

## TABOO LANGUAGE AND CENSORSHIP IN THE ITALIAN DUBBING OF *TED 2*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly argued that the use of taboo language in films has constantly increased over the years (Arndt *et al.*, 2000: 179; Cressman *et al.*, 2009; Kaye *et al.*, 2009; Rossi, 2011). Taboo language is claimed to revolve around vulgarity, racial slurs, obscenity, scatology, blasphemy, profanity, insults and sex (Jay, 1992 and 2000; McEnery, 2006). Taboo language is hence considered harmful and inappropriate (Fernández, 2009: 210). Furthermore, given that «language is loaded with culture» (Agar, 1994: 28), taboo language is driven by culture. Therefore, the perception of what taboo is varies across countries and cultures.

It is widely known that film dialogues are often adapted to the target culture or conformed to the target language (Gambier, 2003). For instance, in some countries taking the name of God in vain can be considered more abusive than sexual innuendoes or racist epithets (Hughes, 1991; Gorji, 2007). In Italy, given the long-lasting Catholic influence, insults related to religion or blasphemy are considered by far the worst kind of slurs (Nobili, 2007: 1; Tartamella, 2009). The same can be said of offences on virility or innuendoes to male homosexuality, in view of the Italian prevailing male culture (Nobili, 2007: 1; Tartamella, 2009). As a result, differences in the perception of taboo language can lead to different dubbing strategies or censorship. Audiovisual translators, in fact, may be compelled to soften taboo language, or omit it, on the basis of the requirements imposed by distribution companies and film producers (Chiaro, 2007). Censorship is generally highly criticised by literature, because a censored dialogue does not always convey the true intents of the characters (Fernández, 2009: 213) and, sometimes, it can even alter the film plot (Zanotti, 2012: 365). In some other instances, instead, language modifications may be due to lexical issues, such as the lack of corresponding expressions or utterances in the target language (see later in this paper).

In light of the above, this paper is aimed at analysing the translation strategies used in the American film *Ted 2* (2015). In particular, the analysis will focus on the taboo language used in the film and its rendering in Italian. At first, a thorough analysis of the

original film taboo language will be carried out. Afterwards, the Italian version will be pinned down. For the purpose of this paper, the swearwords which will be taken into account are those concerning scatology, sex and religion. As far as scatology and sex are concerned, swearwords may take the form of obscenities, vulgarities and insults; whereas as regards religion, swearwords may concern profanities and blasphemies (Jay, 1992: 3-8). As Jay suggests (1992: 5-8), obscenities are words which cannot be uttered in public and are referred to as «indecent language» by the American Federal Communication Commission (*ibid.*: 5). The most representative word in this respect is «fuck». Insults are instead aimed at harming the targeted person (*ibid.*: 8). Vulgarity is the language of the «person in the street» (Jay, 1992: 6), who lacks manners and delicacy, but who does not necessarily have evil intents. Finally, profanities are words which are uttered out of ignorance or indifference on religious matters (Jay, 1992: 3). For instance, uttering «Jesus Christ, it's cold!» is profane. Blasphemies, instead, are words used outright to show disrespect against God and religion.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE FILM TABOO LANGUAGE

In order to understand whether the Italian dubbing is faithful to the original film, it is necessary to analyse the taboo language of *Ted 2* in depth. Therefore, the analysis will firstly focus on its scatological and sexual swearwords, then on religious offences.

### 2.1. Sex and Scatology

Table 1 below reports the swearwords revolving around scatology and sex, together with the word count, percentages and categorization in obscenities, vulgarities or insults. For the purpose of this paper, the words «fuck», «fucking» and «fucked up» have been analysed separately, as they are used throughout the film as nouns, modifiers and verbs respectively.

*Table 1: Swearwords revolving around sex and scatology in Ted 2:*

SCATOLOGY and SEX	WORD COUNT	%	CATEGORY	SPECIFIC TOPIC
fucking	50	21%	obscenity	sex
fuck	48	20%	obscenity	sex
shit	40	17%	vulgarity	scatology
ass	16	7%	vulgarity	sex
dick	12	5%	obscenity	sex
asshole	12	5%	insult	sex

fucked up	6	3%	obscurity	sex
fuck+obj.	6	3%	obscurity	sex
jerk off, handjob	6	3%	obscurity	sex
cock	5	2%	obscurity	sex
son of a bitch	5	2%	insult	sex
blow job	4	2%	obscurity	sex
motherfucker, fucker	4	2%	insult	sex
bullshit	4	2%	vulgarity	scatology
bang	3	1%	vulgarity	sex
cum, jizz	3	1%	vulgarity	sex
piss off	2	1%	vulgarity	scatology
whore	2	1%	insult	sex
jackass, spaz	2	1%	insult	mental
nigger	2	1%	insult	racial
pussy	1	< 1%	vulgarity	sex
bitch	1	< 1%	insult	sex
screwed	1	< 1%	vulgarity	sex
sucker	1	< 1%	insult	sex
prick	1	< 1%	insult	sex
fag	1	< 1%	insult	sex
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>238</i>			

From Table 1 above, it is clear that the swearwords «fucking», «fuck» and «shit» are the most recurring, which is no surprise. To some extent, they are in fact the make-up of the «seven dirty words» listed by the American Federal Communication Commission and outlined by George Carlin on a TV show in 1972 (as cited by Sullivan, 2010: 4). As a matter of fact, the words «fucking», «fuck» and «shit» are also used extensively in many other films. Some of these are, for instance: *Full Metal Jacket* (1983), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), as Table 2 below reveals (the swearwords were counted by the Author: Giampieri, 2017: 268):

*Table 2: Count of «fucking», «fuck» and «shit» in Full Metal Jacket (1983), Pulp Fiction (1994) and The Wolf of Wall Street (2013):*

SWEARWORDS	<i>The Wolf of Wall Street</i>	<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>
fucking	344	133	31
fuck, (fucked)	200	66	21
shit	80	78	51

Table 1 above highlights also some other interesting data. The swearwords can in fact be analysed from another perspective. In particular, it would be useful to understand whether the swearwords uttered are obscenities, insults or vulgarities, according to Jay's (1992) taxonomy.

Table 3 below reports the swearwords as pertaining to obscenity, vulgarity and insult categories.

Table 3: Word count in the obscenity, vulgarity and insult categories:

CATEGORIES	WORD COUNT
obscenities	137
vulgarities	70
insults	31
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>238</i>

As can be seen, obscenities are by far the most used swearwords.

Amongst the insults reported in Table 1 above, it is possible to notice two topics which do not belong to the ones addressed in this paper, such as: «jackass» and «spaz» (meaning «spastic»), both referring to mental illness or disease. It is also possible to find «nigger» (a racial slur). These insults have been kept in the count as they are uttered in the film and translated literally in the Italian version.

Finally, it is also possible to carry out another type of analysis, by dividing the taboo language of the film in sexual and scatological swearwords (see Table 4).

Table 4: Topic and variety count of the swearwords uttered in *Ted 2*:

TOPIC	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT
sex	21	188

scatology	3	46
other	2	4
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	238

What comes to the fore, is the fact that the majority of the swearwords revolves around sex. As a matter of fact, both a high variety and number of sex words are uttered in the film. In Table 4 above, the variety count refers to the varieties (or types) of the swearwords uttered which revolve around sex, scatology and other topics, respectively. For instance, sexual swearwords show 21 varieties (which are, for instance: «fuck», «dick», etc.). The word count expresses the times sexual or scatological swearwords are uttered (for instance, «fuck» is uttered 48 times). Therefore, it is clear that sexual swearwords show a great deal of varieties (21 types) and are uttered 188 times in the film. On the other hand, scatological swearwords are fewer, both in variety (3) and number (46). The other types of swearwords refer to mental insults («jackass» and «spaz») and racial slurs («nigger») and will not be dealt with any further in this section.

From these data, it can be claimed that the dirty language of *Ted 2* (2015) mostly revolves around obscenities (such as: «fuck», «dick» and all their variants).

## 2.2. Religious Offences

It is now useful to address the swearwords concerning religion, which are also present in the film, although to a minor extent. For the purpose of this paper, the uttering «Oh, (my) God» has not been considered. Table 5 below reports the swearwords about religious matters, and divides them in profanities and blasphemies.

*Table 5: Swearwords revolving around religion in Ted 2 divided by type:*

RELIGION	WORD COUNT	%	TYPE
holy shit	13	28%	blasphemy
hell	12	26%	profanity
Jesus, Jesus Christ	10	21%	profanity
goddamn (it)	8	17%	blasphemy
for God's sake	2	4%	profanity
damn	1	2%	profanity
Jeez	1	2%	profanity
<i>TOTAL</i>	47	-	-

The expression «holy shit» is only counted here and the related swearword «shit» was not counted above as a vulgarity. Therefore, the swearwords revolving around religion are 47, against 234 which concern sex and scatology (the insults «jackass», «spaz» and «nigger» were ruled out). It is therefore evident that religious offences are far less in the film.

The swearwords reported above are mostly epithets: i.e., words uttered in stressful situations in order to release tension (Jay, 1992: 7). They can be classified as profanities and blasphemies. As stated above, the former include words such as «damn», «hell» or naming the deity in vain (Kaye *et al.*, 2009: 7). The latter, instead, are outright offences against the religion (Jay, 1992: 3).

By looking at Table 6 below, it can be noticed that profanities tend to prevail, both in variety and in the word count. However, profanities (26) are still far less than sexual swearwords (188).

Table 6: *Blasphemy and profanity varieties and count in Ted 2:*

TYPE	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT
profanities	5	26
blasphemies	2	21
TOTAL	-	47

### 2.3. Overall Analysis of the Taboo Language of Ted 2

Given the gathered data, it is self-evident that *Ted 2* is rich in swearwords, especially revolving around sex, religion and scatology. 234 are in fact the swearwords concerning sex and scatology, whereas 47 are those concerning religion. Therefore, the total amount of swearwords uttered in the film is 285, as Table 7 underpins:

Table 7: *Swearword variety and count (summary)*

CATEGORY	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT	% of word count
sex	21	188	66%
religion	7	47	17%
scatology	3	46	16%
other	2	4	1%
TOTAL	-	285	-

In Table 7 above, the variety count refers to the varieties of the swearwords pertaining to each category (i.e., sex, religion, scatology); whereas the word count refers to the counting of each swearword pertaining to each category. For instance, 188 words refer to sexual topics and are uttered in 21 different forms (ranging, for example, from «fuck» to «dick», etc.). Table 7 corroborates the fact that sexual swearwords make up the most (66 per cent) of the film taboo language; whereas religious offences come soon after.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF THE DUBBING OF *TED 2*

#### 3.1. *Sex and Scatology*

After analysing the taboo language of *Ted 2*, it is now interesting to explore if and how it is rendered in the Italian version.

At first, it would be useful to analyse the swearword types and varieties revolving around sex and scatology used in the Italian film, as Table 8 below shows:

*Table 8: Swearwords concerning sex and scatology in the dubbed version of Ted 2, divided in categories and topics:*

SEX and SCATOLOGY	BACK TRANSLATIONS	TOT	%	CATEGORY	TOPIC
(del/che) cazzo	cock, dick	56	37%	obscenity	sex
stronzo/a, pezzo di merda	piece of shit	16	11%	insult	scatology
merda	shit	10	7%	vulgarity	scatology
finocchio, frocio	fennel (meaning: fag), fag-got	10	7%	insult	sex
culo	ass	8	5%	vulgarity	sex
uccello, pisello	bird, pea (meaning: dick)	7	5%	vulgarity	sex
vaffanculo	fuck you	7	5%	obscenity	sex
stronzate	bullshit	5	3%	vulgarity	scatology
scopare	to fuck	5	3%	obscenity	sex
(fare) una sega	to jerk off	5	3%	obscenity	sex
figlio di puttana	son of a bitch	5	3%	insult	sex
pompino	blow job	4	3%	obscenity	sex

trombare	to bang	3	2%	vulgarity	sex
cazzone/coglione	nut, ball (meaning: stupid)	3	2%	insult	sex
troia	whore	2	1%	insult	sex
negro	nigger	2	1%	insult	racial
testa di cazzo	dickhead	1	1%	obscenity	sex
sborra	cum	1	1%	vulgarity	sex
topa	she-mouse (meaning: pussy)	1	1%	vulgarity	sex
<i>Total Swearwords</i>		<i>151</i>			

The swearwords uttered in the Italian version are 151, against 238 of the original film. This means that the taboo language of the Italian film covers only 63 per cent of the swearwords uttered in the original film. The remaining 37 per cent has been evidently censored or mitigated, as Table 9 below summarizes.

*Table 9: Breakdown of taboo words, mild swearwords, euphemisms and censored words in the Italian version of Ted 2:*

WORDS	WORD COUNT	%
swearwords in the Italian film	151	63%
censored words	76	32%
euphemisms or very mild swearwords/insults	11	5%
<i>TOTAL swearword count in the original film</i>	<i>238</i>	

It is self-evident that a significant 37 per cent of the original taboo language revolving around sex and scatology has been somehow omitted by censorship (32 per cent) and by lessened expressions (5 per cent). Instances of euphemisms or lessened swearwords concerning sex and scatology are reported in Table 10 below.

*Table 10: Some instances of euphemisms and lessened, very mild swearwords in the Italian version:*

EUPHEMISMS OR LESSENERD WORDS	MEANING	..INSTEAD OF..
cazzarola (euphemism)	saucepan	fucking
cavolo (euphemism)	cabbage	shit



idiota	idiot	asshole
pacco	package	dick
smanacciata di pisello	pea-fumbling	handjob
sbobba	slop/swill	cum
chiappa	buttock	ass
deficiente	half-wit	jackass

It would be interesting to report some dialogues of the original and dubbed films, in order to better understand the data reported in the tables above.

*Dialogue 1:* Ted found a penis-shaped bong in the car and started inhaling. His friend Johnny suddenly took a picture of him and posted it online.

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Ted:</b> Oh, what the fuck? What are you doing?</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> Hashtag «My amazing summer».</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Goddamn it! What the hell's wrong with you?</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> I fucking owe you, you bastard.</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> What do you mean? I was just messing around.</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> Shut up and suck that dick.</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Fuck you!</p>	<p><b>Ted:</b> Che cazzo! Che fai?</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> Hashtag: «La mia estate porcellona».</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Vaffanculo, ma che cosa ti prende?</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> Così siamo pari, bastardo.</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Ma no, io stavo solo cazzeggiando!</p> <p><b>Johnny:</b> Sta' zitto e succhia quel cazzo!</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Rivà a fanculo!</p> <p>[Back Translation:  <b>Ted:</b> What the fuck*! What are you doing?  <b>Johnny:</b> Hashtag: «My piggy summer».  <b>Ted:</b> Fuck you, what's wrong with you?  <b>Johnny:</b> So we're even, you bastard.  <b>Ted:</b> No, I was just messing* around.  <b>Johnny:</b> Shut up and suck that dick.  <b>Ted:</b> Fuck you again!]</p>

\*Literally: «dick» / «dicking»

In Dialogue 1 above, a few interesting translation strategies can be noticed. First of all, the Italian audiovisual translators did not render Ted's question «What are you doing?» by using a present continuous. In Italian natural language, in fact, a simple present would suffice (Bocchiola, 2010: 50). Secondly, it is possible to notice that «fuck» is rendered with the back translation «dick»; the blasphemy «Goddamn it» with «fuck» and «hell» (in «What the hell's wrong with you?») is omitted. We will revert to these aspects in the next pages. Finally, «I was just messing around» is wisely rendered with the colloquial *stavo solo cazzeggiando* (literally «I was just dicking around»). In practice, Dialogue 1

corroborates Table 8 above, as there is a high recurrence of the swearword «dick», even in such a small dialogue.

In the light of Dialogue 1 and Tables 8 – 10 above, it can be stated that also the Italian dubbing mostly presents sexual swearwords, as Table 11 summarizes:

*Table 11: Variety and swearword count in the dubbed version of Ted 2:*

TOPIC	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT
sex	15	118
scatology	3	31
other	1	2
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	<i>151</i>

In Table 11 above, the variety count refers to the varieties of the swearwords concerning sex, scatology and other topics. For instance, the taboo language revolving around sex shows 15 varieties, such as: «dick», «cock», «fuck», etc. It is evident that sexual swearwords show a great deal of varieties, although less than those of the original version (21). The word count, instead, expresses the times sexual or scatological swearwords are uttered. In this respect, sexual swearwords are uttered 118 times in the Italian version; whereas in the original film, they are uttered 188 times. Scatological swearwords are uttered 31 times in the Italian version, against 46 of the original film, but show the same variety (3). Also in the Italian version scatological swearwords are less in variety and number *vis-à-vis* sexual swearwords.

Table 12 below compares the counting of the original film with the dubbed version.

*Table 12: Swearword variety and word count of the original and dubbed film*

TOPIC	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT	VARIETY COUNT	WORD COUNT
	original film	original film	dubbed film	dubbed film
sex	21	188	15	118
scatology	3	46	3	31
other	2	4	1	2
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	<i>238</i>	-	<i>151</i>

Leaving out the discrepancies due to censorship or milder expressions, it can be stated that, to some extent, the dubbing of the film has remained quite faithful to the original language, as far as sexual and scatological swearwords are concerned.

Another interesting analysis concerns the swearwords pertaining to the obscenity, vulgarity and insult categories, respectively. Table 13 below highlights these data by comparing the original film with its dubbed version:

Table 13: Word count of obscenities, vulgarities and insults in the original and dubbed film:

CATEGORIES	WORD COUNT	
	original film	dubbed film
obscurities	137	78
vulgarities	70	35
insults	31	38
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>238</i>	<i>151</i>

As can be seen, obscenities are still the swearwords mostly used, although both obscenities and vulgarities are practically reduced by 50 per cent in the dubbed film. What comes instead to the fore, are the insults in the dubbed version, because they outnumber those of the original film. This peculiarity is also evident in Table 8 above, where the persistence of the insult «fag» is remarkable. An excerpt of Table 8 is reported here below for clarifying purposes:

Excerpt of Table 8: Recurrence of the insult «faggot» in the Italian dubbing of Ted 2:

SEX and SCA- TOLOGY	BACK TRANSLATIONS	TOT	%	CATEGORY	TOPIC
finocchio, frocio	fennel (meaning: fag), faggot	10	7%	insult	sex

Dialogue 2 here below corroborates Table 8.

Dialogue 2: Sam, Ted's lawyer, is showing her knowledge.

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<b>Sam:</b> Can either of you tell me who wrote The Great Gatsby?	<b>Sam:</b> Chi di voi sa dirmi chi ha scritto Il Grande Gatsby?
<b>Johnny:</b> Judy Blume?	<b>Johnny:</b> Judy Blume?
<b>Ted:</b> Hitler?	<b>Ted:</b> Hitler?
<b>Sam:</b> F. Scott Fitzgerald.	<b>Sam:</b> F. Scott Fitzgerald.
<b>Johnny:</b> Who's that?	<b>Johnny:</b> E chi è?

<b>Sam:</b> The author!	<b>Sam:</b> L'autore!
<b>Johnny:</b> Why are you saying "Fuck him"?	<b>Johnny:</b> Perché gli dai del finocchio?
<b>Sam:</b> What?	<b>Sam:</b> Cosa?
<b>Ted:</b> You just said, "Eff Scott Fitzgerald." What did Scott Fitzgerald do to you?	<b>Ted:</b> Hai detto "F. Scott Fitzgerald". Che cosa ti ha fatto Scott Fitzgerald?
<b>Johnny:</b> Yeah.	<b>Johnny:</b> Sì.
<b>Sam:</b> No, that's his first name.	<b>Sam:</b> No, è il suo primo nome.
<b>Ted:</b> His name's "Fuck Scott Fitzgerald"?	<b>Ted:</b> Si chiama Finocchio Scott Fitzgerald?
<b>Sam:</b> What? No.	<b>Sam:</b> Cosa? No!
<b>Johnny:</b> Well, then, what's the F stand for?	<b>Johnny:</b> Allora per cosa sta la F?
<b>Sam:</b> Francis.	<b>Sam:</b> Francis.
<b>Ted:</b> No. Got to be Fuck.	<b>Ted:</b> No, deve essere Finocchio.
<b>Johnny:</b> It must be Fuck. Gotta be Fuck. It has to be Fuck.	<b>Johnny:</b> Deve essere Finocchio, è ovvio che è Finocchio.
<b>Sam:</b> Why would it be Fuck?	<b>Sam:</b> Perché deve essere Finocchio?
<b>Johnny:</b> Otherwise, why wouldn't he say it?	<b>Johnny:</b> E allora, che motivo c'è per non dirlo?
<b>Ted:</b> He's hiding something. It's Fuck.	<b>Ted:</b> Sì, nasconde qualcosa. È Finocchio.
<b>Johnny:</b> Read between the lines, Sam.	<b>Johnny:</b> Leggi tra le righe, Sam!
	[Back Translation: Sam: Who of you can tell me who wrote The Great Gatsby? Johnny: Judy Blume? Ted: Hitler? Sam: F. Scott Fitzgerald. Johnny: Who's that? Sam: The author! Johnny: Why are you saying he's a faggot*? Sam: What? Ted: You said: "F. Scott Fitzgerald". What did Scott Fitzgerald do to you? Johnny: Yeah. Sam: No, that's his first name. Ted: His name's Faggot Scott Fitzgerald? Sam: What? No! Johnny: Well, then, what's the F stand for? Sam: Francis. Ted: No, it must be Faggot. Johnny: It must be Faggot, it is obvious that it's Faggot. Sam: Why should it be Faggot? Johnny: Then, what's the reason for not saying it? Ted: Yes, he's hiding something. It's Faggot. Johnny: Read between the lines, Sam!]

\*Literally «fennel» in all the dialogue.

In the excerpt above, it is self-evident that resorting to «faggot» is due to dubbing strategies, more than lip movements. Nonetheless, the high recurrence of «faggot» in the whole film is probably due to the fact that innuendoes to male homosexuality are considered heavy types of insults in Italy (Nobili, 2007: 1). This is also underpinned by Tartamella's research (2009: 122), where it is claimed that «faggot» is ranked high in the list of the worst insults an Italian could hear or utter. It is hence possible that the insult «faggot» was chosen in order to confer the characters' controversial hilarity or anger, in some other instances.

Table 14 below corroborates this finding. As a matter of fact, whereas in the original film the three most used words are «fucking, fuck, shit», in the dubbed version these are «cock, (piece of) shit, faggot».

*Table 14: The most used words in the original film and in the dubbed version of Ted 2:*

ORIGINAL FILM	COUNT	%	DUBBED FILM	COUNT	%
fucking	50	21%	cock, dick	56	37%
fuck	48	20%	piece of shit, shit	26	17%
shit	40	17%	faggot	10	7%
ass	16	7%	ass	8	5%

By taking another glance at Table 8 on the pages above, it is possible to notice that the racial slur «nigger» has been translated literally in Italian. In this respect, it is relevant to highlight that the slur is softened in both versions by the modifier «white», because it is addressed to a white couple (Giampieri, 2017). Furthermore, the fact that the word is uttered by an African-American person, is possibly another way to lessen the impact of the slur and to avoid censorship on political correctness grounds (Hughes, 2006; Rossi, 2011). Dialogue 3 here below clarifies this aspect.

*Dialogue 3: Ted's African-American colleague, Joy, is imparting life lessons.*

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Joy:</b> Look at that. You see them two white niggas over there?</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Yeah... What?</p> <p><b>Joy:</b> Look at 'em. They're so happy. Because they got that little baby keeping them together. If they didn't have that baby, they'd just be two sad-ass white niggas waiting for Downtown Abbey to come on.</p>	<p><b>Joy:</b> Guarda lì. Vedi quei due negri bianchi?</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Sì, li ve... cosa?</p> <p><b>Joy:</b> Guardali, sono felicissimi, perché c'è quel piccolo nanetto che li tiene uniti. Se non avessero quel bambino, sarebbero due tristi negri-bianchi che aspettano la messa in onda di Downtown Abbey.</p> <p>Back Translation:</p>

	[Joy: Look there. Do you see those white niggers? Ted: Yes.. I s-... what? Joy: Look at them. They're so happy because there's that little dwarf that keeps them together. If they didn't have that baby, they would be two sad white niggers waiting for Downtown Abbey to be on the air.]
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As can be seen from Dialogue 3 above, in both versions the epithet «nigger» is not censored because it is uttered by an African-American character (Giampieri, 2017).

The analysis of the translations of the sexual swearwords of *Ted 2* would not be complete without bringing to the fore the new translation patterns which emerge in this film. These concern in particular the words «motherfucker» and «fucking». Although in *Ted 2* «motherfucker» is only uttered 3 times, it is relevant to point out that audiovisual translators made an effort to partly disregard the translation norms which have concerned this word over the last decades. Literature reports in fact that «motherfucker» has been generally translated «bastard» or «son of a bitch» in Italian, due to adherence to fixed translation norms (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000: 79; Antonini and Chiaro, 2009: 110). This is also corroborated by many real instances. For example, in *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the word is translated «son of a bitch» 21 times, out of 35. The same can be said of *Get Him To the Greek* (2010), where the word is translated «son of a bitch» three times out of six. In the Italian dubbing of *Ted 2*, instead, «motherfucker» is translated «piece of shit» twice and «son of a bitch» only once. This may be still not much, but at least it is a step forward. Table 15 below summarizes this important finding.

Table 15: Translations of «motherfucker» in the Italian version of *Ted 2*:

MOTHERFUCKER	BACK TRANSLATIONS	WORD COUNT
stronzo/a, pezzo di merda	piece of shit	2
figlio di puttana	son of a bitch	1
<i>TOTAL</i>		3

The same can be said of the modifier «fucking». Over the years, scholars have lamented the scarce adherence of the Italian translation of «fucking» to its actual intent in context (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000: 77-78). Most of the times, «fucking» has been translated literally (*fottuto*), thus giving rise to a sort of «dubbese» (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000: 77-78; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005: 20; Antonini and Chiaro, 2009: 110), or non-existing Italian. As a matter of fact, the word *fottuto*, although listed in the Italian dictionary, does not belong to natural language. Instances of such a fictional translation unfortunately abound in many films of the past, such as: *Flashdance* (1983), *Pulp Fiction* (1994),

*Smoke* (1995), *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and many others. The audiovisual translators of *Ted 2*, instead, proved once again to have broken that (bad) habit and translated the word «fucking» in many other ways, such as: dick/cock (13 times); piece of shit, to fuck, nut (meaning «prick») (once each) and a euphemism once (*cazzarola*, meaning «saucepan»). Table 16 below summarizes these findings:

Table 16: Translations of «fucking» in the Italian version of *Ted 2*:

FUCKING	BACK TRANSLATIONS	WORD COUNT
(del/che) cazzo	cock	13
stronzo/a	piece of shit	1
scopare	to fuck	1
cazzone/coglione	nut (meaning: imbecile)	1
cazzarola (euphemism)	saucepan	1
censored	-	33
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	<i>50</i>

The fact that «fucking» has been censored 33 times out of 50 is remarkable, but analysing the reasons for such a choice would go beyond the scope of this paper. What can be stated, instead, is only the fact that such a censorship have probably altered the intensity and roughness of some scenes. Dialogue 4 and 5 report two excerpts.

Dialogue 4: Ted and Tami-Lynn are getting married.

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Priest:</b> Do you, Tami-Lynn McCafferty, take this teddy bear to be your lawfully wedded husband?</p> <p><b>Tami-Lynn:</b> I do.</p> <p><b>Priest:</b> And do you, Ted, take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Fuckin'-A right, I do!</p>	<p><b>Priest:</b> Vuoi tu, Tami-Lynn McCafferty, prendere questo orsacchiotto, come tuo legittimo sposo?</p> <p><b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Lo voglio.</p> <p><b>Priest:</b> E vuoi tu, Ted, prendere questa donna come tua legittima sposa?</p> <p><b>Ted:</b> Cazzarola, certo che lo voglio!</p> <p>Back Translation:            [Priest: Do you, Tami-Lynn McCafferty, want to take this teddy bear to be your lawful husband?            Tami-Lynn: I do.            Priest: And do you, Ted, want to take this woman to be your lawful wife?            Ted: Saucepan! Sure I want it!]</p>

In Dialogue 4 above, the use of the euphemism *cazzarola* (literally «saucepan») comes to the fore. One might argue that such a censorship was applied in view of the scene. As a matter of fact, swearing in a church might not be considered appropriate in Italy.

Dialogue 5: Ted and his wife Tami-Lynn are quarrelling.

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Tami-Lynn:</b> I am the face of the business, okay?  <b>Ted:</b> The face of the business? Jesus Christ! Listen to you! You're delusional!  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> I should've married Robert DiCicco. I really should've.  <b>Ted:</b> Fine! Fine! Go torture that asshole!  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> He treated me good. And... He had a dick! He had an awesome dick!  <b>Ted:</b> News flash! Boston whore has seen Italian penis.  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> What the fuck did you just call me, fucker? What did you fucking say?  <b>Ted:</b> What the fuck?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> You wanna call me a whore?  <b>Ted:</b> You wanna throw shit?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Yeah, I wanna fucking throw shit!  <b>Ted:</b> I'll fucking throw shit! There, see? How do you like that?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Oh, I'm scared, Teddy! I'm really fucking scared of you, you little fucking bear!</p>	<p><b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Io sono l'immagine dell'azienda, va bene? Perciò vedi di non sfracellarmi le palle.  <b>Ted:</b> Ma porca pupazza, ti senti? Stai delirando?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Avrei dovuto sposare quell'attore porno, dovevo sposare lui!  <b>Ted:</b> Eddai, va' a torturare quello stronzo!  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Mi trattava bene e... ah! Lui aveva l'uccello! Aveva un uccello enorme!  <b>Ted:</b> Ultima ora! Troia di Boston vede pene gigante!  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Come cazzo mi hai chiamato? Stronzo! Come cazzo mi hai chiamato? Pezzo di merda!  <b>Ted:</b> Che cazzo fai?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Mi hai dato della troia!  <b>Ted:</b> Ok, Ok, ti metti a tirare le cose?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Sì, mi metto a tirare le cose.  <b>Ted:</b> E allora le tiro pure io, eh! Ecco! Visto? Contenta?  <b>Tami-Lynn:</b> Che paura Teddy, me la sto facendo addosso, orsetto del cazzo!</p>
	<p>Back Translation:  [Tami-Lynn: I am the face of the business, OK? So try not to smash my balls!  Ted: Filthy puppet! Can you hear yourself? You are delirious.  Tami-Lynn: I should have married that porno actor! I should have married him!  Ted: C'mon! Go and torture that piece of shit!  Tami-Lynn: He was treating me right..and.. Gasp! He had a dick*! He had an enormous dick*!  Ted: Latest news! Whore from Boston sees enormous penis!  Tami-Lynn: What the fuck** did you call</p>



	me? Piece of shit! What the fuck did you call me? Piece of shit! Ted: What the fuck** are you doing? Tami-Lynn: You called me a whore! Ted: OK, OK, are you throwing things? Tami-Lynn: Yes, I'm throwing things. Ted: So will I! See? Happy? Tami-Lynn: I'm so scared, Teddy, I'm peeing my pants, you dick teddy-bear!
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\*Literally: «bird»

\*\*Literally: «dick»

As can be seen from Dialogue 5 above, the swearwords «fuck» and «fucking» are translated *cazzo* («dick»); whereas «dick» is lessened with the Italian word *uccello* («bird»). It is noticeable that the word «shit» in statements like «you wanna throw shit?» is omitted. This could be due to lexical issues; i.e., difficulties in rendering the foul word in such a phrase (Giampieri, forthcoming). The religious profanity «Jesus Christ» is censored and translated «filthy puppet».

The next paragraph will shed light on religious offences and their renderings.

### 3.2. Religious Offences

It is now interesting to explore whether the Italian version of *Ted 2* is faithful to the religious offences (please excuse the pun) uttered in the original film. If we disregard the utterance «Oh (my) God», we notice that no space is left to religious offences in the Italian version, either in the form of profanities or blasphemies. In the dubbed version, there is practically an outright censorship of all religious innuendoes. Table 18 below reveals how the profanities and blasphemies of the original film have been censored or changed into sexual or scatological swearwords:

Table 17: Religious offences turned into sexual or scatological swearwords in the dubbed version of *Ted 2*:

RELIGIOUS OFFENCES (?)	BACK TRANSLATIONS	Jesus (Christ)	holy shit	goddamn (it)	hell	TOT.	CATEGORIES
(che) cazzo	dick, cock	2	9	1	0	12	sex
stronzo/a	piece of shit	1	1	0	0	2	scatology
vaffanculo	fuck you	0	0	2	0	2	sex
porca puttana	filthy whores!	0	1	1	0	2	sex
diavolo	devil	0	0	0	4	4	religion

<i>Total Swearwords</i>		3	11	4	4	22	-
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In Table 17 above, it is remarkable that not only blasphemies, such as «goddamn (it)» and «holy shit» are turned into sexual or scatological swearwords, but also profanities, such as «Jesus (Christ)». Censoring blasphemies by turning them into sexual or scatological swearwords can make sense in a country like Italy, where blasphemies uttered in public are fined by law (*cf.* The Italian law n. 205 of 25 June 1999). Furthermore, as Tartamella (2009: 122) remarks, blasphemies against God are considered by far the worst swearwords one could utter, because they are considered the strongest taboo ever (Tartamella, 2009: 130). This common feeling regards all Italians: from those practising to atheists (*ibid.*). The only utterance concerning religion is the word «hell», which is changed into «devil» in expressions like «what the hell». To some extent, however, it could be argued that in Italian there are no perfect lexical equivalents of some profanities or blasphemies (such as «holy shit»). For this reason, it could be claimed that, sometimes, there could be more lexical gaps than censorship, although Italian scholars and laypeople may confute such a claim (Pasolini, 1993; Bertoldo, 2006; Rossi, 2011; Prosperi, 2012). Dialogue 6 sheds light on the rendering of religious offences.

Dialogue 6: Ted is imparting good news to his friend Johnny.

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Ted:</b> I can't believe it. That son of a bitch!  <b>Johnny:</b> That was very selfish of him.  <b>Ted:</b> I know, after I've watched his piece of shit movie like a hundred times. Goddamn it!  <i>[Ted throws a stone at a car and breaks its window]</i>  <b>Johnny:</b> Oh, shit!</p>	<p><b>Ted:</b> Non ci credo, figlio di puttana!  <b>Johnny:</b> È stato proprio un grande egoista.  <b>Ted:</b> Sì, dopo che io ho guardato quel suo film di merda un centinaio di volte. Vaffanculo! <i>[Ted throws a stone at a car and breaks its window]</i>  <b>Johnny:</b> Oh, cazzo!</p> <p>Back Translation:  <b>Ted:</b> I can't believe it, son of a bitch!  <b>Johnny:</b> He's really selfish.  <b>Ted:</b> Yeah, after I've seen his shitty film a hundred times. Fuck you!  <b>Johnny:</b> Oh, fuck*!]</p>

\*Literally «dick».

As can be noticed in the excerpt above, the original blasphemy has been turned into a sexual utterance («Fuck you») in the dubbed version.

By looking back at Table 17 above, it is possible to notice that only 22 swearwords against religion are somehow translated, or turned into sexual and scatological swearwords. The original version accounts however for 47 (Table 5). Therefore, it would be

interesting to explore how the remaining 25 (53 per cent) have been dealt with. Table 18 shows some interesting findings:

Table 18: Religious offences: censorship, euphemisms and mild swearwords in the dubbed version of *Ted 2*:

WORDS	Jesus (Christ)	holy shit	hell	goddamn (it)	for God's sake	damn	Jeez	TOT.
euphemisms or mild swearwords	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
censored words	6	2	8	2	2	1	1	22
<i>TOTAL</i>	7	2	8	4	2	1	1	25

What Table 18 brings to the surface, is the fact that some religious offences, such as «hell», «damn» or even «for God's sake'» and «Jeez» have been censored. In particular, the most censored words are «hell» (censored 8 times) and «Jesus (Christ)» (censored 6 times). In particular, «Jesus (Christ)» has undergone a subtle form of censorship. Sometimes it has been censored outright; whereas at other times, it has been replaced by common expressions (such as: «filthy puppet!» or «dash it!»), as seen in Dialogue 5 above.

Table 19 sheds light on some euphemisms and mild swearwords used in the Italian version:

Table 19: *Examples of euphemisms and mild swearwords used to partly censor religious offences in the dubbing of Ted 2:*

EUPHEMISMS OR MILD SWEARWORDS	MEANING	REPLACING... (IN THE ORIGINAL VERSION)
porca tro... (truncation)	filthy whor..!	Jesus Christ
maledetto, maledizione	damn(ed)	Goddamn (it)

The fact that «goddamn (it)» has been translated «damn(ed)» in the Italian version, is an issue which has long been debated in the literature (Pavesi and Malinverno, 2000: 77; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005: 20). Such a translation choice has in fact been criticized fiercely over the years, because the word «damn(ed)» does not convey the same intensity, or outrageousness, of the original utterance. Nonetheless, what is remarkable in the dubbing of *Ted 2*, is at least the effort made by the audiovisual translators to render the translation of the epithet «goddamn (it)» more vividly. As a matter of fact, in many instances they resort to effective epithets, such as «fuck you!», «filthy whores», or

«cock/dick!», all ranked medium-high or medium-low (but still medium) in the scale of insults drawn up by Tartamella (2009).

The same can be said of the blasphemy «holy shit». In many films of the past, such an expression was translated in non-effective ways. For example, in the film *Die Hard with a Vengeance* (1995), it was omitted once and translated «holy God» twice; the same occurred in *The Matrix* (1999), where it was omitted once and translated «Oh, God» another time; in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) it was simply omitted and even in *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), whose taboo language is conspicuous (Giampieri, 2017), it was omitted twice and translated «filthy poverty» once. Table 20 summarizes these findings:

Table 20: Translation of «holy shit» into Italian in some films of the past:

FILM, YEAR	BACK TRANSLATIONS INTO ITALIAN AND NUMBER OF TIMES
<i>Die Hard with a Vengeance</i> , 1995	holy God: 2 omissions: 1
<i>The Matrix</i> , 1999	oh God: 1 omissions: 1
<i>The Matrix Reloaded</i> , 2003	omissions: 1
<i>The Wolf of Wall Street</i> , 2013	filthy poverty: 1 omissions: 2

Therefore, in light of the above, it can be stated that the blasphemous and profane language of *Ted 2* has been censored extensively. Nonetheless, some justice has been done, because the intensity and outrageousness of its blasphemies and profanities have not been completely disregarded, but turned into some effective sexual and scatological swearwords. Dialogue 7 shows an example of the rendering of «holy shit».

*Dialogue 7: Ted is imparting good news to his friend Johnny.*

Original Version	Italian Dubbing
<p><b>Ted:</b> Tami-Lynn and I.. are gonna have a baby!  <b>Johnny:</b> Holy shit! You?</p>	<p><b>Ted:</b> Tami-Lynn e io.. avremo un bambino!  <b>Johnny:</b> Oh, ma che cazzo! Voi?</p> <p>Back Translation:            [Ted: Tami-Lynn and I.. are going to have a baby!            Johnny: Oh, what the fuck*! You?]</p>

\*Literally «dick».

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper was aimed at exploring the Italian rendering of the taboo language of the film *Ted 2* (2015). To this aim, the swearwords uttered in the original film were firstly analysed in depth. Taboo topics were divided in two groups: those concerning sex and scatology and those regarding religious offences. Sexual and scatological swearwords were also analysed from a perspective of pertinence to the categories of obscenities, insults and vulgarities; whereas religious offences were divided into profanities and blasphemies. The findings of this analysis revealed that the original version of *Ted 2* is rich in sexual swearwords, in particular obscenities, either in the variety of the swearwords uttered and in number. Sexual obscenities were followed by offences against the religion, in the form of profanities. These were immediately followed by scatological swearwords, which, however, showed a far less variety (Table 7).

From the analysis of the Italian dubbing of the film, some discrepancies emerged. First of all, a large number of swearwords was censored in the Italian version, either abruptly, by omission, or by using lessened expressions or euphemisms. This resulted in 37 per cent of loss in swearwords (Table 9). Sometimes, however, the lack of acceptable equivalents might have prevented audiovisual translators from translating. The remaining 63 per cent mostly focused on sexual swearwords and, again, on obscenities (Table 14). The insults uttered in the Italian version outnumbered those of the original version. This was probably due to the fact that the insult «faggot» in Italy is considered very abusive; therefore, the Italian film made an extended use of it in order to confer outrageousness or the characters' anger.

The most striking finding was the one concerning religious offences. Disregarding the utterance «Oh, (my) God», neither profanities nor blasphemies are uttered in the Italian film. This could be partly explained by the fact that in Italy blasphemies are fined by law, and they are perceived by the layperson as the worst swearwords anyone could hear or utter. Therefore, religious offences were partly replaced by obscenities, but mostly (62 per cent) omitted or mitigated by lessened expressions. As stated above, however, this could be due to the lack of perfect equivalents in the Italian language, although Italian scholars and laypeople may not agree (Pasolini, 1993; Bertoldo, 2006; Rossi, 2011; Prosperi, 2012).

What is also relevant in the dubbing of *Ted 2*, is the fact that its audiovisual translators made painstaking efforts which were never made before. In particular, they strived to convey the outrageousness and gravity of some of the original utterances (concerning sexual and religious matters) by finding interesting substitutes. For instance, amongst

others, they used «dick», «cock» or «piece of shit» to translate «goddamn (it)», «holy shit», «motherfucker» and «fucking». In this way, they avoided the commonly-used, but highly-disputed, standard literal translations. All in all, given the Italian legal and social constraints, such substitutes can be considered acceptable equivalents. Hopefully, they will be set as examples for future audiovisual translations.

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## **FILM LIST**

Ted 2, 2015, MacFarlane Seth

Die Hard with a Vengeance, 1995, John McTiernan

Flashdance, 1983, Adrian Lyne

Get Him to The Greek, 2010, Nicholas Stoller

The Wolf of Wall Wtreet, 2013, Marting Scorsese

Pulp Fiction, 1994, Quentin Tarantino

The Big Lebowski, 1998, Joel Coen, Ethan Coen

The Matrix, 1999, Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski

The Matrix Reloaded, 2003, Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski