

# AVT in Italy: Successes and Failures

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**Abstract**—Today audiovisual translation (AVT) occupies an important place in our lives. In a country like Italy, where all foreign films are dubbed, an analysis of how AVT does justice to original films has become compelling. Audiovisual translations can in fact be very challenging, as AVT professionals act not only as language translators, but also as cultural mediators. In this paper, the pitfalls of AVT will be brought to the fore, together with successful instances. Translation patterns will hence be highlighted, together with some possible reasons for adaptations, modifications and unfaithful renderings. Conclusions will be drawn, on the basis of the gathered evidence. In particular, what will emerge is that most of the times the greatest impediments to a faithful rendering may lie in cramped budgets, time constraints, cultural adaptations, adherence to fixed translation norms and technicalities. A final call for change in AVT will be urged, mainly focussing on the importance of raising the audience's awareness and on not reducing AVT to a mere “business as usual” matter.

**Index Terms**—AVT, audiovisual translation, dubbing, Italian dubbing, Anglo-American films

## I. INTRODUCTION

Film translation is also defined as screen, multimedia, or audiovisual translation (AVT). Dubbing, in the strict sense, is the act of applying re-voicing techniques to cover the original utterances and match the lip movement. In other words, the spoken source is entirely covered by a target-language voice and the words are adjusted to match the lip movement of the original utterances (Dries, 1995). In this way, thanks to dubbing, an original film enters a different socio-cultural context. This is what occurred at the dawn of the film industry in Italy. In the 1930s dubbed films helped the Italian population, still almost illiterate and far from speaking a national language, approach and understand Italian after the unification (Di Fortunato & Paolinelli, 2010). Although this might seem rather easy to accomplish, translating films is in fact a painstaking activity, conditioned by the functional needs of the receiving culture (Delabastita, 1990).

In light of the above, this paper will explore how the Italian translators have tackled the constraints arising from the technical aspects of film dubbing and from the hallmarks of the target language and culture. Language is known to be conflated with culture (Friedrich, 1989). Therefore, adaptations to the target culture are very likely to occur. In addition, translators generally resort to fixed translation patterns, not only because of lip movements, but also in order to comply with translation norms (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000). In fact, language alterations, either wanted or unwanted, flattening and enhancing may occur in order to conform to translation routines (Pavesi, 2005). Such adaptations may also take place in multilingual films (De Bonis, 2015), which are films where multilingualism is opted for as a way to represent naturalistic situations.

It is bearing in mind this wide array of possible manipulations, that this paper will try to explore whether films dubbed into Italian are faithful to the original films or not. According to the literature, faithfulness in audiovisual translation revolves around the capability of keeping or modifying the words uttered in the original film (Marchelli, 2000, p. 56). In particular, Gubern (2001, p.83-89) highlights that unfaithfulness is mainly due to four factors: censorship, self-censorship, incompetence of the audiovisual translator and adaptation. In case unfaithful renderings are found in the course of this analysis, I will try to shed light on some possible reasons. To this aim, Anglo-American and multilingual films will be analysed in order to explore the quality of the Italian AVT.

## II. ANALYSIS

As stated above, the intent of this paper is to shed light on the linguistic choices made in the Italian audiovisual translations of Anglo-American and multilingual films. In order to do so, the following aspects will be analysed: the ways in which the co-existence of another language (in this case: Italian) is tackled in film dubbing; the ways in which vernacular English is provided for (if it is); the ways in which humour is addressed; and also some other relevant patterns in the Italian AVT which may come to the fore. Several films will thus be considered and analysed, ranging from old films, to the most recent ones. In this way, a full perspective of the Italian approach to AVT will be dealt with.

### A. *Multilingual Films*

As outlined above, multilingualism represents how, in real life, two characters coming from two different countries would probably interact with each other by using their native languages. If one analyses the ways in which the co-existence of another language (in this case: Italian) is tackled in Anglo-American films, s/he would notice a standard stylistic pattern. In particular, in a number of instances, the audiovisual translators resort to regionalism, such as Sicilian

most of the times. These are the cases of films such as “The Goonies” (1985), “Inglorious Basterds” (2009) and it is also the case of an episode in “Family Guy” (“McStroke”, season 6, episode 8, 2008). In all these instances, the characters who speak Italian in the original film, speak Sicilian (or a Sicilian-like language) in the dubbed version. A Sicilian variety of Italian is spoken by the Fratellis, a family of criminals, in “The Goonies” (1985) and by Lieutenant Aldo with his comrades, in “Inglorious Basterds” (2009). Very interesting is also the case of an episode in “Family Guy”, where Peter, the head of the Griffin family, enters a butcher's pretending to speak Italian. Whereas he only utters an Italian-like singsong, this is changed into straightforward Sicilian in the dubbed version. Quite inexplicably, where original films resort to Sicilian in order to show the origins of some characters, in the dubbed versions the characters speak a sort of lessened Sicilian dialect, characterized by a fading accent and Italianized expressions. In “The Godfather I” (1972) and “The Godfather II” (1974), Sicilian is in fact replaced only by accented Sicilian words. Ironically, the parts where characters speak Sicilian are dubbed into Italian to obtain a more understandable, Sicilian-like Italian. This is what Di Fortunato and Paolinelli (2010, p.126) refer to as flattening due to language banalization for the business purposes of the film industry.

In some other films, Italian is replaced by Spanish, such as in “A Fish Called Wanda” (1988), where Otto, a Latin lover, seduces Wanda by uttering Spanish words. Some other times, Italian is replaced by French, such as in “Live and Let Die” (1973), where James Bond plays his usual part of an acculturated and refined man, by speaking French to his lover.

So far, dubbing has resembled to flattening and homogenization, at the expense of preserving the language peculiarities of the original characters. In the next section, other interesting instances will be brought to the fore, in order to explore whether the same has occurred in other contexts.

*B. Vernacular English*

Before pinning down the various translation choices of vernacular English, it is necessary to give a definition of vernacular English itself. As claimed by Wardhaugh, there are different “linguistic situations” concerning “certain social class differences in the use of language in England” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.336). In particular:

It is widely believed that you can be advantaged or disadvantaged not just socially or esthetically [*sic*], but also cognitively, i.e., intellectually, by the accident of which language or variety of a language you happen to speak. (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.336)

From this perspective, vernacular English can be defined as a language variety, which is spoken by a particular group of people living in a given area and in certain social conditions. Such a language and social peculiarity can be traced back to “My Fair Lady” (1964), where Eliza speaks a particular variety of English (i.e., Cockney), which is aimed to depict her as a poor, but honest flower girl. In Italian, great efforts are made to convey the same message of simplicity and excellent results are found in fiction prose. In practice, Eliza speaks a mixture of Neapolitan, Apulian (both dialects from southern Italy) and Ciociarian (a dialect spoken in an area which includes the provinces of Rome, Latina and northern Frosinone, all in the Lazio region, in the centre of Italy). Table 1 reports an excerpt:

TABLE 1  
Context: Eliza, a flower girl, is trying to sell flowers on the street.

English	Italian dubbing
Eliza: Cheer up cap'n; baw ya flahr orf a pore gel (=Cheer up captain; buy a flower off a poor girl)	Eliza: A commendato', compre du' fiore a 'na povera raghezz  Translation [O commander, buy two flowers off a poor girl]

An additional linguistic challenge of this film is the famous phrase “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain”, which Professor Higgins teaches Eliza in order to improve her pronunciation of some critical diphthongs. In Italian, this challenge is overcome by resorting to a critical vowel for Apulian speakers, which is the *a sound* (pronounced almost as *eə*). The result is the outstanding “La rana in Spagna gracida in campagna” (Table 2)

TABLE 2  
Context: Eliza is trying hard to learn to speak as a lady and to lose her Cockney accent (critical vowels are underlined)

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain	La rana in Spagna gracida in campagna  Translation: [The frog in Spain croaks in the countryside]
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Another challenge of this film comes to the fore when Professor Higgins teaches Eliza how to pronounce the *h* sound in some words, such as those in the following phrase: “in Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire hurricanes hardly ever happen”. In the Italian language there is no aspirated *h*; therefore, it would make no sense for her to learn how to pronounce such words. However, the challenge is brilliantly overcome by resorting to learning the pronunciation of some English words with an aspirated *h*, in order to take a breath and strengthen Eliza's diaphragm (Table 3):

TABLE 3

Context: Professor Higgins is teaching Eliza how to pronounce words starting with *h* and he is showing a phonetics device with a flame:

<p>Now, you see that flame. Every time you pronounce the letter H correctly the flame will waver, and every time you drop your H the flame will remain stationary. That's how you'll know if you've done it correctly.</p>	<p>Vedi questa fiamma? Io pronuncerò alcune parole inglesi con l'H aspirata e la fiamma, oscillerà. Se invece non farò l'aspirazione, la fiamma resterà immobile. Cos'isi impara a prendere fiato e ad esercitare il diaframma.</p> <p>Translation: [Do you see this flame? I will pronounce some English words with an aspirated H and the flame will waver. If I do not aspirate, the flame will remain stationary. So you'll learn to take a breath and strengthen your diaphragm.]</p>
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Other not so fortunate instances can be found in "From Hell" (2001), where Cockney-speaking prostitutes are dubbed in perfect Italian. The same flattening can be found in "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" (2001) (Table 4):

TABLE 4

Context: The school of magic is over and Harry Potter, a young wizard, is saying goodbye to Hagrid, the game keeper he grew attached to. This scene occurs at the end of the film, at the train station (elliptical language is underlined>):

<p>Hagrid: Thought you were leaving without saying goodbye, did you?... (...) Harry: But Hagrid, we're not allowed to do magic away from Hogwarts, you know that Hagrid: I do but your cousin don't, do he?</p>	<p>Hagrid: Pensavi di andartene senza salutare, eh? (...) Harry: Ma Hagrid, non ci è permesso di fare magie lontano da Hogwarts, lo sai bene Hagrid: io s'ì ma tuo cugino no, giusto?</p> <p>Translation: [Hagrid: You thought you were leaving without saying goodbye, uh? (...) Harry: But Hagrid, we're not allowed to do magic away from Hogwarts, you know that Hagrid: I do, but your cousin doesn't, right?]</p>
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In the excerpt above, it is self-evident that elliptical language is neglected. This is an issue which has long been noted in Italy, as in Italian there is no national slang (Calvino, 1965, translated by Federici, 2009):

The more one goes into spoken language, into the popular, especially for those languages which have a dimension of slang, the more Italian stays behind, because at a popular level it goes immediately into regionalism and dialect. (Federici, 2009, p.247)

Other instances which do not do justice to the intent of the original film, can be found in "Gone with the Wind" (1939). "Gone with the Wind" is a film which was dubbed twice for socio-cultural reasons: the first time in 1949 and the second time in 1977. In particular, in the following excerpt Belle, a prostitute, speaks ungrammatical English, whereas in both dubbed versions she speaks a flawless Italian (Table 5):

TABLE 5  
Context: Belle, a prostitute is looking for Melanie, a good-hearted woman, to donate some money for the hospital:

Original	1949 dubbing	1977 dubbing
<p>Belle: My name's Belle Watling, but that <u>don't</u> matter. I expect you think I've got no business here</p> <p>Melanie: Hadn't you best tell me what you want to see me about?</p> <p>Belle: First time I come here I <u>says</u> "Belle you're a nurse", but the ladies didn't want my kind of nursing. Well they <u>was</u> more than likely right, then I tried giving them money, but my money wasn't good enough for them either. pff.. old peahens! I know a gentleman who says you're a human being if you are, which they <u>ain't</u>, you'll take my money for the hospital.</p>	<p>Belle: Sono Bella Watling, ma questo non conta. Pensate forse che questo non sia posto per me!</p> <p>Melanie: Non fareste meglio a dirmi che cosa volete?</p> <p>Belle: La prima volta che venni qui dissi "curerò i feriti", ma le signore non m'hanno voluto, bhe forse non avevano torto. Poi ho offerto il mio denaro, ma da me neanche quello han voluto vecchie streghe. Un amico mi ha detto che voi avete buon cuore, se è vero quello che mi ha detto, prendete i miei soldi per l'ospedale</p> <p>Translation: [Belle: I'm Bella Watling, but this does not count. You're maybe thinking that this is no place for me! Melanie: Wouldn't you rather tell me what you want? Belle: The first time I came here, I said "I will cure the injured", but the ladies didn't want me. Well, maybe they weren't wrong. Then I offered my money, but they didn't even want it. Old witches! A friend told me you are good-hearted. If it's true that he said, take my money for the hospital.]</p>	<p>Belle: Mi chiamo Bella Watling, ma importa poco. Immagino che lei pensi che non dovrei essere qui.</p> <p>Melanie: Non potrebbe dirmi per cosa voleva vedermi?</p> <p>Belle: La prima volta che sono venuta ho detto "Bella sei un'infermiera!" però le signore non me l'hanno permesso certo avevano più che ragione. Allora ho offerto un po' di soldi, ma i miei soldi non li hanno voluti accettare che arpie! Io conosco un signore che m'ha detto che lei è un essere umano. Se lei lo è quelli non lo sono, accetter il mio regalo per l'ospedale!</p> <p>Translation: [Belle: My name's Bella Watling, but it's little important. I guess you think I shouldn't be here. Melanie: Couldn't you tell me what you wanted to say? Belle: The first time I came, I said "Bella, you're a nurse", but the ladies did not allow me. Sure, they were more than right. Then I offered some of my money, but they didn't want to accept my money. What harpies! I know a gentleman, who told me that you are a human being. If you are, which they aren't, you'll take my money for the hospital.]</p>

This is a case of language manipulation. Belle's broken English has the intent to accentuate her character and social background. By using a levelling strategy, instead, such an intent is lost (Zanotti, 2012, p.75).

The film "Gone with the Wind" also encompasses other language peculiarities which revolve around African American vernacular English. Wardhaugh (2006) describes African American vernacular English (formerly "black English" or "Afro-American vernacular English") as a variety of English with patterns which "have tended to separate the population of the United States along color lines" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.342). This is particularly relevant in a film such as "Gone with the Wind", which, as stated above, was dubbed twice in Italian for reasons of political correctness. In the first dubbing all African American characters speak with a contrived African accent, as all verbs are uttered in the infinitive forms, *t* sounds like *d*, and *s* like *z*. This was the pattern chosen in 1949 to convey the speech peculiarities of the people. It was obviously fictional, but it was a way to preserve their identity (Martini, 2014, p.28). However, this was considered politically incorrect and rejected in the second dubbing. Therefore, their linguistic peculiarities and their fictional accent are lost in the second dubbing. As a result, the black characters also lose their identity and are deprived of their social context. As claimed in the literature, racial stereotyping have a specific intent in films (Zanotti, 2012, p.75). Furthermore, as Halliday *et al.* (2003, p.35) claim: "language is at the same time a part of reality, a shaper of reality and a metaphor for reality", which underpins how language is embedded in a given social context.

To some extent, the same can be said for "Pulp Fiction" (1994), where, despite keeping the obscene language as literally translated as possible, care has not been taken to provide for Marcellus's broken, colloquial English and grammar mistakes (Table 6).

TABLE 6  
Context: Marcellus is an African American drug dealer. He has been raped by Zack, a policeman, but rescued by Butch, a boxer, who had previously betrayed him. Now Marcellus is telling Butch that they are even. Broken and colloquial language is underlined:

<p>Yeah, we cool. Two things: <u>don't</u> tell nobody about this. This shit is between me, you, and Mr. <u>Soon-To-Be-Living-The-Rest-Of-His-Short-Ass-Life-In-Agonizing-Pain</u> rapist here. It ain't nobody else's business. Two, you leave town tonight, right now, and when you gone, you stay gone or you'll be gone. You lost all your L.A. Privileges. Deal?</p>	<p>Pace, allora. Due cose: uno, non raccontare questa storia. Questa cosa resta fra me, te e il merdoso che presto vivrà il resto della sua stronza breve vita fra agonia e tormenti, il violentatore, qui. Non riguarda nessun altro questo affare. Due: lascia la città stasera, all'istante, e una volta fuori, resta fuori, o ti faccio fuori: a Los Angeles hai perso i tuoi privilegi.</p> <p>Translation [Peace, then. Two things: first, do not tell anybody about this story. This is between me, you and the shitty rapist here, who will soon live the rest of his filthy short life in agony and torment. This thing does not concern anyone else. Second: leave town tonight, right now, and once you're out, you stay out, or I'll kill you: you lost your privileges in Los Angeles.]</p>
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A part from the foul language, which, to some extent, has been kept unvaried in the Italian version, all instances of broken English and colloquialisms have been levelled. This has occurred at the cost of a faithful rendering of the

character and of his socio-cultural context.

C. *Humour*

In the previous paragraph, some not very successful instances of AVT have been examined. Fortunately, the same cannot be said as far as humour is concerned. An exemplary case is “Young Frankenstein” (1974), where the humorous intent is preserved throughout the film and very little is “lost in translation”, despite the linguistic challenges. For instance, the most challenging issue, which is brilliantly tackled, is the famous Freddy and Inga’s “werewolf” conversation (Table 7):

TABLE 7

Context: Igor, Dr. Frankenstein’s servant, is taking Inga, his assistant, and him to the castle where they will stay. Suddenly, they hear wolves’ howling:

Inga: Werewolf. Dr.F: Werewolf? Igor: There. Dr.F: What? Igor: There wolf.... There castle.	Inga: Lupo ulu-là Dr.F: Lupo ulu-l’ă? Igor: L’ă! Dr.F: Cosa? Igor: Lupu ulul à e castellu ulul ĩ  Translation: [Inga: The wolf is howl-in' Freddy: Wolf howl-in'? Igor: In! Dr.F: What? Igor: Wolf howl-IN, castle howl-OUT!]
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In order to highlight the remarkable translation choices of the Italian AVT, the same excerpt will now be analysed in the German and Spanish films. In particular, the German AVT does not present the same challenges with reference to the word “Werewolf”. Therefore, it uses almost the same pun as the English version (as “wer” in German means “who”). On the contrary, the Spanish version is confronted with the same challenge as the Italian, but this is not successfully overcome (Table 8):

TABLE 8

German	Spanish
Inga: Werwolf! Dr.F: Wer ist der Wolf? Igor: Daa Dr.F: Da? Igor: Da Wolf, dorthin Schloss  Translation: [Inga: Werewolf! Dr.F: Who is the wolf? Igor: Heeere Dr.F: Here? Igor: Here wolf, there castle]	Inga: Hombreslobo! Dr.F: Hombreslobo? Igor: All ĩ Dr.F: Qu’è? Igor: All ihombreslobo, all icastillo!  Translation: [Inga: Werewolves! Dr.F: Werewolves? Igor: Here Dr.F: What? Igor: Here werewolves, there castle]

Another interesting instance is “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I” (2010) (Table 9):

TABLE 9

Context: Ron is Harry Potter’s best friend. Ron has got two twin brothers: George and Fred. George is lying on the couch with a bleeding ear after being hit.

Fred: How you feeling, Georgie? George: Saint-like F: Come again? G: Saint-like. I’m holy. ... [pointing at his ear] I’m holey Fred. Get it?	Fred: Come ti senti, Georgie? George: Romano F: Come hai detto? G: Romano, come il foro*. Come il foro Fred, capito? [*foro=hole; forum]  Translation: [Fred: How are you feeling, Georgie? George: Roman F: What did you say? G: Roman, like the forum. Like the forum, Fred. Got it?]
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It is self-evident that when puns and jokes are at stake, the Italian AVT has proven to be successful, despite any linguistic diversity. Some other good examples can be found in “Wallace & Gromit and the Curse of the Ware-Rabbit” (2005); “Pulp Fiction” (1994) and “Robots” (2005) (Tables 10-12). Puns or jokes are underlined:

TABLE 10: WALLACE & GROMIT

Context: Gromit is Wallace's dog and business partner. In an attempt to save Wallace, Gromit is seized and put in a cage by Lord Victor Quartermaine, Wallace's rival in love.

Lord Victor Q: Your loyalty is... <u>moving</u> . Sadly, you won't be.	LVQ: La tua lealtà va dritta al cuore.. tu invece non ti muovi da qui.  Translation: [Your loyalty goes straight to the heart.. you instead won't go anywhere]
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TABLE 11: PULP FICTION

Context: Vincent, Marcellus's goon, has just brought Mia (Marcellus's wife) back home, after she almost died of an overdose. They are saying goodnight and Mia is telling a joke:

Mia: Three tomatoes are walking down the street; Poppa tomato, Momma tomato, and Baby tomato. Baby tomato starts lagging behind and Poppa tomato gets really angry, goes back and squishes him...and says, <u>catch up</u> ..	Mia: Tre pomodori camminano per la strada; papà pomodoro, mamma pomodoro e il pomodorino. Il pomodorino cammina con aria svagata e il papà si arrabbia e va da lui, lo schiaccia e dice "fai il concentrato"  Translation: [Three tomatoes are walking down the street; papa tomato, mama tomato and little tomato. Little tomato is walking absent-mindedly so papa tomato gets angry and walks towards him, he squashes him and says "be concentrated"]
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TABLE 12: ROBOTS

Context: Rodney, an aspiring inventor, is meeting Aunt Fanny, a large robot with a big backside and he is astonished by her dimensions:

Aunt Fanny: And what's your name? Rodney: I'm Rodney Bigbottom.. No! I mean, I'm Rodney Copperbottom! Copperbottom.	Aunt Fanny: E come ti chiami? Rodney: Rodney Chiappebottom. No! Copperbottom. Copperbottom.  Translation: [AF: And what's your name? R: Rodney Buttcheekbottom. No! Copperbottom. Copperbottom.]
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It is self-evident that as far as jokes and puns are concerned, the Italian audiovisual translators have found brilliant ways to meet the challenges arising from linguistic diversities. Another quite historical instance of conveying humour in the Italian AVT, can be found in Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel's films (1921-1951). The Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel case is an example of mirroring the original language of the film, if not enhancing the humour strategies. The dubbed characters speak with an English-like accent, which leads to remarkable changes not only in the pronunciation, but also in the stress of the Italian words. Consequently, the characters are funnier as additional humour is brought in (De Rosa *et al.*, 2014).

An exception to the apparent capacity of Italian translators to render humour and jokes, can be traced in the following excerpt from "Full Metal Jacket" (1987), where the Italian rendering of the American idiom is almost lost, whereas the French adaptation, for example, is closer to the mark (Table 13):

TABLE 13

Context: Private joker is meeting another soldier and he is making jokes. This is the other soldier's remark:

Original version	Italian	French
You talk the talk, do you walk the walk?	Tu sai chiacchierare, ma le palle ce l'hai?  Translation: [You can talk, but have you got balls / the nuts?]	Pour causer tu causes, et pour oser tu oses?  Translation: [You can talk, but can you dare?]

It is clear that the phrase the soldier utters is taken from the idiom "To walk the talk", which means to behave consistently with what one claims. The French translation is faithful because it translates the idiom and it keeps the rhyme. In the Italian translation, instead, there is no rhyme and the utterance borders on indecency. This is a case of linguistic manipulation, where vulgarity is added.

Debatable are also some of the linguistic choices in "Guys and Dolls" (1955), as Table 14 reveals.

TABLE 14

Nathan: Get on your feet, Big Jule. I now have dough to roll you again. But this time with real dice.	Nathan: Tirati su boia Giulio, ci ho la lattuga per giocare, ma con dadi per bene, ora.  Translation: [Stand up lousy Giulio, I've got the lettuce to play, but now with honest / respectable dice.]
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As it is clear, there are words which are non-existent in current Italian, such as "lettuce" to mean "money". Nonetheless, it cannot go unnoticed that the original language used in the film was innovative *per se*. It was in fact a landmark in the film industry, formerly characterized by a more sumptuous register (Del Moro, 2000).

D. *Lost in Translation*

Finally, there are some AVT instances which represent a certain deviation from the original versions. They are

notable examples of “lost in translation”; wanted or unwanted omissions; significant changes made in the name of the target culture or of the audience's perception of the film characters. The reasons for such mistakes are sometimes claimed to be due to a cost-benefit analysis, where the urge of containing costs clearly prevails over quality (Di Fortunato & Paolinelli, 2010, p.126). Other times, unfaithful renderings are the result of a mere adaptation to the audience's presumed perspective or tastes. As a consequence, the original film “becomes the raw material that is to be re-inscribed into the different cultural contexts” (Ascheid, 1997, p.40). Some obvious examples are “Ocean's Eleven” (2001), where Rusty (Brad Pitt) has to keep his *macho* role in the eye of the Italian audience and says “I banged her for a while”, instead of the original “I dated her for a while” (Table 15):

TABLE 15

Context: Rusty and Danny are two professional robbers and are planning a robbery in a casino vault:

Rusty: Munitions. Danny : Phil Turentine. Rusty : Dead. Danny : No shit? On the job? Rusty : Sun cancer Danny : You send flowers? Rusty : <u>Dated</u> his wife a while.	Rusty: Munizioni Danny: Phil Turentine Rusty: Morto Danny: Dici davvero? Rusty: Cancro della pelle Danny: Hai mandato dei fiori? Rusty: Mi sono fatto la moglie per un po'  Translation: [R: Munitions D: Phil Turentine R: Dead D: Really? R: Skin cancer D: Did you send some flowers? R: I <u>banged</u> his wife for a while]
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Another example is “Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince” (2009), where Harry's probable slip of the tongue becomes a real lack of style in the Italian version (Table 16):

TABLE 16

Context: Harry and Hermione, his friend, are talking about a coming party. Harry needs to decide who to go with:

Harry: But I am the Chosen One. [Hermione smacks him on his head with a newspaper] Harry: Okay, sorry. Um, kidding. I'll ask someone I like. Someone <u>cool</u> . [In the following scene, Luna, a rather odd school wizard whose “coolness” is debatable, is waiting for Harry with a fancy party dress on]	Harry: Ma io sono sono il prescelto.. va bene, scusa, scherzavo... Inviterò una che mi piace.. Una fica.  Translation: [Harry: But I'm the chosen one.. all right.. sorry, I was kidding... I'll invite someone I like... Someone <u>hot</u> ]
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Whereas in the original version the intent was probably to make Harry's last words: “someone cool” funnier, in the Italian version his utterance is unexpected and clashes with his whole character and personality. Another example of “lost in translation”, although minor, can be found in another Harry Potter film (“Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix”, 2007), where Luna, a wizard and friend, utters “I hope there's pudding”, thinking of dinner. This phrase is dubbed literally “*spero ci sia il budino*”, without thinking that “pudding” in British English means “dessert”. In fact, in a following scene of the film several types of dessert are served at the dinner table.

In the film “Supersize Me” (2004), a vegan cook is introduced as vegetarian. This probably happened because the Italian audience was presumed not to be ready for veganism in 2004 (Table 17):

TABLE 17

Context: Alex is a vegan chef and is being interviewed about his boyfriend's choice not to eat but burgers for a month:

Alex:... I think this is gonna affect our relationship! Interviewer: you are a <u>vegan</u> chef Alex: yes, I am a <u>vegan</u> chef	Alex:.. E questo avrà effetti devastanti sul nostro rapporto! I: Sei una cuoca vegetariana. A: Sì una cuoca vegetariana  Translation: [A: And this will have devastating effects on our relationship! I: You are a <u>vegetarian</u> cook A: Yes, a <u>vegetarian</u> cook]
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In this instance, not only was the dubbing changed from “vegan” to “vegetarian”, but also the video inscriptions, which introduced Alex as “A healthy chef: Morgan's girlfriend and vegetarian cook” instead of the original “Healthy chef Alex: Morgan's girlfriend & Vegan chef”.

“Slumdog Millionaire” (2008) is another example, where adherence to what was currently politically in *vogue* was preferred, although it brutally clashed with the logic of the film (Arcangeli, 2010, p.34-35) (Table 18):

TABLE 18

Context: India. Two Muslim brothers are playing outside, when Hindu fundamentalists arrive and kill the people around.

A male voice in the background*: They're Muslim; get them! [*from the Hindu, referring to the two brothers]	A female voice in the background*: Aiuto! Sono mussulmani! Scappiamo! [*from the running crowd, referring to the fundamentalists]  Translation: [Help! They're Muslims! Run!]
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In the film, it is clear that the two brothers are Muslims; therefore it makes no sense to make a woman from the running crowd cry out that Muslims are attacking them.

Another example can be found in “The Punisher” (2004), where the “ice Florentine” (a type of dessert) is dubbed *fiorentina ghiacciata*, i.e. an “ice T-bone steak” (Table 19).

TABLE 19

Context: Bumpo has invited his neighbours for dinner. Dinner is almost over and Bumpo is offering dessert

Bumpo: There's dessert. <u>Ice Florentine</u> . You have to try my <u>Ice Florentine</u> . Come on, Dave.	B: Ah, c'è il dessert, la fiorentina ghiacciata. Devi provare la mia fiorentina ghiacciata, andiamo Dave.  Translation: [There's dessert, <u>ice T-bone steak</u> . You must try my <u>ice T-bone steak</u> . Come on Dave.]
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One might argue whether this translation choice was made because of lip movements (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000). Nonetheless, it would be rather debatable. This may have in fact occurred for a variety of reasons, such as the lack of time or money to carefully translate. A particular case of adjustment to lip movements can instead be found in “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” (2005), where a stuttering “You must be boy's... p-p-parents” is replaced by *Voi dovete essere i suoi...p-p-parenti* (“You must be his r-r-elatives”). Here it is clear that the mistake is due to lip movement synchronization as “parents” is “genitori” in Italian.

Some examples of careless translations can also be found in “The Mentalist” TV series (season 3, episode 12, 2011), where the word “soda” (a non-alcoholic fizzy drink) is also used in Italian, neglecting the fact that in Italian “soda” strictly refers to a compound of sodium, as Table 20 clearly reveals:

TABLE 20

English	Meaning in Italian: Italian Dictionary 1	Italian Dictionary2
Soda	1. sodium carbonate 2. sparkling water added with sodium carbonate	1. sodium carbonate 2. sparkling water similar to <i>selz</i> with more sodium carbonate

This case, in linguistics, would be described as a hyperforeignism: a foreign-like word “which, parallel to a (wo)man without a country, is a form without a language” (Janda *et al.*, 1994, p.71). A hyperforeignism is hence a form deprived of its original meaning (in this case, the form in question is the word “soda”). In AVT, this would be instead an instance of “dubbese”, which will be addressed in a later section of this paper.

Film excerpt:

TABLE 21

Patrick: I like the packaging. What flavour is that? Girl: Probably orange cream soda, right Esther?	Patrick: Mi piace la confezione. A che gusto è quella? Girl: Credo sia la <u>soda</u> alla crema d'arancia, vero Esther?  Translation: [P: I like the packaging. Which flavour is that one? G: I think it's orange custard soda [sodium carbonate], right Esther?]
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The false friend *crema* (“custard”) has also been used. An explanation for these shortcomings is provided by Di Fortunato and Paolinelli (2010, p.123), who say that TV series generally suffer from time constraints, which make revisions and fine-tuning almost impossible.

In some other cases, the Italian audiovisual translators mirror the grammar mistakes of the original language, albeit on reduced terms. This is the case, for instance, of “The Lord of the Ring” (“The return of the King”, 2003), where Gollum's speech unorthodoxy is limited to a double consonant in the word *tesoro* (“treasure”) (Table 22):

TABLE 22

Context: Gollum is a creature who found and wore an evil, powerful ring for a long time. He is now taking Frodo and Sam (two hobbit friends) to destroy it, although he is not willing to:

<p>Gollum: You thieves! You thieves... You filthy little thieves! Where is it? Where is it? They stole it from us. My Precious. Curse them! We hate them! It's ours it is... And we want it!</p>	<p>Gollum: I ladri. I ladri. Quegli sporchi piccoli ladri. Dov'è? Dov'è? Ce l'hanno tolto, rubato. Il mio <u>tessoro</u>. Maledetti! Noi li odiamo! È nostro. E lo vogliamo.</p> <p>Translation: [Thieves. Thieves. Those filthy little thieves. Where is it? Where is it? They took it from us, they stole it. My <u>treasure</u>. Curse them! We hate them! It's ours. And we want it.]</p>
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Another discrepancy in the AVT of “The Lord of the Ring” (“The Return of the King”, 2003) is the omission of the literary appeal “What say you?” uttered by king Aragorn to the king of the dead (Table 23):

TABLE 23

Context: King Aragorn is looking for soldiers. He is asking the king of the dead to raise an army and fight for him.

<p>Aragorn: I am Isildur's heir. Fight for me and I will hold your oaths fulfilled! <u>What say you?</u></p>	<p>Aragorn: Io sono l'erede di Isildur. Combattetevi per me, e io riterrò rispettato il vostro giuramento. Cosa risponderete?</p> <p>Translation: [I am Isildur's heir. Fight for me, and I will hold your oath fulfilled. What will you answer?]</p>
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Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case, as the same occurs also in “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I” (2010) where Lord Voldemort (a wicked dead wizard) utters “What say you, Pius?”, plainly dubbed *Pius, che ne pensi?* (“Pius, what do you think?”). On the one hand, the syntactic structure used in such a question can be considered infrequent in spoken language (it pertains to the literary world). On the other hand, it would be rather unusual for an Italian audiovisual translator not to retrieve a corresponding literary reference in the Italian language! Therefore, one might wonder why such a learned reference is omitted in the dubbed version. Ironically, the same cannot be claimed as far as the film “Trash” (1970) is concerned. In the dubbed version of the film, an erudite-like quotation replaces some prosaic nonsense uttered in the original language: (Table 24):

TABLE 24

Context: Joe, a drug addict, has encountered a girl on the street and has invited her home. Now they are chatting while he is injecting some drug:

<p>The girl: I have a girlfriend, she's really insane. She has a boyfriend and she has a lover and she's married. It's terrible. It's unbelievable, she went all the way to Detroit just to see another one of her lovers. She tells me that she's God. It was unbelievable, because she said that she was in love with Rhett and she was in love with George...</p>	<p>Lo hai mai conosciuto tu? Lo sai che è stato in India? E appena arrivato si è fatto pisciare in bocca da una vacca sacra, come fanno gli indiani. È un rito sacro di purificazione che ti svuota del male. &lt;&lt;Voglio sapere che cosa accade quando sono marcito, perché sto già marcendo, mi cadono i capelli, mi è venuta la pancia, sono stufo del sesso; il mio cazzo si trascina nell'universo che conosco troppo.&gt;&gt;</p> <p>Translation:[speaking about a wise man] [The girl: Have you ever met him? Did you know that he was in India? And as soon as he got there, he had a sacred cow pissing in his mouth, as all Indians do. It's a purification sacred rite, which will empty you of all evil. &lt;&lt;I want to know what happens when I'm rotten, because I'm already rotting, my hair is falling, I put on a paunch, I'm fed up with sex; I'm dragging my dick in a universe I'm too much acquainted with.&gt;&gt;]</p>
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As it can be noticed, the dubbed version is completely different from the original. What comes here to the fore, is the debated question of where the translator's loyalty lies (Mason, 1992, p.24). One might ask whether such a presumed erudite quotation (if erudite might it be called) does justice to the film and, most of all, to such a character, who is instead rather dull.

### E. Miscellaneous

In this last section other shortcomings of AVT will be addressed. In particular, the following topics will be addressed: compliance with fixed translation norms; examples of “dubbese”, an hybrid language which is the result of translation work (Pavesi, 2005), and calques (Bocchiola, 2010).

As far as adherence to fixed translation norms is concerned, it should be reminded that “translators adhere to them more often than not. They may not like this (...) but they recognise their power” (Simeoni, 1998, p.6). In addition, audiovisual translators have long lamented their difficult work conditions, mostly affected by time and budget constraints, as well as a fierce battle about translation fees (Di Fortunato & Paolinelli, 2010). A sort of oligopoly has practically been established in the AVT world, where only few professionals dictate norms or maintain the existing ones (Pavesi, 2005, p.61). All these factors, have sometimes resulted in poor quality of translation work.

As far as calques are concerned, one typical example mentioned in the literature (Bocchiola, 2010) is the phrase “I don't know what you're talking about” which is often literally translated *Non so di che cosa stai parlando*. In Italian, a

simple *Ma che dici?* (“What do you say?”) or *Non so di che parli* (“I don't know what you say”, i.e., using a simple present) would suffice. This type of instances can be found in the film “The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones” (2013) and also in the 1970s film “Diff'rent Strokes”; for example, where Arnold, an African-American boy, keeps saying “Watcha talkin' about, Willis?” to his elder brother Willis. That phrase is invariably dubbed as *Che cavolo stai dicendo, Willis?* (“What the cabbage are you saying, Willis?”), where “cabbage” is an Italian euphemism of “dick”.

Unfortunately, following translation routines may sometimes give rise not only to calques (Bocchiola, 2010), but also to “dubbese”, which can be defined as a fixed formula far from spontaneous language (Pavesi, 2005). Some examples can be found in “Vanilla Sky” (2001), where David, who has just found out that he has been living in a dream, cries out “Tech Support!” to call for his dream builders and wake him up. In Italian, the words *Supporto tecnologico* (“Technological support”) are uttered, whereas a more common *assistenza tecnica* (“technical assistance”) should be used.

All the instances discussed in this paper illustrate the fact that a film rendering is not an easy process, as it is the result of a delicate balance between adaptation and faithfulness. Furthermore, the boundaries between fiction and adherence to reality, most of the times, are not clearly defined. Therefore, there is room for manipulation in the name of cultural adaptations, fixed equivalents and technicalities (such as lip movement).

### III. FUTURE SCENARIOS

Taking the above issues into consideration, one might propose to resort to subtitles, in order to overcome the shortcomings in dubbing. However, subtitling may not be the right path to choose for many reasons. First of all, because “abusive subtitling” (Nornes, 1999) could occur when “the abusive subtitler may seek to produce polyvalencies and knots of signification that may not coincide precisely with the problem in the source text” (*ibid.*, p.30). This, as illustrated above, can also happen in dubbing. Secondly, because the film audience may not be able to acknowledge the various languages in multilingual films (Cronin, 2009). Thirdly, because prosody and some relevant features of oral discourse, such as false starts, hesitations, repetitions, and so on, would not be represented in subtitling (De Bonis, 2015, p.64). The only way out of a poor and disloyal AVT, could hence be found in a change of perspective. Given that films are dubbed in order to meet the audience's needs, there is a call for raising the audience's awareness about the importance of not reducing dubbing (and subtitling) to a mere matter of budgeting. Some Italian AVT masterpieces have been analysed in this paper and resourceful solutions have been noted. These are all instances which clearly demonstrate that a faithful, elaborated AVT which does justice to the original film is possible. It would be then ideal that such AVT schemes and logic could be maintained and applied to all films.

### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the above, some final considerations will now be drawn. It is commonly agreed that the task undertaken by an audiovisual translator is a very difficult one, with the AVT translator being not only a linguistic translator, but also a cross-cultural mediator (Bassnet, 2011). Apart from some scattered successful examples which this paper has provided, AVT is clearly characterized by flaws, ranging from misrepresentations and careless renderings, to real “losses in translation”. Such shortcomings may occur at the level of individual lexical choices (Mason, 1992, p.28) and may be due to a wide variety of reasons, encompassing restricted budgets, adherence to fixed equivalents, cultural adaptations and difficulties in the linguistic aspects of the target language. Resorting to subtitles in order to prevent such shortcomings may not always be the right solution. To paraphrase Nornes (1999, p.17), it seems in fact that both admiring and “wanting to kill the translator” is something everybody has ever felt at least once, when exiting a cinema. The highly debated question on where the translator's loyalty lies (or ends), still remains at stake (Mason, 1992, p.24). In this respect, this paper has explored several paths and analysed different patterns to reach the conclusion that in AVT, most of the times today, loyalty probably lies more in the supposed expectations of the audience, than in the linguistic faithfulness or in the intent of the original film. A call for change is hence needed, and one can only hope that the final decision will not depend on “business as usual”. Awareness should hence be raised in order to resist film banalization (Di Fortunato & Paolinelli, 2010) and audiovisual translators should be encouraged to carry out their work undisturbed.

### APPENDIX

#### Film list

A Fish Called Wanda, 1988, John Cleese, Charles Crichton  
 Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, 2005, Tim Burton  
 Diff'rent Strokes, 1978-1985, Herbert Kenwith, Gerren Keith  
 Family Guy, 1999-present day, Seth Mac Farlane  
 From Hell, 2001, Albert Hughes, Allen Hughes  
 Full Metal Jacket, 1987, Stanley Kubrick  
 Gone with the Wind, 1939, Victor Fleming  
 Guys and Dolls, 1955, Joseph L. Mankiewicz  
 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I, 2010, David Yates

Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince, 2009, David Yates  
 Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, 2007, David Yates  
 Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, 2001, Chris Columbus  
 Inglorious Basterds, 2009, Quentin Tarantino, Eli Roth  
 Live and Let Die, 1973, Guy Hamilton  
 My Fair Lady, 1964, George Cukor  
 Ocean's Eleven, 2001, Steven Soderbergh  
 Robots, 2005, Chris Wedge, Carlos Saldanha  
 Shining, 1980, Stanley Kubrick  
 Slumdog Millionaire, 2008, Danny Boyle  
 Supersize Me, 2004, Morgan Spurlock  
 The Godfather I, 1972, Francis Ford Coppola  
 The Godfather II, 1974, Francis Ford Coppola  
 The Goonies, 1985, Richard Donner  
 The Lord of the Ring, the Return of the King, 2003, Peter Jackson  
 The Mentalist, 2008-2015, Bruno Heller  
 The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones, 2013, Harald Zwart  
 The Punisher, 2004, Jonathan Hensleigh  
 Trash, 1970, Paul Morrissey  
 Vanilla Sky, 2001, Cameron Crowe  
 Wallace & Gromit and the Curse of the Ware-rabbit, 2005, Nick Park, Steve Box  
 Young Frankenstein, 1974, Mel Brooks

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1. Dizionario Garzanti di Italiano 2006
2. Dizionario Lo Zingarelli 2016

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