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Audiovisual Translation from a Gender Perspective

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ABSTRACT
It is not only the linguistic but also the cultural and ideological differences between source and target cultures that come to the fore in the act of translating. These cultural and ideological connotations often reflect assumptions which may vary from one culture to another, revealing different ways in which social issues may be approached. This paper aims at seeing what the differences between the dubbed and subtitled translations of three British films suggest in terms of how different countries deal with gender issues, and to what extent these translations may mould differently the audiences' understanding about these issues.

KEY WORDS:
Subtitling, dubbing, gender, audiovisual translation, sexism, stereotype

BIOGRAPHY
Marcella De Marco was born in Italy in 1977 and has a degree in Foreign Languages and Literature from the University of Bari. She has worked as a teaching assistant in Spain and France and has translated several scientific works. In 2002 se joined the PhD programme "Methodology and Analysis of Translation" at the University of Vic, Spain. She currently holds a British Academy scholarship to take an MPhil at Roehampton University, London, where she is researching the contribution of audiovisual translation to the exportation and perpetuation of gender stereotypes. She also works as a visiting lecturer at Roehampton University.
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1. Introduction

The past fifty years have witnessed a growing interest in a discipline that, during the 1970s, was labelled Translation Studies (TS). These studies have long addressed questions such as fidelity to the source text and equivalence in the target language, loss of nuances in the act of translating, and the linguistic strategies implemented by translators. In the last twenty years, however, TS have been approached from a more cultural perspective. As a consequence of the 'cultural turn' advocated by Bassnett and Lefevere (1998) in TS, it has become increasingly clear that cultural and ideological – besides linguistic – issues emerge when transferring a text from one language into another. More and more scholars have focused, then, on the relationship between the texts and their social context (Even-Zohar, 1978), on the translator's role as a 'manipulator' of the text (Hermans, 1985; Toury, 1995), and on the manipulation of the text as an intentional or unintentional act (Lefevere, 1992).

Cultural and social issues are also the object of study of another academic field known as Gender Studies (GS), which stemmed from feminist criticism in the 1970s. One of the major contributions of this approach is

the definition of femininity and masculinity as two socio-cultural constructions. The concept of 'gender' is associated with both men and women and with the way in which their ethnic origin, class, religion and sexual orientation determine their role and position in society. The awareness that the manipulative power of the act of translating may have a crucial impact on the way in which gender issues are perceived within a social system has encouraged further research in the intersection between the notion of gender and that of translation. This relationship has usually been analysed within a literary context and translation has become one of the tools through which women, black people, homosexuals and religious minorities have voiced their resistance to the *status quo* that a white, patriarchal, heteronormative society has established. In so doing, they have questioned the stereotypes and false views that this kind of society has applied to them. Simon (1996), von Flotow (1997), Harvey (1998) and Spivak (1990, 1993) are just a few examples of scholars who, in recent years, have tried to redefine the act of translating, providing some insights into the implications of translating literary texts from a gender perspective.

This paper aims to analyse gender in the context of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), since it is my firm belief that this type of translation may also disclose important clues about the way identity-related issues are perceived in a source and in a target culture. Matters relating to gender, sexuality and ethnicity have already been analysed in Film Studies where scholars have paid special attention to the strong impact that image and sound may have on the audience. In other words, they have focused on the way the audience shape their own views according to the stereotypes and commonplaces about men and women that cinema provides and encourages through its audiovisual language. Mulvey (1975), de Lauretis (1984, 1987) and Kuhn (1982) are some of the scholars who have described in detail the mechanisms through which the camera manipulates the audience's visual pleasure. In particular, they have focused on the reification of women in Western cinema in order to satisfy an essentially male-heterosexual audience. Little has been said, however, about the thorny questions that arise when gender issues emerging from a film need to be translated for other audiences who do not understand the language of the original version. Within AVT, research has progressed mainly in the direction of describing the characteristics and technical constraints of dubbing and subtitling and, only in recent years, the sociolinguistic aspects of this sub-discipline have started to be taken into account.

I have taken as a starting point for my study the analyses carried out by the aforementioned Gender and Film Studies scholars, and followed the examples set by AVT scholars who have been applying traditional premises devised for translation in general to audiovisual products (Díaz-Cintas, 1997, 2003; Chaume, 2000, 2004). I will place special emphasis on the visual and linguistic stereotypes about gender that the original

version of three British films presents. My aim is to investigate whether the way in which these films are dubbed and subtitled might contribute to weakening or strengthening those stereotypes. The British films that I have chosen to examine are *East is East* (1999), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002) and *Calendar Girls* (2003). My analysis is based on the dubbed and subtitled translations for DVD in Italian and Spanish.

These films share common ground in the sense that most of the main characters are women of different ages, they belong to various races, and their relationship with men varies according to the roles that these women play in their families and to the social clichés and religious creeds which apply to them. Issues such as patriarchal values, ethnicity, homosexuality and lesbianism come together in these films and, whether they are dealt with ironically or seriously, they show that gender stereotypes are part and parcel of their lives and language.

My starting point is an analysis of the way in which the men and the women in these films speak and address each other in order to investigate whether the language they use is more or less sexist and whether it discloses any traces of racist, homophobic remarks or of religious intolerance. The analysis has been carried out viewing, in the first instance, the English original version and, secondly, the Italian and Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions. Finally, I attempt to shed some light on the way gender stereotypes are linguistically portrayed and how this may have an impact on the way the target audiences may perceive the translated films.

In the past two decades there has been a growing interest in the study of differences between men's and women's talk (Coates, 2004), perhaps as a consequence of the growing awareness that gender relations are changing as a result of women's more established position in society. Gender has been approached from a wide range of perspectives (*ibid*.), and one of the aspects that has mostly surfaced in these analyses is the negative connotation given to women's language – and behaviour in general – as opposed to men's language. The assumption that male language is the norm to which all the rest have to conform has led to stereotypes and false views about women, and consequently about men too, that only recently have started to be questioned, and in some cases censured, but that are still hard to eliminate.

Some of the widespread clichés are that women are talkative, they gossip more than men, they use more hedges and questions in their speech, and their voices are shriller and, therefore, more annoying than men's (Cameron, 1992). On the other hand, men are said to talk less and with more control of themselves and to swear more than women. When they speak or behave emotionally they are labelled as gay, homosexuality being still perceived as a dangerous threat to traditional male hegemony in Western society. Many scholars (Risch, 1987; Hughes, 1992; Eckert

1998) have proved that these assumptions are not always true and have shown that anybody may resort to a different register or vocabulary depending on the situation, the interlocutors, their social class and the context they are faced with. The issue here, however, is that even when men and women use the same linguistic frameworks or share the same experiences, their behaviour is valued according to different criteria. Silence, for example, is a mark of powerlessness for a woman, whereas in a man it is associated with his freedom to decide whether or not to intervene in a conversation; swearwords in a woman's mouth are perceived as unladylike, whereas for a man they are part of the tools through which he legitimately voices his virility and power.

We find a good illustration in one of the first scenes from *Bend it like Beckham* (*BB*). Here, Jess's parents have discovered that she has joined a female football team, something uncommon for a young woman and unthinkable for a British-Asian one like Jess. After Jess's mother tells her off, her father says:

Example 1

Jessie, your mother is right. It's not nice. You must start behaving like a proper woman. Ok?			
Sub es	Tu madre tiene razón. ---------- No está bien. ---------- Debes empezar a comportarte como una mujer. ¿Vale?	Sub it	Tua madre ha ragione. Devi ---------- cominciare a comportarti da donna.
Dub es	Jessie, tu madre tiene razón. No es bonito. Debes empezar a comportarte como una mujer, ¿de acuerdo?	Dub it	Jessie, tua madre ha ragione. Ora sei grande. Bisogna che cominci a comportarti come una donna. Ok?

There is no great difference in the way the advice of Jess's father has been translated in Spanish and Italian since the three versions convey the idea that playing football does not form part of the usual feminine duties. A remark about a couple of words used in the translations has to be made, however. The original 'like a proper woman' has been translated in the Spanish dub and subtitle as *como una mujer* [like a woman] and in the Italian dub as *come una donna* [like a woman]. The three versions do not reproduce the adjective 'proper' but they still convey the idea that all women should behave 'properly', that is, they are expected to mind what they do (and say) otherwise they run the risk of compromising their reputation. On the other hand, the Italian subtitle sounds a bit different because of the presence of the preposition *da* [from]. The expression *comportarti da donna/uomo* back translates as 'behave like an adult woman/man'. The subtle difference conveyed by this preposition neutralizes the above-mentioned nuance since Jess's father's words sound like a mere warning given to children – regardless of their gender – to

prevent them from doing other childish tricks. Moreover, it is interesting that 'it's not nice', that has been literally translated in Spanish as *no está bien* / *no es bonito*, is missing in the Italian subtitle, whereas it has been dubbed as *Ora sei grande* [You've grown up now]. This remark in the Italian dub might have a different effect on the audience, since it gives the impression that Jess's father thinks it has been merely a whim of a teenager, whereas the original and the Spanish versions emphasize the idea that certain behaviour is no good for any woman.

Let us now turn to the primary focus of this study, namely the way men and women speak. Rather than focusing on the syntactical structure of their sentences or on the number of pauses, questions or adverbs that they use in their dialogue – aspects which have been thoroughly investigated within linguists by scholars like Jespersen (1922) and Lakoff (1975) – I prefer to pay attention to:

- The topics dealt with by men and women in same-sex talk, including the kinds of terms they use to refer to the opposite sex.
- The lexical forms used to address each other through compliments or insults.
- The use of swearwords by men and women.

2. Topics

It has been said that one of the main differences in men's and women's conversations is the fact that men tend to talk about sport, jokes, possessions or any other subject that prevents them from speaking of matters which are too personal or from disclosing their vulnerability (Aries, 1976; Pilkington 1998; Coates, 2004). On the other hand, women are said to prefer talking about themselves, their problems, their dreams, and their work and are not ashamed to manifest complicity or emotional support. The films examined provide some interesting clues about these assumptions. There are several scenes in which the female characters – never the male ones – are filmed talking about personal issues or about their fears. On the contrary, the main topic that prevails in most of the male characters' conversations in these films is girls. Neither of these films dwells upon the physical appearance of the female characters that Hollywood cinema, instead, usually resorts to in order to encourage the 'scopophilic pleasure' (Mulvey, 1975) in the male characters and the male audience. Nevertheless, some remarks and exchanges from the male characters in these films confirm the persistence of the most common association in their minds: women as an erotic object. Whatever their age, they all seem obsessed by women's appearance and by the erotic association of ideas that they unconsciously provoke. One of the most fitting and amusing examples comes from *Calendar Girls* (*CG*). Here, the teenager Gaz gives his friend Jem his opinion about the fact that Debbie,

one of their schoolmates, laughed when she met them in the school corridor:

Example 2

Gaz: It is, I'm telling ya. Girls laughing's a good sign. It's a top sign, I tell ya. Bloody hell, if you're in with Debbie Nolan, not being unsound here, but she has got the most fantastic tits. She has got fine mangoes. Actually, not mangoes. I don't imagine they'd be hard like mangoes. Maybe plums. Ripe plums. You know, big ripe plums. No, what am I saying? No, not plums. Balloons! That's it. That's what exactly they're like. A pair of balloons you find behind your settee three days after a party. Jem: Gaz, will you stop talking about tits? Gaz: Why would I ever wanna do that?			
Sub es	Que sí. Que las chicas se rían es una buena señal. ..... Es guay, te digo. ..... Si le caes en gracia a Debbie Nolan... ..... No quiero ser vulgar, pero tiene unas tetas que no veas. ..... Tiene un par de mangos... ..... Bueno, no mangos no. No creo que sean ..... duras como los mangos. ..... Quizá ciruelas. ..... Ciruelas maduras. ..... Ya sabes, ciruelas grandes y maduras. ..... ¿Qué estoy diciendo? ..... No, ciruelas, no. ¡Globos! ..... Eso es. ..... Eso es justo lo que parecen. ..... Unos globos que encuentras en casa al acabar la fiesta. ..... Gaz, ¿quieres dejar de hablar de tetas? ..... ¿Por qué iba a querer?	Sub it	È così, te lo dico io. Se le ragazze ridono è un buon segno. …….. È un ottimo segno, te lo dico io. …… Se piaci a Debbie Nolan, ……. non per essere volgare, ma ha due tette fantastiche. ……. Ha due bei manghi. …… Anzi, non manghi. Non me le immagino dure come manghi. …… Magari prugne. ……. Prugne mature. Sì, grosse prugne mature. ……. No, cosa sto dicendo? …… No, non prugne. Palloncini. …… Ecco. Sono proprio così. ……. Palloncini che ritrovi dietro il divano tre giorni dopo una festa. …….. Gaz, la smetti di parlare di tette? …….. E perché mai?

Dub es	Gaz: Es verdad . Te lo aseguro. Que las tías se rían es bueno. Es la mejor señal, fijo. Yo creo que le molas a Debbie Nolan. Y no hay una mejor. ¡Menudo par de tetas! Tiene unos buenos melones. No, bueno, melones no. No las imagino duras como melones. A lo mejor, peras. Peras maduritas. Sí, muy grandes y maduras. No, pero ¿qué digo? No son peras. ¡Globos! Eso es. Eso es lo que parecen. Un par de globos como los que te encuentras tres días después de una fiesta. Jem: Gaz, ¿puedes dejar de hablar de tetas? Gaz: ¿Por qué quieres hablar de otra cosa?	Dub it	Gaz: Ma sì, te l'assicuro. Se le ragazze ridono è un buon segno. È il massimo, lo sai. Bel colpo se piaci a Debbie Nolan. Non vorrei essere volgare, ma ha due enormi, fantastiche tette. Sembrano due grossi manghi. Anzi, non proprio manghi. Figurati se sono dure come manghi. Magari come prugne. Prugne mature. Due belle prugne mature. No, che sto dicendo? No, non prugne. Palloncini. Così sono. Ecco a cosa assomigliano. A due palloncini che trovi dietro il divano tre giorni dopo una festa. Jem: Gaz, vuoi piantarla di parlare di tette? Gaz: E perché dovrei piantarla, scusa?

There are not significant differences in the translated versions of this conversation apart from the words 'mangoes' and 'plums' that have been rendered as *melones* [melons] and *peras* [pears] in the Spanish dub. The Spanish subtitle and both the Italian versions, instead, are far more literal. What I find particularly striking is the wealth of colourful metaphors used. As Hines (1994: 295) points out:

> there is a consistent, widespread, largely, unconscious and undocumented metaphor in English equating women-as-sex objects with desserts, manifested both in linguistic expressions (such as *cheesecake*, *cookie*, *tart*, etc.) and in customs (such as *women jumping out of cakes*) […] which can have unexpected side-effects.

In fact, the images conjured up by Gaz make his mental picture much more seductive but, at the same time, mock the stereotypical way in which most (young) men consider women, i.e. as "something easily obtainable, a ripe fruit ready for picking and for (male) consumption" (Mills, 1991: 46). Interestingly, in Spanish men also colloquially refer to women's breasts as melons and pears, but not as mangoes and plums, suggesting that the Spanish dub is more target-oriented than the subtitled version, in which mangoes and plums have been kept.

Another amusing, if less flattering, example of these associations can be found in *East is East* (*EE*). Nazir, the eldest of a family of seven children of Pakistani origin living in Salford, near Manchester, has been disowned by his patriarchal father because of his refusal to marry the Muslim girl that his father has settled on for him according to Islamic tradition. In the scene, his mother, brothers and sister call him from a telephone box without their husband/father's knowledge. During the conversation, Tariq, one of Nazir's brothers, says:

Example 3

Ask what the talent's like in Eccles!			
Sub es	Pregúntale por las chicas de Eccles.	Sub it	Chiedigli delle ragazze di Eccles.
Dub es	Pregúntale qué tal son las tías en Eccles.	Dub it	Chiedigli com'è la fauna femminile a Eccles.

Tariq's question does not have any disparaging nuance in the original version even though the word 'talent' is often used by men to refer to women they find sexually attractive. The Spanish versions are even more general than the English original, the dub back translating as 'ask him what the girls are like in Eccles' and the subtitle as 'ask him about the girls of Eccles'. On the other hand, however, the Italian dub does not only fail to convey the positive connotation that the word 'talent' has, but goes even further to replace it by a clearly negative phrase, since *chiedigli com'è la fauna femminile a Eccles* literally means 'ask him what the feminine fauna is like in Eccles'. Although a more neutral translation is possible by using *chiedigli se ci sono belle ragazze a Eccles* [ask him if there are beautiful girls in Eccles], the target solution has preferred to resort to an expression suggesting a grosser image, usually associated with wildlife. The Italian subtitle opts instead for a more neutral translation: *chiedigli delle ragazze di Eccles* [ask him about the girls of Eccles].

3. Interaction forms

People interact in different ways depending on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, the formality of the context in which they are, their social status and, of course, their gender. Compliments and insults, together with vocatives and forms of address, are among the most common forms of treatment. Each contains a great range of intriguing and, sometimes, tricky signals and overtones of which the speakers do not seem always aware, but which denote if there is an equal distribution of power or respect between the two interlocutors (Eckert and McConnell, 2003; Baptiste, 1990).

Most studies carried out on this subject (Holmes, 1998; Herbert, 1998) show that there is clear evidence that women compliment each other (especially on their appearance) more than men and that when men do it, their effusiveness is easily misunderstood and feared either by the addressee or by a third party. We find evidence of this in two scenes from *BB*, but the interesting point is that the object of other people's misunderstanding are the two female characters and not the males.

At the end of the film Jules, Jess' best friend and team-mate, joins Jess at Pinky's (Jess's sister) wedding. Jules's mother decides to drive her. As soon as she sees Jess wearing the shoes that Jules had lent her, without her mother's knowing, she bursts out saying:

Example 4

Get your lesbian feet out of my shoes.			
Sub es	¡Saca tus pies lesbianos de mis zapatos!	Sub it	Leva quei piedi da lesbica dalle mie scarpe!
Dub es	Saca tus pies lesbianos de mis zapatos.	Dub it	Leva di corsa quei piedi da lesbica dalle mie scarpe.

Later on, when Jules tells her mother that just because she plays football it does not make her a lesbian and that being a lesbian is not anything bad anyway, her mother hypocritically replies:

Example 5

Oh, no, sweetheart, of course it isn't. No! I mean, I've got nothing against it. I was cheering for Martina Navratilova <u>as much as the next person.</u>			
Sub es	No, cariño. Claro que no lo es… ¡No! ..... Es decir, yo no tengo nada contra eso. ..... Yo animaba a Martina Navratilova <u>como la que más</u>.	Sub it	No! Certo che no, amore. ……. Per me no, no di certo! ……. Io tifavo per Martina Navratilova <u>come se fosse una normale</u>.
Dub es	Oh, no cariño. Por supuesto que no. No, no, no tengo nada en contra. En su momento animé a Martina Navratilova <u>como la que más</u>.	Dub it	Oh, no. Amore, certo che no. No. No, per me no. No di certo. Io per esempio tifavo per Martina Navratilova <u>come se fosse una normale</u>.

Throughout the film, Jules's mother suspects Jess to be more than a friend to her daughter because she has happened to hear a conversation between the two girls and has misunderstood their words. The attitude of Jules's mother in this scene openly discloses her strong prejudices about same-sex relationships, but what is striking is the even more offensive way in which her words have been rendered in both dubbed and subtitled Italian versions. In a way, the original sentence 'I was cheering for Martina Navratilova as much as the next person' sounds a bit offensive, since it suggests that the speaker feels herself entitled to deliver a judgement about Martina Navratilova for not conforming to the sexual preferences of the 'next person'. Both Italian translations for this sentence are *Tifavo per Martina Navratilova come se fosse una normale* [I was cheering for Martina Navratilova as if she were a normal person]. Even

though it can be argued that it is the speaker's attitude, rather than her words, that should be branded as 'politically incorrect', I find the Italian rendering more derogatory. It stresses a very common attitude in Western societies – in which Italian society often indulges – which tends to classify things and individuals in fixed categories, deciding what is normal and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, and thus placing some people at a disadvantage. The Spanish versions are more literal as *como la que más* back translates as 'as much as anyone else'.

In a previous scene, there is a very similar misunderstanding about Jess and Jules. This time they are seen hugging at a bus stop by Pinky's future parents-in-law. In reality, they see Jules from behind and think she is an English man but, as Indian women are supposed to have relations with and eventually get married to Indian men only, they find Jess's attitude shameful and decide to cancel the wedding between Pinky and their son. Upset by this turn of events and angry with Jess, Pinky tells her parents that Jess keeps on playing football behind their back, adding:

Example 6

No mum. It's not their fault. I bet she was with some dykey girls from her football team!			
Sub es	¡No, es culpa suya! ……. ¡Estaría con una tortillera …….. de su equipo!	Sub it	È colpa sua! Sarà stata con qualche lesbica della sua squadra!
Dub es	No, mamá. Ella tiene la culpa. Apuesto a que estaba con una tortillera de su equipo.	Dub it	No, mamma. È tutta colpa sua. Scommetto che stava con qualche lesbica della sua squadra.

Once again Pinky's remark shows intolerance towards women who do not conform to the established heterosexual canon, but in this case it is the original version, as much as the Spanish one, that charges Pinky's words with a more derogatory connotation. 'Dykey' is a slang term for a female homosexual, especially used to refer to the stereotypical image of a mannish lesbian. The Spanish *tortillera* conveys the same negative allusion, thus emphasizing Pinky's prejudice and sense of superiority. In Italian, the more neutral *lesbica* [lesbian] has been used.

As regards the way in which women are usually addressed by men, Coates (2004: 100) points out that men's compliments often "amount to sexual harassment" since even the words of endearment may show that women are regarded in terms of sexuality. A good example can be found in a scene of *CG* in which Ruth, suspecting that her husband Eddie has a mistress, goes to the restaurant where they are supposed to meet each other. After an exchange of words between the two women, Eddie comes along walking with a bullish gait and addresses her lover as follows:

Example 7

You are looking good, baby.			
Sub es	Estás muy guapa, nena.	Sub it	Sei bellissima, tesoro.
Dub es	Estás de muerte, muñeca.	Dub it	Sei una cannonata, bimba.

What might look like a tender compliment by an intimate friend, is perceived, instead, as a clear sign of superiority as is evident from Eddie's greedy look. It is interesting that the metaphors in both the Spanish dub *estás de muerte* [you can cause death] and the Italian dub *sei una cannonata* [you're a cannon shot] emphasize the more general 'you are looking good', thus suggesting that he may have other plans after dinner and that she likes his manners. The subtitles are more neutral since *estás muy guapa* and *sei bellissima* back translate as 'you look very beautiful'. The point that I would like to foreground, however, is the final word of this apparent compliment. In the three languages 'baby', *muñeca* [doll], *nena* [baby girl], *bimba* [baby girl] and *tesoro* [treasure] are terms of endearment used by either very close people (especially heterosexual lovers) or by parents who address their children with fondness. When applied to a woman, however, these labels indicate either that she is considered sexually attractive and available by a male (in some way it debases her to a little, silly object that anyone may handle), or that her power is taken away and she is reduced to a puerile level.[1]

4. Swearwords

The fact that men swear more than women is another accepted commonplace which should be revisited, since in everyday conversation we find evidence that more and more female speakers avail themselves of taboo words either because they intend to address someone with an offensive aim, or simply because this kind of language has become part of everybody's language (Cheshire, 1982; De Klerk, 1992; Hughes, 1992). It is true, however, that this disposition to make use of vulgar and offensive terms is more common among the young generations and the films analysed provide a good instance of that. The films with a heavier density of swearwords are *BB* and *EE* where most characters are young people, whereas the majority of the characters in *CG* are middle-aged women who live in a small village in Yorkshire, where people are stereotypically supposed to live in a more genuine manner and to have more traditional habits. Many of these words and expressions, uttered by both men and women, contain sexist or racist nuances. By using them, speakers consciously or unconsciously contribute to encouraging stereotypes and unpleasant views that may backfire on themselves because they are the

very target of these false assumptions. From this point of view, the dubbed and subtitled translations can maintain or minimise certain connotations and may be responsible for perpetuating stereotypical images.

In the aforementioned scene from *BB* where Jess is suspected of going out with an English man, both the way in which Pinky addresses her and the way in which Jess reacts are worthy of analysis:

Example 8

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Pinky: You were at a bus stop kissing him! You stupid bitch! Why didn't you do it in secret like everyone else?
Jess: Kissing? Me? A boy? You're all bloody mad!</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sub es</td><td>¡Le besabas en una parada!
……
¡Maldita estúpida!
……
¿No podías ocultarte,
como todas?
……
¿Besándole? ¿Yo?
……
¿A un chico?
……
¡Estáis como putas cabras!</td><td>Sub it</td><td>Ti hanno visto baciarlo!
……

Potevi farlo di nascosto
come le altre!
……..
Che cosa? Io chi avrei baciato?
……

Cavolo, siete matti!</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dub es</td><td>P: Te vieron en la parada del bus besándote. ¡Asquerosa! ¿Por qué no lo hiciste como todas las demás?
J: ¿Besándome? ¿Yo? ¿Con un chico? ¡Estáis todos como putas cabras!</td><td>Dub it</td><td>P: Ti hanno vista oggi che lo stavi baciando alla fermata. Brutta puttana. Non lo potevi fare di nascosto come le altre?
J: Che cosa? Io avrei baciato? Cavolo, ma siete matti?</td></tr>
</table>

Pinky addresses Jess by calling her 'stupid bitch' whose denotative meaning is "a female dog in heat that seeks insemination" (Kramarae and Treicheler, 1992: 72). This substantive does not necessarily denote harlotry but, of course, is a derogatory term when referred to a woman because it suggests something lewd and aggressive, lacking human control. This provocative appellation is maintained in the Spanish dub *asquerosa* [filthy], is hardly softened in the subtitle *maldita estúpida* [bloody stupid], but is missing in the Italian subtitle. On the other hand, the Italian dub has a far more sexist connotation since *brutta puttana* back translates as 'ugly whore', thus stating a clear association with prostitution. Jess voices her incredulity by saying 'you're all bloody mad' which does not have any sexist connotation even though she is a bit cheeky considering that she is addressing her parents too. This utterance has been translated pretty literally in the two Italian versions *cavolo, (ma) siete matti?* [Jeez, are you mad?], whereas it has been altered in the Spanish ones. *Estáis (todos) como putas cabras*, literally 'you're all like whore goats', is a common phrase in Spanish-speaking cultures. Of course, it is not used intending its literal meaning, but it reflects a very

disparaging conception of femininity of which the speakers may seem unaware.

BB provides another good example of how translation may reinforce the overtones of some remarks that are intrinsically unpleasant. In this scene, the male mates Jess used to play with in the park before joining the professional female team go to the stadium to see Jess playing a match. When they see Jess's new mates in gym suits they make some comments about their breasts, disclosing with their remarks other stereotypical assumptions about women:

Example 9

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">M1: They don't all look like lezzies, do they?
M2: Check out the boobs on the captain!
M3: Jeez, man, they must get in the way.
M1: She's lucky she ain't knocked herself out running out the pitch with them!</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sub es</td><td>- No todas parecen lesbianas.
- ¡Mirad las tetas de la capitana!
……
- Serán un estorbo.
- ¡Tiene suerte
…….
de no lesionarse corriendo
con eso!</td><td>Sub it</td><td>- Non sembrano tutte lesbiche.
- Guardate che seno che ha la capitana!
……
Con quelle non vede la palla!
……
Le finiranno in faccia
e si farà un occhio nero!</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dub es</td><td>M1: No todas parecen lesbianas.
M2: ¡Dios! ¡Mirad las tetas de la capitana!
M3: Dios, tío, ¡le deben de estorbar!
M1: Tiene suerte de que no se haya dado un golpe de teta en la cara al correr.</td><td>Dub it</td><td>M1: Però, mica sembrano tutte lesbiche.
M2: Ragazzi, guardate un po' che poppe ha la capitana!
M3: Cavolo, ma con quelle non vede la palla.
M1: Se non sta attenta se le sbatte in faccia e finisce che si fa un occhio nero!</td></tr>
</table>

Apart from the colloquial register they use when referring to the girls' breasts, and from their narrow and puerile conception of lesbianism that their words and tone disclose, what is particularly striking are the Italian translations of the sentence 'she's lucky she ain't knocked herself out with them'. In both dubbing and subtitling the linguistic result adds a racist nuance when the text interacts with the image. The dub back translates as 'if she doesn't pay attention she'll end up by giving herself a black eye' and the subtitle as 'she will knock herself out with them and will end up by giving herself a black eye'. Besides the derogatory remark, which is very unflattering in the three languages, the Italian versions are openly discriminatory, not because the phrase 'to give someone a black eye' may be considered racist in itself, but because the introduction of the word 'black' is inopportune in this case since the comment is addressed to a black woman. Strictly speaking, this is not really a case of the use of a swearword, but this (un)intentional rendering can be as offensive as any four-letter word because of the effect that it might have on a target black audience.

To conclude this analysis I will briefly refer to *EE* where a good stock of swearing is found. The strongest utterances come mostly from the head of the family, George, who often addresses his own children as 'bastards' and his wife, Ella, as 'stupid', 'bitch' or 'bugger'. One of the most dramatic examples of his verbal and physical violence is the scene in which George hits one of his sons. Ella takes the boy's defence, reproaching her husband's bad manners, to which he says:

Example 10

You bastard bitch! You bugger! You call me pig, bitch! You talk to me like this again, I'll kill you bloody bitch! I burn all your bastard family when you sleep.			
Sub es	¡Perra asquerosa! ..... - ¡Zorra! - ¡No! ..... ¿Me llamas cerdo, perra? ..... ¡Como vuelvas a hablarme así, te mato! ..... ¡Maldita perra! ..... ¡Quemaré a toda tu familia ..... mientras dormís!	Sub it	Puttana bastarda! …….. Troia! Tu mi chiami "porco"! …… Parlami ancora così e io ti ammazzo! ……. Puttana, brucio tutta la tua fottuta famiglia ……. quando dormite!
Dub es	Eres una perra asquerosa. ¡Puta! Llamarme cerdo a mí. ¡Perra! Vuelve a decírmelo ¡anda! Te voy a matar. Te voy a matar. ¡Perra! Y pegaré fuego a toda tu familia mientras dormís.	Dub it	Puttana bastarda! Troia! Tu chiama me porco. Tu parli a me così ancora, io, io ti ammazzo. Ti ammazzo, puttana! E brucio tutta tua fottuta famiglia quando dormite.

The words used by Gorge to address Ella are accompanied by an extremely offensive tone peppered with insults that contain sexual innuendoes ('bitch', 'bastard'). Although these words subtly imply a reference to prostitution, the association is not directly perceived. They have become so commonplace in English spoken language that the speakers use them without being aware of their allusions. The Spanish and, in particular, the Italian versions, instead, state a more direct association with harlotry. The Spanish translations maintain the sense of the original 'bitch' through *perra*, but translate 'bugger' as *puta* in the dub, and *zorra* in the subtitle, both meaning 'whore'. In the Italian versions, 'bastard bitch' and 'bugger' have been rendered as *puttana bastarda* [bastard whore] and *troia* [slut], and 'your bastard family as *tua fottuta famiglia* [your fucking family]. The striking point is that in this case too a more literal translation could have been possible, but once again the Italian has preferred the use of terms which contain even more sexist/sexual innuendos, suggesting that the best way to offend a woman

is to call her a 'whore' or to insinuate that if something goes wrong it is her fault, and not the man's.

5. Conclusions

Language is one of the means by which people communicate and express their attitudes, ideas, and feelings about other people and social issues. Sometimes speakers are not fully aware of the weight of their words. When they go on using a certain kind of vocabulary without being aware of its full meaning they unconsciously encourage the spreading of stereotypes and wrong assumptions. If language users are not always responsible – though not automatically excusable – for the way they talk because they absorb good and bad habits from their surroundings, mass media are responsible, because they control the type of information and cultural values that are spread in our societies. One of the main tools the media resort to in order to transmit these values from one culture to another is audiovisual translation, in particular dubbing and subtitling. According to traditional approaches, the translation must be faithful to the source text. From a merely linguistic point of view, therefore, when films are dubbed and subtitled, the values, the ideologies and even the stereotypes contained in the original version should be reproduced. This transfer, however, may involve changes in the vocabulary that can in turn affect the way in which the socio-cultural issues are portrayed in the film. The problem arises when these linguistic changes 'do not make sense' or when the translator decides, consciously or unconsciously, to manipulate the original. Whatever the reasons for these changes – whether technical or ideological – they may have a crucial impact on the target audience's perception of those social issues.[2]

My initial aim was to investigate if the films chosen contain and display gender stereotypes through verbal language, and if these are kept, softened or reinforced in the dubbed and subtitled versions into Spanish and Italian. The analysis carried out so far shows that these films contain good examples of linguistic stereotypes which disclose not only sexist, but also general discriminatory attitudes, 'dykey' and 'bitch' being two prime examples. The conclusions that can be drawn from the corpus analysed are the following:

- The original version shows that when the characters address each other with offensive terms, these do not necessarily have a sexist or sexual connotation. A wide range of expressions has been used. They can be inoffensive words such as 'baby' which, however, hides a light sexist connotation; slang terms like 'bitch' which may acquire more or less negative nuances according to the speakers and their tone; and openly discriminatory labels like 'dykey' that disclose the widespread prejudices about certain sexual categories.

- The Spanish, and especially some Italian translations tend to render some of these derogatory remarks through words and expressions associating the figure of the woman with prostitution or sexual intercourse which do not exist in the original version (Examples 8 and 10).
- There seems to be greater freedom when translating for dubbing than when translating for subtitling. The subtitles tend to reproduce the original terms more literally than the dubbed versions or to soften, rather than to increase, the offensive overtones of the original dialogue, although this is not done in a systematic way.

Broadly speaking, these films and their translations show that British, Spanish and Italian societies are very close in terms of their relationship with identity-related issues. It is difficult to conclude that the image of the Italian society reflected in the language used in these dubbed/subtitled films is more sexist, or that the Spanish one is more homophobic even though the few examples considered might point in that direction. The issue is that the three cultures in question display intolerance towards some social categories that do not conform to the clichés of the mainstream society, and that this subtle uneasiness and fear of what is different is expressed through idioms, swearwords, and even forms of endearment.

To conclude, I would like to comment on how the films analysed show that the linguistic changes that occur in the dubbing/subtitling process may affect differently the source and the target audiences' perception of the world. People hardly question what they have got used to. When they go to the cinema, or watch television, they are ready to believe in what is portrayed on the screen because they find it attractive and, in some cases, they hope that their dreams will also come true like the characters' ones. In so doing they absorb and unconsciously accept the good and the bad things represented in the film. If the characters address each other in an offensive way, through a vulgar choice of vocabulary, the audience may agree or disagree with this kind of treatment, but think that these forms of address are part and parcel of their language. The crucial point is that if those same expressions are rendered in another language with terms which are not simply vulgar, but also sexist or racist, then the audience who have not viewed the film in the original language end up thinking that these forms of address are universal. As it is common not to question standard patterns of behaviour, certain expressions and attitudes become part of an interculturally shared background. In this way, cinema, and screen translation, may have the power to monopolize the audience's conscience and subtly contribute to inculcating and perpetuating unpleasant assumptions, patriarchal stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes that become more and more difficult to uproot from our minds.

Notes

1 For a more detailed analysis of the patriarchal connotations of the term 'baby' see Mills (1991:14).

[2] However, the semiotic value of films cannot be underestimated. Images, gestures and ways of dressing can never be adapted to the target context because they cannot be changed. What may be manipulated linguistically cannot be manipulated visually.

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