quality ST should aim at providing the viewer with more than this. Emulating the naturalness of everyday spoken Italian may not be the ultimate qualitative aim of an ST; after all, filmic language is not 'natural' in the first place as films themselves are artefacts and it thus follows that their language is equally simulated (see Bucaria, this volume). However, the language of ST could perhaps try to be like filmic Italian, French or German. In other words, one of the issues at stake is whether it might be feasible for the target text's communicative function to at least mirror the language of an autochthonous fictional product, documentary or soap rather than invent its own linguistic clichés. Conversely, for the purpose of this essay, poor quality refers to translations which "barely manage to survive the loss of nuances and the sense of unease given sometimes by asynchronous faulty dubbing and excessive simplifications and real howlers..." (Duranti 1998: 483).

Finally, I shall suggest the possibility of transferring European know-how in dubbing to films in languages other than English for the North American market. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons European films do not have a great impact on the US market is due to the fact that audiences are averse to subtitling. Dubbing these films might well help penetrate this market and boost an industry which is important to the EU both in economic and cultural terms.

2. Quality and translation

While the Merriam Webster dictionary defines quality in terms of "degree of excellence", according to the American Society for Quality, it is defined as

"a subjective term for which each person has his or her own definition. In technical usage, quality can have two meanings: 1. the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. 2. a product or service free of deficiencies."

In the light of this definition, but at the same time bearing in mind the concept of excellence, let us briefly consider how the literature in Translation Studies (TS) has broached the issue.

2.1 Approaches to quality assessment in Translation Studies

What is special about translations is the fact that by their very definition they will possess an original text which can be considered the matrix from which they have been spawned, thus, as it is universally thought to be desirable that translations resemble their matrices as closely as possible, much discussion in TS in the sixties and seventies was built around the issue of assessment of equivalence rather than specifically *quality* assessment in terms of satisfaction of needs of end users and/or absence of deficiencies (Nida 1964, Nida and Taber 1969). However, since the 1980s functionalist approaches have been very much anchored in the professional world, and we have thus witnessed the birth of text-based, functional approaches (Reiss 1989, Vermeer 1989, Nord 1997); pragmatic approaches (Baker 1992, House 1997) and system based approaches (Toury 1995, Chesterman 1997).

Even so, the professional world appears to be well aware of the gap between the reality of the actual process of translation and what is discussed in the academic TS discourse community, which often appears to move in an “almost separate domain” (Milton 2004: 169). Practitioners seek advice, and, business communication journals, concerned with a need for translational excellence, sporadically dedicate space to guidelines and advice to professionals and discussions on quality (e.g. Sherblom 1998, Zahn 1999). Yet, while such assistance may appear simplistic to Translation scholars, professional translators actually hunger for more professional guidance (Wagner 2004). In fact, few scholars have actually attempted to combine theoretical argument with the issue of quality in terms of its application in real life and/or ‘workplace’ situations. Exceptions are to be found in Nord (1991), Steconci (2000) and Adab (2002) as well as in surveys and discussions carried out by Hermans and Lambert (1998), Chiaro and Nocella (1999, 2000), Davico (2005) and Milton (2004).

On the other hand, since the early 1980s the issue of quality in Interpreting Studies (IS) has been a fervent ground of studies on quality, especially with regards to conference interpreting (e.g. Shlesinger 2000, Riccardi and Viezzi 2005). And of course conference interpreting is clearly an example of a DSOT: interpreters are providers of a service aimed at specific end users. Possibly owing to the fact that the profession, by its very nature, is free of the Ghost of Literary Translation coupled with the greater visibility of interpreters compared to translators, this discipline has tackled the issue of quality at great length. Such visibility is even stronger in the case of liaison and community interpreters whose services in the delicate areas of politics, jurisdiction, health and education require special care and attention, and here, too, the issue of quality is receiving ample scholarly attention (e.g. Mason 1999, Pöchhacker 2001).

2.2 Quality assessment in Screen Translation

As in mainstream TS, scholarly literature on the processes involved in the work of ST have generally been based on studies of a descriptive and prescriptive nature (e.g. Gambier 1998; Gambier and Gottlieb 2001). Furthermore the literature contains numerous case studies based on contrastive analyses of dubbed and subtitled texts in a variety of language combinations (e.g. Baccolini *et al.* 1994, Heiss *et al.* 1996, Bosinelli *et al.* 2000). But similarly to mainstream TS research, there has also been a tendency in ST research to examine quality in abstract terms rather than tackle the issue head on (Gambier 1999, Gottlieb 1997a, Gummerus and Paro 2001, Soukup and Hodgson 1999).

2.2.1 *Europe and the issue of quality standards in ST*

Most commercial and service sectors within the EU are now regulated by international quality standards such as ISO 9000 (International Organization for Standardization) certification. These standards consist of sets of norms which can be *voluntarily* adopted by European and national organisms. The norms suggested are all-purpose in nature and sufficiently flexible to be implemented by any organization or for any product or service wishing in some way to guarantee quality to end users. In order to receive such certification, the applicant agrees to abide by general indications and principles laid down by the organization. The point is, however, that these norms are in no way obligatory although they do contain a set of principles which include benchmarking systems of quality management in relation to customer requirements and satisfaction. In other words, a significant element of trust is involved both on the part of applicants who agree to abide by recommended ISO standards and consumers who are confident in companies that have chosen to take part in such a system.

However, the fact that somehow ST has managed to avoid certification and thus escape any kind of quality control could well be due to the invisibility of the service itself. Take the case of dubbing; it would not be unfair to say that it is a service which is consumed pretty much automatically and in a sense goes by unnoticed. Subtitles, too, are consumed without audiences being unduly aware or disturbed by them. In fact, it is not untrue to say that audiences get used to what they see and hear and by and large accept them simply because “viewers are creatures of habit” (Ivarsson 1992 :66).

According to Paolinelli and Di Fortunato (2005: 106) operators in the Italian dubbing sector have been unsuccessful in soliciting quality control management from the national institute UNITER and hopefully await a European directive. Until then, they claim that the issue of quality is in the hands of individual companies. In fact, in 2002, Mario Paolinelli, vice-chairman of AIDAC – *Associazione*

Italiana Dialoghisti ed Adattatori Cine-televisivi (Italy's association of dubbing translators), called for the creation of an "International Agency for Dubbing" as an appropriate way of establishing rules for international quality standards. Despite the emphasis on dubbing, in all fairness Paolinelli was attempting to promote pan-European quality standards for subtitling too as he sought support in the form of the allocation of funds and agreements in the production and post-production stages of ST as well as for the organization of training courses for professionals in the fields of dubbing and subtitling.

Today, across Europe, audiences expect to see films and TV series premiered at the same time as in the USA. In the past, this would have been impossible as before the era of digitalization, operators worked with reels of celluloid and subsequently with cassettes in which translating and adapting occurred in short chunks or so-called "loops." These loops were actually physical coils of celluloid that were part of a reel which was constantly rewound and replayed as the dubbing process was negotiated and fine tuned between script/film and operators. With the advent of DVD the need to rewind vanished as technology reduced this time-consuming process to the split-second push of a button. Yet the necessary time for human reflection has not changed even if the world of business does not, or rather will not, see this time 'gap' but only perceives the hard fact that, over and above traditional terrestrial channels, there are now countless thematic cable and satellite channels broadcasting 24 hours a day and innumerable DVDs which are released shortly after film debuts in theatres requiring an incalculable quantity of translations in record time. But industry seems only to understand that no translation means no audience, which is tantamount to no profits. And there is the rub. Thus a film which once required three weeks to dub from start to finish, now calls for the same task to be completed in three to five days, something technically feasible but at the cost of quality. And there are indeed dubbing companies perfectly willing to abide by new market rules and commissioners who are happy to send the product to anyone ready to agree to a low fee and a quick and dirty translation. But what about customers? Are they getting a fair deal?

During both 2003 and 2004, French and Italian operators in the relative dubbing industries went on strike. Heavy workloads, poor wages and stressful working conditions had forced these operators to take issue with their employers and call attention to the fact that they did not even have a national contract. However, their strike appears to have been to no avail. Despite underscoring the fact that better working conditions would be beneficial to consumers as well as to operators, industrial action did not manage to have the desired effect.

The point is, that at the heart of the entire quality issue lies a somewhat perverse mechanism of non-competitiveness. Unlike any other goods or service, we are dealing with a service which offers no choice. Viewers are exposed to one

translation alone as a filmic product is likely to be translated only once and furthermore, by a single company. Commissioners do not ask various companies to translate a product after which they choose the best. Of course the product may be re-dubbed or re-subtitled at a future date, as happens especially with great movie classics, but more than one dubbed or subtitled version of a product at the time of its release is quite unusual. Indeed consumers can sometimes choose the translational mode in which to watch the product (the choice between dubbing and subtitles is available in Switzerland and SKY packages across the EU), but beyond that they are generally forced to accept what they are given in a 'take it or leave it' situation. Thus, we are faced with a sort of monopolistic market in which many products are tendered for translation in a way which is less than transparent. In such a no-choice situation, there appears to be little that consumers can do.

The figures and processes involved in the Italian "dubbing cycle" are emblematic of what can happen in the absence of quality control. In this system there are traditionally four basic steps involved in the process from start to finish (Fig.1). Firstly a script is translated *mot à mot*; secondly this rough translation is adapted both to sound like natural Italian dialogue and to fit into visual features on screen such as lip movement, facial expressions and so on. Thirdly, the dialogues may be adapted once more when the actors begin recording as they will often have the freedom to manipulate utterances as they think fit according to artistic or other criteria. Fourthly, a dubbing director, a sort of project manager who supervises the whole process, may intervene in the dialogues wherever he or she wishes. Now, there are several problems with this system. As is often the case, a single person often carries out more than one of the four steps in the process. In other words, the same person may double up as both dubbing director and dubbing translator (the person involved in step 2), or else one single person may both translate the script and adapt the dialogues to the visuals, or again an actor may also be the dubbing director, etc. Furthermore it is not unknown for one figure to cover more roles within the process. Such polyvalent figures may be all very well, and certainly a money-saving option, but will they have the psychological distance to be able to judge the quality of their own work? Surely quality is ensured when others oversee the various stages of a process?

Another serious fault in the system lies in the first stage, the word-for-word translation of the script. This is the most poorly paid step in the process and also the most undervalued. Translators are often hired with little regard to their qualifications or experience, moreover it is not unknown for scripts to arrive without the corresponding video and for dubbing translators to be unfamiliar with source languages (Benincà 1999, Bucaria and Chiaro 2007). Of course, a simple solution would naturally be for the translator and dubbing translator to work together – a mandatory practice when the director and/or producer care about translation (e.g.

Woody Allen, the late Stanley Kubrik and *Buena Vista* productions in general). Yet possibly the most serious fault in the system is the fact that it is clearly self-referential. The entire dubbing cycle is very much in the hands of a small closed shop of figures who keep work very much to themselves (Benincà 1999). How can so few people possibly maintain quality over large quantities of translation? Surely greater competition can only be seen as healthy in such a situation? On the other hand, it could be argued that competition might also lead to lesser quality, because clients tend to opt for cheaper solutions and not necessarily for high-quality solutions.

And are we certain that the situation in the subtitling sector is any better? With up-to-date subtitling software packages that can easily be managed by a single operator and with the vast quantity of subtitling being carried out at breakneck speed, we cannot be certain that serious quality control is occurring in this sector either.

In such an uncontrolled marketplace how can quality be assured? And can we be certain that the situation in other European communities is any different?

3. Potential solutions

In this section I will present three well established approaches to quality management widely adopted in numerous services. Firstly I shall discuss Total Quality Management (TQM), an approach which is perfectly in line with ISO 9000 philosophy; secondly I will examine attribute-based approaches, already used to measure customer satisfaction in media studies; and finally I will put forward the Kano Model as an instrument to determine quality in ST. As we will see, all three suggestions complement each other and can be used either independently or else in combination, with no need to exclude any one approach.

3.1 Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) was first developed in the USA in the 1940s by scholars such as W.E. Deming and J. Juran who applied their principles in the post-war reconstruction of Japan. It was not until the 1970s in the USA and the 80's in the UK, when economic well being was becoming widespread and consumer demands were evening out, that industry began considering customer needs beyond the bare necessities and turned to quality management for help. Today, so-called "quality gurus" are a small number of American and Japanese experts who have developed philosophies and a series of principles which have been widely adopted in industries and services with a view to obtaining excellence (Munro-Faure 1992).

But what exactly is TQM? In the past the quality of products was governed by a series of random checks during the production stage, nowadays quality control has generally changed into a market-oriented procedure with the needs and requirements of the consumer in pole position. In other words, whether we are talking about goods or a service, TQM implies that quality is monitored throughout an organization at every stage of production so that problems are stopped before they can develop any further. With most problems being identified before they reach the end-user, should faulty goods/service however reach the consumer, it will be managed with the minimum of upheaval. Furthermore, the opinions of end-users are constantly sounded out and taken into serious consideration by the organization. Thus TQM can be seen as a comprehensive and well thought-out approach to organizational management which seeks to improve the quality of products and services through ongoing refinements in response to continuous feedback. Although TQM originated in the manufacturing sector, it has since been adapted for use in almost every type of organization imaginable, including schools and universities, hospitals, hotel management, and churches (Munro-Faure *op.cit.*).

In the Italian “dubbing cycle” (2.2.1) an application of TQM would require monitoring the entire process whereby product and service quality are maintained. In other words, from start to finish, both physical and human resources would be managed so as to enable standards to be met and maintained, a philosophy which is entirely in line with ISO 9000 (2.2.1). Furthermore, TQM entails ongoing measurement and analysis of customer evaluations implemented in view of ever improving quality. In such a framework, gone would be the haphazard hiring of translators, as would be single operators working without supervision, and there would be continuous feedback from consumers themselves, as is standard practice in most services today. However, in TQM no single figure operating within the entire service is to be undervalued; rather it is the figure of the customer who is to be included within the totality of the process where previously he or she had been ignored. But it is this last factor, feedback from consumers, which creates a significant problem in carrying out market research in this area.

3.2 Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction (CS) can be defined in terms of a customer’s post-purchase evaluation of a product or service. In a Europe which apparently favours commercial TV channels over the state owned, undoubtedly TV consumers are at the same time potential consumers of what is advertised between one product they choose to watch and the next. Thus, it is in the interest of single commercial channels to keep their audiences, as large audiences mean greater takings from advertising campaigns and a customer is likely to be satisfied when a service performs better

than expected and dissatisfied when expectations exceed performance. This line of thinking is representative of the 'Expectation-Disconfirmation Model' (Jacobs 1999) which states that an individual's expectations are either

- a. CONFIRMED if a product or service performs as expected;
- b. NEGATIVELY DISCONFIRMED if a product or service performs more poorly than expected
- c. POSITIVELY DISCONFIRMED if a product or service performs better than expected.

Negative disconfirmation results in dissatisfaction and consumption is likely to be discontinued. Confirmation or positive disconfirmation results in satisfaction and the continued use of the product or service. However, as we saw previously, ST constitutes a *Catch 22* situation with no choice available, and even if they are unsatisfied by a translation, viewers are unlikely to stop watching programmes altogether, so their bargaining power is weak. And this might well be one good reason why the impact of translation has never been considered a relevant issue in consumer research. However, TV is not only about ratings and advertising profits. End users should not be enduring mere adequacy but have the right to expect top quality translations on TV just as they would expect tip top services in any other walk of life. Besides, who is to say that a programme translated extremely well would not attract a larger audience share and kill two birds with one stone by pleasing viewers more and at the same time TV managers too, as the latter would automatically gain greater bargaining power and consequently more income from advertisers through larger audiences during commercial breaks.

But how can CS be measured in relation to translation? Given that when viewers go to the movies or sit down in front of the TV, they expect to enjoy what they are about to see, it is obvious that good quality performance is tantamount to customer satisfaction. However, in satisfaction research, when consumers are interviewed, overall performance routinely emerges as the only or the most important feature of satisfaction. This means that we need to understand exactly what constitutes "performance." Performance is made up of a series of numerous credence attributes. Credence attributes are features of a product or service which consumers expect to find. In film products these attributes include actors, dialogues, musical score, costumes, make-up, special effects, scenery, photography, computer graphics, sound effects, editing etc. Furthermore, they also comprise an invisible element: director, producer, scriptwriter, camera operator and often a book or play from which the product has been adapted. Let us not forget costs: price is also an attribute not to be underestimated. And last, but certainly not least, I would like to suggest that language – or rather *translation* – is both a key attribute which together with many others, make up the performance of a filmic product in its entirety.

Obviously, when viewers consume a product in a foreign language with which they are not familiar they expect a translation, so, the first thing we need to know is how importantly consumers rate the attribute of translation *tout court*. Given that the more important a performance attribute is, the greater is its impact on overall satisfaction, and as we want to investigate the impact of translation alone, I would like to suggest that first we find out how highly translation is rated in terms of importance *within the totality of a whole product*. In other words, when consumers watch an imported blockbuster such as *Desperate Housewives* how would they rate the series' various attributes? At which point, along a hypothetical cline of satisfaction, would the dialogues – *in translation* – be ranked against the plot, the actors, the clothes and look of the actors, the musical score etc.?

Having established the general importance of translation against all the other attributes which make up performance, we next need to pick out a series of attributes in the translation itself.

What are these attributes that can make or break an ST? I would like to suggest the four categories of obstacles which can lead to what Antonini and Chiaro have labelled “lingua-cultural drops in translational voltage” (2005: 39) as those translation attributes which may constitute “cases of perceived lingua cultural ‘uneasiness’ and ‘turbulence.’” These instances include:

1. Culture-specific references (e.g. place names, references to sports and festivities, famous people, monetary systems, institutions, etc.);
2. Lingua-specific turbulence (translating terms of address, taboo language, written language, etc.);
3. Areas of overlap between language and culture (songs, rhymes, jokes, etc.);
4. Visuals (culture specific examples void of language) (2005: 39).

For example, good quality entails transferring the meaning of highly specific cultural references adequately; finding a solution to retaining the connotations contained in accent and/or linguistic variety; dealing with notoriously thorny problems like songs and jokes; whether the target language resembles the filmic speech in the target language. Furthermore, a fifth area of turbulence can be identified in the management of lip synch in dubbing and of timeliness and line breaks in subtitling. And indeed, perhaps viewers are so used to *dubbese* or *subtittlese*¹ that they

1. The term *dubbese* is my personal translation of the Italian term *doppiaggese*. Operators in Italy use this term disparagingly to denote the qualitatively poor translation of an utterance on screen in terms of either equivalence, functionality or both. Italian scholars, especially Chiaro and Pavesi, having recognized dubbed Italian as a sort of “Italian for Special Purposes”, have since adopted the term to denote the language of dubbing and use it without any value judgement. I have inserted the nonce term *subtittlese* as a parallel to *dubbese* to denote the special use of language for subtitles.

are not aware that what they are hearing/reading could be improved. But can we be certain that this is a good excuse for not working towards excellence?

The Kano Model of Customer Satisfaction (Jacobs 1999) provides useful guidance for gathering data from viewers and subsequently elaborating them in a way which will offer a clear picture of end-users' evaluations.

3.3 The Kano Model

The Kano Model, devised by Japanese quality engineer and satisfaction expert Noriaki Kano, has been widely applied to the automotive industry and seems to have the characteristics which render its application in ST plausible. The Kano Model classifies product attributes and their importance based on how they are perceived by customers and their effect on CS. In fact his model can be seen as a tool for capturing the voice of the customer as it aims to measure the level of satisfaction against consumer perceptions of attribute performance. Kano argues that attributes can be classified into 3 categories:

1. THRESHOLD ATTRIBUTES these are essential or "must" attributes which do little to enhance the product;
2. PERFORMANCE ATTRIBUTES these are enhancing or "need" attributes;
3. EXCITEMENT ATTRIBUTES these are unexpected or "nice to have" attributes.

An example of a threshold attribute in a subtitled screen translation would involve the timely synchronization of utterances on screen; a performance attribute could be the insertion of extra explicitation, and an excitement attribute could be an unusual font and backdrop which might be easier on the eye than traditional ones. For a dubbed product, threshold attributes clearly involve good lip synchronization with the audio, performance attributes could be naturalness and clarity of expression while excitement attributes can be exemplified through a good choice of actor-voice correspondence. However this last attribute is a kind of additional one which does not lead to customer dissatisfaction, but enhances and adds to satisfaction.

3.3.1 *Applying the Model*

As we have seen, having established the degree of satisfaction with the service in general, in other words, where exact translation is ranked against other attributes, the investigation can then delve into more specific aspects and try to evaluate customer attitudes to individual attributes of these translations (3.2). As is customary in market research, Kano adopts a questionnaire to be administered to consumers. However, Kano's instrument differs in that it aims at understanding how customers

would feel if a certain attribute is either present or not present in the goods or service. This is achieved by asking two questions for each feature – a functional question (i.e. “How would you feel if attribute x was present?”) and a dysfunctional question (i.e. “How would you feel if attribute x was not present?”). For example, let us consider a typical attribute of an ST, namely the way in which highly specific cultural references are translated. Conventionally considered to be a thorny problem (see Antonini this volume) they may well cause certain uneasiness amongst recipients if their translation is less than adequate. To give a more concrete example, in a subtitled version of BBC’s *Delia Smith’s Christmas*, the term “cranberries” was never once translated into Italian but simply left in English (*Gambero Rosso* [sky Italia] December 2005). A Kano questionnaire would include a question asking how viewers feel about this. Respondents would choose from a scale which would include “I like it that way”; “It must be that way”; “I am neutral”; “I can live with it” and “I dislike it.” Once sufficient responses have been obtained from a robust sample of random consumers, average responses are calculated and subsequently mapped onto the graph to provide a visual guide to the importance of inclusion/exclusion of such features from a user perspective. In Kano’s Model (Figure 2) the perpendicular axis corresponds to customer satisfaction and the horizontal axis cutting across it stands for the achievement of quality. The diagonal line which crosses the figure stands for performance, however, it is the two arched arrows which are of most interest: Arrow 1 (Threshold, basic “must haves”) and Arrow 2 “Delighters and Exciters”. As long as the tip of Arrow 1 is positioned towards the top part of the bottom left quadrant, basic quality standards have been met. Similarly, if the tip of Arrow 2 is in line with the tip of the satisfaction axis, it means that customers are delighted with the service or good in question. Thus, the top, right hand quadrant of the figure represents fully implemented performance, high quality and satisfied customers while the bottom left hand quadrant represents the non-achievement of performance, the absence of quality, and dissatisfied customers. The bottom right quadrant represents customers who remain indifferent.

In the “cranberries” example, the exclusion of the “translation of highly cultural specific words” attribute might automatically distance Arrow 2 from the diagonal Performance Arrow. But of course we cannot be certain of this prior to testing; perhaps it is sufficient for viewers to understand what cranberries are simply by seeing them, although this seems highly unlikely as it is somewhat difficult to distinguish them from other varieties of red coloured berries simply by their appearance. However, the next step in the process would be to gather responses to similar questions on other attributes of the translation such as lip synchronization, naturalness of expressions (see Bucaria this volume); voice quality; “the homogenizing convention” commonly adopted for translating accents (Sternberg 1981)

and so on (see 3.2). The scores of self-stated importance ratings on the various attributes related to the translation of single products are added together, after which the data are elaborated and charted on Kano's Model. If scores are high on threshold basics, this would clearly mean that viewers are satisfied with the translation while low scores would imply dissatisfaction. If a product also scores high on exciter attributes this would imply excellence (e.g. the choice of an actor with a particularly melodic voice to dub Ross – played by actor George Clooney – in the series *ER* may well have been a plus factor in its success in Italy, but it is unlikely that it was a make or break factor). However, more significantly, operators need to be aware of viewers' attitudes towards the midway performance attributes. Do they feel they are getting a square deal on the absence of geo-socio connotation? Are they happy with the reduction of taboo words? And how do they feel about features such as dubbese and condensation in subtitling? Now, of course, TL viewers may not know that such operations have been applied, yet significantly, experimental research by Antonini and Chiaro (2005) and Bucaria and Chiaro (2007) shows that certain viewers are indeed aware of the artificiality of ST and accept it, albeit reluctantly, as part of the suspension of disbelief that is necessary when experiencing any screen product.

4. Conclusions

This essay has attempted to provide an overview of the difficulties facing the application of quality standards in an atypical market. TQM has been proposed as a way of making order in a cluttered situation, while attribute-based approaches such as Kano's have been put forward as frameworks from which to obtain data from consumers which can lead to a more precise idea of both strong and weak points of the service. What is innovative about the application of such approaches is that any areas of weakness would be identified by *consumers* rather than researchers, as has been the case in ST so far.

Obviously, data emerging from Kano surveys, for example, can only be entrusted to operators in the hope that they will bear them in mind and strive towards excellence in their work. It would be utopian to imagine this market to suddenly become competitive and offer viewers a range of translational choices as such action would not be economically viable. On the other hand, certifying operators by requiring them to obtain formal qualification through university training courses and work experience in dubbing/subtitling firms, seems to be both a reasonable and a modest proposal. Conceivably, firms willing to adhere to ISO 9000 suggestions and hence obtain certification could be labelled in some way so that consumers would know that they were exposed to translations which had

been prepared by qualified operators and with the utmost care. Vice versa commissioners would hopefully begin adopting branded translations and consequently slowly push improvised companies out of the marketplace. This could ultimately lead to the formation of 'families' of top quality brands with both commissioners and consumers being more aware of what they are paying for. These suggestions need not be considered unfeasible, but simply sensible solutions to a disorderly state of affairs.

Furthermore, I would like to suggest that European filmic products could benefit by being dubbed *well* into English so as to attract larger markets outside restricted North American art house cinemas which at present broadcast very few, mainly artistic products, exclusively subtitled (rather than dubbed) and therefore to somewhat elitist audiences. Let us not forget that European cinema and TV are totally different from those in the USA since in the former, distribution is restricted to Europe alone, while significantly, vice-versa nearly all US imports whether dubbed or subtitled get aired in mainstream cinemas as well as on TV across the whole continent. The European industry is totally lacking in the kind of promotion and advertising adopted across the Atlantic, as distributors are unwilling to invest a great amount of money in having products dubbed, knowing that the dubbing costs may not be even recovered by the film takings. Thus the issue of quality is not merely restricted to European viewers. Indeed, they may be getting a slightly raw deal from their exposure to ST (mainly translated from English) but more seriously perhaps, the production of good quality dubbing *into* English from the many languages of the Old World could indeed give a much needed cultural and financial boost to a significant European economic sector in the USA.

To sum up, the ST sector is clearly in need of serious reorganization. As we have seen, there is plenty of work on the market but at present it appears to be in the hands of relatively few companies. If the sector were willing to open its doors to more companies this could mean more competition which, in a system regulated by TQM, could well stimulate excellence via benchmarking. More competition in turn might well lead to more employment opportunities for young people wishing to enter the field. And if the sector seriously considered voluntarily taking part in quality schemes such as those of ISO, then employment would by default depend on criteria laid down by agreed norms and regulations. Hopefully, screen translators would then require qualifications from institutions specialized in training translators and interpreters, and haphazard hiring would diminish. And this would surely be a significant step in the right direction.

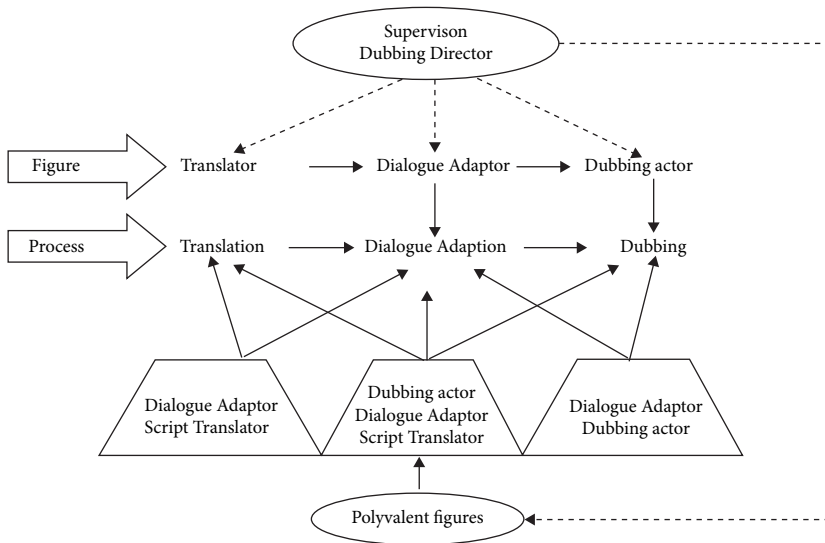


Figure 1. The dubbing cycle

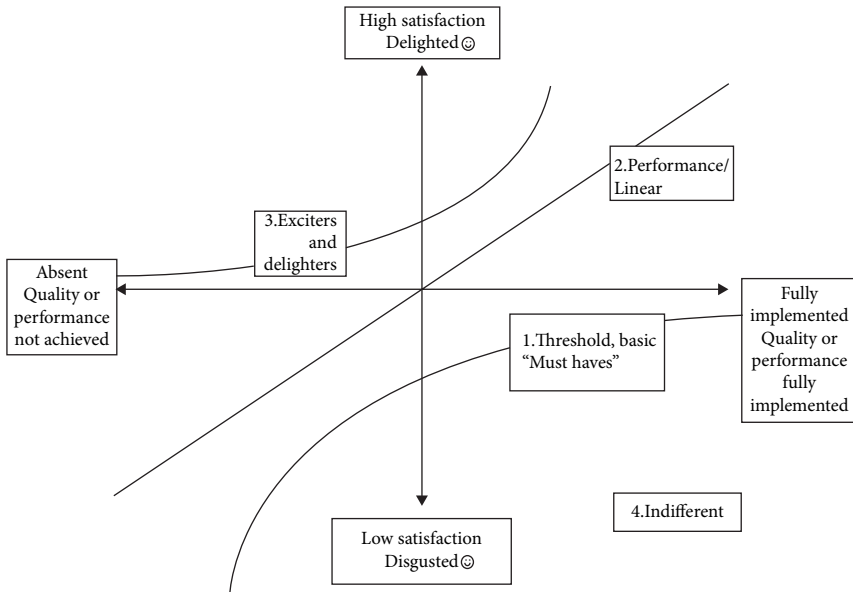


Figure 2. Kano model

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