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## Accent and dialect as a source of humour: the case of *Rio*

### 1. Introduction

The sources of humour in narrative texts, be they literary or audiovisual, are manifold, as has been shown in the relevant literature (cf., among many, Chiaro, 2005, 2006, 2010; Vandaele, 2002; Zabalbeascoa, 1996). The analysis of the problem has then been extended to animated feature films (Tortoriello, 2006; Bruti, 2009; De Rosa, 2010), a genre with its own peculiarities, which obviously shares the problematic areas of translation in general but has its own specific constraints.

The present work stems from a research project carried out with G. De Rosa on the dubbing and subtitling of the film *Rio*<sup>1</sup> (Saldanha, 2011), produced by Blue Sky Studios, in which the original English dialogues are compared and contrasted to translations into several languages, i.e. Brazilian Portuguese and Italian, making occasional reference to other dubbed versions, e.g. the Mexican, Spanish and Portuguese versions. In particular, this paper is devoted to an analysis of the Italian dubbing of *Rio* into Italian, focusing especially on humorous aspects and sociolinguistic variation and drawing a comparison with another animated film, i.e. *The Aristocats* (Reitherman, 1970).

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1 The plot revolves around Blu, a male blue macaw who is taken to Rio de Janeiro to meet a female blue macaw, Jewel. He eventually falls in love with her and together they have to escape from being smuggled by Nigel, an evil cockatoo.

## 2. The genre and its constraints

‘Cartoon’ is a term that was originally employed to refer to non-realistic drawings or paintings, but at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was extended to animated productions for the cinema and the television and now the two terms are interchangeable. Disney was certainly a leader in this industry, with the release of the first feature-length animated film in the English speaking world and the first film made completely with hand-drawn animation, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), although this was not the first animated film ever.

Animated films may tell the story of human characters, anthropomorphic animals or both, and can be based on either original screenplays or, more often, on a prior-existing story, though the degree to which they are faithful to the original varies remarkably. Generally, animated movies are based on the happy-ending trope, thus belonging to the comic genre, even though sometimes the protagonist(s) or some of the characters go through a series of hardships and obstacles to earn, in the end, their happily-ever-after, a very popular ending especially for love stories. The plot is in fact always enriched with twists and turns, and there is usually a quintessential villain, who acts as an evil foil to the hero’s personality and somehow hinders his journey towards his destiny. However, the villain mainly exists as an obstacle to, or as a consequence of, the hero’s quest. So, apart from a few moments of tension, these movies are for the most characterised by a light-hearted atmosphere where humour, both verbal and non-verbal, plays a decisive role. It can travel along two dimensions, as shown by De Rosa (this volume), the audio and the visual, the former allowing for two combinations, linguistic and linguistic-cultural humour (Antonini & Chiaro, 2005; Chiaro, 2005; Chiaro, 2006), whereas the latter can be expressed visually (through cinesics, proxemics, oculusics)<sup>2</sup>, acoustically (through paralanguage, i.e. prosody, intonation or extralanguage, i.e. voice qualities), or with a mixture of both modes.

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<sup>2</sup> Cinesics is concerned with communication by body language, proxemics with communication by body positioning and oculusics with communication by eye movements.

Rio exploits all strategies alike, as can be seen from the following examples.

1. Jewel [to Blu]: I wouldn't expect a pet to understand.  
Blu: Pet? Did you just call me a pet? For the record, I'm not a pet. I am a companion.
2. Blu: We are in the jungle. You know, when people say, "It's a jungle out there"? Well, I'm pretty sure they don't mean it as a good thing.  
Jewel: Look, I hate to break it to you, but this is where our kind naturally lives.  
Blu: Hey, don't talk to me about nature. I watch *Animal Planet*. I know all about the food chain.

Example 1 is a typical case where humour derives from the linguistic texture: Jewel calls Blu a 'pet', which is exactly what he is, since he does not live in the jungle but in a comfortable house and behaves more like a human being than an animal. However, he perceives the sarcastic tone of Jewel's remark and is offended by the expression, which he, in fact, rejects. Further humorous notes derive from the typical usage of the word 'pet', which is normally used as a term of endearment in a familiar context.

In example 2 humour is attained partly linguistically and partly by exploiting cultural elements, as Blu, a perfect and self-assured know-it-all, quotes the expression "it's a jungle out there", meaning a difficult situation. Jewel reminds him that they *are* in the jungle and that the jungle is the typical habitat where their species is supposed to live. At this point, not wanting to be found at a disadvantage, Blu clings to his second-hand knowledge and quotes *Animal Planet*, an American TV cable specialty channel, launched on September 1, 2007.

In *Rio* some plot-specific sources of humour stem from the atypical condition of the protagonist Blu and can exploit either verbal and non-verbal humour, or both. Some typically funny situations are, for example, those in which Blu behaves like a human being (when Blu washes his teeth, when he drinks cocoa with marshmallow, when he puts sun protecting cream on his beak, which is mistaken for pigeon's poo by Pedro and Nico), or vice versa, i.e. when humans, less frequently, behave like birds, for example when Túlio and Linda dress as macaws for Carnival. A very funny example, in this case based on verbal humour, also occurs when Blu and Jewel meet. She is astonished to discover that Blu is not a typical macaw, so at a certain point she asks him: "Is there any-

thing else I need to know?” to which he answers: “Yes, I can’t fly, I pick my beak and once in a while I pee in the bird-bath. Happy?”

Another motive of the film which also provides humorous elements is the redefinition of ‘birdiness’, i.e. what is proper or prototypical for birds (and what is not). So, at a certain point, exhausted after running, Blu exclaims “Is it hot? I think I’m sweating. I didn’t even think that was biologically possible, and yet, look”.

Non-verbal humour is equally largely represented, as can be seen from the following cases. At the beginning of the film, Blu lives in a comfortable house with his owner and friend Linda. He cannot fly and is aerophobic, but perceives the awkwardness of this condition and sets to solve the problem. So he concentrates and studies the physics of flying. There is a shot on a picture of a macaw reminiscent of *Homo Vitruvianus* with lots of calculations, which is clearly an instance of visually-expressed humour. An example of acoustically-expressed humour is instead represented by the ringtone of the ornithologist’s mobile, the cockcrow. A mixture of the strategies occurs, for instance, towards the beginning of the film, when Blu behaves like a human being and does everything Linda does. So each day begins with the daily routines of washing one’s teeth with a toothbrush, gargling and, for Blu, also burping.

Non-verbal humour usually works well even cross-culturally, if the two lingua-culture sets are not too far away from one another, whereas linguistic and lingua-cultural humour may pose the translator more serious problems, especially relating to culturemes, puns and sociolinguistic variation (De Rosa, 2010; Katan, 2010).

To these typical translation difficulties one needs to add some more specific constraints which specifically rest on the medium and on the audience. As is well known, dubbing imposes some technical constraints having to do with different types of synchronism (Herbst, 1994). With cartoons this aspect is sometimes less crucial, as the protagonists are often talking animals, so speech and articulating movements do not need to coincide so accurately as they do in feature films, because place and manner of articulation are blurred and approximate.

The other conditioning factor, the audience for whom cartoons are destined, is equally important, as it influences the level of syntactic intricacy of the dialogues. Generally speaking, cartoon talk has been recognised as a simplified variety, which aims to be easier for the intended

audience. Some of its typical traits are the use of basic vocabulary, monoclausal sentences, short and balanced turns, reduced speech speed (which makes the genre useful in second language teaching), and a reduced number of orality markers. These features are usually reflected in the dubbed dialogues, in most cases even more so, as translated texts tend to accentuate neutralised and levelled out language (cf. the literature on translating universals, among many Mauranen and Kujamäki, 2004). In the course of the present paper, it will be shown that, on the contrary, *Rio* is rich in sociolinguistically marked traits that contribute to both characterisation and humorous effects (although these features are not fully exploited as in other films, see paragraph 3). Sociolinguistic variation is, however, very much reduced in the dubbed dialogues, thus weakening verbal humour and entrusting laughter mostly to non-verbal humour.

### 3. Sociolinguistic variation in *Rio* and its Italian dubbed version

As pointed out by De Rosa in paragraph 3 of his contribution, the film is characterised by multilingualism, a feature that is always problematic to translate. Furthermore, phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing make the speech of certain characters quite vivid and realistic<sup>3</sup>, although complex to translate. Most of the characters in the original speak with plain American accents, even supposedly Brazilian-reared Jewel (apart from a little Portuguese – with an American accent – at the beginning).

As has been shown to be the case in many films (Lippi-Green, 1987), accent may signal that the action does not take place in an Anglophone country<sup>4</sup>, but this is not the case in *Rio*, where the setting is con-

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3 On the issues of sociolinguistic variation in film language and translation see Bruti 2009.

4 In *The Aristocats*, for example, the setting is Paris, which is recognisable from visual and auditory signals: typical Parisian icons, such as the Metro, the Tour Eiffel, Notre Dame, but also some French expressions uttered by minor characters and a few loanwords used especially by O'Malley (Bruti, 2009).

structured through several stereotypes, i.e. images of famous places in Rio, samba, Carnival, a soccer game on TV between traditional rivals Brazil and Argentina, the famous song *Garota de Ipanema/The Girl from Ipanema* sung in this case by the toucan Rafi to his wife Eva.

Among the few characters who differentiate themselves for a distinctive accent, there is Nigel, the villainous cockatoo, who has an Aussie accent, in line with British-accented villains (cf. Disney: Scar in *The Lion King*, Edgar the butler in *The Aristocats*, Shere Khan in *The Jungle Book*). This aspect is quite coherent with the natural breed of the bird, as cockatoos are of Australasian origin. In addition, Santoro, the ornithologist, is the only character with a Portuguese accent. The supporting characters in Rio speak with Latin American and African American accents: Pedro, a red-crested cardinal, has the voice of will.i.am, a rapper and member of the American hip-hop group *Black Eyed Peas*, whereas his close friend Nico, a yellow canary, is voiced by Jamie Foxx, a singer, rapper and comedian. Other members of the group of friends are Louis, a bulldog and chainsaw expert, who is voiced by Tracy Morgan, an American comedian, and Rafael, a toucan, who is played by Mexican-American George Lopez. The speech of this group of characters is both diastratically and diaphasically marked, as can be noticed from example 3 below.

3. Pedro: You *was* locked up and now you're rolling with a hot-wing. Come on! This *ain't* the level. The next level's the level [...]

Here not only does Pedro have a very strong accent, but his speech can be described as substandard, because of the repeated use of ungrammatical forms, e.g. “was” instead of “were”, and “ain't”, a colloquialism and contraction for “am not”, “is not”, “are not”, “has not”, and “have not”, by most still considered non standard and improper (cf. below for more examples).

No one in the Italian dub, apart from Josè Altafini in the role of the bulldog Louis, has a peculiar accent. Over the last few years, the tendency to employ voice talents seems to have set in even in the dubbed versions of American audiovisual products. Pino Insegno, a famous dubbing actor who in this film lends his voice to the toucan Rafael, explains in an interview that “è stato scelto di non dare agli attori dei finti accenti, delle finte inflessioni brasiliane. I dialetti secondo me non funzionano in que-

ste cose (interviene Biondi “ci ho provato a inserire una battuta in siciliano, ma Marco Guadagno [= the dubbing director] mi ha guardato e mi ha detto che non era il caso”). Anche nell’originale tutti, perfino Lopez che è latino e dà la voce a Rafael, parlavano un inglese molto pulito, senza accenti particolari” (<[http://www.comingsoon.it/News\\_Articoli/Interviste/Page/?Key=6205](http://www.comingsoon.it/News_Articoli/Interviste/Page/?Key=6205)>)<sup>5</sup>.

Francesco Castelnuovo, Armando’s voice, says: “Sono molto contento di questa esperienza, anche se volevo fare un *accento ‘brasileiro’*, ma non me l’hanno fatto fare. Il mio personaggio, Armando, è quello alto, con la pettinatura afro. Insieme a Tipa fanno una coppia di delinquenti ‘fregoni’, un po’ Stanlio e Ollio, un po’ alla *Soliti ignoti*. A proposito di Gassman, Guadagno ha voluto che facessi una voce come quella di Gassman in *I mostri* (<[http://www.sentieriselvaggi.it/6/41324 Il\\_cartone\\_sarai\\_tu\\_persempre\\_Intervista\\_con\\_i\\_doppiatori\\_di\\_Rio.htm](http://www.sentieriselvaggi.it/6/41324_Il_cartone_sarai_tu_persempre_Intervista_con_i_doppiatori_di_Rio.htm)>)<sup>6</sup>.

From these interviews the dubbing actors do not seem to be much aware of the extent of variation in the original. The dubbing director probably decided to flatten variation into standard choices, which is what most typically happens, as Chiaro maintains:

Variety is frequently used for humorous purposes – suffice it to think of how comedians all over the world use regional accents in their repertoire. But what to do about regional variation in translation is indeed a thorny issue. Is it to be flattened by simply replacing it with a standard target form? [...] and if, in dubbing, there is always the option of replacing a regional variety of the SL with a regional variety in the TL (though it may not be a particularly enlightening choice to make considering the connotations specific varieties convey), how can variety be accommodated in *subtitled* form? (2010: 9)

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- 5 “It was decided not to give actors false Brazilian accents. I think that dialects are not effective in these films (Biondi adds “I tried to add a line in Sicilian, but Marco Guadagno looked at me and told me it was not appropriate”). In the original too, all the actors, even Lopez, Rafael’s voice, who is a Latin American, spoke very clear English, without peculiar accents” (my translation).
- 6 “I’m very happy that I had the opportunity to participate in this film, even though I would have liked to speak with a Brazilian accent, but I wasn’t allowed. My character, Armando, is the tall guy, the one with the Afro hairstyle. He and his mate Tipa are a pair of whining criminals, similar, in certain respects, to *Stanlio e Ollio* (= the Italian version of *Laurel & Hardy*), or to *(I) soliti ignoti*. By the way, speaking of Gassman, Guadagno asked me to use a voice similar to Gassman’s in *I mostri*” (my translation).

So, what is diastatically and diaphasically marked in the original is turned into a sort of neutralised neo-standard (“italiano dell’uso medio”) with very little variation, and mainly applying to vocabulary. Let us consider the following example of an interaction between Nico, Pedro and their friend Rafi.

Example 4.

Nico	Hey Rafi! If <i>it</i> isn’t the king of Carnival!	Ehi Rafi, guarda un po’ il re del Carnevale!
Rafi	Nico! Pedro! What $\emptyset$ up, family?	Nico, Pedro, <i>come butta amici?</i>
Pedro	Where $\emptyset$ you <i>been</i> hiding yourself, <i>bird?</i>	Dove ti eri nascosto, amico?
Nico	Man, I thought you were dead.	Pensavo che fossi morto.
Pedro	Hold up! Rewind. [sound]. <i>Ain’t</i> that the bird from the cage?	Aspetta, rewind [sound] Non è l’uccello che era in gabbia?
Nico	I think our love lessons went down <i>smooth</i> .	Le nostre lezioni d’amore sono andate <i>alla grande</i> .
Pedro	You work fast.	Tu sei rapido.
Nico	Baby got beak.	E si intende di <i>cuculi</i> .
Pedro	You <i>was</i> locked up and now you’re <i>rolling</i> with a <i>hot-wing</i> .	Eri <i>sotto chiave</i> e ora <i>te la fai</i> con la <i>pennuta focosa?</i>

Apart from accent, which is absent in the Italian dubbing, morphosyntactic variation is also obliterated: the use of “ain’t”, of the third person of the verb to be, “was”, instead of “were”, the lack of the operator “is” in the expression “What  $\emptyset$  up”, and of “have” in “Where  $\emptyset$  you been hiding?” Furthermore, the adjective “smooth” is used in the place of the adverb “smoothly”. In the Italian dubbing, all these features are ignored, but an attempt is made to make the dialogue sound colloquial by choos-



ing informal lexis: the expression “Come butta, amici?”, in which the verb ‘buttare’ is a familiar form, meaning ‘how is it going?’; the locution “alla grande”, also colloquial, which means ‘brilliant’. Some words need to be spent to comment on the wordplay on the word ‘beak’: on seeing Blu with lovely Jewel, Pedro and Nico comment that he has not wasted time since their last meeting and use the word ‘beak’<sup>7</sup>, which is a slang term for someone’s nose, as part of the expression “to have a good (or a bad) nose”, an expression which exists in Italian, but obviously does not create a pun<sup>8</sup>. So in the translation Blu’s apparent love success is rendered in a more explicit way, so as to exploit a word that refers to birds, “cuculi” (cuckoos)<sup>9</sup>, but also alludes to somebody’s bottom (“culi”). The next line also plays on similar words, utilising terms that have to do with birds but which have a more or less explicit slang meaning related to sex: “to roll” means to have sexual intercourse or to do some petting, whereas “hot wing” exploits reference to a part of a bird body (precisely a chicken’s), but is actually a recipe, a chicken wing section that is deep fried and then coated in a spicy sauce. The overall meaning is similar to the Italian expression “è un bel bocconcino” (‘bocconcino’ meaning ‘tid-bit’), something pleasant to taste, also metaphorically. The Italian dub uses a mixture of colloquial and high register expressions: “farsi”, which is quite informal and slightly vulgar, meaning ‘shag’, whereas the object of the verb is “la pennuta focosa”, which employs the adjective ‘pennuto’ (‘feathered’) as a noun and is more typical of literary language.

There are a few episodes in the film in which characters talk a little Portuguese, either in the original or in the Italian dub. For example, when Pedro and Nico first meet Blu in Rio, they address him in Portuguese in both the original and in the dubbed version, as his appearance

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7 On the exploitation of the stereotype of love affairs, see De Rosa (this volume).

8 Another pun resting on the possibility of interpreting a term literally or in its slang meaning is used by Pedro when he says “Where you been hiding yourself, *bird*?”, where the slang meaning of ‘bird’ is ‘person’.

9 Some of the most amusing puns are those that exploit synonymous terms, one of which relates to birds. For example, Jewel, tired of walking around chained to Blu exclaims: “I’m chained to the only bird in the world who can’t fly!”. Blu replies in his typical style, by showing off his knowledge: “Actually there are about 40 species of flightless birds.” On seeing a wooden cart driving in their direction, Jewel shouts at Blu: “Duck!” because she wants him to bend to pass under the cart, but Blu selects the other isotopy of ‘duck’, that of birds, and thus replies “No, ducks can fly!”

suggests that he is a local. Blu instead replies in English in the original, as the audience can see him dropping his pocket dictionary of Portuguese, thus having to improvise. So he talks with some hesitation, providing an example of “foreigner talk”, an instance of simplified code<sup>10</sup>. In the Italian dub, there is an instance of code-mixing as Blu replies “Sì. Ah... Io non sono di aqui”. From that moment on, Pedro and Nico treat him as a tourist.

The second episode occurs when Blu first meets Jewel in the aviary. On the same ground as before, Jewel identifies Blu as a local and addresses him in Portuguese in the original, which is preserved in the dub. Blu, again, replies in English and is immediately recognised as American:

5. Blu: You're standing on my throat./ Mi stai strangolando.  
Jewel: Oh you are an American./ Non sei di qui.

### 3.1. Reflecting on accents and dialects in animated films

As remarked by Chiaro 2010, the use of accents and traits of dialects are in themselves humorous. This factor is in fact skilfully exploited in comedies, be they feature or animated films. Katan (2010: 18) too notices that humour in animated films is not so dependent on dialogues and gives the example of *Donald Duck*, *Paperino* in Italian, whose success is linked to the voice of the actor who impersonated him, Clarence Nash. His timbre is distinctive both for its ducklike quality and the fact that it is quacky and frequently incomprehensible for anybody, especially when Donald gets angry and speeds up the rhythm of his speech. Katan quotes a Wikipedia article devoted to Nash's career, where it is stated that “to keep Donald's voice consistent throughout the world, Nash voiced Donald's voice in all foreign languages the Disney shorts were translated to (with the aid of the phonetic alphabet), meaning Donald retained his same level of incoherency all across the globe”.

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10 According to Ferguson (1971), foreigner talk is the reduced and simplified version of a language that native speakers use to address other speakers for whom the language is not a native one, especially speakers who do not know the language at all. It is quite similar to the speech that is usually directed at children, “baby talk”. Ferguson claims that foreigner talk is the basis of the emergence of pidgin and creole.

Another very useful case in point is represented by *The Simpsons*, one of the most successful shows<sup>11</sup> of the last decades, because it functions on two levels: the immediate appeal of the animated cartoon, designed principally for children, and the attraction for adults, who are stimulated by “erudite references, irony, pastiche, self-reference and other devices” (Armstrong, 2004: 1). But Armstrong notices that there is one more source of “sophistication” in addition to the ones mentioned above, that is the use of variable language. In *The Simpsons* understanding dialogue and the depths of references is necessary to fully penetrate humour, although images alone already convey a great deal, especially if the audience is familiar with the characters. What sometimes happens with animated films is that, when localising them for a target audience, thus adapting the original dialogues and having them dubbed, they are somehow revitalised (Katan, 2010: 23–24). Katan quotes the convincing example of *Laurel & Hardy*, whose successful dub was essentially due to the humour added to the show by the dubbing actors, Alberto Sordi as unforgettable Ollio and Mauro Zambuto, the high-pitched voice of Stanlio. The “semantic of the accents” in the dub, Katan says (2010: 24), made the translated product much more impressive than the original. He also offers another interesting example, that of Disney characters such as *Topolino/Mickey Mouse* and *Paperino/Donald Duck*. Since the Italian translators made them unforgettable characters, they are now created by Disney Italia and then translated into English.

Disney films in the original are already quite rich in linguistic variation, as demonstrated by a study on the adoption of varieties in twenty-four fully-animated films (Lippi Green, 1987). The results of this investigation show that characters do not speak with a homogenous voice: 43.1% speak in fact a variety of US English that is neither socially nor regionally stigmatised; 13.9% a variety of US English that is southern, urban or associated with an ethnic group; and 21.8% a variety of British English.

In *The Aristocats*, for example, the Parisian setting is evoked by the visuals through some unmistakable Parisian icons, such as the Tour Eiffel, Notre Dame, various signs of the metro in the liberty style, and also by the speech of some minor characters, e.g. the milkman and the owner

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11 There is general agreement that *The Simpsons* qualifies more as a sitcom than as an animated series (Armstrong, 2004; Katan, 2010).

of the restaurant *Le Petit Café*, who only utter a few lines. The main protagonists too sometimes make use of French loanwords, especially Duchess, who also speaks with a French accent, which is highly appropriate to her ladylike character, and O'Malley, the smooth-talking and irresistible alley cat that falls for Duchess and rescues her and the kittens.

The linguistic landscape of the film is however quite rich, with many accents and dialects spoken, although this variety does not affect the credibility of the narrative. Duchess and her kittens have, for instance, different speech patterns, as she has a French accent, whereas the kittens speak standard American English. There are characters who employ some more marked varieties, like O'Malley, who speaks a socially-marked US variety, and his resourceful friend Scat Cat, who uses African American Vernacular English. Even secondary characters like the member of Scat Cat's gang, cats coming from different parts of the world, although they utter only a few lines, sometimes only one, have their own distinctive voice.

One of the main functions of foreign accents in *The Aristocats* is to help the audience form a fully-fledged image of the characters (especially inasmuch as they show verbal idiosyncrasies) as individuals and as members of certain social groups (even in the case of anthropomorphic animals). In the words of Delabastita, foreign accents "take part in the process of characterization and they fulfil a mimetic (historical, representational) function by adding ingredients such as authenticity and *couleur locale*, thus giving substance and credibility to individual characters ..." (2010: 205). When this is the case in the original, very often dubbing performs a homogenizing strategy that reduces all variations to one uniform language variety. In the dubbing of *The Aristocats* by Roberto De Leonardis (cf. Bruti, 2009), no such mistake is made and linguistic variety is even upgraded with excellent comic results. So, for example, O'Malley's social dialect becomes a fully characterised hilarious Roman dialect, connoted on all levels, from phonetics and prosody to lexicon. The ridiculous idiolect of the Gabble sisters finds a convincing counterpart in the heavily-accented voice of Adelina and Guendalina Bla-bla, who speak Italian with the typical accent of British speakers and also adhere to the old-fashioned, literary register that the geese employ in the original. Even cameo characters like the two dogs in the countryside, Napoleon and Lafayette, speak in the dub with a marked Milanese accent. The success of the film with both critics and audience is universally

recognised, which is also proven by the fact that, differently from other Disney classics, *The Aristocats* has never been re-dubbed, as it is still found convincing and modern.

#### 4. Conclusions

In the previous paragraph I brought up the example of *The Aristocats*<sup>12</sup> as an instance of dubbing where even more space is granted to linguistic variation, with sure comic effects. In a genre like animated films, which partakes most of the typical features of comedy, there is much room for experimentation in the translation of accents or dialects, which are not only linguistically, semiotically and socially complex categories, but are also severely constrained by genre, in that the same flexibility would in fact not be allowed in drama. So, even though *Rio* is on the whole quite a humorous film, linguistic variation is not prioritised in the original and it is even more levelled in the dub, entrusting humour essentially to non-verbal elements, mainly situational, and to verbal ones, which, as is well known, do not always find convincing equivalence across languages.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Simpsons* is another first-rate example of using accents and dialects in the dub.

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