The Dubbing Translation of Humorous Audiovisual Texts

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By

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INTRODUCTION

INVESTIGATING AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

The label "audiovisual translation" (AVT) includes the various forms of adaptation of "multimodal" texts (van Leeuwen 2005; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Kress 2009), whose semantic dimensions are conveyed by means of the combination between the linguistic, acoustic and visual elements. Despite representing a recent research field, as exemplified by the indeterminacy of terminology,[1] AVT is gaining interest among scholars, as shown by the increasing number of academic papers, publications, and university courses on the topic. The current period marked by the evolution of the media, the identification of new channels for the transmission of audiovisual texts, and the creation of new text types—like podcasts, videos created for the web, video games—encourages further investigation, in order to identify new sub-fields to explore, or to provide models with pedagogic applications.

One of the most common debates on the discipline concerns which form of AVT suits the various genres best. From a general perspective, dubbing and subtitles are distinguished according to their levels of "orientation" (Perego 2005). The latter is considered "a better approach to screen translation" (Tveit 2009: 95) than dubbing, which is seen as a form of domestication (Venuti 1995) where the translators' retextualisations aim to render source texts more accessible to target receivers. Other contributions aim at creating "a taxonomy of the many […] audiovisual translation modes" (Orero 2009: 131), thus defining and investigating the linguistic and technical features of, for example, voice over, where the source and target acoustic scores coexist, or of subtitles for the deaf, which produce a visual "substitute for the information that cannot be picked up by people with hearing impairment" (Neves 2009: 153). Finally, research on AVT is also enquiring into "transcreation", the strategy at the basis of freer translations, which conventionally affects the adaptations of advertisements (Pedersen 2014) and sacred texts (Di Giovanni 2008), and which is being adapted for the localisation of video games (Bernal Merino 2006; Mangiron 2010; Iaia 2014b). Besides these research trends, scholars generally compare dubbing and subtitling, or they justify the choice of specific techniques according to the level of knowledge of foreign languages (in particular, English as it becomes more and more widespread), or to the socio-cultural orientation of the translations (cf. Perego 2005; Tveit 2009). The predominant approach in dubbing translation—thus reflecting its nature of “mass consumption translation” (Plourde 2000), or of an “instrument of colonialism” (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 37)—consists in fact in domesticating and neutralising the original references, producing texts that are heavily oriented towards the target audience. Yet, when analysing target texts, little attention is generally paid to the definition of equivalence in AVT: what features it should respect; what cognitive model it should originate from, whether from a text-based (or bottom-up) source-text centred approach, corresponding to foreignisation, or from a cognitive (or top-down) “functional” (Nord 1997) equivalence that gives more importance to the target receivers’ linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds, coinciding with domestication. Finally, academic literature is usually interested in more technical aspects, from listing mistranslations (cf. also Bogucki 2011), to discussing the features of the language of dubbing, known as “dubbese”, or “*doppiaggese*” in Italian (cf. Gatta 2000: 90), which is seen as an “artificial” (Heiss and Leporati 2000) “television language” (Antonini and Chiaro 2009: 111) with its own rules and lexis, modelled on the features of a U.S. linguistic background, which leads to utterances that are unlikely to occur in everyday conversations (Perego 2005: 26).

This book argues that due to the specific, audiovisual nature of the text types under analysis, such conventional approaches to AVT studies should be integrated with close examination of the function of the visual and acoustic source-text elements in transmitting the intended denotative-semantic and connotative-pragmatic dimensions. This is in line with the definition of “text” as “the physical manifestation […] of the discourse (the set of ideas that the addressor wants to communicate)” (Christiansen 2011: 34), by means of its written, oral, acoustic dimensions (cf. Brown and Yule 1983; Widdowson 1984; Fairclough 1995; 2001), thus entailing that the audiovisual dimension has to be interpreted together with what is uttered, and that appropriate strategies for such interpretation should inform audiovisual translators’ competences. In fact, for these reasons, the product-based approaches to AVT studies should be accompanied by a focus on the practical strategies and cognitive processes that are activated (or that may be activated) to assist the reception of the visual design and its “grammar” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). The multimodal nature of those specific text types should be also conferred to the same process of audiovisual translation, acknowledging that images and sound have to become part of the corpus to be explored at the time of adapting the original work. In this sense, this book will consider the lexical, syntactic, functional and extralinguistic features of the selected source and target scripts, focusing on the exploitation or misinterpretations of the original audiovisual and textual characteristics that lead to ideological interpretations grounded on the target linguacultural background, which eventually disrespect or change the source-text-authors' intent. At the same time, a model will be devised for the analysis of the "official" translations (i.e., those used in the translated product either screened, broadcast or sold as game software) and the production of alternative versions that will be compared to the former, so as to propose different paths for the adaptation of humorous discourse, as well as to test a number of objectives, detailed in the following section.

1. Book Rationale and Objectives

This book aims to present a new approach to the analysis and production of audiovisual translations, providing a model for the analysis and rendering of multimodal texts, and proposing a selection of competences which translators should possess, in order to produce equivalent target scripts after taking into account socio-cultural, cognitive and linguistic factors. Furthermore, the Model and the alternative texts will be also informed by a specific view of the empirical audience (i.e., the audience who actually use the final product: watch the film/programme, or play the game), who are becoming accustomed to watching AV products on different media, and who are aware of the differences between the source and translated versions. The proposed strategy for the creation of target texts will differ from the dominant domestication approach, insofar as it originates from an interactive, "dynamic" view of translation as a cross-cultural, communicative process (Sager 1997) between the source and target linguacultural backgrounds (cf. Nord 1997), also considering audiovisual translators as cross-cultural mediators (cf. Guido 2012: 18-19) that have to bridge the source and target cognitive and socio-linguistic contexts in order to identify and adapt the denotative-semantic and connotative-pragmatic dimensions.

In addition to the consideration of the theoretical notions connected to audiovisual translation and to the construction and interpretation of multimodal texts, the analysis of the selected corpus of scripts shall be carried out from the cognitive-semantic, critical, pragmatic and multimodal perspectives. In fact, it is stated that also the audiovisual construction actualises the influence of the conventional cognitive organisations of experience (labelled as: “scripts”, “frames”, or “schemata”), and that translators should be able to interpret the multimodal and cognitive grounds, provided that they possess appropriate methodological and practical models. This would also entail borrowing and adapting the procedural aims of critical discourse analysis, identifying the ideological nature of the audiovisual translation strategies, affected by the translators’ socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The construction of the “Interactive Model” in this book is therefore meant to help achieve such complete interpretation, by means of a multicultural approach accounting for both the need for the texts to be enjoyable for the target audience, as well as the respect for the original author’s intentions. This approach is defined “interactive” as it is rooted in the interaction between two strategies of analysis and retextualisation of—respectively—the source and target texts. All of the above to comprehend the face value and hidden meanings of the former, which are then adapted for the target audience. In other words, the approach advocates a possible compromise between the respect for the authors’ intents and for audience entertainment, in a dynamic process of mediation between source and target cultures. In addition to films, TV series and TV shows, this book will also explore the topic of game localisation, thus directly tackling one of the new research trends in AVT (e.g., Mangiron 2007; Chandler and Deming 2011), aiming to encourage further research, and to define the theoretical and practical framework for the adaptation of the original humorous discourse of video games to the target audience. In particular, the selected audiovisual text-types will be divided into two groups:

(i) films, TV series and TV shows characterised by humour, where the need to render the comic effect requires a mediation between the cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions typical of the cultures respectively producing and receiving each text (cf. Chiaro 1992; Ross 1998; Guido 2012);
(ii) video games whose humorous discourse is generally based on innovative applications of the conventional cognitive (Attardo 2001), socio-cultural (Zillman 1983) and intertextual strategies (Iaia 2014a).

As for text type (i), the academic literature has so far focused on the correlation between the original and translated jokes (e.g., Chiaro 2006 on films such as *A Fish Called Wanda* or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), or on the analysis of the translations performed by local comedians (cf., e.g., Guido 2012: 86-92, who enquires into the Italian modifications to the original version of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*). This book will focus on the translation of a multimodally constructed humour by means of a linguistic and pragmatic analysis that unveils the translators' ideological choices, resorting to conventional stereotypical and linguacultural representations to prompt a specific response from target receivers. In this sense, the Model for the analysis and translation of audiovisual texts will be developed to support the cross-cultural approach to humorous discourse (Guido 2012), according to which the analysis and response to the comic message should be ruled by the integration between the senders' and recipients' linguacultural backgrounds, considering that the adaptation of humour is not straightforward even when cultures with similar types of world knowledge are involved (Chiaro 1992).

With regards to text type (ii), the conventional areas of investigation of "game localisation" (cf. Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006; Chandler and Deming 2011) will be integrated with the linguistic and multimodal analyses. Scholars generally combine elements of software translation and screen translation, focusing on how translators are challenged by the linguistic, cultural and technical constraints in modifying the game code, or in considering the spatial limitations of the user interface or icons.[2] Besides contributing to the contrastive analysis of source and target scripts, the Model that will be developed shall be resorted to for the production of different translation strategies for video games, as an alternative to the conventional adoption of Italian diatopic and diastratic language varieties in target versions.

Finally, the empirical audience reception of the official and alternative translations will also be considered, in order to explore the differences between the implied receiver's expectations, to which translators seem to refer when planning and producing target scripts. This approach will eventually give more information about "end-users' perception of AVT" (Antonini and Chiaro 2009: 99-100), which is not generally discussed in literature.

By means of a deductive-qualitative approach, the analysis of the selected corpus of AV texts will have the following objectives:

(i) to enquire into specific strategies in the Italian translation for the dubbing of humorous texts—i.e., the adoption of specific diatopic/diastratic varieties and the production of pragmalinguistic misrepresentations—focusing on its cognitive-ideological, lexico-semantic, structural and pragmatic dimensions;

(ii) to propose an alternative approach to the translation of the analysed texts accounting for the multimodal construction of the selected corpus;

(iii) to discuss the results of a questionnaire on the empirical-audience reception of a case study related to the translation of video games.

The structure of this book is meant to present first the theoretical background underlying the construction of the Interactive Model, starting from general considerations on audiovisual translation, dubbing and game localisation, and then focusing on how to interpret the multimodal construction. Finally, after the introduction of the Model, the differences in the linguistic, pragmatic and extralinguistic features of official and alternative Italian translations of the selected corpus of humorous audiovisual texts will be examined.

2. The Chapters

The first chapter will focus on dubbing and game localisation from the historical, technical and linguistic perspectives, presenting audiovisual translation as a linguistic, cross-cultural, communicative and interpretative process, and discussing the theoretical and analytical issues related to the production of equivalent target scripts. Chapter two will then introduce the theoretical notions connected to the interpretation of how the interaction between linguistic and extralinguistic features conveys specific semantic dimensions that audiovisual translators should recognise and adapt for target receivers. The third chapter will instead concentrate on the genre of the selected corpus of texts, presenting the most relevant theories of construction and translation of humorous discourse. The grounds of the Model and the translators' factual and procedural competences will represent the main subjects of chapter four, together with the introduction of the method of investigation and the examined audiovisual texts. This structure is meant to provide analysts, students and translators with the theoretical notions connected to the most important issues in AVT before identifying the Italian translation strategies in humorous films, TV series, TV shows (chapter five) and video games (chapter six). These chapters will underline the cognitive-semantic, pragmatic and socio-cultural dimensions of target versions, by focusing on the adoption of diatopic and diastratic language varieties, on the production of pragmalinguistic misrepresentations of the original characterisations, and also presenting some examples of alternative translation strategies that produce more equivalent scripts. Finally, the seventh chapter will be dedicated to the introduction and comments of the novel scripts obtained through the Model, and to the empirical audience's reception of the translation strategies for the video games *Final Fantasy IX* and *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch*, analysing the results of a questionnaire submitted to groups of undergraduate students (specific to a selected interaction from the former video game) and the comments that players have posted on dedicated online forums.

When it comes to AVT, the unexplained and unsaid are as important to both the authors and the translators as the explicit elements: what is implicit reveals the author's schemata, it is supported by the images and sounds, and it is to be taken into account when planning translations; the explicit translators' choices reveal their perception of target cultures, but also their knowledge of the cognitive source, linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds, with which they need to come to terms when translating.

CHAPTER ONE

AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION: HISTORY AND CENTRAL ISSUES

This chapter focuses on audiovisual translation, and dubbing in particular, enquiring into its historical development, identifying the economic and socio-cultural reasons behind its creation and adoption in Italy (1.1), along with the criticism towards its peculiar language, or "dubbese" (1.2), which is considered an artificial way of reproducing the oral communication, it being in fact characterised by peculiar lexical and syntactic choices. The technical limitations that dubbing translators have to face in the adaptation of source scripts are explored (1.3), as well as the specific area of game localisation, concerning the adaptation of video-game scripts (1.4). Finally, the notion of equivalence is discussed from a perspective that is tailored to the text types under analysis (1.5), dealing with the theoretical and analytical issues related to the production of the target scripts.

1.1 The Introduction of Dubbing in Italy

The analysis of dubbing in the Italian context reveals that this practice does not only have a linguistic aspect, and that it acquires the status of a cultural construct that reflects the target socio-cultural background. For example, the importance of commercial television and its contribution to the increase in foreign audiovisual texts have led to a reiteration of certain translation strategies such as the inclusion of Central and Southern Italian diatopic and diastratic varieties, from *Romanesco*, to *Napoletano*, to *Siciliano*—as the analytical chapters will exemplify—which may be perceived as old-fashioned and perhaps in need of a revision, particularly when they are adopted for the localisation of video games.

Dubbing in Italy was first introduced under Mussolini's Fascist regime (1922-1943), officially to preserve the Italian culture and language from the influence of foreign audiovisual texts.[3] It quickly became established and has continued long after the re-introduction of democracy due to economic and political (or ideological) factors. Originally, the addition of sounds and voices at the beginning of the 20th century was achieved by means of different experimental devices, parallel to the creation of the new cinemas, built in France in the 1900 and in Italy after 1905-1906. At first, the invention of the Fregoligraph—named after its inventor, Leopoldo Fregoli—allowed the introduction of a particular form of performance, as Fregoli himself used to sing and talk from behind the stage, while the movie was projected (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 4).[4] The Fregoligraph was followed by the Vitaphone, a device created by the Warner Bros. studios, which led to the production of *The Jazz Singer* (*Il cantante di Jazz*, 1927), the movie containing the first synchronised speech in the history of cinema: "Wait a minute, you ain't heard nothin' yet". After *The Jazz Singer*, other films presented "all-talking features", thus causing producers to wonder how to export their works, in a context where the linguistic and cultural barriers made their translation difficult, yet necessary: Italy, for example, refused to admit foreign films, deciding not to grant the *visto censura* (the rating system) if characters did not speak Italian (Perego 2005: 21), and the Minister of Communication stated, on October 22, 1930, that any movies containing foreign languages could not be screened.

Before the introduction of dubbing, production companies decided to re-shoot the original scenes for the international market, although this led to low-quality, or sometimes paradoxical or even comic results,[5] as in the cases of *Paramount on Parade* (*Paramount in festa*, 1930), or *Pardon Us* (*Muraglie*, 1931). In the former, new scenes were specifically added for each foreign country, where "[l]ocal stars could have segments in their native tongues interspersed" (Crafton 1999: 424); the latter, instead, led to Stan Laurel's and Oliver Hardy's characteristic accent, since they had to act the same scenes in Italian as well.

Dubbing was then invented by Jakob Carol, responsible for Paramount German films, whereas the Italian dubbing industry was created during the 1930s, and the first dubbed movies were projected in 1932.[6] Bassi (http://www.sinet.it/baroncelli/doppiatori/compendio.htm) identifies four stages in the Italian history, from the first films to the influence of commercial television, in the Eighties, due to which the number of foreign (mainly American) AV texts increased. Nowadays, a further stage could be identified, because of the multiplication of digital channels that determines the need for more target versions, the decrease in the amount of time to perform and record translations, and the selection of other, less conventional AVT modes in Italy, such as voice over, which are cheaper and faster than dubbing.

1.2 The Language of Dubbing: Dubbese

As a form of translation, albeit audiovisual, dubbing is also affected by debates on the type of equivalence between the source and target texts; on the strategies to achieve such equivalence; on whether it constitutes a "covert" translation, or an "overt" one. As to the latter debate, scholars do not agree: for example, according to Fawcett (1996) both subtitling and dubbing correspond to overt translations, since they mark the target texts as "secondary forms" derived from the original versions, due to the fact that source languages are not omitted in subtitled texts, whereas dubbing presents synchronisation problems that may break the suspension of disbelief allowing one to accept hearing target languages produced by foreign actors. On the other hand, Gottlieb (1994: 102) states that differently from subtitles, dubbing "offers a discrete, covert mode of translation" replacing the original semiotic modes, such as the "dialog track, and […] the accompanying music […] with a target-language version".

With regards to the issue of equivalence, the "colonising" nature of dubbing (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 37) and its peculiar characteristics bring forth linguistic, technical, socio-cultural and cognitive issues. As for the linguistic ones, dubbing is supposed to create and spread a peculiar, artificial language, defined "dubbese" (or, in Italian, *doppiaggese*). The term denotes an easily-recognisable form of language, whose peculiar features have caused the audience to perceive it as an "estranged" means of communication that does not correspond to that used in everyday, face-to-face conversations, but which is nonetheless accepted and recognised as typical of audiovisual texts (Antonini and Chiaro 2009), in a sort of linguistic and cultural compromise. So, even though the high level of professionalism may create the impression that "foreign actors are actually speaking Italian" (Denton 2007: 25), the language of dubbing gives only the impression of authenticity and spontaneity (Heiss and Leporati 2000), trying to sound like the common forms of oral language (Gatta 2000),[7] though actually based on a written form of translation.[8] Besides the general considerations on dubbese, Herbst (1996: 99) identifies three characteristics of this peculiar language: the presence of Anglicisms; the tendency of dubbed texts to opt for a formal style "which often reminds one of the written rather than of the spoken language" (100); a cohesion in the target-language versions which seems to be lower than the original.[9]

This book extends the investigation of the language of dubbing, by identifying a link between the genre of source texts and translation strategies. In particular, it is supposed that Italian translators resort to Southern-Central diatopic/diastratic varieties when the source scripts aim at creating a comic effect, whereas in the translation of other text types, such as the "migration movies" (Iaia and Sperti 2013; Iaia 2015) they resort to the Standard variety of Italian, thus respecting the feature of artificiality and the written style typical of dubbese. Those rules also seem to apply to the translation of films from more important production companies, starring famous actors or involving important directors. Consider, for example, the movies *Gran Torino* (2008) and *Looking for Alibrandi* (*Terza Generazione*, 2000): though the former is based on the cultural clash between the conservative main character and his Korean neighbours, in the Italian version all the characters use the Standard variety. On the other hand, the target version of the latter (a comedy, in opposition to the dramatic tones of *Gran Torino*) contains parts spoken in the Sicilian dialect, which correspond to the original scenes where the characters resort to Italian (cf. also Section 7.2). In fact, the use of diatopic/diastratic varieties in humorous movies may not constitute the giving of "greater realism" to AV texts, which Denton (2007: 28) recognises as typical of dubbing, and yet it may be a precise cognitive and socio-cultural choice conveying specific stereotypical representations of the participants, who (are meant to) evoke specific culture-bound schemata.

Actually, dubbing translators not only they have to face linguistic issues, they also have to take into account the extralinguistic elements on screen and the way that the original actors move their lips.

1.3 Technical Issues of Dubbing

The main technical issues audiovisual translators have to face include the impossibility of adding further captions or descriptions of passages that may not be understood by the audience of different cultural backgrounds, along with trying to synchronise the dubbed text with the original lip-movements of the actors delivering the source text. As for the former, differently from written translation or from the subtitling process,[10] translators have little space to add explanations that may be important to let the audience enjoy target versions: they cannot add footnotes or explanations, and their integrations are generally limited to small captions that replace or translate the original names. In *The Simpsons* (*I Simpson*, 1989-present), for example, the original name of Apu's market, the "Kwik-E-Mart", is substituted in the Italian version by the label "Jet Market". The Italian choice does indeed obscure the original name, but produces a target text which adapts the original pun, in fact the idea of going to the market for a “speedy” shop—conveyed by the original “Kwik” (‘quick’)—is rendered with the reference to a “Jet”, a fast type of aeroplane.

As for their multimodal nature, consisting in the integration between several semiotic modes (Kress 2009), audiovisual texts are considered by Delabastita (1989: 199) as semiotic macro-signs consisting of:

(i) visual presentation—verbal signs;
(ii) visual presentation—non verbal signs;
(iii) acoustic presentation—verbal signs;
(iv) acoustic presentation—non verbal signs.

Therefore, the acoustic presentation needs to match with the visual one,[11] this relationship being also expressed by Herbst’s (1996: 102) “severe constraints”, which are to be respected by translators to achieve a target text that could be considered linguistically, culturally and pragmatically equivalent. Herbst’s theory is focused on three sub-groups of synchronisation:

(i) quantitative lip synch;
(ii) qualitative lip synch;
(iii) nucleus synch.

Though separated, synchs (i)-(iii) are “interactive”, namely they should be considered as a whole construction: the translated text should contain more or less the same words as the original script (lip synch (i)), and the lines have to give the impression of being uttered in the target language, trying to use expressions that are produced by means of similar lip movements in both the original and translated versions (lip synch (ii)). At the same time, utterances should not be perceived as “estranged”, if related to the visual context that completes the audiovisual text (lip synch (iii)). Actually, the conventional Italian translation for the dubbing of American sitcoms, film and TV cartoons (cf. Iaia 2011a; 2011b) may lead to the disrespect of constraint (iii), when the presence of culture-bound visual elements clashes with the changes in settings decided by the adapter. Consider, for example, the Jewish marriage ceremony from *The Nanny* (*La tata*, 1993-1999) still celebrated in the Italian version by “*un prete e un assessore*” (‘a priest and a councillor’), or the reference to the candelabrum of the festival of Hanukkah in a scene that in the Italian version is set during Christmas time, both examples delivering pragmatically-inappropriate target versions (cf. Section 1.5 below), where the extralinguistic elements do not match the linguistic ones, or the target linguacultural context (see Denton 2007: 32-33, but on the cultural adaptation of the sitcom *The Nanny* also cf. Guido (2012), who carries out a detailed analysis of the Italian translation of a corpus of episodes).

The above technical issues have to cope with the need to create target scripts that would be perceived by the audience as actually produced for the target culture. Yet, this objective is generally pursued by obtaining local versions modelled on the target culture and receivers only, which may therefore not be defined equivalent to the source texts from a pragmalinguistic perspective, but only from the lexical or semantic ones—unless a neutralisation strategy is chosen. For these reasons, it is claimed that a more detailed analysis of the source texts focused on the interpretation of the interaction between their linguistic and extralinguistic features may help translators attain an appropriate interpretation of the original semantic dimensions. Before dealing with equivalence in audiovisual translation, though, it is now time to introduce the topic of game localisation, thus completing the presentation of the main issues connected to the translation of the different text types under analysis.

1.4 Game Localisation

The translation of video games is considered as an emerging branch of audiovisual translation, offering new challenges for translators (Mangiron 2007: 317) and new opportunities for scholars to enquire into innovative text-types. Game localisation, or the label defining the adaptation of a game for different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, could be defined as a mix between the conventional strategies of audiovisual translation, such as dubbing and subtitles, and the different branch of software localisation, consisting in dealing with the original code, adapting for example the original user interface to suit the differences between the Western alphabets and Asian languages (Chandler and Deming 2011). O'Hagan (2005) includes game localisation in the so-called GILT practices, which aim at rendering a product suitable for an international market. The label GILT introduces those activities that are carried out in order to make the product "global ready" (O'Hagan 2005: 76) and stands for "Globalisation, Internationalisation, Localisation and Translation". Yet, when it comes to video games, the translation strategies may depend more on the producers' expected profits, whereas the study of game localisation requires a linguistic analysis of the construction of the target versions.[12] However, the analysis of the selected corpus of video-games scripts shall reveal the prevalence of top-down retextualisations of the source texts, which seem to be based on the cognitive construct of the implied audience. This construct influences the linguistic features of target versions—such as the lexis the characters use—and also leads to modifications to the original texts, because of the presence of topics which may be considered taboos or unsuitable for a specific kind of audience, e.g. young people.

As for the method of investigation, the integration between extralinguistic and linguistic insights may allow the development of a coherent terminology, which may be employed usefully within the field of translation studies. For example, the label "Internationalisation" (in GILT) refers to the process of localising a product with "a minimum amount of work on the developer's part", reproducing a game that would give the impression to foreign users that it has been made "specifically for them" (Chandler and Deming 2011: 4). Yet, it is possible to provide a better definition of such a goal by referring to the cognitive and socio-cultural influences that the authors' and the translators' backgrounds constitute in the production and adaptation of the texts. The linguistic approach would hence explain the linguistic differences as resulting from the prevalence of top-down cognitive mechanisms, which may (or may not) produce an equivalent response from a pragmalinguistic perspective. In this sense, the conventional approach that tries to account for the modifications of the target versions only in terms of economic or generic cultural factors is enriched, and such changes are described by means of an integration between the cultural, the social and the cognitive dimensions, reflecting the fragmentation of the semantic dimensions affecting all text types, including video-game scripts.

Furthermore, a linguistic-based approach may also help to develop alternative adaptation strategies, which are grounded on different notions of implied receivers, on different views of translation, as well as on different objectives of game localisation, whose main approach is today represented by transcreation, a creative form of translation.

1.4.1 Transcreation

Transcreation is not an exclusive strategy adopted for the localisation of video games, since it is widely used in the translation of sacred texts (Di Giovanni 2008) and advertisements (Pedersen 2014), eventually acquiring the status of a concept *per se*, which identifies something "more than translation" (Pedersen 2014: 62). Due to the novel dimension of transcreation, though, a universally accepted definition for it has not been developed yet, the processes involved are described from a "merely practical" perspective (59).

Transcreative scripts are commonly acknowledged as more creative (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006) and as tilting "the balance towards the target audience" (Bernal Merino 2006: 34), in order to facilitate the players' immersion and experience (32). Such a notion of "experience" does not have cognitive connotations, for it is not connected to the influence of the translators' background knowledge, but entails the degree to which audiences are entertained. Apart from this generic definition, however, it is thought that an equivalent "experience" should correspond to the search for a pragmalinguistic type of equivalence resulting in the creation of a similar response from the target receivers, based on the correct adaptation of the linguistic and extralinguistic features in the source versions. Similar types of gamers' immersion are indeed possible if translators and their receivers share the same socio-cultural backgrounds, thus prompting similar responses to defined stimuli such as peculiar characterisations, counterfactual visual representations, or the use of specific diatopic/diastratic varieties.

Transcreation is here defined as a translation strategy focused on the influence of the translators' top-down cognitive processes (cf. Iaia 2014b: 517), but as this book shall show, such conventional top-down retextualisations do not always produce a pragmalinguistic equivalent effect, generally determining a partial semantic type of equivalence, which unveils the cognitive construct of the implied audience, on which the Italian versions are modelled. Furthermore, the target scripts lack the lexical type of equivalence to the source versions, which in the text types under analysis contribute to the expected receivers' suspension of disbelief (cf. Guido 1999a: 64-66), as they have to accept, for instance, animals that speak, often using onomatopoeic language, or the existence of counterfactual creatures. The Italian diatopic/diastratic varieties adopted in the official translations evoke instead specific socio-cultural characterisations that are not relevant to the fantasy settings of the analysed corpus. What is more, the experienced audience of video games is indeed not always satisfied with the translator's choices, which are defined as "old" and "predictable", or as transforming video games "into a *commedia all'italiana*" (cf. Sections 5.1.4 and 7.6.2 below). In particular, as for the analysed corpus of video games, the transcreative renderings are characterised by the Italian diatopic/diastratic variety of *Romanesco*, typical of the city of Rome, which replaces the original "bully" or "clumsy" characters with "loutish" and "less educated" counterparts.

Example (1) below represents a case in point. This is an extract from *Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story*, a role-playing video game whose protagonist, Mario, has to save Peach from Bowser. In (1), the latter talks to a group of his servants, the Monty Bros. The interaction is here only introduced, as it will be analysed in Section 6.1.2 below:

(1)

	English script	Italian script	Backtranslation
Bowser:	“Secret tunnel? First time I heard of it!”	“Un tunnel segreto? Di che accidenti parli?”	“Secret tunnel? What on heart are you talking about?”
Mole 5:	“Remember, Bro—I mean, Bowser! You wanted an escape tunnel for kidnapping Princess Peach?”	“Sua Turpitudine voleva ’sto tunnel ppe’ scappa’ in fretta quanno rapiva ’a principessa…”	“Your Basenessty wanted this tunnel as an easy escape after kidnapping the princess…”

Extract (1) above exemplifies the partial semantic type of equivalence: both versions deal with Bowser’s plan to kidnap Princess Peach, but the English and the Italian protagonists are differently characterised. The original clash between high-status and low-status participants is indeed replaced by a generic characterisation of clumsy characters, linguistically realised by means of the Italian diatopic variety of *Romanesco* and the strategies of lexical creativity (l. 5), which may match the expectation of the implied audience of children and teenagers,[13] but do not fit in with the fictional worlds of the analysed case studies.[14]

1.5 Equivalence in Audiovisual Translation

Equivalence in translation may be intended as the reproduction in the target texts of the original meaning, and is thus mainly described in semantic terms. Actually, this notion of “meaning” should not be limited to the semantic dimension; it needs to include other features, such as the socio-cultural and pragmatic levels of communication. To neglect the exclusively semantic nature of meaning means that what a text communicates relates not only to what is written, or manifested linguistically, but also to what the receivers may infer from their relationship with the text. Such a relationship is affected by the activation of the mental schemata based on their socio-cultural background, their knowledge of the world, and by their individual experiences as well. Over the years, though, meaning has generally been considered intrinsic to the organisation of text, thus disregarding the individual contribution, but conveying a sort of "super-interpretation", "passed off as the objective text itself" (Guido 1999b: 79; on the Structuralist approach cf., for example, Culler 1975; Riffaterre 1978; Lotman 1982). At the same time, even when the presence of the reader has been taken into account, scholars have produced a sort of artificial, cognitive construct of "text receivers", which does not result in an exemplification of the existence of several possible interpretations, but represents a way to control "the real reader's response" (Guido 1999b: 80), as evoked by Fish's (1970) "informal reader". It is furthermore possible to identify a link between the "implied reader" construct and the field of translation, since translators' choices sometimes implicitly reveal that their interpretations of STs are also based on the similar, cognitive construct of "implied audience", on which the textual, semantic and pragmatic features are modelled, and which will be identified while analysing the selected corpus of humorous scripts.[15]

Guido (1999b: 76; emphasis added) poses three questions related to the notion of meaning, exemplifying those dimensions that interact to allow appropriate interpretations of the source versions:

(i) what does the author mean *by* the text?
(ii) what does the text *mean*?
(iii) what does the text mean *to* the reader?

The questions above identify the fragmentation of meaning reflected by its three different sources—the author; the text; the receivers. The reception of texts is hence connected to the readers' interpretation and reception of the "partial" meanings composing the overall sense, as also exemplified by Abrams's (1958) diagram of the work of art, which defines the relationship between the reader and the text, and the contribution of the reader's socio-cultural background to the possible interpretations. The fragmentation of sources from which to identify what a text communicates is also reflected by Austin's (1962) identification of the three levels of communication—the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary effects—respectively referring to what the text means, what the author means by the text, what the text means to the receivers.

Therefore, since the complete message of a text is the result of the integration between the author's intentionality, the text's formal features and the readers' response to it, receivers themselves have to be re-considered and therefore re-defined as "active" subjects (cf. Guido 1999b), in order to state that the semantic analysis of a text may coincide not only with the interpretation of its lexical and syntactic features, but also with the authors and receivers' actualisations of their past experiences, through the activation of mental schemata, to respectively construct and make sense of what is communicated. When reading a text, in fact, even in their own native tongues, readers actively communicate with it by means of two main types of cognitive mechanisms, "bottom-up" (cf., e.g., Richards 1929) and "top-down" (cf., e.g., Bartlett 1932), (unconsciously) answering the questions above. Similarly to what happens with reading, even at the time of translating the three sources of meaning have to be taken into consideration, in order to identify the ST features that have to be equivalently rendered into the target versions. The "translation-reading" relationship actually reflects one of the aspects of the process of adaptation, particularly the translators' role, their being both readers of the source texts and authors of the target ones—indeed, it is not by chance that Guido (1999b: 94) defines translation as a "mode of reading to produce a discourse interpretation".

The fragmentation of meaning therefore affects the three types of equivalence that TTs may reach according to the original features on which translators focus (cf. Guido 1999a: 58-59):

(i) semantic equivalence (the original and translated texts are equivalent at the level of the surface meaning);
(ii) structural equivalence (the concepts have the same textual organisation in the original and translated texts);
(iii) pragmatic equivalence (the original and translated texts have the same effects on the audience).

The semantic dimension, hence, should be integrated with the lexical and pragmatic ones (cf. also Kussmaul 1995), but a shared decision on the type of equivalence to achieve with translation is yet to be found. It is argued that just as a mere reproduction of the original features of source versions would actually make the translator "visible", in the perception of estranged texts, also excessively fluent, target-audience-oriented retextualisations would make translators "visible", due to the prevalence of their schemata in the activation of reformulation strategies to achieve equivalent effects. For this reason, an appropriate approach would be that of analysing the text-based evidence in order to identify the intended effects on receivers as well as to acquire a complete picture of the denotative-semantic and connotative-pragmatic dimensions of source versions, eventually mediating between the respect for the original features and the target linguacultural conventions, between the linguistic and pragmatic types of equivalence.

The approach described above requires the integration between the bottom-up and top-down mechanisms, so translators have to be acquainted with both source and target languages and cultures, but also with the limits of their additions and changes to the original characteristics, so as to avoid non-equivalent target texts. For example, when the source ones are characterised by misspellings or defects, it is claimed that the need for the translators' adjustments depends on the illocutionary force of the defects, which sometimes may contribute to the conveyance of the semantic and communicative dimensions. Consider in this sense the following text (http://theweek.com/article/index/227257/7-suspected-criminals-who-got-themselves-caught-via-facebook), used as an exercise for undergraduate students in English-Italian Translation courses at the University of Salento (the defect is highlighted in bold):

> *7 Suspected Criminals Who Got Themselves Caught via* Facebook
> […] Michael Baker, 20, got a visit from the Jenkins police on April 16, after a photo he posted on Facebook. In the picture, Baker is siphoning gas from a Jenkins Police Department cruiser while smiling. After getting booked for misdemeanor theft Baker updated his 380 *Facebook* friends: "Lol **i went too jail** over Facebook."

In the example above, the quotation "i went too jail" is not a simple source-text defect, but conveys the author's evaluation of the criminals he is talking about. It therefore acquires a humorous, disparaging value (Zillman 1983), which translators are called to identify and reproduce in an equivalent way. In fact, whereas "i" may reproduce the conventional way of writing on social networks, "too" represents a mistake made by the criminal, whose exact reproduction serves to characterise the man, contributing to the overall sarcastic tone. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the above interpretation was not shared by all the students when asked to produce their translations of the article. In fact, the group that considered the defect above as a simple mistake corrected the line in their translated versions, thus failing to adapt the original humorous construction. This misinterpretation unveils the importance of the receiver's relationship with the text, since the resulting retextualisation is based on a different, partial identification of the original meanings and hence it triggers different effects in the receivers.

1.5.1 Pragmalinguistic Equivalence in Audiovisual Translation

Besides the general enquiry into the notion of equivalence in translation, it is now time to focus on how to aim at the main objective of the process of linguistic adaptation, which according to Guido (1999b: 64) consists in both reproducing the original linguistic features, as well as finding the proper ways to let target versions have the same function