



*To translate or not to translate
dialects in subtitling?
The case of Pif's
La mafia uccide solo d'estate*

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ABSTRACT: The difficulty of translating dialects has been extensively studied over the years, firstly by scholars who focused on the (un)translatability of dialects in literature, and more recently by an increasing number of academics who have been investigating the issue within the field of audiovisual translation, both in dubbing and in subtitling. This study aims to analyse the strategies used in subtitling to translate into English the Sicilian dialect spoken in the Italian film *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, directed by Pif in 2013. In this film, the use of dialect is not simply a tool to indicate the geographical origins of the characters, but it is exploited to construe their identity. Indeed, language variation is a device used purposefully to distinguish the 'good' characters from the 'bad' ones, and, as such, it is a means of identification. The results of the analysis will also be compared to those of previous studies conducted in this research area. Finally, the paper will attempt to provide some potential solutions that might be adopted in the subtitling of similar products, based on previous studies performed by the author on the original dialogues of some Hollywood films.

KEY WORDS: Audiovisual translation; subtitling; dialects; Mafia; identity



INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to provide a contribution to the research field on dialect translation, more specifically in the area of audiovisual translation (AVT). In particular, the study aims to analyse the strategies used in subtitling to translate into English the Sicilian dialect spoken in the Italian film *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, directed by Pif in 2013. The film has been chosen as the object of study of this research especially because the use of dialect is not simply a tool to indicate the geographical origins of the characters, but, as will be seen more in detail, it is a significant instrument exploited to construe the identity of the characters.

The difficulty of translating dialects has been extensively studied over the years, firstly by scholars who focused on the (un)translatability of dialects in literature (see, among the others, Altano; Balma; Bonaffini, "Dialects"; "Traditori"; "Translating"; DuVal; Federici; Koch; Rosengrant; Sánchez García), and more recently by an increasing number of academics who have been investigating the issue within the field of AVT, both in dubbing (see Bonsignori, "Desi/Brit-Asian"; "Transposition"; Bonsignori and Bruti, "Analysis"; "Representing"; Bruti; Bruti and Vignozzi; Dore, "Revoicing"; Gaudenzi; Minutella, "Dialects"; *(Re)Creating*; Parini, *Italian-American*; "Dagos"; "When"; "I'm a man"; "Sleeping") and in subtitling (see Bonsignori, Bruti and Sandrelli; Bruti and Ranzato; De Meo, "Language"; "Montalbano"; Dore, "Subtitling"; Dudek; Hargan; Magazzù, "Dottore"; "Montalbano"; Mével, "Traduire"; "Use"; Ramos Pinto; Raffi, "Fellini"; "Language"; "Linguistic"). The online translation journal *inTRAlinea* has dedicated four special issues to the topic (in 2009, 2012, 2016, and 2020), entitled "The Translation of Dialects in Multimedia" (Giorgio Marrano *et al.*; Nadiani and Rundle; Brenner and Helin; Geyer and Dore). The series of conferences "MultiMeDialectTranslation" (which had its eighth edition in 2019) is a continuous scientific event organized in different European universities that has been attracting the interest of scholars from a wide variety of countries since 2002. Moreover, there are some international research projects that deal specifically with the investigation of the strategies used in the translation of multilingual audiovisual products, which include the study of dialects in their scope.¹

Given the fact that the vast majority of Italian audiovisual products are not specifically meant for international distribution, it is not so easy to find their versions subtitled into English. Italian films are usually subtitled only if they have been selected for awards and screenings at film festivals, or if they are *films d'auteur* realized by renowned and universally acclaimed directors from the past (for example, Fellini, Rossellini, Pasolini, Antonioni, Bertolucci, Leone, Monicelli, Visconti, Zeffirelli, Scola), or the present (for example, Sorrentino, Tornatore, Salvatores, Moretti, Virzi), or if they are produced as international co-productions. Aside from films, only very few quality TV

¹ See the TRAFILM project.



series are generally exported abroad in their subtitled versions, such as *Il Commissario Montalbano*, *Romanzo criminale* and *Gomorra*.

Consequently, the number of studies focusing on the English subtitles of Italian products are rather scant, considering the relatively exiguous number of films or TV series available to analyse. As far as studies investigating the strategies used to subtitle Italian dialects, this could even be considered as a niche within the niche. As Raffi ("Linguistic") claims, "In the domain of subtitling, Hargan (2006), Petillo (2012), and Raffi (2017, 2021) are among the few scholars to have focused on the ways in which Italian varieties are rendered in the English subtitles of audiovisual fiction." To the studies mentioned above, it is possible to add those by De Meo ("Language"; "Montalbano"); Dore ("Subtitling"); Bonsignori, Bruti and Sandrelli; Bruti and Ranzato; and Magazzù ("Dottore"; "Montalbano").

The film that will be analysed in this paper has been subtitled into English and it presents several exchanges of dialogues spoken in the Sicilian dialect. Therefore, it represents an ideal object of study for making a contribution to the studies pertaining to this specific area of research. The analysis intends to investigate the translation strategies used by subtitlers in order to establish whether there has been any attempt to mark the variety spoken in any way and maintain the connotations implied in the original version. As will be seen, in fact, the use of dialect in this film is an extremely important tool for the construction of the characters' identity. The results of the analysis will also be compared to those of the previous studies conducted in this research area. Finally, the paper will attempt to provide some potential solutions that might be adopted in the subtitling of similar products, based on previous studies performed by the author on the original dialogues of some Hollywood films.

DIALECTS IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

The growing interest in the investigation of dialects in AVT studies stems from the fact that the topic offers interesting material for analysis under different perspectives. Since the advent of the so-called *talkies* (sound films) in the late 1920s, the practice of using dialects and accents to connote speakers has been routinely employed in films with very specific purposes. Language, in fact, tends to be manipulated in order to convey characters' social, regional or ethnic origins, and to evoke in the audience the expectations related to the stereotypes connected to those specific origins. Such connotations can be conveyed through different linguistic devices, specifically by the use of identifiable accents, lexical variation and marked morphosyntactic constructions.

As noted in a previous study, "given the constraints imposed by the limited duration of films, time becomes an element of crucial importance in the construction of the identity of characters, and the use of language variation is a helpful tool which enables the audience to rapidly and easily identify them as possessing certain features" (Parini, "Sleeping" 246). Language, therefore, becomes an extremely important instrument which can be exploited by screenwriters and directors to characterize the



protagonists of their stories in a quick and easy way. Indeed, as Lippi-Green (81) clearly puts it, language becomes “a shortcut to characterization”:

In traditions passed down over hundreds of years from the stage and theatre, film uses language variation and accent to draw character quickly, building on established preconceived notions associated with specific national loyalties, ethnic, racial, or economic alliances. This shortcut to characterization means that certain traits need not be laboriously demonstrated by means of a character’s actions and an examination of motive.

The translation of language varieties loaded with connotations from a geographical perspective has always been problematic for translators. Indeed, as Bruti and Ranzato (341) state, “If on the one hand dialect lends narratives an undisputed quality of authenticity [...], its presence makes translation into a target language and culture quite challenging.” The transposition of a specific dialect into another language, while successfully maintaining all the connotations conveyed by the original text, is no doubt an arduous task.

In fact, there can be no correspondence between a variety spoken in a geographical area of a country and another one spoken in another country. Dialects are the result of specific historical, geographical, and social factors: each dialect is unique and cannot be transposed into another language with a corresponding variety. For example, as maintained by Galassi (67), ‘it is impossible to establish an analogy between a regional dialect of the United States and an Italian regional dialect’ (“è impossibile stabilire un’analogia tra un dialetto regionale degli Stati Uniti e un dialetto regionale italiano”; my translation).

If the translation of dialects is a challenge in any text type, it becomes unquestionably more complicated in the case of audiovisual products. The specific mode involved, in fact, combines images and sounds, which entails a series of unavoidable limitations and constraints. Literary translators, indeed, can avail themselves of various aids to help readers understand the connotations implicit in the use of a specific dialect in the source text (i.e. explanatory notes, glossaries, explanations added in the text through strategies of expansion and explicitation). Audiovisual translation, on the contrary, necessarily implies the exclusion of such expedients.

TRANSLATING DIALECTS IN DUBBING

As mentioned above, the use of a corresponding variety connoted from a geographical perspective in the target language tends to be avoided as it is unrealistic. It easily tends to provoke an estrangement effect upon the spectators, with the resulting suspension of disbelief (the audience’s intentional acceptance of a work of fiction, in order to believe it for the sake of enjoyment).



This strategy is used only very rarely. When this happens, it is usually for comic purposes. Given that comedy is meant to make people laugh, spectators, in fact, seem to be more willing to overlook any potential disruption of realism and consequent suspension of disbelief. Some well-known examples of substitutions of regional varieties used in Italian dubbing for comic purposes in TV series are *Roseanne*, where the main character has been turned into an Italian woman called Annarosa who speaks with a marked Neapolitan accent; *Tequila and Bonetti*, where the character of the dog that provides a commentary for the audience speaks with a clearly recognizable Neapolitan accent; and *The Nanny*, where Jewish-American Fran Fine has become Francesca Cacace from Frosinone and speaks with an accent typical of that area (Parini, "Transposition" 23; see also Buonocore; Ferrari, "Translating"; "Since When"). Another famous example is the Italian dubbing of the cartoon *The Simpsons*, where the original regional varieties have been transposed with Italian regional varieties (Dore "Target Language"; Ferrari, "Since When"; Parini, "Transposition" 23), once again to maintain the comic element of the original product.

However, apart from the cases of comic products, some studies have demonstrated that in a few specific cases it may be possible to successfully transpose (at least some of) the connotations of the original dialogues in dubbing. This is the case, for example, of the Italian American variety (see Parini "Changing"; "Transposition"; *Italian-American*; "Dagos"; "When"; "I'm a man"; "Sleeping") or the Indian English and Desi/Brit-Asian variety (see Bonsignori and Bruti, "Analysis"; "Representing"; Bonsignori, "Desi/Brit-Asian"; "Transposition") dubbed into Italian. Indeed, there are several devices which allow the dubbing professionals first, and the actors themselves later, to connote the language on various levels.

Characterization, in fact, may be performed on a phonological level (by making the characters speak with a peculiar accent, with specific marked features related to pronunciation and intonation that are typical of speakers coming from a specific geographical area), on a lexical level (through phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing), and on a syntactic level (by using non-standard constructions which, again, can be associated with the variety spoken by people coming from a specific geographical area).

These, however, are special cases, where dubbing professionals can exploit the use of an authentic variety with specific characteristics that can be easily recognized by Italian spectators (namely, the Sicilian regiolect to transpose the Italian American variety and the variety spoken by Indian/Pakistani people living in Italy).

TRANSLATING DIALECTS IN SUBTITLING

In the case of subtitling there are other variables that come into play. First of all, it is necessary to focus on the original process that leads to the performance of the dialogues uttered by the actors in films, namely the transfer from the written (script) to the spoken word. This is usually done with the specific intention of making film dialogue



resemble spontaneous conversation. Film dialogues, indeed, are “written to be spoken as if not written” (Gregory and Carroll 42), meaning that they should sound as natural as possible, so as not to disturb the audience in their willing suspension of disbelief. Subtitles actually reverse this process, as dialogues are moved back to a written form. As Taylor (47) claims, “subtitling, compared to dubbing, suffers from the added difficulty that the ‘written to be spoken as if not written’ language is transformed again into the written mode and cannot totally extricate itself from the canons of written language.”

Moreover, when dealing with the analysis of subtitles, we should bear in mind the technical time and space constraints involved, which often leave no other choice to the translator but to opt for strategies of condensation and omission. As far as time is concerned, it is an acknowledged fact that people speak more quickly than they can read, so the content of the dialogues performed orally by the actors on screen needs to be summarised in subtitles. Space constraints instead are imposed by the fact that across the screen there is room for only 30/40 characters and a maximum limit of three lines of text at the bottom of the screen. Most important, however, is the fact that subtitling can only act on the lexical and grammatical levels, but not on a phonological one (which is something that dubbing can do), leaving out any potential characterization that relies on the characters’ accents.

All these limitations have no doubt a significant influence on the choices performed by the subtitlers when dealing with the translation of dialects. As previously mentioned, the studies in the area of subtitling Italian dialects are rather few, and they all seem to agree in identifying a general tendency towards neutralization of the dialectal features in the target text (Bonsignori, Bruti and Sandrelli; Bruti and Ranzato; De Meo, “Language”; “Montalbano”; Dore, “Subtitling”; Hargan; Magazzù, “Dottore”; “Montalbano”; Petillo; Raffi, “Language”; “Fellini”). Occasionally, some attempts may be made to mark the language through the use of code-mixing and substandard markers of orality. For instance, in the subtitles of the film *Nuovomondo*, De Meo (“Language” 29) identifies some instances of code-mixing (the use of “signora” and “signorina”) to help carry over “the foreign nuances of the Italian language into English,” whereas in her analysis of the subtitles of the film *Miracolo a Milano*, Raffi (“Linguistic”) maintains that “typical features of oral speech were found such as the absence of subject-verb inversion in questions, ellipses in questions and answers, and discursive cues including interjections.”

Other studies focusing on the translation of dialects in subtitled audiovisual products in other languages apparently report a similar situation (Dudek; Ramos Pinto). In contrast with this trend, it is interesting to point out Mével’s study on the English subtitles of the French film *La Haine* in English, where he identifies the use of features of African American Vernacular English to translate *banlieue* French (“Traduire”), and, conversely, in a corpus of American films from the 1990s portraying African American characters, he singles out the use of *verlan* (a type of argot featuring inversion of syllables in a word) in their French subtitles (“Use”).



LANGUAGE VARIATION IN *LA MAFIA UCCIDE SOLO D'ESTATE*

Known as *The Mafia Kills Only in Summer* in English, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* is a comedy-drama film written, directed, and interpreted by Pif (Pierfrancesco Diliberto's pseudonym) in 2013. Born in 1972, Pif is a Sicilian television and radio author and host, film director, actor, and writer. *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* marked his directorial debut and it was later turned into a TV series directed by Luca Ribuoli (2016-2018). The film is set in Palermo and follows the story of Arturo Giammarresi, from the very moment of his conception to his adulthood. Arturo is a kid who wishes to become a journalist and has been in love with Flora since he was ten years old. His coming-of-age story is paralleled with his slow realization of the existence of the Mafia. The film is a homage paid to the policemen and magistrates who were killed in Sicily by the Mafia between the late 1970s and 1992, culminating with the massacres of magistrates Giovanni Falcone² and Paolo Borsellino³ and their respective police escort agents. It ends with a sequence of images taken from newspapers, with pictures and names of many of the people killed by the Mafia during those years. It was awarded best comedy at the 27th European Film Awards.

The story is set in Palermo, and most of the characters speak a language variety which is more or less loaded with connotations, allowing the spectators to recognize it as being Palermitano. This means that it presents some specific features that make it possible for the audience to recognize the speakers as belonging to the geographical area around the city of Palermo. On the whole, the characters speak Italian, and not dialect, but their accent is usually marked (although to different extents), which means that the variety is connoted especially on the phonological level. Only occasionally does the characterization also act on a lexical and syntactic level.

The Mafiosi, however, always speak dialect, so their variety is much more marked and is loaded with connotations not only at the level of accent, but also at the level of lexis and syntax. It is essential to note that the Mafiosi are always represented in a comic way, as they all seem to be quite stupid and dumb (let us not forget that the film is a comedy-drama). In a simplistic way, we may say that the difference between the Mafiosi and the characters who, on the other hand, are not involved with the Mafia, is very clear from the point of view of characterization: the Mafiosi—who are cruel and evil—are foolish and slow-witted, whereas the non-Mafiosi are usually not.

This very clear-cut difference is also reflected in the way they speak. In fact, the shift in language from Italian (albeit marked from a phonological perspective) to dialect is intentional, as it reflects the shift in the representation of the characters and their characterization as 'good' vs. 'evil'. Language variation, therefore, is no doubt a device used to mirror the portrayal of characters. It is a "shortcut to characterisation" (Lippi-Green 81), as previously mentioned, and as such it plays a fundamental role that goes beyond the actual content of dialogues.

² 1939 – 1992.

³ 1940 – 1992.



It should be noted that the use of dialect as a means of characterization of the evil characters may be interpreted as an act of manipulation resulting in stereotyping. The risk associated with such a process may be that the audience will associate any people speaking dialect with Mafiosi. Nevertheless, it ought to be remembered that the film is a comedy, and, as already seen, in comedies accents and language variation in general are often used as a tool to emphasize the comic elements of the characters. As Bruti and Vignozzi (44) claim, “comedy and light-hearted films [...] seem to be the privileged environment for the use of accents and dialects with a clear humorous function” (see also Chiaro and Parini, “When”). In the Italian context, in particular, dialects have often been used with this specific purpose. As noted by Galassi (67), ‘dialects in Italian cinema carry a heritage that presumably originates from the theatre of masks, from the farce, and therefore they are bound to connote any character that speaks with an accent in a grotesque way’ (“il dialetto nel cinema italiano è portatore di un retaggio che forse trae origine dal teatro delle maschere, dalla farsa, ed è perciò condannato a connotare in modo grottesco il personaggio che parli con qualsiasi accento”; my translation). The same can be said about the American context and dialect comedies, which were extremely popular in the 1920s-1950s (first on the radio, and later on television), as well as the subgenre of the “ethnic comedy” (see King 143-169).

As the film was awarded best comedy at 27th European Film Awards, it was also distributed abroad, and this is the main reason why it was subtitled in English. Even more interesting for the purposes of this study is the fact that it is possible to find two different subtitled versions of the film on the market, namely the DVD version, whose English subtitles were performed by Charlotte Lantery for Ombre Elettriche (Rome) and the Netflix version, whose English subtitles were performed by Fabio De Grandis. This study aims to analyse both versions to investigate the strategies (or the lack of them) used to transpose the dialogues in Sicilian dialect played by the Mafiosi.

ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH SUBTITLES

As the film revolves around the coming-of-age story of Arturo, whose life events are constantly marked by a series of terrible murders committed by the Mafia, it is possible to argue that the Mafia itself can be considered as one of the main characters (the word “Mafia” itself is the subject of the title of the film). However, the actual dialogues among the Mafiosi in the film are relatively few. In the present study, five excerpts were identified where the characters speak proper dialect (other lines where only a few words are occasionally used at an intrasentential, or intraclause, level, as a sort of code-mixing strategy, were not taken into consideration). The dialogues have been aligned to their subtitled versions, with a view to investigating the strategies used by the two subtitlers.



<i>CHARACTER</i>	<i>ORIGINAL VERSION</i>	<i>DVD SUBTITLES</i>	<i>NETFLIX SUBTITLES</i>
Riina	Che fu?	-----	-----
Bagarella	Ma talè cu c'è? U figghiu d'Andreotti!	Look! That's Andreotti's son!	Is that Andreotti's son?
Riina	U figghiu d'Andreotti?	Andreotti's son?	Andreotti's son?
Bagarella	Minchia! Precisu a so padri! Eh, su i stissi. Totò, a te piacerebbe incontrare Andreotti?	Damn, just like his father!	Dammit! He really looks like his father.
Riina	Ca ciertu! Ma chistu incontra solo l'amici soi palermitani. C'iu spiegassi io cu cumanna oggi a Palermu. Amuni.	Of course! But he only meets his friends from Palermo. I'm going to tell him who the boss of Palermo is.	Sure! But he only meets his Palermitan friends. I'd like to explain to him who's the boss of Palermo.

Excerpt 1 (00:17:07-47).

The dialogue above takes place between Salvatore Riina⁴ (familiarily called Totò—which is the diminutive form of his first name—by his fellow Mafia comrades as well as by the press and the media in general), the cruel 'boss of the bosses', head of the Corleonesi family, and Leoluca Bagarella,⁵ his second-in-command, as well as his brother-in-law. The two Mafiosi are probably two of the most notorious cold-blooded Mafia bosses of all time, as they were responsible for the ruthless murder campaign that culminated with the assassinations of the magistrates Falcone and Borsellino. In this scene, they see by chance young Arturo dressed up as Giulio Andreotti,⁶ who was the Italian Prime Minister at the time when the story takes place. Arturo, in fact, has just been at a Carnival costume party. He is dressed up like Andreotti because (at this stage of the story, when he is just a ten-year old child) he is fascinated by the politician, as he sees him as a sort of role model. The two Mafiosi, who, as already mentioned, are portrayed as rather dumb, think that he is actually Andreotti's son. As it is possible to observe from the transcription of the two subtitled versions, no attempt whatsoever is made to mark the shift from Italian to dialect in the original version. The shift in characterisation, therefore, is lost in translation. The only attempt to mark the variety as substandard is the use of the colloquial forms "damn" and "dammit" to translate the typical Sicilian vulgar expression "minchia."

⁴ 1930 – 2017.

⁵ 1942 – imprisoned since 1995.

⁶ 1919 – 2013.



CHARACTER	ORIGINAL VERSION	DVD SUBTITLES	NETFLIX SUBTITLES
Bagarella	(singing) Tosami lady, Tosami lady...	-----	Cos I'm a lady...
	Minchia cantante sticchiosa!	Beautiful singer!	What a hot singer!
Riina	Zuccaru miu! Ma chi minchia ci fai ca?	I love you! What are you doing here?	Sweetie! What the fuck are you doing here?
	U nn'avevanu a ammazzari quella bestia ca nn'avi a dari i picciuli?	Weren't you supposed to kill that guy who owes us money?	Shouldn't you have killed that beast that owes us money?
Bagarella	Totò, non ci posso fari niente, a me Spagna mi fa sangue!	I'm helpless, this singer gives me the hots!	Totò, it's not my fault. The singer Ivana Spagna turns me on.
Riina	Luchino, fai la persona seria. Prima rispetti li impegni di lavori, poi ti nnni vai 'nta Spagna e unni ti nni voi iri, tinni vai.	Luchino, be serious. Respect your work commitments first, and then off to Spain or wherever you want.	Be serious, Little Luca! Your job first! Then you can think about Spagna and go whenever you want to.

Excerpt 2 (00:37:07-22).

The conversation reported above also occurs between Riina and Bagarella. The latter is cutting out a picture of the Italian singer Ivana Spagna from a magazine, and he is singing one of her songs, entitled "Easy Lady," whose refrain actually goes: "Cos I'm a lady, lady, lady, easy lady..." However, the man is not familiar with the English words of the song and changes the tune into "Tosami lady," which may be translated as "Shave me, lady." First of all, it is possible to note that also in this case both versions have been rendered with a standard variety of English. The DVD version, moreover, even omits the translation of the vulgar term "minchia" (which in the previous excerpt was translated as "dammit"), therefore making the register higher compared to the original version.

As far as this dialogue is concerned, besides the issue of the transposition of the dialectal variety, the translators had to face another difficulty, namely the reference to a singer (Ivana Spagna) who is not famous in the Anglophone world and outside of Italy in general. The translation is problematic not only due to the fact that she is basically unknown to the Anglophone audience, but also because her name is used as a device to play on the characterization of the two Mafiosi as extremely dumb-witted. The singer's last name, in fact, coincides with the Italian word used to refer to the country Spain, and when Bagarella tells Riina that he likes Spagna (the singer) so much, Riina replies that he should first carry out his duties, and later go to "Spagna" or wherever he wants to. This is obviously a pun that is very difficult to transpose in another language, and the two translators have opted for different choices. The DVD version avoids any reference to the name of the singer (Bagarella refers to her simply as "this singer"), and Riina tells him that first of all he should think of what he is supposed to do and then he can go to Spain. This exchange of lines turns out to be a *non-sequitur*, as Riina's reply is not logically connected to Bagarella's statement, since there has been no mention of Spain whatsoever. Moreover, the misunderstanding is not clear, so the characters do



not appear to be as dumb as they do in the original version. The Netflix version, instead, maintains the reference to the singer (even explicating her first name, which is not mentioned in the original version). However, it fails to transpose Riina's misunderstanding of the singer with the country (as it translates "Then you can think about Spagna," which does not convey the same meaning).

It is interesting to point out that Bagarella's passion for Ivana Spagna is apparently based on real facts. Tony Calvaruso,⁷ Bagarella's driver as well as his right-hand man (who was arrested with him in 1995 and later became a *pentito*, a collaborator of the prosecution) claimed that Bagarella had a real obsession for her. According to Calvaruso, the boss listened to her songs all the time, at home and in the car. The *pentito* maintained that he liked her so much that once he even took into consideration the idea of kidnapping her—apparently, as they were watching her singing at the Sanremo Festival on TV, Bagarella said: "Chista mi piace, ci fussi 'i sequestrarla" (Associazione Cosa Vostra) which, in Sicilian dialect, means 'I like this one, we have to kidnap her' (my translation).

There is one more issue that is worth analysing in this exchange of lines, namely the translation of Bagarella's diminutive name "Luchino." The DVD version has retained the original form, somehow maintaining a sort of foreignizing effect. On the other hand, the Netflix version has opted for a literal translation in order to transpose the meaning conveyed by the Italian diminutive suffix "ino," turning the name into "Little Luca." However, the solution adopted does not really convey the connotations of the original form. Indeed, Luchino is a diminutive name, but in this case it is used more as an expression of affection rather than to refer to the size of a person (which is the connotation conveyed by the used of the adjective "little" to premodify a proper noun). Leoluca Bagarella, in fact, is not known for being a particularly small man. Moreover, his name as a Mafia boss is precisely Don Luchino. Thus, by translating the name into "Little Luca," the subtitler has not only failed to maintain the connotations of the original term, but he has also manipulated facts.

CHARACTER	ORIGINAL VERSION	DVD SUBTITLES	NETFLIX SUBTITLES
Riina	U grandissimu curnutu! Diceva ca ci pinzava iddu a sentenza di stu maxi processi! E finiu ca ni condannanu a tutti. Avenu a ammazzari a Lima. E dopo ca pinzamu all'amici, pinzamu ai nemici.	Damned! He said he would think about the maxi trial! And they convicted all of them. We have to kill Lima. And after sorting our friends out, we will think of our enemies.	Big cuckold! He said he'd fix the super trial verdict. Instead they convicted everyone. We must kill Lima. After fixing our friends, we'll fix our enemies.

Excerpt 3 (1:03:18-39).

⁷ 1960 – under protection programme.



In the excerpt above Riina is watching an interview with Salvo Lima⁸ on television. Salvo Lima was a Sicilian politician associated with the Mafia. He was eventually killed by them, apparently because he had failed to block the confirmation of the sentences of the so-called *Maxiprocesso*⁹ by the Court of Cassation (Court of Final Appeal) in January 1992. This is exactly what he is referring to in this extract, which represents the moment when Riina tells his partners that they have to kill Lima for not avoiding the sentences to the indicted Mafiosi. Also in this case, it is possible to observe that none of the two subtitled versions have made any attempt at characterising the variety in any way. However, it is possible to observe that the Netflix subtitles have at least managed to maintain the insult to Lima (“curnutu” is the Sicilian dialect word for Italian “cornuto,” which actually means ‘cuckold’, and it is a rather offensive epithet, especially in Sicilian culture), whilst the DVD subtitles turn out to be milder, by rendering this slur with the generic exclamation “damned.”

CHARACTER	ORIGINAL VERSION	DVD SUBTITLES	NETFLIX SUBTITLES
Fra Giacinto	Dalli parti mia si dice che cu parla poco, campa cchiù 'ssai.	Back home they say: talk little, live longer.	Where I come from, people say that those who speak little, live more.
	Bravo 'o picciriddu!	Good boy!	Good job, little baby!

Excerpt 4 (00:06:31-40).

CHARACTER	ORIGINAL VERSION	DVD SUBTITLES	NETFLIX SUBTITLES
Fra Giacinto	E la vita è accussì... E cu è fissa se ne sta 'a casa!	That's life. Let all the fools stay home!	That's life. And that fool stays at home.

Excerpt 5 (00:11:51-59).

Excerpts 4 and 5 report some lines played by the character of Fra Giacinto, the priest in charge of the parish in Arturo's neighbourhood. He is not one of the Mafiosi *strictu sensu*. However, his character is based on a real person, whose birth name was Stefano Castronuovo¹⁰ (although his religious name was precisely Fra Giacinto), and was connected to the Mafia. He even had a nickname (namely “Padre Lupara,” meaning ‘Father Sawn-Off Shotgun’), just like most Mafiosi do (see Grimaldi 265; Piazza 52; Bolzoni). Although he is not directly involved in the many murders that are shown during the film, he is clearly closely related to the bosses of the organization. Once more, the use of dialect is a device used purposefully to make it evident that he is one of the

⁸ 1928 – 1992.

⁹ The Maxiprocesso (Maxi Trial) was a criminal trial against the Sicilian Mafia, which took place in Palermo and lasted 6 years. The importance of the trial was that the existence of Cosa Nostra was finally judicially confirmed. It is considered the most significant trial ever against the Sicilian Mafia, as well as the largest trial in world history.

¹⁰ 1919 – 1980.



'bad guys' and to distinguish him from the characters who are not involved with the Mafia. Also in these cases, however, both subtitled versions have opted for standardizing the variety. Moreover, once more the Netflix version turns out to be rather inaccurate, as the original dialect word "picciriddu" (literally meaning 'child') has been translated as "little baby," whereas Fra Giacinto is talking to Arturo, who is 10 years old.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has aimed at analysing the two English subtitled versions of Pif's film *La Mafia uccide solo d'estate* (2013), where language variety plays a significant role in the portrayal of the characters. Indeed, whereas the variety spoken by all the characters who do not belong to the Mafia is identifiable as Palermitano only at a surface level (mainly thanks to accent, through marked features of pronunciation and intonation, and only occasionally through lexical and syntactic variation), presumably for realistic purposes (the story takes place in Palermo, where people usually speak with an accent, albeit to different extents), the characters identifiable as Mafiosi speak dialect. Language variation, therefore, is a device used purposefully to distinguish the 'good' characters from the 'bad' ones. In a few words, it is a means of identification.

Generally speaking, the analysis of the subtitled versions of the dialogues spoken in Sicilian dialect has revealed a prevailing tendency towards standardization. Indeed, any trace of dialect is absent in both versions. The results of the analysis basically conform to those of previous studies conducted in the research field of dialect translation in Italian subtitling (Bonsignori, Bruti and Sandrelli; Bruti and Ranzato; De Meo, "Language"; "Montalbano"; Dore, "Subtitling"; Hargan; Petillo; Raffi, "Language"; "Fellini"; "Linguistic"; Magazzù, "Dottore"; "Montalbano"). Characterizing a language variety which is loaded with connotations from a geographical perspective in subtitling is in fact definitely complicated, as subtitles cannot exploit phonological variation in order to contribute to characterization, and this turns out to be a significant limit with respect to dubbing.

However, it was not possible to identify any attempt at compensation strategies either to try and make up for the unavoidable omissions/losses in characterization, or simply to connote the language in any way, for example at the lexical or morphosyntactic level. This leads to the question: are dialects really untranslatable in subtitling? Most of the times, this would probably seem to be the case.

In the specific case of the Sicilian dialect, nevertheless, it might be argued that some compensation strategies could be employed. In particular, characterization at the lexical level could be used to compensate for the unavoidable losses implicit in this kind of transposition. The use of Italianisms or even dialecticisms, which may be easily understood or inferred by an Anglophone audience, might be a potentially successful strategy, as it would connote the variety by distinguishing it from the standard language spoken by the other characters.

Previous studies which investigated the original dialogues of American films starring Italian American Mafiosi (Parini, *Italian-American*; "When"; "Sleeping") have



identified the presence of phenomena of code mixing through the insertion of some Sicilian words in the English lines played by the characters. If these words are used in English original dialogues of American films, it presumably means that Anglophone spectators are not expected to be disturbed by them. Some of these words are actually used in the original dialogues analysed in this paper, namely “minchia,” “curnuto,” “piccioli” and “amunì” (“minchia” occurs in the original dialogues of *GoodFellas*, *Donnie Brasco*, and *Analyze This*, “curnuto” occurs in *GoodFellas*, “piccioli” occurs in *Donnie Brasco*, and “amunì” occurs in *GoodFellas* and in *Shark Tale*).

Likewise, Italian American gangsterspeak could potentially be used to translate some words. For example, the verb “ammazzari,” which is the Sicilian dialect form for the Italian verb *ammazzare*, meaning ‘to kill’, could easily be rendered with the Italian American slang verb ‘to whack’, which is consistently used in basically all American films representing Italian American mobsters, either in dramas (for example in *The Godfather Trilogy*, *GoodFellas*, *Donnie Brasco*, *Casino*, *A Bronx Tale*), or in comedies (such as *Analyze This*, *Analyze That*, *Mickey Blue Eyes*), and even in animation (*Shark Tale*).

Taking into consideration all the difficulties implied in the process of transposing a language variety connoted from a geographical perspective in subtitling, it is worth mentioning the fact that in some specific cases translators are offered the possibility to limit the losses, at least to some extent. This is precisely the case of the translation of the Sicilian dialect, which, as already noted for the opposite process in dubbing (that is, the translation of the Italian American variety from English into Italian), offers the possibility to connote the target language through various strategies.

Given that subtitling excludes the option of characterising the variety at the phonological level (which is an option that can be exploited in dubbing), subtitlers might try and connote the variety at a lexical level. We should not forget that in this specific film the use of dialect is essential as far as the identification of the characters as ‘good’ vs ‘bad’ is concerned, and therefore language variation plays an extremely important role. By using code mixing in the same way as it is used in original dialogues in American films, some of the connotations conveyed by the shift of the original dialogues could be preserved in subtitling.

As has been stressed more than once in this paper, the studies on the translation of Italian dialects in English subtitling are still scant. This essay has aimed to provide a contribution to the research field. However, it is evident that further studies are necessary in order to establish whether the tendency towards standardization of the language through neutralization of regional dialects, which has been observed in most studies so far, can be considered a consolidated practice.

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