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TRANSLATING HESITATIONS IN FILM SPEECH
The case of Hugh Grant

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Abstract – The present study aims to investigate the way dysfluencies such as hesitations and pauses of silence are rendered when adapting films from English into Italian, and their impact on characterization. Such features are observed referring to the actor Hugh Grant, known for displaying verbal insecurity stereotypically British (Chiaro 2000; Fox 2004). The study focuses on four romantic comedies: *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Notting Hill* (1999), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Love Actually* (2003), where the presence of hesitation markers plays an important role in the characterization of the male protagonist, namely a young man, shy, hesitant and a little clumsy. The investigation is carried out through a linguistic and translation-oriented analysis of the original English version and the Italian dubbed version of each title. When possible, a multilingual comparative analysis is also carried out, taking into account the adaptations made for other languages such as French and Spanish in order to identify symmetries and asymmetries between different translation approaches. In dubbing a tendency to reduce hesitations can be noticed, which is partly due to the limits imposed by the audiovisual medium itself (Bruti 2019; Chaume 2012). The analysis shows how possible changes in the adaptations can alter the perception of characters, leading them to a performance that does not correspond to the original one.

Keywords: audiovisual translation; hesitations; characterization; Hugh Grant; dubbing.

1. Introduction

Hesitations are the most evident form of dysfluency in spontaneous conversation (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1053) and are included in fictional dialogues to communicate specific pragmatic meanings to the audience. In film speech linguistic resources are used to create dialogues that convey a sense of spontaneity to viewers, allowing them to follow the narrative events and draw the correct inferences regarding the story, the characters and the relations between them. The particular type of language employed in film speech includes elements typically associated with both written and oral language (Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009; Chaume 2012, p. 81; Pavesi 2008, 2018; Romero-Fresco 2009, 2012; Whitman-Linsen 1992; Zabalbeascoa 2012). This spoken register has been defined as 'prefabricated' (Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009; Chaume 2001)[1] in that it aims at creating exchanges that sound natural and improvised, as if they had not been carefully pre-planned (Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009; Chaume 2012, p. 82; Zabalbeascoa 2012, p. 64).

Numerous studies conducted on film speech have delved into the nature of prefabricated orality, analysing the linguistic features reproduced in audiovisual products (Bublitz 2017; Quaglio 2009; Taylor 2004; Valdeón 2009;) and the ways they are dealt with in the adaptation process (Bruti 2019; Romero-Fresco 2009). The present

[1] Chaume (2001) talks about "oralidad prefabricada" in Spanish (Chaume 2001, p. 79). This definition has later been translated into English as "prefabricated orality" (see Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009; article available online at the following link: https://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/Prefabricated_Orality).

contribution focuses on a particular category of orality markers, namely hesitations (i.e. filled and unfilled pauses), intending to unravel how different translation strategies used in dubbing may alter the original meanings associated with these elements. Traditionally, hesitations have been studied by scholars through discourse markers playing the role of (self-) repair markers (Romero-Fresco 2007), and in combination with other features typical of oral speech, like interjections and attention signals (Valdeón 2008), as well as other dysfluencies such as interruptions and repeats (Valdeón 2011). Nevertheless, there is a lack of research conducted uniquely on the translation of hesitations as filled/unfilled pauses. The objective of this article is to fill this void.

More specifically, the present investigation involves the linguistic and translation-oriented analysis of original English movies adapted for an Italian audience through dubbing. When possible, the adaptations made for other languages such as French and Spanish are also considered. By using this multilingual comparative approach, it is possible to ascertain similarities and/or differences between the translation procedures used in different languages when dubbing audiovisual products.

The aim of the study is to show how hesitations can contribute to the characterization process and how possible changes in the adaptations can alter the perception of characters, leading them to a performance that does not correspond to the original one. Section 2 investigates fictional dialogue, offering a brief overview of hesitations with the aim to establish their pragmatic meanings, the roles they fulfil in film speech, and the information they can convey to viewers. Section 3 surveys the concepts of performance and characterization, investigating how dysfluencies can be used to characterize characters, their attitude and personalities, as well as their onscreen relationships. Section 4 explores the objective of the study, the corpus and the methods of analysis. Section 5 presents the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the linguistic and translation-oriented investigation. Section 6, finally, discusses the results and the possible future developments of the current study.

2. Hesitations in film speech: a general overview

In film speech both scriptwriters and translators work with a language "written to be spoken as if not written" (Gregory, Carrol 1978, p. 42), which must respect not only the technical constraints imposed by the audiovisual medium itself — lip synchrony, kinetic synchrony and isochrony in dubbing (Chaume 2012, pp. 67-69) — but also the limitations and guidelines provided by the industry or the client (Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009; Valdeón 2011, p. 230). In order to create credible and realistic dialogues, scriptwriters tend to select linguistic features typically found in spontaneous conversation, which are able to convey specific meanings to the audience, who ought to recognise and accept them as natural and unrehearsed. These features, then, must be recreated in the target language according to the cultural expectations of the foreign audience regarding 'verbal realism' (Kozloff 2000, p. 47; Pavesi 2005, p. 30).

In dubbing from English into Italian a few selected items, known as "privileged carriers of orality" (Pavesi 2008, p. 79), are considered to be enough to evoke a sense of spontaneity among viewers (Pavesi 2018, p. 106). Since fictional dialogue cannot perfectly replicate spontaneous conversation, selection is a fundamental requirement of audiovisual registers (Pavesi 2018, p. 107; Valdeón 2017, p. 378) in that it guarantees a sense of orality, enabling viewers' immersion in the story (Pérez-González 2007, p. 14) and their suspension of disbelief (Pavesi 2022, p. 547) without interfering with the

understanding of the events (Chaume 2012, p. 81). Indeed, film dialogue represents one of the main resources to unravel the events and make the story advance (Pavesi 2005, p. 30).

The present investigation mainly focuses on dialogue as a tool to display characters, their identity, personality and psychological traits, as well as the different relationships that exist between them (Bednarek 2018, pp. 46-51; Kozloff 2000, pp. 43-47; Pavesi 2005, p. 31). Such information is communicated to viewers through a system that works on two levels: the so-called "collective sender's layer" and the "fictional layer" (Dynel 2011, p. 1634). The former includes all the decisions made during the production process, while the latter includes the fictional world and characters depicted on the screen. The collective sender designs the film and the dialogues to transmit information to the audience who uses them to construct and infer meanings. Therefore, it can be argued that "film discourse is designed for viewers, and their listening and watching are by no means surreptitious or accidental. […] Characters may not talk to us, but they certainly talk for us" (Dynel 2011, p. 1642). Consequently, all elements found in verbal exchanges among characters are intentionally and consciously included solely to favour viewers and their interpretation of the overall product (Kozloff 2000, p. 19). This also includes orality markers.

Researchers have focused on various phenomena typical of spontaneous speech reproduced in film dialogues such as discourse markers (Chaume 2004a), interjections (Bruti, Pavesi 2008), question-tags (Bonsignori 2009a), dislocations and cleft sentences (Pavesi 2005), but also vocatives and address pronouns (Bruti, Zanotti 2012), intensifiers (Baños-Piñero 2013), and demonstrative pronouns (Pavesi 2020). The present contribution focuses on a particular category of orality markers, namely hesitations (i.e. filled and unfilled pauses).

In the categorization provided by Biber *et al.* (1999), also shared by Romero-Fresco (2007) and Valdeón (2009), hesitations are described as performance phenomena, that is, errors and dysfluencies (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1052) that normally occur in conversation due to the spontaneous and unplanned nature of oral interactions since speakers "plan and execute their utterances in real time" (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1048). Hesitations represent a momentary delay in delivery that can occur in two forms: a hesitation pause and a filled pause (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1053). The former can be described as a period of silence in which speakers plan how to continue their utterance, while the latter can be defined as a pause filled by a sound, usually a vowel, which can be accompanied by nasalization, like *um* or *uh*. Their occurrence can be associated with different pragmatic meanings. Hesitations are usually used to express doubt and uncertainty, but they can also represent a form of linguistic politeness, used to prevent a face-threatening act (Leech 2014, p. 31). In addition, hesitations can be employed in conversations as turn-taking tools, also defined as a floor-grabbing function (O'Keefe *et al.* 2011, p. 152), or they can signal that the speaker still has something to add, preventing someone else from taking the turn (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1054). Moreover, they can indicate a change of topic (Carter, McCarthy 2006, p. 903; Watts 2003, p. 8).

Despite the multiple pragmatic functions such elements fulfil, they often tend to be neglected in audiovisual translation. When adapting dialogues for foreign audiences, the tendency to add unnatural linguistic features can be noticed (Romero-Fresco 2007, p. 199), as well as the lack of a coherent approach in translation (Valdeón 2008, p.133). Usually, hesitations are simply omitted (Romero-Fresco 2007, p. 199) or substituted with undistinguished noises (Valdeón 2008, p. 128). Similar considerations have also been made about the Italian dubbing industry. Bruti (2019), for instance, highlights a propensity to overlook hesitations in dubbing since a wider range of linguistic elements and gap-

filling words are used in Italian to render the naturalness of the interactions (Bruti 2019, pp. 202-203).

As suggested by Kozloff (2000), the use of pragmatic features in film speech constitutes a specific stylistic choice (Kozloff 2000, p. 64). Since dialogues go through a complex process of rehearsal, editing and approval, "pauses, repetitions, and hesitation phenomena are edited out unless they fulfil a specific narrative function" (Bednarek 2018, p. 213). In the present case, hesitations convey meanings linked to the attitude and personality of certain characters, that is, they contribute to the characterization process.

3. Performance and characterization

Characterization is defined as "the way characters are created and presented in original and translated texts in an audiovisual context" (Bosseaux 2015, p. 1) and it includes several linguistic and extra-linguistic elements, such as gestures, actions, facial expressions and mise-en-scène. Characterization is strictly connected to performance since the way actors deliver their lines shapes the way characters are perceived by the audience (Bosseaux 2015, p. 25). In particular, while the visual part remains the same, the text is inevitably subjected to change and translation can alter the original performance. This is especially relevant in dubbing, because changes occur not only in what is said by the character, but also in the way lines are delivered through the substitution of the original voice with a new one.

In the present study particular attention will be given to the verbal component, drawing on previous investigations like the ones carried out by Bosseaux (2012, 2015, 2019) on the role of both linguistic and paralinguistic features in the characterization process. The author has focused on the study of voice, its role in building someone's identity and personality (Bosseaux 2015), and the contribution of elements such as vocal register, tempo, timbre and volume (Bosseaux 2019). All of these elements can be manipulated, altered and adjusted by actors, who are able to adapt their voice to achieve dramatic characterization and convey specific meanings (Bruti, Zanotti 2018, p. 157). In this regard, Sánchez-Mompeán (2020) carried out a groundbreaking investigation on the naturalness of prosodic and paralinguistic features in Spanish dubbing. Since voice is central in defining the identity of characters on screen, it is extremely important in dubbing to identify voice talents whose voice and vocal performance correspond to what viewers expect to hear from actors on screen and what they usually associate with a character's identity and personality (Chaume 2012, p. 69). This character synchrony (Whitman-Linsen 1992) is said to "cover the agreement between the voices of the dubbing actors and the expectations of the on-screen actor's voice" (Chaume 2004b, p. 44).

From the linguistic point of view, characterization includes those features associated with the personality and identity of a character which have been decided by the writers of an audiovisual product and have to be included in dialogues (Bednarek 2010, p. 98). As Bednarek (2010, p. 101) suggests, information can be included both explicitly and implicitly (see also Culpeper, Fernandez-Quintanilla 2017). Implicit information can be conveyed, for instance, through geographically and socio-culturally marked choices (Bosseaux 2013, 2015), as well as through the presence of dysfluencies, which can be used to portray a character as shy and insecure (Bruti 2019, p. 197; Richardson 2010, p. 64).

Since both linguistic and sound elements are subjected to change in the dubbing adaptation of the audiovisual text, translators have to be aware of the role of such features in the original text and make sure that meanings associated with characters in the original

product are reproduced in the international versions. The main question here is whether the translation manages to mirror the characterization intended in the original version. The present research will be carried out by considering the characters played by the British actor Hugh Grant.

4. The study

The objective of this study is to investigate the role of hesitations in film dialogues and their impact on characterization. The analysis has been carried out focusing on the British actor Hugh Grant. The actor has been selected as a case study of the unique and distinctive expressive style he exhibits in his portrayals of characters — dominated by recurrent dithering, repetitions, pauses and hesitations — which has an obvious impact on characterization.

In the 1990s, Grant established himself as the "king of romantic British comedies" (Capuano 2007, online)[2], where he typically portrays a posh, slightly awkward, bumbling British bachelor, often nervous and unable to express his feelings (Armsden 2022, online; Kemp 2022, online)[3]. Concerning Grant's performance, a particularly insightful contribution is offered by Taylor (2004), who compares the original script of the movie *Notting Hill* with the dialogues actually uttered by the actors. Taylor reports different cases in which Grant slightly changes his lines adding features such as repetitions, pauses and hesitations. As also stated by the actor, these features, specifically employed to characterize his role in the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, have become distinctive traits of his performance:

> The speech part was very much written in convoluted syntax […], that's Richard[4] writing that stuff, and then Mike Newell, who directed that film, wanted it even more messed up. He said: '[…] mess up the lines and break them up […]'. So, I did all that and, then, when that film was a success […], I let it bleed into other parts. (Grant 2018, minutes 3:36-4:05)[5]

The verbal insecurity Grant displays in such roles has been recognised as a stereotype commonly associated with British people. Kate Fox (2004) identified "social dis-ease" as one of the main features of Englishness (Fox 2004, p. 401). When discussing first time introduction and greetings, she writes: "One must appear self-conscious, ill-at-ease, stiff, awkward and, above all, embarrassed. Smoothness, glibness and confidence are inappropriate and un-English. Hesitation, dithering and ineptness are, surprising as it may seem, correct behaviour" (Fox 2004, p. 41)[6].

[2] Capuano (2007), online: https://www.film.it/news/televisione/dettaglio/art/hugh-grant-un-premier-timido-e-dolce-13719/ .

[3] Armsden (2022), online: https://screenrant.com/hugh-grant-rom-coms-imdb/. Kemp (2022), online: https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/how-hugh-grant-shaped-perceptions-of-british/.

[4] Hugh Grant is talking about Richard Curtis, the scriptwriter of the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

[5] This is my transcription of Hugh Grant's interview available online at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2YoUbAEFTI

[6] This can also find some corroboration in Tottie's study (2014) conducted on the use of *uh* and *um* in conversations taken from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBC). The results were compared to the data obtained from a previous study (Tottie 2011) conducted on the British National Corpus (BNC). Even though the results are to be considered only preliminary, *uh* and *um* resulted to be way more frequent in BNC than in SBC. In other words, they were more frequent among British speakers (Tottie 2014, pp. 9-10).

This British social ineptitude and awkwardness has been investigated with regards to vagueness and tag-questions in previous studies, like the one carried out by Chiaro (2000) on *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Charles, the character played by Hugh Grant, "verbally trips and stumbles through his lines" (Chiaro 2000, p. 29). However, the study shows that "much of this vagueness is lost in the Italian version thus transforming our dithering Charles into an assertive Charles […] rendering him less amusing" (Chiaro 2000, p. 29).

Drawing also on Chiaro's contribution, the present study revolves around the investigation of four British romantic comedies written by the screenwriter Richard Curtis and produced by the film studio *Working Title Films*: *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *Notting Hill* (Roger Mithcell, 1999), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) and *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003)[7] (hereafter *FW*, *NH*, *BJ* and *LA*). Hugh Grant himself talks about the characters played in these movies as a shy, goofy and awkward young man, a 'nerdish' character who is not supposed to get the girl (Grant 2018, online)[8]. The only exception to these 'fluffy' characters is represented by Daniel Cleaver in *BJ*, who is described as "quite a sort of West London smooth upper-middle class" (Grant 2018, minutes 6:20-6:26). Drawing attention to the similarities between the different protagonists, Grant states:

> When I read this[9], I thought: 'this is gonna be a huge hit, but I don't really want to be that same character again […]', so I said to Richard[10], you know, I can't just be that guy from Notting Hill and from Four Weddings […] and then I just did exactly the same character. (Grant 2018, minutes 8:38-8:58)[11]

The titles selected for the analysis all share a common thread, that is, the use of comedy and irony based on stereotypes linked to Britishness, among which, verbal insecurity, including the linguistic features here studied. For this reason, the abovementioned films have been included in the analysis, because they constitute the proper context for the investigation of linguistic phenomena used to represent verbal insecurity in film speech. Consequently, the characters played by Grant in these titles are particularly suited for the investigation of prefabricated orality in both the original and adapted versions.

In the adaptation process, orality features are often reduced, if not eliminated, due to the constraints of the medium itself (Chaume 2012, p. 82), but also because their omission does not seriously alter the overall structure of the story (Bruti 2019, p. 197). However, considering the type of characters portrayed by Hugh Grant, the elimination or reduction of features typically associated with verbal insecurity can reduce the original comic effect, painting the protagonist as less clumsy, goofy and awkward, and as more self-confident.

Looking at the translation choices made with regards to markers of orality, this study investigates whether any changes in the dubbing process may alter the way characters are portrayed and perceived by international audiences, leading them to a performance that does not correspond to the one intended in the original version.

[7] IMDb - Internet Movie Database: https://www.imdb.com/.
[8] Grant (2018), online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2YoUbAEFTI.
[9] Hugh Grant is talking about the script of the film *Love Actually*.
[10] Hugh Grant is talking about Richard Curtis, the scriptwriter of the film.
[11] This is my transcription of Hugh Grant's interview available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2YoUbAEFTI.

4.1. Corpus and methodology

The analysis has been carried out on a self-constructed corpus containing the transcriptions of both original and translated dialogues in Italian. It is important to point out that the number of words indicated for each movie (Table 1) does not correspond to the total number of words included in the scripted dialogues of the four films, but it only represents a portion of the dialogues recorded on the soundtracks. Since the present study focuses on the characters played by Hugh Grant, the corpus only includes those scenes in which Grant is present and speaks. Therefore, those scenes in which Hugh Grant is not onscreen or does not contribute to the verbal exchange have not been transcribed, analysed or counted in the present investigation. As a result, *BJ* and *LA* present a number of words which is significantly lower compared to the other films as a consequence of the lower number of scenes in which the British actor is present and speaks.

Film	English soundtrack	Italian soundtrack
FW	7003	7773
NH	10 933	10 275
BJ	3112	3169
LA	2284	2233
Total	23 332	23 450

Table 1
Number of words.

The corpus has been built using both DVD (*FW* and *LA*) and Blu-ray Disc (*NH* and *BJ*) versions of the films. The combination of both is because, depending on the languages available for each version of the movies under scrutiny, a multilingual comparative approach has been carried out, considering the adaptations made for other languages such as French and Spanish, to identify symmetries and, more importantly, asymmetries between different translation approaches.

The transcription of the original and dubbed soundtracks has been accomplished following the guidelines provided by Veronica Bonsignori (2009b) on prosodic transcription[12]. For comparative purposes, the transcribed text has been organized in two columns: one for the English language and one for Italian. Pauses filled by vocalizations have been reported in the written text using the conventional transcriptions *uh*, *um*, *er* and *erm* (Biber *et al.* 1999, p. 1053), as well as their variants *ehm* and *eh* (Bonsignori 2009b, p. 11). The transcribed soundtracks have been examined in order to isolate those instances where linguistic features are used in context as hesitation markers. The transcription *eh*, for instance, could be used to report features other than hesitations, like interjections. For this reason, while carrying out the analysis, these elements have been carefully observed in context in order to disambiguate their function within the dialogue. For each film, the investigation has been conducted in the following way: each occurrence has been qualitatively observed in the English version in order to establish the role of hesitation markers in the original text. Subsequently, a comparison between the English version and the Italian version has been carried out in order to ascertain whether the original meanings

[12] Transcription conventions for the dysfluencies under study: Three dots (…) indicate a long pause; two dots (..) indicate a medium pause; one dot (.) indicates a short pause. Commas (,) indicate a change in the intonation. A dash (-) indicates false starts and self-corrections. Double dashes (--) indicate interruptions and hesitations through the lengthening of the vowel sound at the end of a word.

are conveyed in the dubbed adaptation. Finally, if possible, depending on the languages available for each title, a targeted multilingual analysis of the scenes reported in the article has been carried out with the intention of comparing the translation approaches used in other languages such as French and Spanish.

5. Case study: Hugh Grant

In the present investigation special attention has been given to pauses of silence and pauses filled by hesitations. However, it must be pointed out that dysfluency phenomena are not to be intended as separate from one another; on the contrary, they often tend to co-occur in dialogues.

5.1. Data and analysis of the original and dubbed soundtracks

5.1.1. Filled pauses

Pauses filled by hesitations are particularly present in the transcriptions of the texts under study (see Table 2). A first quantitative analysis reveals a general reduction of hesitations in the Italian dubbed version.

	FW	*NH*	*BJ*	*LA*
English	81	140	23	31
Italian	47 (58%)	69 (49%)	10 (43%)	14 (45%)

Table 2
Hesitations uttered by Hugh Grant.

Notably, the characters played by Hugh Grant exhibit verbal insecurity when the male protagonist interacts with a woman. In line with the abovementioned stereotypes underlined by Fox (2004), this seems to emphasize the awkwardness of the character, as can be seen in the following extract (Table 3):

English	thanks. Natalie! ... ((chuckling)) +*erm*--*. I'm starting to feel--. *uh*--uncomfortable ((chuckling)) +about us*, working in such close proximity every day and--. me knowing so little about you, it seems-- *um*--. seems elitist and wrong […] *um*. and *uh*-- you live *with your*--. *husband? uh*-- boyfriend? . three illegitimate but**.** charming children?
Italian	grazie. Natalie? ... ((chuckling)) +*ehm*--*. eh comincio a sentirmi--. *uh* un po' a disagio per il fatto che lavoriamo a contatto così stretto ogni giorno! . e io so così poco di lei mi sembra-- ((slight noise)), mi sembra così classista e sbagliato […] ah, *e-e*--. *e* . ci abita con-- suo marito? il suo fidanzato? hm. tre illegittimi ma. bellissimi? figli
Spanish	gracias. Natalie … *ah*-- ((chuckles)) . empiezo a sentirme--. incómodo, trabajando los dos tan próximos cada día--. y sabiendo tan poco de ti me parece *uh*-- . elitista y un error [...] *ahm*-- y *ah*-- ¿vive--s? ¿con tu-- marido? *eh*-- ¿tu novio? . ¿tres hijos ilegítimos aunque encantadores?

Table 3
Example 1 from *LA* in English, Italian and Spanish.

Here the British prime minister, David, is trying to get to know Natalie, one of the members of the household staff. The original speech is characterized by six hesitations and two cases of momentary interruption followed by a brief pause during which the speaker

plans how to continue. One of the hesitations co-occurs with the interruption *to feel--*, while another co-occurs with the repetition of the verb *seems*. When asking Natalie about having children and a potential partner, alongside hesitations, a brief silent pause is used to break the final question. In the dubbed soundtracks, two of the original markers of hesitation are rendered in Italian and five in Spanish. Moreover, in the Spanish soundtrack there are cases where hesitations are rendered through the lengthening of vowels, like the *e* in the sentence *¿vives con tu marido?* or the vocalic sound of the hesitation *ahm*. The awkwardness and clumsiness of the character is rendered in Italian through a wider variety of linguistic features such as the repetition of the conjunction *e* in combination with some short pauses of silence, creating a stuttering effect. On the contrary, the hesitation preceding the word *boyfriend* has been eliminated in Italian, probably due to isochrony needs as a consequence of the introduction of *il suo*. Therefore, while the Italian David appears to be less hesitant compared to the original and Spanish version, the awkwardness of the character is rendered using a wider set of linguistic features such as, for instance, the insertion of the interjections *ah* and *eh*, the introduction of a slight noise when uttering *mi sembra--, mi sembra*, as if the speaker was catching his breath, as well as the insertion of an indistinct sound *hm* when uttering the final question.

The tendency observed in the Spanish version of lengthening a vocal sound to fill a pause is also used in the Italian dubbed version. In the following scene (Table 4) from *BJ*, Daniel tells Bridget about his past with his former best friend Mark Darcy. In this scene we learn that Daniel has been cheated on by his wife with Mark. Later in the film viewers will find out that this is a lie.

	English	Italian
DANIEL	no, no, I was *um*-- best man at his wedding. *um*--. knew him from Cambridge. he was a mate	no, no, ero il suo-- testimone di nozze. *uh*. l'ho conosciuto a Cambridge. eravamo amici
BRIDGET	and then what?	e poi?
DANIEL	and then *uh*--.. nothing	e poi--.. niente
BRIDGET	you don't need to protect him he's no friend of mine	non c'è bisogno che lo difendi non è certo un mio amico
DANIEL	well, *um*-- then. many years later. I made the-- somewhat catastrophic mistake. of. introducing him to my. fiancée!... and *um*… I couldn't say in all honesty I've ever. quite. forgiven him	beh, *ehm*-- poi--. parecchi anni dopo. ho commesso l'enorme e catastrofico sbaglio. di--. presentare il mio amico alla mia. fidanzata… e… non posso dire in tutta onestà di averlo davvero. perdonato

Table 4
Example 2 from *BJ* in English and Italian.

In most cases, the original hesitations are substituted with a prolonged vowel sound in final position. This happens twice at the end of the word *poi* and once at the end of the preposition *di* followed by a momentary interruption. The reduction of hesitations also emerges in the other dubbed languages (Table 5). In French, the reduction is highlighted by the substitution of the first hesitation with *en fait*, whose addition makes the speech more direct compared to the other languages. The same happens in *à jour..rien*, pronounced in a more direct way compared to both Spanish and Italian, where there is the prolongation of the vowel sound at the end of *pasó* and *poi*, respectively. Moreover, the introduction of an indistinct sound after *plusieurs années plus tard* can be noticed in French. As for the Spanish version, instead of hesitations the dubber seems to produce some indistinct noise to fill the pause (*fui*-- and *pasó*--).

	Spanish	French
DANIEL	no no, fui-- ((indistinct sound)) padrino en su boda . *ehm*--. le conocía de Cambridge. fuimos compañeros	no non, en fait j'étais son témoin de mariage. *em* . on était ensemble à Cambridge c'était un copain
BRIDGET	¿y qué pasó?	et à jour?
DANIEL	pasó-- ((indistinct sound)).. nada	à jour.. rien
BRIDGET	no tienes por qué protegerlo, no es amigo mío	c'est pas la peine de le couvrir, c'est pas un ami à moi
DANIEL	pues e*m*-- pasó--((indistinct sound)) que años después . cometí-- el, error un poco catastrófico de--. presentarle a mi--. prometida... y-- e*m*… si dijera que se lo he perdonado no sería del todo, sincero	bien *em*. à jour. plusieurs années plus tard hm. j'ai commis. l'erreur quelque peu dramatique. de lui--.. présenter ma, fiancée… et e*m*…en toute honnêteté j'avoue que je ne lui ai jamais, pardonné

Table 5
Example 2 from *BJ* in Spanish and French.

However, there are scenes in the Italian dubbed version in which the original hesitations are rendered quite faithfully. For instance, in *NH* when the famous American actress Anna Scott enters the bookshop owned by William Thacker and he comments on the book she is looking at (Table 6):

English	Italian
fine… *uh* that book's really. not. great. just in case you know browsing turned to--. ((laughing)) +buying*. *uh*-- you'd be wasting your money.. but if it's Turkey! you're interested in, *um*-- this one!, on the other hand is very good!. *um*--. I think the man who wrote it has actually been! to Turkey which helps *um*--. there's also a very musing incident with a KEBAB. *um*--. which is one of many amusing incidents	bene… *eh* quel libro non è--. un granché. nel caso che sfogliandolo decidesse di ((chuckling)) +comprarlo*. *em*-- sprecherebbe il suo denaro .. ma se è la Turchia che le interessa *um*-- questo qua. invece è molto buono. *em*--. credo che l'autore sia stato realmente in Turchia il che non guasta *um*--. c'è anche un divertentissimo incidente con il KEBAB. *um*-- uno dei tanti incidenti divertenti

Table 6
Example 3 from *NH* in English and Italian.

In the English version the text is fragmented by six hesitation markers, the filler *just*, the discourse marker *you know* and several brief pauses of silence. The Italian dubbing does not include either the filler or the discourse marker, yet the nervousness of the character emerges through several short breaks (short pauses of silence) and six hesitations, which are all preserved, making the character sound tongue-tied. It is worth mentioning that the Italian version pays greater attention to hesitations compared to the other languages (Table 7). Indeed, hesitations are maintained four times in Spanish and only once in French. In other cases, explicit hesitation markers are substituted by the lengthening of vowel sounds (the prolongation at the end of the word *buena* and the lengthening of the conjunction *y* in Spanish) and some indistinct noises that cannot be categorized as hesitations (for instance, between the words *kebab* and *parmi* in French).

Spanish	French
bien…esa que ha cogido no es, muy buena-- si por casualidad se atreviera--. a ((chuckling)) +comprar*. *uh* tiraría su dinero.. pero si le interesa Turquía-- , esta otra en cambio es,	bien...n'est pas géniale ce livre. si en effet vous étiez tenté de le prendre. ((indistinct sound)) ne vaut pas son prix. si vous cherchez quelque chose sur la Turquie-- hm . en revanche celui là est excellent .

excelente!. *ehm*. se nota que el que la escribió ha estado allí y-- eso es bueno *hm* y cuenta una divertida anécdota con los kebabs. *ehm* . y otras cosas muy divertidas	*em*--. je pense que l'auteur est allé vraiment en Turquie ce qui est un avantage. raconte un épisode très drôle avec un kebab . ((indistinct sound)) parmi une foule d'autres anecdotes

Table 7
Example 3 from *NH* in Spanish and French.

At the same time, there are scenes in which hesitation markers are eliminated in the Italian dubbing. This is the case in the following example (Table 8), where William goes to visit Anna and confesses that he has feelings for her:

English	Italian
I suppose in the--.. dream!. dream scenario. I just *uh*--.. change my ((chuckling)) +personality* because--. you can do that in dreams and *um*… walk over and *uh*--. kiss. the girl! , but *uh*--	immagino che nel--.. sogno. ((chuckling)) +di mia* sceneggiatura io ecco--.. cambio personalità perché--. nei sogni questo lo puoi fare e--… mi avvicino ((whispering)) +e--*. bacio . la ragazza ma--

Table 8
Example 4 from *NH* in English and Italian.

In the Italian dubbed version the original hesitations are completely omitted. Moreover, there is no lengthening of the final vowel, which occurs in the original film at the end of the definite article *the*. In Italian the speech is interrupted several times and the shyness of the protagonist is rendered through soft laughter when pronouncing *di mia* and the insertion of the filler *ecco* before the pause. In other instances, the original hesitations are substituted with pauses of silence to convey the intensity of the moment, also due to the close-up shots focusing on the face of the actor. Quite similarly, pauses of silence are the preferred strategy to express the original tension in the other dubbed versions (Table 9). However, one explicit hesitation is kept in Spanish. In French hesitations are rendered through the lengthening of the final vowel in *que* and *je*, as well as through the insertion of a nasal sound in correspondence with a brief pause:

Spanish	French
supongo que en el-- .. sueño. que dentro del sueño yo *eh* .. cambio mi personalidad porque--. se pueden hacer estas cosas .. y . me acerco, para . besar . a la chica	j'imagine que--.. ensuite. si le rêve continue. je--.. j'ai un tempérament aussi différent. dans les rêves c'est faisable et... je, m'approche de la fille . et *hm* . je l'embrasse

Table 9
Example 4 from *NH* in Spanish and French.

Nevertheless, there are cases where the omission of explicit markers of hesitations can have important consequences on the characterization process and alter the way the protagonist is perceived by the audience. This becomes particularly evident in the film *FW*:

English	Italian
uh-- do you want one of these?	ti va un po' di champagne?

Table 10
Example 5 from *FW.*

English	Italian
wha?--. I--… gosh-- *uh* you know that-that's *um*--. takes a lot of thinking about that kind of thing. *uh*-- obviously I'm *uh*. *uh*-- .. you're ((chuckling)) +joking*	*eeh*-- io che--. no.. ((whispering)) eh. mi hai preso alla sprovvista sai, queste veramente--.. sono decisioni che non si possono prendere così su due piedi. *eh*-- bisogna pensarci con molta calma perché--… stavi ((chuckling)) +scherzando*

Table 11
Example 6 from *FW*.

In the first case (Table 10), the initial hesitation maker underlines the shyness and insecurity of the character, intensified by the vague expression *one of these*. In the Italian version the hesitation is omitted and the vague expression is replaced by the name of the beverage, making the offer more direct and the character more straightforward.

Likewise, example 6 (Table 11) reports a scene where, after spending the night together, the female protagonist Carrie tells Charles that she wants to get married. The character played by Hugh Grant finds himself speechless, he hesitates (five times in total) and dithers (interrupted speech, discourse markers like *you know*, repetitions such as *that-that's*, and pauses), trying to get out of the difficult situation. Moreover, the only complete sentence which he can utter is extremely vague. The Italian version presents only two hesitations and the filler *eh*. Collectively, the Italian Charles sounds less vague and more talkative. Indeed, he is perfectly able to articulate a verbose and sensible response.

5.1.2. Pauses of silence

When it comes to pauses of silence, time constraints linked to lip-synch and isochrony usually result in closer adherence to the original version. It has been pointed out how in dubbing a certain degree of variation, namely a pause slightly prolonged or shortened, does not alter the effect and the perception of a line (Chaume 2012, p. 78). At the same time, the presence of pauses within a period or a syntactic unit, even very brief ones, in combination with other linguistic elements may be used to convey specific meanings and foster specific interpretations. Therefore, if the same effect is not achieved in dubbing, viewers watching the adapted product will have a different experience. This is the case in the toast scene in *FW* (Table 12):

	English	Italian
CHARLES	ladies and gentlemen I'm sorry to drag you from your delicious dessert. *uh*-- . there are just one or two . little things I feel I should say as best man . *th-this* is only *the-the* second time *I've e-I've* ever been a best man I . I hope I did the job right that time . the couple in question are at least still . talking to me	signore e signori, mi dispiace distrarvi dallo squisito dessert che avete davanti ma, come testimone dello sposo ritengo sia mio dovere fare un breve discorso . è la seconda volta che mi trovo a fare il testimone, spero d'essere stato all'altezza della situazione la prima volta . la coppia in questione continua ancora a rivolgermi la parola
ALL	((laughter))	((laughter))
CHARLIE	*u-u-um*-unfortunately *they-they*'re not actually-- *um* . talking to each OTHER *t-the-the* divorce . *c-came* through, a couple of months ago	*eh*-- purtroppo però *eh*-- sì c'è un però. non parlano più tra di loro, il divorzio . è stato pronunciato un paio di mesi fa

Table 12
Example 7 from *FW.*

The original speech is disrupted by eight pauses of silence. Some of them following hesitations, while others segment a long stretch of speech. Sometimes they appear at the end of a sentence, after a preposition, breaking the speech with a short break. To begin with, the first part of the Italian speech is completely cleaned out of the original hesitations, repetitions, and false starts. Moreover, the Italian speech is segmented differently: in Italian the pauses of silence are kept at the edge between syntactic units (two in total). In other cases, the speech is prosodically organized through changing intonation. As a consequence, the Italian Charles seems more loquacious and self-confident. An increased number of pauses of silence is kept in the second part of the speech, probably due to the need to synchronise the lip movements of the actor in the close-up shot. However, other orality features are eliminated. Despite the presence of the hesitation marker *eh*, which appears twice, the stuttering effect is not present in Italian. On the contrary, the insertion of the sentence *sì c'è un però* once again makes the character sound more verbose.

Likewise, a similar tendency occurs in the film *LA* when Daniel lies to his sister about the reason why he is attending the school play of his nephews (Table 13):

English	Italian	Spanish
well I thought it was about time *I-I* did, I just didn't want anyone to see so I'm gonna-- . hide myself somewhere *and*-- . *and* watch the show =	*beh* ho pensato che fosse il momento-- di farlo solo che non volevo farmi notare da tutti così mi nascondo da qualche parte e guardo lo spettacolo =	decidí que ya era hora de hacerlo solo que-- no quiero que me vea nadie así que voy a esconderme en alguna parte y, ver la función =

Table 13
Example 8 from *LA* in English, Italian and Spanish.

Here again both dubbed versions sound more straightforward, a continuous flow in which the repetition of the first-person pronoun and the momentary interruption followed by a brief pause are not present. The only sign expressing some sort of difficulty emerges from the lengthening of the final vowel of the word *momento* in Italian and, similarly, by the lengthening of the vowel *e* in *que* in Spanish, where the initial discourse marker is also eliminated.

To conclude this section, it seems evident that the omission of a brief pause of silence, even if it is less than a second long, can have an impact on the perception of characters, especially when such pauses co-occur with other forms of dysfluency.

6. Conclusions

The present investigation attempted to observe how the rendering of certain linguistic features can have an impact on characterization. The elements under scrutiny typically fulfil pragmatic functions and, since they do not carry factual information, they often tend to be eliminated (Bruti 2019, p. 199; Chiaro 2009, p. 151).

The data analysed show that there is a marked tendency to reduce the number of hesitations in dubbing compared to the original version. The Italian dubbed versions usually present less than half of the original hesitations. This is because a wider set of linguistic features are employed to make the speech sound natural and spontaneous, as well as to render the insecurity of the character. In the Italian soundtrack, hesitations tend to be substituted with repetitions, pauses of silence and fillers, but also with laughter or

indistinct awkward 'noises', as also pointed out by Valdeón for Spanish (Valdeón 2008, p. 128). This also happens in French, where there seems to be a propensity to insert indistinct nasal sounds in correspondence with pauses. The multilingual comparative analysis has pointed out a general tendency to render hesitations through the lengthening of vowel sounds, usually at the end of a word. This seems to be one of the preferred approaches to render hesitations in all three of the languages here observed. However, these solutions do not always succeed in conveying the original awkwardness, as illustrated by the case of *FW*, where the translated version alters the original characterization, making the protagonist sound more self-confident, straightforward and assertive. The same occurs when lexical elements are introduced in dubbing in lieu of original dysfluencies, portraying the character as more talkative. Similar impressions can also arise from changes concerning the position of pauses of silence in a sentence. Pauses of silence are found quite faithfully in dubbing due to the need to synchronise the soundtrack to lip movements; however, while in the original versions they are often used within a syntactic unit to break the speech, in dubbing they are usually relocated at the border between syntactic units, making the flow of the speech firmer and more compact.

These results are in line with the findings of previous studies conducted within the Italian context (Bruti 2019). Nevertheless, it is important to draw attention to the fact that these reductions can be seen to derive from the complex adaptation process audiovisual products are subjected to. Different scholars such as Ramière (2010) and Guillot (2012) highlight the need to consider such products from a holistic perspective, taking into account various co-textual, semiotic and situational factors working together (Ramière 2010, p. 105). They insist on the multimodal nature of audiovisual texts (see also Pavesi 2018) and underline how, thanks to the simultaneous work of different modes, a few cues indexing orality can be enough to trigger the illusion of speech among viewers, based on our knowledge on communication (Guillot 2012, p. 483).

For future studies, it would be interesting to expand the present contribution through surveys investigating how the rendering, or lack of rendering, of these features impacts viewers' perception of on-screen characters. Moreover, it is important to address the limitations of the present investigation, which is a case study based on a small corpus of films. For future developments, it would be interesting to replicate the analysis using data from a larger corpus of film dialogue and from other characters or actors.

To conclude, it is important to raise AVT professionals' awareness of the role that apparently marginal elements such as hesitations play in film dialogue, so as to ensure international audiences a viewing experience as close as possible to the original one.

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