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The Italian Dubbing of Dialects, Accents and Slang in the British Dark Comedy Drama *Misfits*

Abstract

Although they are far from reflecting real interaction *stricto sensu*, TV series try to recreate a sort of idealised community. In order to do this, the language they use is based on those communicative patterns that are deemed prototypical for a given social group. It is therefore not surprising to find that stereotyped language variations are exploited in audiovisual texts to mark differences in social status. In particular, British TV dramas and films have often relied on such strategies to enhance dramatic characterisation. The British dark comedy drama *Misfits* proves to be an interesting example of the way British dialects, accents and slang are used to characterise its five young main characters. Each of them displays a peculiar accent, which reflects their social and personal background, yet they all also use contemporary slang that shows their willingness to be part of the same social group representing young people of all backgrounds. When dealing with such linguistic peculiarities, translators may resort to global strategies such as standardization to ensure the smooth processing of the target text, or opt for more creative solutions instead. Hence, this study investigates the strategies and procedures used to transfer *Misfits* into Italian. The comparative analysis of the English source text and its dubbed Italian counterpart shows that the characters' dialectal inflections have been replaced by standardised pronunciation. It goes without saying that this has led to significant losses in terms of connotation. However, the translator has attempted to compensate by means of a consistent use of Italian slang and swear words to convey the in-group bonding that such linguistic elements can create.

1. Introduction

The rapid advances in the production of audiovisual media and related technologies have led to an increased need for diversified ways to consume the products they create. Nowadays, films, TV series, documentaries, reality shows, and so on, can be watched in their original versions, subtitled, dubbed, in voice-over, partial dubbing (e.g. reality shows featuring

unsynchronised lip-movement and the original sound-track in the background) or audio-description. It is therefore not surprising that AVT has attracted a good deal of scholarly interest, which has been reflected in the proliferation of courses in AVT at the undergraduate and Master's level. Students' interest has also grown exponentially; many are willing to embark on academic research while others seek to acquire "hands-on" experience by providing their own translated versions of audiovisual works (Dore 2016, see in particular Chapters 2-5). An abundance of theoretical refinements has also attempted to provide sound frameworks that could assist empirical investigation, taking the ever-changing AVT landscape particularly into account (Chaume 2013: 105-123). If one considers Remael and Neves's (2007: 11-22) positive view that audiovisual translation in today's globalised world can promote social integration and help erase linguistic and cultural boundaries, exactly how this type of translation can be carried out needs to be investigated. In other words, scholars and researchers try to verify what is lost and what is gained while a text travels from the source to the target context (where context is used to include the verbal and non-verbal text along with its referential load), and what may be the underlying reasons that inform such changes. In Díaz Cintas's (2012) words:

[T]ranslating solely the linguistic component of any audiovisual material, without fully considering the rest of the information transmitted by the audio and visual channels, would spell disaster (…). As a site of discursive practice, audiovisual media and its translation play a special role in the articulation of cultural concepts such as *femininity*, *masculinity*, *race*, and *Otherness*, among others (emphasis in original; ibid. 281).

Under the heading of "Otherness" can be subsumed all those features that text receivers are likely to consider as different or distant from themselves. Hence, such features may also include all those nuances conveyed by dialects, accents and types of slang (or, more broadly, sociolects) that are employed in audiovisual materials to offer a comprehensive picture of a given, if often stereotyped, reality. As regards English, Ranzato correctly affirms that students of English are usually exposed to Standard English and Received Pronunciation (RP) in their classes; consequently, when training to

become translators, they find themselves at pains to detect language variations. She therefore calls for the need to expose students, from a very early stage, «to literary and audiovisual programmes which reflect the varied linguistic and social specificities of other cultures» (Ranzato 2010: 110). By doing so, both trainee and professional translators are provided with those tools that will help them to develop a sound understanding of the socio-cultural context within which the source text is produced. In turn, this understanding will inform their decision-making process.

Generally speaking, translators tend to comply with the social norms, behaviours and conventions set out by the professional context they work in and the dominant ideology embedded in it (Toury 1995; Chesterman 1997). Consequently, the transfer of the source text (ST) into the target language and culture is bound to undergo inescapable manipulation. Nonetheless, much still needs to be investigated regarding manipulation as a form of re-writing (Lefevere 1985). As far as Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is concerned, Pérez-González (2014: 65-85) sees manipulation as an example of interventionist practice involving audiovisual media translators, audiences and markets. However, he also places great emphasis on the increasing involvement of consumers of audiovisual works today (a.k.a. prosumers), and offers a comprehensive account of this phenomenon (e.g. fansubbing in cyberculture; Ibid).

With these premises in mind, the present study seeks to contribute to the ongoing research on how dialects, accents and slang are tackled in AVT and how they influence or affect translation practice. In particular, when dubbing is employed, language- and culture-specific issues usually get «lost in translation» (Ranzato 2010: 110). Using this AVT mode implies a set of constraints but also advantages for the translator and translating team (i.e. lip-synchronisation, complete replacement of the original sound-track, etc.) that lead to a necessary *technical manipulation* of the text (Díaz Cintas 2012: 284). However, this also results in parts of the original texts being toned down, modified or omitted, especially if they refer to sensitive or taboo topics (e.g. scatological and sexual references, political and religious issues, and so on); such interventions are instances of *ideological manipulation* (Ibid.

285). Ideological manipulation is certainly a fascinating aspect of AVT, and it is therefore not surprising that two special issues of international journals devoted to Translation Studies recently concentrated on this phenomenon (respectively, Díaz Cintas 2012 and Díaz Cintas, Parini, Ranzato 2016). The aim of the present analysis is to consider the possible technical and ideological reasons that have led to manipulation in the translation of the first series of the British dark comedy drama *Misfits* (Howard Overman, 2009-2013).

2. Dialects, accents and teenage language

Dialects, accents and slang are inherent elements of human communication. Before discussing these features, in order to effectively understand verbal communication, a brief look at the concepts put forward in accommodation theory may be instructive. According to Giles *et al.* (1991), accommodation is defined as follows:

[A] multiply organized and contextually complex set of alternatives, ubiquitously available to communicators in face-to-face-talk. It can function as a way to index and achieve solidarity with or dissociation from a controversial partner reciprocally and dynamically (Ibid.: 2).

Consequently, solidarity is achieved via "convergence", which can be described as the strategy interactants use so as to adapt to each other's communicative behaviours, including linguistic, prosodic and non-verbal features. Conversely, "divergence" is a strategy individuals use to mark a distance between themselves and their interlocutors. In this light, dialectal forms and accents, as well as slang, can be seen as ways to achieve convergent or divergent communication among individuals, depending on the context or situation (Ibid.: 7-9).

Dialects still maintain a considerable social relevance in a wide variety of countries and social contexts (Marrano *et al.* 2009). This paper espouses Hatim and Mason's (1997) working definition according to which a dialect is a language variety that marks the interlocutors' identity due to social and

regional origin (e.g. Cockney or Estuary English, Scot, etc.). Indeed, as Steffensen (2012: 511) observes, «[i]n natural speech situations, accents tell our interlocutors who we are. They identify us as bearers of certain social identities». Accents can be described as the phonological part of dialects, whereas slang, by contrast, is defined as «a variety of language that is used by a restricted part of the population» (Brown *et al.* 2014: 131).

Dialects, accents and slang reflect communicative patterns that are believed to be prototypical for a given social group (Giles *et al.* 1991: 18). As other aspects of human communication and social interaction that attempt to «maintain a sense of community or fellowship» (Wilson 2007: 77), dialects, accents and slang can serve convergent communicative purposes because they can foster in-group membership. However, they can also be employed for divergent communicative purposes, aimed at *excluding* others. Labov's 1963 classic example of Martha's Vineyard, a small island off Massachusetts, demonstrated how the young men on the island preferred speaking in a sort of old-fashioned accent when dealing with tourists rather than in Standard English as a way to mark their distance from the outsiders (quoted in Brown *et al.* 2014: 121). In other words, they wanted to reaffirm their belonging to a specific speech community that was limited in spatial and linguistic terms (i.e. an island). Speech communities can therefore be described as sharing «the rules with which language is produced and interpreted in at least one variety of language» (Ibid.: 97) and are formed by «people who have habitual contact with each other and have developed a shared use of language, with a common lexicon and language practices» (Ranzato 2015: 161).

As mentioned earlier, this study concentrates on a TV series depicting mainly young people. Hence, it is important to identify those elements that shape and mark the naturally occurring language the series attempts to replicate. According to Ranzato (Ibid.: 162), teenage speech displays a series of communicative patterns that include an extensive use of metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, and affixation, for semantic exaggeration purposes; as well as apocope, forms of dialectal origin, loan words (i.e. Anglicisms and Hispanisms or pseudo-Hispanisms), slang words, technical or sectorial terms,

playful deformations, and informal address strategies, such as *tutoyer*, or calling everyone by their first name, and so on. Hence, young people seem more prone to express themselves via highly creative language. Although youth talk has always been considered an alternative to mainstream standard language, Ranzato's findings can be easily linked to today's globalised world, which has dramatically increased our exposure to other cultures and languages, as reflected in the use of Anglicisms and Hispanisms. This is mainly due to new waves of immigration and, more importantly, to the availability of huge amounts of AVT materials.

Although they are far from reflecting real interaction *strict sensu*, TV series try to recreate a sort of idealised community (Wamsler 2007: 5). To be sure, they do create what Baños Piñero and Chaume (2009) describe as *prefabricated orality*, which «does not lie so much in trying to imitate spontaneous conversations, but in selecting specific features of this mode of discourse that are widely accepted and recognised as such by the audience». Hence, in the case of teenage speech, TV series based on the life and experiences of young people are likely to include many, if not all, of the elements Ranzato mentions in her work. By the same token, their translation may strive to retain those elements as far as possible.

Regarding *Misfits*, it stands to reason to affirm that it attempts to replicate a teenage speech community through the language of its main characters. Being part of the same age group, they are pictured as sharing the same contemporary British slang, which serves as a convergent communicative strategy. However, language also becomes a tool to mark their different social backgrounds as well as the fact that the characters did not actually *choose* to be part of the group. They are forced into habitual contact because they have been all sentenced to work in a community service programme due to their social misconduct. Hence, idiosyncratic dialectal features and accents are exploited to enhance the idea of a multifaceted reality; indeed, the characters seem to have been created to represent an ethnically and geographically mixed group that represents Great Britain (Zotevska 2013: 6).

According to the guidelines provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the five main characters can be described as follows: Kelly Bailey (Lauren Socha), Simon Bellamy (Iwan Rheon) and Nathan Young (Robert Sheehan) are of a white British background; Curtis Donovan (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) is black and Alisha (Antonia Thomas) is of ethnically mixed origin (black and white). From a linguistic standpoint, they are connoted as follows: Alisha speaks with a Cockney accent while Simon speaks Estuary English; Kelly has a strong Northern accent (from the Derby area) whereas Nathan is Irish and consequently has a marked Irish accent; finally, Curtis speaks with a Jamaican-London-Street accent. As for Cockney and Estuary English, Ranzato (2010: 113) summarises their typical phonetic and grammatical elements, which include:

· "th" fronting, which involves the replacement of the dental fricatives, /θ/ and /ð/ by labiodentals [f] and [v] respectively, as in words like "mother" (muvver) and "think" (fink);
· dropped "h", as in "house" ('ouse);
· "t"-glottalisation: use of the glottal stop as an allophone of /t/ in various positions, especially the use of a glottal stop for intervocalic /t/, as in "bottle" or "butter". Also /p,t,k/ are almost invariably glottalised in the final position;
· many vowel and diphthong alterations, including /eɪ/ → [æɪ~aɪ] as in take = tyke; /aʊ/ may be [æə] or a monophthongal [æ~aː] as in round = raand, house = 'aase;
· vocalisation of dark "l", thus [mɪok] for "milk";
· use of "ain't" instead of "isn't", "am not", "are not", "has not", and "have not";
· use of "me" instead of "my".

Some of these features have also been identified as part of other dialectal variants used in *Misfits*. This may depend on the fact that the characters from other British regions live in London and are therefore in constant contact with Cockney and Estuary English speakers. Hence, they may have picked up some elements of the local language variety. For instance, Kelly's Derby accent, which shares several features with the Manchester dialect due to their proximity, appears to be marked, among other things, by a range of voiced variants of intervocalic /t/, including [ɹ] and [ɾ]. However, [ɹ] appears to be restricted to a small set of lexical items, mostly in the final

position (e.g. "get off", "what if", "that is"). Kelly also displays the vocalisation of dark /l/ and t-glottalisation (e.g. "better" and "getting"), which has generally been developing in northern accents. As for vowels, young people in the north of England seem to have developed the monophthongal variants [eː] and [oː] for "face" [eɪ] and "goat" [əʊ], as well as [ʊ] for "sun" [ʌ], and these can be found in Kelly's speaking pattern as well (cf. the examples in Section 4.1 for "us" and "gun"). As for grammar, Northern dialects also display the use of "me" instead of "my" (cf. Foulkes and Docherty 1999 for a comprehensive overview). Kelly also uses "ain't" instead of "am not", and so on.

Curtis's London Jamaican (Sebba 1993) is geographically influenced by its proximity to Cockney and Estuary English. In general, his speech features specific elements proceeding from the Jamaican English variant, e.g. backing of /k/ before low back vowels to [q], reinstatement of /h/ in lexical words and stressed pronouns, while dropping the "h" if not in an initial position, e.g. "t'ing" for "thing"; [d] for [th] and lengthened fricative, such as sibilant [sː] in initial position. Yet again, Curtis's speaking pattern also includes the use of "th" fronting if not in initial position. As for the lexis, London Jamaican is influenced by vernacular items such as "shite" for "shit", or slang such as "blood" for "friend", "ends" for "one's place of residence", and so on (Cf. Sebba and Tate 2002, and Kerswill 2014). However, Curtis makes use of a more general youth language (e.g. the invariant tag "innit", "get done for", "prick", and so on).

This overview of the *Misfits* characters concludes with a brief description of Nathan's Irish accent, while skirting the lengthy debate (cf. McWilliams 2005, quoted in Hickey 2007: 180) over Hiberno-English (hybrid English and local language) and Malahidialect (the youth speech in an affluent suburb in Dublin) as it falls beyond the scope of this paper. This summary, therefore, shall be limited to the most relevant observations regarding Irish English as spoken by young people today, and which Nathan's speech patterns also display. These include high rhoticity, the retraction of diphthongs with a low or back starting point (e.g. "toy" [tɒɪ] or [tɔɪ], [toɪ]), raising low back vowels, alveolar /l/, retracted /a/

before /r/, Yod-deletion after sonorants in stressed syllables ([nu:z] and [lu:t] for "news" and "lute" respectively), GOAT-diphthongisation, similar to Received Pronunciation ([gəʊt]), MOUTH-fronting (i.e. [mɛʊt]) and retracted /a/ before /r/ (Hickey 2007: 182).

As for the five main characters' slang, the findings of the present study are consistent with Zotevska's (2013) detailed analysis of the first two seasons of *Misfits*. She explains that all characters share a *general slang* (i.e. the use of words unrelated to a particular group or trend), yet there are also instances of *specific slang* (i.e. typical of a group; Stenström 2000: 101, quoted in Zotevska 2013: 16-19); the latter are mostly uttered by Nathan. *General slang* includes vocatives and terms of address and general slang words ("mate", "man", "bruv" for "brother") along with other slang words. Unsurprisingly, the teenage slang in *Misfits* is imbued with taboo words and abusive language (e.g. "bastard", "prick", "freak", "psycho", "chav", and so on) coupled with intensifiers ("fucking be here"), expletives ("that's bollocks") and prepositional verbs (e.g. "dicking around"). Interestingly, Zotevska (2013) highlights Nathan's linguistic creativity, which is reflected in his ability to come up with slang words that become part of the characters' in-grouping way of talking (e.g. "melon fucker" to offend Simon, or "virtue-virgins" and "virtue-bitch" to refer to brainwashed conservative girls as they appear in Episode 6). Pragmatic markers such as intensifiers ("well", "proper"), hedges ("like") and appealers (invariant "innit" and "yeah") are also extensively used (Ibid. 20-29). Clearly, slang is used to communicate and build the teenagers' group identity.

As can be seen above, dialects and accents and slang are inherently linked to the socio-cultural setting within which a text is created. Slang can find equivalents in other languages, while accents and dialects cannot. As discussed earlier in this paper, in audiovisual texts all these three elements can be used as geographical markers and reality-enhancing factors (Hudson 1996; Culpeper 2001). However, dialects and accents are bound to be lost in translation when dubbing is used (although some exceptions can be found, as explained in Section 3 below). It is therefore not surprising that translators and dubbing teams may resort to other devices to compensate for such

losses. Slang may also be used to this end, as the data analysis that follows shall demonstrate. First, however, a discussion of Italian dubbing and the way it handles these phenomena may be useful.

3. Italian Dubbing

Although by now the long-standing distinction between subtitling and dubbing countries is becoming blurred (Chaume 2013: 120), it is a matter of fact that most mainstream audiovisual productions on the big and small screen in Italy are broadcast using dubbing. The dubbing tradition in Italy dates back to the 1920s and 1930s and developed over time to become an increasingly refined art. However, this AVT mode brings with it a whole set of constraints that lead to the technical manipulation of the text and the consequent loss of language- and culture-specific nuances contained in the ST. Before analysing how manipulation is carried out in the data under scrutiny, a brief description of Italian TV broadcasting is in order.

State-owned RAI and private-owned Mediaset are the biggest national TV networks, which also claim the lion's share in terms of viewing rates; other national albeit minor networks are La 7 and TV8. Both RAI and Mediaset offer a variety of major and minor channels, which started cropping up soon after the digital revolution. RAI 1, 2 and 3 are the oldest channels and therefore occupy a prime position, whereas other channels, such as RAI 4, which mainly shows first-time broadcasts and re-runs of TV series, and RAI YoYo, which airs cartoons and other children's fare, hold a secondary position. Similarly, Mediaset's Canale 5, Rete 4 and Italia 1 are the oldest and most popular channels offering mainstream content such as talk shows, national and international TV series; Italia 1, in particular, devotes part of its programming to US teenage TV series. Conversely, channels such as La 5, Iris, Top Crime and Cartoonito offer dedicated programmes or re-runs of mainstream TV programmes. Content broadcasting is regulated by governmental norms that allow for the broadcasting of sensitive material (i.e. inappropriate for over-fourteen viewers) only after 22:30, which is after Italian prime time, whereas adult-

only programmes are banned altogether (Chiaro 2007; Zanotti 2012). Besides, all major and minor networks provide viewing guidelines before or during broadcasts to advise parental control: programmes are marked as: 1) unsuitable for children, 2) suitable if viewing is supervised by an adult and 3) suitable for the whole family. Needless to say, due to its particular content and language, *Misfits* was broadcast by RAI 4 after 23:00.

All national networks broadcast a large number of internationally acclaimed US TV series and films (*Friends*, *House*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Blue Bloods*, *Elementary*, etc.), as well as a limited amount of European productions (e.g. British *Downton Abbey*, Spanish *Física o Química*, German *Alarm für Cobra 11*). As explained above, this paper particularly focuses on dialects, accents and slang in Italian dubbing. Unfortunately, the nuances in terms of social belonging and identity that such elements can convey are usually lost in dubbing and, in general, little is done or can be done to maintain them. Italian dubbing tends to naturalise dialectal features in AVT by replacing them with expressions and lexicon that may be incorrect or highly informal, but do not mark the character geographically (Ranzato 2010: 112). A few exceptions can be found when the accent is foreign, such as a French or Spanish accent on English or German lips. The usual procedure is to retain such accents in the target text (TT) so that the foreign character speaks Italian with a marked accent (e.g. in Tarantino's 2009 film *Inglourious Basterds*, the German character Hans Landa retains his accent in Italian). Also, genres play a fundamental role in deciding whether an accent or a dialect can be retained or replaced by a TL variety. For instance, US productions featuring Italian-American characters are often dubbed into Italian using Sicilian and Southern accents (Ibid.). Similarly, cartoons may be creatively manipulated in order to retain the perlocutionary function of the text (Dore 2009). Other solutions may be stigmatised as considered politically incorrect, e.g. replacing a source language dialect or accents with one in the target language (Di Giovanni *et al.* 1994; Steffensen 2012).

Dialects and accents are certainly a delicate issue that may require special handling, and their transfer is likely to be subject to the careful scrutiny of the audiovisual work at hand. For instance, Ranzato's (2010:

120-121) analysis of the ways Cockney and Estuary English are dubbed into Italian shows how the loss of these dialectal features can be compensated for by the creative exploitation of the target language, by using rhymes, for example, or unusual prosody, or a sort of unlocalised variety of language). Indeed, resorting to compensatory strategies is a trend generally used in dubbing (cf. also Arampatzis 2012 and his analysis of humour based on the exploitation of British English and New York dialects in American sitcoms, as well as its Spanish dubbing).

Slang dubbing has also been the centre of much scholarly attention, especially when referring to teenage language. For instance, Ranzato (2015) concentrates on characters' youth language in the British TV series *Skins* (Bryan Elsley and Jamie Brittain, 2007-2013). Standard English, Bristol, Cockney and other accents are all dubbed in standard Italian. However, a juvenile set of expressions (e.g. neologisms, hyperboles, slang words and occasional swearing), coupled with target culture references, were used to compensate for the losses in accent in some characters (Ranzato 2015: 173). Although not restricted to teenage talk, it seems appropriate to include taboo language and swearing as part of young people's slang (Beseghi 2016), especially as far as *Misfits* is concerned, as they strongly connote the main characters of the series (Zotevska 2013: 14).

As demonstrated by many scholars thus far, dubbing in general and Italian dubbing in particular tend to manipulate and tone down sensitive and taboo language (especially referring to sex), to the extent that the TT incurs losses in terms of characterisation and style (Munday 2006; Chiaro 2007; Bucaria 2007; Dore 2008). It is therefore not surprising to find that such mitigation strategies are particularly used when dealing with youth films. As Zanotti (2012: 352) observes, «[w]hen it comes to linguistic transfer, youth films appear to be the privileged site of censorship and manipulation". As Zanotti herself acknowledges, this was probably done «in order to make the films acceptable to the board of censors and the Italian audience, while at the same time making them more palatable for the local market in order to ensure large profits" (Ibid. 366). However, it should be pointed out that Zanotti's diachronic investigation, in this case, concentrates on teenage films

produced in 1970s. Hence, the dilution, toning down or total omission of sensitive language easily relates to the specific cultural Italian context of that time, which still considered TV as a vehicle for the audience's general education (Danan 1991). Nonetheless, recent studies have confirmed that the commissioning network plays a significant role in allowing different degrees of translation freedom when dealing with swearing (Ranzato 2010, Beseghi 2016).

Interestingly, Liucci's (2013) investigation of the dubbed version of the first *Misfits* season shows the opposite trend. She demonstrates that, in this case, swearing has been maintained as much as possible and as far as technical constraints allowed it. After interviewing the professionals involved in the dubbing of the series, Liucci concludes that this more lenient approach to taboo language may be due to unconscious choices rather than instructions and guidelines the professionals received (ibid. 40-41). Be that as it may, this revealing data shows that such a strategy may be seen as a compensatory strategy to counter the loss of dialectal nuances such as accents.

4. Misfits

Misfits (Howard Overman, 2009-2013) is a British dark comedy TV drama (or dramedy) that ran for five seasons and was broadcast on E4 from 12 November 2009 to 11 December 2013. It was nominated for several awards and won the BAFTA 2010 Television Award for Best Drama Series. It features a group of young offenders that have been sentenced to work in a community service program in southwest London. After a sudden electric storm that strikes them on their first day of community service, they discover they have supernatural powers.

Due to the many cast changes that occurred over the course of the five seasons, the first season was analysed for the purposes of the present study. It comprises six 45' episodes featuring the five main characters I mentioned earlier in Section 2. Alisha's anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) is due to repeated drink-driving, and her superpower is the ability to sexually arouse

anyone who touches her. She is characterised as a woman who is extremely comfortable with her sexuality and body, and she comes from a middle-class background. Simon was slapped with his ASBO for attempted arson and can become invisible; he is characterised as often ignored and unappreciated. Kelly's ASBO is due to her starting a fight, and she gains the power of telepathy; due to her appearance (i.e. her flashy jewellery, sportswear, pony tail, heavy make-up), she is characterised as a *chav* or *chavette*, which is a derogative term that usually describes British lower-class young people. Curtis, caught in possession of cocaine, can manipulate time and change the course of events. His hopes to become a professional sportsman are dashed after the sentence, as he was publicly shamed for being a bad example for young people. Lastly, Nathan is sentenced for theft and assault; he does not discover his ability until he falls off a roof during a fight; while in the coffin, in fact, he realises he is immortal. He is characterised as being extremely witty and talkative, sarcastic and outlandish.

In a nutshell, the first series starts with a thunderstorm that drives the group's Probation Worker Tony (Danny Sapani) insane, and Kelly kills him in self-defence. Tony's girlfriend Sally suspects that all five youngsters are involved in Tony's disappearance and pretends to be attracted to Simon so as to get more information. When she discovers what happened, Sally and Simon have a fight and he accidentally kills her. In the meantime, the gang finds out that Rachel, a young girl who gained the power of suggestion, is brainwashing everyone and converting them to ultra-conservative behaviour. The series ends with Nathan and Rachel killing each other and the brainwashed young people being freed from the spell.

The program has been marketed internationally and translated into various languages, including French, Spanish, German, etc. In Italy, *Misfits* was first broadcast in 2012 by Fox Italia (satellite) and towards the end of the same year by state-owned channel RAI 4. As anticipated in Section 3, due to its coarse language and taboo topics, the show was broadcast after 22:30.

5. Data Analysis

In today's globalised world, the English language retains its dominant position. Hence, the translation of *Misfits* into Italian can be seen as an example of downstream translation, i.e. a translation from a dominant into a dominated language (Gottlieb 2014: 28). To date, apart from Liucci's study, there do not appear to be any other studies dealing with the translation of *Misfits* into Italian or other languages, be it dubbed or subtitled. As mentioned earlier, Liucci's analysis of the Italian dubbing of this TV series focuses in particular on the transfer of taboo language. The present study concentrates on the first series to investigate how dialectal expressions and accents have been handled in Italian. Due to space limitations, only a limited number of examples shall be discussed and will hopefully suffice to clarify the handling of such features in Italian.

In general, of all the five main characters, Kelly has received the most attention due to her accent, which is highly divergent from RP. Both Italians and native speakers who watched *Misfits* in English commented on the Internet about her speaking patterns[1]. The accents are reported graphically using italics, as close to their pronunciation as possible, to show how they depart from RP. Also, Nathan's high rhoticity, emphasis and other highly deviant pronunciation patterns are highlighted by the use of capitals. Each example provided below includes the English original, the Italian dubbed version and a gloss.

Example (1) is taken from the very beginning of Episode 1, when the group of young offenders meets their Probation Worker (PB), Tony. He gives them a brief speech about the values of community services. As soon as Kelly speaks, thus codifying her accent, she becomes the butt of the jokes by her co-workers, who refer to her accent through mocking comments (i.e. non-codified use of accent; Arampatzis 2012: 71):

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1 Cf. for instance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wgcOsTY1iY (in English) and https://www.facebook.com/Laccento-di-Kelly-Kellys-accent-in-Misfits-166940386696646/ (English and Italian) and related comments (last accessed 03/08/2016).

1	English	Italian	Back translation
	Tony: We need to work as a team here. [Curtis and Gary are fighting] Hey, that's enough.	**Tony:** Sentite, dobbiamo lavorare come squadra. Ehi, fatela finita.	**Tony:** Listen, we need to work as a team here. Hey, stop it.
	Curtis: Can I move to a different group? This isn't gonna work *fo'* me.	**Curtis:** Posso cambiare gruppo? Questo non va bene per me.	**Curtis:** Can I move to another group? This isn't good for me.
	Kelly: What makes you *fink* you're *be'er* than *oz*?	**Kelly:** Ehm, <u>se non te ne fotte niente</u>, puoi <u>piantarci</u> qui.	**Kelly:** Ehm, if you <u>don't give a fuck</u>, you <u>can dump us</u> here.
	Nathan: What IS that accent?	**Nathan:** Ma come <u>cazzo</u> parli?	**Nathan:** How <u>the fuck</u> do you speak?
	Curtis: Is that *fo'* real?	**Curtis:** Lo fai apposta?	**Curtis:** Are you doing it on purpose?
	Kelly: *Wha*? Are you trying to say *somethin'* out, *yah*?	**Kelly:** Che c'è? Avete qualcosa da dire?	**Kelly:** What's up? Do you have something to say?
	Nathan: It's... That's just a noise. Are we supposed to be able to undeRstand her?	**Nathan:** Questo è solo un mucchio di suoni? Non si capisce una parola quando parla.	**Nathan:** That's just a lot of sounds. You can't understand a word she says.
	Kelly: *D'you understan'* that? [she shows him her middle finger]	**Kelly:** Questo lo capisci?	**Kelly:** Do you understand *this*?

As can be seen above, Kelly's original first line includes "th"-fronting ("fink") and "t"-glottalisation, which are typical of Cockney and Estuary English. She pronounces "us" as [ʊ] as people from the north of England do (cf. Section 2 above). In her following turns, Kelly uses the final tag "yah" and often drops the last consonant of words (e.g. "wha'", "somethin'" and "understan'") as typical of spoken English. Interestingly, Kelly's first line

does not include any swearing while the Italian translation displays a vulgar and an extremely colloquial verb (respectively "fottere" and "piantare"). Similarly, Nathan's first line in Italian includes a swearword not present in the English version. Comparatively, both Curtis's original and translated second lines underscore the implied mocking at Kelly's accent. She correctly interprets Nathan and Curtis's criticism and defends herself by challenging them; then Nathan quickly spells out the fact that Kelly's way of talking is almost unintelligible. The translator has clearly struggled to convey the meaning and potential humour of this exchange in Italian, since Kelly speaks with a standard Italian accent. Hence, s/he has probably tried to compensate by suggesting that her slang is very marked and they cannot understand how she speaks. All in all, the humour is retained by the matching of the verbal text with the image of Kelly giving her co-worker the middle finger. This contributes to picturing her as someone of a lower-class background and is consistent with her general image as a *chavette*.

Example (2), taken from Episode 2, further confirms this pattern. In this scene, after finding out that his mother's fiancée goes around the city naked and behaving like a dog (rummaging in trash bins, licking people's faces, and so on), Nathan asks Kelly to find him a gun. He turns to her out of the biased idea that Kelly is more likely to be able to get Nathan a weapon than anybody else in the group:

2	English	Italian	Back translation
	Nathan: Can you get me a gun?	**Nathan:** Trovami una pistola.	**Nathan:** Find me a gun.
	Kelly: I *ain't* getting you a *gon*.	**Kelly:** Io non ti trovo nulla.	**Kelly:** I don't find nothing for you.
	Nathan: *C'mon*. Just a little one. Nothing too laiRy.	**Nathan:** Andiamo, <u>tu sai come fare</u>. Una piccola. Niente di appariscente.	**Nathan:** Com on, <u>you know how to do it</u>. A small one. Nothing too showy.
	Kelly: There's no way	**Kelly:** Non procurerò	**Kelly:** There's no way I'm

I'm getting a <u>dickhead</u> like you a *gon*.	mai… a una <u>testa di cazzo</u> come te una pistola.	gettinga <u>dickhead</u> like you a gun.

Like for "us", Kelly's pronunciation of "gun" is markedly that of a northerner, while her use of Cockney "ain't" shows how this dialectal variant has developed across the country. Nathan's "c'mon" shows a typically colloquial and spoken pattern, but his use of the word "lairy" connotes it as British slang[2]. Again, his pronunciation of "r" is markedly Irish. In this excerpt, Kelly's slang is retained in Italian ("testa di cazzo" for "dickhead") whereas Nathan's is slightly toned down (i.e. "appariscente" for "lairy"). Liucci suggests that Kelly in Italian appears to be less negatively marked because of the more feminine voice used to dub her, compared to Lauren Socha's original, more masculine voice (Liucci 2014: 35). However, as demonstrated here, the Italian dubbed version reinforces the stereotype regarding Kelly and *chavettes*. Nathan's line "tu sai come fare" (you know how to do it) instead of "Just a little one" presupposes Kelly's familiarity with crime, which includes illegal weapon possession. It stands to reason to suggest that the use of slang coupled with reinforced stereotyped views about the characters are likely to serve as compensatory strategies.

Example (3) is again taken from Episode 1. The five main characters are trying to find out the reason why each one is doing community service. In this scene, Curtis reveals he was caught for drug possession:

3	English	Italian	Back translation
	Alisha: No one gets *commun'y* service for possession.	**Alisha:** Non fai servizio sociale per possesso di droga.	**Alisha:** You don't do community service for possessing drugs.
	Curtis: If it *'as* anyone else, they'd have got a caution. I get 200 hours' community service	**Curtis:** Se fossi stato un altro avrei preso una multa. A me hanno dato	**Curtis:** If I'd been anyone else, I got a fine. They gave me 200 hours' community service and a

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2   Cf.   Cambridge   Dictionary   online   at: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lairy (last accessed: 03/08/2016)

and a TWO-year ban from *affletics*. They said cos of my profile they needed to send a message.	200 ore di servizio sociale e una squalifica di due anni. Hanno detto che visto cosa rappresento, dovevano mandare un messaggio.	two-year ban. They said that considering what I represent, they needed to send a message.
Nathan: You let yourself *deun*. [Alicia laughs] You let the kids *deun*. You let you parents *deun*.	**Nathan:** Sei solo una grande delusione. Hai deluso i bambini, hai deluso i tuoi genitori, hai deluso la tua gente.	**Nathan:** You're just a big disappointment. You disappointed the kids, you disappointed your parents, you disappointed your people.
Curtis: [moving towards him and shouting] <u>Shut the fuck up</u>!	**Curtis:** Chiudi quella bocca, <u>pezzo di merda</u>!	**Curtis:** Shut up your mouth, <u>piece of shit</u>!
Nathan: Your people *deun*.	-	-
Curtis: All I ever did was train. You know *noffin'*! I shouldn't even <u>fucking</u> be *'ere*.	**Curtis:** Non ho fatto che allenarmi. Non dovrei essere qui, <u>cazzo</u>.	**Curtis:** I have done nothing but train! I shouldn't be here, <u>fuck.</u>

Alisha's Cockney accent is readily recognisable by her "t"-glottisation of "t" in "community" whereas Curtis displays "h"-dropping in "has" and "here" and "th"-fronting in "athletics" and "nothing". Nathan's pronunciation of "down" [ɛʊ] deviates from RP /daʊn/. Once again, the Italian version shows the insertion of taboo language where the English version has none. Curtis's "you know noffin'" becomes an abusive term of address, i.e. "pezzo di merda" (piece of shit). Moreover, the intensifier in "fucking be 'ere" is retained by using the swearword "cazzo" at the end of Curtis's line, which also conveys the spontaneity of spoken Italian. Interestingly, Curtis is shown in close-up, but the context probably does not require perfect lip-synchronisation as the action is rather quick: Curtis shouts and shoves Nathan, which may also explain why Nathan's second turn is included in the

first one. Interestingly, such a technical constraint has often led to specific manipulation in dubbing (Luyken *et al* 1991; Pavesi and Perego 2006; Dore 2008). However, it does not seem to explain why, in Episode 3, Curtis's "oh, man!" is replaced by "oh, merda!" (oh, shit) since Curtis is seen from behind. Rather, it may be a further demonstration that the dubbing team resorted to taboo language as a compensatory device for Curtis's London-Jamaican accent.

As mentioned earlier, Nathan is the most creative speaker in the whole group in terms of linguistic manipulation. He creates rhymes and neologisms and playfully deforms language (Ranzato 2015). Moreover, he also makes ample use of extremely vulgar slang, swearing and blasphemy. The dubbing team seems to have attempted to retain these features as much as possible (as also confirmed by Liucci's analysis). In example (4) from Episode 5, all the five characters are talking about the fact that someone seems to be spying on them and accusing them of murdering the PB:

4	English	Italian	Back translation
	Kelly: We never did find out who was *puttin'* notes in our lockers.	**Kelly:** Non abbiamo più trovato messaggi negli armadietti.	**Kelly:** We didn't find any more messages in our lockers.
	Nathan: *Wha'* did I say? I said they had *noffing*. They were just *pissin'* in the wind.	**Nathan:** Ve l'avevo detto no? Non sa niente nessuno. Stavano solo pisciando a vento.	**Nathan:** I told you, didn't I? Nobody knows anything. They were just pissing in the wind.
	Curtis: You don't know what they got on us.	**Curtis:** Non puoi esserne sicuro.	**Curtis:** You cannot be sure.
	Simon: Maybe they're *watchin'* us *righ'* now.	**Simon:** Magari ci stanno guardando proprio ora.	**Simon:** Maybe they're watching us right now.
	Nathan: *Thisshit* is old *nuz*. We've outfoxed the fox,	**Nathan:** Basta con queste <u>stronzate</u>. Siamo più furbi di una volpe. Siamo stati	**Nathan:** Stop this <u>bullshit</u>. We are slyer than a fox. We have

which makes us very *blAAdy fAxy*. [Kelly laughs] You like that, huh? Yeah.	<u>fottutamente</u> <u>braviii</u>. Ti piace eh? Sì!	been fucking gooood. Do you like, uh? Yes.

As in standard Irish, Nathan pronounces "news" as [nu:z] (Hickey 2007: 184). Unlike standard Irish, Nathan does use "noffin", and this may depend on the contact with Cockney and Estuary English, at least from a fictional point of view. Like other characters, Nathan also drops "t" in "what", the "g" in the gerund form of most (or all) main verbs and links together two words when ending and beginning with "s" ("thisshit"). As mentioned earlier, these are all features of spoken English that are probably used to reinforce the attempt to convey a close reflection of everyday spoken language (Baños Piñero and Chaume 2009). Interestingly, the colourful slang expression "pissing in the wind" (i.e. "to be trying to do something when there is no hope of succeeding"[3]) does not exist in Italian, or at least not in the sense it is used in English. However, the dubbing team translated it literally probably because, being a rather transparent metaphor, it conveys the intended original meaning within the context it is uttered. Finally, Nathan's playful distortion of language and exaggerated pronunciation ("outfoxed the fox" and "blAAdy fAxy") are compensated by taboo language and distorted pronunciation ("fottutamente braviii").

Alisha's Cockney accent is further shown in example (5) below. In this scene, taken from Episode 3, she is giving vent to her frustration over the fact that her power makes all men who touch her sexually aroused. Consequently, she often risks getting raped:

5	English	Italian	Back translation
	Curtis: I'm gonna stay	**Curtis:** Me ne starò qui.	**Curtis:** I'll stay here…

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3   Cf.   Cambridge   Dictionary,   online   at: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/be-pissing-in-the-wind   and   Urban Dictionary: http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=piss+in+the+wind (last accessed: 03/08/2016)

over *'ere, a'right*?	Va bene?	OK?
Alisha: It used to be a good *fing, y'know*… people *wan'in'* to *'ave* sex *wif* you. It was nice. Now *i'sshit*. I don't know if someone actually wants to sleep *wif* me, or if it's just this *bOllshit.*	**Alisha:** Prima era una cosa così naturale… <u>Mi è sempre piaciuto fare sesso, era bello</u>… Ora è uno <u>schifo</u>. Non so se uno è davvero attratto da me o se è solo questa <u>merda</u>.	**Alisha:** Before, it was such a natural thing… <u>I always liked having sex, it was nice</u>… Now it's <u>disgusting</u>. I don't know if one [man] is really attracted to me or if it's just this <u>shit</u>.
Curtis: Guys still *wanna* have sex *wif'you*.	**Curtis:** <u>Tutti</u> vogliono fare sesso con te.	**Curtis:** <u>Everybody</u> wants to have sex with you.
Alisha: You *didn'.*	**Alisha:** Tu non volevi.	**Alisha:** You didn't want to.
Curtis: I did. *Jus' no'* like *da'.*	**Curtis:** Sì invece. Solo non così.	**Curtis:** Yes, I did. Just not like that.

All the italicized items in the ST above are typical instances of Cockney dialectal pronunciation ("t"-fronting in "fing" for "'hing" and "wif" for "with", dropping "h" in "'ave" for "have", and so on; Ranzato 2010) and spoken English ("y'know", "wanna", "didn'"). Similarly, Curtis's turns display such patterns (e.g. "h"-dropping in "'ere" and "t"-fronting in "wif"). Consistent with the patterns of Jamaican English, Curtis's third turn shows the use of [d] for [th] when in initial position ("da'" for "that"). Interestingly, in the ST Alisha's utterance means that she likes the fact men find her attractive. Conversely, her turn in Italian characterises Alisha as someone who enjoys sex very much. This example of manipulation probably portrays Alisha slightly differently, although it is consistent with the way the audience and the other characters perceive her. Curtis's second turn in Italian not only confirms this but it also seems to suggest that everybody (not only men) want to have sex with Alisha anyway, and not just because of her power.

Lastly, Simon is the shyest character and consequently seems to have fewer chances to talk than the others. However, towards the end of

Episode (3) everybody compliments him because he stole the PW's credit card and used it to book a flight, so that people will think he is still alive. Simon gets overexcited at this and proposes they should all go out for a drink:

6	English	Italian	Back translation
	Kelly: You're dead *goud* at *stUff like'hat.*	**Kelly:** Sei bravo a fare queste cose.	**Kelly:** You're good at doing these things.
	Nathan: Yeah! Nice one, weiRd kid.	**Nathan:** Sì! Bel lavoro, <u>strano</u>!	**Nathan:** Yeah! Good job, <u>weird</u>!
	Alisha: I cannot believe we got away *wi' thisshit.*	**Alisha:** Non ci credo che <u>l'abbiamo sfangata</u>.	**Alisha:** I can't believe <u>we've got away with it</u>.
	Simon: We should all go out for a drink, *y'know*, to celebrate. It's like an ironic 'fuck you' to the probation *wo'ker.* We're all out *'aving* a good time you're buried under the foundations of an environmental *monitorin'* station.	**Simon:** Dovremmo festeggiare. Celebrare questo momento. Sarebbe un 'vaffanculo' ironico all'assistente sociale. Noi siamo qui a <u>spassarcela</u>, lui nelle fondamenta di una stazione per il monitoraggio ambientale.	**Simon:** We should celebrate. Celebrate this moment. It'd be an ironic 'fuck you' to the probation worker. We're here <u>fooling around</u>, he's buried under the foundations of an environmental monitoring station.
	Alisha: *S'you* all tomorrow, yeah?	**Alisha:** Ehh… Ci vediamo domani, OK?	**Alisha:** Herm… See you tomorrow, OK?

Simon's Estuary English accent is not as marked as all the other characters', but certain features can be detected ("fink" for think, "'aving" for having). From the phonological point of view, it is clear that Kelly's pronunciation is once again consistent with her northern background (e.g. [ʊ] instead of [ʌ] in "stuff", h-dropping in "'hat", etc.). Nathan's and Alisha's turns also display the same patterns discussed earlier in terms of specific pronunciation (e.g. Nathan's high rhoticity in "weird") and spoken English (e.g. Alisha's "wi' thisshit" and "s'you").

The Italian dubbing team has tried to make the exchange more colloquial. In particular, they have used "spassarcela" for Simon's "'aving fun". Such a colloquialism, in Italian, is slightly outdated, but it is consistent with Simon's image as an awkward, nerdy young person. Hence, Nathan's abusive expression when addressing Simon ("weird kid") reinforces all those idiosyncratic features that characterise him. The Italian dubbing team has successfully retained that kind of expression, thus coherently conveying the way the others perceive him using youth language. As a final note, Alisha's "we got away wi' thisshit" has been toned down to a more general "l'abbiamo sfangata" ("we've got away with it"). The extremely colloquial word "sfangata" can be seen as a further example of compensation for the loss of the original vulgarism.

6. Conclusions

Dialectal variations and accents are among the most challenging phenomena in audiovisual translation, since they can be used for a variety of purposes. As demonstrated in this study, dialects and accents are employed in *Misfits* so as to geographically, socially and culturally mark all five characters. These strategies help enhance the impression of everyday spoken English and contemporary life in the British Isles. Such a multifaceted reality is aptly reflected in the scriptwriter's choice to have five main characters that can be seen as prototypical instances of British young people. Kelly's northern accent, speech patterns, overalls, make-up, etc. ensure that the audience, as well as the other characters in the series, perceives her as a *chavette*. Similarly, Nathan's Irish accent and quick mind, coupled with his constant use of coarse language, become recurring idiosyncratic features that contribute to making him an essential part of the show. The same can be said about Curtis's London Jamaican accent, Alisha's Cockney accent and flirtatious attitude towards men, and Simon's Estuary English.

All five characters appear to use a generic slang shared by the British community at large, as well as a specific slang pertaining to young people in particular. Consequently, it becomes impossible to transfer all such features

when employing dubbing. Nonetheless, when technical constraints impede the transfer of such peculiarities, other compensatory devices may be used. As for the Italian dubbing of *Misfits*, the present contribution shows that retaining, and at times intensifying the use of youth language (including swearing and slang) can work towards this end – bearing in mind, however, that the option of applying higher or lower levels of manipulation depends, more often than not, on factors outside the dubbing team's control, such as the commissioner's brief, the time slot for the show, or the target audience. In the case of *Misfits*, the dubbing team seems to have enjoyed a good deal of freedom, at least as far as the first series is concerned. Although limited, the above analysis has hopefully shed some light on the possibility that the attitude towards the translation and the use of taboo language (as a type of teenage slang) might be changing. To conclude, it can be safely suggested that a greater use of such language may be seen in the future as a way to compensate for the loss of other items in specific types of audiovisual texts.

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