Lexical Complexity:
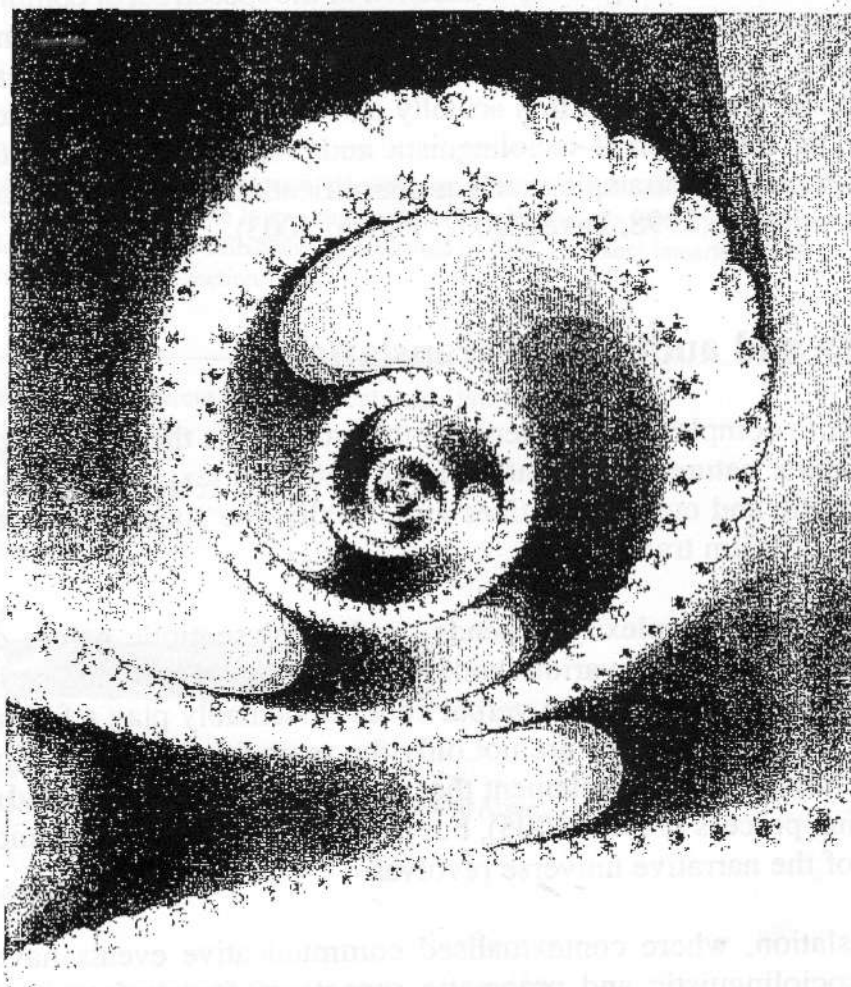# Theoretical Assessment
and Translational Perspectives

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COMPLEXITY IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SPEECH ACT OF COMPLIMENTING

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1. Introduction

The present paper aims to investigate the translation of the speech act of complimenting (Wolfson 1981, 1984; Manes and Wolfson 1980; Pomerantz 1978; Wolfson and Manes 1980; Herbert 1991; Holmes 1986, 1988; Golato 2004) in audiovisual translation, i.e. interlingual subtitling and dubbing. It is actually part of a wider research project that aims to pin down the translation of sociolinguistic and pragmatic values and to further explore essential translation strategies such as simplification and explicitation (Baker 1996; Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998; Pavesi 2002; Perego 2003).

2. Complexity and audiovisual translation

The connection with complexity, the theme of this volume, is therefore manifold: it involves the complex nature of translating a polysemiotic text, the complexity of transposing linguistic and cultural routines and, finally, the specific constraints of the two main types of film translation.

2.1. The first source of complexity depends on the polysemiotic nature of films (Gambier 1994), i.e. the fact that various codes and channels of communication constantly intersect. Even though the non verbal codes undeniably play a fundamental role in audiovisual texts, dialogues are not only the main focal point of film translation studies as they are the only element that can actually be adapted and moulded in the translating process (Pavesi 2005), but they are also the pivot around which the construction of the narrative universe revolves.

2.2. In film translation, where contextualised communicative events have to be transposed, the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of face-to-face interaction depict lifelike cultural scenarios and are meant to represent a wide range of situational variables. Hence, when turning from a language (and a culture) into a different one, perfect correspondences (i.e. equivalent linguistic signs → comparable socio-cultural meaning) rarely occur. The constraints due to the polysemiotic nature of film texts on the one hand and the ordinary difficulties of mediating between source- and target language and culture on the other often cause inevitable clashes on the level of social and cultural meanings, if not their complete deletion.

████████ e controversial speech acts in themselves, in that even though it is universally accepted that they are primarily ████████████████████ and are usually employed to express admiration or approval of someone's work/appearance/taste, these conversational routines pose the addressee a severe problem, i.e. how to reconcile the need to be supportive with the speaker and to avoid self-praise (Pomerantz 1978). In fact, although they are predominantly recognised as polite speech acts or "face flattering acts" (cf. Manno 2005), they can make complimentees feel uneasy or embarrassed, thereby creating a threat for their negative face. Furthermore, language-specific sociolinguistic and cultural variations (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) have a direct bearing on the giving and accepting of compliments across languages and contribute to make the picture even more confused. It follows t████████████████ ███ f ████ish (at least in the British variety), a language where negative face work plays a crucial role and that has been described as an excellent vehicle for mitigation and understatement.

Other equally relevant and serious constraints that increase the complexity of the translating task depend on the specific requirements and limitations of subtitling and dubbing.

2.3.1. *Subtitling*

Interlingual subtitles[1] reduce the original text of at least 40% of its length by simplifying it (Pavesi 2002), due to the rigid space and time constraints that this translation medium imposes (e.g. viewing time, good readability, synchronisation, but also the audience's reading skills, which in turn depend on its age and on its linguistic and cultural background, and the balance between length and informative load, cf. Caimi and Perego 2002). In addition, the transformation from the oral script to the written subtitles also contributes to the quality of the language, which becomes more formal and neat, almost devoid of the many sociolinguistic and pragmatic markers that give spoken language its natural flavour (Bussi Parmiggiani 2002: 180). Given these limitations, it has been observed that some elements are bound to be deleted more than others. Reduction strategies mainly apply to redundancies in the spoken text, but also to modulating and pragmatic markers, which are considered less essential in conveying the conceptual meaning of the original, at the risk of manipulating – more or less severely – the interpersonal dynamics intended by the author (Hatim and Mason 2000: 438). Blini and Matte Bon (1996) have thoroughly demonstrated that modifying or eliminating such markers in the written subtitles is tantamount to corrupting the sociolinguistic and pragmatic meanings of the original. ██
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[1] Interlingual subtitles translate the soundtrack into a target language, and intralingual subtitles reproduce graphically what is heard. In this case they are addressed to the deaf or hard of hearing or to language learners (cf. Caimi and Perego 2002).

translated in Bruti and Perego 2005: 30).

I have so far investigated the translation of some instances of socio-linguistic and pragmatic meaning in Italian subtitles for British/American films. More specifically, I have concentrated on the speech act of complimenting and on vocatives and terms of address (Bruti 2006, forthcoming; Bruti and Perego 2005), but for the purposes of the present paper I would like to extend my analysis to dubbing as well.

2.3.2. *Dubbing*

Dubbing is a complex process of which translation proper is but a moment. A first, sketchy literal translation of the original script is followed by an adaptation or better a rewriting of the dialogues to adapt them to the prerequisites of the different codes of the audiovisual text, followed in turn by the acting of the script under the direction of a dubbing director (Pavesi 2005: 12; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 2-3, 81). The aim of dubbing is therefore not only to transpose the verbal information as detached from that from the other channels but to recreate a text where all the facets of meaning are compatible with one another and do not distort the original message.

Among the constraints of dubbing there are several types of synchronism: lip-, linear-, gestural-, and rhythmic synchronism (cf. Pavesi 2005: 13-16; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 67-68). Lip synch, probably the most well-known, is the match between the articulatory movements determined by the utterance of the original words and those presupposed by the utterance of the dubbed words. Special care is needed for bilabial consonants like [m], [b] and [p], or labio-dentals like [f] and [v], but many other factors such as the degree of closure of the mouth and the rounding of the lips in the production of vowels are also relevant. If lip synch is mainly qualitative, linear synch is quantitative: it refers to the length of the utterance, demarcated by the opening and closing of the actor's lips, or better, by the beginning and end of the movements of his/her articulatory organs.

Gestural synch is the matching of words, gestures and actions. Gestures are signs that should in fact go along with verbal signs, often specifying or reinforcing their meaning. On the other hand, words and the way in which they are uttered should be compatible with the actions that are performed (e.g. one cannot deliver a speech while running fast). While lip synch is a priority in first and medium shots, gestural synch is required also in long shots (Pavesi 2005: 15).

Finally, rhythmic synch involves various factors at the same time and must be complied with also when the actor is off screen. It includes the syntactic rhythm of the original language, the speed of acting, the pitch the actor uses, which is in turn motivated by the setting where the scene takes place.

Similarly to subtitling, in dubbing as well universal strategies of levelling out (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998) have been repeatedly observed, especially in transposing sociolinguistically marked (e.g. diatopically, diastratically, diaphasically) or substandard varieties. The ensuing result is a dull portrait where the characters speak a standardised language, devoid of any geographical and social colouring (cf. Pernigoni 2005).

3. Lexical complexity across languages

Although the main focus of this paper is the translation of compliment routines, a few comments on the complexity of the lexicon and its translation[2] are in order. As quite a few studies have shown (Bertuccelli Papi 2003; Masi 2003: 130-131), lexical complexity derives from several factors such as systematic (i.e. depending on categorial distinctions) and unsystematic ambiguity, presuppositions of use inscribed in lexemes themselves, selection restrictions and so on, but these features, although they enrich the informative load of a lexeme do not necessarily entail psychological complexity, i.e. difficulty. When translating from one language to another the texture of meaning associated to certain lexical items (the result of semantic, syntactic and morphological complexity) must be matched with the resources available in the target language, as each language has its own ways of organising conceptual material in its lexical inventory. ███ ██ ██ ██████████████ which applies to translation in general, and thus to both modes of audiovisual translation to the same extent, ██████████████ ████████████████████████ A lexical gap occurs whenever there is no corresponding word for a well-defined concept; so, for example, in English there is no everyday term for members of the animal kingdom (cf. *bête* in French, *beastie* in Scottish) because *creature* belongs to a more formal register and *animal* is mainly used in technical registers (cf. Cruse 2000: 183). Lexical gaps can be observed with frequency in meronymic taxonomies across languages: for instance, in French *pommette* designates the rounded part of the cheek over the cheekbone. English has no such term, so for instance the English *cheekbone* cannot be regarded as an equivalent. In fact *Elle a les pommettes rouges* cannot be rendered with *She has red cheekbones*. As Cruse rightly points out, it is not always easy to keep lexical and conceptual gaps distinct. Sometimes concepts are accessible and easy enough for speakers of a language to grasp but "they are not felt to be salient enough to merit lexical recognition" (2000: 188). So Cruse ascribes the case ██ *pomme* ████████████ A more transparent example is represented by the American English term *pudding*, a type of everyday dessert made of milk, sugar, flour and different flavourings, frequently mixed from pudding powder, which finds its nearest counterpart in British *blancmange*, which, however, does not contain eggs, has no flavourings such as chocolate, strawberry, caramel and so on, as the French adjective *blanc* suggests. The situation is complicated by the fact the term *pudding* might be applied to savoury dishes in the British Isles (Gramley 2001: 72), e.g. steak and kidney pudding, Yorkshire pudding. Here *pudding* applies to combinations of either sweet or savoury food that are kept together in a container, a bowl or a cloth, and cooked by boiling or steaming.

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[2] The majority of studies on dubbing are devoted to the lexicon and to the various forms of mismatch between the languages at stake (e.g. from the case of incorrect translations, to stylistic shifts and consequently cohesive discrepancies, to the use of structural and semantic calques, cf. Pavesi 2005: 42-44).

Similar cases can be observed in the following examples from the film *Bend it like Beckham*[3].

(1)

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	SUBTITLING	DUBBING
PINKY: My fiancé don't like dyed hair. Can't stand here all day. I got to go to Ealing for <u>my facial</u>. Laters!	Il mio fidanzato odia i capelli tinti. / Scusate, ma devo andare A fare <u>la prova trucco</u>. Ciao!	Già. Il mio fidanzato odia i capelli tinti. Scusate non posso restare a chiacchierare. Sto andando a fare <u>la prova trucco</u>. Ciao, ciao.

(2)

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	SUBTITLING	DUBBING
JESS: Nah, it just looks awful. I was eight. My mum was working overtime at Heathrow and I was trying to cook <u>beans on toast</u>. When I jumped up to the grill to get the toast, my trousers caught alight, so my sister put me in the bath, poured cold water over me and pulled them off but half my skin came off, too.	No, è solo brutta da vedere. / Avevo otto anni, mia madre lavorava e io stavo preparando <u>un toast</u>. / Mi sono avvicinata al fornello e i pantaloni hanno preso fuoco, / mia sorella ci ha versato sopra l'acqua fresca e me li ha tolti. / È venuta via anche la pelle. /	No, è solo brutta da vedere. Avevo otto anni, mamma faceva gli straordinari all'aeroporto e io decisi di farmi <u>un toast</u>. Scavalcai il fornello per prendere il toast e i pantaloni mi presero fuoco, così mia sorella mi ficcò nella vasca da bagno e mi sfilò i pantaloni. E venne via anche metà della pelle.

(3)

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	SUBTITLING	DUBBING
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, ▮▮	Tutte ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮n?

[3] In the examples the symbol / indicates the border between two different subtitles, whereas cues preceded by the symbol - represent two different lines belonging to the same subtitle. For more details about the films see the filmography at the end of the paper.

In example (1) the critical term is represented by *facial*, a term that designates a beauty treatment in which one's face is massaged and various creams are rubbed into it. In Italian there is no primary lexicalisation (Bertuccelli Papi 2003) and we need to use a periphrasis to explain the idea. In both subtitling and dubbing, however, the choice fell on a different concept, perhaps referring to what is most typically done in the wedding script by brides-to-be the day before the wedding ceremony at a beauty saloon[4].

Examples (2) and (3) are instances of conceptual gaps motivated by cultural differences and traditions. In Britain it is common to eat toasted bread with butter, eggs, beans, sausages, tomatoes, jam etc., whereas in Italy the word toast only refers to a snack consisting of two slices of bread with cheese and ham. In both modes of translation normalisation is at work and the translating choice is something more typical in the target culture.

Example (3) presents a typical phenomenon in Great Britain, where immigrants from different parts of the world have kept their traditions in religion, food, family relations etc. Here the protagonist is complaining about the narrow-mindedness of her parents, who would like her to be a traditional Punjabi girl and certainly not to play football in a semi-professional team. She therefore refers to *aloo gobi*[5], a typical dish that her mother judges as an essential part of a woman's background knowledge and that she will learn to cook later on in the film. This term cannot of course be translated into any language.

In the same utterance there is another interesting term, the verb *to bend* ('piegare, curvare')[6], which also occurs in the film title. The verb *to bend* has undergone a process of semantic specialisation in the field of football: it has begun to be used to refer to a typical way of 'touching' the ball which makes it swerve. In this technique[7] swerve is produced by kicking the ball off centre on the opposite side to the side you want the ball to swerve. This skill is important in many areas of football, such as shots at goal around defenders that are obscured from the goalkeeper's view, corner kicks, crosses into the box, and passing the ball around opponents especial-

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[4] Notice how dubbing definitely neutralises the agrammatical register used by Pinky: "my fiancé don't like", "Ø can't stand here". In addition, "laters" is translated with a typical 'dubbese' solution: in fact, the translation of the informal greeting *bye-bye* with *ciao ciao* is by now established and through dubbing has been adopted in spoken interactions.

[5] A traditional Indian dish. The word *aloo* means potato, and the word *gobi* cauliflower, the two main ingredients in this recipe. Ingredients also include onions, green chillies, ginger, coriander, tomatoes and spices (cumin seeds, tamarind, paprika, ginger, garlic). As the director of the film Gurinder Chadha explains in one of the extras available on the DVD, this dish looks and tastes like curry.

[6] A query in the BNC yielded only 3 results for *to bend*, of which only the last is referred to football:
1. older Portsmouth valve, adjust by carefully <u>bending</u> the ball arm. Never hold
2. the ball while Land with your legs together, knees <u>bent</u>, on the balls of your feet, with your
3. fell for almost four hours. Though Akram <u>bent</u> the ball around like a frisbee and Waqar.

[7] There is an impressive amount of information available on the net. The following sites seem to be the most interesting: "Football kicking skills – swerving or bending the ball" (http://www.master-sport.co.uk/swerve.htm); "So I do I bend it like Beckham?"– The site of the US national soccer players (www.ussoccerplayers.com/resource_ center/for_players/380912.html); "Bend it like Beckham - Here's how to... bend the ball" (http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/skills/4189002.stm); "The Soccer Clinics - Where players come to learn" (http://www.soccerclinics.com/IPAHomeworkBentPass.htm).

ly because the trajectory of the ball is hardly predictable (cf. http://www.master-sport.co.uk/swerve.htm). The term *bend* is obviously not the same as 'crossing' the ball, which simply means imposing the ball a certain trajectory across the field. Nor is it equivalent to either 'aim' at the box (the solution chosen in the subtitles), or 'score' a goal (the solution adopted in dubbing). Football hero David Beckham is one of the most famous players to bend his free kicks. In fact, his hallmark does not imply that he is a top-scorer. So the meaning of the verb *to bend* is completed by the prepositional phrase "like Beckham" because Beckham has become legendary for making the ball bend in his free kicks, just like Del Piero is famous for his free kicks that often score a goal (hence in Italian 'punizione alla Del Piero').

Possible Italian translations for this term are 'tagliare la palla'[8], which obtains for both tennis and football (Zingarelli 1997; cf. 'girare la palla', which is instead only applicable to pool). A certain correspondence might hold, because both verbs are used with a metaphorical extension: the ball is not actually bent, nor is it cut. Yet the profile of the word in English differs from that in Italian and the choice of translating it with 'tagliare' would surely entail some loss. In fact, the combinatory pattern[9] of *bend* includes mainly parts of the body and things as objects (*head, knee, leg, arm, elbow, pipe, ray*), with the notable exception of the abstract word *rule* (the 4th for frequency of occurrence in the role of the object; there are other abstract words as objects: *truth, effort, law, mind*). In this film, in the title in particular, the use of the verb *bend* is therefore consequential in that it evokes the philosophy of life that is pursued by the protagonist, who in the end succeeds in 'bending the rules' of her parents' conventional world without endangering her familiar bonds[10].

4. The nature of compliments

Even though compliments can serve a plurality of functions in different contexts, there is widespread agreement on their nature of "social lubricants" (Wolfson 1983: 89), i.e. strategies that aim to establish or reaffirm common ground, mutuality or social solidarity. They are often quite independent from the linguistic environment in which they occur, although they are frequently related to the topic of the exchange. This independence makes them suitable tools to use in opening sequences such as greetings or in thanks.

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[8] In his article on football English Broccias 2001: 151 translates it as 'addomesticare'.

[9] I have used the demo version of the corpus query system Sketch Engine (developed by A. Kilgariff and P. Rychly) and the specific function 'word sketch' (http://www.sketchengine.co.uk/).

[10] One of the websites (IMDbPro Professional Details, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0286499/) devoted to the film reports among the trivia the following anecdote: "Although football (soccer) star David Beckham and the term 'bend' are well-known throughout most of the world, they are virtually unknown in the U.S. As such, when the time came for the film's U.S release, 20th Century Fox marketing execs suggested changing the title to 'Move it like Mia', alluding to U.S. football star Mia Hamm. Director Gurinder Chadha objected to the name change and the film was released with its original title". In Germany, instead, they opted for a title in English, *Kick it like Beckham*, whereas in Italy it was distributed as *Sognando Beckham*.

It is however true that like any speech act, compliments are embedded in a larger discourse structure. As Golato (2004) claims, despite their flexibility, compliments need to have some 'hooks': in fact, when the speaker pays the addressee a compliment, he/she needs to know and recognise the 'assessable', that is the "object/talent/character trait" the compliment is about (Golato 2004: 27). Secondly, a certain degree of 'positiveness' also needs to clearly appear in the utterance. This aim can be achieved through semantic and syntactic means (cf. below), but also – and to a larger extent – through the context in which the compliment is uttered.

Apart from having a status and function of their own, compliments can take on an ancillary function and thus contribute to – or even supplant – other speech acts. Wolfson (1983: 88) states that compliments can "strengthen or even replace other speech-act formulas" such as apologies, thanks and greetings and can downgrade the force of face-threatening acts such as criticisms, reproaches, directives of various types (that is displaying different degrees of strength, e.g. requests and orders) (cf. on this Holmes 1986: 488). The picture is however by far more complicated than this, as it often happens that compliments do not differ significantly from general assessments. In fact, there are utterances whose positive meaning is to be gleaned from the context and that pragmatically speaking count as compliments even though they do not look like them. Furthermore, there are also utterances that employ semantically positive material but turn out not to be attending to a praising function (e.g. reproach).

Research on compliments, no matter in which language, has incontrovertibly shown that they are quite formulaic in nature. The most interesting results on compliments in English (in the American variety) are those that emerge from the studies by Manes and Wolfson (Manes and Wolfson 1980; Wolfson and Manes 1980). On the basis of their investigation of a corpus of 686 compliments collected by the authors and their students at the Universities of Virginia and Pennsylvania from a wide range of everyday interactions, Manes and Wolfson recognise the formulaicity of compliments and identify nine syntactic patterns that account for the majority of the structures in their data. In particular, the first three patterns cover 85% of the compliments in their data base. The patterns are the following:

1.	NP is/looks (really) ADJ	*Your sweater is really nice*
2.	I (really) like/love NP	*I like your car*
3.	▮▮▮▮▮▮ (a) ▮▮▮▮	▮▮▮▮▮▮
4.	You V (a) (really) ADJ NP	*You did a great job*
5.	You V NP (really) ADV	*You sang that song very well*
6.	You have (a) (really) ADJ NP	*You have a beautiful living room*
7.	What (a) ADJ NP!	*What a pretty shirt!*
8.	ADJ NP!	*Good shot!*
9.	Isn't NP ADJ!	*Isn't that ring pretty!*

Formulaicity can also be observed in the limited choice of vocabulary. Manes and Wolfson notice that *nice* and *good*, among semantically positive adjectives certainly two that are characterised by low specificity, cover together 42% of adjectival occurrences in compliments. If *beautiful*, *pretty* and *great* are added to the group the percentage increases to reach two thirds of all adjectival compliments. Among verbs, *like* and *love* are the most frequent and occur in 90% of verbal compliments. Semantically

positive nouns and adverbs (e.g. *genius, well*) are very rare, showing that compliments are preferentially expressed with a positive adjective or a verb of liking (Manes and Wolfson 1980: 400-401). Intensifiers (*really, very, such*) often accompany verbs of liking to emphasise the expression of appreciation, whereas the presence of deictics (mainly *this* and *that*) helps establish reference to the object of the compliment.

Studies on compliments have also highlighted other regularities investing the topic and its correlations with both genre and status[11]. Even though an ample variety of topics would at least be possible, only a few account for the majority of compliments in the collected data (cf. Holmes 1986, 1988): appearance, ability, skill or performance, possession, personal traits or qualities. Compliments on appearance are the top-rank items and have their highest proportion in female-to-female interactions. Complimenting on appearance across sexes may yet be perceived as too intimate or containing seductive overtones; therefore, males prefer to compliment females on performance or skills, not only or not always as a sign of their superior social status, but so as not to be perceived as inappropriate or sexually biased.

There are undeniably correlations between complimenting and gender. On the whole it appears that women tend to compliment more than men and normally perceive complimenting as 'affiliative' or cooperative, whereas men sometimes see it as competitive and face-threatening. However, if on the one hand women are deemed to be better addressees of compliments because of their lower social status (Wolfson 1984: 243), it is also true that women see compliments as an appropriate strategy to strengthen rapport in a wide variety of contexts. Men, on the contrary, seem to express solidarity and in-group membership in different ways (e.g. the use of swear words).

As for the status of complimenters and recipients, Holmes (1986, 1988) points out that 79% of the compliments she collected occur between equals, a result that is confirmed for American English by Wolfson (1983). However, when compliments are exchanged in asymmetric dyads, they are preferentially addressed to higher status females, probably because they are considered less intimidating than higher status males.

5. Translating compliments

The choice of investigating compliments as linguistic and social routines was suggested firstly by the findings of various studies on subtitling that recognise that the universal of simplification is in this mode both more pervasive and more extensive (Pavesi 2005: 21) and chiefly invests socio-pragmatic values (Blini and Matte Bon 1996; Kovačič 1996; Hatim and Mason 2000; Bruti and Perego 2005), and secondly by the scarcity of studies on these aspects in the literature on dubbing, where scholars have mainly concentrated on morphosyntactic, lexical and rhetorical traits (cf. Pavesi 1994, 1996; Brincat 2000; Alfieri et al. 2003).

As hinted at before, compliments are mainly conveyed by a limited set of lexical items and syntactic structures, which do not in themselves represent difficulties for audiovisual translators. The two kinds of problems that might arise are of a dif-

[11] For a more detailed investigation of these variables see Bruti 2006 and forthcoming.

ferent nature. The first one is shared by both modes: when transposing interactional routines it is important not to alter the dynamics of the forces at play. Minor changes may in fact have a disruptive effect and subvert the intentions of the speaker or the general structure of discourse and its micro- and macro-goals. The second kind of problem is instead mode-specific: in the case of subtitling compliments are affected by a heavy reduction process as elements that belong to the realm of expressivity and do not provide the viewer with strictly factual information; in the case of dubbing there are the various types of synch requirements.

5.1. *Formulaic compliments*

As shown above, compliments often employ a restricted range of syntactic patterns and an equally limited lexical repertoire. Some examples from the corpus of films so far investigated are the following[12].

(4) *Tootsie*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
Tootsie [the sound is not heard but we can see her lips uttering the word]: Perfect.	Perfetta. /	Perfetta.
John: ▮▮▮▮▮	▮▮▮▮▮	▮▮▮▮▮
Julie: ▮▮▮▮▮	- Grazie. /	Grazie, John.
Rita [off-screen]: Lovely job. First rate.	- Buon lavoro. Ottimo.	Buon lavoro. Julie. Ottimo lavoro.
Woman: You were wonderful.	- Sei stata magnifica. /	Sei stata bravissima.
Julie: Yeah. Thanks to my coach.	Grazie alla mia maestra.	Grazie alla maestra.

(5) *Shallow Hal*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
Hal: And in summation, I feel that these measures will help JPS and all of our customers. Ok.	Insomma, credo che sarebbe positivo sia per la JPS che per i nostri clienti.	In conclusione, credo che questi provvedimenti aiuteranno la JPS e tutti i nostri clienti.
Colleague 1: ▮▮▮▮ Hal.	▮▮▮▮▮ Grazie.	▮▮▮▮▮ Oh grazie.
Hal: Thank you.		
Colleague 2: Nicely done.	Bravo.	*Collega 1:* Davvero. Ottimo lavoro, Hal.
Hal: I appreciate it.	Grazie molte.	Grazie

[12] In the examples compliments are underlined both in the original English soundtrack and in the Italian subtitled and dubbed versions (in ex. 9 also when the translation is no longer a compliment).

(6) *Philadelphia*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
Joe: You saw me on TV? It's a good school, Penn. What year are you in?	Mi hai visto in TV? L'università di Penn è molto buona. /	Mi ha visto in TV? È una buona università la Penn, eh?
		Student: Già, ottima.
		Joe: A che anno è?
Student: Second. Listen, I just wanted to tell you this case is tremendously important and I wish you to know you're doing a fantastic job.	Sono al secondo anno. Volevo solo dirle- / questa causa è tremenda- mente importante. E Lei è fantas- tico. /	Secondo, senta io voglio solo dirle che questa causa è terribilmente importante e voglio che sappia che credo stia facendo un magnifico lavoro.
Joe: Thank you. When you graduate, give me a call.	Quando ti laurei, fammelo sapere.	Grazie. A te. Grazie, Joe. Quando ti laurei, chiama.

In example (4) both "Perfect" and "That was great" are compliments that refer to a scene that has just been performed by Julie, an actress starring as a nurse in the soap *Southwest General*. Reference is therefore quite easily exophorically established. The use of a pronoun is possible because reference is being made to an action or an event that is currently relevant and therefore easily accessible. Deictics are in fact a typical feature of spontaneous conversation, where participants rely on such extra-linguistic cues as facial expressions, mimicry, gesture, posture and, above all, a shared context of situation to make sense of what their partners say. "Perfetta", which occurs in both modalities, is ambiguous in that it could refer to either Julie or to the scene that has just been shot. The translation of the second compliment in both the subtitles and the dubbed version shifts the focus from the performance, the shooting of the scene, and pays instead attention to one of the character's personal qualities.

Another observation pertaining to dubbing only is that the utterance of "Buon lavoro, Julie. Ottimo lavoro" is not particularly convincing. The second specification "Ottimo lavoro" is needed to disambiguate the first, which otherwise could be taken as the forward-oriented utterance of a wish. In addition, the intonation of this sequence sounds odd.

In (5) the topic of the compliment is Hal's successful presentation of his new proposal to implement business in the company where he works. So he is praised for his well-argued talk and the brilliant ideas that he has put forward. In the subtitles, instead, little importance is attached to his performance, for the first compliment ("complimenti") is very generic. The second, "bravo", is also quite vague as it refers to a person and not to a performance, but is an adjective that can be used on an unlimited number of occasions and, unless reinforced otherwise, is weekly informative.

The solutions in dubbing are more faithful to the original as the compliments also concern a deed "Gran bel lavoro", "Ottimo lavoro". There is, however, a minor

difference because in Italian the expressions pertain to the observable results, something that retrospectively allows to judge something as a good job, whereas in English the emphasis is placed on the performance of the action (i.e. well-*done*). Finally, the dubbed dialogue includes a line that is absent in the original (it is possible because the character is off-screen), with the purpose of strengthening the force of the compliment.

In (6) in the original the second compliment concerns a successful performance, whereas it is turned into a recognition of some stable personal qualities in the subtitles. Dubbing, instead, keeps the topic ("st[i]a facendo un magnifico lavoro"), but the overall result is perhaps even more divergent from the original as the illocutionary force is significantly attenuated. The compliment is in fact mitigated by an epistemic marker that relativises the judgement to the speaker "credo che stia...". Furthermore, the two overtures ("io voglio solo dirle che... e voglio che sappia che credo...") make the student's turn elaborate and meandering, whereas communication in the original is more straightforward. This impression also collides with the brusque switch to the informal *tu* that closely follows.

(7) *Sliding Doors*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
Anna: Is Gerry excited about being a daddy? *Helen*: I haven't told him yet. Never seems to be the right moment somehow.	- Gerry è contento del bambino? - Non gliel'ho ancora detto. / Non so perché non mi sembra mai il momento adatto. /	Gerry è contento di diventare papà? Non gliel'ho ancora detto. Non so perché non mi sembra mai il momento adatto.
Anna: Come on, let's celebrate with a proper drink. *Helen*: <u>Bloody marvellous idea</u>. I really shouldn't in my condition, but I'm really going to.	Avanti. Festeggiamo come si conviene. / <u>Questa sì che è un'idea meravigliosa</u>. / Veramente, nelle mie condizioni non dovrei, ma lo faccio lo stesso.	Avanti, festeggiamo come si conviene. <u>Questa sì che è un'idea meravigliosa</u>. Veramente nelle mie condizioni non dovrei, ma lo faccio lo stesso.

Example (7) is quite interesting, because although the pattern of the compliment is quite common (a reduced variety of type 3), yet the adjective "marvellous" is associated with "bloody"[13], which in this context works as an intensifier. Both translating modes show to adhere to a convention of audiovisual translation, that of neutralising taboo language (cf. Pavesi 2002, 2005: 47). This feature is more pervasive in subtitling, where the written nature of communication exerts a stronger control

[13] For a detailed analysis of *bloody* see Biscetti 2004.

on the register that is employed, whereas in dubbing, apart from stereotypical translating equivalents of certain expressions (e.g. *figli di puttana, maledetto, maledizione, dannato*, etc.), some space is left to the lexical creativity of the adapter (Pavesi 2005: 48). Yet, in example (7) an attempt at giving the cue a more informal, offhand tone has been made by choosing a structure that typically occurs in colloquial speech, i.e. a cleft with the focus on the item *sì* (Pavesi 2005: 112). Furthermore, in dubbing the introduction of "questa" in initial position also solves the problem of finding an adequate correspondence with the bilabial of "bloody".

5.2. *Non formulaic compliments: more indirect forms of praise*

Interestingly, some scholars have noticed (Herbert 1991: 383; Lewandoska-Tomaszcyk 1989: 77; Boyle 2000) that compliments are not necessarily formulaic and in certain genres there is a marked preference for implicit forms. By implicit compliments Boyle means two different speech acts: those that refer to the addressee's achievement, whose recognition strongly depends on indexical knowledge; and those that compare the addressee to someone he/she thinks highly of. The latter type also requires a great deal of indexical knowledge and reciprocity of perspective in order for the compliment to be taken as such. The expression of praise rests on a comparison, whose interpretation depends on the addressee's knowledge of the object of the comparison. Both types seem to be able to solve the dilemma posed by compliments (Pomerantz 1978), i.e. reconcile the need to agree with assessments and to avoid self-praise. Furthermore, they also obey to a phatic function not only in the sense that they use small talk to establish rapport, but also because they reach greater affiliation with others.

On the whole it can be argued that a higher degree of indirectness in uttering compliments seems preferable for several reasons: on the one hand, the choice of an original wording better supports the sincerity of the locutor and lends more force to his/her utterance; this strategy also involves the addressee by asking him/her to co-operate to construct the implied meaning. On the other hand implicitness most strategically redresses the balance between positive and negative face thereby reducing the possibility of getting too close to the addressee and invading his/her territory, for example by embarrassing him/her (for a more detailed analysis of implicit compliments cf. Bruti 2006).

Indirect wordings of this type seem to be fairly pervasive in film language.

(8) *Sabrina*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
David: Are you stranded? *Sabrina*: My father was supposed to pick me up but something must have happened.	- È rimasta a piedi? - Papà doveva venirmi a prendere.	Non vi aspettavano? Doveva esserci mio padre a prendermi, ma dev'essere successo qualcosa.
David: <u>Whoever your father is, whatever happened, I'll be grateful to him.</u>	<u>Chiunque sia suo padre, gli sarò eternamente grato.</u>	<u>Qualsiasi cosa sia accaduta non posso che essere grato agli dei, se accettate un passaggio, naturalmente.</u>

(9) *Sabrina*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
David: Well, I may know nothing of Dow Jones, but I do know something about kisses.	Non ne saprò nulla del Dow Jones, ma di baci sono esperto. /	Beh, forse non mi intendo d'affari, ma di baci ne so qualcosa.
Linus: <u>You could lecture on that at Vassar</u>.	Potresti tenere <u>un corso universitario</u>.	<u>Se è per questo non l'ho mai messo in dubbio</u>.

Example (8) is about the meeting between David and Sabrina when she gets back from Paris. He does not recognise her, but makes a pass at her at the station. She decides not to reveal him her true identity until they reach home. The compliment in the original does not contain any item belonging to the lexicon of compliments, nor does it employ any of the most frequent syntactic structures. It also ironically exploits the clause "whoever your father is", which is uttered by an unaware David, but which would also be justifiable if he had recognised Sabrina. Once again the translating solutions in subtitling and dubbing differ considerably. The first area where a divergence can be observed is the choice of address pronouns: *lei* in the subtitles, *voi* in dubbing. This is a recognised difficulty of translating English into Italian (Pavesi 1996), as English has a one-item paradigm whereas Italian has three options (*tu, lei, voi* – the latter with diatopic and diachronic restrictions). Yet a very rich inventory of vocatives allows the English language to make up for the solidarity/power meanings encoded in the T/V[14] pronouns. The use of the first name in English may in fact correspond to the passage from the V to the T form in other languages.

It should be recalled that in Italy the polite pronoun *voi* was imposed in 1938 by the Fascist regime as the autochthonous form for polite address, but the film *Sabrina* was released in 1954, when *lei* had already become the most typical form in use.

Some other considerations are in order. Since pronouns (and vocatives) are important pointers of an interaction and the passage from V to T is not retractable (whereas it was in Early Modern English), one cannot consider these phenomena as isolated occurrences in the text, thus overlooking their diachrony throughout the plot. The dyad of address pronouns and vocatives exchanged by Sabrina and David at crucial moments[15] in the film is the following (cf. table 1[16]):

[14] As in Brown and Gilman 1972, T and V stand respectively for the informal and polite address form.

[15] The moments that have been considered crucial in the development of Sabrina's relationship with David can be reduced to three main stages, delimited by Sabrina's journey to Paris. So we'll consider their relationship before she leaves, after she comes back, but in this case two stages need to be distinguished: a first one, in which David does not recognise her, and a second one, in which he discovers who she really is.

[16] D and S stand respectively for David and Sabrina.

Table 1			
Before Paris	**ORIGINAL**	**SUBTITLING**	**DUBBING**
D > S (T/V pronoun + vocative)	It's you Sabrina	Tu + Sabrina	Tu + Sabrina
S > D (T/V pronoun + vocative)	Hallo, David	Salve, David	Buonasera Ø
After Paris	**ORIGINAL**	**SUBTITLING**	**DUBBING**
D > S (T/V pronoun + vocative)	Miss	Lei	Signorina + voi
S > D (T/V pronoun + vocative)	Ø	Lei	Voi
After the recognition	**ORIGINAL**	**SUBTITLING**	**DUBBING**
D > S (T/V pronoun + vocative)	Sabrina	Tu (ti porto in città)	Voi + Sabrina
S > D (T/V pronoun + vocative)	David	Lei (vuole vedermi?)	Voi + David

At the beginning of the film David and Sabrina, although they belong to different social classes, call one another by first names. In both subtitling and dubbing, David addresses Sabrina by calling her with her first name and using a T pronoun. We don't know which pronoun Sabrina uses to address David, as she never uses any, but in subtitling she calls him David, whereas in dubbing she uses more formal ways and avoids naming him. Then the scene of the trip from the station follows: in that context it is reasonable to use polite forms, which are reciprocal *lei* in subtitling and reciprocal *voi* in dubbing. When David understands who she is, the situation changes again, with an asymmetrical dyad in subtitling and reciprocal *voi* + first name in dubbing. Both choices appear rather questionable. There is no occurrence of *tu* from Sabrina to David before she leaves for Paris, but as she called him by name, probably the relationship could be decoded as symmetrical. In dubbing, instead, the choice falls on reciprocal *voi* + first name, a solution which seems to owe much to an established tradition of dubbed films but which does not correspond to actual use in spoken Italian. Furthermore, why does David address her with *voi*, if before she left he used *tu*? Perhaps to strategically switch to *tu* after they kiss at the ball.

So the choice of polite forms (pronoun + vocative) in the compliment scene is quite meaningful: for David it signals that he hasn't recognised her and he therefore treats Sabrina as a new acquaintance; for Sabrina it is a signal of her harmless deceit. Yet *lei* (cf. subtitles) seems a more appropriate choice than *voi*.

The dubbed version completely changes the content of David's utterance: Sabrina's father is not mentioned and David shifts the merit of having met her to some deities, a decision that obliterates the nature of the 'pivot' of the compliment, i.e. the element the indirect praise is built around. The utterance in Italian ends up being longer and heavier than the original even though the compliment has been preserved. Subtitling results in this case more convincing, both for the choice of address pronouns and for the adherence to the 'pivot' of the compliment, i.e. Sabrina's father.

In (9) the compliment is of a very implicit nature as no positively denoted item is used in the wording. Linus is praising his brother for his way with women by

recognising him an uncommon talent. The compliment refers therefore to David's achievement but we can read between the lines a note of sarcasm and criticism because David is all play. So even though technically he is employed by the family business, he never shows up for work, spends all his time entertaining, and has been married and divorced three times. The subtitled version closely reproduces the original preserving the compliment in its implicit form, but applies the universal of normalisation (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998: 289) by removing the cultural reference that the Italian audience might not understand (i.e. Vassar, an exclusive college located in the heart of the Hudson Valley)[17]. Dubbing, instead, completely obliterates the compliment, as Linus, instead of taking up David's words to upgrade them, simply says that he does not deny what he is saying.

We would like to conclude with an example where dubbing, contrary to the observed norm (Pavesi 2005: 41), successfully translates sociolinguistic variation (diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variations with their substandard forms) and pragmatic meanings. In fact, in the extract under consideration, Frank, an American restaurant owner with mafia connections, welcomes his potential son-in-law Michael with open arms. Michael, instead, begins to realise that by marrying Gina, he may not just become a member of her family – he may become a member of "The Family"'s gangster life. Frank's pays Michael a compliment to show him how glad he is that Gina met him. The compliment is not direct in that Frank does not praise Michael overtly, but he does so through reference to Gina. The subtitles have expunged the taboo expression that is used in the second part of the compliment, which functions as an explicitation of the first part, and which upgrades its strength. Dubbing, for once, finds a good translating alternative, adopting a four-letter word that perfectly fits Frank's character, who like his family members does not speak a classless standard Italian, but his own idiolect, identified by phonetic and prosodic features (e.g. intonation and accent, vaguely reminiscent of Sicilian), informal vocabulary, indulging in taboo words, and simple syntax.

(10) *Mickey Blue Eyes*

ORIGINAL	SUBTITLES	DUBBING
Frank: I'm so thrilled that she met someone who knows exactly how she deserves to be treated. *Michael*: Right.	Finalmente ha incontrato qualcuno che sa trattarla come merita. /	Oddio, sono felicissimo che abbia incontrato una persona che sa esattamente come merita d'essere trattata. Sicuro.
Frank: Like a fucking princess.	Come una principessa.	Come una minchia di principessa.

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[17] Another instance of neutralisation applies to "Dow Jones", which is however nowadays quite popular for Italians as it is mentioned daily in the news.

6. Conclusion

From the examples of compliments that have been examined – too few to allow us to generalise, but at least indicative of some observable trends – it appears that close correspondence or diagrammaticity (Merlini Barbaresi 2002) in transposing pragmatic routines is rarely achieved. In formulaic compliments, for example, the object of praise has often been changed[18]. Yet, more evident shifts in meaning occur in the case of indirect forms of praise, where changes and omissions may completely even out the compliment.

On the whole, we hope we have shown how important it is to approach translation with a certain awareness of the complexities of finding patterns of mapping between linguistic and cultural systems and of the constraints imposed by such factors as text type and translation mode. In fact, even apparently negligible semantic and pragmatic shifts pertaining to the micro level may have fateful repercussions on the whole text.

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[18] In this concern, it would be necessary to establish the most typical compliment topic in Italian by investigating natural data, as the topic shift could possibly be motivated by an attempt to choose the most natural topic in the target culture.

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