



REACHING ITALIAN AUDIENCE: CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC
TRANSFERS IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION.
THE CASE OF *SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE*

di

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1. *Introduction*

This paper presents a case study of the Italian translations (dubbing and subtitling) of the famous film *Slumdog Millionaire*¹.

Drawing partially on Rosa Agost's theoretical framework² for the study of audiovisual products, which is in turn based on Hatim and Mason's model³, my analysis is based on two levels:

1. the pragmatic level, where I analyse the contextual focus, intentionality and conversational maxims of the film script and their translation in the two target texts (Italian dubbed and subtitled versions);
2. the semiotic level, where I concentrate on the translation of ideological and cultural components and on religious overtones.

In addition, the paper contains some teaching prompts. Audiovisual translation, when dealt with in a systematic and creative way, can offer innumerable opportunities to improve linguistic competence and technical know-how. In fact, an analysis of dubbing/subtitling will enhance interpretative competence in general and will broaden students' knowledge at all levels.

2. *The Pragmatic Dimension*

As far as contextual focus is concerned, it is mainly conversational.

The framing idea of Vikas Swarup's novel *Q & A*⁴ on which the film (co-directed by Loveleen Tandan) is based, is the implausibility of a slum boy know-

¹ Directed by Danny Boyle. Lucky Red, UK and USA, 2008.

² R. Agost Canos, *Traducción y doblaje: palabras, voces, imágenes*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1999.

³ B. Hatim, I. Mason, *Discourse and the Translator*, London, Longman, 1990.

⁴ Black Swan, India, 2005.

ing the answers to the esoteric and culturally alien questions asked in the quiz show “Kaun Banega Crorepati”, popularly known as KBC, an Indian reality/game show based on the UK game show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, as it is referred to in the film. In both the book and the film⁵, the protagonist from the slums is interrogated by the police when the story begins, because his success in answering the show’s questions provokes the suspicion that he is cheating. In the course of his frequently brutal interrogation, he tells the police inspector his life story and narrates the specific experiences in his hectic, scary life that filled his head with random snippets of information and helped him answer questions that would otherwise have been beyond his ken. Simon Beaufoy’s script was originally entirely in English, but Boyle’s decision to have the children speak Hindi (their native language) emphasises realism and closeness to their actual conditions of life. In fact, in parts of the film where the flashbacks occur and the audience is shown the lives of the children in the slums, the language used is Hindi, thus leading to code-mixing of Hindi and English in the film dialogues.

And, in particular, the sections in Hindi are subtitled. The main characters, Jamal, his older brother Salim and Latika, the love of Jamal’s life, are each played by three actors who represent their infancy, their childhood and their lives as young adults. Boyle lets them speak Hindi through childhood, whereas during adulthood they mainly speak English or Hinglish, as we had better define it. In fact, according to Jenkins⁶, English has not killed off India’s indigenous languages, but functions in a complementary relationship with them. The growth of an Indian English identity finds expression in a linguistic variety with its own grammatical, lexical, phonological and discursal norms.

In adapting to local cultural norms, Indian English has developed its own varietal characteristics through the interaction of Indian languages and social behaviours with those of English. These characteristics differ in quite major ways from British English and would still be considered “deviant” by those who take an inter-language/fossilisation view of the indigenised varieties of English. The Indianisation of English essentially involves on the one hand adaptations of existing features of British and, on the other, the use of transferred mother-tongue items where British English lacks the scope to express a particular concept-or, to put it another way, where British English is “deficient”. At the discursal level, Indian English also makes considerable use of code switching and code mixing, as we can see in our film corpus.

⁵ The author of the screenplay is Simon Beaufoy. He won the 2009 Academy Award for “Best Adapted Screenplay” for *Slumdog Millionaire* as well as winning a Golden Globe and a BAFTA award.

⁶ J. Jenkins, *World Englishes*, London-New York, Routledge, 2003.

The film is narrated through the alternation of three time spans: the flashback on Jamal's life, the quiz show, and the interrogation by the police. Each question from the show is reviewed and Jamal is questioned as to how he would know such answers.

During the quiz show, the TV host (Prem Kumar) uses code mixing very often, probably to show off that he knows and can manage to talk fluently in two different languages, such as in the following example:

(All quotations from the source text come first, followed by Italian dubbing, and then by interlingual subtitling)⁷.

1. PREM: Ah, computer-ji, D lock kiya-jaye⁸
Ah, computer, dammi la risposta!⁹

...

-ji is a class-maintaining Indian English derivational honorific suffix, but in this case it is used with a humorous connotation. Lock kiya-jaye was made popular by Amitabh Bachchan, who hosted India's "Kaun Banega Crorepati" to ask the user whether his answer is final. The main trend in the whole Italian dubbed version is of a strong domestication, even at the cost of substantial manipulation of the source script. In fact, the Italian audience is deprived of the crucial characteristic of the source text, being the mixing and switching of two different codes.

"Dammi la risposta" is a clear example of a normalising and neutralising effect. The speaker's "voice" has been re-expressed in terms of what is familiar to the dominant culture.

The sentence is not subtitled, probably due to the intrinsic nature of subtitling, whose cuts can be compensated for while hearing the original.

Jamal's family is Muslim and while his village was doing chores outside, villagers came and killed everyone in sight. Jamal and Salim ran as much as they could and hid out in a shack. While they were running, they were said:

2. VILLAGERS: Private-ka land! Private ka-land! The planes won't kill you, madher chod, I will!

È proprietà privata! Via, via, subito da qui! Dai, dovete andarvene, andatevene!

È proprietà privata! Se gli aerei non vi ammazzano lo facciamo noi!

⁷ The Italian dubbed and subtitled version is distributed by Medusa Video.

⁸ Cfr. J.T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*, London, W.H. Allen & Co., 2008.

⁹ Cfr. J. Diaz Cintas, A. Remael, *The Linguistics of Subtitling*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, 2006.

In the two Italian versions the vulgar form of address “madher chod” is omitted, in favour of a heightening of the linguistic register. Also, emotionally charged language, made up of taboo words, swearwords, interjections, is often toned down in the Italian dubbed or subtitled versions, or even deleted if space is limited.

Emotionally charged language has a phatic or exclamatory rather than denotative function and it can be quite idiosyncratic, but usually it is also linked to situations and/or population groups. For instance, taboo words are tied in with local traditions and are used differently by different linguistic communities, depending on those communities’ religious background¹⁰.

Another interesting example of code-mixing is found in the flashbacks showing Jamal’s life on the streets with his brother Salim and the struggles that they endured just to survive. In a humorous scene, the young brothers have made their way to India’s most famous site, the Taj Mahal. Young Jamal sees a couple of tourists looking for a guide, and offers to give them an immediate tour of the impressive monument. Actually, this is just a blend of what he has overheard from the actual tour guide and his own quick wit. In the meanwhile, Jamal’s friends steal the tyres of the tourists’ car, and shout:

3. BOYS: Aré, sala! Formula One, Formula One! Pit-stop ka speed, Schumacher ka ishstyle!

Correte, correte, formula uno, formula uno! Rapidi date pit-stop stile Schumacher!

Oh, cazzo.

“Aré” derives from Hindi “arre”, interjection, being an expression calling for another’s attention. “Sala”, noun, is used especially as a term of address to refer to a fool or an idiot. This adjective is lost in the Italian dubbed version, being replaced by the repetition of the verb “correte” to give emphasis to the speaker’s voice. The subtitle, instead, is a concise summary of what is given aurally, because viewers may not have time to read the text. The choice of a rough expression (“Oh, cazzo”) characterises the speakers as being “slumdog”, thus fulfilling a phatic function in the dialogic interaction.

Still referring to verbal interaction¹¹, a recurrent ritual in the film is represented by greeting and return-greeting. In Indian culture, this stereotype involves a

¹⁰ Cfr. J. Diaz Cintas, *Striving for Quality in Subtitling: the Role of a Good Dialogue List*, in *(Multi) Media Translation*, cur. Y. Gambier, H. Gottlieb, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2001, pp. 199-212.

¹¹ Cfr. J. Sarangi, *The Indianization of English: a Sociolinguistic Study of Rama Mehta’s Inside the Haveli*, in *DOST Critical Studies*, cur. A. Monti, Alessandria, Dell’orso, 2007, pp. 31-40.

protocol of encounter among the participants of Indian discourse. The most frequent greetings are: *namaste*, *namaskar*, *salaam* and good morning. Sometimes, greetings are accompanied with non-vocal signals i.e. gestures, such as hand-shake, nods, smiles, taking the dust from the feet or touching the feet.

Jamal's friend Arvind is blind, disfigured by Mamman, who used to take in orphans and train them to beg for money, since people would give more to someone as helpless as a blind child. Arvind says to Jamal:

4. ARVIND: *Namaste, Sahib.*

Namaste Signore, che Dio vi benedica. Chi farà del bene al prossimo riceverà tanto.

Salve, signore. Benedetto sia colui che fa opere di bene per gli altri.

As B. K. Mahal points out, *namaste* is also said when performing the *namaskar*, the traditional Indian salutation in which one places the palms together in front of the chest and bows¹². "Sahib" is the title given in respect to someone senior in status or caste. It is a form of blessing, typical of Indian culture, given by a person to another. In the Italian dubbed version, an over-translation was necessary, because in Italian culture, blessing can only be given by God. The addition of the sentence "Chi farà del bene al prossimo riceverà tanto" is an evident strategy of ethno-centric adaptation of the source text to the dominant cultural values of Italian culture.

In the subtitle, the translation of "namaste" is literal, with a consequent domesticating effect.

Within the same dialogue between Arvind and Jamal, Arvind tells him that Mamman is upset with him and his brother, as they escaped, and if he finds him, he will surely kill him. So, Arvind comments:

5. ARVIND: *I will sing at your funeral, yaar.*

Canterò al tuo funerale, fratello

Canterò al tuo funerale!

"Yaar" is Hindi for "friend" or "buddy". In the Italian dubbed version, this noun is translated with "fratello", thus drawing up the addresser and the addressee. This effect is lost in the subtitle, probably for reasons of synchronisation.

But Jamal and Salim don't care and go looking for Latika, Jamal's love, who is now being trained as a dancer so she can make more money for Mamman. Ja-

¹² B.K. Mahal, *The Queen's Hinglish*, Glasgow, Harper Collins, 2006, p. 83.

mal and Salim devise a plan to get Latika out, Salim pulls out a gun and shoots Mamman dead. They run with Latika to a hotel to celebrate. While Jamal and Latika are catching up on life experiences, Salim tells Jamal to leave because he is the elder and he wants to have sex with Latika. Jamal tries and stops him but Salim is too strong, as we can see as follows:

6. SALIM: The man with the Colt 45 says chup.
 questa colt 45 dice piantala.
 L'uomo con la Colt 45 dice zitto!

Dialogues between the main characters in the film are always code mixed. A full use of the English language would have increased distance, especially when the two brothers quarrel.

“Chup” is the Hindi for “shut up” and the Italian subtitle is faithful to the source text. The dubbed version, on the contrary, switches the point of view, because the subject wanting Jamal to stop talking is not “The man”, but the “colt 45”. This emphasises Salim’s anger.

After a long time, Jamal is looking for Latika again and follows Salim to a mansion where Latika lives with the boss of a gang, Javed. Jamal poses as the new cook:

7. JAMAL: Baba, I am the new cook from the agency. A thousand apologies, I am late for the Lady of the House.

Buongiorno, sono il nuovo cuoco dell'agenzia, mi scusi se sono molto in ritardo. La signora mi aspetta

Signore, sono il nuovo cuoco. Mi manda l'agenzia. Profondissime scuse. Sono molto in ritardo.

“Baba” is commonly used to convey respect. The same effect is given in the subtitle thanks to the form of address “Signore”, which is also emphasised by the superlative adjective “profondissime” and by the adverb “molto”. The dubbed version is more neutral, probably for a matter of synchronization of lip movements.

As far as modes of address are concerned, conversational maxims in the source screenplay and in the two Italian versions provide an interesting case-study for assessing translatability. In particular, we will go through a series of swearwords and rough expressions in examples from 8 to 13.

Taking into consideration “conversational maxims” means that the translator should bear in mind those pragmatic principles that regulate cooperation between characters in order for communication to take place, and respect them, despite the difficulties and restrictions of the source text. These principles should be

based on avoiding ambiguity, telling the truth, being brief and clear, and being relevant¹³. This is not easy in translation, as the examples below will show.

Salim sees Jamal on TV going for 20 million rupees. He understands that Jamal is deeply determined and defines his brother as:

8. SALIM: Crazy chutiya.
Stupido e coglione¹⁴
Quello svitato.

“Crazy” is strengthened by the Hindi adjective “chutiya”, being a swear-word. It is well translated in the Italian dubbed version with the adjectives “stupido e coglione”. The same adjective (and his variant form “chutiya”) is present in the following series of exclamations by the Indian policemen torturing Jamal because they suspected him of cheating on the show:

9. POLICEMAN: Hello! He’s unconscious, chutiya! What good is that? How many times have I told you Srinivas!

Oh! È svenuto, lo vedi? Che cazzo hai combinato? Quante volte devo dirtelo, Srinivas?

Ehi! Ha perso coscienza. Non ci è utile così! Quante volte ti devo dire...?

In this case, the adjective “chutiya” has been omitted by both Italian translations, even if in the dubbed version its semantic value is switched in the following question, where “good” is translated with “cazzo”. The linguistic register of the subtitle is heightened.

When Jamal sees Javed abuse Latika, he gets insanely angry. He tells Latika to leave with him but she refuses and says:

10. LATIKA: Chutiya. Away where? And live on what?
Via, e dove? di che cosa viviamo?
Via? Dove? E per vivere di cosa?

“Chutiya” is perhaps the most common slang word in Hindi.

It is really a harmless word, meaning idiot, or fool, or stupid depending on the context in which it is used. Still it is a taboo for the simple reason that etymologically it means “someone who has come out of a chut, or vagina”. There is no

¹³ Cfr. H.P. Grice, *Logic and Conversation*, in *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, cur. P. Cole, J.L. Morgan, New York, Academic Press, 1975, pp. 41-58.

¹⁴ Cfr. M. Pavesi, *La traduzione filmica. Aspetti del parlato doppiato dall'inglese all'italiano*, Roma, Carocci, 2006.

semantic equivalent in Italian, and this explains its deletion both in the dubbed and in the subtitled versions.

Other interesting cases are the ones still referring to the rough language used by Mamman, when Jamal and Salim try to take Latika away to free her:

11. MAMMAN: You really thought you could just walk in and take my prize away? Have you any idea how much this little virgin is worth, ben chod?

Ma davvero pensavate di venire qui belli tranquilli e portarmi via il mio premio? Latika, vieni qui. Hai la minima idea di quanto vale questa piccola vergine, figlio di puttana?

Pensavi veramente di poterti presentare qui e portare via il mio premio?

Latika, vieni.

Hai idea di quanto possa valere questa piccola vergine?

In the dubbed text, the verb “walk in” is expanded and overtranslated with “venire qui belli tranquilli”. Another lexical addition is the whole exclamation “Latika, vieni qui!”. “Ben chod” has no equivalent in Italian, because it should be literally translated with “sister-fucker or daughter-fucker”. The most similar phrase is “figlio di puttana” and it is omitted in the subtitle, as often happens with subtitling of swearwords and rough expressions throughout the film.

Also, when Indian English speakers want to strike a casual chord, they’ll smatter their sentences with “I see, I know, man, ya/ja (from “yaar”, buddy/friend), na” (“no”) and similar interjections. In the following example, Salim is asking a street gang for news about Javed, their boss. One of them answers:

12. MAN: Ja, mada chod. He’s not looking for you. Ja!

Figlio di puttana, lui però non cerca te

Lui non sta cercando te.

Here again, the address form “mada chod” is deleted in the subtitle. The usage of maderchod (or mada chod) in Hindi is as widespread as “motherfucker” is in English.

Latika’s husband, Javed, asks her who the man she is talking to is, and says:

13. JAVED: And what is this shit supposed to be, mader chod?

Ma che è questa merda?

Cos’è questa merda?

In this case, there is a deletion of the taboo word in both Italian translations, thus resulting less vulgar.

To sum up, the dubbed version has more or less retained the linguistic and semantic function of the source text, whereas the subtitles have managed to cap-

ture some of the pragmatic force and make the dialogue sound as authentic and natural as possible, even while paying due attention to technical constraints.

A few comments are also necessary as far as grammar is concerned, both in the source text and in the two translated ones. Direct questions are often characterised by the deletion of the auxiliary, such as in the following example, when Salim says to Jamal that once they have met again, he doesn't want to stay far from his brother:

14. SALIM: You think I am going to let you out of my sight again, sala? You stay with me now. Ab phut!

Perché non voglio perderti di vista un'altra volta. Starai con me, adesso, fratellino.

Pensi che ti permetterò di scomparire ancora? Stai con me, ora, fratellino.

The direct question becomes a sentence in the dubbed version, thus conveying a stronger determination in the speaker. The subtitle is faithful to the sentence structure of the original. In both translations, the noun "sala" has been deleted. Literally it means "wife's brother", but it is used as a swearword.

To sum up, when we refer to "intentionality", we understand that the translator may have to deal with texts that have a clear intention (ironic, humorous, ambiguous...), which can be very difficult to transfer into another language. However, in some cases the translator may break those maxims to produce a text that is more coherent, funnier or more ambiguous than the original text. In this way, the translator participates creatively in the production of the text, claiming his or her authorship together with the author of the source text.

3. *The Semiotic Dimension*

In terms of semiotic dimension, I want to refer to the translation of cultural references.

According to Rosa Agost¹⁵, there are four basic strategies for transferring these elements into another language:

- no translation
- cultural adaptation (the source elements are replaced by (quasi) equivalents in the target culture
- explanatory translation (the original elements are paraphrased)
- omission.

¹⁵ R. Agost Canos, *Traducción y doblaje* cit.

Toponyms, for example, can be eliminated when they are not part of the visual code, or they can be transformed into more familiar ones to the target audience. When Salim says to Jamal he is tired of looking for Latika because he thinks it is impossible to find her again, he says:

15. SALIM: You should come down the Cages on Saturday night instead of searching for your lost love.

Vai nel quartiere a luci rosse il sabato sera, invece di andare a cercare il tuo amore perduto.

Dovresti venire alle gabbie sabato sera invece di cercare il tuo amore perduto in giro.

In the dubbed version, there is an explanatory translation, which is necessary for Italian audience to understand what “The Cages” is in Bombay. The subtitle, on the contrary, lacks the scope of being a semantic equivalent. In fact we read “le gabbie” which has no meaning in this context, being only a literal translation.

Just like toponyms, references to food are easily integrated in the dialogues and appear very frequently throughout the film, being an essential part of Indian culture. The reason for this is that cuisines differ according to caste, community, region and state¹⁶. Let us consider just one question, asked by one of the two policemen to Jamal, trying to understand if he actually knows so many things or if he is cheating:

16. POLICEMAN: How much is panipuri on Harishian stall on Chowpatty?
Quanto costa il panipuri al chiosco di Harish a Chowpatti?
Quanto costa il panipuri al chiosco di Harish a Chowpatti?

Panipuri is a popular street snack in South Asia and it has no equivalent in Italian cuisine, but the choice of the translators of the two Italian versions was not to translate the noun. Besides, Italian interest in foreign food traditions has been constantly growing over the past decades, with Indian dishes and ingredients gaining such a popularity as to become part of the Italian cooking habits.

Chowpatty is one of the most famous public beaches in Bombay, and again the toponym needs no translation.

To paraphrase from Di Giovanni¹⁷, in order to convey familiarity, three main strategies can be singled out as being employed in a film on a cultural and ideological level:

¹⁶ Cfr. A. Monti, *Categorie della commensalità e lessico urbano della ristorazione in India*, in *Percorsi di flessibilità dell'Indian English*, cur. A. Monti, S. Bianchi, Torino, L'Harmattan Italia, 2007.

¹⁷ E. Di Giovanni, *Cultural Otherness and Global Communication in Walt Disney Films at the Turn of the Century*, in «The Translator», 9,2 (2003), pp. 207-223.

1. first of all, elements used to index the distant culture are mainly selected from a common repertoire of items associated with such cultures within the Western world: on the linguistic level, this often includes objects, places and characters which have been adopted by the Western civilization to stand as symbols of faraway lands and times, as we can see in the dialogue between Prem, the TV show host, and Jamal, during the quiz show:

17. PREM: And what does an assistant phone basher do exactly?

E che fa un assistente rompiscatole di preciso?

E cosa fa di preciso un assistente rompiscatole?

JAMAL: I get tea for people and

Io porto il tè alle persone dell'ufficio

Porto il tè alle persone e...

PREM: Chai wahhah, a chai wallah

Un chai wallah! Il ragazzo del tè, amici!

Chai wallah! Un chai wallah!

In Italian, what is associated with the job of a “phone basher”, meaning telemarketer, is the adjective “rompiscatole”. Thus the noun of the job has been substituted by the adjective which refers to it. In addition to that, in the dubbed version, Jamal’s statement “I get tea for people” is expanded with “dell’ufficio”, probably to clarify the task of the character doing a job (getting tea for workers of a phone company) which is not so common in the Western world. “Wallah” is from a Hindi word meaning both “person” and “tradesperson” and is used to denote someone’s occupation or involvement in an activity.

In the previous exclamation, two different strategies are adopted.

The dubbed version transforms the repetition of the noun “chai wallah” into a kind of explanation of the term, even if Jamal doesn’t get “chai” (a typical Indian drink), but tea. In the Italian subtitle, the noun “chai wallah” is borrowed and adopted as a symbol of a faraway land, with a consequent foreignizing effect.

2. In other cases, cultural references are adapted to fit in with modern, Western expressions: exclamations and other fixed phrases, for instance, have one or more elements modified or replaced by others which refer to the culture portrayed.

This is the case of young Jamal shouting:

18. JAMAL: It’s Amitabh! That’s his helicopter!

L’elicottero di Amitabh! L’elicottero del grande divo!

L’elicottero di Amitabh! Quello è l’elicottero di Amitabh!

In the Italian dubbed version, Jamal’s exclamation of surprise for the approaching of his favourite star is adapted with “l’elicottero del grande divo”,

which explains to the Italian audience, who may not know how famous Amitabh Bachchan is in India, the reason of Jamal's happiness.

Another example of this strategy shows Prem saying goodbye to the audience because the time for the TV show is over:

19. PREM: Join us tomorrow night to see if Jamal Malik has made the biggest mistake of his life or has just won half a million rupees.

Tornate domani sera, per vedere se Jamal Malik ha commesso lo sbaglio peggiore della sua vita o se ha vinto il premio più grande nella storia della televisione indiana

State con noi domani sera per scoprire se Jamal farà il più grande errore della sua vita o se vincerà...

In the above dubbed version, there is a kind of explanatory translation, to make it clear to the Italian audience that "half a million rupees" represents the highest prize in the history of Indian television. The subtitle is quite literal and has no additions or explanations, probably for reasons of synchronisation.

Another question asked by Prem to Jamal, during the show is:

20. PREM: The song "Darshan Do Ghanshyam" was written by which famous Indian poet?

Il canto la preghiera a Ganesh fu scritto da quale famoso poeta indiano?

La canzone "Darshan Do Ghanshyam" fu scritta da quale famoso poeta indiano?

In the Italian dubbed version, the choice was to replace the proper noun of that Indian prayer, which means "the divine vision of Ganesh" with "la preghiera a Ganesh", thus approaching the audience to a far-away religious topic. The subtitle, on the contrary, is a literal translation of the source text, and is consequently foreignizing.

3. The third strategy involves scattering through the narration a number of elements and expressions which belong to the contemporary Western and Italian culture.

For instance, during the show, Prem says:

21. PREM: Time for a commercial break. Don't go away, now.

Una breve pausa per la pubblicità. Restate con noi.

Andiamo con la pubblicità. Rimanete qui con noi.

The exclamations "restate con noi" or "rimanete qui con noi" are very common in Italian TV discourse. Thus, even if that is not the translation of "Don't go

away, now”, the effect is strongly domesticating, both in the dubbed and in the subtitled versions.

Another example of how this strategy is practiced in the two Italian versions is found in Jamal’s phrase during a telephone conversation (while substituting a phone basher for a break):

22. JAMAL: Next door to Detective Taggart’s flat.
il portone dopo quello di Sean Connery
Sono un vicino di Sean Connery.

Taggart is a Scottish detective television programme, but it is not common in Italy. So, the strategy used by the translators was to refer to someone well-known to the target culture, such as Sean Connery, who can be considered as a “semantic equivalent” of detective Taggart to the Indian audience.

As far as intentionality of the source text is concerned, there are other explicit religious references in the film¹⁸, and a few comments are necessary on how they are dealt with and translated. Salim, in particular, seems to become more pious as he becomes more corrupt. He is seen at one point kneeling in prayer on a prayer rug, and at several key moments he utters:

23. SALIM: God is good, bhai¹⁹. God is good.
Jamal, Dio è buono, fratello, Dio è buono!
Dio è buono. Dio è buono.

“God is good” is itself a rough translation of Allahu Akbar, meaning “God is the Greatest”, a common Islamic expression, used as both an informal expression of faith and as a formal declaration. The two Italian versions, of course, translate “God” with “Dio”, but Italian audience could not be aware of the fact that Salim is not referring to the Christian God. Anyway, Islam is almost incidental in the film, and religiosity is mostly suggested via a kind of urgent, unrelenting, fatalism. The three main characters, the brothers Jamal and Salim and their friend, Latika, are all Muslim children who are orphaned in a horrific anti-Muslim riot instigated by Hindu nationalists. In a classic Boyle touch, as the riot is unfolding, Jamal has a vision of an icon of a Hindu deity, Rama, who springs menacingly

¹⁸ According to the definition of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, intentionality is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for things, properties and states of affairs. The puzzles of intentionality lie at the interface between the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language.

¹⁹ It is used to refer to a brother or to a cousin. The term conveys respect, but friendly terms at the same time.

to life with a bow and arrow in hand. Jamal's fatalism blames Rama for the most tragic event of his life, i.e. his mother's death.

While commenting his answer to a question in the show, Jamal says to Prem:

24. JAMAL: I wake up every morning wishing I didn't know the answer to that question. If it wasn't for Rama and Hallah I would still have a mother.

Mi sveglio ogni mattina desiderando di non sapere la risposta. Se non fosse per Rama e Allah, avrei ancora una madre.

Mi sveglio ogni mattina desiderando di non sapere la risposta a quella domanda. Se non fosse per Rama e Allah, avrei ancora mia madre.

In this case, both translations are equivalent to the source text, retaining the names of Rama and Hallah also in the two target translations. The balancing of familiarity and otherness, or to quote from Venuti²⁰ "domestication" and "foreignization" is best achieved. And, as it is impossible to separate language from culture, a few comments are necessary with reference to the last shot of the film. The two lovers, Jamal and Latika are together, at last, and while they hug each other they say:

25. JAMAL: This is our destiny. This is our destiny.

È questo il nostro destino.

Questo è il nostro destino

LATIKA: Kiss me.

Baciami

Baciami.

In the source text, emphasis is put on the concept of destiny, as the exclamation is repeated twice. This emphasis is lost in both Italian translations, probably because of the cultural value it has. For Italian culture, destiny is synonym of things being fated, from a quite passive point of view. On the contrary, in Indian culture, it means something very different, quite extraordinary, something you have to fulfill.

This explains the final caption:

D. It is written.

D. Era scritto

D. Era scritto

For the Western audience, the expression 'It is written', is romantic, cute and lovely. For Indian audience, it is the natural consequence of being determined.

²⁰ L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London-New York, Routledge, 1995.

Probably, Boyle wanted to make it the driving force of the film. Jamal was determined. He was not just an underdog having a dream, but a man who believed in his destiny and who would have done anything to achieve it.

The parameters examined have been those related to text analysis methodology, and then the ones pertaining to translation generally (faithfulness, register, culture-boundness), and to film translation in particular (redundancy connected to the visual component, limitations imposed by lip synchronisation and by the images on the screen, the register and dialectal constraints imposed by the audio factor).

The final outcome can be applied as a model in English language teaching, so to emphasise the translation potential of this film²¹. In fact, language learning cannot be limited to the acquisition of vocabulary and the mastery of grammatical structure. As C. Taylor²² suggests, students could be given the task of analysing the dubbed version of a film, according to pre-established themes and a series of criteria discussed in class.

To paraphrase from Delabastita²³, some interesting discussion points could be:

- Through the analysis of *Slumdog Millionaire*, try to detect whether any form of prejudice lies at the bottom of language variation²⁴
- What type of source text information has been deleted, if any?
- What is the attitude toward loan words and foreign idioms and expressions?
- Have foreign cultural elements been retained, naturalised or deleted?
- How have taboo elements been dealt with?

In addition, for each of the following translation strategies, they could find examples from the film script and its dubbing/subtitling, like the following ones²⁵:

²¹ Cfr. D. Delabastita, *Translation and mass-communication: film and T.V. translation as evidence of cultural dynamics*, in «Babel», 35,4 (1989), pp. 193-218.

²² C. Taylor, *The relevance of film dubbing and subtitling to language teaching*, in *Traduzione multimediale per il cinema, la televisione e la scena*, cur. C. Heiss, R.M. Bollettieri Bosinelli, Bologna, CLUEB, 1996, p. 271.

²³ D. Delabastita, *Translation and mass-communication: film and T.V. translation as evidence of cultural dynamics* cit.

²⁴ A very useful tool is the webography project researched by Clarice Naomiand, Denise Landim and oriented by Professor Deusa Passos (Universidade de Sao Paulo). Here one can find useful links to texts on language prejudice among English-speaking communities. Cfr. <http://languageprejudicelinks.blogspot.com>

²⁵ Cfr. J. Diaz Cintas, *Teoría y práctica de la subtitulación: inglés/español*, Barcelona, Ariel Cine, 2003.

Translation strategy	Source Text	Italian Dubbing	Italian Subtitling
Loan	You're not dead, chutiya.	Non sei morto, Jamal.	Non sei morto, Jamal.
Calque or literal translation	So, my friend, you're onto serious money.	Amico mio, cominciamo a fare sul serio, ora.	Allora, amico mio. Sei arrivato ai soldi seri.
Explicitation	So remember. You have three lifelines: ask the audience, 50/50, phone a friend.	Allora, ricorda. Tu hai tre aiuti: l'aiuto del pubblico, l'aiuto del computer, la telefonata a casa.	Ricordati che hai tre aiuti: L'aiuto del pubblico, 50:50, oppure chiamare un amico.
Transposition	The Taj Mahal was built by the Emperor Khurram for his wife Mumtaz who was maximum beautiful woman in the whole world.	Il Taj Mahal fu costruito dall'imperatore Khurram per la moglie Mumtaz. Era la donna più bellissima del mondo.	Il Taj Mahal fu costruito dall'Imperatore Khurram per sua moglie Mumtaz che era la donna più bellissima del mondo.
Lexical recreation	Don't you move a muscle!	Volete che spezzi la schiena con il bastone?	Volete che vi ammazzi di botte, eh?
Compensation	Well, ladies and gentlemen, Jamal Malik from Mumbai. Let's play "Who wants to be a millionaire"!	Beh, signore e signori, Jamal Malik, quello che porta il tè caldo di Mumbai, è il concorrente a chi vuol essere milionario!	Bene. Signore e signori, Jamal Malik da Bombay, giochiamo a chi vuol essere milionario?
Omission ²⁶	1. mader chod 2. Get back to bed, dogs! What the hell...	1. Pezzo di stronzo 2. Forza... rimettetevi a dormire! Chiudete gli occhi! Zitti! Dormite!	1..... 2. Tornate tutti a letto!

²⁶ Rabadán has termed such occurrences "referential vacuums". Cfr. R. Rabadán Alvarez, *Equivalencia y Traducción: Problemática de la Equivalencia Translémica Inglés/Español*, Leon, Universidad de Leon, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1991, p. 164.

	3. And what happened to the girl? They blinded her too?	3. Che hanno fatto alla ragazza... anche lei?	3. Cos'è successo alla ragazza? Hanno accecato anche lei?
	4. Do you know what bloody time it is?	4. Non lo sa che ore sono?	4. Hai idea di che ore sono?
	5. Hello? Hello? Who is this? Hey. Is someone fucking with me? Who is this?	5. Pronto, Pronto, pronto, chi parla?	5. Pronto? Pronto? Chi è?
Addition	My five-year-old daughter can answer this question, but you couldn't. It's strange for a millionaire genius!	Perfino mia figlia di 5 anni conosce la risposta, ma tu no. È strano per un genio milionario, come mai?	Mia figlia di 5 anni sa rispondere a quella domanda, ma tu no. Strano per un genio milionario. Cos'è successo?

Students will discover that the most challenging situation arises when no similar item exists in the target culture. So they will be aware of the fact that different translation strategies can be applied, as shown in the table above.

5. Concluding Remarks

As shown in our film corpus, the film portrays India as a socio-linguistic macro-context in which multilingualism is the nerve system. Sridhar²⁷ believes that in a multilingual society, each language uniquely fulfils certain roles and represents distinct identities, and all of them complement one another to serve the complex communicative demands of a pluralistic society.

Our analysis substantiates the fact that language and identity are two closely related social factors²⁸. The English language used by the characters in the film is an integral part of their identities, thus identities are multiple and people are capable of constructing as well as reconstructing multiple identities within and

²⁷ K.K. Sridhar, *Societal multilingualism*, in *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching*, cur. S.L. McKay, N.H. Hornberger, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 218-279.

²⁸ Cfr. P. Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, London-New York, Routledge, 2008.

across Discourses. In addition, Discourses are always defined in relationship to other Discourses, as we can see in the comparison between book and film. We find that Ram Mohammad Thomas, the central character in Swarup's novel who does not belong to any specific religious group, becomes a boy named Jamal Malik from the Muslim minority group in *Slumdog Millionaire*. Boyle's ambivalent imperialist discourse situates Ram Mohammad Thomas at an anachronistic space and fills up the vacuum by reconstructing Jamal Malik (and also other characters such as Prem Kumar, Salim or Nita from Swarup's novel). They resemble their characters of origin but still remain different in many ways. That is why they generate ambivalence. It is important to question why many of the Indian subjects (such as Indian actors, co-director, song writer, composer, and many other people who are associated with *Slumdog Millionaire*) consciously decided to cooperate with the imperial direction team of *Slumdog Millionaire*. Probably, the direction team realized that the indigenous culture of India would be best captured if it could employ some Indian eyes to vigilate on its behalf²⁹.

Although *Slumdog Millionaire* is associated with the national pride of India, its generic boundaries are not at all rigid³⁰. The cinematography of this film is a "curious amalgam" between Hollywood and Bollywood. BBC reports that it is a British film since Danny Boyle is British. Hollywood considers it as an American film because it enters the mainstream category of the Oscar awards instead of the category of "foreign films". So, framework built on a nationalist understanding of identities fails to capture the trans-national imperial politics undergirded in *Slumdog Millionaire*. It is necessary to imply a lens, built on a trans-national understanding of neo-imperialism, in order to analyze gendered and racialized philosophies embedded in the making of the film³¹.

In addition, the translation of this film for an Italian audience, either through the mode of dubbing (which involves the substitution of the original soundtrack by a version in the target language) or by subtitles (the superimposition on the screen of a written version of the soundtrack) is a topic of interest within the discipline of Translation Studies and, by extension, discourse analysis in general.

²⁹ Cfr. R.S. Duncan, *Reading Slumdog Millionaire across Cultures*, in «Journal of Commonwealth Literature», 46,2, (2011), pp. 311-326.

³⁰ Cfr. S. Banaji, *Seduced 'outsiders' versus sceptical 'insiders'?: Slumdog Millionaire through its re/viewers*, in «Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies», 7,1, (2010), pp. 1-24.

³¹ Cfr. A. Anderson, *Contesting India's Image on the World Stage: Audience Reception of Slumdog Millionaire*, in «Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research», 9 (2010), pp. 1-18.

According to Josélia Neves³²:

“One of the main reasons for introducing audiovisual translation for language learning/teaching lies in the fact that students are given the opportunity to think about language within an enjoyable holistic approach”.

This paper has tried to describe the communicative strategies in interactions used in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, to show how learners and teachers can become socio-linguistically competent in the interpretation of the “cultural Other” in such a case of audiovisual translation, both at lexical and clause level.

As shown in our film corpus, for instance, English code-switches in *Slumdog Millionaire* subconsciously remind that English has acquired unparalleled functional and societal depth, as it has its own distinctive roles in the Indian multilingual society, and it can be perceived as an achievement strategy in order to get meaning across to the audience. Often, code switching and code mixing are lost in Italian, in favour of a continuous balancing of familiarity and otherness, or domestication and foreignization. As Venuti³³ claims:

“Determining whether a translation project is domesticating or foreignizing clearly depends on a detailed reconstruction of the cultural formation in which the translation is produced and consumed; what is domestic or foreign can be defined only with reference to the changing hierarchy of values in the target-language culture”.

In fact, the discourse norms of Italian language are so different that the translators had to intervene actively and creatively in the text to make it suit other purposes, i.e. the ones of the target culture. In particular, on the level of semiotics, different strategies have been singled out in dubbing and subtitling, such as adopting Western symbols and meanings to translate faraway lands and times, modifying and replacing exclamations adapting them to fit in with modern, Western expressions, or scattering through the narration some elements of Italian culture.

The final outcome is a view of “translation as cultural confrontation”³⁴, through a cross-lingual and cross-cultural analysis, which is in itself a clear example of the translational potential of a film.

³² J. Neves, *Language awareness through training in subtitling*, in *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*, cur. P. Orero, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2004, p. 128.

³³ L. Venuti, *Strategies of Translation*, in *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, cur. M. Baker, London-New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 243.

³⁴ Cfr. E. Di Giovanni, *Cultural Otherness and Global Communication in Walt Disney Films at the Turn of the Century* cit.

ABSTRACT

Questo lavoro muove dalla semiotica della traduzione audiovisiva per analizzare le principali strategie attraverso cui l'alterità culturale viene verbalizzata, filtrata e organizzata nella coscienza del traduttore. Partendo dal modello teorico di Even Zohar (1976) e dai concetti trattati da Venuti (1998) di *addomesticamento* e di *estranimento*, proverò a svelare e a discutere nuovi metodi di ricerca riguardanti il potenziale traduttivo dei film. Attraverso l'analisi di *Slumdog Millionaire* (D. Boyle: 2008), sui piani del doppiaggio e della sottotitolazione interlinguistica, prenderò in considerazione una serie di questioni riguardanti l'atteggiamento degli italiani verso l'inglese indiano ed esplorerò la possibilità di applicare il mio modello alla didattica della lingua inglese.

This paper draws upon the semiotics of audiovisual translation to analyse the main strategies through which the cultural Other is verbalized, filtered and arranged through the consciousness of the translator. Starting from Even-Zohar's theoretical framework (1976), and Venuti's concepts of *domestication* and *foreignization* (1998), I will try to unveil and discuss new research methodologies relating to the translation *potential* of films.

Through the analysis of the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (D. Boyle: 2008), on the levels of dubbing and interlingual subtitling, I will consider a number of issues that relate to the Italian attitude towards Indian English and I will also explore the applicability of my model in English language teaching.