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New Perspectives on (Im)Politeness and Interpersonal Communication

Edited by

Lucía Fernández Amaya, Maria de la O Hernández López, Reyes Gómez Morón, Manuel Padilla Cruz, Manuel Mejías Borrero and Mariana Relinque Barranca

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AUDIOVISUAL (IM)POLITENESS: AN INTERLINGUISTIC AND INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SPANISH FILMS DUBBED INTO ITALIAN

LAURA MARIOTTINI

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the pragmatic nature of Spanish film texts and their translation into Italian, taking into account in particular (im)politeness phenomena such as vocatives, diminutives and swearwords as sample areas of cultural and social expression in language. As argued in Pettit (2009: 44), “[…] language is an expression of culture and culture is expressed through language. An audiovisual text offers a cultural representation of the world”. It is known that translators mediate between two linguistic and cultural systems and need bilinguual and bicultural vision and ability. The audiovisual translator deals with a complex semiotic and pragmatic text, a film, which is composed of signs in contexts: verbal/ nonverbal, intentional/ unintentional, implicit/ explicit, all of which combine to create the message to be received by the viewer (Delabastita 1989; Gottlieb 2004). In a dubbed version, the aim is to ensure that the dialogues feel as authentic as possible.

I start from the assumption that in translated, as well as in original film, dialogue similarities to real dialogue exchanges must be present if viewers are to be drawn into the fictional world portrayed on the screen (Korloff 2000; Pavesi 2009). Dialogue exchanges, in fact, do not just happen in a vacuum but they always take place in a given context, which, in the case of audiovisual discourses, is a concrete situation in time, captured and frozen by the camera.
The framework for analysis I adopt in this study is a pragmatics-oriented one, which means that dubbing is conceptualised as an act of communication which is not different in nature from any other type of communication, spoken or written. Consequently, the focus here is investigating dubbed dialogues within the communicative event as a whole, under certain technical constraints, and in view of other people’s expectations or needs. Contextualisation is particularly important because, as noted by Bakhtin (1990: 428): “[…] at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions […] that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions”.

Research on the linguistic aspects of dubbing has mainly focussed on the translation of general aspects such as synchronisation, social and geographic variation and transfer errors, morpho-syntactic and lexical phenomena¹. Little is thus known about the degree to which (im)politeness filters into translated film scripts.

After briefly describing the background—Spanish films translated into Italian and (im)politeness in audiovisual dialogues—this paper will explore the culture-specific Spanish (im)politeness strategies used in the dialogues of the selected films, moving on to a discussion centred on the potential cultural particularities involved and their impact, if any, on the Italian translations.

My task, however, is not limited to the analysis of (im)politeness in the original Spanish soundtrack of the film material I have selected, but also involves their translation into Italian, offering an interlinguistic and intercultural perspective.

Although a large number of examples have been studied prior to the findings presented here, space limitations prescribe a selection only of the most pertinent concerning the films Todo sobre mi madre (It. Tutto su mia madre), Volver (It. Volver), Hable con ella (It. Parla con lei), La mala educación (It. Idem) and Los abrazos rotos (It. Gli abbracci spezzati) by Pedro Almodóvar². In what follows, phenomena from different areas of (im)politeness will be investigated: vocatives, diminutives and swearwords as sample areas of cultural and social expression in any language.

The theoretical framework of my paper on audiovisual (im)politeness also draws on the work of the EDICE research group (Estudios del Discurso de Cortesía en Español). They propose a flexible and reflective

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¹ Cf. Pavesi (2009) for a complete review.
² In the examples, films titles are abbreviated as follows: TM Todo sobre mi madre; V Volver, HE Hable con ella, ME La mala educación, AR Los abrazos rotos.
background to study (im)politeness, gathering empirical data and theoretical reflections in order to create a fair balance between the emic (internal to the society) and etic (internal to the research community) aspects. In fact, as I argued elsewhere (Mariottini 2007), EDICE works pertain to the third generation on (im)politeness studies, which are sociocultural pragmatics-centred.

One of the basic concepts of this framework (Bravo 2003; Cordisco 2003; Hernández Flores 2003), considered central for the present analysis, is the so-called role. This category, based on Goffman’s (1967) statements, enclose the differentiation between individual behavioural forms in a specific situation and in relation to others. Role, in fact, includes what an interlocutor should do agreeing with the speech event and with the position he/she occupies in relation to the other participants. Thus, the role adopted by a party will be conditioned not only by the sociocultural context but also, and most fundamentally, by the social image of the speaker and it is, indeed, strictly linked to (im)politeness activities. Bravo (2003) distinguishes between two types of image: the basic image that is socially recognized and stable, and the role image that emerges from the adoption of different roles by other parties during the interaction, subjected to interactional negotiation and update. In addition, Zimmermann (1998), Fant and Granato (2002) and Hernández Flores (2003) differentiate between three levels or types of roles: socio-cultural role (mostly permanent), situational role (assumed in a specific situation/context) and, finally, interactional role (extremely transient because of being dependant on speech acts).

2. Background

2.1. (Spanish) Audiovisual Translations (into Italian)


Linguistics has been questioning, above all, the sociolinguistic aspects of film texts, such as the discrepancy between orality and writing during the adaptation process and the status of film dialogues (cf. Raffaelli 1994; Rossi 1999, 2002); to be more specific, Galeota (1988) has worked on the
transposition of Tristana from a book (by Galdós) to a film story (by Buñuel). More recently, Orletti (2010) has investigated the relevance of the interactional context in film dialogues for interpreting speakers’ activities. Following sociolinguistic suggestions, two miscellaneous volumes have appeared in the mid nineties: Baccolini, Bollettieri Bosinelli and Gavioli (1994)—exploring linguistic and cultural transpositions in dubbing—and Heiss and Bollettieri Bosinelli (1996) analyzing multimedia translations for cinema, theatre and television. The last one includes an article by Blini and Matte Bon on simplification in subtitles formation, in which they defend the pragmalinguistic elements of speech acts against the simplification mechanisms used in subtitles’ translation, more oriented to narrating the story in a clear way than to maintaining the effectiveness of speech acts in the target language.

Other two editions have been published during this last decade: the first one by Cipolloni and De Rosa (2001), exploring the image of Italian emigrants to the American continent, and the second one by Scelfo and Petroni (2007) going into the theoretical and practical folds of audiovisual translation even from source languages different from English (cf. for example, Carreras i Goicoechea’s investigation of Totò’s translation in Spanish; De Rosa’s analysis of Brazilian Portuguese productions into Italian, and Scelfo’s study about the cultural and language hybridization in Land and Freedom by Ken Loach).

It is impossible to conclude this brief and not exhaustive review on audiovisual translation without mentioning two Hispanists working specifically on cinema and television dialogues, whose investigations have been seminal: Alessandra Melloni (2004) and Marco Cipolloni (1997). Melloni (2004) has analysed dialogue status in cinema and television, language variation, gender communication in contemporary cinema, telenovelas dialogues, structure and translation, and didactic exploitation of films. Cipolloni (1997) has examined the history of Spanish cinema, its fruition by the Italian audience, multilingualism, audiovisual translation both for dubbing and subtitles and its usefulness for investigation and foreign language teaching.

2.2. About (Im)Politeness in Translating Audiovisual Dialogues

A speech event is not only an exchange of symbolic expressions, it is not the production of an unsystematic and improvised message, but it is planned and directed from a sender to a definite recipient with specific purposes in a number of established socio-cultural attitudes and habits. Such competences are external to the speaker, they reside in the implicit
and indirect part of the cultural background knowledge, but this quality
does not entail that they do not affect communication. The translator’s
task, then, is to transfer the beliefs and strategies of a language/culture to
another avoiding pragmatic interference (cf. Gómez Caput 2001),
specifically adapting (im)polite expressions and strategies from the source
language and culture into the target ones.

Many problems arise for the existence of two different role professions
(and consequently two separated phases) in translating for dubbing,
namely the translator and the adaptor. The former translates the meaning
of the audiovisual text, whilst the latter, even if not knowing the source
language, deals with the acoustic, kinesics and sync adaptation of the
translated texts. As Scelfo (2002) pointed out, the problem is well known
but very little has been done in order to solve it, like, for example, to allow
the same person to play the two roles.

As Díaz Cintas (2009) describes, audiovisual translation has often been
studied from a professional point of view, with research focusing mainly
on its mechanics, on technical issues such as time and space constraints,
lip sync, spotting or cueing of subtitles, etc. In addition to that, Cipolloni
(1997) underlines that both linguistics and translation studies have long
treated audiovisual translation as literary translation, and, at the same time,
history of the show has obstinately headed it in the field of techniques and
tools. I agree with this author when he claims that dubbing is not only
translation and it is not only craft: dubbing is made of socio-cultural and
linguistic spaces delimited by technical horizons pertaining to both
translation and craft.

Topics of research have been widening in scope in the last two
decades, thanks also to the seminal work of Bassnett and Lefevere (1998),
who have departed from the technical and linguistic approaches to
encompass the socio-cultural dimension of audiovisual translation.
Recently, audiovisual translation has been addressed from a perspective
centred on how the language used in the (translated) dialogue exchanges
affects or is affected by social constructs. Nevertheless, some works on
audiovisual translation (e.g. Bartrina 2001; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato
2005; Castellano 2000) insist on questioning the role of the cultural and
pragmatic dimensions in translating for dubbing and subtitling giving as
reason the respect for technical constraints and mechanisms (such as labial
sync in dubbing or rapid accessibility and understandability for subtitles).
But translating only the linguistic component without taking into account
the value of the other dimensions, especially the pragmatic one, would be
(perhaps) a technical success but not effective from the audience point of
view.
This last assumption invites us to reflect on the philosophical essence of translation. Eco (2001: 22) asks the following question: “Should a translation permit the reader to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the original text, or should, however, transform and adapt the original to the reader’s cultural and linguistic universe?” If we think of an audiovisual translation, the consequences of not adapting the original script may be even more serious. Concerning (im)politeness in audiovisual translation, as pointed out in Pinto (2010) too, the key lies in the definition of Nida’s (1964) dynamic equivalence, that is to say, that the aim should be trying to reproduce the same effect in the target language. Translation is not, therefore, merely a language process but a total transaction which involves a set of interrelated social and cultural rights, primarily in their own culture and then between foreign cultures. Therefore, the cultural parameters have an important role not only in literary but also in technical translation. The translator plays a decisive role in his/her own culture in relation to the other culture.

As Peninsular Spanish and Italian represent different styles of (im)politeness, an attempt to reproduce the same effect would be equivalent to the Eco’s (2001) idea, i.e. the adaptation of such a statement to the viewer’s cultural universe. In short, a good translation of (im)politeness phenomena would have to represent what they would say in the same context in the receiving culture.

From the audience’s viewpoint, it is important for them to be able to identify themselves with the characters. When the characters are unreliable—the desired effect is not aimed at in the target language—the viewer will feel less empathy. In extreme cases, the effect is totally unexpected and it could even be funny. For example, some vocatives or diminutives included in the corpus for this study are more characteristic of Spanish relationships and treatment than Italian everyday life interactions. Another unanticipated consequence, especially if we take into account the pedagogical dimension, is the influence of audiovisual (im)politeness translation in the formation of negative or rare stereotypes.

Culture and pragmatic functioning in their more or less explicitly localised forms exude from all the film’s pragmatic systems: briefly, audiovisual translators must pay close attention to language in the first instance; however, in order to aim at a successful combination between words and contextual information, they must undertake a very precise examination of the audiovisual situation, of the relationships established between characters, of their interactions and individual verbal strategies. In fact, when we enter the interpersonal relationships sphere, every language and culture requires specific linguistic elements that reflect the
nature of the relationship and the complex net of social and cultural factors that compose it, such as polite and impolite formulas. The translator must therefore be able to recognize these strategies and formulas and translate their functions and objectives. A mistranslation of (im)politeness strategies can lead to serious consequences for the interpretation of film texts in terms of coherence and adequacy. In short, the audiovisual translator must be fully aware of the pragmatic complexity of the audiovisual production.

Previous works examining the (im)politeness dimension in audiovisual translation have focused on: compliments and compliments responses in films (Rose 2001), English/Italian vocatives in subtitles (Bruti and Perego 2005), English/Spanish/Italian compliments in dubbing and subtitles (Bruti and García Jiménez 2008), politeness and audience design in subtitles (Gartzonika and Şerban 2009), Spanish/English requests in subtitles (Pinto 2010), praise, compliment, admiring comment and flattering remark in dialogues of Spanish contemporary films (Hernández Toribio and Deltell Escolar, forthcoming).

3. Analysis

Clyne (1972) observes that remarkable differences in speech rules and discourse routines exist even in very similar languages (such as Spanish and Italian) and that, for this reason, it is impossible to translate literally a language pattern into another one without realizing a pragmatic interference. Thus, different strategies are employed to translate for dubbing, as Tomaszkiewicz (1993) first and then Pettit (2009) point out:

a) Omission;
b) Literal Translation, where the solution in the target text matches the original as closely as possible;
c) Borrowing, where original terms from the source text are used in the target text;
d) Equivalence, where the translation has a similar meaning and function in the target culture;
e) Adaptation, where the translation is adjusted to the target language and culture in an attempt to evoke similar connotations to the original ones;
f) Replacement of the cultural term with deictics, particularly when supported by an on-screen gesture or a visual clue;
g) Generalisation, which might also be referred to as neutralisation of the original; and
h) Explication, which usually involves a paraphrase to explain the cultural term.

In the following analysis, taking into consideration the social and image role of the characters, I examine the specific context in which an (im)polite strategy or formula is used in the source soundtrack, the translation strategy employed to translate it into the target one, and I underline the effects (in terms of interpretation and perlocutionary act) on both audiences.

3.1. Vocatives

As Biber et al. (1999) observe, vocatives serve for: a) getting someone’s attention, b) identifying someone as an addressee, and c) maintaining and reinforcing social relationships. Vocatives differ from allocutive pronouns because they appear syntactically and prosodically separated from the structure of the clause.

V [Context: Agustina’s house; Agustina is a neighbour; she is as old as Soledad]
(ST1)  
Soledad (to Agustina): ¡qué hermosa tienes la adelfa, hija mía!  
(TT1)  
Soledad (to Agustina): bello il tuo oleandro, figlia mia!

V [Context: Soledad’s house; she is a hairdresser who works in her own house; Client1 is older than Soledad]
(ST2)  
Client1: no me extraña. Mira la cantidad de top model rusas que ha salido ahora  
Soledad (in OFF): ¡uh! ¡hija mía!  
(TT2)  
Client1: non mi meraviglia. Guarda quante modelle russe sono spuntate fuori  
Soledad (in OFF): uh! Figlia mia!

3 ST stands for the original Spanish soundtrack, while TT stands for the Italian dubbed version.

4 In OFF means that the speaker’s mouth is out of camera plan (because, for example, he/she has his/her back to it)
From the examples above, it can be deduced that in Spanish oral interactions of a colloquial register, there is a frequent use of vocatives, concretely “hija mía”, as a kinship or relational term exploited to highlight the relationship of proximity/informality among interlocutors. Its use does not vary according to interlocutors’ factors such as age; that is to say that it does not depend on the basic image (or the socio-cultural role), but only on the role image (or interactional role).

In Italian, on the contrary, vocatives depend also on users’ stable characteristics and the main filter here would be age. Thus, the use of a literal translation as strategy creates a pragmatic interference whose explanation does not reside in the technical constraints. In fact, in two of the three examples presented, the speaker pronouncing “hija mía” is in OFF, excluding the question of labial sync. Possible solutions, which take into consideration technical and pragmatic constraints are: the use of a proper name in ex. 1 (“Che bello il tuo oleandro, Agustina!”), and two adaptation forms in ex. 2 (“Uh! Hai proprio ragione!”; Engl. “You are completely right!”) and 3 (“io non so se capisce, davvero, ma la ipnotizza”; Engl. “I don’t know if she understands, really, but she is like hypnotised”).

In examples 4 and 5, instead, the translator has appropriately opted for the solution of introducing a general exhortative element (“dai”; Engl. “come on”) and a phatic one (“ehi”).

In example 6 below, the term of address “y a estaaa”, pronounced by Agustina and referring to Raimunda, who is located just in front of her, is transferred into Italian as “anche a questa qui” (literally, “to this one too”).
by an explication. This solution not only is not as effective as it is in Spanish, but it also acquires impossible connotations in Italian. Even in this case, the dubbed translation is not constrained by technical constraints because Agustina is in off while speaking, so a solution like “e alla tuaaaa!” (“to your sister tooooo”) should be possible.

(ST6)
Soledad: a tu hermana siempre la ha atraído el mundo de la canción
Agustina (in OFF): y a estaaa

(TT6)
Soledad: a tua sorella l’ha sempre attratta il mondo della canzone
Agustina (in OFF): anche a questa qui

Other problematic vocatives when translating for dubbing, are “mujer” and “hombre” which, depending on the contexts and the participants, are translated with an equivalence (ex. 7), generalized with exhortative elements (ex. 8 and 9) or with a continuer or explicative one (ex. 10), or, finally, adapted (ex. 11). In example 7, equivalence is possible because Paquito, the speaker, is a pansy, thus his basic image can support lots of vocatives that, in this specific context, become possible also in Italian interactions.

ME (ST7)
Paquito: pero que tiene que ver ese pobre hombre, mujer
Zahara: mucho. Todo

ME (TT7)
Paquito: che cosa c’entra quel poveretto, bella?
Zahara: molto. Tutto

TM (ST8)
Agrado: mujer, ¿por qué te has molestado?

TM (TT8)
Agrado: ma guarda! Perché ti sei disturbata?

TM (ST9)
Rosa: pues vente, mujer. Así no voy sola

TM (TT9)
Rosa: allora vieni, dai. Così non vado da sola.

ME (ST10)

ME (TT10)
ME (ST11)
Enrique: ¿te acuerdas?
Juan: ¿de qué?
Enrique: nada
Juan: estás muy pasado tío. ¿De qué me tengo que acordar?
Enrique: de nada, hombre

ME (TT11)
Enrique: ti ricordi?
Juan: che cosa?
Enrique: niente
Juan: ci hai dato giù pesante eh? Che cosa mi devo ricordare?
Enrique: niente niente

Similar considerations have to be done even for “tí/o/tía” appearing also in the last two examples presented. They can be omitted (ex. 12 and 13) because of a lack of adequacy of the social polite formula in the target context. This leads to an inevitable reduction of the pragmatic effectiveness of the sentence (especially in example 13). They can be translated with a general exhortative (“dai” ex. 14). Example 15, on the contrary, presents what I call “hyper-equivalence” because the source term is more general than the target one. Target term “cocca” (“darling”) functions as an anti-polite strategy too (Zimmermann 2005), in fact it serves for reinforcing affiliation among participants, that is underlining to pertain at the same social group. Examples, as in 15, of anti-polite strategies can be seen also in the use of swear vocatives: Paquito calls Zahara “marica” translated into Italian as “frocia” (“queer”).

V (ST12)
Paula (to Soledad): ¡qué cosa, tía!
V (TT12)
Paula (to Soledad): pazzesco!

ME (ST13)
Juan: ¡anda joder, tío!
ME (TT13)
Juan: come sono contento!

ME (ST14)
Juan: No. ¡Qué derechos, tío! El cuento es tuyo, haz todo lo que te salga de la polla
ME (TT14)
Juan: No, ma quali diritti dai! Il racconto è tuo, facci quello che cazzo ti pare.
ME (ST15)
Paquito: yo flipo contigo, tía
Zahara: me imagino

ME (TT15)
Paquito: mi fai uscire di testa, cocca
Zahara: me l’immagino

There are some interesting examples in which we can detect a change in kinds of vocatives, to be clearer, a generic name in original dialogue (like “chico”; Engl. “mate”) comes to be a term of endearment (“caro mio”; Engl. “my dear”) in target one.

ME (ST16)
Enrique: chico, es que me coges en plena crisis de creación
Juan: ¡qué putada!

ME (TT16)
Enrique: caro mio, mi becchi in piena crisi creativa
Juan: che fregatura!

Another remarkable example of the translation of a term of endearment is in the following situation, in which Juan speaks to a pansy. Here, like “cocca” in example 15, “guapo” and “bello” (literally, “pretty man”) are used both as pragmatic terms to create proximity between speakers and to construct speaker’s identity.

ME (ST17)
Juan: no o bueno sí
Travesti: ¿en qué quedamos, guapo?

ME (TT17)
Juan: no, sí
Travesti: decidiamoci, bello!

### 3.2. Diminutives

In prior studies (Mariottini 2006, 2007), I investigated word formation and use of diminutives in Spanish and Italian and I asserted that there was a higher frequency in the use of diminutives in Spanish than in Italian, a difference in the context of use in these languages and a greater number of grammatical categories to which diminutives can be added in Spanish rather than in Italian (greetings, adverbials, adjectival verbs, constructions with light verbs, etc.). Within politeness theory, diminutives are “[…] in-group identity markers that fall into the sphere of our notions of familiarity, intimacy, and decreased psychological distance” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103).
Bazzanella, Caffi and Sbisà (1991) developed a systematic investigation on diminutive usage as a mitigation mechanism of speech acts illocutionary force. These authors claim that diminutives bring the denotative meaning of [little] that can be applied to speech acts as an illocutionary force mitigation mechanism. Diminutives downgrade the illocutionary force of all those speech acts that can be mitigated with a different frequency among languages.

Following this brief explanation of diminutive use, it is inferable that in institutional interactions, that is, in those interactions in which there is a more powerful participant than the others as result of the institutional role he/she is playing, it is not essential to mitigate requests by using diminutives. Spanish and Italian languages and cultures differ, in fact, in that Spanish tends equally to create affiliation, proximity and familiarity among people with a different interactional role, while Italian tends to respect the institutional images, namely the situational roles of nurse and visitors, as in the example below.

HE (ST18)
Nurse: ¿Pueden salir un momentito, por favor?

HE (TT18)
Nurse: Potete uscire un momentino, per favore?

In Spanish the use of a diminutive sounds polite in this specific context, whereas in Italian it sounds awkward, because it does not take into consideration the situational roles of characters.

In addition, the following fragments show that in Spanish the accumulation of more mitigation formulas is common, specifically “un poquito”, an adverb that diminishes the quantity to which a diminutive is attached; in Italian, from the point of view of word formation, the above mentioned accumulation is possible (“un pochino”) but, as opposed to Spanish, the form employed as mitigation or polite formula is not usual except in very specific contexts (like ex. 21 in which Manuela wants to reinforce Agrado’s image mitigating, at the same time, her physical damages). In ex. 19, the use of “un po’” would be more adequate.

V (ST19)
Agustina (to Soledad): el porro me da un poquito de hambre. Me relaja mucho

V (TT19)
Agustina (to Soledad): le canne mi danno un pochino di appetito e mi rilassano molto
V (ST20)
Raimunda (to Agustina): mira, yo si me enterase de algo, da por seguro que te lo diré, pero lo veo un poquito difícil

V (TT20)
Raimunda (to Agustina): guarda se vengo a sapere qualcosa stai pur sicura che te lo dirò eh? ma mi sembra un pochino difficile

TM (ST21)
Manuela: estás un poco hinchadilla, nada más

TM (TT21)
Manuela: sei un po’ gonfietta, tutto qua

Moreover, in example 20 above, Raimunda says her utterance in a situation of conflict with Agustina: she is very disappointed with Agustina’s request, which she considers a foolishness (she says “lo que me estás pidiendo es un disparate”). In the Spanish dialogue, “un poquito” also acquires a tinge of sarcasm that is completely lost in the Italian translation, creating, unexpectedly, an empathetic discourse, not adequate to the interactional situation. The use of “piuttosto” (Engl. “rather”) would be more acceptable, considering both the situation and the labial sync.

In example 22 below, the use of a diminutive attached to the noun “soldi” (money) also sounds very unusual, even ridiculous if pronounced by a woman speaking to another adult. Soldini, in fact, is adequate in Italian only in baby-talk situations.

V (ST22)
Soledad (to Raimunda): era ella la que le ponía el dinerico para que le trajera el pan

V (TT22)
Soledad (to Raimunda): era lei che lasciava i soldini perché le portasse il pane

Here too, the reason of lip sync can be excluded, which generally attains phonetic equivalence at the expense of semantic and pragmatic ones, because the sound difficulty in dubbing this part could be bilabial “p” and not the diminutive suffix, which could be replaced by an external modifier: “un po’ di soldi” (Engl. “a little money”).

An interesting use of diminutives can be seen in the following example in which in Italian it is necessary a diminutive suffix to translate in an equivalent way the Spanish “mona” (“pretty”):

TM (ST23)
Agrado: eres mona, proporcionadita, chiquitina pero mona

TM (TT23)
Another use of diminutives is to attach them to proper names: in AR, we hear Dieguito both in Spanish and Italian; in TM Manolita (in It. Manuelita) and Agradito in both languages; in ME Paquito. All described diminutives are borrowed from Spanish. They, in fact, follow the Spanish (not the Italian) suffixes and word formation (ito/a do not exist in Italian).

### 3.3. Swearwords

According to Sagarin (1968: 18), “[…] the structure of a language is a powerful tool for an understanding of a culture”, and Fernández Fernández (2009: 211) concludes that “[…] swearing, as part of the language, is a manifestation of culture”. In fact, there is a great variation in what constitutes swearing in different cultures or in the way it is expressed. The problem arises when Spanish coarse language intrudes upon Italian patterns of swearing and Spanish obscenities, formulas and fixed expressions are translated literally into Italian (creating a fictitious language). In a way, it may not be wrong to translate “X dei miei coglioni” for “¡X de los cojones!”; it is not a matter of grammar or syntax but of differences in the way people really swear in Spanish and Italian.

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V (ST24)
Raimunda: ¡viento de los cojones!
V (TT24)
Raimunda: ‘sto vento dei miei coglioni

ME (ST25)
Juan: Más claro no te lo puedo decir. Soy actor. He estado tres putos años haciendo ascos en el grupo Calabrón de los cojones. Esta es la primera oportunidad que tengo de hacer un papel de la hostia y no pienso dejarla escapar.
ME (TT25)
Juan: Più chiaro di così non te lo posso dire. Sono un attore. Sono stato per tre merdosi anni a fare cazzate col gruppo Calabron dei miei coglioni. Questa è la prima opportunità che ho di fare un personaggio pazzesco e non voglio lasciarmelo scappare.
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The sentences “sto vento dei miei coglioni” and “col gruppo Calabron dei miei coglioni” are grammatically correct but not used in everyday Italian dialogues, that is to say that they are not as socially, culturally, communicatively and pragmatically correct as the solutions formed by “X del cazzo”: “Sto vento del cazzo”, “col Gruppo Calabron del cazzo”.
In the following examples, we are in Raimunda’s (the mother), Paco’s (the putative father) and Paula’s (the daughter) house; Paula and Paco are seated on the sofa, while Raimunda is putting into order the living table and the kitchen. In the first case, Raimunda, speaking to Paula, says “cierra esas piernas ¡coño!” recommending her to sit better. The swearword used there is translated into Italian with “cazzo” (fuck) which conveys a very high level of vulgarism. But the register is not maintained in the second rude word, after some seconds of the film, when Paco confesses to Raimunda that he has lost his job. In Spanish she says “¡ay la leche!” whilst in Italian the dubbing version presents “ah cacchio!” (“oh gosh!”)

V (ST26)
(in OFF) Raimunda: Paula ponte bien. Cierra esas piernas ¡coño!
V (TT26)
(in OFF) Raimunda: Paula mettiti bene. Chiudi quelle gambe cazzo!

V (ST27)
Paco: me han despedido
Raimunda: Ay la leche
V (TT27)
Paco: mi hanno licenziato
Raimunda: ah cacchio

The two reasons for interfering that Fernández Fernández (2009) explains in her article are not useful in the selected cases. Neither the lip sync priority nor the toning down of coarse language in translation for companies will function to explain the examples above. In fact, in the first case, Raimunda is in OFF, so in the dubbing another word could appear instead of “cazzo” and evidently there is not a downgrading of vulgarisms. The translator here should have decided to downgrade the first and to emphasize the second word or to reinforce much more the second one to maintain the same high level.

Often swearwords appear in fixed constructions that cannot be altered using a literal translation or an explication as occurs in the examples below:

AR (ST28)
Judit: Perdona, pensé que estabas solo. ¿Puedo pasar o vas a echar otro?
Harry: no, no. Pasa, pasa, ya hemos terminado
AR (TT28)
Judit: Scusa, pensavo fossi solo. Posso entrare o devi fare altro?
Harry: entra entra, abbiamo finito!
V (ST29)
Paula: es cuestión de educación mamá
Raimunda: mira me vais a tocar el fandango tú y tu tía. Las dos
Paula: ¡qué ordinaria eres!

V (TT29)
Paula: è questione di educazione mamma
Raimunda: guardame la state facendo a pezzettini tu e tua zia
Paula: che volgare che sei!

In example 28, the expression is not articulated totally but only in a
part “vais a echar otro”, which refers to “echar otro polvo” (“to fuck”).
This is completely lost in the translation, in which there is a generalization
and also a standardization of the vulgar register. A possible solution here
would be “Posso entrare o te ne fai un’altra?” (“Can I enter or do you want
to have another one?”).

In example 29, instead, the reason for translation is the phonetic
equivalence of the labiodental “f”, but it is relevant to say that in Italian
this utterance is obscure and lacks efficacy. In the following examples too,
translations are due to phonetic equivalence “po” between “pollas” (dicks)
and “pompini” (blowjobs). In Italian, a different term is useful to this
translation: “piselli” (“dicks”), which contains the same initial bilabial
consonant.

ME (ST30)
Juan: No, pero si no hago el papel de Zahara no hay película
Enrique: entonces no sé qué coño estás haciendo aquí calientapollas.
¡Lárgate!

ME (TT30)
Juan: No, ma se non ho il personaggio di Zahara, il film non si fa.
Enrique: e allora non so che cazzo stai facendo qui attizzapompini.
Vattene!

Other examples of pragmatic interferences in swearwords can be seen
in translation of “cabrón” which, from an orthographic and phonetic point
of view, is a false friend of the Italian “caprone”, while, pragmatically
speaking, is closer to “stronzo” (“asshole”).

TM (ST31)
Manuela: somos gilipollas y un poco bolleras. Mi amiga y su marido con
tetas se montaron un chiringuito aquí mismo, en la Barceloneta. Él se
pasaba el día embutido en un bikini microscópico tirándose todo lo que
pillaba y a ella le montaba un numerazo si andaba con bikini o se ponía
ME (ST32)
Zahara: ¿ahora te empalmas cachocabrón? no hay derecho
ME (TT32)
Zahara: ora ti si drizza pezzo di animale? Non è giusto

4. Conclusion

Since sound film took its first steps, it has been clear that, because of its language characterised by a visual and an audio code, cinema does not simply reproduce reality but also speaks reality, mirrors values, conveys messages and, in doing so, brings about the meeting between cultures. Sound films create the need for translation and usher in dubbing. Perhaps because of its hands-on nature, audiovisual translation has long been ignored as a field of research and considered mainly a professional activity. However, the development of film studies has recently taken notice of audiovisual translation as a discipline in departments of translation, sociolinguistics and even history.

The field of pragmatics, and especially (im)politeness studies, can find in film dubs very interesting contexts for research with the final objective of contributing to avoiding “pragmatic interferences”. This analysis has shown that (im)politeness is subject to interference:

- In the use of vocatives. I have pointed out that different solutions are adopted: literal translation (in the case of “hija mía”), borrowings, in maintaining proper names with diminutives; generalizations (“dai”) with exhortative elements, adaptation with phatic or pragmatic elements and omission. In some cases, translations do not consider the speakers’ roles.

- In the use of diminutives, too, there are some intercultural and interlinguistic questions to consider when translating, specifically, of situation adequacy (participants’ role) and of frequency of Spanish diminutive suffixes with respect to Italian ones.

- In the use of swearwords. I have exposed some interferences especially due to phonetic equivalence, but also to orthographic false friends and to the presence of fixed (but not totally expressed)
constructions. In these cases, we see a literal translation that often loses in efficacy and in connotation.

To avoid that Italian dialogues lose their genuine character in order to be a reflection of different speech rules and cultural activities (like impoliteness) some reflexions are necessary.

Firstly, dubbing must be cinematographically effective even at the cost of being linguistic unfaithful, because, as Cipolloni (1997) maintains, literary characters are what they say whilst cinema’s characters say what they are. Thus, the dubbed version has to create the illusion of a slice of real life in which characters interact in a more immediate and spontaneous way.

Secondly, technical problems (labial sync) are not easily separable from those of cultural translation: adaptation and execution, linguistic and cultural synchronization are complementary and interacting parts of the same process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the expressive and communicative message balance.

Thirdly, it is worthwhile mentioning the vast potential opened by audiovisual translation from a didactic perspective (cf. Díaz Cintas 2008). In fact, very little has been researched on the way to train audiovisual translators: they should develop at the same time technical, intercultural and interlinguistic competences. From a different pedagogical perspective, although Rose (2001) establishes the validity of film language in the teaching of pragmatics in language classes, showing that it is undoubtedly representative of naturally-occurring exchanges, especially from a pragmalinguistic perspective, very little has been written or researched in relation to the value of dubbing in the learning of foreign languages (Spanish-Italian). I hope that this work opens up the way in that direction.

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