

The Subtitling of Film: reaching another community

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in **E. Ventola** (ed.), *Discourse and Community; Doing Functional Linguistics*,
Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen

Introduction

The translation of film for a foreign language audience, either through the device of dubbing (which involves the substitution of the original soundtrack by a version in the target language) or by subtitles (the superimposition on the screen of a written version of the soundtrack) has only recently become a topic of interest within the discipline of translation studies and, by extension, discourse analysis in general. Of the above-mentioned two principal methods of film translation, dubbing has reached a prestigious level of sophistication in a number of countries (e.g., Italy, Germany, France), and is the predominant practice in those countries, especially as regards the adaptation of English language productions. As a result, dubbing has become the subject of a growing number of studies and research projects.

On the other hand, the art of subtitling, possibly due to its lower profile on the international circuit, has received rather less attention. However, in the case of English/Italian film translation, which will be the focus of this paper, while English language films are invariably dubbed into Italian, Italian-to-English film translators invariably opt for subtitling. Although demand for translation in this direction is proportionally minimal, a small number of well-reputed Italian films have been, and are still being, translated and subtitled in the English language.

Because of their generally high status, the films in question are just the kind that reveal a whole series of social, cultural, historical and political characteristics of the Italian nation and people to a foreign audience. Film-makers of the stature of Fellini, Pasolini, and Antonioni, and more recently, Troisi and Tornatore create films that are both entertaining and instructive, and which reach out to other cultures to inform and invite reaction. The act of subtitling in these circumstances therefore carries a heavy burden of responsibility in terms of transferring semantic, pragmatic and cultural content. For example, no attempt should be made to 'localise' these works, but rather, efforts should be made to defend the source culture. Gottlieb (1994: 265), a major authority on translation by subtitling, advises film translators to "give the target

audience the experience they would have if they already knew the foreign language" and, it might be added, if they already understood the source culture. But does the switch from the oral to the written code and the restrictions of concision and omission, that would seem to be inherent to the formation of subtitles, affect the message?

This paper seeks to examine the discourse structure of subtitles, and the strategies employed in their preparation, in terms of a number of parameters, particularly those relating to the principles of functional grammar and systemic linguistics, and to ascertain to what extent they are able to convey the full significance of an important and instructive art form. But first the rival strategy of dubbing must receive its due consideration.

Dubbing

During the silent movie era (very simple) captions accompanied a film in the original and these were simply translated for foreign language audiences, and it might have been thought that this process would have heralded a future for subtitles as soon as 'talkie' films took over. But, for political and historical reasons, dubbing rather than subtitling was to take precedence in Italy. Firstly, at the very beginning of the 'talkie' film era, a section of the film audience was still illiterate or semi-literate and unable to understand the more sophisticated level of wording that the new films required. Comprehension was also impaired by the speed of presentation required by subtitles, as they had to be designed for ever more complex dialogues. It has been calculated (see Ivarsson 1992) that the minimum exposure time necessary for a one-line subtitle is one and a half seconds and, perhaps more importantly, the maximum exposure time recommended is 4 seconds for a single line and 6-8 seconds for a two-line subtitle. These figures are based on the average reading ability of a literate population and, however much they may have been questioned of late (see Minchinton, 1997), they clearly exclude those sections of the population still considered illiterate during the 1920s and 1930s.

Furthermore, the Fascist party would not allow the broadcasting of foreign languages on political grounds. Laws were devised to protect the purity of the Italian language and resist foreign language influences, particularly the influences emanating from the politically suspect United States. While the censorship laws regarding literature during the Fascist period were not always rigorously upheld, the cinema was generally forced to obey the rules, to the extent that by 1939, even the names of the characters in foreign films had to be translated. Clearly, in this climate, there was no future for subtitling and the dubbing process got an early boost. To this day dubbing remains the dominant strategy adopted in the translation of film into the Italian

language.

In spite of the propitious circumstances, before dubbing proper became an established practice, various other expedients were attempted. For example, the new screen stars of Hollywood were required to speak at least a few lines in the languages of the countries to which the film was to be exported; Greta Garbo, Buster Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy all performed this dubious task. Indeed, the (unintentionally) comical Italian pronounced by Oliver Hardy provided a model for the highly successful and (intentionally) comical dubbing of later dubbing actors such as Alberto Sordi.

This brief experiment was followed by the equally improbable multi-lingual versions of Hollywood films using emigrants as actors (see Bollettieri Bosinelli 1994). Many of these impromptu stars had but a residual knowledge of their supposed mother tongue, but versions of major productions such as *The Big Trail* (1931, Raoul Walsh) starring John Wayne and Marguerite Churchill, were conceived in this way. The Italian version of this film (*Il grande sentiero*) featured Franco Corsaro and Luisa Caselotti. Companies such as Paramount actually set up in Europe in order to produce such pluralised works.

But by the early 1930s the process of dubbing had become recognisable in the form we understand it today, and the problems involved in translating for the wide screen began to present themselves. In fact some of the early resistance to dubbing shown by cinema audiences, and particularly by critics, was due to its limited efficacy in 'getting over the message' and the curious use of language created by insensitive translation. Early Hitchcock and Marx Brothers' films were among the first to be dubbed into Italian and initially lost much of their impact in the process. 'Horse Feathers' (McLeod, 1932) translated as 'I fratelli Marx al college' is such an example; its translation immediately brings to the fore the problem of how to capture Groucho Marx's style of (very American) wit and idiolect. The following exchange is indicative - Groucho is being presented as the new Principal of an American college (see Sandrelli, 1997):

- 1) - "Pres. Wagstaff, now that you have stepped into my shoes..."
- "Oh, is that what I stepped in? I wondered... If these are your shoes, the least you could do was have them cleaned".

The humour in this case lies in a typical device used by Groucho Marx, that is the literal interpretation of a metaphorical expression, exploiting the resulting play on words. In just such ways the Marx Brothers create their own kind of artificial macro-context of situation which characterises all their films. It is a contradictory world where many

accepted truths are turned upside down in the service of humour, acceptable to a cinema audience within a wider context of (western) culture. Within the films, each particular context of situation needs to be seen in terms of this wider sense of unreality. The typical plays on words, the deliberately contrived nonsensical expressions, and the linguistic invention employed can upset normal patterns of information presentation and force new interpretations of language functions. In other words, the normal obligatory elements in the contextual configurations of recognised genres (see Halliday & Hasan, 1989: 59) such as 'a lesson', 'a sermon', or in this case, 'the presentation of a new Principal', are distorted. Groucho's response in the above exchange (while looking at his feet) is not meant to constitute a coherent move within a longer dialogue. In fact it is ignored as the old college president continues talking as if nothing had happened. The jokes are aimed at the audience and the 'dialogue' is merely a vehicle. This is an extreme case of film dialogue distancing itself from real, spontaneous exchanges. The translation of such text must also play to the crowd in the same way. As Gregory (1967: 192) points out, in relation to all cinema work, "a film largely creates its own situation and patterns of contextual relations".

A recent dubbed version of the script made some attempt to capture this kind of humour and disregard any logical exchange pattern:

- *"Professor Wagstaff, ora che si è messo nei miei piedi".*

- *"Ah lì mi son messo!, Ecco da dove esala. Se questi sono i suoi, li mandi in lavanderia!"*

(literal translation)

- *"Professor Wagstaff, now that you have put yourself in my feet."*

- *"Ah there I put myself! Here's where it gives off from. If these (indicating the feet) are yours, send them to the laundry!"*

Sergio Jacquier (1995: 262), the translator, actually gave the following explanation:

"Il film poteva essere distribuito in Italia solo a prezzo di una riscrittura che rispettasse quel tipo di paradossale e clownesca comicità propria dei Marx".

'In order to sell in Italy, the film needed rewriting precisely to capture the Marx Brothers' paradoxical and clownish humour'.

Indeed, Jacquier uses the same technique by adopting an Italian colloquial expression which literally translates as "to put oneself in somebody else's feet"; this creates no problem as on the screen Groucho is actually looking down at his shoes/feet. The final

line, meaning "Send them to the laundry!" is meaningless but in harmony with the Marx Brothers' zany style. There is no need to provide a cue for the following 'move', and normal rules of coherence can be waived. The technical aspects of timing, length and lip synchronisation are also accounted for.

Another amusing example from the same source features two of the brothers involved in a meaningless exchange that gains its effect by playing on an exquisitely synaesthetic juxtaposition of alliterative fricatives and contrasting vowel sounds.

2) Zeppo: "Anything further, father?"

Groucho: "Anything further, father? That can't be right. Isn't it 'Anything father, further'?"

As the meanings of 'father' and 'further' are not instrumental to the success of the dialogue, the translator was able to take the liberty of playing around phonetically himself:

Zeppo: "C'è altro, oltre a ciò?"

Groucho: "C'è altro, oltre a ciò? L'avete sentito? Si dice "Che oltre c'è inoltre?"

From the metafunctional point of view, there is little ideational force in this remark, whether it is seen at the level of dialogue between the two characters or as a text designed to amuse a potential cinema audience. In either case it has a basically interpersonal role, being an extended leave-taking exercise at one level and an example of pure language play at another. The translator quite rightly reflected both elements, and indeed managed to find acceptable solutions to most of the other linguistic caprices in the text.

However, although the post-war period has brought ever more sophisticated dubbing techniques and led to a growth in expertise on the part of translators, adaptors, dubbing directors and actors alike, major mismatches in meaning, cultural equivalence and register still emerge. The dialectal challenges of Spike Lee's expletive-ridden films, where the context of culture is so crucial to an understanding of the thought processes of the largely inarticulate characters, the importance of class-related accent in films of social reality such as 'My Beautiful Launderette', and the register shifts adopted in works such as Tarantino's 'Pulp Fiction' all create obstacles to successful translation. In the latter case, one short scene is indicative of what can go wrong. The character Vincent, high on heroin, enters the home of his boss's wife, trying to appear 'cool'. He

only utters a few words: 'Hello' - 'Where's the intercom?' - 'Hello' - 'OK'. but they are pregnant with meaning. He is attempting to show his nonchalance in a potentially very risky situation. In the dubbed version the character is made to say 'Ciao, c'è qualcuno?' (Hello, Is anybody home?) in a rather infantile voice, totally ruining the effect.

Neil Jordan's 'The Crying Game' (1992) contains another example of register error in the Italian version, where a barman's question "What'll it be?" was rendered by "Che cosa bevi, amico?", making a deliberate use of the intimate second person singular pronoun and adding the vocative *amico* - 'mate'. However, a little later the barman addresses the same person with "She wants to know, sir", giving a formal flavour to the dialogue by adding a powerful interpersonal marker.

Subtitling

Jean Renoir referred to dubbing as "a monstrosity, a challenge to human and divine laws" (see Baccolini et al. 1994: 53), and in Italy, the director Michelangelo Antonioni has also always been a determined opponent of dubbing. They and many others have supported the use of subtitling, and then only when some kind of linguistic assistance was considered essential. However, their fears were related to the effects of dubbing on the kind of serious film that they themselves were involved with. Indeed, subtitling into English was long thought to be the province of cinephiles interested only in "exquisitely produced films by little known Hungarian directors". But nowadays, apart from the wider acceptance of 'avant-garde' foreign films in general, the interest shown by organisations such as Channel Four television in Britain has widened the prospects for this kind of cinema. Generally speaking, the foreign films that are subtitled in English continue to be those that make some comment on the real issues facing different societies.

Subtitling involves transferring the characteristics of spoken dialogue to the written mode. The distinguishing features of spoken and written language are widely discussed in the literature of linguistics (see in particular Halliday: 1989), and include such general notions as the fact that the spoken language is grammatically more intricate but lexically less dense, and that written language is more nominalised compared to the dynamic, verbal nature of the spoken variant. Thus written transcriptions of spoken dialogue might be expected to betray their artificial nature. However, in the film genre, it must be remembered that the original dialogue is not real, merely purporting to be real. It is first produced in the written mode, in the script: then, in the case of translation for dubbing, the original text is translated 'written word' for 'written word' and then, even more artificially, 'spoken' by dubbing actors. In the case of

subtitles, the original script is merely transposed to a different written form.

Particularly in the past, the language of many popular films was often stylised and patently false, demonstrating its lack of authenticity. Consider the classic cowboy line 'A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do', and expressions like "Crikey, it's the law!" uttered by hardened criminals in 1950's English 'cops and robbers' films. Even today the language of 'Rambo' or 'Baywatch' hardly reflects reality. In these cases the dubbed or subtitled versions, if accurate, were (and are) equally inane.

But in the case of higher quality foreign films subtitled into English, where considerable thought goes into the creation of meaningful and credible dialogue, translators need to put thought into their versions. A whole series of parameters need to be borne in mind. Firstly, in spite of the often disorganised nature of spoken discourse, all the words that are uttered need to be accounted for, just as they must be in written translation. "Source language texts consist of words, that is all that is there, on the page" (Newmark 1988: 37). This does not necessarily mean that nothing should be missed out or rearranged at a segmental level. It is the utterance that should be translated, not just the language. Words being "accounted for" means giving due respect to the original creator of the text and what he/she intended to convey, even if only through inference or implicature (see Grice 1975). In fact, there is much in translation, from both written and oral texts, that is not "on the page". Cultural references, deliberate ambiguity, humourous allusion and the various pragmatic intentions of the speakers also need to be understood and included in the translation. These problems are inherent in most translation acts but subtitling presents its own set of inbuilt difficulties.

Firstly, subtitles must follow a 'blow-by-blow' sequence, hence running the risk of losing the overall global view, whereas a more thorough written translation can occasionally summarise, explain or otherwise maintain the holistic picture. It may be necessary with subtitles to operate a trade-off between the effect of an individual line or sequence (or their sacrifice) and keeping the audience on track in terms of the development of the wider plot. As Gregory points out in terms of the stage:

if the actor...spoke as people do in 'real life', with frequent non sequiturs, false starts, allusions, digressions, sentence fragments, etc. ...the audience would be unlikely to be getting the information it needs to get, in order that the 'two hours traffic of the stage (or film) emerges as a whole and understandable experience (Gregory 1978: 43).

On the other hand, concision or omission of material in subtitles may lead to their losing much pragmatic effect. However seemingly banal, any elements of context

may be important in creating meaning and maintaining cohesion. The practical problems of time and space on the screen force decisions on the translator, but the decisions must account for the communicative intention of their original. For example, there is often a temptation to dilute or omit colloquialisms, while colloquial usage is typical of spoken language and may provide an important key to the relations between the speakers and the level of formality involved. This is particularly true of taboo language, especially sexually-based swear words, which are usually toned down, however, due to the fact that the coefficient of intensity of expletives would seem to be raised through the greater visibility of the written mode. The coefficient of intensity (see Snelling 1992) is a measure of the force of a lexical item and needs to be matched in translation. For example the verb 'to hug' has a higher coefficient of intensity than the verb 'to hold' in that it implies a greater degree of force dictated by momentary affection or excitement, but the verb phrase 'to hold tight' matches its force. Thus a translator needs to be sensitive to the level of intensity required in writing to match the verbal ferocity.

The inventive use of language displayed, for example, in puns and other kinds of wordplay are often connected to the visual element on the screen. The written version tends to have less impact, especially as it cannot capture the changes in intonation or use of stress that are the province of the oral mode. It is also less directly connected to the non-verbal gestural element. A classic example is the 'seal scene' from the previously mentioned Marx Brothers' film 'Horse Feathers'. Groucho is putting the finishing touches to an important document and calls for a seal (*sigillo* in Italian). Harpo emerges with a live animal seal in his arms (*foca* in Italian). As can be seen the word play based on the homonyms seal/seal cannot be replicated in Italian. Translator Jacquier came up with the brilliant solution of having Groucho say "*Focalizziamo*" ("Let's focus on this"), though the dubbed version has the advantage of being able to put phonological stress on the first telling syllables. Highlighting the written syllables by using some emphatic device (bold, italics, bigger letters) may overlabour the joke.

Where the spoken text contains social, ethnic or geographical dialect use, this element also usually fails to emerge in subtitles. With dubbing something can be done to reflect language variation: Amendola's rasping version of Dustin Hoffman's Ratso in 'Midnight Cowboy' provides an important ingredient in the characterisation. And even if all the relevant prosodic features cannot be captured, the lexical items (slang, taboo terms, etc., which are important markers) compensate sufficiently even with the necessary toning down referred to above. Dialectal usage, swearing, deviant grammar or even inarticulacy help set the context of culture, and both dubbing and subtitling techniques should be called upon to provide some clues. Using a transcription of a

native dialect (e.g., Neapolitan for Cockney) might be unnecessarily misleading, but one solution is, for example, to restrict the vocabulary range, to give the idea of an uneducated, grammatically limited parlance.

As a final comment on the potential inadequacy of subtitles, Kovacic reminds us that, in the Hallidayan terms of the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language, subtitles favour the ideational - they are informative, whereas in dialogue it is often the interpersonal that is important, especially where nothing new is said. Consider a scene of a man offering a woman a cigarette. The realisational possibilities for the accompanying direct or indirect offer include *Would you like a cigarette?*, *Can I offer you a cigarette?*, *Do you smoke?*, *I think you need one of these*, *Here, have a fag*, and the possible appropriate choices of reply *Yes, please*, *Yes, OK*, *No, thank you*, *That won't help*, *Christ, yes!*, etc. may be crucial from the interpersonal point of view of creating or maintaining certain relationships between the characters. However, very often in cases like this, where the gesture itself fulfils the ideational function, the dialogue is considered redundant. Similar considerations come into play with regard to the repetition of words or phrases, which are also often left out on the grounds of being redundant. Repetition may, however, contribute to meaning in itself, as well as providing cohesion. It may express surprise, incomprehension or enthusiasm.

As Ventola explains (1988: 60), two main types of logical relations can be recognised in the Hallidayan concepts of expansion and projection. She provides the following example (taken from Martin, 1981):

- B. *Have you heard of Baron von Munchhausen?*
 A. *No, I've never heard about them.*
It's the first time I've heard about them.

She points out that the initiating move 'No, I've never heard about them' is expanded by restating it in other words in the continuing move 'It's the first time I've heard about them', involving a logical relation of elaboration. A is making sure that B understands him properly - the reiteration is not redundant, though this is precisely the kind of move that is sacrificed in subtitling. Even the most banal sounding chat can tell us a great deal about the psychological nature of the characters, the immediate environment and the cultural setting. Furthermore, conversational markers and turn-taking strategies can be indicative of social relations, showing where the power relations lie.

All language users are interested in maintaining 'face' (see Brown & Levinson, 1987) and their use of language is constantly aimed at setting up, maintaining or breaking down social relations. The important elements in this 'politeness' strategy must

be kept in translation; Hatim and Mason (1997: 87) specify the following elements as important in the encoding of face protection - "lexical choice, sentence formation, imperatives, interrogatives, unfinished utterances, intonation, ambiguity of reference." Thus, in the example of the cigarette offer, the invitation "Wanna fag?" is acceptable between two friends who maintain an equal power relationship, while if a clerk expressed himself in the same way to his boss, there would have to be a reason transcending the mere offer of 'goods'. If the wording of subtitles misses such nuances, the interpersonal dynamics are modified. However, transcultural messages may also be involved. For example, in the case of a film set in an English university, the generally less formal relations subsisting between British students and their lecturers should be allowed to emerge in translation for audiences in Italy, where such relations are generally still more formal.

However, notwithstanding the above account of the limitations of subtitling as a translation method, many worthy translators work in this field and produce highly creditable versions of original film dialogue. While many of them, like most other translators, would eschew the idea that they work to any kind of plan, attempts have been made to observe what strategies are adopted in subtitling work (Ivarsson 1992, Gottlieb 1992, Kovacic 1996). Gottlieb, for example, has devised ten strategies that he sees at work in reducing a text to subtitles, and which he classifies as expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation.

Examining each in turn, expansion is used when the original requires an explanation because of some cultural nuance not retrievable in the target language; paraphrase is resorted to in cases where the phraseology of the original cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language; transfer refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and correctly; imitation even maintains the same forms, typically with names of people and places; transcription is used in those cases where a term is unusual even in the source text, for example the use of a third language or nonsense language; dislocation is adopted when the original employs some sort of special effect, for example a silly song in a cartoon film, where the translation of the effect is more important than the content; condensation would seem to be the typical strategy used, that is the shortening of the text in the least obtrusive way possible, but as we shall see later, this is not necessarily the case; decimation is an extreme form of condensation where, perhaps for reasons of discourse speed, even potentially important elements are omitted; deletion refers to the total elimination of parts of a text; resignation describes the strategy adopted when no translation solution can be found and meaning is inevitably lost.

From a perusal of these strategies, it might seem that subtitling must often consist of little more than 'making the best of a bad job', but the situation is not in fact so negative. Kovacic (1996: 298) points to the conclusion to be drawn from the fact that such a wide range of strategies is available to the translator:

"Subtitling makes it particularly obvious that translation is a decision-making procedure".

"It is important to understand the choices available to the subtitler and the effects produced by different subtitling decisions".

She cites Halliday and the functional linguistics model developed by him as being particularly useful in analysing the general principles of human communication organisation.

"Since (in subtitling) we are dealing with language in use, the most appropriate models for such a description would seem to be those provided by functional linguistics, which defines its objective as study of language not as a formal system, but rather as a system of social semiotics, i.e. from the point of view of its function in human societies". (Kovacic 1996: 298)

Halliday himself (1992: 15) described translation as a "meaning-making activity" but added the distinction that it is "the guided creation of meaning", pointing out that what is of interest is the question of choice.

While Halliday was talking basically about semantic, lexicogrammatical and phonological choices, other choices (of strategy and of content) are made following the translator's mental construction of the context of situation. The Hallidayan concept of context of situation, going back to Malinowski's work on the translation of Melanesian languages into English, is based on the idea that all 'texts', in addition to the wording, occur within a non-linguistic situational and cultural context that must be understood. Different cultures have different modalities of perception which at times impede interlingual understanding. Translators must know their audiences very well and be sensitive to their receptive capabilities in given situational contexts. The context of situation consists of the three components *field* (what is going on), *tenor* (who is involved) and *mode* (how the language is being employed). These three components determine the register of each situation and are in turn related to the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language alluded to above, which are at work simultaneously in any semiotic event, film being a particularly complex example. Films

unwind in a sequence of scenes which can each be described as belonging to or representing a certain genre or genrelet. As Ventola (1988: 52) explains:

the plane of genre uses the register plane as its realisation ... the register plane in its turn, uses both the language plane and non-linguistic planes for its realisation.

Subtitles must then attempt to bring the language plane and the non-linguistic plane together where necessary to relay meaning.

In terms of the choices available to the subtitle translator, elements of the textual function such as theme/rheme organisation and cohesion are often rendered less crucial by the accompanying visual clues as to how the discourse is developing. A film combines the meanings of the verbal and visual codes. As Kress (1985: 35) explains, in relation to a TV news report, "the visual code operating in the text locates the viewer more precisely and more decisively than the verbal." Thus, a close-up, a camera angle or a succession of shots and scene changes can plot theme progressions and maintain cohesion.

However, as Kovacic suggests, important choices lie between the ideational and (inter)personal aspects. It is tempting for the translator to concentrate on the ideational in that the resulting subtitles provide signposts to the action and the plot. But there are times when the interpersonal element may be more important than the ideational. Kovacic (1996: 302) provides an example from the translation from English into Slovene of the television adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's 'Long Day's Journey into Night'. The mother in the story repeatedly breaks into the main stream of conversation with comments about her hair. The choice open to the translator is between providing only the main storyline and ignoring the superficially trivial comments of the mother, or providing all the apparently trivial comments on the grounds that they provide important clues to the mental condition of the character and her relations with her environment. There is therefore a case for a certain decimation of the main dialogue, or a transfer of the entire text. If, as is likely, the latter option is not logistically possible, then the subtitler will have to resign him/herself to making choices and losing some ideational or interpersonal force. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (1986) can be brought to bear in this discussion of what can be jettisoned. According to this theory, effective communication takes place in a shared cognitive environment where the minimum of effort is required on the part of participants in deciphering meaning.

"People do not speak unless they assume that what they have to say will have

some effect on (will be relevant to) their audience (...) Conversely, audiences assume that what is said to them will be relevant in some way or another". (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 49)

Anything that goes beyond this premise is potentially redundant, and particularly unhelpful in subtitles.

An actual text and its subtitling will now be examined in the light of the above discussion, namely the Italian film *Caro Diario* directed by and starring Nanni Moretti. This film is a kind of parody of a documentary as Moretti traverses Rome and other parts of Italy providing a minimalist portrait, through monologue and dialogue, of the country as he sees it today. Clearly it has a highly specific cultural content. Examples of all Gottlieb's strategies can be observed in the translation of the film into English and a sample is presented below of some of those that are relevant to the purposes of this paper:

EXPANSION

... oppure qualche film dell'orrore come "Henry"

... or horror films like "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer"

The elaboration of the film title is presumably considered necessary by the translator/subtitler in order to avoid potential ambiguity.

PARAPHRASE

Ormai ho paura di rimettermi in gioco.

I'm afraid to re-think my life.

Paraphrase is the obverse of straight transfer and has numerous potential pitfalls. It risks upsetting Newmark's warning to pay attention to the words on the page, and may have unforeseen effects on subsequent developments in the discourse. In this case the perspective of the speaker in relation to his future is altered, though probably to no great detriment to an overall understanding of the film. A nearer equivalent, dictated by the wider context of situation, might have been "I'm afraid to jump back into the fray".

TRANSFER

La nave sta arrivando a Lipari.

The boat arrives in Lipari

This kind of literal translation is indeed the best when it is possible. As well as being correct in the most obvious sense of the word, it maintains information structure in terms of theme and rheme, cohesion and information focus.

TRANSCRIPTION

Ca-pi-sci quel-lo che dico.

Un-der-stand what I'm say-ing.

Transcription consists in the reproduction of a particular usage, fulfilling the textual function of how the language is being used. In this case the very obvious pronounced enunciation of the original is reflected in the syllabisation of the subtitle.

CONDENSATION

Ora è tutto cambiato, ora è tutto veramente cambiato.

Everything has really changed.

This example condenses by summarising the original and is typical of the strategy employed to eliminate seemingly redundant material. However, it loses the cohesive elements of repetition and syntactic equivalence.

Il micio, come fa il micio? Miao, miao, Eh, eh.

What does the cat do?

In this case the question of genre arises. The situation is that of a father speaking to a child and the features associated with that genre situation can be seen in the original - the repetition of words, the use of children's vocabulary and the sense of intimacy that that engenders. The stark question in the subtitled version does not fit this genre (see Ventola, 1987 for a detailed discussion of exchange and genre conventions, particularly as regards service encounters).

DELETION

Te lo dico io perché. Perché odio gente... come te.

I hate people like you.

The total elimination of text should presumably rest on the conviction that that element is expendable. However, the cotext may be crucial to the text in question from a rhetorical or pragmatic point of view. The *Te lo dico io perché* is important in establishing the power relations behind the dialogue.

Conclusion

The discussion so far has been largely theoretical, backed only by selected examples taken from the real world of dubbing and subtitling, in the latter case with specific reference to Moretti's *Caro Diario*. But theoretical discussion is of little value if not also backed by some kind of scientific, let us say statistical, support. With regard

to the translation and subtitling of *Caro Diario*, such data exist (see Sandrelli 1997). The potential breakdown of the strategies adopted in the translation of this text was approximately as follows:

transfer	66%
condensation	17%
decimation	5%
paraphrase	4%
deletion	4%
imitation	3%
transcription	1%
expansion	1%
resignation	0.5%
dislocation	0.5%

(adapted from Sandrelli 1997: 133)

All the strategies were employed and various choices were made but the overwhelming conclusion that emerges from this analysis is that the wording remains the crucial factor, both at individual lexis and clause level. Meaning is seen to reside overwhelmingly in this dimension. So, with regard to the original question raised of whether a subtitled film, particularly a film of value, can succeed in delivering an intellectually challenging and culturally specific message into English, the answer must be a guarded "Yes, it can". Whether the same can be said of subtitling between other language pairs is a question that has been addressed by a number of authors (Roffe & Thorne 1994, Kovacic 1996, Widler 1996), all of whom come to the same (guarded) conclusion. But as with much translation, it is the surprising degree of statistically recorded 'transfer' that will perhaps surprise the reader versed in translation theory. And, as we have seen, this transfer is basically ideational transfer, so the audience is potentially deprived of the more complete picture. Indeed, even in the case of 'Caro Diario', it was recognised that there were losses at the level of pragmatic meaning, particularly through the omission of conversational and register markers. However, given that this film, and many others like it, received considerable critical acclaim in its subtitled version, a further conclusion must be, bearing in mind Kovacic's point about the tendency to overemphasize the ideational aspect, that the more discerning audience picks up a substantial part of the interpersonal component through the visual channel. This would back Lambert's view (1993: 234) that subtitles are a "support text" that nevertheless provide cohesion and coherence between the images on the screen, the

general soundtrack, and the co-text formed by the titles themselves.

A good translator/subtitler, therefore, should be able to guarantee the inclusion of all the essential elements of meaning, such that the viewer perceives the events of the film, in Hallidayan terms, as not only an ideational, but also an interpersonal and textual whole. It is salutary to remember that, whether we are discussing the field of film translation or any other sector, it is the preponderance of straightforward workmanlike interpretation (the organisation of information in transitivity patterns that fulfil the ideational function) that paves the way for that smaller but essential element of imaginative and creative translation expertise that makes a complex semiotic event not only comprehensible but also enlightening and enjoyable.

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