Subtitling Neapolitan Dialect in "My Brilliant Friend": Linguistic Choices and Sociocultural Implications in the Screen Adaptation of Elena Ferrante's Best-selling Novel

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Abstract. In the screen adaptation of Elena Ferrante's best-selling novel "My Brilliant Friend", the first foreign language co-production of the American pay-cable network HBO with the Italian public broadcaster RAI, as a specific requirement of the American producers, the Italian of the main characters has been transformed into Neapolitan, a thick regional dialect mostly appropriate to tell the story of a life-long friendship on the backdrop of the 1950s poor outskirts of Naples, the main city of southern Italy. Starting from some background theories of cultural aspects of translation together with audiovisual translation, the aim of this presentation is that of analysing how English subtitlers have faced the translation of the dialectal elements in such a culture-bound audiovisual text and to what extent their choices depend on those made by Italian subtitlers, then discussing about the sociocultural implications of the solutions adopted. The data have been organized and presented with reference to the extralinguistic and the intralinguistic levels (in terms of syntactical, lexico-semantic and crosscultural pragmatic elements).

Keywords: Neapolitan dialect; subtitles; culture; translation.

Introduction[1]

Dialects take a subsidiary position in the Italian linguistic hierarchy, where regional varieties coexist with the standard. Although they are recognised as languages, they have acquired the role of minority languages with the affirmation of standard Italian.

The screen adaptation of the best-selling Italian novel by Elena Ferrante[2] *L'Amica Geniale/My Brilliant Friend* (henceforth MBF),[3] conceived for the Italian and the American audience simultaneously, features dialect and its pragmatic and sociocultural-related aspects as a key challenge in the subtitling process. The plot is profoundly rooted in the Italian – and more precisely, Neapolitan – culture; therefore, the characters speak Neapolitan,[4] a dialect used in Naples and its surrounding area. Neapolitan is both a diatopic and a diastratic variety, and its use is indicative not only of the geographical background and social status of the speakers but also of its function as a marker of the relationships between characters. In the TV series, the Neapolitan dialect used recalls a thick and dated variety that reflects the language used in post-war poor metropolitan outskirts of Naples in a quest for "dialect authenticity"[5], and the frequent use of code-switching/code-mixing between dialect and standard Italian identifies the distinction between Italian, the language of legal institutions (schools/universities/tribunals), and Neapolitan, the familiar in-code of the characters. The use of different graduations of dialect has an integral role in the cultural representation of the characters to mark class distinction and the impenetrable belonging to a closed-in neighbourhood. This multi-layered use of language variation has required the use of both *intralingual* and *interlingual* subtitling, being the series also subtitled in Italian for those Italians who are not familiar with the Neapolitan dialect.

The transfer of a source dialect to a target language and audience can by no means aim at conveying its non-standard complex and multifaced aspects; rather, it can easily fall into stereotyping through the amplification of its most apparent aspects (Kozloff, 2000), such as the reiterated use of swearing and abrupt and informal register. The well-known technical constraints of mainstream professional subtitling favour the transfer of communicative features embedded in the source message to the detriment of textual and semantic peculiarities of non-standard varieties, determining a process raising cultural and linguistic neutralization and standardization by levelling out non-mainstream identities (Díaz Cintas, 2005; Fawcett, 2003; Gambier, 2013; Guillot, 2019; Pérez-González, 2014).

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[1] The authors have jointly conceived this paper as a result of discussion and debate. Nevertheless, individual contributions in writing this research article are identified as follows: Mikaela Cordisco is responsible for Introduction, 1.1, 1.2; 3; 3.1.1 and 3.1.6, while Mariagrazia De Meo is responsible for 1.3; 2; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.1.4; 3.1.5; 3.1.7 and Conclusive Remarks. The references are the result of their cooperative research work.

[2] Elena Ferrante is the pseudonym of a contemporary Italian writer who has chosen to keep her/his identity unknown.

[3] *My Brilliant Friend* (2011), is the first book of "The Neapolitan Novels" tetralogy. It is the story of the life-long female friendship between Lila and Lenù on the backdrop of the 1950s poor outskirts of Naples.

[4] The use of dialect has been an explicit requirement by the American co-producers.

[5] The novel is written in standard Italian, and the use of dialect is introduced and described mostly metalinguistically.

Starting from a comparative analysis of this intralinguistic and interlinguistic transfer, the aim of our research is (1) to enquire on how English subtitlers faced the translation of the intralinguistic and extralinguistic culture-bound references (henceforth ECRs), taking into account the sociocultural implications/losses in this process; (2) to consider the translation of pragmatic features of dialogue sequences like "interactional retroactive moves" that are often regarded as redundant features in conversation but that, particularly in dialect use, carry an important connotative function; (3) to consider to what extent have the subtitles managed to convey the narrative texture of dialect.

1. Theoretical background

1.1 Dialect, realism, linguistic authenticity

Subtitling has recently gained considerable popularity even in the so-called dubbing countries, thanks to the fast spread of digital television and streaming platforms together with a growing presence of multilingual films and TV series that feature an ever-increasing presence of dialects and accents to strengthen characterization and a sense of belonging to a specific place. Not only do dialects carry referential meanings, but they also embody the set of values and beliefs in which a speech community identifies itself (Cordisco, 2015, p. 23). A dialect can be used as a mimetic tool to shape characters in relation to their social context, to add texture to their interpersonal relations and interactional naturalness (Pérez-González, 2014), to produce a more realistic effect in relation to the situation and place of the story (Lippi-Green, 1997; Hodson, 2014). Nonetheless, most productions aim to reproduce a limited impression of dialects/accents, for mere stereotypical or humorous purposes (Kozloff, 2000; Ranzato, 2010), rather than aiming to accomplish a realistic experience of a non-standard language variety.

In fictional language, as Pérez-González (2014, p. 2) argues, "the authenticity of dialogue is jointly accomplished by the fictional characters through a combination of prefabricated orality and spontaneous-sounding interaction over extended stretches of conversation". In other words, even when a thick form of vernacular marks the original dialogue, this still comes from a carefully structured script that has been deliberately put together for narrative purposes and, as many scholars advocate (Bleichenbacher, 2008; Delabastita and Grutman, 2005; Hodson, 2014; Kozloff, 2000), multilingualism in fictional texts remains an artefact that inevitably differs from naturally-occurring speech and needs not to achieve an authentic experience of the language in order to produce credibility in its audience. However, in MBF, there is the presence of "realistic multilingualism" (Sternberg, 1981), being Neapolitan is the main language spoken by the characters living in the poor neighbourhood, the "rione". Here dialect reaches a strong level of spontaneous sounding language since it often relies on improvisation and casual turns that produce a substantial shift towards authenticity and render the Neapolitan dialect the most outstanding and characterizing oral feature of the series.

In this linguistic context, codeswitching between dialect and standard Italian occurs frequently and represents a central phenomenon in studying multilingualism in fictional dialogue (Corrius, Zabalbescoa, 2019; Locher, 2017). The film offers what Sternberg (1981) defines as "vehicular matching", i.e. the insertion of real multilingualism in a given situation, as dialect is the main language we would normally expect to be used by the inhabitants of the "rione", and codeswitching here is mainly "situational" (Bleichenbacher, 2008; Gumperz, 1986), determined by either a specific sociocultural situation or by affective reasons (Myers-Scotton, 1997): this is triggered by different factors dependent on linguistic circumstances or related to the particular social setting such as the change of addressee and/or of the topic, and the intention to mark emotional and social positioning between speakers.

1.2 Audiovisual translation and cross-cultural pragmatics

In reference to culture, for the present study, Ron and Susan Scollon's (1995) idea of the "discourse system" (i.e., the socially acquired pragmatic knowledge of how to do things in a particular culture) has been considered together with the notion of "high context" and "low context" cultures and communication styles (HCC and LCC), first pioneered by Edward Hall (1976). The focus here is on HCC (to which the Neapolitan context can be ascribed), since the speakers' intentions in exchanges are conveyed through implicit forms of communication such as gestures, silences, social customs and tone of voice (Cordisco, 2017, p. 57; Nam, 2015, p. 378), which overtake the actually spoken utterances.

Moreover, audiovisual translation (AVT) is considered here from a "cross-cultural pragmatic perspective" (De Meo, 2019; Guillot, 2016; Linell, 1998; Remael, 2003), in which meaning is acquired by language through context and its sociocultural embedding. Going beyond the observation of the inevitable losses, importance has been given to the consideration of the capacity of subtitles to bear a similar imprint of the source dialogue's communicative intention and also to generate new linguistic and pragmatic meanings. In order to build a framework of analysis for the pragmatic elements of discourse, we have referred to Linell's (1990; 1998) seminal work on the power of dialogue dynamics and empirical studies of dialogism. Although his thorough categorization of "dialogue initiative-response sequences" transcends the scope of this paper, the notions concerning the dynamic nature of dialogue as context-dependent and context renewing[6] and the social construction of meaning are important founding principles to understanding the socio-cultural and interpersonal dynamics triggered by dialect use in MBF. For the present study, we have focused on the pragmatic and interpersonal communicative relevance of weak initiatives and responses, also considered "retroactive moves" (Remael, 2003). They do

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[6] Meaning is highly dependent on context and, therefore, socially (re)constructed and utterly depends on the interaction between interlocutors. Linell stresses that dialogue analysis should take into account the following three elements: utterances, understanding and context as we can say that there is always an element of incompleteness in utterances and, in other words, a degree of a transaction between 'the production and understanding aspects of communicative activities" (1990, p. 152) in relation to context.

not carry much information to move the conversation forward but rather introduce pauses through the use of rhetorical requests of repetitions and confirmations, as in the case of "deferring questions", where "the speaker asserts something or submits a proposal for a comment without explicitly soliciting or demanding (but often inviting) a response from the interlocutor" (Linell, 1998, p. 439), and "minimal responses" that are just comments to the previous turn[7] with no initiating power. Such elements carry considerable pragmatic relevance in clarifying interpersonal relations and are important cohesive devices in dialectal sequences, often providing examples of marked dialectal expressions. In her analysis of dialogic exchanges in subtitling, Remael (2003, p. 244) remarks that

> deferring questions and minimal responses, but also the retroactive parts of turns are cut: these are all turns or turn parts that perform a cohesive function. The proactive parts of turns, which move on both dialogue and story, are usually retained.

Beyond their cohesive function, we will argue that they often display examples of dialectal phraseology and connotative interactional features in character construction.

1.3 Multimodality in subtitling

Drawing on previous research on multimodal studies of subtitling of non-standard varieties (Ramos-Pinto, 2017; Remael, 2001), we have taken into account the different dimensions that participate in the construction of meaning and that therefore concern the translator. Discourse is first considered as a communicative act expressed through the formal use of language and its extra-linguistic references (Hatim, Mason, 1990). It also possesses a pragmatic function that pertains to the speaker's intentionality and a semiotic function that refers to the text positioning in a given context. When confronted with the use of a non-standard variety in AVT, we need to take into account the communicative functions and sociocultural implications it triggers, together with the fact that such elements are not confined to the linguistic or textual mode but are intertwined with a diegetic and a sociocultural dimension.

Although we are not going to focus specifically on multimodality, we assume a multimodal perspective "to consider all the modes participating in the construction of meaning" (Ramos-Pinto, 2017, p. 3). Analysing the construction of meaning in subtitles implies considering three parameters: (1), the textual parameter that includes the identification of formal features of discourse in relation to extra-linguistic aspects embedded in its use that reflect different levels of prestige; (2) the diegetic parameter that refers to the multimodal construction of meaning considering the spoken non-standard elements of the ST in relation to the *mise-en-scène*; (3) the sociocultural parameter that pertains to the target audience ideological reaction and the target context conventions and traditions and cultural distancing with the source culture.

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[7] Following the terminology adopted by Remael (2003) and Linell (1990, 1998), a *dialogue sequence* refers to the dialogue of an entire scene, and a *turn* is a character's contribution to the sequence.

When considering the translation strategies used, the extent to which this intermodal relation has been preserved, deleted or changed is central. When neutralization of non-standard features of language occurs in subtitling, a relation of contradiction rather than one of confirmation is generated. However, since the audience expects standardisation from subtitles, these will still have to be considered in their intermodal relation to the image on the screen. "If the subtitling convention is one of standardization, viewers would probably react with surprise to something different leading translators to respond to their expectations" (Ramos-Pinto, 2017, p. 14). In these circumstances, a multimodal approach to the reconstruction of meaning is essential.

1.4 Translation strategies

The number of studies that have delved into the issue of transfer strategies from a variety of angles and perspectives is considerable. Scholars that embark on creating taxonomies often remark that these are never fully exhaustive or in a fixed sequence. They are usually based on descriptive observations of translators' practice in specific areas, literary or AVT. Therefore, the terminology is often repeated and readapted, showing different degrees of specification.

For the present study, the taxonomy of transfer strategies comes from a synthesis of the models suggested by different scholars (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2009; Gottlieb, 2014; Pedersen, 2005, 2011; Perego, 2003). As suggested by Pedersen (2005) in strict relation to the rendering of ECRs, we have borrowed the six main microstrategies that are arranged in relation to the Venutian scale (Venuti, 1995) from foreignization to domestication that are the following: retention (a SL element is used in the TL as a loan word); specification (the SL element remains untranslated but adds information previously absent); direct translation (possibly in the form of calque or shifted terms); generalization (the substitution of an element with a more general one, often as a hypernym); substitution (the item is substituted by a different item often in the form of paraphrase); omission.[8]

Moving from the extralinguistic to the intralinguistic level, which includes the syntactical, semantic and pragmatic aspects of dialect use, such categories remain appropriate and are still employed. However, they may require a broadening of their meaning in order to account for the textual manipulations. Therefore, according to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2009, pp. 145–162), generalization will be considered as a microstrategy that belongs to the macrocategory of "reduction", which also includes sentence "condensation" and the microstrategy of "specification" will be considered as belonging to the broader category of text "explicitation" (Perego, 2003).

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[8] In addition to the six transfer strategies, Pedersen (2005) also considers the case of official equivalents that refer to a set name in the TL that officially corresponds to one in the SL.

2. Methodological approach

Two methodological macro-areas of analysis have been considered for the present study: the extralinguistic and the intralinguistic levels.

The extralinguistic level pertains mainly to words and chunks that refer to cultural entities. According to Pedersen (2005), Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (ECR) is intertwined with the multifaceted sociolinguistic context and is functional to the development and localization of this particular story. They undeniably represent an important cultural signal and will be considered in the present analysis, although the number of ECRs uttered in a dialectal inflection is limited. Borrowing from Pedersen's taxonomy[9] and Newmark's classification[10] (1988, p. 94), we have identified the following items: (1) personal, geographical, institutional, brand names; (2) titles/professional titles; (3) food and beverage; (4) education/school marks; (5) currency; (6) organizations/customs/ideas. Within the range of influencing parameters[11] in the transfer of ECRs present in Pedersen's analysis, it is important to consider the level of transculturality of culture-specific items, indicating degrees of familiarity of the audience with the item, bearing in mind that the majority of those chosen as examples from MBF are monocultural, or microcultural, i.e. they could be unfamiliar both to the source and target audience.

As for the intralinguistic level, we have considered the language used, especially in terms of substandard varieties, regionalisms, dialect and codeswitching, to identify the presence of specific features of oral interference with reference to linguistic elements that retain signs of spontaneous conversation, use of non-standard vocabulary, lexical creativity and cross-cultural pragmatic features in dialogue exchange (Baños-Piñero and Chaume, 2009).

3. The case study

The case study focuses on the analysis of subtitling processes in the screen adaptation of Ferrante's novel MBF in the eight episodes of series 1. The corpus under investigation consists of the transcriptions of the source dialogues of the episodes, mostly featuring Neapolitan dialect, and of the intralinguistic and interlinguistic subtitles. A comparative qualitative analysis of the corpus has been carried out in order to identify and describe the subtitling strategies/solutions adopted for the translation of dialect, but also to reflect upon the sociocultural implications and changes that, through language transfer, omissions and reformulations of this multi-layered use of language variation, affect character perception and interpersonal relations. We will also consider 1) the subtitlers' choices may have been

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[9] 1. *Weights and measures*; 2. *proper names* (personal, geographical, institutional, brand names); 3. *professional titles*; 4. *food and beverage*: 5. *literature*; 6. *government*; 7. *entertainment*; 8. *education*; 9. *sports*; 10. *currency*; 11. *technical material*; 12. *other* (Pedersen, 2011, pp. 59–60).

[10] Newmark's five groups (1988, p. 94) are the following: 1. *ecology*; 2. *material culture*; 3. *social culture*; 4. *organizations*, *customs*, *ideas*; 5. *gestures and habits*.

[11] The seven influencing parameters are as follows: 1. *transculturality*; 2. *extratextuality*; 3. *centrality of reference*; 4. *intersemiotic redundancy*; 5. *co-text*; 6. *media-specific constraints*; 7. *paratextual consideration*.

influenced by the Italian intralinguistic translation and 2) the subtitles have managed to convey the narrative texture of dialect.

More specifically, the data have been organised and presented according to the following macro-categories for the above-mentioned levels:

- *extralinguistic level*:
  - (1) Extralinguistic Cultural References (ECRs);

- *intralinguistic level*:
  a) syntactical elements
  - (2) L1 codeswitching between dialect and standard Italian;
  - (3) the use of non-standard grammar;

  b) lexico-semantic elements
  - (4) lexical adaptation/misinterpretation;
  - (5) metaphors and figurative language;

  c) cross-cultural pragmatic elements
  - (6) vulgarities and verbal violence;
  - (7) dialectal retroactive moves.[12]

For each of the paragraphs that follow, a table encompassing the source language (SL), the Italian subtitle (IS), the English subtitle (ES) and the translation strategy (S) adopted is provided, together with a discussion of the most striking elements of the comparative analysis and of the strategies chosen to render the elements under scrutiny.[13]

3.1. ECRs

Many are the ECRs in the source text, which have been grouped and analysed according to the categories outlined in §2. [14]

Table 1. ECRs

		SL	IS	ES	S
Personal names	1	*Lenù*	Lenù	Lenù	Retention
	2	*Pinù*	Pinuccia	Pinuccia	Specification
	3	*Pascà*	ø	ø	Omission

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[12] For a study of the extra- and intralinguistic elements in the novel MBF, see Cordisco (2018, pp. 191–210).

[13] In the tables below, dialect words are in italics to distinguish them from standard Italian, omissions are marked in bold and back translation in square brackets, whereas the words to focus on are underlined when needed.

[14] As shown in table 1, ECRs with dialectal phonology or morphology are marked in italics.

		SL	IS	ES	S
Geographical names	4	*Tuledo*	Via Toledo	Via Toledo	Specification
	5	*Abbasc e Tribunal'*	Via de' Tribunali	Montesanto	Substitution
	6	*Poggioreale*	Poggioreale	prison	Generalization
	7	Coroglio	ø	Coroglio	Omission
Institutional names	8	*scola* media	scuola media	middle school	Direct Translation
Brand names	9	Vespa	Vespa	Vesta	Retention
	10	*Millecient*	Milleccento	car	Generalization
Titles/ professional titles	11	*Don Achille*	ø	Don Achille	Retention
	12	*Donna Consì*	Donna Consiglia	Donna Consiglia	Retention/ specification
	13	*mammà*	mamma	mamma	Specification
	14	maestra Oliviero	ø	Maestra Oliviero	Retention
	15	Signora maestra	ø	Miss	Generalization
Food & beverage	16	struffoli	ø	struffoli	Retention
	17	rosolio	ø	rose liquor	Direct Translation
	18	*sover*	sorbe	sorb apples	Direct Translation
Education/ school marks	19	10	ø	A+	Substitution
Organizations/ customs/ideas	20	*a Maronn' ell'Arc*	La Madonna dell'Arco	The Holy Virgin	Generalization

Overall, the general picture that can be drawn from the observation of ECRs' subtitling strategies shows a strong presence of *retention* of Italian words in each of the categories considered in the analysis, as is typically the case. *Direct translation*, *substitution* and *specification* are also present, although less frequent but essential, at times, to clarify the cultural load of some words, while, less frequently, ECRs are specified, generalised or omitted. On the other hand, the main strategy observed for instances of dialectal morphology and specific dialect words is a *specification* that converts them into the Italian spelling or *direct translation* and *generalization* through the use of English hypernyms. The number of omissions rises only if we consider personal names used as vocatives.

3.2. L1 codeswitching

In the series, there are two levels of L1 codeswitching. The first happens in conversations when one character speaks standard Italian, and another uses the non-standard variety. The

second type of L1 codeswitching happens in situations where characters switch between standard and vernacular within the same piece of discourse mainly to the emphasise emotional load of the utterance, as in the case of the scene reported in the table below.

Table 2. L1 codeswitching

		SL	IS	ES	S
E1: Lenù	1	Secondo me si vuole fidanzare con te	[no sub.]	I think he wants to be your boyfriend.	Direct translation
Lila	2	*E m'arregal' 'e sover?* [and he gives me sorb apples as a present?]	E mi regala le sorbe?	And he gives me sorb apples?	Generalization

While children rarely codeswitch to standard Italian outside school, since dialect is the only language they master and feels natural to them, the dialogue offers an interesting example of codeswitching and register variation due to the solemn situation and the topic formality. While the Italian audience is able to perceive the change, also marked by the absence of the Italian subtitle when utterances are in standard Italian, the English audience misses it completely.

3.3. Use of non-standard grammar

At the syntactical level, the use of non-standard grammar in the English subtitle happens quite frequently, although it is not always coherent with the ST register, whereas the Italian subtitle is a transcription of the source dialogue syntax.

Table 3. Use of non-standard grammar

	Ep.	SL	IS	ES	S
3	E2: signora Greco	Te lo devo dire in italiano? *O' dialett' nun t'o rricuord cchiù?*	[no sub.] Il dialetto non te lo ricordi più?	Do I have to say it in proper Italian? You've forgotten dialect?	Explicitation Condensation

Extract (3), where Signora Greco makes a direct meta-reference to the use of dialect, offers an example of metaphorical codeswitching, where the moving from one code to another serves the purpose of remarking their difference to the audience. In the English subtitle, there is the only attempt to reproduce codeswitching through a syntactical switch from standard to non-standard grammar. The sarcastic remark of Lenù's mum in standard Italian is marked in the subtitle by the explicitation "proper Italian" and then by the use of non-standard grammar.

3.4. Lexical adaptation/generalization/misinterpretations

Lexico-semantic adaptations often appear generalized and, at times, misinterpreted.

Table 4. Lexical adaptation/generalization/misinterpretations

		SL	IS	ES	S
1	E2: Lila	*E certi cazett' ngiullut'.* [and some yellowed socks]	E certi calsini ingialliti	And these yellow socks.	Substitution
2	E3: Carmela	*Te fann mal 'e rin.* [Your back hurts]	Ti fanno male i reni.	Your kidneys hurt.	Substitution

In extract (1), the "yellow socks" of the subtitle without the final "-ed" of "yellowed", also present in the Italian translation, produce a complete change of connotation, normalising the sense of shabbiness contained in the ST "cazette 'ngiallute". In (2), "e rin", meaning the "back", becomes mistakenly "kidneys" because of a literal translation into 'reni' in the Italian subtitle that is carried across the English translation.

3.5. Metaphors and allusive language

The corpus contains several instances of metaphors, allusive language and regional sayings that connote dialect of a familiar and imaginative component also used to highlight diachronic features of language through the use of old fashion words or expressions.

Table 5. Metaphors and allusive language

		SL	IS	ES	S
1	E5: signora Greco	*Si tien 'o Marchese* [if the Marquis is with you]	Se hai il Marchese…	If Aunt Flo's with you.	Reformulation
2	E7: Stefano	*Nun c'è stann Santi.* [There are no Saints]	Non ci sono Santi.	No discussion.	Generalization
3	E8: signora Greco	*A bell' e buon'…*	ø	ø	Omission

While the Italian subtitles generally standardize their form, maintaining the same semantic content, the English subtitles mainly resort to reformulation, (1), generalization, (2), and omission, (3).

3.6. Vulgarities and verbal violence

Vulgar words perform different interpersonal functions according to different contexts (Andersson, Trudgill, 1990). As Goddard (2015) suggests, vulgarities and swearing stand at the crossroads of many fields of research; therefore, we consider them in between semantics and pragmatics.

Table 6. Vulgarities and verbal violence

		SL	IS	ES	S
1	E3: Signora Greco	Ma che <u>cazz'</u> ric?	Ma che <u>cazzo</u> dici?	What <u>the fuck</u> are you talking about?	Direct trans./ reformulation
2	E2: Enzo	*Ij vo' mett' <u>ncul'</u>.* [I'm going to stick it up your ass]	Ve lo metto in <u>culo</u>.	I'm going to stick it up yours.	Condensation
3	E3: Michele	*A te c' te ne fott?* [What the fuck do you care?]	Te che te ne frega?	What do you care?	Generalization
4	E3: signora Greco	*Ma nu'm'guardà cu sta faccia 'a '<u>nzalla-nuta</u>!* [don't look at me with this face of an <u>imbecile</u>]	Non mi guardare così ø.	Don't look at me like that ø.	Omission

Vulgarity expressed through physical and verbal violence is a pervasive trait in the narration and the construction of interpersonal relations in MBF. Abusive language, regardless of gender or age, is expressed through shouting, threats and insults. Sex-related vulgarities, including the frequent use of "cazzo" (lit. 'dick'), often find direct translation or reformulation (1), with the recurrent use of the f-word in the subtitles. On the other hand, abusive periphrases are often toned down or omitted, as in (2), where the very explicit and inappropriate sentence uttered by a child in school is condensed and softened. Furthermore, in (3) insults are generalized, matching the choices in the Italian subtitles but rarely omitted. In (4), Lenù's mum uses overt verbal shaming, instructing her oblivious and visibly embarrassed daughter on how to wear sanitary towels. In the subtitle, the abrupt remarks are completely toned down and omitted, and the fact that there are no multimodal signals of verbal violence like screaming and shouting makes the audience miss a substantial reference to characterization and to this unemotional mother-and-daughter relationship that is so central in the narration.

3.7. Dialectal retroactive moves

As already pointed out in §1.2, deferring questions, minimal responses, exclamations, and vocative phrases represent redundant retroactive moves of discourse but are also important cohesive devices that carry emotional and interpersonal connotations. Frequent omissions deprive the subtitle of essential cultural features of characterization.

Table 7. Dialectal retroactive moves

		SL	IS	ES	S
1	E1: Peluso	Cher'è? T' miett' scuorn', a papà? T' miett' scuorn', 'e patet'?	Ø Ø Ti vergogni di tuo padre?	Ø Ø Are you ashamed of your father?	Ø Ø Direct trans.

Here, Peluso's deep despair is conveyed through this rhetorical question to his daughter. The omissions of the deferring questions 'Cher'è?/What is it?', of the tag of affection 'a papà/sweetheart' and also of the question 'T' miett scuorn/are you ashamed?', iron out his humiliating and yet affectionate tone.

4. Results

The outcomes of the present study led us to observe that, as for the spoken mode, in MBF, the non-standard variety has been recreated in the subtitles through the occasional use of non-standard grammar at the syntactical level and the use of swearwords and vulgarities at the lexical level. However, the presence of non-standard linguistic features in the subtitles appears more as an occasional insertion rather than a consistent choice to signal traits of language variation. The frequent strategy of retention of ECRs contributes to remark localisation in coherence with the *mìse-en-scène*, but other instances pertaining to orality and the use of codeswitching are completely standardised.

The relation of dependence between the interlingual and the intralingual subtitles is not identifiable. The English subtitles show recurrent instances of divergence from the Italian ones and not necessarily a higher degree of domestication. Therefore, it is arguably difficult to pin down a consistent relation of dependence or dominance of one over the other, as it is impossible to exclude, at times, a form of contact and influence between them. In reference to textual and diegetic functions played by dialect, the practice of subtitle standardization may not necessarily lead to losses as the audience is used to the subtitling conventions that favour denotative information rather than pragmatic features of conversation. However, at a semantic, pragmatic and sociocultural level, the omission of retroactive moves of discourse, when not imposed by time and space constraints, generates avoidable standardization in the representation of the local characters and their relations. The transfer of verbal violence in subtitles serves more as a means to reinforce linguistic

stereotyping rather than a strategy to reach deeper levels of embedded language abuse and unveil interpersonal dynamics. The rough texture of some scenes and the language found in the subtitles generate, at times, a whole new system of pragmatic representations of characters and their interpersonal relations.

Conclusive remarks

It certainly goes beyond the scope of subtitling to provide accurate renditions of non-standard language; however, lexico-grammatical and pragmatic choices can strongly affect the perception of characterization and the cohesive function within the fictional narrative, as shown in the analysis. This leads to a final consideration on whether subtitling norms should be considered totally incompatible with the transfer of linguistic creativity and non-standard varieties in the source dialogue and whether these norms are still too rigid and conservative, failing to meet the ever-growing need to account for language diversity and the rich repertoire offered by a growing number of audiovisual productions.

Therefore, on the whole, the representation of dialect in subtitling remains limited, possibly fostering stereotypical portrayals through the retention of vulgarities and an informal register.

Balancing loss and neutralization that reflect audience expectations with the implementation of subversive and creative practices remains controversial when dealing with the degree of intrusiveness this particular mode of AVT can and should bear. It seems appropriate to advocate for the construction of new perceptions of intrusiveness that should not necessarily be regarded as detrimental to the construction of meaning.

Innovations in mainstream subtitle construction and use are pushing the boundaries of traditional parameters, and the future challenge in AV translation of multilingual films would be to account for the multi-layered implications of language variation, raising awareness of linguistic diversity but also enriching the linguistic and cultural repertoire embedded in many audiovisual products.

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