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**AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION: COMPLIMENTS AND  
INSULTS IN SPIKE LEE'S *BAMBOOZLED***

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## Introduction

Translating only the linguistic component without taking into account the value of the other semiotic dimensions of film would certainly be a recipe for a disaster. Culture, cultural identity and pragmatic functioning in their more or less explicit localised forms ooze from all the film or programme's semiotic system and pragmatics. (Díaz Cintas, 2009: 9)

Jorge Díaz Cintas' statement, taken from the introduction to "New Trends on Audiovisual Translation" (2009) edited by the linguist himself, anticipates the basis of the present study, which aims at revealing the translation strategies adopted in terms of cultural adaptation and acceptability in *Bamboozled*, a film written and produced by Spike Lee.

Considering the relevance of audiovisual language and its translation as a multi-faceted and flexible discipline, the starting point of the project is to consider the verbal component of audiovisual texts not only as a neutral and aseptic linguistic product, but also as the embodiment of several constituents, at times implicitly presented, that mirror the society and the lingua-cultural panorama in which they are produced and even translated.

In the late twentieth century audiovisual language and audiovisual translation made their official appearance in a new discipline called Translation Studies (Freddi and Pavesi, 2005; Díaz Cintas, 2008; Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009; Díaz Cintas, 2009). The importance of these two fields of research has recently grown to the point of having them included in the wider humanistic area.

As an increasing number of international conferences, university courses and academic publications goes to prove, audiovisual language and its translation have become a huge source of interest for, to name but a few, linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists and pragmaticians.

The heterogeneous and versatile nature of the audiovisual language and the audiovisual translation is, in fact, considered as a breeding ground for social patterns and lingua-cultural archetypes. The study of every kind of audiovisual product, such as films, documentaries, and video clips, as well as video games, social networks, and video-sharing websites, cannot be detached from the

socio-cultural context in which that particular product was created, developed, and is regularly being used.

Along with their cultural relevance, audiovisual language and its translation have also been analysed for their pragmatic value, as communicative exchanges in TV programmes, TV series and films generally aim at faithfully reproducing “the centrality of dialogue in face-to-face conversations” (Freddi and Pavesi, 2005: 12), where the principles of naturalness and verisimilitude govern the evolving speech.

Taken into consideration the great importance of Austin and Searle’s theory of speech acts - stipulated in the late 1960s - in human communicative processes, this analysis focuses on the presence of compliments and insults in the 2000-African American filmic production *Bamboozled*, evaluating their linguistic nature and their socio-cultural value in the situational context in which they are uttered.

The primary purpose of the analysis is to decode the illocutionary force, and the perlocutionary one, if required, of the original as well as the dubbed expressive speech acts, considering their authentic cultural validity and their pragmatic value.

This study, mainly exploratory in nature, takes into account any obstacle or complication caused by the process of adaptation to the target language. Problems generated by technical constraints have not been taken into consideration.

Moreover, both the socio-cultural and the situational context have been taken into account since, as Ranzato (2010: 10) points out, besides the fictitious narrative elements of the film and its relation with the rest of Spike Lee’s filmic productions, other macro-structural components, such as the political, economic, social and historical factors in which the film and its dubbed version are produced, are also of great importance.

The hypothetical differences between the source and the target versions will be presented and discussed in order to interpret the translators’ choices and to understand the reasons that may have led to a change in the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimension.

The recurring use of complimentary and insulting speech acts included in the script allows for a broad-spectrum and multi-faceted analysis, which embodies, as Díaz Cintas would say, historical, social, pragmatic and lingua-cultural elements.

The high incidence of praising and insulting remarks, both in the source and in the target versions, creates a complex organization of linguistic and semantic relations whose framework will provide food for thought.

The African American director himself, conceiving his work as a 'showdown', stated the relevance of the film, produced at the beginning of the new millennium, by defining *Bamboozled* as satire. His aim was to show how African Americans have been portrayed since the inception of film and Lee depicts a controversial American right from the very beginning of the twentieth-first century.

This paper will compare the original version of the screenplay with the Italian dubbed text, offering an analysis of forty-four compliments and forty-four insults. There are several versions of the English screenplay, so the original dialogues have been carefully transcribed from the film before data collection. The same process was necessary for the dubbed version because no Italian screenplay is available.

This approach naturally fosters a broad-spectrum and flexible analysis, whose organized network is based on a micro-syntactical and pragmatic study. However, a careful viewing of the whole film is highly recommended in order to achieve a deeper understanding of what is reported herein. When required, a brief explanation of the scene revolving around the expressive speech act has been included.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural framework in which the micro-cosmos portrayed in the film is set, may likewise give the audience an even greater understanding of the nature of the expressive speech acts analysed and their illocutionary force. In fact, several comments refer to the world "outside" the filmic production.

By deciding to make a comparative study of the expressive speech acts in both versions, the present study includes all the examples in the film. None will be omitted from the analytical approach.

In order to provide a deeper and more general understanding of the pragmatic micro-cosmos within the audiovisual product, every remark of approbation and every offensive comment will be classified and contextualised, even when the pragmatic and syntactic texture of source and target versions completely coincides.

Central to this approach is the linguistic variety that the characters use. The uniqueness of the source text, in fact, is mainly produced by the recurring use of African American English, whose vocabulary and idiomatic expressions are typical of the lingua-cultural background of the U.S.A.

As a consequence, special attention will be devoted to the micro-linguistic level, evaluating, case by case, the sub-standard linguistic features of the original screenplay and their translation.

For a clearer and more comprehensible reading of the analysis, the two categories of expressive speech acts will firstly be categorized following Kebrat-Orecchioni's distinction (1987), i.e., according to their explicitness and implicitness.

However, it should be remembered that literature includes many methods for classifying complimenting and insulting expressive speech acts. In fact, the same author (*ibid.*) explains that compliments, and similarly insults as well, can be divided into *direct* and *indirect* ones. In the former classification, the speaker addresses his interlocutor by paying the complimentary or offensive remark directly to him while in the latter classification remarks are generally made to a third party linked to the addressee.

Bruti (2005) offers another classification. She calls compliments and insults *overt* when the utterance contains semantically positive or derogatory lexical elements, and *covert* when no complimentary or insulting words are included in the comment. She then adds a third category called *dishonest*, in which all utterances that sound like compliments or insults reveal a different illocutionary force due to their verbal texture.

The classification offered in this thesis includes four categories. The first contains all the examples that are directly addressed to the listener, whereas all the utterances containing implicit positive or negative comments addressed to the listener are grouped into a second category. This is followed by the

examples that include compliments and insults addressed to a third party. Lastly, the fourth classification includes any *dishonest* compliments and insults. Although every expressive speech act will be analysed and commented, cases where there is more than one example in the same line will not be divided into smaller units since a too rigid segmentation of the discursive flow would lead to an unfaithful analysis of the utterances. Completely detaching them from their situational context, in fact, would make them meaningless.

With the aim of giving a detailed and organised reading of the analysis, these categories are not intended to provide a new systematic pattern in the analysis of compliments.

# 1 A brief introduction to African American English

African American English, the linguistic variety spoken by many African Americans in the USA, is a system with specific rules for combining sounds to form words and words to form phrases and sentences.  
(Green, 2004: 76)

Since this study focuses on Spike Lee's filmic production, a brief introduction to African American English and its linguistic norms would be helpful in getting to the heart of the analysis.

As several notorious researchers have highlighted (Tottie, 2002; Green, 2002; Wolfram and Thomas, 2002; Finegan and Rickford, 2004) this variety of English has been labelled with a variety names over the years:

Negro dialect

Non-standard Negro English

Negro English

American Negro Speech

Black communications

Black dialect

Black folk speech

Black street speech

Black English

Black English Vernacular

Black Vernacular English

Afro American English

African American English (AAE)

African American Language

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)<sup>1</sup>

All these labels have been used to refer to the same linguistic variety but the latter ones are those regularly preferred today.

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<sup>1</sup> This classification was taken from "African American English: A Linguistic Introduction" (Green, 2002: 6).

As the terms themselves show, the evolution of the denomination of this linguistic system suggests an initial inclination to limit it to a dialect spoken by African Americans defined as Negro. Subsequently, focus centred on the American community who spoke the language, roughly described as speech, dialect and communication. The latter labels clearly embrace a more complex perspective according to which the variety spoken by African American people is a language linked to English, suggesting that “some of its characteristics are common to or very similar to those of different varieties of English” (Green, 2002: 6)<sup>2</sup>.

In regard to this point, the origin of African American English and the subsequent development of its linguistic features, is a matter of controversy between scholars who do not share the same perspective.

Discussions on the origin of AAE are traditionally and simply based on its birth: some linguists embrace the *Anglicist* hypothesis, while others support the *Creolist* possibility. The former believe that the African American language essentially derives from British-based dialects and the latter share the theory that AAE is the result of African diaspora and includes distinctive patterns of Niger-Congo languages and, more generally, West African languages.

In keeping with this last supposition, Crystal ([1995] 2003: 96 - 97) explains that the emerging linguistic code developed within the first permanent settlements in the XVII century was deeply influenced by the incoming black population imported by white colonizers to work on sugar plantations. This system, which continued until 1865<sup>3</sup>, forced people of different mother tongues to live together, thus generating pidgin forms of communication, “in particular a pidgin between the slaves and the sailors, many of whom spoke English” (ibid.: 96).

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<sup>2</sup> Parallel to these labels, *Ebonics* is another term used to classify AAE. This label, however, cannot be included among the others for two main reasons: firstly, as linguists explain (Green among them, 2002) it does not only refer to African American speakers in the U.S.A but also includes users living in the Caribbean; secondly, this label is generally used to refer to AAE outside the academic environment.

<sup>3</sup> Slavery in the U.S.A. was abolished at the end of the American Civil War with the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Amendment was passed by the Senate in Spring 1864, by the House in January 1865 and officially adopted in December 1865.

When black people eventually settled in the Caribbean, as Crystal points out, this new linguistic code spread and became the principal means of communication with the white masters. With the next generation, the evolution of this process led to the development of the first black Creole speech in the area. In terms of the African American language, Crystal confirms the heterogeneity of the linguists' perspective, and defines the history of AAE as "complex, controversial, and only partly understood" (ibid.: 97).

More recently another theory, called the *neo-Anglicist* hypothesis, has been studied. This modern position continues to agree with the principle of the previous theory, but it also recognizes that AAE has distinctive linguistic rules that are different to white vernacular language.

The neo-Anglicist hypothesis has gained greater support among the linguists without, however, putting an end to the controversy since, as Wolfram and Thomas (2002: 14) testify, "disputes remain over the nature of the data [...], the earlier language contact situation between Africans and Europeans [...], and the sociohistorical circumstances that contextualised the speech of earlier African Americans"<sup>4</sup>.

As mentioned above, African American English has specific features in the main fields of linguistics:

Vocabulary

Phonology

Syntax

## **1.1 Vocabulary**

With regard to lexicon and its meaning, African American speakers do not have a vocabulary that completely differs from other varieties of the English language but they do use words and phrases that are not part of any of these varieties or of general American English itself.

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<sup>4</sup> The lexicographical and historical account given here merely aims at providing a brief introduction to the origin of African American English. For a full discussion see Green, 2002 (8-11); Wolfram and Thomas, 2002 (12-15).

Moreover, as Green (2002) and Tottie (2002) point out, some of the AAE lexicon has the same sounds as American English words but is used with different meanings by black speakers. These words or expressions have been adopted over the years by the white population as well.

In fact, Tottie (2002: 225) lists several examples that have now also been exported overseas and are commonly known among English speakers today<sup>5</sup>:

| WORD    | GENERAL AMERICAN ENGLISH <sup>6</sup>   | AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH <sup>7</sup>  |
|---------|---|--|
| brother | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A boy or a man who has the same mother and father as another person</li> </ul>   | A black man                            |
| cool    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fairy cold</li> <li>▪ Calm</li> <li>▪ Not friendly</li> <li>▪ confident</li> </ul>   | Excellent                              |
| hip     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The area at either side of the body between the top of the leg and the waist</li> <li>▪ Knowing what is fashionable in clothes or music, etc.</li> </ul> | Wise, sophisticated                    |
| man     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An adult male human</li> </ul>   | Address form speaking with another man |
| sister  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A girl or a woman who has the same mother and father as another person</li> </ul>  | A black woman                          |
| square  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Having four straight equal sides and four angle of 90°.</li> </ul>   | The opposite of hip                    |

The complexity of AAE lexical items is further clarified by Green's detailed categorization (2002: 12-33), entirely reported herein, and which includes three different categories of lexicon:

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<sup>5</sup> One factor, probably even the main one, that has contributed to the spread of African American English is thought to be music: the development of gospel music (which dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century), the growth of jazz and blues as international artistic forms (in evidence since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the success of rap and hip-hop (developed during the 70s and now one of the most preferred artistic forms of the new millennium) have contributed to making African American English popular all over the world.

<sup>6</sup> Definitions are taken from Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (8th edition).

<sup>7</sup> Explanations of the words are taken from Tottie's definitions (2002, pp. 225, 226)

- General words and phrases that cross generational boundaries and are likely to span regional and class boundaries;
- Verbal makers and
- Current slang items used by adolescents and young adults.

The first list includes words that are systematically used by AAE speakers without diachronic, diastratic and diaphasic constraints. To exemplify the first category, Green (2002: 14) refers to one of the milestones of AAE literature *Juba to Jive* written by Major in 1994. This dictionary, in fact, includes a corpus of words from the early XVII century to the XX century<sup>8</sup>, which proves that words that were spoken two hundred years ago are still being used today.

The second archive includes all lexical items subdivided into thematic topics. These subcategories differ from the first list because they are strictly affected by the speakers' age, social status, education, sex and geographic background. General examples shown are: male or female interaction, street jargon, vocabulary of drugs or gang linguistic codes.

The latter category probably presents the most fascinating dimension of the African American language: slang items and expressions. Once again, Crystal ([1995] 2003: 182), preferring a more general starting point, offers a brief but detailed account of the origin of the word *slang* by selecting a challenging and picturesque definition, quoting Sandburg, who defines it as a “language which takes off its coat, spits on its hands – and goes to work”. He then goes on to include other more *judicious* definitions, as he calls them, citing the Oxford English Dictionary which identifies as *slang* “a language of a highly colloquial type, considered below the level of educated standard speech” (ibid.: 182). Major (1994), defining slang as *the most alive aspect* of AAE and the language of youth, gives the reader an eye-opening explanation of what slang is and the possible reasons why speakers are so fond of it and why it has become such an interesting area of research. First of all, he starts by pointing out that “slang has

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<sup>8</sup> Major, at the end of the introduction, highlights that “the entries represent African-American speakers in every section of the country, from as early as the 1620s through the 1990s (p. XXXV).

never had a consistently good reputation. Often it is characterized as much by arrogance, bigotry, sexism, and self-contempt as by humour, compassion, and wisdom” (ibid.: XXVII). He, then, continues by asserting that “African American slang cuts through logic and arrives at a quick, efficient, interpretative solution to situations and things otherwise difficult to articulate” (ibid.: XXVIII). His four areas of African American slang<sup>9</sup> help linguists and ordinary people alike, to understand how it developed and how it works. He distinguishes between southern rural slang (whose roots developed during slavery); the slang of the sinner-man/black musicians (included between the beginning of the XX century and the 60s); street culture slang (precursor of rap and hip-hop music) and working class slang.

Many AAE slang expressions have been adopted by the English-speaking population. Furthermore, due to literature, filmic production and, above all, hip hop music, the language has also spread widely overseas giving life to whole communities of users, who not only share the linguistic code but also many discursive and communicative practices. Alim (2004), examining the concept of Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), explains that “the relationship between HHNL and AAL<sup>10</sup> is a familial one. Since hip hop’s culture creators are members of the broader African American community, the language that they use most often when communicating with each other is AAL” (ibid.: 396).

The use of AAE slang has not only contributed to creating a fixed – even if in continual evolution – subcategory of English lexicon, it has also helped to reinforce African American identity and community.

## **1.2 Phonology**

The phonology of African American English is another important field of research since the sound patterns of this variety do not generally mirror those of Standard American English so that, for example, words with the same meaning in both languages often differ in pronunciation. Tottie (2002: 220) introduces the

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<sup>9</sup> The four areas of African American slang theorized by Major are entirely reported herein.

<sup>10</sup> African American Language

topic by observing that African American intonation is characteristic and difficult to describe. Therefore this paragraph will only offer a general descriptive summary of the system of sounds and rhythm in AAE<sup>11</sup>.

### 1.2.1 Vowel system

- Short [e] before nasal sounds *n*, *m*, and *ng* [ŋ] is often pronounced [ɪ] → *pen* and *pin* are the same vocalic sound;
- Diphthong [aɪ] before voiced consonants or at the end of the words is pronounced as a single vowel [a] → *side* [sɑd] – *my* [mɑ];
- Diphthong [oɪ] is used by older speakers in words like *road* [roid] – *coach* [koɪ tʃ];
- Lowering of the [ɛ r] sound in words like *prepare* and *hair*;
- When a voiced nasal phoneme follows a vowel, the nasal consonant is deleted and the vowel is nasalized → *man* [mã] – *find* [fã:]

### 1.2.2 Consonant system

- Consonant cluster reduction in words like *post* [pos], *mask* [mæs], *gift* [gɪ f] or *raised* [rez];
- Consonant devoicing occurs at the end of words → *cab* sounds *cap*, *feed* sounds *feet*;
- Word-initially voiceless sound *th* is normally pronounced [θ] → *thing* [θɪ ŋ];  
Word-initially voiced sound *th* [ð] is pronounced [d] → *these* [diz];  
Word-medially and word-finally sound *th* sounds as [f] or [t] → *bath* [bæf] – *with* [wɪ t];  
Word-medially and word-finally sound *th* [ð] sounds [v] or [d] → *bathe* [bev];
- Liquid *l* at the end of the words is vocalized: *bell* [bɛ ə] – *cold* [ko:] - *I'll* [a];
- Since it is an r-less sound system, when the consonant *r* is not followed by a vowel, it is generally dropped (intervocalic *r* can also drop) → *floor* [flo:];

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<sup>11</sup> This introduction to the AAE sound system follows the contributions given by Green (2002) and Tottie (2002).

- The word-ending nasal sound - ing [ŋ] is generally pronounced as [n] → running [rʌ nɪ n] – dancing [dænsɪn];
- The sound *str* at the beginning of words is often substituted by the sound *skr* → street [skrit] – strawberry [skrɔ bɛ ri] – stretch [skrɛʃ];
- The phonemes [ks] and [s] tend to be replaced by [k] → box [bok].

### 1.3 Syntax

As for the lexicon and sound systems, African American English presents specific and systematic features regarding grammar and, above all, tenses which differ remarkably to General American English and other varieties of English<sup>12</sup>.

As already elaborated by Green (2002), this paragraph will present the main patterns and rules of AAE tenses shedding light on the principal differences with Standard English and proving “evidence that the syntactic system of these verbal markers is rule governed” (ibid.: 74). In addition, special attention will be paid to the way words are combined to create sentences and to the morphology of the language.

- The verb to be
  - Absence of the copula *be* (when not stressed and not in the first personal pronoun):
    - He Ø a man
    - She Ø singing
    - He Ø gonna go
    - Who Ø you?
  - Use of the verbal marker ‘be’ to signal frequent or habitual situations:
    - Those computers be light
    - He be working on Monday
    - Michael be good

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<sup>12</sup> Most examples shown here are taken from Green (2002) and Tottie (2002).

John be mad

- Auxiliaries

- In the present tense, a single verb can be used with all subjects:

He walk

She don't eat

She have a car

He always do silly things

- No difference between the Simple Past and the Present Perfect forms (generally simple past form is preferred):

- Tottie (2002: 222) illustrates the general uses of past tenses with three eye-opening examples:

She did sing → she has just finished singing

She done sung → she sang recently

She been sung → she sang a long time ago

- *Bin* + -ing form indicates an activity or situation in the remote past or phase that continues up to the moment of speaking.

According to the different stress patterns *bin/been* has different meanings:

He bin running → he has been running for a long time;

He been running → he has been running

She bin had him all day → she has had him all day

- The verbal marker *dən* indicates that a situation or activity is ended:

I told him you dən changed → I told him that you have changed

I dən already finished it → I have already finished it

- Preverbal markers: *finna*, *steady*, *come*

- *Finna* (with non-finite verb forms): refers to an event that is imminent:

I'm finna leave → I'm getting ready/about to leave

Y'all finna eat? → Are you getting ready/about to eat?

- *Steady* (followed by a verb form in the progressive): indicates that an activity is being carried out in an intense or consistent manner:

They want to do their own thing, and you steady talking to them → [...], and you're continuing to talk to them.

- *Come*: is used to mark the speaker's indignation:

They come walking in here like they was gon' make us change our minds → they walked in here as if they were going to do or say something to make us change our minds

- African American English can have two or more negative words in the same sentence (*ain't* is the most popular form)

Don't know nothin' about nobody → I don't know anything about anybody

Ain't got no milk → I don't have any milk

Freeze! Don't nobody move! → freeze! Don't anybody move!

- Existential *it* and *dey*: are used to indicate that something exists and means *there is* and *there are*:

It be too many cars in the parking lot → there are usually/always too many cars in that parking lot

- Questions: often questions are formed without auxiliaries:

You know my name? → Do you know my name?

He sleeping in the car? → is he sleeping in the car?

- Left dislocation:

The teacher, she yell at them all

- In the genitive and in the plural forms, the –s is generally omitted:

The boy hat

John house

## 2 Spike Lee: creature and creator

The decision to identify is, in the moment of decision, not so much a recognition of something, a “blackness”, already given, but rather an existential choice – an act of imagination, of creativity.  
(Lively, 1998: 228)

Defined as the greatest revelation of the last few decades (Audino and Fasoli, 1993; Moneta, 1998; Rizza and Rossi, 2007), Spike Lee is known worldwide as the first undisputed African American filmmaker who has irreversibly challenged the traditional set of assumptions on which the whole Hollywoodian machine has always been based. Through his filmic production, on-going since the 80s<sup>13</sup>, he has indelibly unhinged and modified the way in which African Americans were often represented, destroying those obsolete and standardized ideas that depicted black characters as mere loafers usually waiting for government aids. The range of portrayals in movies and on commercial network television before the TV revolution of the 60s and 70s (Acham, 2004), did, in fact, generally promote negative stereotypes where the African American people’s inferiority, laziness and lack of purpose were depicted to highlight the ancient concept of the mainstream culture, according to which Blackness could not be similar to Whiteness (Means Coleman, 1998).

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<sup>13</sup> Spike Lee is an American film director, producer, writer and actor.

His first production was the independent film *Joe’s Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We cut Heads* (1983) submitted as his Master Degree thesis at the Tisch School of Arts (University of New York) while his first feature film was *She’s Gotta Have it* (1986), which received four prestigious awards (“Award of the Youth” Foreign Film – 1986 Cannes Festival Film; “New Generation Award”- 1986 Los Angeles Film Critics Awards; Best First Feature and Best Female Lead – 1987 Independent Spirit Awards).

His filmography boasts more than 20 movies, including worldwide famous feature films and short films among which *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *Get on the Bus* (1996) and *Bamboozled* (2000).

This principle involved the white process of distorting and trivializing black cultural identity by promoting ghettoised and buffoonish characters like those in the American series *Beluah*<sup>14</sup> and *Amos 'n' Andy*<sup>15</sup> (Bogle, 2001), thus creating insubstantial caricatures of the African American community. In fact, black performers were often excluded by producers who preferred to paint the faces of white actors black (Mean Coleman, 1998)<sup>16</sup>.

Described by Means Coleman (1998) as hyper-racialized images, such representations have always encouraged feelings of incessant rivalry between black and white people among the audience, which Lee also defines as the eternal struggle between Love and Hate (Socci, 2007), those interior feelings which Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde do anything to gain supremacy over, even though they are both deeply and fully aware that one complements the other.

Such made-for-TV representations began to alter during the Civil Rights Movement when series like *Black Journal*<sup>17</sup> began to modify the perceptions of black communities, documenting their racial discrimination. The positive

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<sup>14</sup> Famous for being the first American sitcom to star an African American actress, The Beulah Show ran between the 1940s and the 1950s on ABC.

<sup>15</sup> Inspired by the minstrel tradition, *Amos 'n' Andy* aired both on radio and television between the 1920s and the 1950s. It was a controversial show which offered a stereotypical representation of African Americans.

<sup>16</sup> Developed in New York, the minstrel show was a popular American form of entertainment dating back to the 1830s and 1840s. Performed by white actors in blackface makeup, it exploited African American dialects, songs, jokes and habits. The TV show portrayed the black population as the mainstream culture wanted to see it: minstrels, in fact, "shaped white Americans' vague notions and amorphous beliefs about Negroes into vivid, eye-catching caricatures as they literally acted out images of blacks and plantation life that satisfied their huge audiences" (Toll, 1974: 65). Blatantly racially-offensive and anti-black, the minstrel show contributed to the evolution of racist beliefs and racial stereotypes amongst white Americans. It completely rejected any notion of equality between the two races and depicted African Americans as totally inferior. In fact, blacks were purposefully portrayed as stupid and foolish (Toll, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> *Black Journal*, an American television show, was first broadcast on PBS in June 1968. It was a non-fiction program created by African Americans focusing on black issues and dealing with culture, politics and society. It also included interviews with political leaders, entertainers and contemporary public figures (Acham, 2004: 24 – 53).

evolution of black images exploded with the arrival of sitcoms and stand-up shows in the last part of the XX century when, as Brent Zook (1999: 107) maintains, “like a blast of fresh air after rain, African American productions of the early 1990s allowed us to inhale just a bit deeper, to reflect a fraction of a dramatic minute longer. Such shows help us to know that our fears, desires, and memories are often collective, not individual.” In fact, weekly series such as *The Jeffersons* (1975 – 1985) and *Will, the Fresh Prince of Bel Air* (1990 – 1996) were evidence of successful black integration while stand up shows, like *Bring the Pain* (1996) and *The Chris Rock Show* (1997 - 2000), aimed at discussing white as well as black aspects of the American culture and politics. Furthermore, in observing the world of cinema, the absence of African American figures in front of the camera, and even more so behind, is evident throughout the XX century. As Gubar (1997: 40) points out, “the concept of whiteness depends [...] on the appropriation of black beings, then perhaps one of the predicaments of white culture has resided in its blindness about its dependency on represented (and thus effaced) black bodies”, suggesting that the two American masterpieces of cinematic production in the early XX century (*The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *The Jazz Singer* (1927)), are primordial examples of blackface exploitation, in which the representations of blacks mirrored the stereotypical vision they have had to put up with the entire century (ibid.: 57). As a matter of fact, many other films, such as *Wonderbar* (1934), *A Song to Remember* (1945) and the famous *Rhapsody in Blue* (1945), persisted in recycling blackfaces and are witness to the common white attitude towards the black community. Only the presence of Melvin Van Peebles with his two films *Watermelon Man* (1970) and *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadassss Song* (1971) marked the beginning of a new era in which the traditional concept of *blackness* started to change. Van Peebles’ unexpected work was, in fact, considered a strong attack against the white mainstream racist culture, promoting a new way of representing blacks in front of the camera. Thanks to his films, however, the idea of allowing a cinematic production to show African Americans as positive individuals became concrete (Minganti, 2007).

Spike Lee, in terms of the cinema and television history, does not make his own way by focusing only on African American culture and heritage, but by getting consciously away from an Afrocentric point of view, with the aim of creating constellations of individual experiences in which the Bergmanian blink of an eye consists of a multiracial world where African Americans, Koreans, Italian Americans and Jews find living together difficult<sup>18</sup>. In fact, Lee dazes the audience revealing a world in which racism and its consequences have not completely disappeared and are, on the contrary, even more concealed in a social balance built on blindness and deafness (Chiacchiarini, 1996), where still only a few black people actually own their “forty acres and a mule”<sup>19</sup>.

And it is exactly through the name of his production company, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, with head offices in Brooklyn, that the filmmaker wants to give a face and a voice to all those black characters that have been hidden for so long in humiliating representative cages and that showed their identity only through a white-oriented perspective. According to his innovative filmic philosophy, the modern African American Prometheus moulds an endless series of micro-cosmoses that portray a contemporary socio-cultural, political and economic dimension and where the key words are dissatisfaction, misunderstanding, prejudice and racism (Razzini, 1996).

Moreover, what was, and still is, considered noteworthy in his filmic production is the way in which Lee and his team, which includes two of his best friends, Monty Ross and Ernest Dickerson<sup>20</sup>, have been able to build an unusual macro-

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<sup>18</sup> Spike Lee's collaboration with African American artists, as well as white figures, goes back to the beginning of his career. He has often worked with internationally famous actors such as Denzel Washington, Samuel Lee Jackson, Ossie Davis, Danny Aiello, Giancarlo Esposito and Clive Owen.

<sup>19</sup> As the result of a policy drawn up in 1865 at the end of the American Civil War, all freed black families should have received sixteen hectares of land - a standardized size for a rural area - and a mule. Such measure was meant to help freed slaves begin a new independent life. Unfortunately, the policy was never respected as, after the death of President Lincoln, Johnson revoked it and the lands came back to their previous white owners.

<sup>20</sup> Lee also worked for years with his father who composed music for his films, but their cooperation collapsed at the end of the 80s. Belonging to two different lifestyles, Bill Lee and his

cosmos whose geography is completely different from those films produced during the so-called Blaxploitation. Lee's purpose, in fact, although he has often been accused of showing an amplified inclination towards masculinity, homophobia (Lubiano, 1991) and violence, meets the need to face reality by taking pictures of a present-day America, in which daily situations become central for two main reasons<sup>21</sup>: firstly, as several critics, including the famous Siniscalchi (1996), have maintained, because the representation of real lives and experiences gives a deeper understanding of the black and the white populations, and encourages a breakdown in those human assumptions according to which everyone already knows everything about all the possible obstacles caused by racism and intolerance. The filmmaker's ability, in fact, lies in unexpectedly shuffling the cards to make his viewers see their unwitting impotence in understanding and judging what is going on around them every day. What leaves the audience puzzled is the fact that Spike Lee categorically refuses to suggest any kind of guided interpretation, expecting the viewer to play an active role in deciphering the narrative structure (ibid.). As he stated in a recent interview (McCluskey, 2004), he does not want to give any answers because he wants his position to be closer to the concept of representation and discussion rather than to supply preset comments or explanations that would gradually move away from an architecture promoting a critical approach to African American culture and racial integration.

Furthermore, the choice of illustrating reality is based on the desire to embody real events which show how contemporary American society is still saturated

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son always had a problematic relationship which eventually resolved due to Bill's heroin addiction (Semmola, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> As Massood (2008, p. XXIII) asserts, Lee's filmic production refers to global as well as local events, such as Malcom X's assassination, The Million Man March in Washington DC and church bombing in Alabama.

*Do The Right Thing* (1986), for example, contains several allusions to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X's philosophy and to contemporary American violent acts, such as the 1986 Howard Beach Incident and the killing of Michael Stuart by the NYPD in 1983. *Jungle Fever* (1991) refers to the 16-year-old African American Yusef Hawkins being shot to death by mobs in Bensonhurst and *Malcom X* (1992), as suggested by the title itself, depicts the biography of the Muslim-American figure (Moneta, 1998).

with racial problems. All his films, in fact, aim at depicting an objective reality that requires a subjective analysis in order to be truly understood. The interweaving of stories and their development depict a conflicting universe that is always jeopardised by unpredictable and contagious violence. The images on which Lee's films are built, therefore, are usually suspended in a limbo with a tendency for order but are constantly beset by violent behaviour (Fadda, 1996). As the director, by means of the various plots, highlights the human inability to forecast where the scales will tip, he forces viewers to activate a much more complex process than simply summarising. They must be prepared to contest their beliefs by taking into account all the contradictions of contemporary society.

Spike Lee's glittering eye, in fact, persuades the audience to examine the reality of the African American population throughout the second half of the XX century in all its complexity, undermining all rooted stereotypes. As Siniscalchi (1996) points out, Lee's filmography overlooks documentary representations of human existence encouraging sociological understanding and interpretation. In regard to the latter observation, the viewer is naturally led to wonder how Lee can associate entertainment with a more educational value and the answer lies in the fact that his films often shift from comedy to drama, from political concerns to humour (Lee and Gates, 1991), epitomizing the unpredictability of reality. As Lively (1998: 223) suggests when comparing Ralph Ellison to the contemporary filmmaker, Lee brilliantly handles the dark humour and absurdity for which the novelist is appreciated, by focussing on the same mixture of populist exuberance and irony.

With his filmic creations, defined as mirrors reflecting human authenticity (Razzini, 1993), Spike Lee recontextualizes black as well as white identities giving the audience a more complex view of what is related to the two populations (Paulin, 1997; Flory, 2006).

This original approach has led African Americans to think of him as an icon to be followed and imitated even if he has always rejected the epithet of social preacher. He would rather class himself as a skilful businessman who deeply

believes in what he is and what he is doing<sup>22</sup>. Born in Atlanta in 1957, Shelton Jackson Lee is the son of a teacher of arts and black culture and a jazz musician and composer. He moved to Brooklyn when he was still a child and, after school, he attended Morehouse College where he graduated with a B.A. in Mass Communication. He then enrolled at New York University earning his Master of Fine Arts Degree in film production. In addition to his primary work as a filmmaker, Shelton Jackson, called Spike by his mother, has also had a hand in music, writing and advertising this creating his worldwide reputation of a multi-faceted businessman, who now even owns a chain of shops called Spike's Joint, which originally sold merchandise linked to the titles of his movies and his film company<sup>23</sup>.

Such an economic position, probably stereotypically more white than black, has helped to develop and sharpen his analysis of the world around him and African Americans and he has been able to promote, through his movies, a heterogeneous and sometimes labyrinthine global village (Nazzaro, 1996). His characters are not required to adapt to the mainstream culture and to absorb the habits of white people (Moneta, 1998). They can be considered as real archetypes who are asked to lead the viewers towards a moment of contemplation which leads them to discover black heritage and culture for the first time in a new perspective, miles apart from the traditional concepts but closer to the way in which African Americans themselves have always experienced them (Tate, 1993).

Spike Lee, a product of post-modern cinematic literature, definitely overcomes what Tatum (1997) would have called the paralysis of fear<sup>24</sup>. He aims at

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<sup>22</sup> As often pointed out by the director himself, he doesn't think of himself as anything but "an independent filmmaker who, more often than not, uses Hollywood - the Hollywood system - for finance and distribution" (McCluskey, 2004)

<sup>23</sup> In addition to his filmic production, Spike Lee has produced several music videos for artists like Michael Jackson, Prince, Steve Wonder and Eros Ramazzotti. He has also directed two *Pavarotti and Friends* videos. He has since appeared in many documentaries and asked to work on Nike, Levi and Telecom Italia advertising campaigns.

<sup>24</sup>The expression *paralysis of fear* indicates both black and white people's reluctance to admit and discuss the present-day form of racism. According to Tatum, in fact, Americans are not able to challenge their tradition because racist attitudes and beliefs are thought to be too complex to

representing racism from a black point of view by discussing what has constantly been considered the normativity of whiteness (Flory, 2006). His fictitious men are dramatic characters living in a chaotic and huge American environment that tends to devour them. But, thanks to their individuality and their colourful peculiarities, they get themselves noticed by making the audience love them.

The hidden treasure of all these figures is the fact that they do not remind viewers of those classical heroes who could never be equalled by common men. They are not entirely positive protagonists in their stories and therefore, they could be better compared to post-modernist anti-heroes who find daily life very hard. All these characters clearly embody the part of losers who force worldwide audiences to contemplate their pre-set assumptions by plunging them into a world that is superficially familiar but still deeply unknown.

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decode and change. However, as the author explains, every form of silence has a price: choosing a non-denouncing behaviour entails the loss of racial identity and cultural traits (Tatum, 1997).

## **Spike Lee as screenwriter**

Despite the fact that both American and worldwide spotlights are always on Shelton “Spike” Lee as one of the most popular filmmakers of the late XX century, his success is also based on his talent as a screenwriter. In fact, he wrote all the scripts of his films creating the plot, the characters and the dialogues<sup>25</sup>.

From a more linguistic point of view, Spike Lee’s scripts are an unlimited source of analysis in the study of the use of African American English and in understanding what types of linguistic features are associated with the characters portrayed in his films. Obviously, the communicative exchanges concerned are not exactly faithful and undisputed copies of the processes of real communication, let alone copies of the authenticity of the language<sup>26</sup>. Using Green’s words (2002), Spike Lee’s characters “use syntactic and phonological features to mark their speech as being non-standard or black, others use speech events and other types of expressive language use as markers” (ibid.: 4-5).

The present study focuses on one of his masterpieces: *Bamboozled*.

A brief introduction to these filmic productions would seem appropriate.

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<sup>25</sup> In 1989 *Do the Right Thing* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay and the same script was re-proposed at the Golden Globes; in 1999 *He got Game* was also nominated for a Black Film Award for Best Screenplay during the Acapulco Black Film Festival and *Bamboozled* and *She Hates Me* were nominated during Black Reel Awards in 2000 and 2005 for Best Screenplay (Original or Adapted) (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000490/awards>).

<sup>26</sup> This observation comes from the common assumption according to which, as Gregory (1967) stated, “the fundamental difference between the speaking of what is written to be spoken as if not written and ordinary speech, is that the one is planned, prepared behaviour, the other is spontaneous” (p.192).

## 2.1 *Bamboozled*

Written and directed by the African American producer Spike Lee in 2000, *Bamboozled* is a 135-minute film set in the world of television.

Harvard College graduate, Pierre Delacroix, is an African American screenwriter who works for CNS, an independent television network. Although his job is well paid, he is deeply unsatisfied with his position because he is constantly forced to submit to his superior Dunwitty's arrogant behaviour. Not only does Dunwitty implicitly embrace offensive traditional stereotypes associated with black people in his every-day inter-relational contacts, but he also thinks to be more black than the protagonist himself, since his wife is African American. According to him, he is allowed to use the term *nigger* without Delacroix being offended. Furthermore, Dunwitty often rejects the author's projects for TV shows because they depict African American community as positive, hard-working and honest. Wanting to be fired, Delacroix suggests a new TV programme called *Mantan, The New Millennium Minstrel Show*, whose framework is similar to that of the traditional minstrel shows of the previous century. Even though Delacroix is sure that the script will be rejected for its offensive, anti-black and racist themes, Dunwitty enthusiastically approves the new proposal.

So, with the help of his personal assistant, Sloan Hopkins, who is not entirely persuaded by his idea, Delacroix engages two street performers, Manray and Womack, to be the protagonists of the show. Living on their own wits, they immediately accept the roles.

With their new identities as Mantan and Sleep 'n' Eat, they portray two *coons*<sup>27</sup> in a watermelon field in blackface.

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<sup>27</sup> Green (1993: 266) explains that the term *coon* "is an abbreviation for *raccoon* and the "chocolate coloured coon" (usually a white person in blackface) was for years a staple of mass entertainment, typically as in television's Black and White minstrel Shows". In the XIX century, the expression was actually used to describe any man and did not have any racial meaning. By the end of the same century, the expression gained a racist connotation and was used to refer to African Americans.

Contrary to expectations, the show is popularly acclaimed and Delacroix starts being considered as one of the best screenwriters on the market and so, even if his assistant tries to warn him about the possible consequences, he welcomes his newfound success and sides with his white colleagues who say the show is only satire.

However, once the show is aired, African American people take offence, become angry about the content of the show and take to the streets to show their concern.

Mau Maus, a group of militants, whose leader is Sloan's elder brother Julius, decides to publicly punish CNS and the team of authors by killing the protagonist of the show. Manray is eventually murdered by these people and Julius is killed by the police. Revenge leads Sloan to fatally shoot Delacroix while the audience is offered a long montage of old, racially offensive Hollywoodian clips of black representations of the XX century.

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In the film the term is often chosen to describe the two black protagonists of the TV programme. They embody, in fact, several of the negative stereotypes associated with black people in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American panorama.

According to Means Coleman (2001), the representation of African American coons in mass media included these traits:

- Inferior mentality
- Primitive morality
- Over-assertiveness
- Lazy and boisterous
- Gaudy and flashy clothes
- Given to crimes of violence with razors and knives
- Occupationally instable (ibid.: 80)

### 3 Visual dialogues and linguistic images: the Audiovisual Language

Films are texts of great semiotic complexity in which different sign systems co-operate to create a coherent story.  
(Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 45)

As testified by several linguists in this field of research (Freddi and Pavesi, 2005; Díaz Cintas, 2008; Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009; Díaz Cintas, 2009) interest in the area of audiovisual media only began to flourish in the late XX century as the number of television channels increased, with the advantage of VHS, followed by the worldwide success of DVD, the new interactive video game trend and the even greater importance of TV series and feature films. Moreover, in recent years, the Internet, with its uncontrollable proliferation of digital formats such as newspapers, video clips, streaming media and social networking services, for example, the universally used American Facebook or Twitter, has contributed to developing the need for greater attention and more awareness of these modern means of audiovisual products. Taking a closer look, the audiovisual dimension has become an area of increasing interest for scholars because it is unanimously seen as an inexhaustible source for studying human language from multiple linguistic and socio-cultural angles, as Freddi and Pavesi suggest (2005: 11).

It is universally acknowledged, in fact, that audiovisual products play a central role in the evolution of human language since they are seen, as Freddi and Pavesi (2005) point out, as useful material for an in-depth study of face-to-screen dialogue as examples of every-day language. According to this approach, all audiovisual documents can contribute to the study of human linguistic codes, as they include a faithful representation of real language, even if *simulated* (ibid.: 12). Following this perspective, the linguistic decisions of screenwriters, or those made by Internet users, are anthropologically analysed as the illustration of group identification and socio-cultural norms.

In considering audiovisual dialogue and its relevance in the macro-structure of the product, Freddi and Pavesi (ibid.) draw attention to the fact that the language spoken in films is inseparably linked to

1. the situational context – depending upon the plot itself, the setting and the exact moment in which interlocutors are interacting;
2. the socio-cultural context<sup>28</sup> being deeply influenced by historical and socio-cultural factors.

Great interest is also being shown in another perspective which investigates all the possible ways through which audiovisual language influences communication in real context (Díaz Cintas, 2008: 90). In light of this consideration, the author himself offers a challenging observation of the difference between written and audiovisual documents by stating that “what we are witnessing is the emergence and settling down of a new medium (audiovisual) as opposed to traditional ones (paper). Mono-dimensional (printed) documents are somehow becoming multi-dimensional (audiovisual) programmes”. This change, as already illustrated, has fostered the inclusion of audiovisual material - and its translation - in the interest of the academic world (Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009: 2), allowing what Díaz Cintas (2008: 2) calls the Cinderella mantle<sup>29</sup> to disappear. All this makes room for an out-and-out discipline which nowadays includes several publications and research projects in audiovisual dialogue and translation (Díaz Cintas, Matamala and Neves, 2010; Freddi and Pavesi, 2005), so that the latest impression is that the original reluctance to consider audiovisual texts and screenplays as a literary genre is gradually disappearing.

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<sup>28</sup> Taking into consideration Mey’s ([1993] 2001) definition, “context is a dynamic, not static concept: it is to be understood as the continually changing surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact, and in which linguistic expressions of their interaction become intelligible” (p.41)

<sup>29</sup> In the introductory chapter of *The Didactics of Audiovisual Translation* (2008), the author offers a detailed description of the development of Audiovisual Translation. The growing interest in this discipline has fostered its inclusion in the field of Translation Studies and in the academic world. As a result, “it seems that audiovisual translation has finally found its glass shoe and become a princess” (Martínez Sierra, 2009).

In this respect, Zabalbescoa (2008) demonstrates the relevance of the audiovisual product defining it as a text containing an act of communication made up of images and sounds, that he describes as “a statement of one’s cultural background, trendiness, mood, taste, daring, degree of self-consciousness, social standing, identification with brand names, likeness of thinking, among many other” (ibid.: 22). He then aims at highlighting the complexity of audiovisual material, by offering an eye-opening classification that includes all the parameters that bring this product to life. First of all, the audiovisual structure is based on two general factors: non-verbal and verbal means. The former consists of music and visual effects (audio components), the picture and photography (visual components), and the latter encompasses dialogues and the sense of hearing (audio components), written words, and the ability to read or decode them while sequences run one after the other (visual components). According to his filmic structure composed of two types of signs and two modes of communication that combine to create four types of signs (audio-verbal (words spoken), audio-non-verbal (other sounds), visual-verbal (writing) and visual-non-verbal (other visual signs))<sup>30</sup>, the author suggests that all the elements are complementary and of equal importance.

Therefore, the thorough and complete blending of all these ingredients produces the perfect creation including “cohesion, coherence, intentionality, informativity, acceptability, inter-textuality and complying with situationality conditions (ibid.: 22).

Furthermore, after having specified that audiovisual texts do not share the same channel of communication as traditional written and oral ones, the author’s interest shifts to the semiotics of audiovisual products that, according to him, can be deciphered through a scrupulous photographic analysis of stills – to find out how colours, light and visual elements work together – and through an equally precise investigation of the co-operation between stills, sounds, audiovisual narrative techniques and the use of cameras.

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<sup>30</sup> This classification offered by Zabalbescoa is faithfully reported herein (2008: 24).

### 3.1 *The Nature of audiovisual dialogues*

As stated in the previous paragraph, audiovisual products come into being through the accurate fusion of several different elements which include auditory and visual components.

Offering a more linguistic approach, Cattrysse and Gambier (2008) highlight how dialogues in audiovisual texts are an integral part of the action. In fact, they draw attention to the development of the plot, characterizing the characters and verbalizing abstract ideas (ibid.: 50).

As explained by the authors (ibid.: p. 52), citing Hampe (1993), language used in this field can, however, be divided into two ample areas: experts call *dialogues* all those communicative exchanges among characters that are considered relevant to the development of the plot, and *conversations* all other talks which do not include any kind of significant information about the film but indirectly develop the action.

In regard to this classification, two examples taken from *Enchanted*<sup>31</sup> will help to explain the difference between the two categories:

Patrick: Yes, here we go. I really think that went well

There is no reason not to be reasonable

Lawyer: Great, we might be on the neighbourhood of a settlement.

Patrick: Would you excuse me? I'm gonna check on your cars.

In this scene played out in Robert's law firm, the two colleagues are considering their good work in helping an African American couple obtain their divorce. It is evident from this example that this communicative exchange can be defined as a *conversation*: in fact, it adds no significant information to the development of the story.

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<sup>31</sup> Produced in 2007, *Enchanted* is a fantasy-musical film starring Patrick Dempsey, Amy Adam and Timothy Spall. The Protagonist, Giselle, is a traditional princess who is forced by the evil queen to leave her Disney world called Andalasia and live in Manhattan. After several misfortunes she meets Robert, a cynical lawyer, who will take care of her and help her adapt to the New York life-style. Spending a lot of time together, they eventually fall in love.

On the other hand, the example below represents a *dialogue* because it helps viewers to truly understand who Giselle really is and the reasons why Robert cannot help her return to Andalusia. Moreover, with this scene, Robert realizes that he cannot leave her wondering in Manhattan with nobody to take care of her and, considering the assistant's conclusive line from another angle, it implicitly shows the audience how the protagonist's behaviour is not accepted by the other characters.

Assistant: She has no driver's license. No passport.

Can't find this place she comes from.

Patrick: What place?

Assistant: Andalusia

Patrick: Andalusia

Assistant: Whatever. I called every travel agent, every airline... I don't know if it is a country or a city

Patrick: It can't be a state

Assistant: More like a state of mind. She told me it's just beyond the Meadows of Joy and the Valley of Contentment. I mean, what is that all about?

In other words, the distinction between conversations and dialogues is founded on the basis of plot relevance.

Going into a deeper analysis, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 48), citing Vanoye (1985), explain that audiovisual dialogue presents two levels of communication: the *horizontal* and the *vertical*. The former level represents the communicative exchange that takes place between speakers based on "standard conversational-management devices such as conversational maxims, discourse markers and connectives" (Remael 2008: 60), while the latter level refers to the interaction of film dialogue with the other filmic sign systems that include sounds, music, visual components as gestures, lip movements, photography and the rest of the film's apparatus, including relations with the audience.

Moreover, among its other characteristics, audiovisual dialogue obeys three other functions (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007; Remael 2008) called *structuring*, *narrative-informative* and *interactional*.

Often simultaneously fulfilling the three parameters, audiovisual language conforms to the first function when communicative exchanges are cohesive and coherent in each scene and throughout the whole filmic production. The *narrative-informative* function, however, is performed by dialogues when they are characterized by “the *factual* information that needs to be conveyed, the propositional content of the utterance” (Remael 2008: 61). Lastly, the *interactional* function, as the definition itself suggests, is used to present and characterise the fictitious characters of the story, their relationships and their importance in the development of the plot.

As for the previous classification, an example taken from audiovisual material will make the distinction clearer.

In the following extract from *The Dark Knight*<sup>32</sup>, the protagonist Bruce Wayne is meeting his best friend’s boyfriend Harvey Dent for the first time at a sumptuous party in his penthouse.

INT. WAYNE PENTHOUSE -- EVENING

*Dent and Rachel get off the lift. Dent stands in awe of the penthouse and its guests.*

Rachel: Now I've seen it all: Harvey Dent, scourge of the underworld, scared stiff by the trust fund brigade.

*Rachel spots someone and darts off-*

Dent: Rachel-

Alfred: A little liquid courage, Mr. Dent?

*Dent turns to see Alfred with drinks on a silver tray.*

Dent: Thanks. Alfred, right?

Alfred Yes, sir.

Dent: Rachel talks about you all the time. You've known her whole life?

Alfred: Not yet, sir.

Dent: (smiles, surveys crowd) Any psychotic ex-boyfriends I should be aware of?

Alfred: Oh, you have no idea.

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<sup>32</sup> Based on DC Comics superhero Batman, *The Dark Knight* is a 2008 film directed, produced and co-written by Christopher Nolan. This time Batman, lieutenant James Gordon and new district attorney Harvey Dent have to battle with an unknown evil character called The Joker to save Gotham City from chaos.

*Alfred leaves Dent standing there, puzzled. The crowd reacts as a loud roar drowns conversation... Dent looks out-*

EXT. HELIPAD, WAYNE PENTHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

*Wayne's chopper touches down. He spills out with a clutch of supermodels...*

INT. WAYNE PENTHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

*Wayne and the supermodels come out of the helipad elevator-*

Wayne: Sorry, I'm late- glad you started without me! Where's Rachel?!

*Rachel cringes slightly. Wayne spots her.*

Wayne: Rachel Dawes- my oldest friend. When she told me she was dating Harvey Dent, I had one thing to say... the guy from those god-awful campaign commercials?

Laughter. Dent shifts, embarrassed.

Wayne: "I Believe in Harvey Dent." Nice slogan, Harvey. Certainly caught Rachel's attention. But then I started paying attention to Harvey, and all he's been doing as our new D.A., and you know what? I believe in Harvey Dent. On his watch, Gotham can feel a little safer. A little more optimistic. So get out your check-books and let's make sure that he stays right where all of Gotham wants him...(raises his glass). All except Gotham's criminals, of course. To the face of Gotham's bright future- Harvey Dent.

*Dent smiles accepting the toast.*

This example clearly obeys the three basic functions. Although the dialogue is informative, the scene also indicates the location in which the protagonists are and describes the way in which the owner arrives at his penthouse party, thus connecting the communicative verbal exchanges with the visual components of the sequence. Consequently, detailed information given about the characters' actions contributes to providing narrative continuity and cohesion within the situation. In addition, the words spoken by Rachel Dawes and Harvey Dent reveal the different psychological state of the two lovers: the female character feels comfortable, while the man shows his difficulty in managing that kind of situation. Moreover, the first part of the dialogue tells the audience who Harvey Dent is, and the reason why he is appreciated by the citizens. Rachel's description of the district attorney's qualities is then further enhanced by Bruce Wayne, who sings Dent's praises making him the real protagonist of the party.

The last part of the scene, on the other hand, focuses on the main character of the story who, despite his sharp initial comments, shows his authentic respect for the other man.

The example chosen here clearly shows that verbal communications among characters are a huge source of knowledge because they include explicit as well as implicit information about the universe revolving around them.

To this regard, Cattrysse and Gambier (2008) explain that audiovisual communicative exchanges “often pass on information to the audience without the audience noticing it” (p: 52) and can be important to characterise individuals and their psychological or socio-cultural traits.

As stated in the previous paragraphs, therefore, words spoken in film and TV programmes should not be considered as a mere means of fictitious communication, but should be seen as faithful representations of every day communicative exchanges.

In fact, considering the role language generally plays in the semiotics of cinema and television programmes, Gregory’s theory (1967: 192) certainly points out its complexity by stating that “the fundamental difference between the speaking of what is written to be spoken as if not written and ordinary speech is that the one is planned, prepared behaviour, the other is spontaneous”.

In fact, any dialogue performed by characters in films or made-for-television programmes has, among its other functions, the aim of communicating.

Therefore, interactions among characters in audiovisual products follow the same linguistic rules that Grice (in Mey, [1993] 2001) would have called conversational maxims where the principles of Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner lead any communicative process, allowing both the speakers and listeners to understand<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Grice theorized the Cooperative Principle consisting in these four pragmatic sub-principles which the philosopher himself summarized as “Make your contribution such as required, at the stage which it occurs, by accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975 in Mey ([1993] 2001: 73). According to him, speakers who observe these maxims are sure to say what they really want, thus fulfilling their purpose while listeners, assuming speakers are obeying the cooperative principle, can avoid misunderstanding or gap in the comprehension of the message.

However, in keeping with this dimension, the production of this variety of language cannot simply be associated with the traditional Jacobsonian Communication Model<sup>34</sup> based on the intelligibility between *sender* and *receiver*, because firstly, the audiovisual dialogue is part of the whole filmic process and, secondly, it is also created to be understood by a third unknown participant called the audience. Tomaszkiwick (2005: 21) makes the argumentation clearer and explains that audiovisual products are, just like face-to-face communication, contexts in which mutual understanding is achieved on the basis of simultaneous visual and audio reception, such as words uttered, turns, paralinguistic components and intonation. What is irreversibly different however, is the fact that, in real interactions, all these elements are directly interiorised and decoded by the receiver, whereas, as the author suggests, “the fictive conversation between characters of the film is simultaneously perceived by the audience to whom the whole filmic event is ultimately directed”. (ibid.: 21).

Focusing on the audience’s role, Zabalbescoa (2008: 26) re-values it and suggests the hypothesis that users become interlocutors having an active participation in the audiovisual process. They are, indeed, part of the lymphatic system of audiovisual products as they actively use their eyesight and hearing to interiorise the text.

As a consequence, the alphabet of audiovisual language becomes seriously complex because the main function of interaction is to “iconically reproduce the centrality of dialogue in face-to-face conversation” (Freddi and Pavesi, 2005: 12) and to simulate the naturalness of real interactions among people.

To conclude, communicative exchanges have the task of letting the recipient community enter into the specific world created by the camera, and to whom the lingua-cultural background is familiar.

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<sup>34</sup> The Russian linguist based his linguistic theory on Karl Bühler’s model (1934) and recognized six different communicative functions interacting in the communicative process: context, message, sender, receiver, channel and code.

### 3.2 Screenwriting and Screenplays

Having specified the complexity of audiovisual language and the importance of verbal exchanges in audiovisual products, a brief description of the process of screenwriting would appear appropriate.

As Robbiano (2000) clarifies, making a film means telling a story, i.e. telling someone something representing a new dimension made of fictitious characters, images, language, paralinguistic elements and sounds. All these components are included in what experts call *screenplay*.

Conceptualising and giving a satisfactory explanation of what the term *screenplay* really means is a Herculean task because, as stated by Remael (2008: 58), “the screenplay of a film does not exist”. This statement captures the paradox lying behind the nature of a screenplay: on the one hand, it is the skeleton of every film, but on the other, it seems to lose its importance once the film has been produced.

This condition is caused by two main factors:

1. viewers are generally interested in the end-product and place less importance on the in-between phases.
2. screenplays can be revised and rewritten several times during the production of a film<sup>35</sup>.

In the light of these observations, Remael (ibid.) distinguishes two types of screenplay that are respectively called *physical* and *virtual* screenplays.

The first definition refers to the multiple versions written during the production of a film, while the second constitutes the narrative structure of a film referring to scenography, acting, editing, sounds, music and dialogue.

Despite its apparent lack of artistic value, the same author (ibid.: 60) highlights that the virtual text “is the structural blueprint of the macro-level narrative patterns, even if these are ultimately modified and given their definite shape through editing, photography, music, sound, and the interaction of all these different sign systems with each other as well as the film dialogue”, so that the

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<sup>35</sup>This is why final screenplays are not easy to find as the large number of drafts can be jumbled up.

text remains a precious source in understanding what Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 45) define as “the great semiotic complexity [of films] in which different sign systems co-operate to create a coherent story”.

Castellani (1986) and Aimeri (1998) highlight that a script is a film written on a sheet of paper, where language and images, although very different forms of communication, merge to create a unique product where visual language is given the chance to speak.

In order to make the argumentation clearer, Cattrysse and Gambier (2008: 40) point out that screenwriting can be compared to the practice of storytelling since they both share most of the principal structural elements. In fact, oral transmission, the social dimension, co-operation between the text and the audience, and the purpose of entertaining, educating and preserving cultural heritage, are all reminiscent of the ancient folkloristic art form performed by storytellers throughout history.

The process of writing a screenplay, however, consists in a very large number of different phases that Cattrysse and Gambier (ibid.) schematically summarize in five steps: the *story idea*, the *synopsis*, the *treatment*, the *step outline* and finally the *screenplay*.

With the term *story idea*, experts mean a brief written text of just four or five lines with which the main idea for a film is superficially outlined. These notes aim at explaining the main elements of the story including the principal series of events in the plot, the protagonists and the ending.

The second phase of the process, known as *synopsis*, consists of a two- or three-page description of the film’s main storyline in which authors generally illustrate the basic dramatic components of the plot focusing on possible turning points, flashbacks, anticipations or digressions. In more specific terms, both steps are designed to fulfil two different purposes: first of all, the text has a technical function since it is part of a more complex process of writing, and, secondly, it must contain promotional dynamics in order to find possible partners to finance the project.

The *treatment* represents the third phase of the screenwriting process and includes the realization of a more detailed written explanation of the story. Such description contains the main narrative units of the film that will subsequently be

divided into smaller units called sequences. At this point screenwriters have to expand the plot specifying the chronological development of the story.

The next stage in the process of screenwriting includes the *step outline* where every scene of the story is written in detail inserting any reference to what the characters have to do and when they have to interact. However, this new version of a not-yet-complete screenplay is still without the characters' dialogues.

Once the phase called *step outline* is completed, the screenwriters start developing the screenplay. Dialogues are included in this last phase.

## 4 Audiovisual Translation (AVT)

While mirroring reality, cinema also distorts it by constructing certain images and clichés that grip the audience and mould their perception of the world.

Given the power exerted by the media, it is not an exaggeration to state that AVT is the means through which not only information but also assumption and values of a society are filtered and transferred to other cultures.

(Díaz Cintas, 2009: 8)

The discipline of translating audiovisual dialogue from source to target language has become common practice leading to several investigations of face-to-face interactions that compare the realization of the same illocutionary act in two or more different languages (see Whitman-Linsen, 1992; Freddi and Pavesi, 2005; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005; Ranzato, 2010.) The unforeseeable distribution of audiovisual products, such as films, TV series, cartoons, soap operas and, recently, stand-up shows, has led experts to acknowledge the media world as “part of our daily life” (Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009: 2) recognizing, therefore, the need for translation in order to make all audiovisual material comprehensible to the international audience.

So, after many years in which linguists undervalued audiovisual texts (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 8), the 90s brought a “revolution” (Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009: 3) in the sector of traditional translation theories fostering linguists’ interest in revising and developing previous studies in order to investigate the wide range of audiovisual translation techniques. In regard to this, Díaz Cintas and Remael (ibid.: 9 – 11) offer a brief account of last century’s most illustrious scholars who focused on audiovisual translation as a subject of study, first citing the three Jakobsonian types (1959) called *intralingual*, *interlingual* and *intersemiotic*.

Also called *rewording*, the first approach refers to the translation of a verbal sign into a different one belonging to the same language, whereas the *interlingual* method, known as *translation proper*, means the translation of the original language into another linguistic code. The *intersemiotic* system, also defined as

*transmutation*, implies the translation of a verbal sign using a non-verbal sign system.

Over the next few years, a great number of academics focused on the translation of audiovisual products, always oscillating between the notion of translation itself and the concept of adaptation. The constant question being asked was whether the emerging field of research could be part of the more traditional discipline of Translation Studies. During this period other definitions, such as *constrained* or *subordinate translation*, partially contributed to the linguists' reluctance to consider audiovisual translation processes as a subcategory of the already existing branch of knowledge. Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo (1988: 356) actually use the adjective *constrained* with the aim of demonstrating that the translation of the verbal sign system of audiovisual texts is limited by all the other non-verbal and visual components.

By the same token, Reiss focuses on what she calls audio-medial text type defining it as a “superstructure that takes into account the special characteristics of the spoken language and oral communication” (in Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 10).

Although at the beginning of the XXI century Gambier (2003) dampened the debate by promoting the term *transadaptation* to point out the uniqueness and multi-faceted nature of audiovisual translation, Díaz Cintas and Remael (ibid.: 11) highlight the inclination of most contemporary scholars for *translation*, rather than *trans-adaptation* since the former is a more flexible and heterogeneous discipline.

Nowadays, as interest in audiovisual text and its translation has grown, the most used term to indicate this discipline is *audiovisual translation* but the lexicographic issue is still open since a smaller number of scholars prefer other definitions, the most popular being *film translation*, *cinema translation*, *screen translation*, *multimedia translation* and *multidimensional translation*. Observing the inadequacy of the first two definitions which exclude the language of TV series, sitcoms, cartoons and documentaries, Díaz Cintas and Remael (ibid.: 12) positively judge the wider umbrella term *screen translation* because it encompasses the language of television, cinema and computer but they prefer

the latter solutions as they emphasize the heterogeneous and multidimensional nature of the products.

Once the scientific and theoretic nature (Perego, 2005: 14) of AVT in the field of Translation Studies was proved – only a recent occurrence (Díaz Cintas, Matamala and Neves (2010) - the importance of this area of research in different but complementary disciplines, such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology and psychology, has conjointly developed. Such areas of research take for granted that the undisputable key function of audiovisual translation – and the process of translation in general - is, as Antonini and Chiaro (2009: 99) state, “to allow people to be privy to texts in languages with which they are not familiar”.

Audiovisual translation does indeed imply a cultural process (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005: 1) that cannot simply be summarised with the single term *translation* because the audiovisual text is subject to a complex intersemiotic transformation. Every word that the audience of the target culture hears is, in fact, the product of several factors. First of all, borrowing Díaz Cintas' expression, (2004: 30) words are part of a *polysystem* composed of visual, non-visual, verbal and non-verbal components which have to fit together at any time. More specifically, language carries specific connotations that are permanently linked to the situational context of the film and that have to be reproduced every time the product is translated. Secondly, in the understanding that every audiovisual text produced is irreversibly tied to its original socio-cultural context, translators cannot ignore this aspect and must match it to the target culture in which the film is to gain a new life. This latter point plays a very crucial role in the process of audiovisual translation because translating not only means giving an audience the opportunity to understand the story, but also conceiving a tailor-made product suitable for them.

In regard to this aspect of ATV, Díaz Cintas (2004: 31) highlights that “translation is viewed as an act of intercultural communication, rather than simply interlinguistic”. Moreover, Bogucki and Kredens (2010: 11), assuming that the two areas of research are complementary, explain that ATV does not mean that words uttered are merely translated from one linguistic code to

another. It does, however, embody the notion of *localization*, according to which film dialogues are always a representation of both source and target culture.

Following this line of reasoning, although defining translations as products of the target culture, Ranzato (2010: 13) highlights how the chameleonic ability of written translations has not analogously developed for audiovisual text. He points out that, although audiovisual translations easily fit the new socio-cultural environment with the language adaptation, the images and sounds keep going, demonstrating that they belong to the source culture. In fact, there are many examples in TV programmes, TV series and films, in which visual and non verbal signs demonstrate that they are not part of target culture<sup>36</sup>.

On analysing audiovisual language transfer from a technical perspective, different forms of translation have developed since the beginning of the practise. These techniques have developed, as Díaz Cintas highlights (2008: 3) “from a theoretical perspective as well as from a practical angle” rousing the scholars’ interest and promoting the use of audiovisual material for L2 or LF acquisition (Pavesi and Perego 2008; Santiago Araújo 2008; Bravo 2010) on the one hand, and recognizing the figure of audiovisual translator as a profession on the other (Amador, Dorado and Orero, 2004; Neves, 2004; Kruger, 2008; Taylor 2009; Skuggevic, 2009).

Díaz Cintas and Andermann (2009: 4) explain that the basic methods of translation used throughout the years basically imply two forms of adaptation. The first involves a written translation of the communicative exchanges in the audiovisual product (subtitling), whereas the second is based on an oral approach according to which the original track of dialogues is substituted or supported by a new track in the target language (revoicing) (Díaz Cintas and Anderman, 2009, Ranzato 2010).

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<sup>36</sup> Among others, the most suitable example taken from audiovisual products to demonstrate the controversial issue between *translation as localization* and translation as *exotization* is *The Simpsons*. Throughout the 22 seasons, several episodes have included references to modern society and its problems. Although translated into Italian through dubbing, they still maintain their source culture connotations through images (Ranzani, 2010: 14; Fusari, 2007: [http://amsacta.cib.unibo.it/2182/1/Fusari\\_OP\\_COMPLETO.pdf](http://amsacta.cib.unibo.it/2182/1/Fusari_OP_COMPLETO.pdf), et al).

## 4.1 Subtitling

To be specific, subtitling refers to the option of maintaining the original sound track and adding the textual version of the dialogues. Subtitles are generally superimposed over the film using modern laser techniques and placed either at the bottom or the top of the screen.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) explain that different typologies of subtitles can be recognized depending on the following five parameters: “linguistic, time available for preparation, technical, methods of projection and distribution format” (p. 13).

According to the first criterion, verbal versions of dialogues engulfing the *interlingual* function imply the translation from source to target language and become enormously useful to listeners who cannot understand the original linguistic code of the audiovisual product.

On the other hand, subtitles considered *intra-lingual* are those specifically used for didactic purposes, for the popular form of interactive entertainment called karaoke and for the transcription of the original language whenever understanding the speakers’ dialects, accents or pronunciation could be difficult. In addition to the above functions, this form of language transfer has also gained an intra - interlinguistic perspective due to its increasing use for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH). It has therefore become an exceedingly interesting area of research in the academic as well as in the professional dimension (Díaz Cintas, 2007; Neves, 2008; Neves 2009; Szarkowska, 2010; Zárata, 2010).

The third type of subtitles within this classification are called *bilingual* and can be found in all those geographical areas where two languages are spoken - as in the case of Belgium, Finland, Israel where both official linguistic codes are superimposed over the film.

Together with this type of category, this form of language transfer can be divided into *pre-prepared* and *live or real-time* subtitles. As in the previous cases, the authors give an eye-opening explanation by pointing out that (ibid.: 19) “the main difference between the two resides in the fact that the pre-prepared subtitles are done after the programme has been shot [...]; whereas

the online type are performed live, i.e. at the same time as the original programme is taking place or being broadcast". The former are more commonly used in the case of films, documentaries, TV series and TV programmes, while the latter are suitable for interviews, political statements or television news.

Additionally, and from a technical perspective, experts distinguish between *closed* and *open* subtitles, the first parameter being the viewers' possibility to visualize subtitles while they are watching the film, while the second classifies subtitles that are permanent and cannot be removed or erased from the film.

This difference has also affected the technical process adopted for transferring the textual translation onto the screen, so that the most preferred solutions are laser and electronic subtitling. These methods have now replaced the old procedures where the subtitle texts were produced with mechanical, thermal, photochemical or optical devices. They, in fact, guarantee the stability of letters and words on the screen and are made for easy reading.

Lastly, subtitles have been classified according to the medium in which they appear because their destination can influence the translators' way of producing them. Following a wide grouping, therefore, subtitles can be made for television, cinema, videos and VHSs, DVDs and the Web<sup>37</sup>.

More recently, subtitling has also been used in live performances where the written transcription of the play or the opera is projected on the stage or on the backs of the seats. Such methods, called *surtitles* or *supratitles*, depending on their position with regards to the stage, allow the audience to easily understand and assimilate the verbal part of the event without losing the meaning of what actors, singer – songwriters or speakers are actually saying.

Last but not least, recent years have seen the birth of a new form of subtitling, called *fansubs*, which has already entered into the academic world although publications have not fully focused on this technique yet. The origins of

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<sup>37</sup> Viewers' reading speed and the time a written line of subtitles can remain on the screen have been calculated theorizing *the six-second rule* which assumes that people can read and understand from seventy to seventy-four characters every six seconds. This estimated amount of letters, however, is generally followed by TV programmes but it increases in the case of film productions, DVDs and Internet because it is assumed that more homogenous groups of viewers can easily read up to forty or forty-three characters on each line.

*fansubbing* can be traced to the 80s when Japanese cartoons started to be subtitled by European fans, giving people sharing the same mother tongue the possibility to directly watch episodes on the Internet. Despite its individualistic and unstructured nature, this technique has grown beyond imagination and has earned itself such important status that fansubbing now deals with other language combinations, films and DVDs.

## **4.2 Revoicing**

Within the umbrella term *revoicing*, experts recognize three different approaches to audiovisual language translation called *voice-over*, *narration* (also known as *audio description*) and *dubbing*. The first definition alludes to the technique where the language of the target audience is recorded over the original track, which is not removed but can barely be heard under the second translated voice. Although mainly used in Eastern European countries (Matamala, 2008: 115), Orero (2009: 131) explains that voice-over is generally practiced in the translation of non-fictional genres that include documentaries, interviews, news bulletins and award ceremonies, such as the Academy Awards or the MTV Music Awards. At all these worldwide popular events, artists are not dubbed but their speeches are often made comprehensible for the international audience by means of voice-over adaptations in the target language. As a result, two voices are usually heard: the artist's original statements remain in the background and the new translated voice track is made clearly understandable by the viewers.

Another type of revoicing that is gaining popularity nowadays is known as *audio description*. This commonly refers to an additional intralinguistic or interlinguistic narration track that describes what is happening on the screen, portraying a scene, the characters' actions and the important elements around them. As pointed out by scholars (Holland, 2009; Palomo López, 2010; Cabeza i Cáceres, 2010) *audiovisual narration* has become a precious aid for the blind and the partially sighted who have to match what they have understood through dialogues with the vocal description of the scenes.

This process of audio describing is not only used in the case of media productions, but also in the performing arts, such as theatre, opera and dance, where what is happening on the stage is clearly explained by the recorded voice. This service is also supplied at visual arts exhibitions where audio tracks are available in many languages to give guests information on the main characteristics of what they are interested in<sup>38</sup>.

A third type of language translation is *dubbing*, which refers to the process of revoicing and substituting original voices with a new recorded audio track, whose language is shared by the target audience. As Chaume (2008: 130) states, this is “a well-known example of the invisibility of translation, an artistic and technical exercise” which allows people of the target language to listen to translated characters’ dialogues, otherwise spoken in a language with which they are not familiar.

This technique, which has become a wide area for academic research (Pavesi 2005; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005; Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2009; Díaz Cintas 2009, to mention but a few), has earned special attention from European scholars since it is the preferred form of audiovisual translation in western countries such as France, Spain, Germany (Tveit 2009: 85) and Italy (Ranzato 2010; Antonini and Chiaro, 2009).

The process of *dubbing* is generally acknowledged as a complex technique that not only deals with lexical and grammatical choices but, together with its interlinguistic quality, also includes a strong intercultural value. The concept mentioned by Ranzato (2010: 36), of *cultural embeddedness*, typical of audiovisual translation, suggests that the texts are products of the source culture and, therefore, the great difficulty lies in the process of adapting the original material to a target environment in which socio-cultural codes, background and tastes can be different.

To better understand the value of translations as cultural and intercultural sources, Delisle, Lee-Jahnke and Cormier’s (2002) explain that translations, even audiovisual ones, can be source-oriented or target-oriented. The first

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<sup>38</sup> This technique is also commonly practiced at sports events: in fact, the Olympic games and football matches are described and commented by one or more speakers in real time.

definition entails paying greater attention to the original text, its explicit and implicit meanings, the author and the cultural background in which it has been conceived, while the second approach aims at fulfilling the viewers' needs by getting closer to their particular socio-cultural background.

In light of this consideration, the translator's task does not simply lie in transferring one language into another linguistic code, but implies a difficult and multi-faceted series of actions aimed at reducing all the references to the source dimension in order to make the audiovisual product comprehensible to an audience who does not share the same language or social linguistic habits. Ranzato (ivi: 37), citing Pym (2010), explains that audiovisual translation entails a process of weakening the so-called *bonds of belonging* and inserting the text into the new cultural pool.

In regard to this aspect, dubbing is generally thought of as the technique that better suits this socio-linguistic operation because, unlike *subtitles*, *voice-over* and *audio-description*, it totally replaces the vocal track therefore removing the chance of finding possible discrepancies between the two linguistic codes. However, what usually makes the translators' task more difficult is the fact that they have to consider the other sign systems of which the product is made – the audio/nonverbal and visual/nonverbal components – as well as the problem of synchronization. For all these reasons, Martínez (2004) clarifies that film script translation through dubbing is a process consisting of several stages. Firstly, the whole system starts when a programme producer or a distributor asks for a translation sending the original copy of the script to the translators. Once the text has been translated, they then send a copy to a team of experts, called proof-readers, whose task it is to check the translation and suggest any changes. The next stage is the synchronization of the translated vocal track, i.e., as Chaume (2008: 129) asserts, matching “the translation with the soundless mouths of the actors”, their body motions and the scene behind them. As a result, foreign actors seem to speak the audience's language, making them understand their words without noticing anything strange.

As previously mentioned, synchronization comes in various types called *lip-sync*, *kinesic synchrony* and *isochrony* (ibid.: 129; Chaume 2004: 37; Pavesi 2005: 13). In the first case, by studying the actors' lip movements, translators

have to try to “keep the impression of reality” (Chaume 2008: 136) and, therefore, to match the mouth’s articulation with the words translated. In order to achieve this goal, they generally choose words in the dubbed language whose phonemes are similar to those of the original terms. Moreover, in all circumstances where words of the source language are regularly accepted in the target culture, they tend to repeat the same words to avoid any other solution where the phonemes would be too different. Synchronizers sometimes also prefer to change the word order of the sentences spoken by the characters in order to make the phonemes of the target language coincide with those of the source linguistic code. In doing this, the possibility that viewers may find anomalies in the dubbed version is almost completely reduced. In other cases, dubbed versions can be made using synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms and hypernyms deriving from the literal translation in the target language. The substitution, reduction, amplification, omission and addition of words, phrases or sentences are other linguistic techniques frequently employed by translators in the process of script dubbing.

The second type of synchronization deals with the world of the human body and its language and consists in choosing the verbal solution that better matches the characters’ body motions.

With the third category, however, called *isochrony*, focus is shifted to the duration of the translated words which necessarily has to be the same as the original. More specifically, dialogues in the target language should respect the time given by the source language and perfectly fit the moments in which human mouths are open or closed.

At this point, once this stage has been completed, script translation is physically prepared to be used by professional dubbers who lend their voices to interpret the story.

In conclusion, recent years have shown how audiovisual translation no longer plays a background role in the world of entertainment. General interest in the academic as well as the professional field has increased, thus transforming AVT from an isolated individual practise to a well-known interlinguistic and intercultural discipline. The multi-discipline aspect of audiovisual translation, including both subtitling and revoicing, is now a serious challenge for scholars and translators who must understand the essence of this dimension, where the *par excellence* multifaceted nature must not only simultaneously preserve its original value but also add new lingua-cultural parameters every time a text is adapted to fit the audience's needs.

## 5 Audiovisual translation and pragmatics: compliments and insults

“[...] the pragmatic waste-basket is more like a can of worms:  
the problems that the basket contains tend to spill over  
into all the domains of linguistic thinking”.  
(Mey, [1993]2001: 21)

Among the technical, semiotic, socio-cultural and linguistic studies of audiovisual translation, an analysis of the pragmatic factors involved in the process of audio-visual translation in dubbing plays an important role. Given the fact that source and target language are governed by similar yet different pragmatic principles, attention will be focused on how compliments and insults in Spike Lee's films have been translated for the Italian audience, whose socio-cultural background is different from the original.

It must be emphasized, however, that the development of this discipline in audiovisual products probably betrays the deepest nature of pragmatics itself, since it deals, as already observed, with a language that is anything but real. As Freddi and Pavesi (2005) point out, the type of language spoken in films is *simulated* to the extent that it aims at reproducing face-to-face communicative exchange but it is, as previously mentioned, “written to be spoken as if not written” (Gregory, 1967: 192). To explain more clearly what this definition actually means, audiovisual dialogues performed by the actors are previously created, discussed and modified by screenwriters on the screenplay and are, therefore, not as spontaneous as real communicative exchanges are.

However, once the artificial nature of language in this type of product has been established, the dynamic communicative exchanges can be considered linguistic end-products as well as face-to-face interactions developed by non-fictional speakers in real situational and socio-cultural contexts. They can therefore be analysed through a pragmatic approach in both languages to understand how audiovisual language, considered as the mirror of the original, works and how it is moulded to meet the various needs of the viewers.

First of all, before devoting greater attention to compliments and insults from a linguistic and pragmatic point of view, a brief introduction to the controversial world of pragmatics will now follow.

To start with, the term pragmatics, rather than having a univocally recognized definition, summarizes the multi-lateral aspects of real communication among those taking part in the conversation. In regard to this point, Levinson (1983) offers a thorough lexicographic excursus through which the various meanings of the word pragmatics can be understood. The first scholar who focused on this area of research was Morris who, in 1938, defined it as “the relation of signs to interpreters” (p. 1), drawing attention for the first time on the relevant relationship between language and speakers but also adding that “it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs” (ivi: 2). In this definition he visibly includes all those non-linguistic parameters that depend on psychology, anthropology, and sociology, leaving the processes of language production aside to concentrate on the end-product.

Shortly after, the philosopher and logician Carnap (1938) narrowed the area of research into this discipline, introducing the concept of *context* as an essential ingredient of pragmatics, stating that disciplines which do not take into consideration interlocutors and the environments in which they are immersed, can only be semantics and syntax.

Picking up the threads of previous attempts made by linguists, in 1983, Levinson tried to find an exhaustive explanation of what pragmatics is, defining it as “the study of language usage” whose “relations between language and context are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language”.

Ten years later, Mey ([1993] 2001: 6) took into account another relevant factor included in the pragmatic dimension calling it *social context*. He, then, re-conceptualized the whole concept highlighting that pragmatics “cannot limit itself to the grammatically encoded aspects of contexts”, but speakers’ skills in this area can be affected by the situational environment in which the communicative exchange is taking place and their wider socio-cultural background.

As a result, pragmatics includes a multi-faceted and flexible geography whose main areas of interests orbit around the close relation between the language and its users (discussed by Austin (1962), the role context plays in real communicative face-to-face exchanges (analysed by Mey (1993 and 2005), the existence of the human linguistic cooperative behaviour and its maxims (theorized by Grice in 1975), conversational implicatures (identified by the same pragmatician) and Austin's theory of speech acts, which was later developed and systematized by Searle (1969).

### **5.1 *Speech Acts Theory***

As pointed out by Levinson (1983), of the pragmatic theories that arose in the late XIX century, the speech acts theory was the one which earned universal enthusiasm. Austin and Searle's approach has, indeed, paved the way for new psychological, sociological and neuro-linguistic studies of human face-to-face interactions.

Searle (1969), in order to explain the importance of speech acts in linguistic processes, points out that "all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts" (p.16), referring to the universally acknowledged principle according to which words are not mere signs but are, in fact, living forces aiming at changing reality.

In addition, Mey ([1993] 2001: 95) highlights that speech acts symbolize "verbal actions happening in the world", clarifying the fact that every time a speaker utters a word, a phrase or a sentence, s/he actually causes or induces an action.

This observation arose from the previous theory formulated by Searle (1969), according to which the general act (illocutionary act) that a speaker performs can be examined as including:

- the uttering of human words (utterance act);
- its implicit performing function (prepositional act);
- the specific speaker's intention in making the utterance (illocutionary force);
- the particular effect produced in the addressee (perlocutionary act).

Going further into his pragmatic explanation, Searle identified five basic kinds of speech acts:

The first type of speech acts, called *representative*, are “assertions about state of affairs in the world, and thus carry the value of *true* or *false*”<sup>39</sup>. Such utterances can concern subjective states of mind, and therefore depend on individual convictions.

*Directive* speech acts, on the contrary, focus on calling the addressee to action, embodying the speaker’s effort to get him to do something.

Speech acts included in the third category, known as *commissive*, are intended to state intentions, make promises or take oaths, generating a change in the world as they create an obligation; unlike the previous type of utterances directed towards the listeners, this one focuses on the speaker’s engagement.

The fourth type of speech acts, called *declarative*, include all those utterances that cause a change in the institutional state of affairs, namely baptizing, excommunicating, declaring war or judging someone guilty.

As the name says, *expressive* speech acts concentrate on psychological and emotional reactions to situations involving the action of thanking, apologising, greeting and offering congratulations.

### **5.1.1 Compliments**

Compliments, included in expressive speech acts, are expressions containing a positive evaluation by the speaker to the listener (Behnam and Amizadeh, 2011) aiming at, as Bruti (2006) highlights citing Goffman (1967), “maintaining, enhancing, or supporting the addressee’s face”. In face-to-face interactions, interlocutors therefore use compliments for a good variety of reasons, including expressing admiration and praise, showing approval of the listener’s appearance, way of behaving, qualities or tastes. According to Behnam and Amizadeh (2011), citing Matsuoka (2003), compliments are an “intricate combination of positive evaluations, displayed good feelings, implicit friendliness, and half-admitted desire to please”, creating solidarity between the speaker and the listener. On the basis of these observations, every utterance

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<sup>39</sup>Mey J.L., *Pragmatics. An Introduction*, Malden (Mass.), Blackwell, [1993] 2001, p. 120.

embodying complimentary behaviour aims at showing admiration and, therefore, establishes a positive relationship between interlocutors.

Bruti (2006) offers an eye-opening account of the most illustrious studies on compliments carried out in the late XX century, starting with Goffman, who saw this type of expressive speech act as a form of lubricant aimed at exalting what Brown and Levinson (1987) called the receiver's face. In recent years, other world-famous scholars have focused on complimentary human behaviours, analysing it from a socio-pragmatic angle. In this manner they have proved that compliments are "*routine formulae* depending on few syntactic patterns and a limited lexicon" (among others cited by the author, Wolfson, 1981 and 1984; Manes and Wolfson 1980; Wolfson and Manes, 1980; Holmes, 1988).

In light of these observations, contemporary linguists offered an interesting classification of the nine mostly used syntactic patterns that create compliments in the English language<sup>40</sup>:

| Manes and Wolfson            |   | Holmes                  |                                    |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| NP is/looks (really) ADJ     | <i>Your sweater is really nice</i>      | NP be (INT) ADJ         | <i>That coat is really great</i>   |
|                              |   | NP be looking (INT) ADJ | <i>you're looking terrific!</i>    |
| I (really) like/love NP      | <i>I like your coat</i>                 | I (INT) like NP         | <i>I simply love that shirt</i>    |
| PRO is (really) (a) ADJ      | <i>That's a good question!</i>          | PRO be a (INT) ADJ NP   | <i>That's a good question</i>      |
|                              |   | Pro be (INT) (a) ADJ NP | <i>That's really a great juice</i> |
| You V (a) really) ADJ NP     | <i>You did a great job</i>              |                         |                                    |
| You V NP (really) ADV        | <i>You sang that song very well</i>     |                         |                                    |
| You have (a) (really) ADJ NP | <i>You have a beautiful living room</i> |                         |                                    |
| What a ADJ NP!               | <i>What a pretty shirt!</i>             | What (a) (ADJ) NP!      | <i>What lovely children!</i>       |

<sup>40</sup> The classification is taken from "Translating Compliments and insults in the Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue: two sides of the same coin?" in Freddi and Pavesi, 2005 (p. 145).

|               |                                |               |                                   |
|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| ADJ NP!       | <i>Good shot!</i>              | (INT) ADJ NP  | <i>Really cool ear-rings!</i>     |
| Isn't NP ADJ! | <i>Isn't that ring pretty!</i> | Isn't NP ADJ! | <i>Isn't this food wonderful!</i> |

Moreover, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) state the strict connection between compliments and the socio-cultural context in which they are produced, laying the foundations for new research on how these expressive speech acts are given and accepted in different lingua-cultural environments.

This concept has been accepted by the Italian linguist Alfonzetti (2006: 9), who adds that compliments are an integral part of the speakers' community, it being governed by specific cultural and socio-linguistic maxims. Compliments, in fact, although universally used in every lingua-cultural environment, can significantly change in accordance with the context in which they are produced.

Nevertheless, the author recognizes only two parameters that do not vary among different cultures. It is a proven fact that complimentary behaviour is generally more frequent when interlocutors are relatives or friends, while they tend to disappear when the speakers belong to different social classes, have hierarchically distant job positions or no particularly friendly or close relationship. Exalting and celebrating a woman's appearance and qualities, are also cited by Alfonzetti as the second most popular reason for paying compliments. According to her, this is the only case when social distance or age differences no longer exist.

Having specified, however, that compliments are cultural mirrors, it is possible to summarize the most common reasons why they are produced in the two languages taken into account herein<sup>41</sup>.

In regard to American English speakers, a general overview on the situations in which they more easily pay compliments is offered by Ishihara (2001), who, in a summary of the experts' most acclaimed hypothesis, describes the main functions of compliments in just six points:

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<sup>41</sup> For a general introduction to compliments in the particular case of African American English speakers, complimentary behaviour in the lingua-cultural American environment will be taken into account. A more detailed classification will be presented through the analysis of Spike Lee's filmic corpus in the next chapter.

1. to express admiration or approval of someone's work/appearance/taste (Manes, 1983; Herbert, 1990);
2. to establish/confirm/maintain solidarity (Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1989);
3. to replace greetings/gratitude/apologies/congratulations (Wolfson, 1983, 1989);
4. to soften face-threatening acts such as apologies, requests and criticism (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Wolfson, 1983);
5. to open and sustain conversation (conversation strategy) (Wolfson, 1983; Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992);
6. to reinforce desired behaviour (Manes, 1993).

Furthermore, the Japanese linguist classified compliments given by Americans into three wide branches:

1. compliments are given to express admiration for appearance and/or possessions;
2. compliments are given to express admiration for performance, skills and/or abilities;
3. compliments are given to express admiration for personal traits.

Basing her considerations on Herbert and Straight's analysis (1989), she then sheds light on the Americans' widespread tendency to refuse or minimize compliments received from interlocutors for the implicit purpose of reducing speaker and receiver's distance<sup>42</sup>.

In keeping with this dimension, Ishihara (2001) lists the main strategies through which the person receiving the compliment replies to the speaker:

1. Accept:
  - a. Appreciation Token (*Thanks/Thank you*)
  - b. Comment Acceptance (*Yeah, it's my favorite, too*)
  - c. Praise Upgrade (*Really brings out my blue eyes, doesn't it?*)

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<sup>42</sup> Hondo and Goodman (2001) do not completely share Ishihara's position, stating that American people positively accept compliments.

2. Mitigate:
  - a. Comment History (*I bought it for the trip to Arizona*)
  - b. Shift credit (*My brother gave it to me/It really knitted itself*)
  - c. Questioning or Request Reassurance/Repetition (*Do you really like them?*)
  - d. Return (*So's yours*)
  - e. Scale Down/ Downgrade (*It's really quite old*)
3. Reject:
  - a. Disagreeing utterance (*A: You look good and healthy!*  
*B: I feel fat*)
4. No Response
5. Request Interpretation:
  - a. Addressee interprets the compliment as a request (*You wanna borrow this one too?*).

As in the case of American interlocutors, Italian complimentary behaviour has some generally recurrent situations usually focusing on:

1. expressing admiration or approval of someone's appearance:
  - a. positive comments on exterior beauty (e.g. beautiful legs, skin, hands)
  - b. positive comments on haircuts or dress sense and elegance
  - c. positive comments on the physical benefits of keeping fit (being thin and young-looking)
2. expressing admiration or approval of objects and possessions:
  - a. positive comments on clothes and shoes
  - b. positive comments on scarves and bags
  - c. positive comments on jewellery
  - d. positive comments on home furniture
  - e. positive comments on cars
3. expressing admiration for skills and/or abilities:
  - a. compliments and praise for people who can cook

- b. compliments and praise for people who can furnish their homes with creativity and originality
4. expressing admiration for personal traits:
- a. compliments to people that are kind, sweet and nice towards others
  - b. compliments to reliable people.

Although this classification slightly differs from the previous one, Alfonzetti (2006) highlights how the response strategies of both languages do not vary. Like Americans, Italian addressees can accept or reject compliments, can show agreement or disagreement with the speaker, can shift credits or return the positive comment to the interlocutor.

### **5.1.2 Insults**

Unlike compliments, insults are expressions or statements that are considered offensive or degrading and aim at damaging the addressee (Bruti 2005: 148). Insults can, moreover, be accidental or intentional but their perlocutionary force always leads to social or cultural clashes, except in cases when they are uttered “with reversed illocutionary and perlocutionary aims” (ibid.: 148) which thus transform the speaker’s words into positive comments.

As generally accepted by scholars, this type of speech act can be subdivided into *swearing* and *insulting*. Swearing refers to the use of inappropriate or morally offensive words in a context that is supposed to be polite and formal. Such expressions are usually linked to social taboos that can vary depending on the lingua-cultural environment in which they are produced. They generally deal with explicit comments on sexual activities, body parts, religious beliefs and death. More generally, these terms are usually seen as a way to show anger and dissatisfaction with the situation experienced by the speaker and, therefore, they are not particularly addressed to anybody. Often, in fact, these types of insult are general interjection and, in many cases, are related to topics considered tricky or unacceptable by the community, for instance sexual deviance, masturbation, adultery, sexual fetishes or drug addiction. These terms, however, are generally not to be taken literally but they have entered the

language due to their “non-targeted, non-reciprocal and neurologically motivated” parameters (ibid).

On the other hand, when the speaker insults his interlocutor, he speaks directly to the listener, producing a targeted and reciprocal utterance. This type of negative comment is hard to categorize because it can deal with any physical, psychological or behavioural aspect regarding the addressee and can significantly vary in accordance with diaphasic, diastratic and diatopic criteria.

The most popular insults, however, are usually linked to topics such as sex, racism, homosexuality, nationality and disability.

To sum up, Andersson and Trudgill (1990) offer an elucidative classification which includes four broad categories of insult:

1. expletive insults: used by speakers to show emotions (not-targeted and not-reciprocal);
2. abusive insults: directly addressed at the listener and therefore offensive, targeted and reciprocal;
3. humorous insults: despite their undisputable negative connotations, these expressions are not intended to be offensive or degrading, but are jokingly used in informal contexts;
4. auxiliary insults: swear words that, as already explained, do not refer to anything or anybody in particular.

## 6 Compliments in Bamboozled

As already presented in the introductory section, this chapter includes forty-four expressive speech acts with the function of complimenting. Having already explained the aim of this study, all examples offered were taken from the African American filmic production *Bamboozled*, a film written and directed by Spike Lee in 2000.

The number of examples included in this part refers to every expression of praise or approbation uttered by the characters throughout the film and does not depend on the pragmatic or linguistic relevance of the sentences.

Furthermore, the compliments selected are reported in both source and target versions for the purpose of a deeper and detailed analysis.

A brief comment for every expressive speech act has also been added in order to pin down the most significant elements included in their own nature and the hypothetical problems that translating them from English to Italian may have caused.

The observations offered aim at fostering the analysis of linguistic microstructures, taking into account the contrastive aspects that develop with the co-existence of two linguistic codes.

In fact, this investigation is not only restricted to a pragmatic perspective, but syntactic and semantic traits are also highlighted in most cases to encourage a broad-spectrum study. The audiovisual translation approach involves a complex linguistic and socio-cultural network which makes the audiovisual alphabet unique and sometimes difficult to interpret. A more multi-faceted method was therefore thought to be the most suitable for capturing the multiple meanings that arise from the lingua-cultural landscape of the source and target universe.

Assuming the importance of audiovisual products as faithful representations of both cultural panoramas, great attention was paid to the lexicon used by every character focusing on the translation of all those elements mirroring cultural background.

To make the analysis clearer, four different subcategories are presented:

1. Compliments explicitly addressed to the listener

2. Compliments implicitly addressed to the listener
3. Compliments addressed to a third party
4. Compliments as insults.

As explained previously, this classification aims at making the analysis and its reading easier.

## 6.1 Compliments explicitly addressed to the listener

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>Big Dela! It's the Dela man! There you go with the suits. <b>I like that.</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Good morning, Womack.</p> <p>WOMACK:<br/>Looks like you going to an exorcism, man<sup>43</sup>.<br/><b>I like the suit, though. It's pretty nice.</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Thank you.</p> | <p>Ehi, è il nostro vecchio amico <b>Dela. Anche oggi un vestito nuovo. Mi piaci! Sempre elegante l'amico!</b></p> <p>Buon giorno Womack.</p> <p><b>Ti fai fare i vestiti su misura</b>, non è vero amico? <b>Stai Bene!</b></p> <p>Grazie.</p> |
|---|---|

(1)

As described from the lines above, the example shows a discrepancy between source and target language.

Although the illocutionary force is the same, the Italian hyper-translation gives a more detailed description of the speaker's thought. Womack, in fact, praises his interlocutor's elegance by specifying the fact that Pierre Delacroix is wearing a new suit.

This statement, again supported by Womack's supposition of tailor-made clothes, may hide an additional illocutionary force by suggesting Mr. Delacroix' economic possibility to spend a great amount of money on suits and, therefore, implicitly suggesting the different social status between the main character and the other two.

The original compliments do not add any additional information concerning Mr. Delacroix, but their function is most typically face-enhancing, aiming at showing Womack's appraisal.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>Why don't you help me and Manray out, man.<br/>We're trying to get some work.<br/>You work for the network.</p> | <p>Perchè non ci trovi un lavoro a Manray e a me?</p> <p>Lo sai che siamo forti.</p> <p>Tu lavori per la televisione, metti una buona</p> |
|--|---|

<sup>43</sup> This line will be analysed in the section 7.4.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DELACROIX:<br>I'll work on something.<br>Sloan says <b>you're too talented to be dancing in the street.</b> | parola, no?<br><br>Penserò a qualcosa da farvi fare.<br>A proposito, <b>Sloan mi ha detto che hai troppo talento per continuare a ballare per le strade!</b> |
|---|--|

(2)

With this statement, Mr. Delacroix explains his assistant Sloan Hopkins' personal appreciation of Manray's skills as a tap dancer. The Italian dubbed version closely follows the original and obtains the same illocutionary force. The same final result is also offered by the accurate reproduction of the syntactic pattern, in which the duration form, typical of the English language, is given in the target language by the verbal compound *per continuare a ballare*.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| DUNWITTY:<br>Listen, let's sit down.<br>I know <b>you're the most creative person</b> I've got on staff. I mean, <b>you're hip, you know what's happening.</b> | Senta, io lo so che <b>lei è la persona più creativa di tutto il mio staff di autori.</b><br><b>Lei è colto, si tiene sempre informato.</b> |
|--|---|

(3)

These three examples of compliments can be considered as one of the most typical options for this speech act and the illocutionary force adaptation was probably not difficult for the dubbing process. The examples above show Mr. Dunwitty's overt will to demonstrate his honest appreciation of Mr. Delacroix' qualities, which include artistic creativity and personal update.

According to a semantic analysis, however, the dubbed version shows a more formal register than the original linguistic code: *hip* is, in fact, a slang term that generally depicts a person who knows and follows what is fashionable, for example in clothes and music.

As Green (1993) explains, the origin of this adjective, along with its predecessor *hep*, can be traced back to the beginning of the XX century when it was borrowed from the agricultural dimension to be used by jazz fans. Recognized by linguists as an African American term, *hip* was adopted by American post-WWII beatniks. Having to face the absence of a term that could convey the same cultural connotation, Italian translators decided on a more common

expression (super-ordinate term) with the aim of getting closer to the target audience.

Considering the situational context in which the dialogue develops, *hip* could also stand for the contemporary acronym HIP meaning Highly Important Person<sup>44</sup>.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DELACROIX:<br><b>I could always count on my lamb</b> - Sloan Hopkins. | Per fortuna potevo contare sulla mia assistente – Sloan Hopkins |
|---|---|

(4)

In this case Mr. Delacroix' compliment is different from the previous examples because he is not directly interacting with the woman since this appraisal is produced by his mental activity. The example, however, has been included in this paragraph because the positive evaluation of Ms. Hopkins' qualities is obvious and explicitly addressed to her. In a more lexical approach, the compliment is built on the use of the noun *lamb* which implies a semantically positive content. It is interesting to note that this term could also have an ambiguous added value linked to another possible meaning of the term *lamb* which, in fact, may portray a passive woman, who unreflectively acquiesces to every request. However, due to the female character's lack of such a passive attitude, the working relationship between Pierre Delacroix and Sloan Hopkins will eventually collapse towards the end of the film when he gets rid of her, complaining of her growing interest in Manray and, above all, her hatred for the TV programme they are working on.

In this case source and target language differ considerably. In the second version, in fact, none of the possible meanings explained above can be decoded. By choosing the term *assistente* Mr. Delacroix' observation is just a real fact which cannot be considered a compliment due to its neutral function.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| DELACROIX: |  |
|------------|--|

---

<sup>44</sup> see [acronyms.thefreedictionary.com/HIP](http://acronyms.thefreedictionary.com/HIP)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Eureka! <b>I am so happy to see you cats.</b> | Eureka. Ma come sono contento di vedervi ragazzi! |
|---|---|

(5)

As in example 4, the compliment revolves around the term *cats*. With this expression, the affirmative clause, although including the personal speaker's positive attitude in meeting the other men, aims at highlighting the two other characters' positive characteristics.

Among its several meanings, the term *cat* describes a person who is generally considered or thought to be cool. This word also has roots in the musical world, when *cats* were all those musicians who played jazz music. Considering that tap dancing has historically been a part of the American jazz dimension, the explicit reference to this tradition through the term *cats* must be highlighted.

As in the previous case, the same metaphorical path is not pursued in the dubbed version where the word *cats* is simply translated as *ragazzi*, which removes any hidden or implied meaning. The translated version also loses any possible reference to the world of jazz and, therefore, to the African American musical and cultural sphere.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| MANRAY:<br>I'm sure that was the only thing he was impressed with. | D'accordo ma io dico che non è rimasto colpito soltanto dal tuo spirito d'iniziativa. |
| SLOAN:<br>Yes.   | Giusto.   |
| MANRAY:<br><b>You look beautiful like that.</b>                    | Giusto. <b>Sei molto bella.</b>   |
| SLOAN:<br>Thank you.   | Grazie.   |

(6)

In this example the expression of praise is undoubtedly obvious. The structure of the English clause represents a typical African American English syntactic pattern where the final words *like that* are reminiscent of the standard English expression *that's the way it is*. The translators, in this case, opted to add the adjective *molto* in order to achieve the same compliment intensity.

Manray's words aim at celebrating the woman's beauty convincing her that Mr. Delacroix must surely have noticed it when he decided to hire her as his personal assistant. In his previous line, in fact, Manray ironically states that Ms. Hopkins was hired only because of her skills. In the Italian version the illocutionary force of the utterance is explicit because he specifies what he thinks.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Dela, my man, <b>I'm glad you got your mind right.</b></p> | <p>Mio caro Dela, sono lieto che tu abbia seguito il mio consiglio.</p> |
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Well, it's right, tight, and ready to delight.</p>        | <p>Esatto capo, c'ho pensato e ho deciso che aveva ragione lei.</p>     |

(7)

This line has been included because it is an ambiguous example of complementing speech act. The sentence shows Mr. Dunwitty's satisfaction with Mr. Delacroix's new attitude towards CNN's future projects and therefore includes the former man's complimentary behaviour, who once again stresses his pre-set assumption that the latter is his best author. The illocutionary force of the utterance can also be understood by the vocative *Dela, my man*, which symbolizes an authentic positive re-evaluation of the writer, whose surname, *Delacroix*, has been shortened to a friendly and more intimate form.

The ambiguous illocutionary force of the English line, however, revolves around the adjective *right* because, on analysing the situation from a different point of view, the expression could suggest Mr. Delacroix has had no choice but to adapt to Mr. Dunwitty's project.

The Italian version shortens the social distance between the two characters by using the informal register demonstrated by the use of the singular second person pronoun *tu*, but any ambiguity is removed – as well as any possible complimentary behaviour – because the Italian Mr. Dunwitty takes credit for Mr. Delacroix's change of heart.

If we consider Mr. Delacroix' answer in the original text as concise, it is a playful and ironic affirmative clause. In the second version, however, Mr. Delacroix has a more serious and submissive tone.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>And that is Sleep 'n' Eat.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>What's the name?</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Sleep and Eat.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Sleep and motherfuckin' Eat.<br/>Oh, shit.<br/>Oh, shit.</p> | <p>E l'altro ragazzo è Mangia e Dormi.</p> <p>Come ha detto scusi?</p> <p>Mangia e Dormi.</p> <p><b>Mi piace molto Mangia e Dormi</b><br/><b>Oh, è fantastico!</b><br/>Oh, è fantastico!</p> |
|---|--|

(8)

In the example above, Mr. Dunwitty's positive comment is made explicit in the Italian text. The verbal compound *mi piace molto* is added. This discrepancy is given by the fact that a faithful translation of the English expression would not have conveyed the same illocutionary force and the adaptation is essential to bring the target text in line with the meaning of the English comment.

In addition, a literal translation of Mr. Dunwitty's comment would probably have caused isochrony problems.

In the situational context, in fact, the translators opted for a detachment from the source text in order to include an Italian expression, whose incidence is as common as the English one in every-day circumstances. As a result, the dubbed version becomes a more overt compliment.

The African American expression *shit* is also lost in the dubbed version. This term includes several meanings depending on the context in which it is uttered. In actual fact, with this exclamation, Mr. Dunwitty reinforces his positive remark. Given the untranslatability of the term, the Italian version offers a semantically similar solution which aims at highlighting the character's enthusiasm.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Every week, we follow the trials and tribulations of Mantan, Sleep 'n Eat-- two real coons, the Dusty Duo!</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>What are their character traits?</p> <p>DELACROIX:</p> | <p>Ogni settimana seguiremo le avventure e le tribolazioni di Mantan e Seep 'n Eat, due veri bifolchi, una coppia di disgraziati</p> <p>Quali sono le loro peculiarità?</p> |
|--|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Ignorant. Dull-witted. Lazy. And unlucky!   | Sono ignoranti, duri di comprendonio, sfaticati e ultra-sfigati.   |
| DUNWITTY:<br>Exactly. Exactly what I'm lookin' for.   | <b>Fantastico</b> , è esattamente quello che volevo.   |
| DELACROIX:<br>Yes, Mantan here is the uneducated Negro. but with educated feets who by some stroke of unbelievable stupidity always makes his best-laid plans go haywire. | Grazie, il nostro Mantan è il classico negro analfabeta e ha un grande talento per il ballo però essendo per sua sfortuna incredibilmente stupido e ottuso, ogni volta che gli capita una buona occasione se la fa scappare. |

(9)

In example 9, Mr. Dunwitty's personal appreciation of Mr. Delacroix' new project is reinforced in the dubbed version by the inclusion of a compliment. In the original text, however, the boss of the television network enthusiastically endorses the new show without any praise.

In the Italian translation, the expression of approval is more evident, so that the interlocutor actually says thank you.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| DELACROIX:<br>It should be a watermelon patch.                                     | lo propongo un campo coltivato a cocomeri.                              |
| DUNWITTY:<br><b>That's the move.</b><br>I like watermelon. It's good for you, too. | Vado matto per i cocomeri. <b>La proposta è accettata, complimenti!</b> |
| DELACROIX:<br>Yes!   | Grazie!   |
| SLOAN:<br>What?!   | Che cosa?   |

(10)

Likewise, example 10 also shows a discrepancy between source and target text and, in fact, the syntactic structures differ considerably. This difference, in my opinion, is due to the fact that there is no similar expression of approval in the Italian language, so translators have had to convey the same illocutionary force by finding a semantically similar solution. The expression *that's the move*, is generally used by African American speakers to express their praise when something is really beautiful or in some way really interesting at the time they are speaking. Besides that, in the second version the first utterance seems to focus more on Mr. Dunwitty's taste than on the proposal itself.

So, while in the original text Mr. Delacroix is indirectly complimented, in the Italian version the expression *complimenti* is added to convey a clearer meaning to which the speaker answers *grazie*.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Delacroix, my motherfucker<sup>45</sup>, <b>you dug deep.</b><br/><b>You dug deeper than deep, my man.</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>To my loins.</p> | <p>Delacroix, gran figlio di puttana, <b>ha superato se stesso. Io non sapevo che aveva un cervello grande come una casa.</b></p> <p>Grazie, questa è la mia giornata.</p> |
|--|--|

(11)

Mr. Dunwitty actually gives vent to his appreciation of Mr. Delacroix' artistic skills, but the two versions differ for more than one reason.

First of all, the English expression used by the first speaker - to dig deep - is typical of the African American language and is usually chosen as a synonym of the standard phrase *to understand something*.

In the context of the film, the speaker uses the sentence to show his approval of his interlocutor's ideas, and his opinion is reinforced by what he adds later. From a more linguistic perspective, the repetition of the same concept contributes towards creating a specific sound effect, given by the presence of consonances and assonances which is lost in the Italian translation.

Syntactically, the original text only counts two main clauses while the Italian version offers a more complex pattern, including two main clauses and one subordinate clause making the line heavier.

The argumentative path is the same in the second text and probably has the same effect on the complimentee, but the dubbed adaptation loses the originality of the English expression and uses a simile which is not so common in the language of the target audience.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/><b>This kid is off the hook!</b><br/><b>This kid is off the hinges, yo!</b></p> | <p>Yu yu yu, <b>ma questo ragazzo è una rivelazione.</b></p> |
|--|--|

<sup>45</sup> This expression will be analysed in section 7.4.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>That's what I'm talking about!<br/> Mantan! Yo, we're gonna get paid!<br/> I'm about to go run upstairs with this.<br/> If CNS doesn't have the balls, somebody else will.<br/> My beautiful black princess.<br/> Delacroix!</p> | <p><b>Questo ragazzo diventerà una stella di prima grandezza. Questo ragazzo ha talento da vendere.</b> La TV impazzirà per questo ragazzo... per Mantan.<br/> Hei, avremo un successo strepitoso.<br/> Adesso io vado ai piani superiori e se quegli stronzi non avranno le palle di produrre questo show mi rivolgerò alla concorrenza.<br/> La mia bellissima principessa nera.<br/> Delacroix!</p> |
|---|--|

(12)

The African American English expressions *off the hook* and *off the hinges* are commonly used as synonyms and, in this situational context, they mean *cool, fresh or awesome*. In this example the Italian version closely follows the original and conveys the same illocutionary force.

The syntactic structure is partially the same too. Although the Italian verbs do not include the repetition of the verb *to be*, the subject of the three main clauses is the same. The Italian text, however, is longer because the meaning would otherwise be unclear to the target viewers, and an explanation, which is not included in the original script, because the American cultural background had no need for it, was therefore necessary.

As in the English version, the compliment is explicitly addressed to the listener and it focuses on Manray's skills as a tap dancer.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/> I'm about to go run upstairs with this.<br/> If CNS doesn't have the balls, somebody else will.<br/> <b>My beautiful black princess.</b><br/> Delacroix!</p> | <p>Adesso io vado ai piani superiori e se quegli stronzi non avranno le palle di produrre questo show mi rivolgerò alla concorrenza.<br/> <b>La mia bellissima principessa nera.</b><br/> Delacroix!</p> |
|--|--|

(13)

As example 12 shows, after he has realized how talented the street performer is, Mr. Dunwitty decides to leave the room to share the new project with the CNS bosses. The way he chooses to say goodbye to the female character can be seen as an expressive speech act with the function of complimenting. Exactly the same expression is maintained in the dubbed version.

The perlocutionary effect of the explicit positive remark is not, however, what we would generally expect. Almost puzzled by the other person's enthusiasm in the

production of a minstrel show, Ms. Hopkins reacts to the whole situation by saying *This is some bullshit*.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| JULIUS:<br>The name of this shit right here...                                | Ho una buona idea per il titolo della canzone.    |
| DOUBLE BLAK<br>What's that, dawg?   | Si, che titolo hai pensato?                       |
| JULIUS:<br>"Black is Black".  | "Black is Black".                                 |
| SMOOTH BLAK<br>It's hot.  | Niente male!                                      |
| DOUBLE BLAK<br>Now, that's some thinking. That's some shit right there, dawg. | Si è un bel titolo, <b>sei in gamba fratello!</b> |

(14)

As in example 9, Double Blak's personal appreciation of Julius' new title for their song is reinforced in the dubbed version by the inclusion of a compliment. The discrepancy lies in the addition of an explicit expression of praise that does not exist in the original text.

From a lexical point of view, the African American speakers in the Italian translation use a more formal vocabulary which does not mirror the original copy. In fact, the Mau Maus members' linguistic code not only reflects their African American community roots, but also symbolizes their identity as a group. They freely use a foul variety of African American English peppering it with a variety of slang expressions. The repeated use of the vocative *dawg*, for example, has no satisfactory translation in the Italian language.

In this context the term *dawg* has two essential meanings. The first is linked to the more common slang terms *buddy* and *homie* that generally refer to close friends while in other circumstances *dawg* is used to stress black people belonging to the African American background. The untranslatability of the term into the Italian language is clear, therefore translators have chosen to use *fratello*, one of the most common calques deriving from African American lexicon translation.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>Y'all like that shit?<br/>The name of the album is "The Black Album".</p> | <p>Vi piace a tutti il titolo?<br/>E il nome dell'album sarà, "Black Album".</p>                                    |
| <p>DOUBLE BLAK<br/>You know what I'm sayin'? That's the motherfuckin' way.</p>           | <p>Ho capito vuoi sfottere i Beatles, eh? <b>Grande amico...</b> Sei un geniale figlio di puttana<sup>46</sup>.</p> |

(15)

Likewise, example 15 also shows a discrepancy between the two texts. An explicit compliment has, in fact, been added in the Italian version to make the interlocutor's approval clearer.

In this case, moreover, the dubbed version semantically differs from the original text because the literal translation of the second character's words would probably not have conveyed the same illocutionary force as the original line. Therefore, the argumentative path changes and suggests a connection between the Mau Maus and The Beatles. More specifically, in 1968 the popular British band released an album, whose official title was *The Beatles*, but it was generally known as *The White Album* because of its plain white sleeve. So, Double Blak's irony revolves around the title chosen by Julius who is focusing on the black – white dichotomy.

This detailed addition, however, partially clashes with the source text, where no implicit or explicit reference to *The Beatles* is made and it would probably not be of any help to the Italian audience since presumably only a few people could immediately understand the allusion.

Lastly, Double Blak's Italian words may also lead viewers to an incorrect interpretation of the situation since the Mau Maus are not in the least interested in comparing themselves to the English rock band but rather to emerge as a militant rap group.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>Come on, Mantan.<br/>Let's study this material.</p> | <p>Andiamo Mantan, dobbiamo studiare questo materiale.</p> |
| <p>DELACROIX:</p>  |  |

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<sup>46</sup> This expression will be analysed in section 7.4.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Study hard, gentlemen.<br><b>You look great in those Hillnigger jeans.</b> | Studiatelo bene, mi raccomando.<br><b>Belli quei jeans.</b> |
|--|---|

(16)

Syntactically, this compliment is classified as one of the more traditional forms. The speaker directly addresses the complementee and expresses a positive comment on Manray's look. Preferring the use of a super-ordinate term, in the dubbed version the jeans brand is not mentioned, while in the English text Mr. Delacroix intentionally specifies the casual clothing make. Moreover, the Italian compliment is more centred on the clothing than on the man himself.

Since the television writer knows that Manray and Womack are puzzled about donning the ridiculous caricatures, his allusion to the Hillnigger jeans is synonymous with the two street performers' new rich life.

In fact, at the beginning of their working relationship, the first things that Manray asks for are tip-tap shoes and a pair of Hillnigger jeans.

The name of the trousers has also been seen as a parody of Hillfiger jeans, thus satirising both white and black culture. Since the casual clothing brand has a specific cultural value, its absence in the Italian version could be considered an omission. Only a few target viewers, however, could have understood the allusion. This example shows how often utterances can include mixed illocutionary forces, which are usually difficult to translate into another language and cultural background.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DELACROIX:<br>Thank you. Thank you.<br><b>That was great.</b> Please... | Grazie grazie.<br>Siediti per favore.          |
| SLOAN:<br><b>That was great. Fantastic.</b>                             | <b>Un'esibizione stupenda, fantastica!</b>     |
| HONEYCUTT:<br>Thank you.  | Molte grazie.                                  |
| DELACROIX:<br>What is your background?                                  | Quali esperienza ha fatto?                     |
| HONEYCUTT:<br>I'm a actor. You know, I act.                             | Sono un attore, recito sempre, sono un attore. |

(17)

As in the example above, the syntactic pattern of this form of complimenting is traditionally classified as one of the most common. Although the illocutionary force is the same, the Italian version offers a different syntactic structure. While Mr. Delacroix' remark of admiration is omitted in the dubbed version, Ms. Hopkins's Italian compliment only counts one noun compound. In both scripts the utterance is explicitly directed at the interlocutor who, unlike in example 13, obeys the audience's expectation and says thank you.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>HONEYCUTT:<br/>And so it came to me.<br/>It just came to me, you know?</p> <p>Waste away your life and linger<br/>Sittin' at home watchin' Jerry Springer<br/>You do blackface and a monkeyshine<br/>And cut a "G" at the same time<br/>'Cause niggas is a beautiful thang<br/>Niggas is a beautiful thang, hit me<br/>Niggas is a beautiful thang...</p> <p>Then the audience would be gettin' in with that.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>I'm digging that. I am so digging that.<br/>"Niggas is a beautiful thing."</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>I got it here.</p> | <p>Ecco insomma, così all'improvviso mi è venuta<br/>in mente una canzone.</p> <p>Waste away your life and linger<br/>Sittin' at home watchin' Jerry Springer<br/>You do blackface and a monkeyshine<br/>And cut a "G" at the same time<br/>'Cause niggas is a beautiful thang<br/>Niggas is a beautiful thang, hit me<br/>Niggas is a beautiful thang...</p> <p>Di questo la nostra gente deve rendersi conto.</p> <p><b>Mi è piaciuta molto la sua esibizione. L'ho<br/>trovata molto valida e interessante.</b> Essere<br/>negri è una bella cosa.</p> <p>È una bella cosa, ho già preso nota.</p> |
|--|---|

(18)

This is another example of discrepancy between the original and the Italian version. The expression of appreciation of the black stand-up comedian's ability only explicitly emerges in the target text. The illocutionary force of this example of expressive speech act is obvious and focuses on the man's performance. This aspect completely differs from the English line, where the spotlight is on the words that the actor repeats several times.

Mr. Delacroix and his team are impressed by the sentence *Niggas is a beautiful thing* since they are looking for new people to work in the production of the new minstrel show. Semantically, the word *nigger* (or *nigga*) has a complex development: Green (1993: 265) states that the modern term appeared in the U.S.A. during the late XIX century when it was widely used as a racial epithet.

Initially, the expression was spread during the slavery period to address black people, while the contemporary meaning refers to members of the African American population.

The term can have an antithetical interpretation since it gains meaning from the context, including the illocutionary force the speaker wants to convey. The term is generally considered racist when it is uttered by a member of the white community because it embodies the traditional negative stereotypes associated with African Americans (describing them as ignorant, foolish and lazy). Such prejudicial connotation actually disappears when those using the term are themselves black. Throughout the film, for instance, *nigger* is used by African American characters as a synonym of *brother*.

In the example above, the term clearly refers to the whole African American population and it ironically shows black people's necessity to reaffirm their values and identity in the mainstream white-oriented society.

The perlocutionary force of Mr. Delacroix' line, whose meaning is changed consistently in the dubbed version, revolves around his unexpected comprehension of the actor's words. The apparent realization is implicitly described by the verb *to dig* which determines the intensity of the action in the utterance. As already explained, *to dig* means *to understand or grasp something that has been hidden or forgotten before*.

It is interesting to note that Honeycutt's statement seems to become the provocative leitmotiv of the minstrel show which, however, will have a hyperbolic tragic development ending with Mantan's words *I'm sick and tired of being a nigger... and I'm not going to take it anymore*.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DUNWITTY:<br><b>Only mistake is I didn't believe in your genius from jump street.<br/>Dela, you are the man, bro.</b> | <b>Il solo sbaglio l'ho fatto io sottovalutando la sua genialità e il suo gran talento, Dela!<br/>Lei è un autore eccezionale!</b> |
|---|--|

(19)

Example 19 shows an evident compliment of Mr. Delacroix' creative skills. This explicit expression of praise does not in itself represent difficulty in dubbing because, as we can see, the number of words uttered and the syntactic

structure is almost the same, even if the last part of the first clause changes. The apparent hyper-translation of the concept is due to the impossibility to adapt the expression *from jump street*, whose meaning must be traced back to African American slang expression that stands for *from the beginning* or *from the very first time*. The unavoidable loss of the lingua-cultural traits can also be found in the second affirmative clause, where the informal register that Mr. Dunwitty deliberately uses, is missing. The expression *you are the man* is a remark of appreciation and describes a person that is to be admired. Moreover, the term *bro* plays an important role in the context since it is a common word used in greetings or in addressing friends. It was exactly this specific cultural connotative value that led the translators to maintain the illocutionary force of the utterances by recreating the same meaning with expressions of praise commonly used in the target language.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>JUNEBUG:<br/>That's my son at the door.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>How are you doing?</p> <p>JUNEBUG:<br/><b>Looking good.</b> Good to see you.</p> <p>DOT:<br/>Looking good, son.</p> | <p>Ehi, apro subito!<br/>Pierre, ciao!</p> <p>Ciao!</p> <p>Come va figliolo? <b>Sei in gran forma!</b> Che bello vederti.</p> <p>Ma guarda che sorpresa!<br/>Allora, cosa mi racconti?</p> |
|--|--|

(20)

Example 20 once again shows an instance of praise obtained by Junebug's explicit compliment.

From a pragmatic perspective, Italian translators have followed the original text preferring, as the original words highlight, faithfulness to stylistic or semantic originality. When a speaker says someone is looking good, it implies that the listener is handsome and probably much better than he normally is. The Italian expression *essere in gran forma* is commonly used in the same situational context in which the interlocutor's physical appearance is praised.

Syntactically, the Italian version offers an affirmative clause that mirrors the original expression of praise.

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| DELACROIX:<br><b>You look dandy in that orange ensemble.</b> | <b>Ti dona questo colore, sai?</b> |
| JUNEBUG:<br>Have a seat, son.                                | Mettiti seduto.                    |

(21)

As in example 16, the syntactic pattern of this form of complimenting is classified as one of the most commonly used. The male protagonist explicitly expresses his positive opinion of his father's style. What is interesting to note is the way in which the approving comment is formulated in both languages.

In actual fact, the development of the plot turns the positive remark into an expressive speech act that has different illocutionary forces depending on two distinct communicative approaches. In the original version the use of the term *dandy* gives a specific connotation to Junebug's image. The same adjective, in fact, is used by African American speakers when they want to describe something cool or fine. However, with the inclusion of this word, Mr. Delacroix gives vent to his appreciation by exploiting the common meaning of it. Taken from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century English literary landscape, *dandy* is generally used in the most traditional way to describe a person who, usually preferring a flamboyant style, places great importance on clothes and physical appearance. This could be the case of Mr. Delacroix' father who, as the original version highlights, is wearing an orange suit.

Making way for a less literal reading, a second thread might also be found. This interpretation takes into account another meaning of the term *dandy*. Historically, in fact, those defined as *dandies* led a life dedicated to art and saw human existence as an art-project. Mr. Delacroix may also use the term to implicitly praise his father's artistic skills as a stand-up comedian by inserting him in the world of the most illustrious writers of the past. Actually, Mr. Delacroix takes heed of Junebug's words *always keep 'em laughing* throughout the film, explaining that they, as artists, succeed when their audience appreciates the

show and that this may mean that the male protagonist himself may have to sacrifice his own life.

As you can see, these observations cannot be taken into consideration in the dubbed version because the expression of praise has been changed and the translators chose to take a specific illocutionary path so that the compliment only focuses on the colour of the suit. In this way it loses all cultural traits.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| DELACROIX:<br><b>You were hilarious.</b>                 | Grazie! <b>Sei stato esilarante.</b>                  |
| JUNEBUG:<br>Thank you.                                   | Tante grazie.   |
| DELACROIX:<br><b>Absolutely hilarious.</b>               | <b>Sei stato davvero... esilarante.</b>               |
| JUNEBUG:<br>It was a good show. Dot, get my son a drink. | Sono contento. Dot, offri qualcosa a mio figlio, dai! |

(22)

This is another example where the dubbed version completely mirrors the original and, both syntactically and pragmatically, the two lines are the same. The expression of appreciation is explicit and its illocutionary force is quite evident.

As in the English version, Mr. Delacroix's compliment is reinforced through his second line where the intensity of his positive comment is modified by the degree adverb *absolutely* and by the adverb *davvero*.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DELACROIX:<br><b>I always enjoy seeing you perform.</b> | <b>Mi è sempre piaciuto vedere le tue esibizioni.</b> |
| JUNEBUG:<br>Good, good. I try.                          | Bene bene, si, me la cavo.                            |
| DELACROIX:<br><b>You do more than try. You succeed.</b> | <b>Non solo te la cavi, sei fantastico!</b>           |
| DOT:<br>I hope this is all right.                       | Spero che questo liquore ti piaccia.                  |
| DELACROIX:  |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| It's perfect. Thank you.<br><br>DOT:<br>You're welcome. | Mi piace eccome, grazie.<br><br>Di niente, caro! |
|---|--|

(23)

Unlike the previous case, example 23 shows how source and target text can convey different illocutionary forces. What makes the Italian expression of approval different from the original one is the use of the Italian present perfect tense form *mi è piaciuto* enriched by the frequency adverb *sempre*. Information given, in this version, focuses on the past. Mr. Delacroix' words seem to emphasise that the habit belongs to the past rather than to the present.

The Italian compound tense is, in fact, generally used to describe a fact or an action which either occurred in the recent past or a long time ago but which is still linked to the present. The English version is more anchored to the present in which they are living since Mr. Delacroix interacts using the Present Simple form, which is clearly chosen to refer to regular habits and daily routines. The process of nominalization is also included in the first complimentary utterance where the verb *perform* is transformed into a noun phrase.

In the second line, the grammatical class changes yet again. The original syntactic subject-verb pattern is substituted by the expression *sei fantastico*. Such adaptation is probably due to the absence of the same morpho-syntactic pattern in the Italian language. Pragmatically, the lacuna is avoided by the use of one of the most common Italian expressions of appreciation.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| DOT:<br>Guess I'd better leave y'all two alone, all right?<br><b>That was a good show tonight.</b> Give me some sugar.<br><br>JUNEBUG:<br>I love you, baby.<br><br>DOT:<br>I love you, too. <b>I'm so proud of you.</b><br>All right. Be back. | Credo che sia meglio che ora vi lasci soli, d'accordo? <b>Sei stato bravissimo, amore.</b><br><br>Ti amo piccola.<br><br>Anch'io ti amo. <b>Sono così fiera di te.</b><br>Allora ci vediamo più tardi. |
|--|--|

(24)

Once again example 24 shows an evident compliment. Junebug's wife gives vent to her appreciation of the show.

While in the original version the woman expresses her positive comment about the stand-up comedian's performance, the target text is more centred on Junebug.

Although the illocutionary force of the Italian compliment closely follows the source text, the realization of the expressive speech act is certainly more overt.

The second compliment, however, is obvious in both versions. The speaker's intention is to praise the actor's skills and performance.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>MYRNA:<br/>First, <b>I would like to say I love your show.</b><br/>It's very courageous.<br/>My parents marched in Selma, Alabama with Dr. King.</p> | <p>D'accordo. <b>Prima di tutto voglio dirvi che mi è piaciuto lo show.</b> È molto coraggioso.<br/>I miei genitori hanno fatto la marcia in Alabama insieme a Martin Luther King.</p> |
|---|--|

(25)

As theorized by Brown and Levinson (1963), in this example complimentary language undoubtedly aims at maintaining positive face and here it is used to achieve a positive social relationship with Mr Delacroix and Ms Hopkins.

With her first statement, Myrna Goldfarb goes straight to the point, expressing her approval of the show.

Both in the original and the target version, the syntactic pattern of the compliment can be classified as one of the most common. The use of the *Presente Indicativo* in the Italian text reinforces the speaker's intention. Moreover, as in the previous example, the use of the Italian *passato prossimo* is generally associated with past actions and viewers could think the show is over. The English use of the Present tense indicates that the programme is still on air.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Why are you here?</p> <p>MYRNA:<br/><b>Good question. Straight to the point. I like your style.</b><br/>Because of the content of the show we're going to expect some very spirited reactions</p> | <p>Per quale motivo si trova qui?</p> <p><b>Ottima domanda. Lei va diritto al punto. Mi piace la schiettezza.</b><br/>Considerando tutti i contenuti del vostro show, ci dobbiamo aspettare anche reazioni ostili e</p> |
|---|---|

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
|  | negative. |
|--|-----------|

(26)

The two versions do not apparently show any discrepancy.

From a pragmatic point of view, in fact, the illocutionary force of the utterance is the same. Myrna Goldfarb expresses her appreciation of Mr. Delacroix' way of interacting. As we can see, the overt compliment remains at the end of the line, but the first statements have the same purpose. From a more linguistic perspective, however, the positive adjective used in the source language *good* is replaced by the superlative form *ottima*, which makes the complimenting expression stronger.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>SPEAKER1:<br/><b>Pierre, yassa man!</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>A small victory, is it?</p> <p>SPEAKER2:<br/><b>Right on, man.</b></p> <p>SPEAKER3:<br/><b>Great show.</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>That's small when you've been used to losing.</p> <p>SPEAKER4:<br/>Hey, Delacroix. <b>Funny show, man.</b></p> | <p>Ehi, <b>sei favoloso amico!</b></p> <p>Già però, una piccola vittoria non è...</p> <p><b>Bravo, bellissimo show!</b></p> <p><b>Complimenti Delacroix.</b></p> <p>Tanto piccola quando uno è abituato a perdere.</p> <p>Ehi ehi Delacroix, <b>mi sono divertito un sacco! Bellissimo show!</b></p> |
|--|--|

(27)

All of the above compliments have the same illocutionary force. What changes is the way in which these positive opinions are expressed. In the source text, the register used is undoubtedly more informal than the Italian one and the speakers use short and concise expressions to go straight to the point. In the second version, the sentences are longer.

Due to the screen translation, a lingua-cultural trait is lost. The inclusion of the word *yassa* has a strong cultural value in the African American community. In fact, when black speakers use the expression *yas*, they want to show their overwhelming approval of something. It is commonly used instead of *yes* to

convey a stronger tone. The final vowel *a* is typically added by African American speakers and stands for *yes sir*.

The expression *yessa massa* (yes master) is rooted in the old African American tradition and was used by black slaves to reply affirmatively to their masters.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>And what do we call this thing?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>It is called a "Jolly Nigger Bank."<br/>Ain't that something? And it's not a repro.<br/>It's circa turn of the century.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Thank you, I guess.</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>I thought it was appropriate.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>And is that good or bad?</p> | <p>E come si chiama questo oggetto?</p> <p>La chiamavano la banca dell'allegro negro.<br/>Non lo trovi fantastico? Non è una<br/>riproduzione, è un oggetto artistico originale<br/>della fine dell'ottocento.</p> <p>Originale in tutti i sensi.</p> <p><b>Mi è sembrato adatto a te.</b></p> <p><b>Vuol essere un complimento o no?</b></p> |
|--|---|

(28)

In example 28 the two versions differ in the latter part of the dialogue. In the Italian version the potential expression of approval has been made explicit.

The scene is set in Mr. Delacroix' office where Ms. Hopkins gives him a present. The gift-box contains an object called a Jolly Nigger Bank, whose function is to eat coins. In consideration of its original explicitly racist meaning, Mr. Delacroix is puzzled and cannot understand why Ms. Hopkins would choose that kind of object. The protagonist's difficulty in comprehending the woman increases when she says *I thought it was appropriate*.

The illocutionary force of the line is ambiguous. It is difficult to understand, in fact, whether Ms Hopkins is deeply happy for him or if she is ironically criticizing his hunger for success and social gratification. Due to its equivocal meaning, Mr. Delacroix' answer in the Italian version openly describes his confusion. Unable to decode the real illocutionary force of Ms. Hopkins' words, Mr. Delacroix explicitly asks her whether they were meant as a compliment.

In the English text Mr. Delacroix' perlocutionary act is more implicit.

## 6.2 Compliments implicitly addressed to the listener

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>How different?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>Impactful, cutting edge and of course <b>it will incorporate both of your very unique talents.</b></p> | <p>In che senso diverso?</p> <p>Creerà molte polemiche, sarà come un pugno nello stomaco e naturalmente <b>metterà in risalto il talento e la capacità di entrambi.</b></p> |
|--|---|

(29)

In example 29, the covert compliment revolves around the noun phrase *your very unique talents*. It means that the people being talked about are praised for their skills as stand-up comedians and tip-tap performers. The verbal texture of the utterance induced me to classify it as an implicit compliment because Ms. Hopkins, rather than directly expressing her positive opinion about the two street performers' abilities, includes her complimentary feeling within the description of the show. Unlike previous cases, the English positive comment is reinforced by the addition of the superlative form *very unique*, which has been omitted from the Italian version.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Gentlemen, please, have a seat.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>How you doin', guys?<br/><b>Are these my two little stars sitting in front of me?</b> Mantan?</p> <p>MANRAY:<br/>That's me. I always wanted to be on TV.</p> | <p>Ragazzi accomodatevi, mettevi seduti.</p> <p>Come va ragazzi?<br/><b>Chi di voi due e la stella dello spettacolo?</b><br/>Chi di voi due è Mantan?</p> <p>Eccomi. Sono io, ho sempre sognato la TV.</p> |
|---|--|

(30)

This is another case of implicit compliment made by substituting the subject with the noun phrase *my two little stars*. The expression is faithfully maintained in the second lingua-cultural context, where the metaphor is commonly accepted. The argumentative path of the two texts, however, differs considerably.

The Italian translation clearly focuses on Manray, the person who will become the protagonist of the minstrel show, while the original text implicitly addresses both characters.

As a result, the illocutionary force of the Italian version does not mirror the original.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| DUNWITTY:<br>What are their character traits?              | Quali sono le loro peculiarità?                                  |
| DELACROIX:<br>Ignorant. Dull-witted. Lazy. And unlucky!    | Sono ignoranti, duri di comprendonio, sfaticati e ultra-sfigati. |
| DUNWITTY:<br><b>Exactly. Exactly what I'm lookin' for.</b> | <b>Fantastico, è esattamente quello che volevo.</b>              |

(31)

A brief description of the scene will help to understand and analyse example 31. With the help of his personal assistant Sloan Hopkins, Pierre Delacroix decides to launch a new programme on television, whose main characters are two African American stand-up comedians. The show includes black actors with black faces performing racist and offensive sketches. In this scene, the show creator presents his project to Mr. Dunwitty, who enthusiastically endorses it. The characters of the new minstrel show are created on the basis of traditional stereotypes generally associated with blacks and are therefore, as Mr. Delacroix explains, *ignorant, dull-witted, lazy and unlucky*. Mr. Dunwitty's reaction is diametrically not what the viewers expect to see because he is actually delighted with the characters' features instead of being offended by the explicit racist references.

This is why I have classified Mr. Dunwitty's last line as a compliment to the author's work, even though the expression of praise is covertly signalled. In the dubbed version, however, the positive remark is more obvious.

The verb tense makes the two versions partially different: the *present progressive* tense in the original text indicates an ongoing action at the present time, while the use of Italian *imperfetto indicativo* is more linked to their previous

meeting where the head of the CNS asked Mr. Delacroix for new ideas to increase TV ratings.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>SLOAN:<br/>I'm gonna trust you know what you're doing, Pierre.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/><b>That's my little lamb.</b></p> | <p>Mi auguro che tu sappia quello che stai facendo Pierre.</p> <p>Grazie per il tuo sostegno mia cara</p> |
|---|---|

(32)

As already explained in example 4, the term *lamb* implies a semantically positive content depicting a cool person.

Unlike the first case, I have included the line in this category because the illocutionary force is more covert. The complimentary remark is again addressed to the same complimentee but Mr. Delacroix' appreciation of Ms. Hopkins' behaviour remains hidden.

In the Italian version Mr. Delacroix' intention is overt and the illocutionary force changes. The indirect expressive speech act no longer includes a compliment because Mr. Delacroix wants to thank his interlocutor.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>What's the name of this show? We need something to sell.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>"Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show!"</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>"Mantan: The New Millennium..."<br/><b>I really, really like this.</b><br/><b>I'm gettin' a boner. The Swanson Johnson is getting hard.</b><br/>You know what I'm saying? <b>I'm feelin' this shit.</b><br/><b>I like this.</b> No, give me more.</p> | <p>D'accordo mi piace, come si chiamerà lo show? Lo sa che dobbiamo colpire il pubblico</p> <p>"Mantan, il nuovo Minstrel Show del nuovo Millennio".</p> <p>Mantan, il nuovo minstrel show... <b>mi piace da impazzire.</b><br/><b>Mi piace talmente tanto che ho avuto un erezione.</b><br/><b>Davvero... non sto scherzando il mio amico è diventato duro, mi piace la sua idea, adoro la sua idea. E' fantastica! E' fantastica!</b> continui ad esplorarla.. avanti continui</p> |
|--|--|

(33)

In example 33, we find yet another compliment that is obtained by a sort of comparison between job satisfaction and sexual pleasure.

Mr. Dunwitty expresses his approval of the title that Mr. Delacroix has found for the new minstrel show. I have classified the example in this category because, even though Mr. Dunwitty clearly refers to the show, the speaker's implicit intention is to praise his author's creative skills.

As we can see from Mr. Dunwitty's words, the first instance of praise is explicit and overt.

In fact, according to Wolfson and Manes (1980), the syntactic structure of the sentence *I really like that* is one of the most common patterns used by English speakers to express their appreciation of something. Similar to this, the utterances *I'm feelin' this shit* and *I like this* again show the character's enthusiasm for the idea.

In the dubbed version, both instances are faithfully translated in order to provide the same illocutionary force. Due to the lack of a similar affirmative expression, *I'm feelin' this shit* has been substituted with the positive, twice-repeated comment *è fantastica*.

As already mentioned earlier, this is the only example found in the corpus in which an overt allusion to the male sexual sphere is included in both versions. To make his praise clearer, Mr. Dunwitty tells Mr. Delacroix he is sexually excited.

From a more linguistic point of view, the register used in the English version is more vulgar. The expression *to get a boner* is, in fact, generally used in informal contexts to describe an erection. The target version, however, offers a more formal expression using the term *erezione*. In both texts, Mr. Dunwitty's taboo image is strengthened by the inclusion of a second instance in which he informally describes his sexual organ.

While in the Italian text the term penis is substituted by the general noun phrase *il mio amico*, the term *Swanson Johnson* is a typical expression used in African American lingua-cultural environments to refer to something unknown. In actual fact, both solutions are clearly understood by viewers.

What is interesting to note is the inclusion of a rhetoric question in the source text used by the speaker to help listeners understand the illocutionary force of

his words, suggesting how his satisfaction is then connected to the sexual context.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>How about Honeycutt?<br/>Topsy? Rastus? Little Nigger Jim? And Sambo?<br/>And I would be remiss to not mention Aunt Jemima.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Aunt Jemima's gonna rock the doo-rag, right?<br/><b>This is gonna be crazy shit. We're gonna hit 'em with the bomb-diggity on this one.</b><br/>Now, what's the setting?</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>The projects.</p> | <p>Avremo, Honeycutt, Topsy, Rastus, il negretto Jim, e Sambo. E poi naturalmente avremo la mitica zia Gemina.</p> <p>Scommetto che la zia Gemina si scatenerà nel ballo... sarà da morire dal ridere, sarà l'evento dell'anno. Sbaraglieremo la concorrenza. E mi dica, dove sarà ambientato?</p> <p>Nella periferia degradata.</p> |
|---|--|

(34)

Initially, after a first reading of this extract Mr. Dunwitty's utterances were not classified as expressive speech acts.

On closer analysis, however, the speaker's intention to pay Mr. Delacroix's creative skills a compliment seemed more likely. Although there are no explicit positive comments about the author's work, the utterance *This gonna be crazy shit* and the expression *the bob-diggity* describe Mr. Dunwitty's approbation of Mr. Delacroix' idea.

As seen in previous cases, the term *shit* is used here to depict the new Aunt Jemina character as someone cool and funny. Similarly, the expression (the) *bomb-diggity* is generally used in the black community to refer to the most beautiful thing ever.

In this case too, the lingua-cultural traits implicitly conveyed by the inclusion of typically African American slang expressions are lost because the Italian linguistic code does not have any similar solutions.

This consideration can also apply to the previous sentence in which the expression *rock the doo-rag* refers to African American cultural heritage. A do-rags is a type of bandana made of various fabrics and generally worn to cover the head. African descendants were already using them at the beginning of the XIX century and African Americans continued to do so throughout the XX

century. It is, in fact, a popular belief, that these head coverings are part of the black style.

In the Italian version the illocutionary force of the two utterances is more ambiguous than the English one. Mr. Dunwitty's positive comment is more centred on the minstrel show and its original and hilarious nature.

### 6.3 Compliments addressed to a third party

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>SLOAN:<br/>Really? Wow.<br/>You never had any formal training, either, have you?</p> <p>MANRAY:<br/>Not really. <b>I picked up some steps from older cats.</b> Slyde, Chaney. But, you know, most of the stuff, yeah.</p> | <p>Sul serio? E non hai neanche mai frequentato una scuola di ballo, vero?</p> <p>Si si è vero, ho imparato i primi passi guardando i vecchi film e ho provato a rifarli. È tutto qui, mi piace ballare!</p> |
|--|--|

(35)

In this case the speaker refers to older tip-tap dancers. As in the previous example, the compliment is created by the term *cats* and refers to jazz music devotees.

The implicit positive comment is lost in the dubbed version.

In the English version, Manray mentions two illustrious names: Jimmy Slyde and Lon Chaney. The former, known as *the King of Slide*, was a world-famous African American tap dancer who became popular in the 50s and invented a tap style mixed with jazz. The latter was a tap dancer who took part in the production *Black and Blue* (a musical celebrating black culture, performed between the 80s and the 90s).

Any reference to African American tap performers does not appear in the dubbed version where Manray only refers to old films. The target-oriented translation approach is meant to favour the general meaning of the speaker's words, rather than to focus on specific tap dancers that the Italian audience will hardly have heard of.

In doing so, the cultural allusion to the history of tip-tap and jazz is lost.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Now, I know you are familiar with minstrel shows. They came about in the 1840s. It was a variety show in which the talent was singing, dancing, telling jokes, doing skits...</p> | <p>Beh, immagino sappia cos'erano i minstrel show, nacquero mi pare nel 1840. erano dei varietà in cui i protagonisti cantavano, ballavano, raccontavano barzellette e, anche</p> |
|---|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| like "In Living Color".<br><br>DUNWITTY:<br>Right, <b>that was dope.</b> | se neri, si dipingevano la faccia di nero fumo.<br><br>Già già <b>erano forti.</b> |
|--|--|

(36)

Among its various meanings, *That's dope* is an exclamation of approbation commonly used in the African American language. The adjective *dope* describes something extremely *cool*, exiting, new or good, and it can refer to several semantic fields such as music, clothes, and people.

In example 36, Mr. Delacroix is explaining the main features of minstrel shows focusing on their characters. An interesting point is that, in the dubbed version, the reference to *In Living Color*<sup>47</sup> is cut to explain that black artists used to perform in blackface make-up.

A free translation strategy is needed here so that the target audience can understand what minstrel shows were. Mentioning *In the Living Color* would probably have no meaning because most Italian viewers are not familiar with this sketch comedy television series.

Mr. Dunwitty expresses his admiration of traditional American entertainment and, in particular, of the actors taking part of them. The Italian version closely follows the original, offering an adapted expression which faithfully reproduces the illocutionary force of the original.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DELACROIX:<br>I ask you, when was the last time there was a great variety show on the air? Carol Burnett? | E ora signor Dunwitty le chiedo, qual è stata l'ultima persona che ha fatto un grande spettacolo di varietà? Carol Burnett? |
| DUNWITTY:<br><b>Carol was the bomb, yo.</b>   | <b>Carol era una bomba!</b>   |

(37)

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<sup>47</sup>Run on Fox network between 1990 and 1994, *In Living Color* was an American sketch comedy television series that "took irreverence to new heights with skits that were sometimes outrageous, sometimes fresh, and often inventive, fast-moving and clever. Enlivened by Black sensibility with a talented group of newcomers that included Damon Wayans, Kim Coles, and Jim Carrey, *In Living Color* also sometimes played with or parodied stereotypes and racial misconceptions" (Bogle 2001: 376).

Unlike the previous case, example 37 shows a compliment that is achieved by using a metaphor.

Born in 1933, Carol Burnett was a popular American actress and star of *The Carol Burnett Show* from 1967 to 1978. It was a TV show which included dance, song and comedy sketches.

The compliment is addressed to the woman. The positive connotation comes from the use of *the bomb* – faithfully translated *una bomba*. The metaphor is commonly used by both source and target language speakers and usually describes something excellent. In both versions the compliment aims at highlighting Carol Burnett’s creative skills.

The English line finishes with the typically African American expression *yo* which is a declarative or imperative exclamation. This lingua-cultural trait is lost in the dubbed version.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DELACROIX:<br>Well, <b>maybe it is...amusing.</b> | <b>Devo ammettere che è molto divertente!</b> |
|---|---|

(38)

With this line, Mr. Delacroix attributes a positive quality to the addressee, which, in the actual conversation, is the new minstrel show.

However, the real addressee of this positive comment is Mr. Delacroix’ himself. Unlike the previous example, here source and target texts pragmatically differ. The original utterance shows a high degree of uncertainty that is completely missing in the dubbed version where Mr. Delacroix’ positive remark about his show is reinforced by the addition of the adjective *molto*. The greatest discrepancy, however, lies in the substitution of the adverb *maybe* with the verbal phrase *devo ammettere*. In this situational context, the verb *dovere* is used to confirm and support Mr. Dunwitty’s original enthusiasm for a new anti-black and offensive TV programme. The source text, on the contrary, presents a man still consumed by doubt.

By not mirroring the original illocutionary force of the utterance, the Italian solution reduces the importance of Mr. Delacroix’ words within the whole filmic micro-cosmos. His comment could, in fact, be read as an open manifestation of his psychological turning point. When he realises how much people like the

show, the author decides to leave his principles aside and become what others want him to be. Such radical change will lead to the loss of his identity. The comment given in the original text may contribute to portraying his initial distrust of the minstrel show and give a general outline of his tormented psychological metamorphosis.

## 6.4 Compliments as insults

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>I'm doing good. <b>It's good to see your low sister working hard for the man on the plantation.</b></p> | <p><b>Ma quant'è brava la mia sorellina che sgobba come un cane per il padrone della piantagione.</b></p> |
|--|---|

(39)

Example 39 shows a case of what Bruti (2005) calls dishonest compliments. Although the sentence describes the woman as a hard-working assistant, the hidden illocutionary force aims at criticizing the woman's behaviour. Thinking that his sister is being brainwashed by Pierre Delacroix and CNS, Julius believes that she is letting her superiors exploit her. The dubbed version closely follows the original text and the allusion to a plantation is maintained. Only the word *man* is substituted with the term *padrone*.

The free translation approach makes the cultural reference more obvious. Julius' critique of Mr. Delacroix is also sharpened by the addition of the commonly used simile *sgobbare come un cane*.

In my opinion, the use of a more informal register was not used to reinforce the character's judgement, but rather to outline the linguistic variety he generally uses, which is peppered with slang expressions and swearwords.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Now, <b>I know that it may be hard for some of you...liberal-minded good white folks to write offensive material...</b> yet I want you to tap into your white angst.<br/>I want you to go back to the O.J. Simpson verdict.<br/>I want you to deal with those emotions.<br/>How did you feel How did you feel when the glove didn't fit?</p> | <p><b>Sono ben conscio del fatto che non sarà facile per voi giovani intellettuali bianchi colti e progressisti scrivere sceneggiature così offensive</b>, perciò io voglio che voi tiriate fuori la vostra rabbia di bianchi.<br/>Dovete rivivere la reazione che avete avuto quando OJ Simpson è stato assolto. Voglio che rivivate quello che avete provato, come vi siete sentiti quando il famoso guanto è risultato di una misura diversa.</p> |
|--|--|

(40)

As in the previous case, the speaker's intention is to criticize his interlocutors. The conversation takes place at the first occasion when Mr. Delacroix and the rest of the authors meet to discuss and write the screenplay of the first episode

of the TV programme. The protagonist realises he is the only black member of the team and he ironically defines other people as open-minded. To be properly understood, this overt critique must be contextualised in the socio-cultural landscape in which they are living.

Mr. Delacroix implicitly states that white Americans are still more influenced by the old stereotypes associated with African American than they superficially show and, therefore, they will have no problem in writing material that could be offensive to black people.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>MYRNA:<br/>Right. The best defense is offense.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Really? I thought it was the other way around.</p> | <p>Giusto! È la miglior difesa rimane l'attacco.</p> <p><b>Ma pensa lo diceva anche Emiliano Zapata.</b></p> |
|--|--|

(41)

Example 41 is one of the cases considered really ambiguous.

There are four characters in the scene: Mr. Dunwitty, Mr. Delacroix, Ms. Hopkins and a woman called Myrna Goldberg. The woman has been hired by Mr. Dunwitty to handle every possible social unrest that the content of the show might cause. What Myrna explains is that the strategy called “offensive action” generally upsets the opposition and fosters the soldiers’ ability to directly harm. Mr. Delacroix, who has not yet surrendered to his newfound fame, by expressing his doubts shows that he finds Myrna’s solution senseless.

Contrary to expectations, the dubbed version offers a free translation which is very different from the original. The reference to the leading Mexican figure, Emiliano Zapata, seems rather superfluous.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Excuse me. Let's keep this above the belt.<br/>Show a little respect for this woman.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Yes. Continue, <b>O Great Niggerologist.</b><br/><b>Enlighten us.</b></p> | <p>Ehi, un momento, stai esagerando.<br/>Vediamo di abbassare un po' i toni!<br/>D'accordo? Parli con più rispetto alla signora.</p> <p>Certo (x2). <b>Continui insigne negrologista, la prego di illuminarci!</b></p> |
|---|--|

(42)

Mr. Delacroix's opinion of Ms. Goldfarb's methods eventually degenerates into a sharp critique of her ideas. The male character accuses her of considering black people only as a monolithic entity and he insults her.

After being reprimanded by his superior, Mr. Delacroix' communicative strategy changes and he makes an insincere compliment about Ms. Goldfarb's knowledge. He ironically shows his respect for her great knowledge about racism and anti-black attitudes.

The Italian text closely follows the original version offering a calque. The term *niggerologist* is translated with the Italian ad-hoc word *negrologista*.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>Trippin', man. I'm not drinkin' the Kool-Aid.</p> <p>MANRAY:<br/>You ain't drinkin'? What you mean?</p> <p>WOMACK:<br/>Like Jim Jones. I'm not drinkin' the Kool-Aid.</p> | <p><b>Il grande coreografo!</b> Io non mi voglio suicidare amico!</p> <p>Ma di che parli? Suicidare?</p> <p>Esatto! Posso anche essere un gran coglione, ma non voglio suicidarmi!</p> |
|--|--|

(43)

In the example above, the source and the target texts differ considerably and the dishonest compliment is, in fact, only offered in the dubbed version.

The original script follows a different argumentative path. The first thing that Womack's says to Manray is *trippin'* (the first personal pronoun *I* and the auxiliary verb *am* are omitted) which means that he is planning to leave his job. He then adds that he is not going to become a *Kool-Aid drinker*. This noun phrase is metaphorically used by Americans to describe a person who gullibly believes everything other people tell him.

As Moore (2003) points out, the expression *drinking the Kool-Aid* has been in the American lingua-cultural panorama since the Jonestown tragedy in 1978, where more than 900 members of the Peoples Temple religious organisation committed suicide after drinking something similar to Kool-Aid. It was assumed that the liquid contained drugs. The reference is made clearer by the speaker himself, who specifies that he has no intention of following in Jim Jones'

footsteps. The latter was the founder and leader of the aforementioned American religious congregation.

This monocultural reference, as Pedersen (2005) would call it, has not been translated in the dubbed version where a free translation has been opted for. The key-theme remains that of suicide but Womack just talks about his decision to leave.

He addresses Manray calling him *the great choreographer*. As in previous cases, although the speaker is apparently expressing his admiration for his friend's artistic skills, the illocutionary force of the utterance reveals his offensive purpose. Womack ironically praises Manray's qualities in order to criticise his egocentric and unpleasant behaviour.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Come on, You're a bright young man.<br/>How do you think she got the gig in the first place?</p> | <p>Andiamo, tu sei un giovanotto intelligente, come pensi che abbia avuto il lavoro di assistente?</p>                   |
| <p>MANRAY:<br/>No</p>  | <p>No</p>  |
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Yes I hate to burst your bubble, <b>Mantan the Marvellous</b> but Sloan is an opportunist.</p>   | <p>Si, detesto fare a pezzi le tue illusioni <b>Mantan il meraviglioso</b> ma Sloan è solo una piccola opportunista.</p> |

(44)

*Mantan the Marvellous* is an expression used by the protagonist to mock the addressee. Mr. Delacroix ironically addresses Manray highlighting his newfound egocentric behaviour. Influenced by the success of the show, the black performer becomes even more centred on himself, abandoning his insecure and humble manners.

This expression, therefore, hides a comment that is anything but positive.

## 7 Insults in Bamboozled

Contrary to the previous section where forty-four expressions of approbation and praise were reported and analysed, this chapter presents forty-four expressive speech acts, whose illocutionary force is offensive and insulting.

The number of insults and derogatory statements included in this part refers to every offensive expression uttered by the characters throughout the film and does not depend on their pragmatic relevance.

As in the previous section, every example has been numbered and classified according to its linguistic and pragmatic nature.

In the opinion that the comparative analysis of both source and target versions is also essential in this chapter, a brief but detailed explanation has been added for every expressive speech act in order to discuss the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic differences that arise through translation.

As in the case of complimentary speech acts, four categories emerge:

1. Insults explicitly addressed to the listener
2. Insults implicitly addressed to the listener
3. Insults addressed to a third party
4. Insults as compliments.

Given the multi-faceted nature of insulting expressions and derogatory terms and the difficulty in understanding and capturing their illocutionary force, this classification aims at making the analysis clearer by offering a fixed super-structure in which every extract taken from the entire script is classified according to the essential relationship between the speaker and his/her addressee. In the first category, the speaker directly interacts with the listener, to whom the comment is directly aimed.

The second category includes every insulting expression that is indirectly aimed at the person who is listening. These expressive speech acts are generally more covert or hidden behind the literal meaning of the words.

The third group includes all the insulting comments addressed to a person other than the listener.

Lastly, all the dishonest insults are reported in the fourth category.

In actual fact, many of the examples included in the chapter only find their pragmatic meaning, as well as their uniqueness, if they are not detached from the socio-cultural and situational context in which they are spoken.

Therefore, whenever the need for a deeper understanding of the expressive illocutionary force arises, a concise description of the scene has been added.

Moreover, the offensive comments uttered by the fictitious characters very often refer to the American panorama outside Spike Lee's filmic production.

Therefore, several references to the U.S. socio-cultural and historical background have been included to allow readers (and viewers) to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and the value of the particular expressive speech acts undergoing analysis.

## 7.1 Insults explicitly addressed to the listener

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|---|---|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>         You're telling me that everyone in the room knew about this little get-together except for you.<br/>         People, you can attempt to pull a Rodman like our friend Delacroix but I guarantee you'll be sent packing just like him.<br/>         These are the ratings, people. Read 'em and weep.<br/>         As you can plainly see the Continental Network System is languishing. Look at 'em, people. Look at 'em very closely.<br/> <b>We are booty, caca. We are doo-doo.</b><br/>         I don't like to be the laughing stock of the entire broadcast industry. I don't like to have these pricks who call themselves my bosses breathing down my back.<br/>         It makes me sweat.<br/>         These numbers are totally unacceptable.<br/>         These numbers have to go up.<br/>         Question.</p> | <p>Quindi mi sta dicendo che tutti gli autori presenti sapevano della riunione odierna tranne lei...<br/>         È inutile che si arrampichi sugli specchi mio carissimo Delacroix, faccia in modo che questo sia il suo primo e ultimo ritardo.<br/>         Quelli sono i dati d'ascolto gente. Leggeteli e piangete. Come potete ben vedere la Continental Network system sta languendo. Osservate quei dati.<br/>         Osservateli con molta attenzione.<br/> <b>Siamo alla frutta, nella cacca e fino al collo</b><br/>         Io non ho intenzione di diventare lo zimbello dell'intera industria televisiva. E detesto che quegli stronzi dei piani superiori mi respirino sul collo perché questo mi rende nervoso. Quei dati sono decisamente inaccettabili. I dati d'ascolto devono salire.<br/>         Chieda pure..</p> |
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(45)

Although the illocutionary force of both the source and target languages is basically the same, the two sentences differ linguistically. Mr. Dunwitty's original affirmative clause is composed of three metaphors that are semantically very similar: *booty* is used in informal contexts to indicate the female posterior; *caca* is generally used to allude to something of bad quality, and *doo-doo* is a childish term referring to fecal matter. In other contexts, the latter expression is a vulgar synonym for the female behind. The speaker, therefore, is directly insulting his audience, portraying them as incapable individuals.

The dubbed version, by using three colloquial expressions typical of Italian informal settings, reduces the intensity of the offensive English exclamations. The offensive degree is additionally weakened by the fact that Italian speakers use the expressions *essere alla frutta* and *essere nella cacca (fino al collo)* when they are in trouble or have to face a great problem from which there seems to be no way out.

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| DUNWITTY:<br>Oh, really?<br><b>Nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger.</b> | <b>Negro, negro, negro, negro!</b>          |
| DELACROIX:<br><b>Whitey, whitey, whitey, whitey!</b>               | <b>Lurido bianchetto figlia di puttana!</b> |

(46)

Example 45 shows two of the most common racial insults used by Spike Lee's characters. In actual fact, the first offensive statement is hurled at Mr. Delacroix, while the second one is addressed to his opponent Mr. Dunwitty.

Being African American, the protagonist feels offended by his interlocutor's non-stop use of the word *nigger*. As in other films<sup>48</sup>, Spike Lee sheds light on the atavistic opposition between white and black people, whose skin color is linguistically exploited to stress the difference between the two communities. The term *nigger*, faithfully translated into Italian as *negro*, is generally used with a derogatory connotation referring to all those citizens who are of African American origin. This racial insult is a disparaging expression used by white people to describe blacks as lazy, ignorant, buffoonish and uneducated. As Green (1993: 265) explains, the term *nigger* derives from its predecessor *negro* (whose roots developed in the mid-sixteenth century) and it was first used in Britain in the late XIX century<sup>49</sup>. It then crossed the Atlantic Ocean to become a derogatory word used to refer to black people.

Being considered one of the most racist expressions of the contemporary age, whether the speaker is black or not, the use of the term has been banned from most TV programmes and other forms of entertainment and is referred to as the *n-word*, if necessary.

On the other hand, the term *whitey* is also an offensive expression generally used by African Americans to refer to white people.

By choosing a target-oriented translation, the dubbed version partly differs from the original. In fact, due to the different socio-cultural backgrounds in which the viewers live, the offensive expression uttered by Mr. Delacroix is rendered as *lurido bianchetto figlio di puttana* with similar aggressive tones.

<sup>48</sup> *Get on the Bus* (1996) and *Jungle Fever* (1991) among them.

<sup>49</sup> According to Menken ([1919] 1936: 296), the Oxford Dictionary's first example of *nigger* is dated 1786.

With these words, spectators can roughly understand the racial implications of the term *whitey*. The Italian derogatory expression can be considered as compensation for the loss of the racial insult in the target language.

Unlike the English lines, however, the Italian solution loses its original rhythmic aspect given by the mirror repetition of both insults.

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Oh, really? No one gave them a chance?<br/><b>You got your head stuck so far up your ass with your Harvard education and bushy pretentious buppy ways.</b><br/>Brother man, <b>I'm blacker than you.</b><br/>I'm keeping it real. I'm 'bout it, 'bout it.<br/>I got the roll.<br/><b>You're just frontin' tryin' to be white.</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>I'm an Aryan. A sellout. Because I don't aspire to do some "Homeboys from Outer Space", "The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer" or, as you may put it, some nigger show?<br/>Is that what you think?</p> | <p>A davvero? Quindi sarebbe tutta colpa delle rete eh?<br/><b>Lasci da parte per un attimo l'atteggiamento supponente che ha imparato ad Harvard e i suoi modi raffinati da negro che ha fatto carriera.</b><br/>Fratello, <b>io sono più nero di lei.</b><br/>So come la pensano i neri, conosco il loro mondo.. so che cosa vogliono... <b>lei invece ragiona come un bianco.</b></p> <p>Quindi sono un venduto? Un traditore della razza solo perché non intendo scrivere soggetti che trattano di piccoli delinquenti di quartiere, o di un maggiordomo nero alla Casa Bianca, o perché mi rifiuto di scrivere uno spettacolo per negri. Allora è questo che pensa?</p> |
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(47)

Example 46 is a direct insult hurled at the protagonist of the film. The slangy and vulgar quality of his offensive declaration has not been preserved in the dubbing where Mr. Dunwitty's tone is more polite. Despite the lack of vulgarity, however, the same pragmatic value is maintained in the dubbed version, in which the interlocutor is accused of *behaving too white*. The way in which Mr. Dunwitty addresses Mr. Delacroix shows their different working position, highlighting his superiority.

For the source audience, Mr. Dunwitty's negative remark takes shape through the use of slang expressions. In fact, Mr. Dunwitty classifies his behaviour as *bushy*, which is generally used to refer to people who do something stupid. As the word itself suggests, the expression has been coined by rearranging the surname of 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. In the African American panorama, George W. Bush is considered as an example of a man acting without thinking about possible consequences.

Moreover, the inclusion of the adjective *buppy* makes Mr. Dunwitty's opinion even clearer since he believes that Mr. Delacroix's behaviour is also childish and whimsical.

The Italian translation differs slightly by offering an offensive critique whose pragmatic value shifts from an originally neutral provocation to a more racially explicit offence. The black character is, in fact, not only judged to be too presumptuous, but the insult also becomes racial when his identity as an African American is offended. Implicitly, in fact, Mr. Dunwitty represents in general white people's reluctance to accept that blacks can have respectable social and working positions.

Mr. Dunwitty's offensive attitude goes on into the next sentence in which he states to be more black than the African American addressee himself. From a linguistic perspective, this affirmative clause does not contain any insulting terminology, but the illocutionary force within it aims explicitly at insulting Mr. Delacroix, who sees himself deprived of his own identity and cultural heritage.

The black character's face, both in the source and target language, is again attacked when his counterpart accuses him of wanting to be white. Therefore, in view of the ineradicable clash between white and black Americans, Mr. Delacroix is considered a traitor to his race.

The discrepancy between the two versions in Mr. Delacroix's answer is relevant as well. The term *Aryan* is excluded from the translation. This decision of the translators has to do with the popular connotation that the term has gained in the target socio-cultural background. Although for American speakers, the adjective *Aryan* is commonly used to refer to white individuals, the same word in the Italian context loses its neutral ethno-linguistic classification and is generally associated with anti-Semitism in the Nazi doctrine. The European historical reference has therefore been neutralized to leave room for a more general definition.

Together with this free translation, two more monoculture-specific allusions are also lost. *Homeboys in Outer Space* and *The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer* are, in fact, included in the adaptation. The former was an American fantasy sitcom that aired in 1996 and 1997 while the latter aired the following year on

UPN but, because of its controversial themes linked to African American history and slavery, it was cancelled after only a few episodes.

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| <p>SLOAN:<br/>Please stop.<br/>Golly day, <b>you sound stupid. You sound Retarded.</b></p> | <p>La vuoi piantare? Per favore piantala.<br/><b>Sei troppo stupido Julius. Parli come un ritardato.</b></p> |
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(48)

The case above offers an example of a direct insult hurled at the interlocutor. In the actual conversation, Ms. Hopkins is referring to her brother Julius. Of all the cases analysed, this is probably one of the simplest to consider because the illocutionary force of the original text is clear and can be easily reported in the second version. Terms such as *stupid* and *retarded* find their equivalents in the target language, where the linguistic similarity of the adjectives *stupido* and *ritardato* goes hand in hand with their semantic meaning. The Italian version, however, presents a possible translation error in the first sentence. The verb *to sound*, in fact, is used here as a synonym of *to seem* or *to give the impression*. In the Italian version, the pragmatic value of the comment changes because Ms. Hopkins' words give a sharper insult. On the contrary, in the second sentence, the meaning of the verb is maintained by the commonly accepted simile *parli come un [noun]*.

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| <p>SLOAN:<br/>Let me put it to you like this.<br/>If I ever decide to do like Brooklyn public television...Show.<br/>I'll call you, but until then...<br/>I am not taking you to my new job...<br/>where I am on the rise...<br/>and have you and your crew blow up my spot.</p> <p>JULIUS:<br/>How is that blowin' up your shit?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/><b>Y'all are embarrassing. Period.</b></p> | <p>Vediamo se riesci a capire... se un giorno io decidessi di produrre uno show che vedrebbe solo la gente di Brooklin ti contatterei... ma fino a quel giorno non voglio vedere te e i tuoi amici nel mio ambiente. Nel quale mi sto facendo una posizione. Perché non voglio che tu e il tuo gruppo mandiate all'aria la mia carriera.</p> <p>E come mandiamo all'aria la tua carriera?</p> <p><b>Mettendomi in grande imbarazzo... riesci a capirlo?</b></p> |
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(49)

Unlike example 47, the dubbed version in this case is weakened.

Although in the original version the female character accuses her brother and his crew of being embarrassing and there are no half-measures in her words, in the Italian text the focal point is partly shifted from Mau Mau members to Ms. Hopkins herself. The pragmatic value of this negative comment turns from an objective to a more subjective function. In the second version, in fact, it is no longer Julius' crew that are impartially embarrassing, but it is Sloan Hopkins herself who seems to feel uncomfortable in introducing them to Mr. Delacroix. Again the slang expression *period*, which is generally used by African American as a punctuation mark signifying the end of a sentence, is lost in the dubbed version.

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| JULIUS:<br>We're embarrassing?           | Mettendoti in imbarazzo...                           |
| SLOAN:<br>Y'all ignorant. Y'all ign'ant. | <b>Perché siete ignoranti... perché siete rozzi.</b> |

(50)

In example 49, the target language conforms to the source text.

Ms. Hopkins' insult is frank and targeted. In English, the offence revolves around the term *ignorant*, which is faithfully reported in the second version.

As in the original lingua-cultural background, this word is neutrally used to describe someone having the lack of knowledge whereas, in this kind of situational context, *ignorant* becomes synonymous of *stupid* or *dumb*. Both source and target societies have given this term a bad surplus connotation.

In the dubbed version, however, the negative remark is sharpened by the inclusion of the second term *rozzo*, which gives the utterance yet further illocutionary force. The repetition of the original text is ignored to leave room for the explanation of the insult itself.

Unlike the English version, Ms. Hopkins specifies the reason why she considers Mau Maus ignorant: they are rude and vulgar.

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| WOMACK:<br><b>Motherfucker, you light-skinned.</b> You gonna listen - | <b>Ma tu hai la pelle chiara deficiente,</b> perché dovresti - |
|---|--|

(51)

“Probably the ultimate in obscenities”<sup>50</sup> *motherfucker* is a common insult in African American English. Literally, the term refers to the oldest taboo known to humankind: a mother-son incestuous relationship. In more common contexts, however, the word is used in a derogative and offensive way without really considering its literal meaning.

In actual fact, once Manray lightly agrees to painting his face black, the speaker expresses his displeasure by insulting his working partner. Failing to provide a similar term, the Italian version substitutes Black US slang with another offensive word. Although the expression *deficiente* does not reproduce the meaning of the original, it helps to convey its illocutionary force.

The same metaphorical path is, therefore, pursued in the dubbed version.

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| DELACROIX:<br>I'd like to begin this meeting by saying I am a fair person.<br>A straight shooter. I do not hold my tongue.<br>So I must tell you this, that I had nothing to do with any of you being hired.<br>If I had my druthers there'd be at least one Negro writer in this room and <b>that afro does not qualify you, my Jewish friend.</b><br>Having said that, I would like to open the floor to some of your questions and comments. | Voglio dare inizio a questa riunione dicendovi che io sono una persona leale, una persona sincera. Non sono uno che ha peli sulla lingua. Perciò è mio dovere dirvi che non sono stato interpellato riguardo l'assunzione di nessuno dei presenti. Se fossi stato interpellato ci sarebbe almeno un autore di colore in questa stanza e <b>quella pettinatura afro non ti qualifica come negro, mio caro ebreo.</b><br>Esaurita questa breve premessa gradirei molto sentire le vostre domande e i vostri commenti. |
|---|---|

(52)

Unlike previously analysed examples, this one is the most complex from a pragmatic point of view. The verbal texture of the utterance, in fact, initially induced me to not classify it as an insult. However, the situational context reveals that the sentence is being used provocatively. There is no explicitly

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<sup>50</sup> Green J., *Slang Down the Ages. The Historical Development of Slang*, London, Kyle Cathie Limited, 1993, p. 133.

offensive element, but the content of the lines in both languages confirms a hidden illocutionary force, mainly linked here to the emotional sphere. In the actual scene, Mr. Delacroix is visibly annoyed with his team of screenwriters because he is the only black component.

So, to his great disappointment, he publicly explains that he was not asked to select any of them. Seeing a white man with an Afro hairstyle in the room, he feels the need to specify that physical aspect is not enough to act, to behave or to be an African American.

His aggressive tone is reinforced by the vocative *my Jewish friend*. Although generally loaded with negative stereotypical meanings<sup>51</sup>, the speaker used the term *Jewish* here to express his displeasure. He only alludes to the color of his interlocutor's skin. The same metaphorical path is adopted in the Italian version. The perlocutionary force of the expression, however, can change. In the target lingua-cultural panorama the term is not generally used without its ethnic implications. *Ebreo* describes a stingy, greedy and uncharitable person.

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| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>For the love of Mary and Joseph!<br/>I will not be held responsible for these revisions.<br/>These changes are not the way I want to go with this show.<br/>This is an outrage, a sham, a violation a debacle, a mockery.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Will you just calm down, please?</p> <p>JUKKA:<br/>In Finland, we get upset -</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/><b>I don't give a good goddamn what they do in Finland Sweden, Norway, or wherever the hell your young, dumb, blond white ass is from.</b></p> | <p>Per tutti i santi e gli angeli del paradiso!<br/>Non voglio essere ritenuto responsabile di queste revisioni. Questi cambiamenti alterano completamente lo spirito del mio show. Lo ritengo un oltraggio, una vergogna, una vera indecenza. Non è più satira ma comicità di bassa lega.</p> <p>Le dispiacerebbe calmare i suoi bollenti spiriti?</p> <p>In Finlandia questo genere di comicità -</p> <p><b>Non mi interessa un accidente di quello che fanno in Finlandia, Svezia, Norvegia o in qualsiasi posto abitato da bianchi idioti con la puzza sotto il naso.</b></p> |
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<sup>51</sup> Green (1993) explains that “in slang Jew as a noun and a verb is based on the primary racial stereotype (other than that of “killing Christ”): that of grasping miserliness and of exorbitant usury. In neither case need the term apply to an actually religious Jew. Thus a jew (17C) is a mean person, a skinflint while *to jew* or *to jew down* is to cheat financially” (p.276).

In this case the protagonist of the film is referring to Mr. Jukka, a Finnish producer who helps CNS. In the original text Mr. Delacroix' offensive comment is indirectly addressed to his interlocutor, while in the dubbed version the insult is in the third person. The content of the utterances changes too. In fact, in the Italian text the insult is weakened. The expression *wherever the hell your young, dumb, blond white ass is from* is substituted by a more general racial offence, in which white individuals are described as stupid and arrogant.

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| <p>MANRAY:<br/>Go ahead, man.<br/>Do what you want right now. I'm handling mines, man. Got a roof over my head.<br/><b>Fuckin' with you, we'd still be on the street.</b></p> <p>WOMACK:<br/>You calling me a cling-on? You been draggin' me? I been dead weight to you? Is that what I been?<br/>New millennium, huh?<br/>It's the same bullshit! Just done over. Same bullshit.<br/>Yassa, I...<br/><i>What you want me to do, massa?</i><br/><i>Anything for you, sir. I sang for you. I tap-dance for you, massa. I coon for you. Anything just to make you laugh, massa.</i><br/>Yassa.</p> | <p>Se vuoi andare, vattene!<br/>Fa quello che vuoi, è un problema tuo.<br/>Io devo pensare ai miei interessi, amico.<br/>Adesso ho soldi, ho successo, <b>tu eri buono solo a farmi ballare per le strade, maledizione!</b></p> <p>Stai dicendo che io non so fare niente, solo tu hai talento, che sono finito? È questo che hai sempre pensato?<br/>Il nuovo millennio, eh?<br/>Non è cambiato un accidente! È il solito giro della ruota, non cambierà mai un accidente!<br/><i>Si padrone, mi hai chiamato? Che cosa vuoi che faccio, padrone? Faccio tutto quello che vuoi. Vuoi che ti canti una canzone? Vuoi che balli il tip tap per te, padrone bianco. Posso fare il buffone per te, la cosa importante è tenerti allegro, padrone bianco. Sì, padrone, certo, padrone.</i></p> |
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In this scene the two street performers are quarrelling. Womack is accusing his interlocutor of being too self-confident and arrogant. According to the speaker, in fact, their new-found fame has negatively affected his best friend.

Manray feels offended by his working partner's comment and insults him by stating he is an untalented and shiftless man. Womack realises that Manray has lost faith in him when he is accused of being the cause of their previous unfortunate lifestyle.

What in the original version remains hidden is, however, better explained in the second version. In fact, even though both versions are pragmatically similar,

they do differ syntactically. The English version offers a conditional sentence (type 2), through which Manray explains that if he had kept on listening to Womack's advice, he would still be dancing on the streets. What is presented as a possibility in the original version is, on the contrary, given as evidence in the Italian text, where the use of the *imperfetto* indicates that the action already happened in the past.

It is interesting to note that the greatest discrepancy between source and target languages can be found in Womack's answer. Despite of the lack of an equivalent term for *cling-on*, which is an African American slang word to describe a loser, the speaker's vulgar and slangy register is omitted.

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| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Don't you give me none of this mumbo-jumbo bullshit because your hands are just as bloody as mine.<br/>I know where I made my big mistake.<br/><b>I should have never gotten romantically involved with the help.</b></p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>What did you just say?<br/>Nigger, did you just call me your help?<br/>Is that what you think of me?<br/>Let me tell you a thing or two about help Peerless Dothan...<br/>if you weren't so busy fucking Maryann, Sue, and Beth... <b>maybe you would have a little more stroke in your back.</b><br/><b>Now help that shit out.</b></p> | <p>Non usare con me quel tono da cavaliere senza macchia e senza paura, signorina Sloan, dal momento che le tue mani sono sporche di sangue quanto le mie! So qual è stato il mio più grosso sbaglio. <b>Non avrei mai dovuto avere una relazione sentimentale con una semplice dipendente.</b></p> <p>Scusa, come mi hai chiamata?<br/>Sbaglio o mi hai chiamato una semplice dipendente?<br/>È questo che pensi di me?<br/>Allora ti dirò un paio di cose su di te e sulle semplici dipendenti, grande capo!<br/>Se non ti fossi sprecato tanto a scopare Maryann, Sue e Beth, <b>forse quando venivi a letto con me avresti avuto un po' più di energia e non avresti fatto cilecca così spesso!</b></p> |
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(55)

In this case Mr. Delacroix' insult can only be fully understood by a deeper analysis of the situational context of the film. During this scene viewers learn that Pierre Delacroix and Sloan Hopkins had been lovers.

So, when the male character addresses his interlocutor as *the help*, it is clear that she sees this epithet as an insult. By using this definition, Mr. Delacroix offends his ex-girlfriend. Although there is no explicitly negative or derogatory element in his words, Ms Hopkins feels offended for two main reasons: first of all, he decries their intellectual and physical alchemy; secondly, he also

humbles her from a more professional perspective. As a matter of fact, she is more than a personal assistant. She always helps him whenever he is in trouble and guides him if necessary.

In answer to his offensive behaviour, Sloan Hopkins goes straight to the point by hurting his male pride. In both versions she accuses him of not being a good lover. As in other cases, the vulgar register is neutralized in the target version, preferring an informal but more polite vocabulary.

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| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Get out.<br/>Get the fuck out!</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>You know what?<br/><b>You are fucked up.</b> Look at that shit.<br/>That could help your sorry ass one day.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>I trust you can help yourself out.</p> | <p>Vattene!<br/>Vattene! Vattene dalla mia casa!</p> <p>La sai una cosa? <b>Sei un fottuto pezzo di merda!</b> Guarda questa cassetta, capirai come hanno sempre trattato la nostra gente</p> <p><b>Peccato che questo appartamento non abbia una porta di servizio.</b></p> |
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(56)

Example 55 shows a discrepancy between source and target text. In fact, the pragmatic value does not coincide. In African American English *being fucked up* means being physically, mentally or morally damaged. In this situational context, the expression is used to explicitly criticize the protagonist of the story and his transitional inability to rationally assess situations around him. Ms. Hopkins' negative comment is coherently linked to her subsequent admonition, through which she foresees the epilogue of the story. With the imperative clause *look at that shit*, the female character advises her interlocutor to watch a montage of racial and anti-black clips of African American characters from early Hollywood films. Her tape should persuade Mr. Delacroix to halt production of the show.

Because of his lack of rationality, he refuses to view the tape.

Unlike the English line, the dubbed version neutralizes its original illocutionary force and offers one of the most common insults uttered by Italian speakers. Ms Hopkins' insult, however, can only be understood here as the typical female

response of someone who has been classified as *the help*. Her pride wounded, she replies *sei un fottuto pezzo di merda!*

To backup this interpretation of their argument, Mr. Delacroix' last comment is coherently associated, because he is again ironic about Ms Hopkins' position. According to him, in fact, she should leave through the back door.

The source text, however, offers a more polite answer, which again reveals Mr. Delacroix' fierce determination not to listen to his assistant's warning.

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>         But you are finished. You're done.<br/>         Niggers like you are a dime-a-dozen. You think you're special? I'm going to slide Honeycutt right into your spot you fake-ass tap dance kid. Get him out of the building.<br/> <b>Ungrateful mother...</b><br/>         Let's go, Honeycutt.</p> | <p>Ma hai finito la tua carriera, sei licenziato!<br/>         Bello, di negri come te ne trovo quanti ne voglio!<br/>         Ti credi un artista? Metterò Honeycutt al posto del tuo numero di ballo!<br/>         Portatelo fuori dall'edificio!<br/> <b>Ingrato bastardo!</b><br/>         Torni in scena Honeycutt.</p> |
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(57)

As in example 50, there is no substantial difference between the languages in this case. The insult is faithfully reported in the target language, even if, as already pointed out, there is no equivalent term in the Italian language. The translators have therefore used the most suitable insult for the situational context.

A point of interest is the use of the US black slang expression *dime-a-dozen*, which describes something so common that its value is little or nothing. This negative comment, which could also be considered an insult, has been semantically faithfully translated.

Unfortunately, given the lack of an equivalent expression in the target language, the concept has been paraphrased.

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| <p>JULIUS:<br/> <b>You a dead, motherfucker.</b></p> <p>MANRAY:<br/>         What did I do, man?</p> | <p><b>Sei un uomo morto, figlio di puttana!</b></p> <p>E che cosa ho fatto di male?</p> |
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(58)

Form a pragmatic point of view, the two versions coincide.

The insult, *motherfucker*, is explicitly reported in the Italian text. In this example, however, the syntactic structure changes. The Italian version has a common pattern (Sbj+verb+noun), while the original text offers a different syntactic model, typical of the African American English language. The term *dead*, which is commonly classified as a qualificative adjective in Standard English, is used here as a noun. The noun compound is composed of the term, which is preceded by the specifier *a* (indefinite article). *Man*, the most likely noun after the adjective, is omitted here.

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| <p>DOBLE BLAK:<br/>No way we gonna be found out. You ain't even here.<br/><b>Motherfucker, you in cyberspace, man.</b></p> <p>JULIUS:<br/>This is gonna really boost your ratings.</p> | <p>Nessuno scoprirà da dove trasmettiamo, perché non saremo qui.<br/>La tua esecuzione sarà trasmessa via internet, amico.</p> <p>L'esecuzione farà salire la nostra popolarità.</p> |
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(59)

Unlike example 57, the two texts show several differences. First of all, the pragmatic value of the vocative case differs. The presence of two vocatives in the English version is reduced in the Italian, where the English insult *motherfucker* is neutralized. The aggressive and vulgar tone is therefore abandoned.

Moreover, the term *man*, through which the party is being addressed, is substituted by one of its Italian equivalents *amico*. Along with its denotative meaning, this word can also be used to refer to a person who is closely related to the speaker. However, considering that Mau Maus wants to kill Manray, the term here has an ironic connotation.

The dubbed lines are, moreover, deprived of any substandard feature. Both the slangy register and the syntactic pattern are sacrificed. In fact, the absence of the copula *be* in the phrase *you in cyberspace* becomes a future instance and the time of the perspective is rendered by the Italian tense known as *Futuro Anteriore*.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>Yo, we're live in five, four, three, two...<br/>We are now live in cyberspace.</p> <p>MO BLAK:<br/><b>Whereas Mantan is a Tom.</b></p> <p>DOUBLE BLAK:<br/><b>Whereas Mantan is a disgrace.</b></p> <p>SMOOTH BLAK:<br/><b>Whereas Mantan is a head-scratchin' foot-shufflin' Negro!</b></p> <p>MAU MAUS:<br/>Dancing fool is condemned to death.</p> <p>SMOOTH BLAK:<br/>He's a good Negro.</p> <p>MAU MAUS:<br/><b>See that bitch's dancing feet?</b><br/>Let's show you some real educated feet.<br/>Show us some of them fancy moves.</p> <p>SMOOTH BLAK:<br/>Get your ass up. Get that nigger up.<br/>Let him do some dancing for us.</p> <p>MAU MAUS:<br/>Get up on your feet, man.</p> | <p>Ci siamo fratelli. Cinque, quattro, tre, due, vai!</p> <p>Ora vi vogliamo spiegare perché odiamo quest'uomo.<br/><b>Lo odiamo perché Mantan è uno zio Tom.</b></p> <p>Si, <b>lo odiamo perché Mantan è una vergogna per tutti noi.</b></p> <p><b>Lo odiamo perché Mantan è una zucca vuota, perché balla come un frocio.</b></p> <p><b>Questo popone dei bianchi.</b></p> <p>Dovrà fare la danza della morte.</p> <p>Guarda che bei piedini.<br/>Oh, guarda come balla bene!<br/>Fa vedere a tutti come sai ballare!</p> <p>Forza! Alza il culo dalla sedia!</p> <p>Vogliamo vederti ballare!</p> |
|--|--|

(60)

In addition to their importance as expressive speech acts, the insults made in example 59 have specific meaning within their own lingua-cultural background. In the African American people's perception, accusing someone of being a Tom is one of the most offensive insults ever.

The expression *Uncle Tom* or *Tom*, in fact, is used by an African American speaker to accuse his/her black interlocutor of behaving like a white person. In general terms, those black individuals who are well-educated, have a good job and a good social position, are seen as traitors of their own race and, are therefore referred to as *Tom*.

In the actual argument in the film, the street performer is so defined because Julius' crew judges him guilty of having contributed to shaming the black community in front of white people. Manray is therefore being described as a source of embarrassment to African Americans.

By calling him a *head-scratching* and *foot-shuffling* Negro, he is doubly insulted. These two offensive expressions hurt both his mental and physical abilities. With the former they are accusing him of being dull-witted and with the latter, they offend his artistic value. Foot shuffle technique, in fact, is typical of tap dance. But here it is used with its disparaging value meaning people who slide their feet along the floor as they walk.

Although the slur term *negro* can also be used in the target language, the word preferred here by the experts is *frocio*. Belonging to different semantic areas, these insults seem to have nothing in common, but the Italian offensive word is full of prejudices, including the original term. Moreover, the metaphor in the dubbed version is based on the negative popular stereotype according to which male dancers are portrayed as effeminate and homosexual.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>MOOTH BLAK<br/>Dance for us!<br/>Showtime!</p> <p>JULIUS:<br/>You fucked up in the game now.</p> | <p>Avanti, forza! Balla per noi!<br/>Tu ami tanto ballare! È la tua ultima occasione!<br/><b>Balla, Cita, balla! Balla traditore!</b></p> <p>Hai finito di ballare per i bianchi.</p> |
|---|---|

(61)

Although the English version does not offer any expressive speech acts, the Italian text spices up the violent scene with two insults.

The first one, *Cita*, originally called *Cheeta*, refers to the chimpanzee character that appeared in several Hollywood Tarzan movies. The concept of the Manray-Cheeta parallelism comes from another Western negative stereotype which takes pleasure in describing African Americans as ape-like. It had been commonly accepted throughout the XX century when this racial association was based on the mainstream white assumption that blacks were primitive, rude and aggressive. As Lee Lott (1999: 14) explains, the negro-ape metaphor saw its spread in the 90s when Rodney King was brutally beaten by L.A. police, who defined black individuals as *gorillas*. The author later explained that “the metaphor satisfied the need to provide a biological justification of anti-black racism, and supplies a convenient rationale for the ongoing subordination of black people” (p.7).

As a consequence, dehumanising black individuals justifies black phobia and any form of violence against African American victims.

Manray is thus defined as a traitor, a person who has betrayed his own people.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>         Stop it! Stop it!<br/>         Stop it!<br/>         Stop it, I say!<br/>         Leave me alone!<br/>         Leave me alone!<br/>         Leave me alone!<br/> <b>Spear chuckers!</b><br/> <b>Get rid of these porch monkeys!</b><br/> <b>Jungle bunny!</b></p> | <p>Fermati!<br/>         Fermati!<br/>         Fermati!<br/>         Fermati ti ho detto!<br/>         Non mi tormentare.<br/>         Non mi tormentare.<br/>         Vi odio tutti, <b>maledetti bastardi!</b><br/> <b>Mami, lo schiavo dei campi, Bingo Bongo!</b></p> |
|--|---|

(62)

The phrase *spear chucker* is a derogatory expression which refers to African American individuals and their pre-historical ability to hunt animals with primitive tools, such as spears. The cultural value of the original insult is neutralized in the dubbed version, leaving room to a more colourless and tasteless offensive expression, typical of the Italian vocabulary.

Likewise, the original phrase *porch monkeys* is also lost in the Italian text. This expression also has a strong cultural relevance. It refers to African American people sitting on their porches all day, doing nothing and wasting their time. Again, the hidden illocutionary force suggests the popular stereotypes associating blacks with laziness.

*Monkeys*, as explained above, is a derogatory term comparing African Americans to apes.

The third insult, *jungle bunny*, is equally strong. Commonly addressed to male African Americans, the expression is composed of nouns. The term *jungle* has been used in the XX century to depict American life in cities. The second word, however, has been used to classify black people. African American-bunny parallelism has become popular for two reasons. Firstly, they were accused of hiding like scared animals and secondly, they were teased by white people about their ability to escape from the police. Like bunnies, speakers stated, African Americans can easily jump out of any window and run away.

The pragmatic value of the source and target versions differ. As already explained, the original text offers three different insults which, although not literally offensive, hark back to common negative stereotypes associated with blacks. They do, in fact, aim at hurting African American pride and identity.

On the other hand, since the original lingua-cultural aspect is impossible to translate into the target audience's language, the dubbed version mirrors Mr. Delacroix' aggressive tone and dissatisfaction with a common insult, which is then followed by a list of coon-themed antique collectibles owned by the story's protagonist. This explanation grows in importance in the target version in order to clarify the deep meaning that these objects have in African American settings. The original insults are, in fact, not directed towards human interlocutors, but to the black racist-themed items on display in Mr. Delacroix' office.

Collected throughout the development of the story, these caricatures of African Americans lose their meaning when he understands what he has created an anti-black and racist show that leading Manray's death.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>ONE-SIXTEENTH BLAK:<br/>         Why didn't you kill me?<br/>         I'm black! Why didn't you kill me?<br/>         I'm black! I'm black!<br/>         All it takes is one fucking drop of black blood!<br/>         Everyone thinks he's black!<br/>         Mau Maus!<br/>         You should've killed me.<br/>         You should've fucking killed me!<br/>         All it takes is one fucking drop of black blood,<br/> <b>motherfucker!</b><br/>         You're black!<br/> <b>Get the fuck off me!</b></p> | <p>Perché non mi avete ammazzato?<br/>         Perché non mi avete ammazzato?<br/>         Io sono nero! Perché non mi avete ammazzato? Sono nero! Sono nero!<br/>         Basta avere solo una goccia di sangue nero, sono nero per un sedicesimo!<br/>         Sono nero Sono nero!, perché?<br/>         Perché non mi avete ammazzato?<br/>         Dovevate ammazzare anche me!<br/>         Basta avere una sola goccia di sangue in corpo, <b>figli di puttana!</b><br/>         Sono nero. Sono nero!<br/> <b>Luridi bastardi!</b></p> |
|--|--|

(63)

The insult in example 62 is targeted and reciprocal.

*Motherfucker* is faithfully translated into the Italian language with *figli di puttana*, which, even if not semantically equivalent, represents the message that the original term wants to convey.

A further insult is added in the Italian version: *luridi bastardi* substitutes the final line *get the fuck off me*, whose illocutionary force is different from that of the

dubbed version. The phrasal verb, in fact, is generally used by a speaker to tell somebody to stop touching him/her or another person.

To better understand the illocutionary force that insults have, however, the situational context of the entire scene should be analysed. After Julius and his crew have murdered the street performer, the police find and kill them in turn. The Mau Mau group is totally annihilated with the exception of one: One-Sixteenth Black. Once the culprit is handcuffed, he harshly accuses the police of having spared his life because his skin is white. As easily inferable, his nickname mirrors his black percentage. The curtain opens, therefore, on a more complex scene where the real social situation is depicted and the police are explicitly accused of being racist and anti-back<sup>52</sup>. They kill every African American antagonist without thinking twice, but favour those who could be white citizens.

The speaker continues, repeating the fact that he is just as black as his friends, expressing his disdain, rather than gratitude, for the white police officers' decision.

Insults, in this case, although external to the micro-cosmos portrayed by the filmic production, give voice to a deeper social denouncement.

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<sup>52</sup> The same overt critique can be found in several Spike Lee films: some of the most noteworthy examples can be found in *Jungle Fever* (1991) and *Get on the Bus* (1996).

## 7.2 *Insults implicitly addressed to the listener*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Good morning, Womack.</p> <p>WOMACK:<br/><b>Looks like you going to an exorcism, man.</b><br/>I like the suit, though. It's pretty nice.</p> | <p>Buongiorno Womack.</p> <p>Ti fai fare i vestiti su misura, non è vero amico?<br/>Stai Bene!</p> |
|--|--|

(64)

In this example Womack overtly criticizes Mr. Delacroix' style.

I decided to include case 63 in this category because the speaker's unfriendly comment could be considered offensive. Its illocutionary force, in fact, has an ambiguous nature. On the one hand Womack's remark could easily be taken as an ironic joke, whose aim is to maximize solidarity and the interlocutor's positive face. On the other hand, this metaphoric description could express the speaker's authentic thought. Mr. Delacroix' style does not seem to be appreciated. The addressee, is in fact wearing an all-black suit, which makes him look austere and serious.

His aspect is mocked by the speaker, who compares his interlocutor to traditional exorcists who always wear black.

Surprisingly, the ambiguous sentence is not reported in the dubbed version. The translators substitute Womack's original comment with a different one, completely changing its illocutionary force. The Italian remark is positive and entails a rhetoric question. Womack seems to be actually wondering whether Mr. Delacroix is wearing a tailor-made suit.

Syntactically, the translation does not obey the original model and it loses the typical African American pattern where the first subject and the copula *to be* of the Present continuous clause are omitted.

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Dumb-ass question. What I want you to do is to write some material that is funny.<br/><b>Your material that you have been writing about as funny as a dead baby.</b></p> | <p>Bella domanda del cazzo!<br/>Quello che voglio da voi è che scriviate soggetti divertenti. <b>I soggetti che mi avete sottoposto sono divertenti come un</b></p> |
|---|---|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>It's not dope. It's not new. It's not sexy.</b></p> <p>FISH:<br/>It sucks.</p> | <p><b>funerale.</b><br/>Niente di originale, niente di nuovo, di intelligente... sono...</p> <p>Sono stronzate!</p> |
|--|---|

(65)

In this case Mr. Dunwitty is addressing his group of authors.

He covertly aims at insulting them because he thinks their projects are neither original nor noteworthy. The implicit offensive illocutionary force is included in Mr. Dunwitty's simile where the two entities compared are screenplays and a dead baby.

In fact, in his opinion, the written material is as likely to cause happiness and pleasure as the tragic event of seeing a dead body. Implicitly all the authors in the room are accused of being untalented and mediocre.

The dubbed version partially differs from the original text. The metaphorical path, in fact, changes slightly by comparing the material written by the group to a funeral.

Although the perlocutionary effect may be the same in both versions, it is clear that the Italian simile is weakened for two main reasons. First of all, the image of a ceremony to pay respects to a person who has died is not as sad or shocking as the image of a dead body.

Moreover, Dunwitty refers to the corpse of a child, which represents one of mankind's most heart-wrenching and tragic sorrows.

Finally, Mr. Dunwitty defines other people's projects as boring and old-fashioned. The anaphoric syntactic pattern has been adapted to the target language, in which the three main clauses have been substituted by the repetition of the indefinite pronoun *niente* followed by the three adjectives: *originale*, *nuovo* and *intelligente*. Only the last term, *sexy*, has been substituted. In this case the translators opted for a free translation because, in common Italian environments, the loanword is only used to describe someone sexually attractive. Italian speakers, in fact, do not generally choose this term to define objects or concepts as interesting or exciting. So, the adjective *intelligente* better fits the situational and socio-cultural context.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/> Listen, let's sit down.<br/> I know you're the most creative person I've got on staff.<br/> I mean, you're hip, you know what's happening.<br/> I've got a bunch of pasty-ass white boys and girls writing for me, you know what I mean?<br/> You know, <b>I grew up around black people my whole life. I mean, if the truth be told, I probably know niggers better than you.</b><br/> Don't go getting offended by my use of the N-word.<br/> I have a black wife and two biracial kids so I feel I have a right.<br/> I don't give a goddamn what that prick Spike Lee says.<br/> Tarantino was right. "Nigger" is just a word.<br/> If Old Dirty Bastard can use it and every other word, why can't I?</p> | <p>Senta, io lo so che lei è la persona più creativa di tutto il mio staff di autori.<br/> Lei è colto, si tiene sempre informato.<br/> Niente a che fare con quei ragazzotti bianchi protestanti che non sanno in che mondo vivono.<br/> <b>Sa, per tutta la mia vita sono stato circondato da neri, di conseguenza sono convinto di conoscerli meglio di lei.</b><br/> E non devo sentirsi offeso se uso spesso tra virgolette la parola "negro".<br/> E non me ne importa un fico secco di quello che dice Spike Lee.<br/> Tarantino aveva ragione. Negro è solo una parola.<br/> Se quel fottuto bastardo può usare la parola negro allora posso usarla anch'io.</p> |
|--|--|

(66)

This is another case in which no offensive word is used but the sentence has a devastating effect. In actual fact, Mr. Dunwitty is trying to persuade his interlocutor to write something new for the purpose of increasing CNS ratings. He thinks Mr. Delacroix could prove to be his best screenwriter, if only he could abandon the project of promoting texts on African American middle-upper classes and racial integration. To convince his interlocutor that he knows what he is talking about, Mr. Dunwitty explains how he understands African American world. His aggressive and challenging tone, however, together with his statements, make Mr. Delacroix feel deeply offended by what he is hearing. Mr. Dunwitty, in fact, declares that he knows black people better than the protagonist himself. His arrogant assumption, representing the mainstream popular belief, hurts Mr. Delacroix, who feels deprived of his identity and his African American heritage.

In the original version, the term *nigger* is used. As previously explained, this word engulfs a multitude of reflections on black culture and history. The dubbed version does not mirror the original and includes a line in which the semantically equivalent term *negri* does not appear. The original insulting comment is, therefore, more effective. Mr. Dunwitty then justifies his use of the ethnic slur by citing three popular men's point of view. He rejects Spike Lee's position, which would be against using the term at random, but he embraces Quentin

Tarantino's philosophy, which is the complete opposite. In the film *Jackie Brown*<sup>53</sup>, for example, the word nigger is pronounced 38 times.

The third artist cited by the speaker is Russel Tyrone Jones, known as Ol' Dirty Bastard, a famous Brooklyn-born rapper and member of the Wu-Tang Clan who died of a drug overdose in 2004. One of his most famous albums is called *Nigga, Please*. Released in 1999, the anthology contains 13 tracks.

Interestingly, the first two artists are faithfully cited in the dubbed version, while the third one, Ol' Dirty Bastard, is totally lost, probably due to the fact that the majority of the target audience would not know who he was.

In fact, the man's name is almost literally translated by *quel fottuto bastardo*. In the Italian text, in fact, Mr. Dunwitty is referring to Tarantino.

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/> <b>The material you've been writing for me is too white-bread. It's white people with black faces.</b><br/>         The Huxtables, Cosby-- a genius, revolutionary.<br/>         Theo, Lisa Bonet--dope. But we can't go down that road again.</p> | <p><b>I soggetti che mi lei ha presentato di recente sono troppo sullo stile dei bianchi... trattano di neri che si comportano come bianchi.</b> La famiglia inventata da Cosby era geniale, rivoluzionaria... Theo, Lisa Bonnet, stupendi... ma non possiamo più percorrere quella strada.</p> |
|--|---|

(67)

Like the previous example, the insulting perlocutionary force of the utterances can be only fully appreciated in the situational context in which the scene is taking place. Indeed, there is no offensive word in the text.

Mr. Delacroix, however, feels deeply offended by Mr. Dunwitty's declarations. His racist behaviour is easily decoded by the protagonist, who is accused of writing fictitious stories where African Americans have roles that they could not possibly play in real life. The author's aim was, and still is, to depict the black middle-upper class and thus undermine the traditional white stereotypes generally associated with blacks. His intention is not well seen by his superior, who offends his interlocutor by accusing him of writing about *white people with black faces*.

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<sup>53</sup>Adapted from the American novel *Rum Punch* (1992), *Jackie Brown* was written and produced by Quentin Tarantino in 1997.

Apart from implicitly referring to archetypical racist representations of African Americans in the XX-century TV and filmic production, Mr. Dunwitty again encases them in stereotypical portrayals, according to which blacks should only belong to lower classes. The adjective white-bread is generally used to describe a person who represents every white stereotypical characteristic.

To support his theory, he criticizes TV series *The Huxtables*<sup>54</sup>, terming it old and predictable. Since the TV series was called *I Robinson* in Italian, the dub line refers to the creator of the audiovisual product: Bill Cosby.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>         Look at this stuff I'm having to read.<br/>         A black family moves into a white middle-class suburban enclave.<br/> <b>This is shit.</b><br/>         A black girl is adopted by some chink American family?</p> | <p>Questi sono alcuni soggetti che ho letto di recente.<br/>         Qui abbiamo una famiglia di gente di colore che si trasferisce in un quartiere residenziale abitato da bianchi. <b>È una gran cagata!</b><br/>         Una bambina nera viene adottata da una famiglia americana di origine cinese?</p> |
|--|--|

(68)

Describing Mr. Delacroix' new projects, Mr. Dunwitty explicitly criticizes them by saying *that is shit*. The offensive comment indirectly refers to the author's creative abilities, which do not match Dunwitty's taste. Although translators added the qualificative adjective *gran*, the dubbed text faithfully follows the original, offering a vulgar expression commonly used by Italian speakers to show their disgust at something seen, heard, understood or told.

In both versions, the illocutionary force of the utterances is clear and targeted.

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<sup>54</sup> Better known as *The Cosby Show*, *The Huxtables* "is the most successful 1980s primetime Black-oriented series" (Bogle, 2001: 286) starring Bill Cosby, Phylicia Rashād and Lisa Bonet. Run on NBS between 1984 and 1992, it is considered "a single phenomenal series [that] is credited with revolutionizing the Black situation comedy genre during this time by setting a standard for non-ridicule, by recognizing and celebrating Black culture, and by presenting African Americans as ably negotiating mainstream America, and with equal status (Means Coleman, 1998: 101). *The Cosby Show* portrayed a family that was "virtually perfect, depicted as: upper-middle class, culturally centered, without stereotypes, achieving – if not surpassing – the "American dream" [...], hard-working, intelligent, and with good middle-class normative values" (ibid.: 102).

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>A black headmaster is hired at some old-money, crusty, Eastern boarding school.<br/><b>Garbage. It's too clean, it's too antiseptic. - It's too—</b></p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>White.</p> | <p>E ancora... un preside di colore viene assunto da una prestigiosa scuola privata frequentata dai rampolli di ricchi bianchi. <b>Spazzatura! È troppo pulito... è troppo asettico... insomma è troppo...</b></p> <p>Bianco?</p> |
|--|---|

(69)

Likewise, example 67 shows no discrepancy between the source and target versions. Mr. Dunwitty implicitly insults Mr. Delacroix' creative abilities and he criticizes his latest proposals. The term *garbage* is used when something is useless, stupid or without meaning. The word *spazzatura* gets close to the original meaning of the comment because it refers to all those valueless things that can be sneezed at. Moreover, the subsequent explanation completely coincides with the original version.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>SLOAN:<br/>You want me to hook up you and the Mau Maus?<br/><b>Why would I hook up some black, red, green flag-waving pseudo-revolutionaries?</b></p> | <p>Vuoi che presenti te e i Mau Maus al mio capo?<br/><b>E perché dovrei presentargli un gruppo di pseudo-rivoluzionari che girano agitando la bandiera nera, rossa e verde?</b></p> |
|--|--|

(70)

In example 68, the insult is embedded in the rhetoric question itself. As already explained by examples 48 and 49, Sloan Hopkins and her brother Julius are arguing about the male character's lifestyle. His sister criticizes him for not taking his responsibilities as adults should and for spending his time with other Mau Mau members. In his opinion, however, she cannot understand the serious reputation his crew has been earning. Julius and his friends look on themselves as an underground, militant rap group, whose aim is to discuss and denounce problems that Africa Americans have to face every day in white-dominated contemporary American society. He then asks his sister to be introduced to Mr. Delacroix because Mau Maus publicly want to give vent to their social anger through CNS. Ms. Hopkins feels embarrassed for Julius and his friend and she defines them *pseudo-*

*revolutionaries*. In this case, the illocutionary force of the insulting comment lies in the prefix *pseudo*. The term is used to describe something false, artificial or pretending to be what it is not. Defining them as pseudo-revolutionaries, Ms. Hopkins does not take Mau Maus seriously and she sharply criticizes their intentions.

Moreover, she accuses them of *flag-waving*, which implicitly means that they are wasting their time, wandering around and not knowing exactly what they are complaining about. Given the lack of a semantically similar adjective, such expression is paraphrased in the dubbed version. The offensive illocutionary force of Ms. Hopkins' comment remains the same.

The three colours cited by the speaker, although in the wrong order, describe the Pan-African flag, whose hues represent African American slaves' blood, black ethnicity, and the color of Africa.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>Damn, it's red, black, and green. Everybody....<br/>White people know it's red, black, and green.<br/>And secondly, why are we pseudo?<br/><b>If we was talking about some ice and fuckin' Cristal and pushin' Bentleys and fuckin' pop mogul then we would be the fly shit?</b><br/><b>You like that shit.</b><br/><b>You like Bling blinging.</b></p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>Who or what are you revolting against? What are you talking about in all them songs?</p> | <p>I colori sono rosso, nero e verde. Anche i bianchi sanno che la bandiera è rossa, nera e verde.<br/>E seconda cosa, perché pseudo-rivoluzionari?<br/><b>Se fossimo musicisti ricchi e famosi con anelli di brillanti e andassimo con le Bentley in ristoranti strafighi mangiando caviale e ostriche avremmo la tua attenzione?</b><br/><b>Ah, non mi dire di no, ti piacciono gli stronzi di successo.</b></p> <p>Contro chi vi state ribellando? Contro cosa vi state ribellando? Di che diavolo parlate nelle vostre canzoni?</p> |
|---|---|

(71)

Julius feels deeply offended by his sister's opinion and he attacks her for not understanding his mission. Julius then implicitly insults his interlocutor, accusing her of being materialistic. In his judgement, Ms. Hopkins believes that physical comforts and economic wealth are more important than anything else.

From a linguistic point of view, the dubbed version aims at mirroring Julius' colloquial and slangy register. Some African American expressions, however, cannot find their semantic equivalent in the Italian vocabulary, therefore, the

lexicon used does not portray any substandard characteristic but is more like an anonymous teen slang.

In the original version, however, the words used achieve specific meaning within their situational context. *Mogul*, for example, describes a very powerful or influential person, and the term *ice* is generally used to refer to expensive jewellery, such as diamonds, necklaces, earrings and watches. With the proper name *Cristal*, on the other hand, Julius is referring to the brand name of a Champagne, produced by Louis Roederer, which is internationally known as one of the most exclusive wines ever produced.

Although equally popular in the target culture, this transcultural reference has been replaced by the expression *caviare e ostriche*, one of the most common couples stereotypically used by Italian speakers in reference to the lifestyle of elitarian groups. It is assumed that only rich customers can afford oysters and caviar dishes.

Probably the most explicit offensive statement comes at the end when the speaker states that his interlocutor loves *bling blinging*. This imitative sound refers to the noise that jewellery and money make when they come into contact. This expression, which became popular through a Lil Vayne song, *Bling Bling*, is a much used term in hip hop culture. This expression has no equivalent in the dubbed version and the translators have opted for paraphrasing the implicit underlying concept.

The vulgar connotation of Julius' speech is not reported in the dubbed version either. Slur terms are neutralized and his tone is less irreverent. The syntactic patterns, typical of the African American language, are also lost.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>That's fucked up, man. It's embarrassin'.<br/>Black folks been doin' that shit to each other...<br/>for the last 400 fucking years, man.<br/><b>This is like some house-nigger shit when<br/>you say that.</b></p> | <p>Dici che ti mettiamo in imbarazzo. È quello che dicono i negri agli altri negri da più di 400 fottuti anni cazzo.<br/><b>Parli come una brava serva nera di casa che lecca il culo al padrone.</b></p> |
| <p>SLOAN:<br/>Wait a minute.</p>  | <p>Che cosa?</p>  |
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>Don't go there. That ain't what I said.</p>  | <p>No no... non ti arrabbiare... ritiro quello che ho</p>   |

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| SLOAN:<br>Hold up.   | detto.<br><br>Aspetta un momento.  |
| SLOAN:<br>Julius, are you calling your sister a house nigger?                              | E così io sarei la serva nera che lecca il culo al padrone...            |
| JULIUS:<br>Sloan, that ain't what I said.<br>I don't even know why you tryin' to go there. | Ritiro quello che ho detto. Non volevo offenderti scusa se ho esagerato. |

(72)

The male speaker, finding himself in a tight corner, eventually hurts his sister by accusing her of behaving like a black servant. Sloan Hopkins feels deeply offended and is devastated by her brother's comment.

The illocutionary force of the utterance is faithfully reported in the Italian version, which is even more offensive. However, the illocutionary force of the rest of Julius' lines changes considerably in the two texts. In the original, the character immediately realizes the gravity of what he has said and tries to minimize her sister's reaction by assuring that he did not mean it. In addition, realizing that his sister is furious, he changes to an aggressive tone and accuses her of having voluntarily misunderstood his words. In this case, Julius is suggesting that intelligibility has failed. On the contrary, in the target version, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces coincide and Julius repeatedly apologizes for what he said.

In both versions, Ms. Hopkins feels insulted and invites him to leave.

|  |   |
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| DELACROIX:<br>Now, I have been doing a lot of soul-searching. And, once again, you're right. My previous work has been all surface, superficial. | Allora, io ho fatto un profondo esame di coscienza e ammetto che lei aveva ragione. I miei lavori precedenti sono stati esteriori, o meglio superficiali. |
| DUNWITTY:<br>It's a thing of the past.   | Il passato è passato.   |
| DELACROIX:<br>I've never really dug deep into my pain as a Negro.  | È inoltre visceralmente io non ho mai accettato il fatto di essere un nero.   |
| DUNWITTY:<br>Hey, <b>those things are hard to look at sometimes.</b>   | <b>La capisco, certe cose non sono per niente facili da accettare.</b>  |

(73)

The authentic illocutionary force of the above utterance can only be inferred by taking into account the situational context in which the conversation develops.

Wanting to be fired, the main protagonist suggests a new TV programme called *Mantan, The New Millennium Minstrel Show*, whose framework would be similar to that of traditional minstrel shows of the previous century.

He then confesses and admits to agreeing with his boss by saying that all his past projects were too ordinary and predictable.

Finally, he sarcastically tells Mr. Dunwitty that he has come to this conclusion by making an in-depth and conscious analysis of how he really feels about being black.

At this point, Mr. Dunwitty does not catch his interlocutor's ironic tone and he replies by saying what he really thinks about being African American. The insulting illocutionary force of the utterance therefore becomes evident. In fact he is overtly disparaging black people and their heritage. His words reveal Mr. Dunwitty's true racist and anti-black nature. Both versions achieve the same perlocutionary effect on Mr. Delacroix, which, although not linguistically expressed, is plainly seen by the expression on his face.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DELACROIX:<br>Study hard, gentlemen.<br>You look great in those Hillnigger jeans. | Studiatelo bene, mi raccomando.<br>Belli quei jeans. |
| WOMACK:<br><b>That motherfucker crazy, man.</b>                                   | <b>Quello là è buono per il manicomio.</b>           |

(74)

In this case the source and target texts do not coincide. In the original version Womack utters an offensive comment, whose meaning is made worse by the addition of the vulgar term, *motherfucker*.

On the contrary, the insult offered by the dubbed version is weakened when the speaker declares Mr. Delacroix' behaviour could be that of an insane individual and there is no derogatory term. The Italian version, although it has the same illocutionary force, loses its original aggressive tone. Moreover, the syntactic structure of the sentence is notably different. The first one is composed of one noun phrase only, while the second is a finite clause.

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|---|---|
| <p>MANRAY:<br/>Why they got to make my nose so big?</p> <p>WOMACK:<br/>What's up with my lips?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>No. This wasn't supposed to be like this.</p> <p>WOMACK:<br/>Where do you guys work, in the lobby of the damn place?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>Man, listen, I don't know what to tell you. You have every right to be upset.</p> | <p>Perché mi hanno fatto il naso così grande?</p> <p>E guarda le mie labbra...</p> <p>No, no,no... non era così che dovevano essere i pupazzi!</p> <p>Ah, non ne sapevi niente? <b>Che cosa sei qui, la schiava negra?</b></p> <p>Casco dalle nuvole, anch'io sono confusa, non so che cosa dirvi... avete tutte le ragioni del mondo di essere arrabbiati.</p> |
|---|---|

(75)

In this scene Manray and Womack, the two street performers, realize that the show they are going to be taking part in is slightly different from what they had imagined. The very theme music tells them that they are to be portrayed as ignorant, buffoonish and uneducated black individuals playing the main roles in the programme only to be mocked by white viewers and the first shots are of their own caricatures. Their physical aspect is, in fact, modified to highlight the image of stereotypical black people, who have curly hair, large fat noses and big lips. Feeling offended by the way in which they are being treated, Womack indirectly offends both Mr. Delacroix and Ms. Hopkins. Asking her if they work in the hall of CNS building, he alludes to the fact they are not involved in the decision-making process. Sloan Hopkins tells him nothing but she is sorry and she is really upset.

The illocutionary force of the Italian version partly differs from the original because there is only one addressee and Womack's offensive comment only refers to Ms. Hopkins. Furthermore, while in the original version the negative remark only deals with their decision-making power, the Italian insult gains a racial connotation. Sloan Hopkins is accused of being treated without respect by her superiors, who think of her as a black servant.

In both versions, she just accepts his sharp critique.

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| <p>MYRNA:<br/>Lighten up, man, right?<br/>This is about fun, right? Nice, wholesome fun.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Myrna, break it down for them.</p> <p>MYRNA:<br/>The Mantan Manifesto. Catchy, ain't it?</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/><b>So is syphilis.</b></p> | <p>Non siate così seriosi, vi prego. Stiamo parlando di divertimento, di sano e semplice divertimento.</p> <p>Myrna, illustra il tuo manifesto.</p> <p>D'accordo. Il manifesto programmatico. È efficace no?</p> <p><b>Come un sonnifero.</b></p> |
|---|---|

(76)

As previously mentioned, Myrna Goldberg is a secondary character who is immediately in conflict with Mr. Delacroix. The woman has been hired to help CNS solve any problems that airing the program might cause. After he has listened to her, the protagonist expresses his opinion which is not at all positive. The covert illocutionary force of both the source and target language is the same, but in the original version, he ironically defines Myrna's proposal as interesting as syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease causing infertility, insanity and even death.

The dubbed version is again weakened since the comparison in Mr. Delacroix' Italian simile is a *sonnifero*. This totally changes the meaning of the figure of speech. In the first case Myrna Goldfarb's project is described as annoying and unacceptable, while the Italian version indicates that her proposal is really boring and probably predictable.

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| <p>SLOAN:<br/><b>No disrespect, but this is some bullshit.</b></p> <p>MYRNA:<br/>Well, I've done my research.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>These are Negroes we are talking about not some lab mice in a cage.<br/>We are not one monolithic group of people.<br/>We do not all think, look, and act alike, Ms. Goldfarb.</p> <p>MYRNA:</p> | <p><b>Con il dovuto rispetto, questa strategia è una stronzata.</b></p> <p>Ho fatto accuratissime ricerche.</p> <p>Guardi che è dei negri che noi qui dobbiamo parlare, non di cavie laboratorio rinchiusi in gabbia.<br/>Noi non siamo un blocco monolitico, siamo persone, non creda che tutti pensiamo, sentiamo e ci comportiamo nello stesso modo, sig.na Goldfarb.</p> |
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| Mr. Delacroix, let me assure you-- I got my Ph.D. in African- American studies from Yale.     | Sig. Delacroix, mi consenta di dirle che sono laureata in cultura afroamericano a Yale.                               |
| DELACROIX:<br><b>So you fucked a Negro in college.</b>  | <b>Quindi si è scopata un negro a Yale e di conseguenza -</b>   |
| DUNWITTY:<br>Excuse me. Let's keep this above the belt. Show a little respect for this woman. | Ehi, un momento, stai esagerando. Vediamo di abbassare un po' i toni! D'accordo? Parli con più rispetto alla signora. |

(77)

Example 74 shows the rest of the conversation, in which Ms. Hopkins supports Mr. Delacroix' point of view. In both versions her comment is overt and targeted and clearly expresses the speaker's opinion.

Her interlocutor, instead of reacting to the offence, justifies her project by explaining that she knows what she is talking about. Unlike Sloan Hopkins' previous insult, the illocutionary force of this comment does not apparently carry any derogatory or offensive connotation in either text. Mr. Delacroix, however, feels deeply offended by Ms. Goldfarb's words, whose meaning, according to him, is intended to portray African Americans as laboratory animals used for all kinds of experiment. Again Mr. Delacroix invites his listeners to see African Americans as a multifarious community and to abandon the old image of black people created by the mass media in the previous part of the twentieth century. The Italian version strengthens and clarifies the concept with the addition of the main clause *siamo persone*.

The female character misses the meaning of Pierre Delacroix' speech and resolves to boast about her academic qualifications. Although none of Myrna's words are explicitly insulting, Delacroix still feels offended and his reaction is to openly insult and humiliate her. In this case the dubbed version closely follows the original one and faithfully translates the vulgar verb *fuck* with the Italian equivalent *scopare*.

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| MANRAY:<br>Did you ever sleep with Dela? | Sei mai andata a letto con Dela? |
| SLOAN:<br>Yes, I did.                    | Si, ci sono andata.              |
| MANRAY:<br>I knew it.                    | Lo sapevo. Lo sapevo!            |

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| <p>SLOAN:<br/>Listen, it doesn't have anything to do with how I got my job. It was a mistake, OK?<br/>It happened a very long time ago and it doesn't have anything to do with me and you.</p> <p>MANRAY:<br/><b>You know what?</b><br/><b>I think you was probably gonna play metry to use me like you used Dela to work your way to the top.</b><br/>It's funny how people in this business can just flip on you like IHOP.<br/>I'm glad he fired your ass.</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>You...<br/>You know what? Let me tell you what's funny.<br/>It's funny how a man always has to perceive an attractive young lady as having to fuck or suck somebody in order to get to the top.<br/>It doesn't have anything to do with the fact that I'm intelligent maybe?<br/>Or have anything to do with the fact that I have drive?<br/>That doesn't matter!<br/>No, I fucked him. Yes, I fucked him.</p> | <p>Ascolta, questo non c'entra niente con il fatto che ho ottenuto questo lavoro! È stato un grosso sbaglio<sup>1</sup> è chiaro? E poi è una cosa che è successa tanto tempo fa e non c'entra niente con il rapporto che c'è tra me e te Cristo! Sai che penso?</p> <p><b>Penso che tu con me volevi spassartela un po' e che hai tentato di usarmi. Proprio come hai usato Dela per fare una brillante carriera.</b> Strano come le persone in questo ambiente siano sempre pronte a sfruttarti e poi a voltarti le spalle! Sono proprio contento che Dela ti ha licenziata!</p> <p>Tu... guarda ti dico io cos'è strano!<br/>È molto strano che voi uomini dobbiate sempre pensare che una donna giovane e attraente debba per forza scopare con qualcuno per poter fare una brillante carriera!<br/>Non ti è mai passato per il cervello che sono una donna intelligente e motivata!<br/>Non hai mai pensato che sono una donna di talento!<br/>Questo a te non importa! Ti importa solo se ho scopato! Sì, ho scopato con Dela!</p> |
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(78)

As in previous examples 65 and 66, the insulting illocutionary force of the utterance can only be fully appreciated in the situational context in which the scene is taking place. Indeed, there is no offensive word in the text.

Ms Hopkins, however, feels deeply offended by Manray's comment. Instigated by Mr. Delacroix, Manray meets Sloan and asks her if she had had a love affair with his superior in the past. Ms. Hopkins, unable to lie, confirms his suspicions. She implicitly points out that their story was based entirely on physical attraction and was otherwise irrelevant. Manray, however, cannot understand his interlocutor's point of view and hurts her by saying that she probably only got the job because she was at Pierre Delacroix' disposal. The woman is then accused of having used her body to further her career. In the actual context, in fact, *play metry* is used by the speaker to describe her presumed action of measuring or counting every situation she finds herself in and taking advantage of it. Manray then applies the theory to a wider situation by claiming that people always want to take advantage of the rich and famous. The expression *flip on you like IHOP* is not faithfully translated: *IHOP* stands for *International House of*

*Pancakes* which is a popular American-based restaurant chain specialising in breakfasts food such as omelettes, toasts and pancakes. The metaphorical idea used here revolves around the fact that the cooks generally flip the pancakes in mid-fry.

According to Manray, people like Sloan Hopkins tend to twist other people around their little finger. The cultural reference is not included in the dubbed version and so the simile is lost. It is however replaced by a more common Italian expression that is semantically equivalent.

The perlocutionary effect of the male character's words is devastating in both versions. Ms Hopkins feels offended by Manray's male chauvinistic comment and answers back. What is clear is, that men always think a woman can only further her career if she is "nice" to her boss. Sloan uses the Western conventional belief according to which women cannot make their own way at work by using their personal qualities and abilities alone.

Her aggressive tone is faithfully transferred in the dubbed text and the vulgar expressions are correctly translated as well except for the expression *fuck or suck somebody* which is summarised with the Italian verb *scopare*. For an Italian audience, in fact, the faithful translation of the second English verb would probably be considered excessively vulgar.

|   |  |
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| <p>MANRAY:<br/>Yo, man, why is the Reverend Al Sharpton and Jonny Cochran down there?</p> | <p>Ehi, perché il Reverendo Al Sharpton and Johnny Cockran se la prendono tanto?</p> |
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Opportunists. They love to see themselves on television.</p>            | <p>Sono opportunisti! Vogliono farsi un po' di pubblicità gratuita.</p>              |
| <p>MANRAY:<br/><b>You sound like the media.</b></p>                                       | <p><b>Parli proprio come un bianco.</b></p>  |

(79)

Yet another case where the source and the target versions differ and where the illocutionary force of the utterance is not conveyed in the same manner. In the original text, Manray's words include a representative speech act through which he expresses his opinion about his interlocutor's comment. In the Italian version the illocutionary force of the utterance changes, leaving room for an example of

an expressive speech act. When Mr. Delacroix explains that Reverend Al Sharpton<sup>55</sup> and Johnnie Cochran<sup>56</sup> are only opportunists, Manray insults him by saying that he thinks like a white person.

The semantic content of the offensive comment could initially be classified as a translation error. However, after a deeper analysis of the socio-cultural context in which the film was produced, this change in meaning could also be a case of explicitation. Although the length of the text does not increase, the dubbed version makes the non-literal meaning of Manray's comment clear. He explicitly comments on his boss' behaviour to implicitly criticise the role that the mass media played, and is still playing, in the American socio-cultural background.

As Acham (2004) explains, the construction of blackness and the integration of African Americans in the mainstream culture have, at times, also been made more difficult by the mass media. According to African Americans, the mass media have often snubbed them by preferring to portray them as a monolithic community, whose main traits were laziness, ignorance and stupidity.

In fact, throughout the twentieth century, and above all before the Civil Rights Movement, TV programmes tended to foster the white mainstream attitude, which minimised black social problems by not giving neutral and detailed accounts of anything that happened in the American panorama. By doing this, television and radios influenced their viewers and listeners, who tended to trust in their unbiased and objective function.

In this respect, Manray is criticising Mr. Delacroix for his unfair and superficial interpretation of the fact. Without a clear explanation, the real content of his utterance would probably have remained hidden to Italian viewers, whose familiarity with the topic is probably insufficient.

Therefore, the linguistic path taken by the target version actually makes Manray's comment more offensive than the original.

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<sup>55</sup> Born in New York in 1957, Alfred Charles Sharpton Jr. is a civil rights activist and Baptist minister.

<sup>56</sup> Johnnie L. Cochran (1937 – 2005) was an American lawyer. He is still remembered for his role in the defence of several African Americans, such as O.J. Simpson, Sean Combs, Tupac Shakur, Snoop Dogg and Michael Jackson.

If we consider the kinesic synchronization, however, the translation in the dubbed language is too explicit and creates a clash with the visual component, since Mr. Delacroix shows no disapproving reaction.

### 7.3 Insults addressed to a Third Party

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Listen, let's sit down.<br/>I know you're the most creative person I've got on staff.<br/>I mean, you're hip, you know what's happening.<br/><b>I've got a bunch of pasty-ass white boys and girls writing for me, you know what I mean?</b><br/>You know, I grew up around black people my whole life. I mean, if the truth be told, I probably know niggers better than you. Don't go getting offended by my use of the N-word.</p> | <p>Senta, io lo so che lei è la persona più creativa di tutto il mio staff di autori.<br/>Lei è colto, si tiene sempre informato.<br/><b>Niente a che fare con quei ragazzotti bianchi protestanti che non sanno in che mondo vivono.</b><br/>Sa, per tutta la mia vita sono stato circondato da neri, di conseguenza sono convinto di conoscerli meglio di lei.<br/>E non devo sentirsi offeso se uso spesso tra virgolette la parola "negro".</p> |
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(80)

In the example above, Mr. Dunwitty is referring to his group of white authors. According to him, in fact, they are not able to write anything new or interesting. There is no derogatory term in the utterance, but the way in which Mr. Dunwitty refers to the addressees reveals his reluctance to consider them capable of achieving his expectations. What is offensive, however, is the term he uses to talk about them. The racial derogatory term *pasty-ass* is generally used by African Americans to refer to white people. In a more general sense, the adjective *pasty* describes a pale and unhealthy person but in this conversation, the synecdoche *pasty-ass white boys and girls* is used to insult them.

In this case the target and the source versions are different. The Italian translation aims at maintaining the illocutionary force of the original utterance but, in the absence of an equivalent expression, the linguistic texture changes. The offensive path follows two different axes: the suffix *-otti* contributes to adding a pejorative connotation to the plural common noun *ragazzi*. It indicates a group of male figures, whose childish minds are housed in adult bodies.

Moreover, the addition of the adjective *protestanti* aims at giving a more negative description of them. The introduction of this word, in fact, aims at playing on the atavistic struggle between Catholic and Protestant people. In the assumption that the majority of the target audience would have been Catholic, the translators added the term to intensify the insult. Moreover, the Italian

offensive comment is sharpened by the subordinate clause through which Mr. Dunwitty highlights the authors' inability to critically analyse and decode the world around them.

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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Delacroix, wake up, brother man.<br/>The reason why these shows didn't get picked up is because <b>nobody, I mean no-motherfuckin'-body niggers and crackers alike, wants to see that junk.</b><br/>People want to be entertained.</p> | <p>Delacroix, apra gli occhi, fratello mio.<br/>Da questi soggetti non è stata tratta una serie perché <b>nessuno, e intendo dire proprio nessuno nessuno, né negri né latticini, vuole vedere queste porcherie...</b> Gli spettatori vogliono ridere.</p> |
|---|--|

(81)

Likewise, the illocutionary force of Mr. Dunwitty's words in example 77 is offensive. He refers to African Americans by using the derogatory term *niggers*, and he talks about white people with the insulting word *crackers*.

In the dubbed version, the word *nigger* is faithfully translated, while the second term is entirely lost. The Italian lexicon does not include an equivalent expression, so *crackers* has been substituted with *latticini*. This term makes the meaning of the original as clear as possible. Taken out of this context, this common plural noun would lose its metaphorical connotation.

As in other cases, the vulgar register used by the speaker is not faithfully translated and the vulgar expression *no-motherfucking-body* is neutralized in the dubbed version.

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| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Mantan, Sleep 'n' Eat. <b>Two real coons.</b></p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>Keeping it real, baby.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>I know that this is out there, but it is satire.</p> <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>No, I want you to take it out there.<br/>Let's swing for the bleachers on this one.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Every week, <b>we follow the trials and tribulations of Mantan, Sleep 'n' Eat-- two real coons, the Dusty Duo!</b></p> | <p>Mantan e Mangia e Dormi, <b>due veri bifolchi.</b></p> <p>Così si che è realistico.</p> <p>Ora io so che lo show sarà considerato offensivo, ma si tratta di satira.</p> <p>No non, non si preoccupi, preme l'acceleratore, voglio che lo show sia offensivo e controverso.</p> <p>Ogni settimana <b>seguiremo le avventure e le tribolazioni di Mantan e Mangia e Dormi,</b></p> |
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| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>What are their character traits?</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Ignorant. Dull-witted. Lazy. And unlucky!</p> | <p><b>due veri bifolchi, una coppia di disgraziati</b></p> <p>Quali sono le loro peculiarità?</p> <p>Sono ignoranti, duri di comprendonio, sfaticati e ultra-sfigati.</p> |
|---|---|

(82)

Although not directly addressed to two real people, the example above includes two insulting expressions on which the new TV programme called *Mantan, The New Millennium Minstrel Show* is conceived. The offensive terms, in fact, overtly refer to the two fictitious characters Mantan and Sleep 'n' Eat, but according to a more general analysis of the film, they implicitly refer to African Americans.

As Dunwitty's character repeatedly explains throughout the film, the new TV programme aims at representing black people as the American mainstream audience unconsciously wants to see them. Unsurprisingly, the show is a huge success but it is also deeply criticised by African Americans.

The term *coon* is often adopted to insult black individuals and its racial derogatory force is generally compared to the word *nigger*.

As Green (1993) explains, *coon* is the abbreviation for *racoon*, which originally indicated actors in blackface. Used with an offensive connotation, the term embodies all the features that stereotypically portray African Americans.

Given the lack of an equivalent term in the target lingua-cultural panorama, the dubbed version includes the more general offensive term *bifolchi*. Although the Italian term is not specifically used to refer to black people, through this process of compensation the original meaning of the insult is not lost.

Within this context, the expression *the dusty duo* can be considered as a synonym for *coons*. The adjective, in fact, not only refers to the two characters' ugly and dirty clothes, it also encompasses their assumed individual traits.

As in the previous case, the translators have compensated for this linguistic lacuna by offering a more general term, which refers to both the characters' mental and physical features. Mr. Delacroix then specifies what the main characteristics of the show's two protagonists will be.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DELACROIX:<br><b>It's frightening.</b><br><br>SLOAN:<br>It should be. | <b>Sono orripilanti.</b><br><br>Lo fanno apposta. |
|---|---|

(83)

In order to understand the insult in the example above, a brief description of the context of the scene is necessary. Mr. Delacroix and his team are casting musicians, comedians and actors for the new TV programme. The Mau Mau group also decides to audition.

Unfortunately, Ms. Hopkins' brother and his band do not fit the selection criteria and, at the end of their performance, Mr. Delacroix expresses his opinion by saying that it was frightening.

The illocutionary force of the original utterance is faithfully reported in the dubbed version, in which the term *orripilante* describes something so terrible that an audience might feel disgusted and afraid.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| SMOOTH BLAK:<br>Here come Blak.<br><br>JULIUS:<br>Whassup?<br><b>Those fuckin' Tom Sambos.</b><br><br>MO BLACK:<br><b>Handkerchief-head-wearing ass.</b><br><br>SMOOTH BLAK:<br><b>Dancin' monkey.</b><br><br>DOUBLE BLACK:<br><b>Benedict Arnold!</b><br><br>JULIUS:<br><b>Those motherfuckers fuckin' it up for the whole fuckin'-- fuckin' everybody! They gonna dis us and keep them two fuckin' smilin', happy Tom-laughing coon motherfuckers Mantan and goddamn Sleep 'n' Eat?!</b><br>You know what I'm sayin'?<br><br>DOUBLE BLACK:<br><b>They's foul, know what I mean?</b> | È arrivato Big Blak. Ciao, come butta?<br><br><b>Quei fottuti di Zio Tom di Sambo. Bastardi maledetti!</b><br><br><b>Avrei voglia di prenderli a calci nel culo!</b><br><br><b>E io di appenderli ad un albero!</b><br><br><b>Nessuna ci rispetta più per colpa di quei due cazzoni sfottuti che ci hanno rovinato la piazza.</b><br><br><b>Quei due bastardi combinati come un sfottuto zio Tom che leccano il culo ai bianchi e odio Mantan e il maledetto Mangia e Dormi.</b><br>Capite il concetto?<br><br><b>Mi fanno vomitare! Vomitare l'anima!</b> |
|---|--|

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| <p>ALL:<br/>Know what I mean?</p> <p>SMOOTH BLAK<br/>Know what I'm sayin'?</p> | <p>Parole sante!</p> <p>E la gente li guarda, capite il concetto?<br/>Dobbiamo sopportare quei <b>bastardi</b>?</p> |
|--|---|

(84)

Whenever the conversational structure allowed for it, most of the expressive speech acts were selected and classified individually.

However, I chose to discuss all the above insults in a global context in order to maintain the rhythm of the authentic communicative exchange. The analysis of every single offensive comment, in fact, would have almost completely neutralised the linguistic violence that the conversation conveys as a whole.

In this scene the Mau Maus are referring to Mantan and Womack. They are blaming the two street performers for their own artistic failure.

As already explained in example 59, the term *Tom* or *Uncle Tom* was generally used to criticise black people behaving like whites. In the current conversation Manray and Womack are betraying the African American race.

While Green (1993: 269) explains that the first epithet comes from “Beecher Stowe’s anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*<sup>57</sup>, the racial offensive expression *sambo* was imported by the Spanish and used by Americans to describe black people as ignorant and buffoonish.

Surprisingly, this term is also present in the dubbed version. The loanword, however, is not commonly understood by Italian viewers and, therefore, the insulting illocutionary force does not come across.

From an etymologic perspective, the expression *Handkerchief-head* is also interesting. It was coined, Green (1993: 269) highlights, from the stereotypical African American mammy figure, *Aunt Jemima*. This female character is popularly known to Americans because she was often included in minstrel shows in the early twentieth century. In this example, the complete noun phrase *Handkerchief-head-wearing ass* is used as a synonym for *Uncle Tom*, and aims

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<sup>57</sup> The book, written in 1852, is considered one of the classic masterpieces of African American literature. By means of his novel, the author describes American black slavery and the sufferings that accompanied it.

at describing a servile and submissive black individual. Given the lack of an equivalent expression in the dubbed language, the translators opted for a more common Italian expression, generally used by speakers to show their anger. Human buttocks are used here to refer to the whole body. This metonymy expresses the speaker's wish to punish the person he is talking about.

The third insult, *dancing monkeys*, follows a clear metaphorical path that compares the two black actors to apes<sup>58</sup>. In this case the source and the target texts show a discrepancy. The Italian speaker actually makes the comment even more violent by saying that he would like to hang them.

Again, Double Black uses the derogatory epithet *Benedict Arnold* to emphasise his opinion of the two performers as hypocrites. Arnold was a soldier who fought during the American War of independence initially beginning his career as an American general, but he then turned tail and decided to join forces with the English Army.

As in the previous case, the insult cannot appear in the Italian version, where most viewers are not familiar with the negative American icon.

In the expanded dubbed text, two common insults are included:

Julius' monologue needs no explanation and, although he uses a vulgar register peppered with many slurring terms, the syntactic pattern of his utterances is typically African American. For obvious reasons, the Italian translation fails to capture the sub-standard linguistic code. Neither the lexicon nor the rhythm of the speech is reported. The dubbed version is therefore rather weak and has certainly been cleaned up.

There is one final insult: Mantan and Manray are defined as *foul*, therefore, not mentally right.

One of the voices in the scene says *mi fanno vomitare*, which is another very insulting Italian idiomatic expression used by Italians to show their disgust for somebody.

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| MANRAY:<br>What you talkin' about, man? | Non capisco, di che parli? |
|---|----------------------------|

---

<sup>58</sup> For a clear explanation of the metaphor, see example 61.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>This pickaninny, watermelon bullshit!<br/>I'm out! I'm raisin' up! <b>The fuck outta here.</b></p> | <p>Sto parlando del nostro merdosissimo, maledettissimo spettacolo del cazzo! Io mollo la baracca, ne ho fin quassù ormai! <b>Fanculo a tutti.</b></p> |
|---|--|

(85)

In this example the speaker concludes the conversation using a vulgar expression that is universally offensive the world over. In both versions, in fact, the noun phrase included is used to show furious disdain, blame and anger. It is also generally used by speakers when they have had enough and no longer want to be bothered by their interlocutor. The street performer's decision to leave the show is by now clear. Both in the source and in the target texts, in fact, he only uses vulgar expressions to refer to the TV programme.

Surprisingly, the intensity and the amount of derogatory words that Womack uses in the dubbed version are greater in comparison to the original line.

The term *pickaninny*, which is an offensive word used to refer to African Americans, is substituted by the superlatives *merdosissimo* and *maledettissimo*. Therefore, the thing he is referring to, i.e. the show, takes on the qualities of these adjectives to a greater degree than anything it is being compared to in the same situational context. Moreover, the noun phrase *watermelon bullshit* becomes *[del nostro] spettacolo del cazzo*.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>So how long have you and <b>Hambone</b> been hanging out?</p> <p>SLOAN:<br/>We're friends.</p> <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Really? That's not what your brother seems to think</p> | <p>Da quanto tempo è che tu e <b>la scimmietta</b> state uscendo insieme?</p> <p>Siamo solo amici.</p> <p>A me risulta che tuo fratello non la pensa così.</p> |
|--|--|

(86)

Being aware of Ms Hopkins and Manray's love affair, Mr Delacroix asks the woman for an explanation.

The visual component clearly shows his anger and his aggressive tone highlights his dissatisfaction with their behaviour. In fact, he refers to the street

performer as *Hambone*. With this term African American speakers generally refer to an actor of little importance.

The offensive value of the English utterance, however, could also be extended to Manray's qualities as a tap dancer. As McNeil (2011) explains, *Hambone* is an African American dance-song. "It is accompanied by an elaborate form of handclapping and slapping of thighs, knees, and buttocks. The song consists of a rhymed chant, generally made up of children's rhymes or "floating verses" [...] It was practiced first by slaves and was later adopted by entertainers. The charleston, a popular dance of the 1920s, and a rock-and-roll dance known as the Charley-bop utilized a minor detail of the *hambone*, the act of crossing and uncrossing the hands on the knees as they fan back and forth".

While Delacroix' original sarcastic comment finds its roots in the history of African Americans, the offensive remark follows a different argumentative path in the dubbed version. Although the illocutionary force of both sentences does not change, in the Italian version the culturo-specific term is substituted by *scimmietta*. Obviously, the term aims at insulting Manray's African American identity, playing on the common comparison between apes and black people. Moreover, the addition of the suffix *-etta* describes the speaker's desire to minimise his addressee's importance by referring to him as if he were a child.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>DELACROIX:<br/>Yes I hate to burst your bubble, Mantan the Marvellous but <b>Sloan is an opportunist.</b></p> <p>MANRAY:<br/>Naw, man. You don't believe that.<br/>I don't believe that.</p> | <p>Si, detesto fare a pezzo le tue illusioni Mantan il meraviglioso ma <b>Sloan è solo una piccola opportunista.</b></p> <p>No, non è vero, non ci credi neanche tu!<br/>Io no ci credo</p> |
|---|---|

(87)

In the example above, Mr. Delacroix' offensive comment is targeted and evident.

In both the target and the source texts, he claims that his personal assistant is an opportunist. Assuming that his claim is untrue, we can imagine that the speaker is insulting the woman in order to convince the new show's protagonist

to break up with her. He is worried that Sloan Hopkins might influence Manray and convince him to abandon the show.

## 7.4 Insults as Compliments

|   |   |
|---|---|
| DUNWITTY:<br>Delacroix, <b>my motherfucker</b> , you dug deep.<br>You dug deeper than deep, my man.<br><br>DELACROIX:<br>To my loins. | Delacroix, <b>gran figlio di puttana</b> , ha superato se stesso. Io non sapevo che aveva un cervello grande come una casa.<br><br>Grazie, questa è la mia giornata |
|---|---|

(88)

The vocative *my motherfucker* is an expression used by the speaker to praise his addressee's ideas and artistic skills.

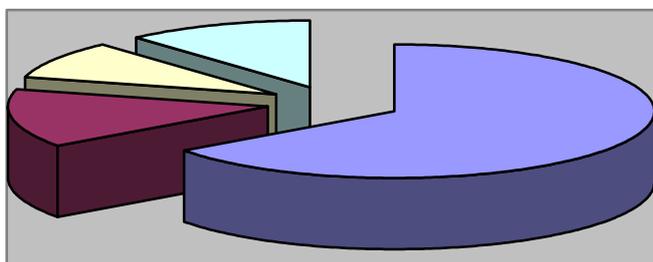
Mr. Dunwitty ironically addresses his interlocutor by highlighting his newfound artistic talent. This expression, therefore, hides positive remarks.

In this case the dubbed version follows the original, and the illocutionary force is the same.

## 8 Concluding Remarks

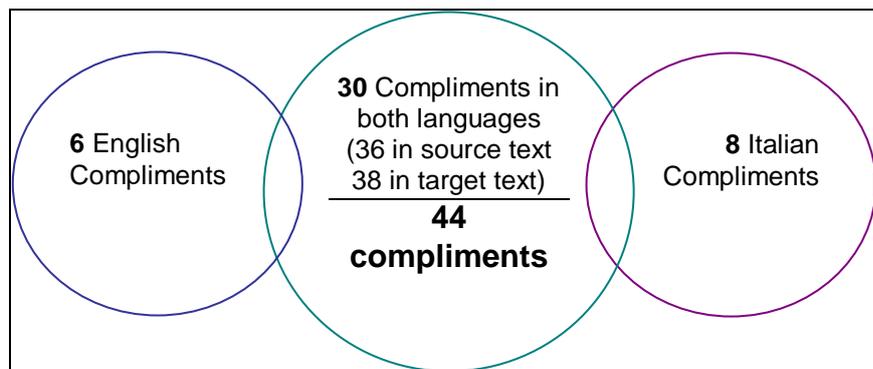
The results of the above analysis indicate that the majority of the compliments in the film are directly addressed to the interlocutors.

Examples in fact show that 28 out of 44 addressees are explicitly praised by their speakers; 6 out of 44 are positive comments on the interlocutor's qualities implicitly inferable by the development of communicative exchanges; while only 4 out of 43 compliments are addressed to one or more individuals outside the actual conversation. Lastly, six cases are classified as insults rather than authentic compliments because of the embedded discrepancy between the positive connotations of words uttered and the illocutionary force hidden beneath the literal meaning of the words.



- Explicit Compliments to the Listener
- Implicit Compliments to the Listener
- Compliments to a Third Party
- Compliments as Insults

The contrastive analysis of the original and dubbed versions also demonstrates that the number of compliments in the source language does not coincide with the number of compliments in the target language. As described in previous sections, while some positive remarks are lost in the Italian text, others are freely added to make the content of the conversation clearer.



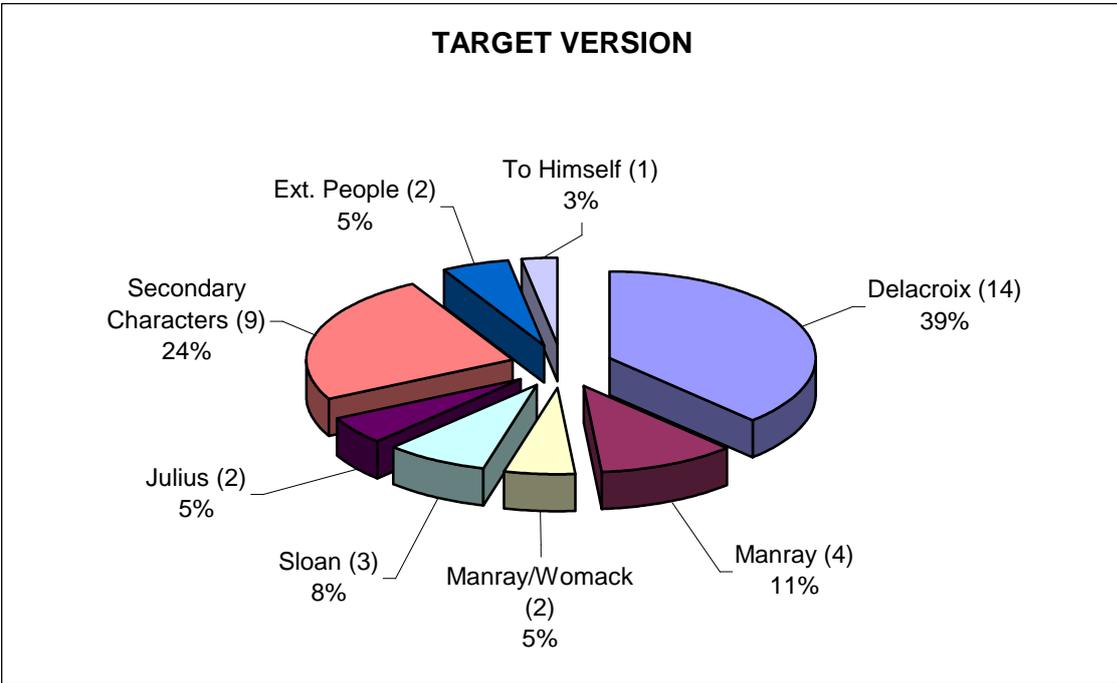
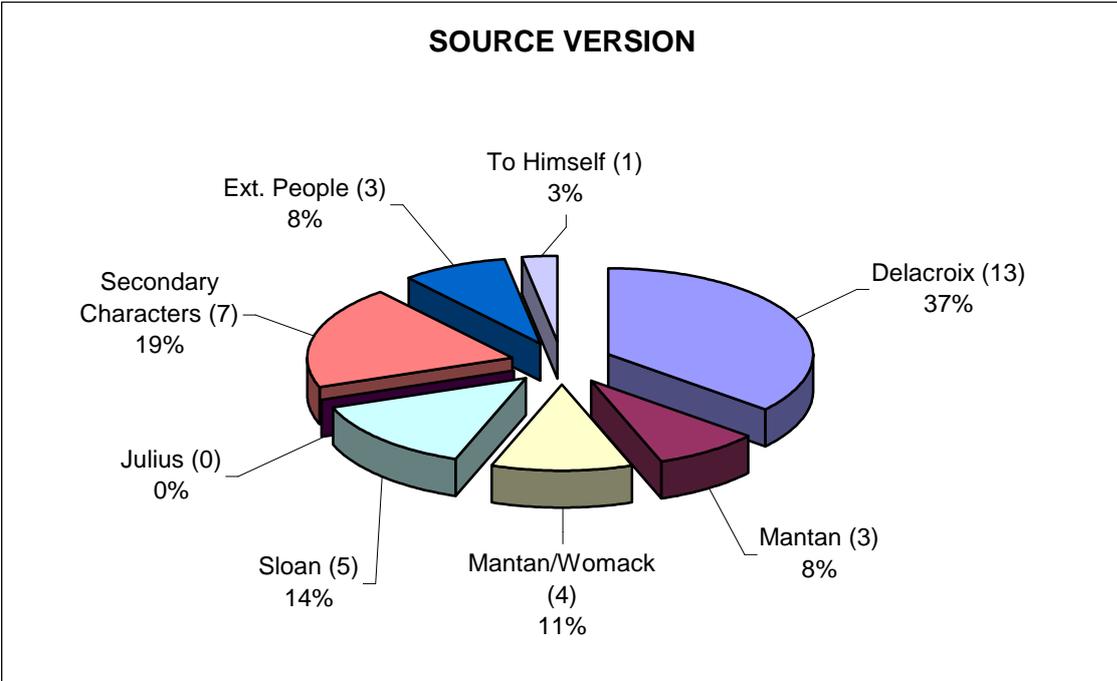
Taking all the examples in both versions into consideration, 32 positive remarks are addressed to a male character (in most cases the protagonist), while only eight involve a female addressee. Five of these, however, refer to the co-protagonist Sloan Hopkins while another two are dishonest compliments aiming at criticizing the secondary character Myrna Goldberg. Only one positive comment is addressed to the famous American figure Carol Burnett.

It is interesting to note that only one comment – a dishonest compliment - is devoted to the rest of Mr. Delacroix' team, while only on one occasion does the addressee aim at praising his own face.

Although the original and the dubbed versions are slightly different, the classification of compliments in both languages mirrors the characters' relevance throughout the story. The person receiving the greatest amount of positive remarks is Pierre Delacroix, the protagonist of the story. The other addressees are people who deal with him in different circumstances.

This analysis also indicates another eye-opening result: no expression of praise or approbation is addressed to Mr. Dunwitty, Mr. Delacroix' dramatic counterpart. This shows how the main character's superior is implicitly discussed and negatively portrayed within the plot.

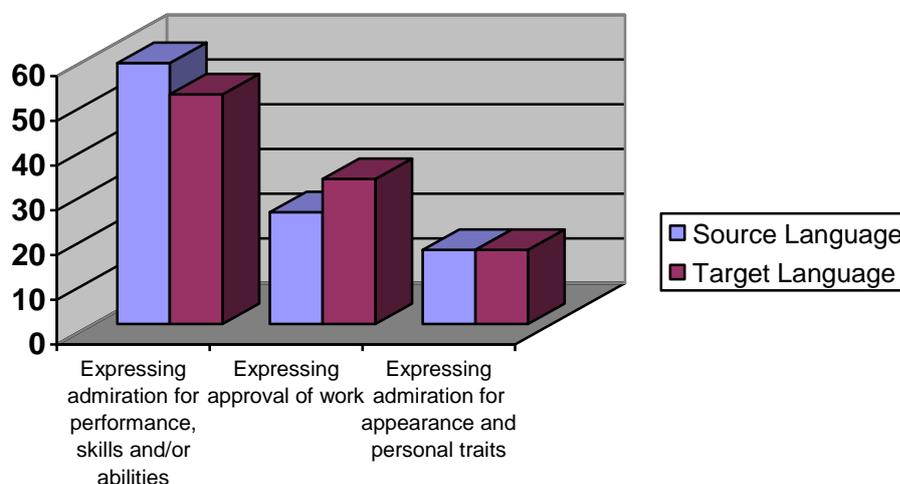
More specifically, compliments in the source and target texts can be classified as follows:



Furthermore, the compliments taken into consideration can be also classified in accordance with their functions. The charts show that the majority of compliments aims at expressing admiration for personal skills, abilities or performances, while the purpose of a relevant number of positive remarks is to express the speaker's praise of the interlocutor's work. Lastly, a smaller number of approving comments are uttered to compliment the addressee's appearance.

In regard to the previous consideration, the original and dubbed versions show some discrepancies due to a scanty number of compliments that are not reported in the Italian version, and to the addition of others.

The percentage of compliments that use the functions presented can be summarized in the following way:



Together with this last classification, compliments in the film have been grouped according to the illocutionary force they convey. However, providing a strict categorization has not been possible because it would be too constrictive. Several compliments, in fact, have more than one function once they are uttered. For example, they might express admiration for the addressee's appearance, skills or elegance, but they may also aim at establishing or maintaining solidarity between interlocutors or at softening face-threatening acts.

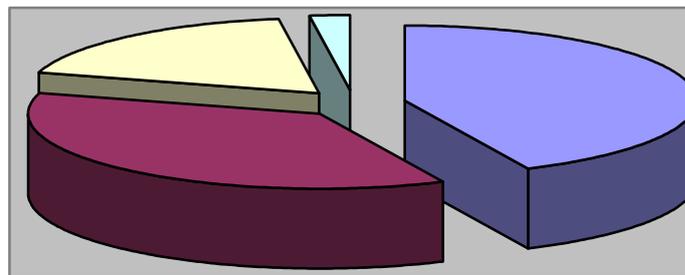
The same applies to any syntactic classification. As stated in the previous chapter, linguists recognize some syntactic patterns as the most used by speaker's in creating compliments. Such classification, together with any other similar approach given by Italian scholars, has not been used to classify the present corpus of compliments. While recognizing the relevance of this categorization, the versatile linguistic nature of the positive remarks taken into consideration has not allowed for any grouping. Although several compliments

follow the syntactic patterns suggested, the majority detach themselves from pre-set models and a varied array of sentence types emerges.

Lastly, the examples shown have brought to light another linguistic aspect that should not be underestimated, i.e. the translation of cultural aspects. As already highlighted within the micro-analysis, the biggest discrepancies between the scripts are probably due to the transposition of lingua-cultural elements. Because of the constraints of the target language itself, several references to the African American community and heritage are lost in the second version.

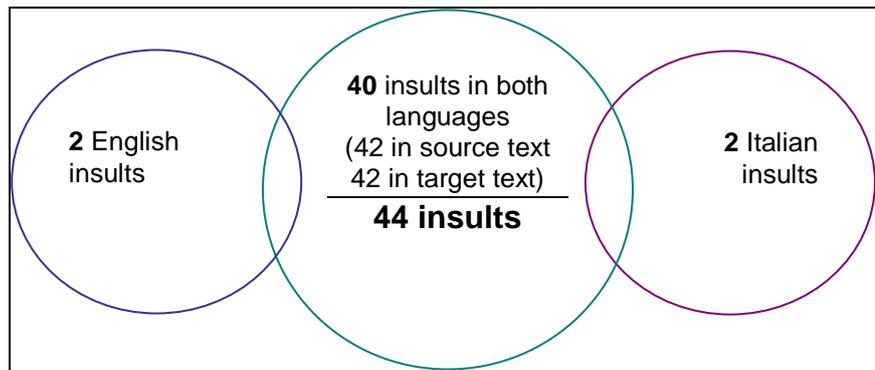
In fact, while the illocutionary force of dubbed utterances almost always coincides with the original, slang expressions and lingua-cultural features are often weakened or neutralized.

The results of the second part of the analysis demonstrate that the greatest number of insulting comments are directly addressed to the interlocutors. In fact, the first category counts 19 out of 44 insults that the speaker explicitly hurls at his listener. Sixteen of the 44 negative remarks are grouped in the second section which includes all the examples implicitly addressed to the interlocutors. Not having an explicit value, these cases can only be recognised by the development of the communicative exchanges within their situational context. The third group of offensive comments contains eight examples referring to one or more individuals outside the actual conversation. Only one example of a dishonest insult has been found. This case, in fact, turns out to be a compliment rather than an offensive remark since the illocutionary force hidden beneath the literal meaning of the words indicates the authentic positive connotation of the speaker's line.



- Explicit Insults to the Listener
- Implicit Insults to the Listener
- Insults to a Third Party
- Insults as Compliments

The comparative analysis between the original and the Italian versions also indicates that the number of insulting expressions in the original text and those in the dubbed version does not always coincide. Examples 59 and 64 show that the offensive comments are only present in the English version, while examples 61 and 75 can be only found in the dubbed version to make the content of the communicative exchanges clearer.



Considering all 44 examples, twenty-two offensive comments are addressed to male characters. To be precise, twelve are aimed at Mr. Delacroix, the protagonist of the film; six refer to the co-protagonist of the story, Manray; only one is addressed to the other street performer Womack; similarly Julius receives only one directly from his sister Ms. Sloan Hopkins and the last two insulting remarks are addressed to two secondary characters.

Only eight negative comments refer to female characters. Six of these are addressed to Ms. Sloan Hopkins, while another two aim at criticizing Ms. Myrna Goldfarb, the only other female and secondary character.

Moreover, four of the 44 insults are addressed to the Mau Mau group, while the rest aim at insulting the authors of CNS or other secondary characters.

Only one insult from Womack is addressed to everyone when he invites all those involved in the production of the minstrel show to go to hell.

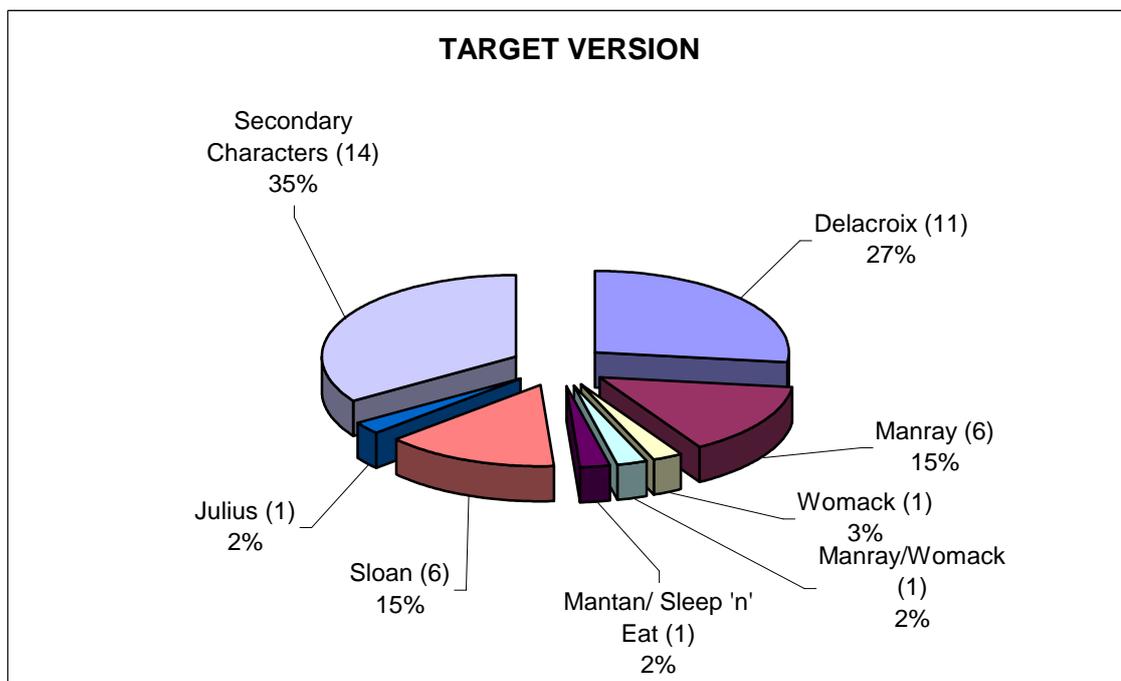
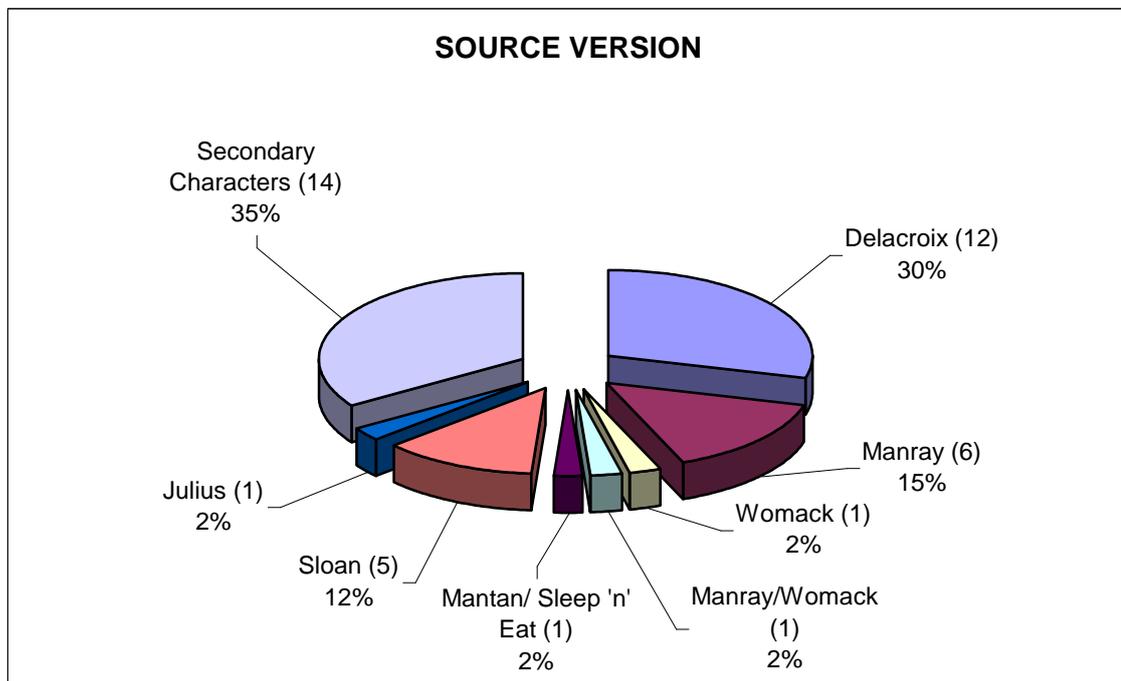
It is interesting to note that, also in the case of insults, the classification of offensive remarks in both languages mirrors the characters' relevance throughout the plot. The individual receiving the greatest number of insulting expressions is the protagonist of the story, Mr. Delacroix. Second in line come Sloan Hopkins and Manray, who receive six insults a piece.

The other addresses are people who have a secondary role in the development of the film.

The examples analysed demonstrate that Mr. Dunwitty, although one of the most offensive characters, is never actually criticized by the others. This result is probably due to the fact that he has a position of superiority over the other people.

However, although he personally never receives any direct criticism, his behaviour and manners are implicitly criticized throughout the story, so that the negative representation of the character makes viewers see him as arrogant, dumb and racist.

More specifically, insults in the source and target versions can be ordered as follows:



Contrary to what the complimenting comments reveal, any classification in accordance to their functions is not possible with this analysis. In fact, the results indicate that every insulting or derogatory expression aims at offending different aspects of those being criticized. As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, due to their own multi-faceted nature, insults are generally unclassifiable. Any attempt to classify insults would be too constrictive and would mean breaking them down into strict groups where their authentic illocutionary force would be lost.

In regard to the previous consideration, the original and the dubbed versions show some discrepancies due to the different use of swear words. In the target text, in fact, the percentage of swear words used is considerably less and, in most cases, the expressions are weakened or even neutralized.

This translation choice, although probably closer to the target audience's tastes, obviously leads to the loss of sub-standard linguistic features typical of the African American language, and to the de-contextualization of the characters with the situational as well as the socio-cultural context in which the film is produced.

For a better understanding of this point, the most significant examples are reported below:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>DUNWITTY:<br/>I want millions and millions of viewers tuned and glued to their <b>fucking televisions</b> every week saying, "Did you see what <b>the fuck</b> they did on CNS last night?" I want advertisers <b>sucking my dick</b> to buy on this show. Do you understand? And I'll squeeze it out of you if it kills you. Peep this. Peep this. I'll give you a thousand dollars if you can name who <b>the fuck</b> number 24 is right there.</p> | <p>Voglio che milioni e milioni di spettatori rimangano incollati alla televisione ogni settimana e dicano "hai visto che figata hanno trasmesso alla CNS ieri sera?"<br/>Voglio che i pubblicitari vengano a <b>farmi pompini</b> per avere uno spazio nello show. È chiaro? E lei è in grado di darmi lo show che voglio io. Un momento... un'altra cosa... sono disposto a darle 1000 \$ se mi dice qual è il nome del playmaker del poster numero 24.</p> |
|---|---|

(89)

The example above clearly shows how the target text is a cleaned up version of Mr. Dunwitty's many vulgar expressions.

Only one has actually been translated. The adaptation, however, has been weakened to suit the audience's taste.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>WOMACK:<br/>Manny, I can't just snap my finger and presto-chango, you're an overnight sensation. Son, it don't work like that.<br/><b>What the fuck you think I am, Houdini?</b></p> | <p>Manray, non pensare che possa schiacciare le dita e farti diventare da un momento all'altro la rivelazione dell'anno. Non è così che funziona. Non ho mica la bacchetta magica io...</p> |
|---|---|

(90)

This is another case, in which the source and the target versions completely differ. Apart from the fact that the final vulgar question is lost in the Italian translation, the whole of Womack's line has been changed. In sarcasm in the original text is a better portrayal of how living a poor life causes them to suffer, while the Italian version seems more formal and neutral. Moreover, the slang expressions included in the English language do not appear in the dubbed version.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>JULIUS:<br/>Word up, man. What we do on this level this <b>shit</b> gotta be <b>fuckin'</b> big, y'all. It's gotta be some global blowout <b>shit</b>. This <b>shit</b> gotta have some symbolism to it! Sustenance.<br/>This <b>shit</b> gotta be like <b>fuckin'</b> John Carlos and Tommie Smith at the ' Olympics, you know what I'm saying?</p> <p>DOUBLE BLAK:<br/>Put the fists up!</p> <p>JULIUS:<br/>Some big <b>shit</b>!</p> | <p>Sono d'accordo fratello. Dobbiamo trovare il modo per punirli, dovrà essere una punizione che farà parlare tutti e no solo qui, ne dovranno parlare in tutto il pianeta, capito il concetto?<br/>Dev'essere qualcosa che mandi un chiaro messaggio alla gente, qualcosa di simbolico. Sto pensando a quando i nostri fratelli Joe Carlos and Tomaie Smith alle Olimpiadi del '68, ricordate salutarono la bandiera con il pugno chiuso.</p> <p>Siiiiii</p> <p>Ricordate quanti casini...</p> |
|--|---|

(91)

Obviously the character whose language is most weakened is Ms. Sloan Hopkins' brother, Julius. The example above shows how the Italian translation detaches from the original, giving Julius a more polite and formal linguistic code.

As already stated for compliments, no syntactic classification can be applied. In fact, although the importance of categorizations theorized by linguists is obviously of great relevance, the versatile nature of the insulting and offensive

comments analysed in *Bamboozled*, makes it impossible to formulate any classification. Many of the insults detach themselves from any previously mentioned syntactic pattern.

As in the case of the analysis of compliments, the cultural aspect must be considered. The translation of insults has, in fact, revealed that many cultural traits are lost in the dubbed version. The transposition of cultural elements that refer to the American background or to African Americans has not always been faithful.

Due to the constraints of the Italian language and to a target-oriented translation, slang expressions and lingua-cultural traits are often weakened or neutralized.

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