

# Transferring multilingual humour intralingually: the case of “Big Night”

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## Abstract

*Multilingual films usually tackle significant social and political issues. Sometimes, these films adopt linguistic diversity to create confusion and to trigger humour, accomplishing a comic effect. Normally, films about migration and diaspora are multilingual, as they want to recreate the linguistic diversity that exists in reality. There are many cases though in which the translator/adaptor faces the struggle of translating into his/her own language. In this paper, we will analyse the Italian dubbing of Big Night, to see how the dialogues have been conveyed and especially how verbally expressed humour and stereotypes from the Italian language and culture are transferred intralingually and to what effect.*

*Keywords: multilingualism, humour, dubbing, intralingual translation.*

## 1. Introduction

Language contact is a common phenomenon in today’s globalised world. It no longer only takes place in traditionally multilingual areas such as South Africa, India, Belgium, Canada or Spain, to name just a few, but is now characteristic of many societies as a result of tourism, international commerce, migration and even war. Film industries worldwide are aware of this phenomenon and filmmakers increasingly incorporate the contemporary context of cultural exchange, characterised by cross-border flows of people, commodities and culture, into the story-world of the film. As cross-cultural encounters intensify through migration and globalisation, much attention has recently focused on exploring how a language shapes its speakers’ identity in the multicultural and multilingual interactions (Carter 2004) which are increasingly being represented in contemporary British and American films. Indeed, these often devote their attention to language use within multi-ethnic communities in the United Kingdom and the United States where code-switching proves to be a crucial linguistic process.

The term “multilingual” can be used to describe texts incorporating official languages, dialects, sociolects, slang, pidgin and invented languages (Delabastita 2009), but for the purpose of this study a film is considered as being multilingual only when two or more official languages are spoken. According to Meylaerts (2006: 5), translation can no longer be understood as “the *full* transposition of *one* (monolingual) source code into *another*

(monolingual) target code for the benefit of a *monolingual* target public.” The translation of multilingual films inevitably results in the levelling out and flattening of linguistic diversity, leaving any geo-social connotation attached to the characters for individual viewers to work out for themselves (Chiaro 2010). Often such films are serious and tackle significant social and political issues. However, what happens when a multilingual film adopts linguistic diversity to create a comic effect? According to Kozloff, “Comedy relies upon confusion, and in screwball these confusions are engendered by the way characters talk, the way they listen, and the way they (mis)interpret what they’ve heard” (Kozloff 2000: 198). Multilingual humour goes beyond Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) *strictu sensu* (such as puns and wordplay) but embraces a wider area, in which language itself contributes to accomplishing a comic effect. Starting from these observations, the present paper sets out to employ a synchronic perspective in order to analyse the Italian dubbing of the movie *Big Night*, a 1996 comedy-drama whose protagonists are two Italian brothers. In the original dialogues, they often speak Italian (even with customers) and in our analysis we will focus on the Italian dubbed version to see how the dialogues have been conveyed and especially how VEH and stereotypes from the Italian language and culture are transferred intralingually and to what effect. In section 2 we will outline an overview of multilingualism on screen and multilingualism as a conveyor of humour, as well as show other examples of intralingual screen translation. Section 3 contains the analysis of the dialogues from *Big Night* and their Italian dubbing, while in section 4 we endeavour to draw some conclusions.

## 2. Multilingualism on screen

Research on multilingualism in Translation Studies has focused on the presence of translation within multilingual films, with a view to studying the visibility of translation in films which depict language diversity (Cronin 2009) and to analysing how multilingualism can become a tool for filmmakers (Martínez-Sierra et al. 2010; O’Sullivan, 2011) and serve an aesthetic purpose (Şerban 2012). On the other hand, researchers are interested in the translation of multilingual films, from a variety of perspectives. Thus, López Delgado (2007), Monti (2009) and Minutella (2012) study translation techniques which are employed to transfer multilingual dialogues from the original film. The translation of multilingual films is also analysed in terms of their multimodality, since film editing and the characters’ non-verbal language enhance the audience’s comprehension (Sanz Ortega, 2011). Taking into account the fact that the translators’ options may be limited by the process of dubbing and subtitling and the characteristics of the audiovisual text itself, López Delgado (2007), Corrius (2008), Zabalbeascoa (2012) and Zabalbeascoa and Corrius (2012) introduce the concept of constraint (Zabalbeascoa, 1996 – from Titford, 1982 and Mayoral, Kelly, & Gallardo, 1988) in the analysis of translated multilingualism.

*Big Night* is a multilingual comedy, in which a secondary language, i.e. Italian, supports English – the main language of the film. English is the language in which the main events of the film are narrated, even if Italian is randomly spoken by the two protagonists, *Primo* and *Secondo*, and by some secondary characters. Nevertheless, the Italian language plays an important role in the film, as it contributes to the production of hilarious and humorous situations, bringing confusion to events in the film. Before proceeding with the detailed analysis of some scenes, it is necessary to give an overview of the theoretical framework used to investigate the role that multilingualism plays on screen, especially in comedies. There seems to be a fairly unanimous opinion among scholars about the increasingly pervasive role that multilingualism has recently acquired on the big screen (Heiss 2004), leading some scholars to consider multilingual films as a real genre (Wahl 2005, 2008). While we cannot

deny the massive quantitative and qualitative increase of the phenomenon in the last two decades and the suggestive and useful attempt to classify it, we have to take into account that the presence of multilingualism on the big screen can be detected in sound movies that were released in the thirties and it is possible to find several examples of multilingual films long before the nineties (De Bonis 2014). Moreover, the categorisation of multilingual films is not able to consider those cases in which multilingualism in cinema plays a multiple and often ambivalent role that cannot always be interpreted unambiguously. The presence of several languages in a film assumes a specific function in each movie, and therefore it is not possible to generalize without an accurate semiotic analysis of this role. Thus, only after having identified the meaning of the phenomenon of multilingualism within a film is it possible to trace points of convergence between different films, both as the role of multilingualism in the original version and its translation, especially in dubbing, which is the prevailing translation strategy for audiovisual products in Italy (Chaume 2007, 2012; Chiaro 2009). Multilingual films can be considered as a sort of genre within the genre, i.e. a multi-faceted set of films whose different features are characterised by the same *fil rouge* that is multilingualism. A commonly shared theme of these movies is the representation of the richness and complexity of real-life multilingual realities within which code-switching plays a crucial role.

## 2.1. Multilingualism and humour

Humour is a culturally specific constructed phenomenon, with each construction typically developing within the backdrop of a given culture, country, and in particular, language. To focus on the latter aspect, language, it can be understood that humour is expressed by a certain type of language and that everything has to be framed in an appropriate fashion in order for humour to be accomplished. A particular type of humour comes into fruition, however, when languages come into contact with one another, thus, representing conflicting cultures and ideologies that intertwine within the same space.

As stated before, the use of multilingualism in comedies often becomes a vehicle for humour, bringing confusion to events narrated on screen. When we talk about humour and the comic effect produced by the presence of different languages and cultures on screen, we do not refer to verbally expressed humour (Chiaro 1992, 2004) *strictu sensu*, i.e. jokes and wordplay, but to a wider area in which linguistic and cultural identities become the target for “good lines [and] sharp and clever remark[s]” (Chiaro 2004: 45) that produce a comic and humorous effect. In this case we are dealing with what Chiaro defines “non-specific verbally expressed humour,” because the effect is obtained through the word, but the use of the word itself becomes more difficult to define in humorous terms. Chiaro (1992) also makes a suggestive distinction between playing with language and playing through language. The first one refers to a creative use of the language that becomes the object of the wordplay, as in poetry or in jokes, while the second considers language a means by which this wordplay is obtained, e.g. prose or witty and sharp graffiti. Thus, we can argue that multilingualism as a vehicle for humour can be considered as a sort of “playing through language.” As far as our study is concerned, the humour in the film currently being analysed is largely based on the contrast between people belonging to different groups and cultures.

## 2.2. Translating multilingual films

As the epitome of a multilingual film one instinctively thinks of works such as *L'auberge espagnole* (Cédric Klapisch 2002) in which an array of languages is spoken, but in reality the range can be restricted to just one more language beyond the basic language of the film – see Chaume (2012: 131) and Chiaro (2009: 159), who alludes to the “translational quandary” deriving from films of this type. Using more than one language in the film’s linguistic

landscape may be considered “an attempt at instilling veracity in the stories” (Díaz Cintas 2011: 218). It can also be motivated by factors such as the need to preserve authenticity and representational adequacy, globalisation, and specific requirements of the fabula, to name just a few. An important role is also played by the demands of the audience, who expect “characters to behave in a ‘plausible’ way”; this in turn means, among other things, “speaking the language suggested by the diegesis” (O’Sullivan 2011: 113–114). In today’s multilingual productions, the decision to translate (or not) all the different languages at play depends on the functional value that multilingualism has in the film. This can be ascertained from a quantitative point of view, according to how often/much the different languages are used. There is of course much variation in the prominence given to the second or third languages in such films, but as a rule of thumb, if languages occur regularly, they should be translated in such a way that the target viewer is aware of the language difference. However, the solution may not be so simple if the second or third language is spoken only occasionally, and only for a particular purpose. The decision can then be taken according to the qualitative importance intended by the language plurality in the film. Does it play a diegetic role? Is the intention of the exchange to produce humour or perplexity among the characters? Can the meaning be derived from any other clues in the semiotic context?

Generally speaking, dialogue exchanges in a second or third language, which are merely part of the setting and have no narrative function, and which the audience will understand because of the context in which they occur, do not tend to be translated. As a rule, the tendency is to translate only the main language, whilst the foreign lexical units remain unchanged. This is the easiest strategy and the chances are that these utterances are not translated in the original version either. In fact, a translation may have the pernicious effect of supplying viewers with more information than intended and destroying the objective of the original. Indeed, non-translation can have the benefit of emphasising a comic or alienating effect as in the case of *Lost in Translation* (2003), where all the Japanese exchanges are left untranslated. These occurrences are not subtitled in the original and need no translation into any other language since the context and the character’s gestures make it perfectly clear what is going on. An alternative approach is to reduce the interlingual tension and wealth found in the original by resorting to complete, monolingual dubbing, replacing the original soundtrack with a new one in the target language. This strategy tends to eliminate all linguistic diversity and usually leads to a negative manipulation of the original, by downplaying the symbolic value of the original multilingualism.

On occasions, monolingual dubbing makes use of compensation devices in the target language to mark the diversity of the original. As discussed by Heiss (2004), compensation can be made at syntactic, lexical, pragmatic and phonetic levels. One such example is the Italian dubbed version of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), in which the father speaks proper Italian but with a foreign accent. For some authors, monolingual dubbing can never be successful since “the complexity and variety of the character network and the intense singularity of each person which form the centre of the polyglot film render dubbing impossible without destroying the movie” (Wahl 2005). The opposite approach would be to retain the original soundtrack and resort to the use of monolingual subtitles; Taylor’s definition of subtitles as the “conveyors of meaning and guardians of culture” (Taylor 2000: 153), emphasizes the power of words through which the audience can grasp a general understanding of the content without necessarily missing out on the extralinguistic level thereof. In this case, all dialogue exchanges migrate from oral to written delivery and the plurality of languages used in the original is kept untouched in the translated version. Linguistically talented viewers will be able to appreciate the linguistic variety present in the original, but those less talented may miss these variations. One way of avoiding this pitfall is to mark the subtitles in such a way that viewers will be alerted to the change of language.

A hybrid where monolingual dubbing seems to be the standard strategy for dealing with the approach proposed by Heiss (2004) is the combination of dubbing (for the main language) and subtitling (for the other languages), which is not so frequent and only viable in countries where dubbing is firmly established as a translation mode. In a country like Italy, where the translation of multilingual films tends to resort to the general strategy of monolingual dubbing (Herrera 2007), there are many examples of American films using Italian as the “other” language that caused problems for translation and adaptation. In the film *Eat, Pray, Love* (2010) the character Liz (Julia Roberts), who initially speaks no Italian, sojourns for a period in Rome – during which time she takes Italian lessons and makes a number of friends – before continuing on her travels. As stated, the character is dubbed into native Italian, so the fact that she needs to pull out an Italian-English dictionary every now and then is incongruous, but this is played down in the dubbing by making the character recite names of celebrated Italian dishes whenever she does so, a logical move in that she subsequently enthuses about Italian cuisine. This is the first example in the film of the coinciding of L2 (the dubbing language) and L3 (a foreign language in the original film). Then when Liz first meets the Swedish woman Sofi in a bar, her remark “your Italian’s fantastic” is transformed into *ti comporti proprio da vera romana* [‘you really behave like a true Roman’] and Sofi’s reply “I have a wonderful tutor” becomes *ho un cicerone personale, conosce Roma a memoria* [‘I have a personal guide, he knows Rome by heart’]. Here, the coinciding of L2 and L3 becomes more convoluted when Liz begins Italian lessons. In this case, transforming the language being discussed into Spanish, French, etc. is clearly not an option – the idea that an American woman with no knowledge of foreign languages settles in Rome for a few months in order to learn Spanish or French would be decidedly far-fetched, whatever the degree of tolerance of Italian audiences when confronted with foreign influences in film dialogues (Ulrych 1996: 157). In the case in point the strategy adopted is to convert Liz’s meetings with her teacher into lessons on Latin and on the city of Rome. In the source text the Italian lesson includes an explanation of the past tense conjugation of the verb *attraversare* [“to cross”], which in the target text becomes:

Table 1. From “Eat, Pray, Love”

| Original version  | Italian version  |
|---|--|
| LIZ: ( <i>out of shot</i> ) - - -   | LIZ: I monumenti di Roma sono pieni di frasi latine. Mi aiuti a capire qualcosa? |
| GIOVANNI: You can say: Egli attraversò [= “He crossed”].                          | GIOVANNI: Come no! Partiamo dalla prima in classifica: SPQR.                     |
| LIZ: Egli attraversò [= “He crossed”].  | LIZ: Non significa senatus qualcosa?   |
| GIOVANNI: It’s a past. Noi attraversammo [= “We crossed”].                        | GIOVANNI: Senatus populusque ecc. Sai come lo traduciamo qui a Roma?             |
| LIZ: Noi attraversammo [= “We crossed”].  | LIZ: No, come lo traduciamo a Roma?  |
| GIOVANNI: Voi attraversaste, essi attraversarono [= “You crossed, they crossed”]. | GIOVANNI: Sono porci questi romani. Quale preferisci dei due?                    |
| LIZ: Too fast. OK.  | LIZ: La versione originale. Vai avanti.  |

Aside from the fact that the adopted solution challenges the much-hyped notion that translations tend to be more conservative than originals (see Pavesi 2005: 56–7), it seems to work, except when Liz subsequently expatiates upon the beautiful sounds of Latin. More generally in the film the protagonist’s progress/difficulties in Italian are converted into progress/difficulties concerning the Roman way of doing things, particularly eating.

An emblematic example of Italian used as the “other” language is represented by “The Godfather” saga. In the first movie (1972), Michael Corleone goes to Sicily in order to embrace his roots and his culture. There he meets Apollonia and he asks her father’s permission to court her. In the following scene, Michael asks his bodyguard Fabrizio to translate what he says:

Table 2. From “The Godfather”

| Original version   | Italian version   |
|--|---|
| MICHAEL: I apologise if I offended you.  | MICHAEL: Io, ecco...mi dispiace che vi siate offeso.  |
| FABRIZIO: [Speaking Sicilian] Ci dispiace se l’ha offesa.                                    | FABRIZIO: Parlavamo senza malizia. [we were talking with non malice]  |
| MICHAEL: I am a stranger in this country.  | MICHAEL: Io sono forestiero qui.  |
| FABRIZIO: [Speaking Sicilian] È straniero a ‘stu paisi.                                      | FABRIZIO: È in Sicilia da poco. [He arrived in Sicily recently]   |
| MICHAEL: And I meant no disrespect to you, or your daughter.                                 | MICHAEL: E non è mia abitudine provocare la gente senza ragione.  |
| FABRIZIO: [Speaking Sicilian] E non voleva mancare di rispetto né a lei né a vostra figghia. | FABRIZIO: Non volevamo mancare di rispetto né a voi né a vostra figlia. [we did not want to be disrespectful to you or your daughter] |
| MICHAEL: [Speaking Sicilian] Ma cu è chistu? E chi vole di me figghia?                       | MICHAEL: [Speaking Sicilian] Ma cu è chistu? E chi vole di me figghia?  |

In the original version, Michael speaks English and asks Fabrizio to play the role of the interpreter in order to translate the dialogues into Sicilian dialect, which is reasonable, since the scene is set in Sicily and Apollonia’s father speaks only dialect. Inexplicably, in the Italian version Fabrizio does not act as an interpreter, since he just paraphrases what Michael says. In this case, the most convenient choice would have been the succession of Italian (spoken by Michael) and Sicilian (uttered by Fabrizio). Moreover, Apollonia’s father speaks Sicilian in both versions, so it would have been natural to see Fabrizio acting as an interpreter also in the dubbed version. As a consequence, the suspension of linguistic disbelief has not been maintained.

Let us now focus on the product chosen for the present study: the next section will deal with the analysis of the Italian dialogues of *Big Night*.

### 3. *Big Night*: multilingualism, humour and translation strategies

This 1996 comedy-drama set in the 1950s in New Jersey, tells the story of two Italian immigrant brothers that own and operate a restaurant called *Paradise*. One brother, Primo, is a brilliant chef who struggles with their few customers' expectations of Americanised Italian food. His younger brother, Secondo, is the restaurant manager, a man fascinated by the possibilities presented by their new life in America. Despite their efforts though, the restaurant is failing. In the original version, the two brothers often speak Italian among themselves and with other characters of Italian origin (the barber, their competitor, etc.). According to the screenplay, the two protagonists come from Abruzzo, and in the original dialogues their Italian is characterised by an accent of that area, although they never speak dialect. In the dubbed version, instead, Primo and Secondo speak a sort of Neapolitan dialect. We will now go on to analyse in detail three scenes taken from the film and we will focus on the dialogues and their Italian transpositions.

#### 3.1. The risotto scene

In the first few minutes of the film, the audience enjoys an exhilarating scene in which Secondo, the restaurant manager and waiter, has to cope with two customers who have some rather bizarre requests for an Italian restaurateur (and for Italian people in general). A woman orders a risotto and asks to be served a plate of spaghetti with meatballs, considering it as a side dish. Secondo tries to convince her that in Italy spaghetti is not a side dish, but the woman insists:

Table 3. Original and dubbed version of the risotto scene

| Original version   | Italian version   |
|--|---|
| WOMAN: But I get a side order of spaghetti with this, right? | WOMAN: Però c'è un contorno di spaghetti con questo, vero?                      |
| SECONDO: <i>Che?! Well, no...</i>                            | SECONDO: Chi? Cioè, no.   |
| MAN: I thought all main courses come with spaghetti.         | MAN: Credevo che tutti i secondi avessero per contorno gli spaghetti.           |
| WOMAN: Yeah, he'll have the meatballs.                       | WOMAN: Sì, le dia a lui le polpette.  |
| SECONDO: Well, the spaghetti comes without meatballs.        | SECONDO: Beh, gli spaghetti qua vanno senza le pulpette.                        |
| WOMAN: There are no meatballs with the spaghetti?            | WOMAN: Gli spaghetti non vengono con le polpette?                               |
| SECONDO: No. Sometimes spaghetti likes to be alone.          | SECONDO: No. A volte gli spaghetti vengono da soli. ( <i>he laughs</i> ) Scusi. |
| WOMAN: All right, then, I guess we'll also                   | WOMAN: Va bene, allora vuol dire che  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| have a side order of meatballs.  | ordineremo anche un contorno di polpette.   |
| SECONDO: voi Americani sarete anche più ricchi di noi ma non potete insegnarci a cucinare. | SECONDO: (speaking dialect): Chist ammerican' sanno lavurà ma non ci imparano a noi come magnà. |
| WOMAN: Excuse me? Could you speak my language?   | WOMAN: Come, prego? Può parlare la mia lingua?  |
| SECONDO: I'll go and tell the chef to make the spaghetti.                                  | SECONDO: Dico subito allo chef di preparare gli spaghetti.                                      |

In this scene, humour lies in the cultural differences between Italy and the USA. In the original version, Secondo speaks English with the customers but their request to have spaghetti as a side dish upsets him so much that he reacts with a very Italian “Che ?!” (What ?!). At the end of the dialogue, before going to the kitchen, he lashes out against American people in general, and then he immediately returns to his role as manager. In the Italian version, Secondo speaks standard Italian, since he is set in a formal situation. Even in this case, when customers ask him for a side dish of spaghetti, he starts to speak Neapolitan dialect. Once more, at the end of the scene, he uses dialect to insult the couple, preventing them from understanding him. In Italian dubbing, especially in a case like *Big Night*, in which the “other” language is Italian, the result is that cultural identities are often deprived or “mutilated” of their linguistic component: American characters retain all their identifying references without ever being referred to as English speakers, even if English is their mother tongue.

This is a very controversial problem among professionals in the audiovisual translation sector who often express conflicting points of view. The defenders of these translation routines argue that they are the only way to work around the thorny problem represented by seemingly innocuous sentences that refer to the language spoken by the characters. The primary objective would be that of maintaining the suspension of linguistic disbelief, according to which the viewers accepts by “convention” that in a dubbed film what should be said in a different language, since the story is set elsewhere, is uttered in their own language instead. Conversely, others emphasise the fact that, after all, dubbing remains a convention and the viewers are aware of it: making the characters speak an Italian variety that basically does not exist, risks “revealing the trick” put in scene by the dubbing (Iaia 2015). There are many attempts to work around difficulties of this kind in a more “creative” and linguistically credible way and the solution adopted in this scene fully falls within them.

### 3.2. The spaghetti with meatballs scene

After the discussion with the customers, Secondo surrenders and goes to the kitchen to tell his brother to make the pasta. The two argue about this a lot because Primo is a purist, a true Italian cook, and does not intend to be humiliated by two Americans who do not know how to cook and how a typical Italian meal is structured. The following is the dialogue between the two brothers:



Table 4. Original and dubbed version of the spaghetti with meatballs scene

| Original version  | Italian version  |
|---|--|
| SECONDO: Just make me the side order of spaghetti, please.  | SECONDO: Famme nu contorno di spaghetti, per favore.                                     |
| PRIMO: [Speaking Italian] Secondo, io voglio sapere per chi sono [I want to know for who ].           | PRIMO: Secondo, io voglio sape' pe' chi sono.  |
| SECONDO: For the lady with the risotto.   | SECONDO: Pe' la signora de lu risotto.   |
| PRIMO: What? Why?   | PRIMO: Chi è? E perché?  |
| SECONDO: Le piace l'amido. Non lo so. Muoviti! [She likes starch. I don't know. Come on!]             | SECONDO: Vo ingrassa'! Che ne sacc' pecché, tu falla!                                    |
| PRIMO: Bitch!   | PRIMO: 'Sta zizzona.   |
| SECONDO: I make it myself.  | SECONDO: Me lo faccio io, va.  |
| PRIMO: Ma che vogliono questi americani? I need to talk to her.                                       | PRIMO: Fermo. Ma come magnano qua in America? C'ha parla' io co' quella.                 |
| SECONDO: You wanna talk to her?<br>Okay, that's great.<br>You wanna talk to her?<br>Okay. Good. Fine. | SECONDO: Ce vu parla'? Ok. Ce vu parla'. Vabbò. Ce vu parla'? Ok.                        |
| PRIMO: No. Quella è una cafona.<br>I'm not gonna talk to her.<br>She no understand anyway.            | PRIMO: No. Chill è 'na chiattilla. Non ci parl con una accusì. Tanto non capisce niente. |

As we can see from the dialogue, the original version is characterised by the code-switching between the two brothers, who alternate English and Italian in a funny and at the same time impetuous conversation. When the discussion degenerates, Primo berates the woman, insulting her in Italian and making her initially believe that “cafona” (i.e. bad-mannered) is a compliment. In the dubbed version, the standard Italian used by the protagonists is transformed into a Neapolitan dialect, in order to maintain the atmosphere of confusion and hilarity that characterises the original dialogues. It can be noted that the dubbed version in some cases changes the original lines, as in the case of “Le piace l'amido” (“she likes starch”) that becomes “Vo ingrassa’!” (“She wants to get fat”). In this case, the dubbed version emphasises the humouristic tone of the utterance. In the final part of the scene, when Primo talks to the woman who asks for spaghetti, the Neapolitan dialect is used in the dubbed version so as not to lose the humour of the original version. It is true that often Italian dialects are understandable, but in this case the translators have chosen a word (*chiattilla*, i.e. arrogant)

very probably unknown to non-Neapolitan people. Italian translators/adapters decided then to adopt the diglossic intralingual translation strategy.

In fact, diglossic intralingual translation is defined by Petrilli (2003: 20) as translation between a standard and non-standard dialect, but this definition needs broadening, as illustrated in the case of the American version of the Harry Potter novels, which is a clear case of intralingual translation between dialects: since it makes no sense to frame the opposition between American and British English as one between a “standard” and a “non-standard” variety of English, diglossic translation must be defined as conversion between dialects as such. (For other examples of the diglossic type of intralingual translation, see Pillière 2010). In our case there is a clear contradiction, though. In a scene from the film *Secondo* says (both in the original and in the dubbed version) that he comes from Abruzzo: how is it possible then that he and his brother speak Neapolitan? Probably this dialect was chosen because it is the one generally used to give a comic effect to situations, and its vocabulary offers very original insults like the one used in our case. As we said before, the main purpose of the translator is to maintain the suspension of linguistic disbelief. In general, in dubbing, dialect is chosen to give a humorous effect to dialogue. As argued by Chiaro:

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

(Chiaro 2010: 9)

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in dialect translation (Federici 2011), which is in line with the latest developments in translation studies, regarding, among others, the translation of and for linguistic minorities, postcolonial approaches to translation in terms of power and identity, and the resurgent interest in ethical issues governing and/or affecting translation. Within this context, multimedia translation in all its forms (from more traditional ones, such as subtitling and dubbing, to more recently developed and investigated ones, such as audio description) has become a particularly interesting site for examining dialect translation both in intralingual and interlingual situations (Jakobson 1959). The most important aspects under investigation in the context of translation studies include the use and function of a dialect within a speech community, which in turn affects the choice of strategies/techniques and the concrete linguistic choices for the translation of dialect into dialect (Sánchez 1999), standard into dialect (Findlay 1996), or dialect into standard (Koletnik and Vahl Lopert 2012), particularly for the theatre (Johnston 1996).

The numerous challenges posed by dialect translation in all its facets create an important research area of translation studies, one that highlights significant core aspects of the field, such as the question of translatability. There are many examples of felicitous translation, where a dialect has been successfully rendered (or, rather, substituted) by another dialect of a different language (Anderman 2009), as well as intralingual examples, where the translation of standard into dialect or dialect into standard has created successful outcomes, supporting the idea that dialect is translatable under certain conditions and considerations (Dudek 2018).

## 4. Conclusion

The translation of multilingualism has been discussed greatly in the academic field, particularly in the field of AVT. Strategies implemented by translators can vary substantially depending on the languages at play. *Big Night* is a good example of a film in which Italian is used to support a “true” representation of the Other and the strategies implemented to deal with its translation in different cultures vary depending on the distance from the Other’s culture. The shorter the distance, the more problematic the relationship seems to be (Díaz Cintas 2011: 229). As a matter of fact, the translation into Italian is a real challenge and the dubbed version seems to be adversely affected because the bilingualism of the scenes has not been preserved in the Italian. The dubbing of the film is reasonable, but it detracts from the spontaneity of the original. Given the shortcomings of the Italian dubbed version of *Big Night*, it is very tempting to ponder whether deviation from dubbing in favour of subtitling may also be a preferable solution for dealing with the translation of this film.

After all, it may well be that the nature of the audio-visual work and not the expectations of the audience should be the deciding factor in the case of some films. The product of such a strategy is the depiction of an Italian immigrant who does not bear any linguistic sign of his/her diasporic experience (apart from the cinematic setting). Italian identity is the hybrid product of migration, represented by the use of the Italian language. In dubbing into Italian (or dialect), the lack of foreignisation or contamination signs by English reduces the nuances of the original film which aimed (according to director and producer) at opposing misperceptions and stereotypes regarding Italians in the USA. The Italian dubbing fails partly to reproduce the dynamicity and hybridity of the migrant experience, changed by the encounter with North American values and depicts Italian emigrants as though they had never left their homeland. Coming to America was a test for the two brothers, as it is for any immigrant. It was a test of their strength and their identity, and when the very thing that is most representative for their culture and dear to their hearts, namely traditional food and the affection for each other, were challenged and endangered, they reconsidered their goals. *Big Night* is about the clash between two cultures that leaves the two protagonists, Primo and Secondo, losers, but also winners.

This descriptive work is not yet able to provide quantitative data in support of these conclusions, therefore we will endeavour not to fall into easy generalisations. As Díaz-Cintas (2004) reminds us, it is important to widen the area of contrastive analysis in order to present stable norms that regulate the field of AVT and in order to do this, the approach to the study of the matter cannot be merely linguistic, but should work in a more interdisciplinary perspective. Therefore, this study on audio-visual intralingual translation as well as the effectiveness of the translation techniques calls for further examination of the topic.

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