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## DUBBING BRITISH HUMOUR AND CULTURE: A RE-READING OF *FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL*

### 1. Introduction: Screen Translation and Humour

The main task of a translator is to act as a mediator among cultures. Always “keeping in mind” a source text, s/he can choose to translate it in a ‘functional/formal’ mode, or to translate following Eugene Nida’s concept of ‘dynamic equivalence’ (1964, 159-160). In the first case s/he will try to reproduce the meaning of the source language in the target language, while in the second one s/he will reproduce not only the meaning, but also the style of a source language message, so that it conveys to a target language/culture the same effect as the one conveyed to the source language/culture.

This ‘swinging’ between functional (or word-for-word translation) and dynamic (sense-for-sense translation) translation recalls the seven “levels of adequacy in translation” (*forme di adeguatezza della traduzione*)<sup>1</sup> (De Mauro 1994, 92; Nocera Avila 1990, 6-8), starting with denotative adequacy, which lies at the base of every translation, to the highest form, namely cultural adequacy. It is at this level that translating becomes an art, the art of finding adequate equivalents.

As Formentelli and Monti claim (2014, 169-195), the art of screen translation, focused not merely on language transfer but also on cross-cultural transfer (Toury 1995) is an important vehicle in weaving relations of cultural identity and in conveying them to the audience. Possible complications in screen translation can be caused by the nature of some humorous comments, which might be considered offensive as they are based on topics that are potentially disturbing for mass audiences. These elements may include references to, for instance, homosexuality, sexuality, death, disability, and other taboos (Bucaria 2007, 235-254; Chiaro 2007, 255-276). And over and above the actual words, phrases and dialogues uttered, a very striking difference, and it can be argued, a significant instance of censorship can be found in the tone of the actors’ voices. Much of, though not all the racy dialogue is mitigated, in the sense that instances of taboo are often replaced with what would be commonly considered as a more neutral discourse. In other words, the taboo remains, but in a diluted form. In view of the above, it will be self-evident how the practice of audio-visual translation (AVT), in such a scenario, will inevitably bring to the fore the translator’s creativity, essential in coping with complex audio-visual texts and the manipulation that these texts undergo as a result.

In a 2001 interview, Ken Loach said: “Dubbing kills humour.”<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, the rendition of humorous discourse is a challenge for an audio-visual translator, who has to adapt the final product to linguistic and socio-cultural contexts considerably different from the original one. If, on the one hand, humour offers precious insight into the complex workings of a given culture and society (Chiaro 1992, 80-81; Davies 1998), on the other hand, the rendering of humour sets the highest hurdles on film dubbing (Whitman-Linsen 1992), since humorous discourse is often built on highly culture-specific features, and a formal correspondence between source language (SL) and target language (TL) is extremely difficult, if not impossible to find.

The present study was carried out by comparing the English and Italian (dubbed) versions of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell 1994).<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we will refer to idioms, proverbs, and puns,

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<sup>1</sup> Translation into English by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Finesi, S., Perotti, L., Loach, *Un regista che non si sente isolato*. “Film.it.” <http://www.film.it/film/festival/dettaglio/art/loach-un-regista-che-non-si-sente-isolato-13560/>. (Last visited May 24, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> The script was written by Richard Curtis, a British screenwriter, film director and actor who is known for creating – together with actor Rowan Atkinson – the character of Mr. Bean. In 1995, thanks to *Four Weddings*



as well as references and allusions in the form of quotes from songs, film titles, famous celebrities, etc., whenever they are used for humorous purposes.

We will also comment on some forms of colloquial and popular language used to render diastratic variation. On a lexical level, we will refer to English proper nouns used to make reception by the target audience easier. Two other meaningful aspects we will take into account are the translation of swearing and the tendency to establish some translational routines.

The hypothesis is that the difficulties inherent in the rendering of humour and culture based on this kind of intertextuality will create a complex balance between text manipulation and translator's creativity, which will in turn produce mixed results as far as the Italian target text version is concerned.

## 2. Method

Working on a corpus of selected scenes from the transcript of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, we propose to compare the original version with the Italian-dubbed one from a pragmatic perspective (Chiaro 1992, 2004, 2007; Formentelli and Monti 2014), in the attempt to explore the characteristics of Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) and its rendering in the Italian translation.<sup>4</sup>

According to Chiaro (2004), the possible translational strategies to adopt in the case of VEH on screen are:

- the substitution of VEH in the Source Language with an example of VEH in the Target Language;
- the replacement of the Source Language VEH with an idiomatic expression in the Target Language;
- the replacement of the Source Language VEH with an example of compensatory VEH elsewhere in the Target Language text.

Nevertheless, taking a step forward, a more recent theory (Formentelli and Monti 2014), based on Chiaro's strategies, will be the basis of our analysis. It focuses on equivalence, downgrading/downtoning, and omission, which are discussed both qualitatively and quantitatively. *Semantic equivalence* between source text (ST) and target text (TT) is frequently achieved by resorting to translational routines, which characterise contemporary Italian dubbing (Pavesi 2005, 48-52). *Downtoning* is a translation strategy that implies a mitigation of the meaning originally encoded by a linguistic form or structure in the source text. The strategy of *Omission* can be interpreted as an extreme case of downtoning, which entails the elimination of one or more words in translation with the result of neutralising the nuances of meaning conveyed by the original dialogue. The following paragraphs will provide examples for each of these strategies.

A very British cult, the film stars characters who are perfectly marked out, succeeding in remaining in every spectator's heart. Unexpectedly, this comedy was the first film for ticket sales earnings in the history of British cinema. This film was released in Italy in October 1994, adapted in Italian by Simona Izzo and her staff, and later re-adapted for DVD format, in 2008. This later adaptation is the film text taken into account for this analysis of source text and target text.<sup>5</sup>

Plot: Charles is a charming, good-looking young Englishman, and his friends are delightful. But he has a problem – although he loves women, he just does not want to get married. Also, he is rather shy. He meets Carrie, a beautiful and sophisticated American woman, at a wedding, and although he obviously likes her, he is too shy to make advances to her, so Carrie is expected to make the first move. A romantic comedy begins, as the couple meet at three more weddings and a funeral. One of the weddings is Carrie's, but it is not Charles whom she is marrying. Another wedding is Charles's but he is not marrying Carrie. Finally, Charles finds the courage to declare his love, when he realizes that he cannot live without Carrie. Love – in all its forms – also comes to many of the other characters in the story.

From the point of view of the sociolinguistic variation, some phonetic aspects must be taken into consideration. A film text, thanks to the peculiar features of spoken language, can strongly express the diastratic and diatopic linguistic differences of the characters (Pavesi 2005, 33).

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and a *Funeral*, he was awarded an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay and his fame is also linked to the scriptwriting of other famous films, such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Notting Hill*.

<sup>4</sup> As Laviosa reminds us (2003, 53), "in Translation Studies, the term corpus does not have the same specialized meaning assigned to it by the discipline of Corpus Linguistics, but it generally refers to a relatively small collection of texts assembled and searched manually according to specific criteria."

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.penguinreaders.com/pdf/downloads/pr/teachers-notes/9781405879897.pdf> (Last visited May 24, 2017)



However, in Italian dubbing some difficulties may arise: not only is it impossible to find a geo-linguistic corresponding noun/expression having the same connotations and expressing the same cultural stereotypes of the source text, but the obstacle is also that the dubbed Italian is not socio-linguistically marked, thus leading to a sort of phonetic neutralization, such as the one that prevents us from recognizing that Carrie speaks American English whereas Charles speaks British English. We do not even recognise that Hamish (Carrie's husband, twice her age) is Scottish.

### 3. Semantic equivalence

From a morphosyntactic point of view, the dubbed Italian uses several forms of colloquial and popular language to render diastratic variation, such as the use of the indicative instead of the subjunctive mood, as in the following two examples:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
1. If you weren't sure you wanted to marry her today of all days, i.e. your wedding day, then it must be the right decision, mustn't it?	Del resto, se non <i>eri</i> sicuro di volerla sposare oggi, proprio oggi, il giorno del tuo matrimonio, <i>dovevi</i> essere quanto meno convinto, non credi?
2. I've fooled them so far. When people think you're stupid, they're less suspicious.	Finora sono riuscito a tenerli a bada. Il vantaggio di essere considerato coglione è che la gente non pensa mai che <i>ho</i> un secondo fine.

The linguistic level on which we can make the most detailed observations is the lexical one. Zaro writes (2001, 47-63) that lip-synchronisation in dubbing partially justifies the tendency to use – at a lexical level – English loan words but also proper nouns and toponyms to make reception by the target audience easier.

In *Four Weddings*, for instance, all proper names remain unchanged, but one: Scarlett, which in Italian translates as Rossella. The reason is that Katie Scarlett O'Hara is the name of the female protagonist of *Gone with the Wind* (both book and movie), that in Italian is Rossella. To keep the meaning of Scarlett's sentence<sup>6</sup> also in the Italian dubbing, the translator had to maintain the name with which Scarlett O'Hara is known in Italy. Another meaningful case of lexical transference is the translation of swearing and taboo expressions. So, it is interesting to notice that, in Simona Izzo's version, Charles says "cavolo" and "cavolissimo" nine times in a minute or so – reacting to his chronic lateness at weddings –, whereas in the version issued in 2008, the dubber must have thought that translating "fuck" with "cavolo" was a little reducing, especially if said by such a chaotic character as Charles. As a consequence, every form of censorship is eliminated.

In addition, many translators tend to establish some 'fixed equivalences,' or *translational routines* so that certain phrases in the source language match certain phrases in the target language. This practice facilitates the translation choices made by the translator/dubber. For instance:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
3. What's the problem?	Qual è il problema? (Instead of "cosa c'è che non va?")

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
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<sup>6</sup> ST: Scarlett: Hello. My name's Scarlett. Named after Scarlett O'Hara, but much less trouble. What's your name?

TT: Rossella: Ciao, io mi chiamo Rossella. Mia madre adorava Rossella O'Hara ma ho molti meno problemi. Tu come ti chiami?



4. Yeah	Già (instead of “sì”)
5. Well	Bene (the beginning of a statement, instead of “ecco”).

In the case of a cultural reference, however, equivalence cannot be fixed, and so is conveyed by the translator following whatever holds the same semantic value in the target text culture, such as the substitution of Richard Branson’s name by that of the Rothschild family.<sup>7</sup>

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
6. - Right. Tommy, are you the richest man in England? - Oh, no...no. I believe we are about seventh. The Queen, obviously, and that Branson bloke’s doing terribly well.	- Tom per caso sei tu l’uomo più ricco d’Inghilterra? - Oh, no...no. Penso di essere al settimo posto! Dopo la regina ovviamente...e dopo i <i>Rothschild</i> che sono al secondo posto.

Or the substitution of a cultural reference through a literary one, very common in the target culture, as in the following example:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
7. I’m stuck in the wedding <u>from hell</u>	Mi sembrava di essere in un <u>girone</u> dell’inferno

The phrase "from hell" is an add-on that signifies what is wretched, horrible, abysmal, very bad, awful, infernal, etc. about something. The Italian “girone dell’inferno” is to be interpreted as a clear reference to Dante’s *Commedia*.

A further example of semantic equivalence and cultural transposition can be found in the last scene of the film, after the ‘non-wedding’ between Charles and Henrietta. A few hours have passed, and Charles’ bell rings. He thinks it is Henrietta and decides to face her in person. The idiom he uses is:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
8. If there’s music to be faced, I should be facing it.	Chi rompe paga, e i cocci sono suoi.

Obviously, just like the majority of idioms, this one is impossible to translate literally, so an Italian proverb is used: “Chi rompe paga, e i cocci sono suoi.”

The phrase “to face the music” dates back to 1850, but the exact origin is unknown. One theory is that it comes from the theatre world, where musicians were in a pit in front of the stage, so "to face the music" was to turn towards the audience. Anyway, the equivalence is perfect in Italian, thanks to the use of this proverb. Semantic equivalence is also given by the so-called “compensation strategies,” often used to solve problems of lip synchronization, as in the following:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
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<sup>7</sup> Richard Branson, who is referred to in the source text, is one of the richest and most famous English men ever. At the age of 22, he achieved his first great success thanks to Virgin Records, but in 1994 – when the film was released in Italy – nobody knew him. His fame started later, in 1996, when he tried to tour the world in a hot-air balloon. This is why in the Italian version the translator has changed his name to that of the more famous Rothschild family, which in the 18<sup>th</sup> century established the modern banking business.



9. Are you sober? Absolutely.	Sei ubriaco? Assolutamente no.
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Needless to say, since we have no direct access to the processes of dubbing, we can only make hypotheses on the basis of our observation. And this is, probably, the case of the adverb “assolutamente,” but as it has the opposite meaning in Italian, the question asked by the character has been changed into its opposite as well. Another hypothesis on how semantic equivalence is achieved throughout the film is based on the belief that idioms in the target language can clearly substitute verbal humour in the Source Language, such as in the following example. At Bernard and Lydia’s wedding party, the best man is giving his speech:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
10. When Bernard told me he was getting engaged to Lydia, I congratulated him because all his other girlfriends were such complete <u>dogs</u> .	Quando il mio amico Bernard mi ha detto che si era fidanzato con Lydia, io gli ho fatto le mie congratulazioni perché tutte le sue precedenti ragazze erano degli autentici <u>cessi</u> !

The idiomatic expression “to be a dog” is to be interpreted here as to be a despicable person, which is suitably rendered with a nearly corresponding idiomatic expression in the Italian version.

Humour reaches its peak when Father Gerald (played by Rowan Atkinson) comes on the scene. He is going to celebrate his first Mass on the occasion of Bernard and Lydia’s wedding, and his *gaffes* are very amusing.<sup>8</sup>

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENTS
11. [...] Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the <u>Holy Goat...Ghost</u> .	[...] Gesù Cristo Nostro Signore che vive e regna con te in unione con lo <u>Spiritoso San...con lo Spirito Santo</u> .	Humour lies in the noun “goat,” being almost homophone of “ghost.” An equivalent solution is found in Italian, as “spiritoso” includes “spirito,” thus being almost homophones and creating a better effect than in the ST (“spiritoso” meaning “funny”).
12. May not be <u>johned</u> in matrimony May not be <u>joined</u> in matrimony! To Bernard Geoffrey Sinj... Sinj...Delaney.	Non debba essere unta in matrimonio Non debba essere unita in matrimonio! Con Bernard Geoffrey Sinj...Sinj...Delaney.	“Johned” is almost homophone of “joined,” but it means to get so obnoxiously drunk that you believe a man called John is spending the night with you, only to be told the next morning after waking up with a raging erection and hangover, that there was no John and you were actually just drunk and alone.

<sup>8</sup> In the limits of this paper, we will just list some examples and their dubbed versions, as the script of the whole scene is very long.





		The equivalent effect in Italian is given by “unta” instead of “unita,” being almost homophones as well, even though different in meaning (“unta” meaning “greased”).
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It is well known that any translator is aware of the fact that transposing humour from one culture to another is not easy, except for universally amusing situations, or slapstick comedy (Bollettieri Bosinelli 1994, 17), such as slipping on a banana skin or throwing a cake at someone else’s face.

Difficulties in translation may arise when laughter is not conveyed by a simple amusing sketch, but by *words*. This kind of humour, based on puns, like the ones listed above, is so typical of a source culture that the only way to keep the comic effect in the TL is that of creating a new one, which is much better than using techniques of deletion or word-by-word translation in the TT (Bucaria 2008,57). This choice is clearly expressed in the words of Maria Pavesi who claims that:

L’inventiva verbale è quindi una componente necessaria nella traduzione filmica, in cui proprio le restrizioni del mezzo possono obbligare a staccarsi dal testo di partenza per ricreare nuove battute che mantengano la coerenza a un livello testuale superiore, rispettando le funzioni e le motivazioni dell’originale.<sup>9</sup> (2005, 18)

#### 4. Downgrading/downtoning

Still referring to the transportation<sup>10</sup> of meanings across cultures, the following examples well show some cases of downgrading and of the fine line between manipulation and creativity in translation. Example 14 illustrates the difficulty in distinguishing between a solution chosen in view of the need to reproduce a literary reference of the source culture in the target culture (Wordsworth), or that to comply with a stronger cultural reference in the target culture (Shakespeare). As Bovinelli and Gallini (1994, 89-98) have already noticed, the most common tendency in dubbing is to introduce literal and metaphorical ambiguity through the use of references belonging to the same categories but typical of the target culture. This explains why the dialogue between Charles and George (who are both invited to one of the weddings) runs as follows.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
13. - [...] Where do you know him from? - University. - Splendid. Splendid. Yep. I didn’t go myself. I couldn’t see the point. You see? When you work in the money markets, what use are <i>the novels of Wordsworth</i> going to be, eh?	- [...] Tu dove l’hai conosciuto? - All’università. - Ah! Splendido, splendido! Eh sì! Io non sono andato all’università, mi sembrava una perdita di tempo. Quando cominci a lavorare e ti piovono addosso i soldi, a che serve conoscere i <i>sonetti di Shakespeare</i> ?	As we can see, the familiarity factor was preferred, with a TL reference to Shakespeare. Probably, Wordsworth was considered too culture-bound to be understood by Italian audiences.

<sup>9</sup> “Verbal inventiveness is therefore a necessary part of film translation, in which the very limits of the means can oblige a dubbing translator to move away from a source text and recreate new lines that preserve coherence even at a higher text level, whilst maintaining functions and motivations of the source text.” Translation into English by the author.

<sup>10</sup> The term “transportation” was used by John Willet in his paper “Translation, Transmission, Transportation,” in Ian Donaldson (ed.), *Transformations in Modern European Drama*, The Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1983, pp. 1-13.



As far as figures of speech are concerned, most of the time dubbed conversations run smoothly, but some adjustments or cases of downtoning are necessary to compensate for possible misunderstandings, such as in the following metonymy.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
14. - You'll be fighting them off. But not so much as <u>a tongue in sight</u> .	Vedrai quante lingue penzoloni. E invece non c'è <u>un maschietto disponibile nel raggio di un km.</u>	Italian dubbing is less vulgar, but the metonymy is downtoned.

Or in the two following puns.

15. - [...] To be my <u>awful</u> wedded wife. - To be my <u>lawful</u> wedded wife!	- Come mia <u>illegittima</u> sposa. - Come mia <u>legittima, legittima</u> sposa!	"Awful" instead of "lawful:" the two adjectives are almost homophones, but their meaning is completely different. The pun in Italian lies in the use of "illegittima," meaning the opposite of "legittima."
16. That's ri...that's right. May Almighty God bless you all. The Father, the Son, and the <u>Holy Spigot...Spirit</u> .	Legittima, legittima sposa. Che il Signore Onnipotente benedica tutti voi, nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello <u>Spiritoso Santo...Spirito!!</u>	"Spigot" is an example of a word-crossing (spirit + ghost). In the dubbed version, humour lies only in the use of "spiritoso" instead of "spirito," thus conveying the humorous effect which lies in the adjective itself.

### 5. Omission

The strategy of omission, which is actually an extreme case of downtoning, results obviously in the neutralization of the meaning nuances conveyed by the original dialogue. Omissions lead to the greatest departures from the source text and often the meaning of the dialogue can change substantially.

Every omission is unique in its context and, therefore, used to attain a set of goals.

As highlighted by Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007, 46) when discussing all types of AVT, "the most difficult situation arises when a linguistic sign, a phrase, refers metaphorically to an iconographic sign or image that the source and target culture do not share." As a consequence, adapters often choose creative ways of conveying the information, as in the following example, which includes a complex joke in the broader sense intended by Zababealscoa (1996, 251-255).

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
17. So, anyway. Back to Angus and those <u>sheep</u> ,	E adesso parliamo un po' di Angus e dei suoi <u>segreti</u> .	<a href="http://www.urbandictionary.com">www.urbandictionary.com</a> : <i>sheep</i> , in some cultures, a substitute or alternate for a woman in the act of sex. (Last Visited May 24, 2017)



This allusion would be understood by a selected part of the English audience, and it is indeed arguable whether a greater number of people would get the joke in Italy, as this is a line which might even be considered closer to British sensibility. The solution chosen by the Italian adapters, in fact, eliminates this reference to sheep hinting at the idea of sex initiation, maybe for reasons of difficult comprehension or acceptability. In fact, the shot with a sheep getting out of a wedding car leaves the Italian audience a little puzzled, even though keeping a comic effect. This is the perfect example of contrast between verbal code (manipulable) and visual code (impossible to manipulate).

In other cases, the strategy of omission corresponds to a slight change of focus, such as in the translation of religious references, in which a considerable part of verbal humour lies.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
18. - You may kiss the bride' isn't actually in the <u>Book of Common Prayer</u> . - I always worry I'll go too far in the heat of the moment.	- Ora puoi baciare la sposa' è una frase che non compare nel <u>libro delle preghiere</u> . - lo avrei una gran paura di andare oltre, di farmi trascinare dalla foga del momento	The "Book of Common Prayer" referred to in the ST is translated by "Libro delle Preghiere."

Though marriage is a globally intercultural phenomenon (at least in the Christian Western world), some differences exist in the wording of the rite. As demonstrated in the dialogue above, the meaning of the message being communicated is kept intact as in the source text. Although it could be argued that the Anglican reference, felt as a reception problem, is not conveyed in Italian in favour of a sort of generalization, it is to be noted that the Italian dubbing manages to keep the semantic link with the word "prayer." Thus, the audience is still in a position to clearly understand the text. In addition, it is well known that one of the goals of a dubber is to match lip synchronization. Whilst Newmark's (2003) theory of translation states that a good translator is one who communicates effectively, without altering the meaning of the message from the original text (the words might be rearranged, but the meaning in the sentence must be maintained), according to Chaume (2012, 72), "in a hierarchy of priorities, synchronies take precedence over a faithful rendering of the ST content." These two theories are displayed in the following example.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
19. Odd decision	Ho deciso	The message conveyed is the same, although the Italian translation may seem to have almost the opposite meaning.

Bearing in mind the lip sync dimension, the adapters have decided to keep the meaning as it is in the source language, despite the omission of the adjective "odd" in the dubbed version of the text. This example surely corroborates Chiaro's claim that "in order to play with language, there must be something linguistically ambiguous about the text, or else the joker has in some way to render it so" (1992, 43).

## 6. Exemplification: an add-on strategy

The first case takes place in Angus and Laura's wedding, when Charles gives a speech as best man. In the Italian dubbed version, a "filler" is used intentionally to integrate the script with the voice-over "Discorso, Charlie!" and also with the addition of Charles' explanatory words to justify his speech, because whereas in Britain this is normal practice, in Italy it is not (Denton 1999, 10).





SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
- ..... 20. Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm sorry to drag you from your delicious desserts. There are just one or two little things I feel I should say as best man.	- <u>Voice over:</u> <u>Discorso, Charlie!</u> - Signore e Signori, mi dispiace distrarvi dallo squisito dessert che avete davanti ma, come testimone dello sposo, <u>ritengo sia mio dovere</u> fare un breve discorso!	The voice over is added in the Italian translation.

As Bertuccelli Papi claims, “languages seem, in other words, efficient tools for communicating, and human beings appear to be equipped with efficient processing devices for dealing with the complexities of turning thoughts into the right words and vice-versa” (2003, 265-272).

One of these ‘processing devices’ in the translation of a culture is shown in the following example referring to the translation of film titles. In ST, Charles and Carrie, after having spent the night together, talk about the film *Fatal Attraction*, in which Glenn Close is the main female character.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
21. I thought I was in <i>Fatal Attraction</i>	Mi sono sentito come Michael Douglas in <i>Attrazione Fatale</i>	Addition of reference to Michael Douglas.

The target language version maintains the reference to the film title, although it could be argued that the joke on the whole is evidently more explicit than in the English version, not only through the translation into Italian of the film title, but also through the addition of the male protagonist’s name, Michael Douglas, who is well known to an Italian audience. The following example will illustrate another cultural difference.

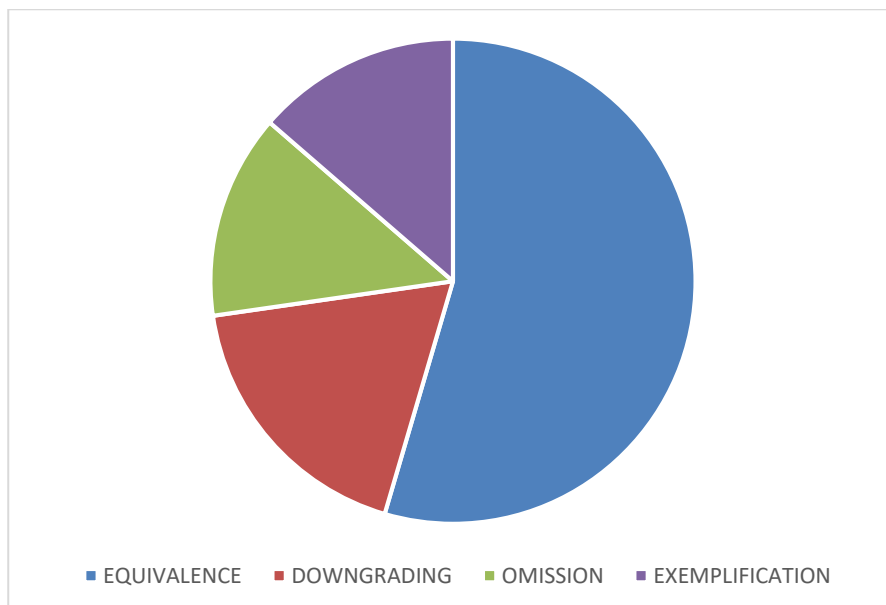
SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	COMMENT
22. Some of us are not gonna get married.	Qualcuno di noi non è destinato al matrimonio.	Reference to destiny is added.

It is evident from the example above that the Italian adaptation does not limit itself to merely keeping the reference to marriage; the dialogue also aims at conveying the concept of destiny, of which Italian/Catholic culture is deeply imbued. In short, however seldom resorted to in the few instances in which it is used, exemplification introduces an amusing element of intertextual pleasure which suitably blends into the context.

## 7. Conclusion

Quoting Pym (2010, 107-131), “texts belong,” that is to say that they are rooted in a context of space and time in which they are best comprehensible. Similarly to books, to which Pym mainly refers, films are the product of a specific context and this is evident not only in the verbal language used but also in the components that make up part of the image: geographic place, historical period, dress code, nonverbal signs of communication, cinematographic conventions, editing, formal qualities, and so on. This raises the issue of cultural specificity and of its transfer into another sociocultural universe. The definition of “culture-specific references” can encompass a wide range of elements, whose dynamics come into play in the transposition of humour from a thought-provoking and intertextual perspective.

A new category can be added to Formentelli and Monti’s method, that of “exemplification” (Calsamiglia and Van Dijk 2004, 369-389), thus leading to the pie chart below, in which we present the results drawn from the analysis of the corpus in an attempt to combine a qualitative evaluation, by reflecting on the nature of cultural references and humour, and a quantitative one, in terms of the different strategies implemented by translators. The results are: 12/22 examples of equivalence (respectively No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,), 4/22 of downgrading (No. 13, 14, 15, 16), 3/22 of omission (No. 17, 18, 19), 3/22 of exemplification (No. 20, 21, 22).



**Fig. 1:** Translation strategies used in the Italian dubbing of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

What primarily emerges from the pie chart is the translator's preference for a strategy of equivalence, which accounts for 54.55% of all translational choices (12 items). As illustrated in the extracts of dialogue exemplified above, the Italian translator tended to rely on procedures liable to create semantic (i.e. to render the diastatic variation, ex. 1, 2) and functional equivalence between the ST and the TT (such as in the case of the translation of idioms, ex. 8, 10 and of puns, ex. 11, 12), and to transpose the emotional charge and the pragmatic force that cultural aspects (i.e. the dichotomy Branson/Rothschild, ex. 6) have in the original film, for instance those relating to literature (ex. 7). These range from translational routines (ex. 3,4,5) typical of dubbing to creative expressions oriented to the target linguistic and cultural contexts. Ultimately, technical constraints of lip synchronization (ex. 9) also strongly influenced the translator's choices.

18.18% of the translations observed in the film script belong to the category of downtoning (4 items), mostly related to the impossibility of translating puns (ex. 15, 16).

Downtoning also includes the substitution of rough words (ex. 14) with milder colloquial expressions which preserve the informal style of the source text, though to the detriment of the vulgar and abusive nuances of the original. Finally, an example of downtoning (ex. 13) is due to a familiarity factor in the target culture.

Omission (3 items) represents 13.64% of the translational strategies employed by the translator. It is required in one item (ex. 17), because of the untranslatability of the word "sheep," referring to sex, in Italian.

In ex. 18, the Anglican reference to the *Book of Common Prayer* is omitted as well, with a consequent generalization of meaning. The case of the omission of "odd decision" (ex. 19), translated by a sentence which means almost the opposite in Italian, is evidently due to lip synchronization.

Finally, three cases of exemplification (3 items), representing 13.64% of all translational choices, have to be taken into account. They consist of further explanation given to an audience which may need it, such as in the addition of Charles' words "Discorso, Charlie" (through voice-over, in ex.20) to justify his speech (whereas in Britain, this is normal practice). Another case (ex. 21) is the addition of the name Michael Douglas, who is well known by an Italian audience, to explain the reference to the film *Fatal Attraction*. The third case is the translation of "Some of us are not gonna get married," by "Qualcuno di noi non è destinato al matrimonio" (ex. 22). Here, the concept of destiny, which is more typical of Italian-Catholic culture, takes the place of the future of intention in the source text.

Dubbing has been defined as "the quintessence of the art of translating" (Pavesi 2005, 17; Whitman-Linsen 1992, 147). It is also a form of *domestication*,<sup>11</sup> thus it makes a film arrive at a target audience as if it were

<sup>11</sup> The strategies of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' have been debated for hundreds of years, but the first scholar to formulate them in their modern sense was Lawrence Venuti in his *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. New York: Routledge, 1995.



recited by actors who look like speakers of the target language. A clear orientation can be claimed of dubbing towards the target language, followed by a limited influx of the source language. It is obvious that some situations exist in which the dubber, as any translator, faces cases of objective translational impossibility. This is also explained by the fact that in film translation any aesthetic or cultural reasoning has to undergo a final testing which is related to its industrial and commercial purpose.

To put it with Chiaro, “anyone who has ever tried to translate an English joke into another language will know that it is no easy task [...]. Similarly, when a joke in a foreign language is translated into English, results tend to be disastrous. Jokes, it would seem, travel badly” (1992, 77).

In addition to that, scholars such as Munday (2008) have noted that, despite its growing popularity, audio-visual translation shows a surprising lack of theoretical models that could properly account for its unique nature. Thus the need for integration of different approaches, so as to open up to broader ideological reflections on the data taken into analysis.

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