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Multiple portrayals of gender in cinematographic and audiovisual translation discourse

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Abstract

The present paper is the follow-up of previous research (De Marco, 2004; 2006) in which a first attempt has been made to interrelate two scholarly fields – Gender Studies and Audiovisual Translation. Many factors have contributed to keep on studying audiovisual translation from a wider sociolinguistic perspective: the fact that both Gender Studies and Audiovisual Translation have been at the core of academic debates in the past decades; that the study of gender issues has already been positioned within cinematographic discourse as well as in (literary) translation; that there are scholars (Danan, 1991; Díaz-Cintas, 1997; Ballester, 2001) who have recently approached the processes of dubbing and subtitling beyond mere technical aspects; and that, under the influence of the so-called 'cultural turn' translation has been interpreted as a realm where different languages and different identities meet.
The aim of the present study is to examine how gender is portrayed in British cinema and to show how translation for dubbing may contribute to transmitting clichés and assumptions about women and other social groups from one culture to another. More specifically, the present study will focus, on the one hand, on the visual and acoustic representation of gender in some British films. It is paying particular attention to the sociological implications that these representations may have on the way in which the audience of different languages and cultures may interpret what they see and hear. On the other hand, the study will discuss the dubbed translations in Spanish and Italian of some relevant exchanges of original British films where sexuality-related issues come to the fore.[1] The corpus of films analyzed here is constituted by: *East is East* (1999, Damien O'Donnell), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001, Sharon Maguire), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002, Gurinder Chadha) and *Calendar Girls* (2003, Nigel Cole).[2]

1 The non-verbal dimension of language

When talking about translation it is easy to pay attention only to its linguistic aspects, but in the case of audiovisual translation we need to also consider the semiotic dimension of cinematographic language. Audiovisual translation is the cultural process by which the meanings and values contained in both words and images of television and cinematographic programs are made intelligible to different audiences.

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[1] Throughout the paper the word "Spanish" is used to refer to the Spanish versions released in Spain, not in Latin America.
[2] The following abbreviations will be used to refer to the films: *EE* (*East is East*), *BJD* (*Bridget Jones's Diary*), *BB* (*Bend it like Beckham*) and *CG* (*Calendar Girls*).

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Verbal language is the place where social stereotypes are more easily reflected, but they can also be perceived in individuals' behaviors, in their ways of thinking and in the roles that they are expected to fulfil. Mass media are one of the tools through which these behaviors and roles are filtered and made socially visible. In so doing, they are primarily responsible for the reproduction and perpetuation of stereotypes and common places.

As stated by Talbot (2003: 26), since "people are perceived through a 'lens' of gender polarization […] there is a strong tendency for gender stereotyping". By 'lenses of gender' – a notion she takes on from Bem (1993) – she means the main beliefs concerning men and women in Western societies. Talbot explains that stereotypes are practiced in order to maintain the existing social order. For this reason, they "tend to be directed to subordinate groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, women)" (*ibid.*: 29). Expressed in other words, stereotypes arise from the assumption that one group or one culture represents the 'normal' and is, therefore, assumed to be superior to other groups or cultures. In particular, gender stereotypes stem from the presupposition that men and women are two opposing categories: since men represent the norm, women are doomed to be the exception to this norm. Such tendency to categorize both genders results in the stereotyping of the labels used to refer to men and women, and of the roles they are allotted. This way of casting men and women in fixed roles ends by affecting not only women in general, but also all those social and sexual categories who seem to deviate from the established norms: black and Hispanic people, religious minorities, gays and lesbians, etc.

The reason for the association between stereotypes and the portrayal of gender in cinema is that mass media tend to be closely linked with the dominant ideologies which, in turn, tend to overwhelmingly support binary gender constructions. In particular, the cinema industry holds on to strong economic interests that often determine what kind of films are made and under which conditions they are shot. The holders of such interests have long been men who, in order to generate considerable incomes, keep on proposing the same subjects and clichés which have always worked, and which, in the end, are the expression of a predominantly patriarchal logic. Furthermore, the sound and visual effects that cinema resorts to, the selection of the characters and the choice of the roles they are asked to perform, all contribute to creating a setting that the mainstream audiences find amusing and attractive. Cinema, therefore, has a strong power to shape people's views according to the norms and clichés that the dominant social groups impose.

There are many strategies that cinema implements in order to meet the audience's expectations, thereby instilling certain ideas and habits that in a more or less subtle way contribute to making social relationships more and more linked to gender-related prescriptions. One of the most persuasive means which cinema uses is the visual representation of characters. Later on the acoustic dimension of films will also be discussed, in particular the way in which the characters' portrayal may be affected by the use of their voices in the original versions and by the choice of voices in the dubs.

1.1 Visual representation

The impact that images may have on the audience's perception of reality has been one of the most discussed topics in the past thirty years among Film Studies scholars. Under the urges of feminist criticism, this cultural current has become more and more concerned with the issue of the stereotypical assumptions that may stem from the mechanisms through which (male) directors, producers and distributors construct and control the representation of characters in general, and of the female characters in particular.

Mulvey (1975), Kuhn (1982) and De Lauretis (1984) are some of the most influential scholars who have investigated questions as to the way in which certain images are built up,

the relationship between the actresses' portrayal on the screen and the social context in which they live, and how their roles have changed (if they have) over the years.

These scholars arrived at the conclusion that the subtle sexist strategies that rule cinematographic logic end by objectifying the female characters, since they mostly act as erotic objects despite the more or less active roles they may play. This is expressed in particularly straightforward terms by Mills (1995: 162) when she states that "with the female characters the descriptions are concerned with establishing a degree of sexual attractiveness and sexual availability and there is a concentration on their supposed sexual characteristics". Although her remarks refer to women's representation in literature and advertising, they can easily be fit into the case of cinematographic representations. She dwells on the technique of fragmenting the female body – which occurs more frequently than in representations of the male body – stressing the estranging effects of such emphasis on the anatomical elements.

It is worth pointing out that most of the critiques raised by these scholars are targeted to Hollywood cinema. Their argumentations have found an application in the study mentioned above (De Marco, 2004) which deals with the portrayal of gender in some Hollywood films. In this essay the presence of elements that produce a certain degree of voyeuristic pleasure (in Mulvey's 1975): the choice of actresses already attractive in themselves (Julia Roberts, Melanie Griffith), the persistent framing on their sensual breasts and legs, the shots on their naked bodies when less expected, the focus on their seductive clothes, and so forth.

As regards British films, which constitute the basis for the present study, almost none of them seems to put great emphasis on these anatomical aspects. Most of the actresses playing in these films are not always internationally famous, although they are well known in the UK (Linda Bassett, Keira Knightly, Juliet Stevenson). They look 'normally' beautiful, that is, they do not conform to the prevalent canon of attractiveness which still seems to be a preferential requirement within Hollywood cinema. The common ground of these films is that the female characters (both the main and the supporting ones) are women of all ages, of all ethnic groups and of all sizes. In other words, they look like any of us in contemporary multiethnic and heterogeneous societies. Moreover, the camera does not dwell upon the female characters' physical appearance.

The only film which seems to indulge in some Hollywood-style shots is *BJD*. On the one hand, there are some elements which make it an unconventional film: the main character, Bridget (Renée Zellweger), is a somewhat plump woman prone to put her foot in; male characters, too, are often presented in funny situations, and there is a good deal of feminist remarks throughout the film. Nonetheless, sometimes the camera excessively focuses on Bridget's body. Her figure, too, is often subject to the above-mentioned fragmentation. In particular, in the scene in which she presents the book of Mr Fitzherbert (Paul Brook), a colleague of hers, her lips in front of the microphone are widely shot before the camera frames her entirely. In another scene, her buttocks are repeatedly shot while she falls down from the top of a stake. It can be argued that in these and other scenes it is not clear where the borderline between ridicule and humor, between the stereotype and the questioning of the stereotype is. On the one hand, this film seems to mock the cliché of the slender actress and of the romantic girl in quest of true love; on the other, it ends by perpetuating these very stereotypes. Bridget and her body are held up for ridicule too many times, and the insistence of the camera on some details of her figure contribute to making her character clumsy and subject to male (both characters' and audience's) derision. Moreover, the engagement of this film with Hollywood policy finds further confirmation in the intense fattening diet Zellweger has gone through. The USA has been one of the first countries in introducing cosmetic surgery or body shaping treatments for cinematographic purposes, and most American stars have been subjected to openly manipulative practices making their bodies thinner or fatter depending on whether their characters had to fit the mainstream culture's female body ideal or not.

Further to the ways in which the female characters' bodies are shot throughout the action, sexist overtones may be perceived in the comments on the covers of the DVDs of some of these films in the three countries and in the translations of some titles. Covers are the visiting card of a film and in order to be distributed commercially, DVD covers have to show images or words that whet people's appetite and curiosity or some other inner feeling of potential viewers who are thus led to buy the product. In most cases the images used in the DVD or video covers are the same as the posters distributed when the films were first launched for cinema release. Sometimes they differ partially or completely. In this transposition from a type of public to domestic consumption and from one language to another some things may be added or removed in order to meet the anticipated expectations of audiences which, however, may vary from one culture to another.

This discussion of a pronounced sexist, or simply derogatory, burden contained in some marketing strategies devised to sell audiovisual products were incorporated in Toury's (1978) notion of 'preliminary' norms. These norms concern the policy establishing what texts are selected for translation and how they are translated. One of the merits of this approach is its raising important sociological issues such as the question under which historical circumstances norms are established according to which criteria and above all as to the question of who is allowed to establish or change such norms.

Although Toury's statements were not conceived with audiovisual translation in mind, it is not difficult to establish a relationship between this form of translation and his theories. Among the preliminary norms ruling the audiovisual world there is a policy which determines how the product is presented: through covers, titles, comments, etc. Coming back to our remarks about the visual dimension of female characters, we often find images which highlight some physical details of the female actresses even though their bodies are not the point of the action. Images thus 'manipulate' the audience's expectations and their final response. These visual innuendos look even more striking when the emphasis on sexual/sexist aspects is placed on the cover of the DVD designed for one country and not on the one designed for another country. In other words, these differences may provide some clues about the way in which different cultures conceive womanhood or, in more specific terms, face up to gender issues. I have not noticed any sexist interventions in the way images were transposed in the covers of the different DVDs under analysis. Either the covers distributed in Spain and Italy are the same as the original British (as in the case of *CG*), or they differ only slightly. In both cases, the images focus on the characters, providing us with some insights about who the main characters are and what the situations which they are involved in might be.

This can be questioned with respect to the cover of *CG*. Here we see Chris (Helen Mirren), one of the main characters, with her shoulders bare. She holds a calendar showing herself (in the same position) and the faces of her friends smiling with large colored hats. No exploitive intentions are perceived in this portrayal, although it could be seen as titillating since the calendar is held to conceal her implied nakedness. In some way, it seems to defy the audience's conjectures when seeing the uncovered shoulders while, at the same time, it fosters fantasies which will never be satisfied since the characters will never appear completely bare. The audience's expectations, then, can be said to go beyond what is shown throughout the film.

More than in the images that portray the characters, the words that go with the images on the covers of *BJD* give us some interesting clues. In the DVD distributed in the UK, under the portrait of the three main characters Bridget, Daniel (Hugh Grant) and Mark (Colin Firth), we read: 'Two thumbs up! Terrific fun!'. This advertising sign suggests that there will be great fun in viewing the film. In the DVD distributed in Italy the same sign has been rendered as *Per tutte quelle che sono state corteggiate, illuse … e poi mollate* [For all those (women) who have been courted, deceived …. and eventually jilted]. The Spanish one is *Para todos los que*

han sido alguna vez engañados, plantados o magreados [For all those who have at some point been cheated, jilted or groped]. Although this is not a translation, it is worth arguing that the marketing strategies used in Spain and Italy are very different from the ones devised in the UK: the Spanish and the Italian advertising seems to deliver a judgment about the characters and the possible audience. What is striking here, however, is the value that the pronouns *quelle* (in Italian) and *los que* (in Spanish) – both meaning 'those' – take on. In the Spanish note the generic masculine pronoun *los* is used, whereas the feminine *quelle* is preferred in Italian. This subtle difference may disclose a more offensive intention on the part of the Italian distributors that is worth being emphasized here. While the Spanish advertising addresses an indefinite audience, thus including both men and women, the Italian ad only addresses women. In doing so it presupposes that it is women – and not men – who get caught, deceived or left. The Italian version thereby contributes to strengthening the idea that men can take the initiative, whereas women are passive and cannot but wait and be confident in men's good purposes. This is an illuminating example of the dilemma of perceiving, in these words, a male chauvinist strategy or just a reflection of the target culture's way of thinking. Some might claim that there is not a manipulating intention in this note because it simply mirrors the traditional – although still vivid – conviction that (Italian) males are never left, they take the initiative, they leave. In other words, the audience may find this comment natural because these are the terms in which most people still think. As a consequence, this is what distributors have to say in order to meet the audience's expectations, i.e. in order to sell their product.

Nonetheless, the commercial factor should not provide a good reason to justify a case of outright sexism. It is generally accepted that films do not only reflect reality, but they have the power to create assumptions and prejudices which may not be directly perceivable. Such assumptions and prejudices are then reinforced through subtle codes conveying the illusion of seeing real facts. By addressing only a female audience, this cover seems to invite women to see themselves in the passive role that this misleading note displays. In so doing the traditional subordination of women is never challenged. It is, instead, revived. On the other hand, the Spanish *los que* may be interpreted as a more aggressive marketing strategy since, by encapsulating and including the whole audience in the sentence, a sort of empathy may be created between the character and the audience. The point which is most important here, however, is that there is such a huge contrast between the original version and the dubbed one. In both Spanish and Italian the words imply a film aimed at people who have suffered, while the British cover is aimed at an audience who wants a laugh.

Concerning the covers of the other films, only *BB* gives cause for reflection and comments, although these must be directed to the way in which the original British title has been rendered in Spanish and Italian, rather than to the comments added on the DVD covers. Even the choice of the titles and of their translation is motivated in most cases, by commercial and marketing reasons. In general terms, in order to sell a product, cinematographic distributors look for a title which exploits a previous box-office success, which reminds us of a famous person or event, or which simply arouses the audience's curiosity. As stated by Shochat and Stam (1985: 43) "titles promise, prefigure, orient" and it often happens that "when original titles seem insufficiently indexical, translators are sometimes tempted to 'improve' them". In this process of 'improvement' many things can arbitrarily change and subtle innuendoes may be added as is evident in some cases of "gratuitous eroticization of [some] titles" (*ibid*: 44). With respect to the present corpus, a good example can be found in the Italian translation of *BB*.

This title was rendered as *Sognando Beckham* [Dreaming of Beckham]. It completely departs from the original which just makes reference to the main character's ability to play football like her hero (Beckham). The verb 'to bend' with its meaning related to football, in the Italian version is replaced by a verb with a far more romantic/erotic connotation which

could turn the Italian audience's expectations of the film in the wrong direction. The Spanish translation *Quiero ser como Beckham* [I want to be like Beckham] diverges from the original as well, but it does not give any direct indication of a possible sexual desire or fantasy on the part of the protagonists, Jess (Parminder Nagra) and Jules (Keira Knightley). In a way it only suggests what will be disclosed later on.

1.2 Acoustic representation

Let us now turn to another element which deserves consideration for it may have implications on the filmic characterization of gender: the choice of the characters' voices. The audience's response to the film and the view of the world that they infer from it may be affected not only by what they see, but also by what they hear. Considering, furthermore, that dubbing is a translation mode in which the original soundtrack is completely erased to be replaced by a new one, the role that the actors' and actresses' voices play in dubbing appear relevant to understand the reasons behind why the dubbed versions may sound remarkably different from the ones in the original.

The study of voice as a factor of gender discrimination has been approached by many linguists and feminist scholars, e.g. Cameron (1992) who argues that there is a false belief that women's voices are too shrill and tiny compared to men's. As a consequence, women have often been excluded from many professional fields. It is believed, in fact, that the female voice does not convey security or authority, qualities that have long been attributed to the low tone of the male voice. Of course shrillness and lowness depend on physiological characteristics of human beings. It is thanks to these factors that we can distinguish a man from a woman or a child from an elderly person, but as stated by Calsamiglia Blancafort & Valls Tusón (2002: 54) "voice can also be moulded in order to achieve certain effects and to show certain intentions" and "every social group attributes different values to a voice" (translation by the author of this article). That the increase or decrease in pitch is culturally constructed is confirmed by by research on language acquisition. Although the process of language acquisition and the ways in which it develops may vary according to culture and social class, several scholars have tested that children lower the tone of their voice when they turn to their fathers and raise it when they address their mothers (Lieberman, 1967; Lee *et al.*, 1995). In other words, depending on the gender of the adults with whom children interact, they unconsciously learn to speak in a way which perpetuates the binary gender opposition that may then be overused as a means by which social order is preserved.[3]

Since the birth of sound film, voice has become an object of study among cinema scholars as a consequence of the awareness of the great impact that it may have on an image's meaning and on the characterization of actors. Chion (1999) is one of the leading theorists who has investigated the function of cinematographic sound.[4] One of his principal ideas is that it is the voice rather than the image that counts most in cinema. In other terms, it is not the image in itself that is the most meaningful element in films, but the range of information that the image conveys through sound, and through the characters' voice in particular. In Chion's words (*ibid.*: 5) "if a human voice is part of it [a space], the ear is inevitably carried toward it, picking it out, and structuring the perception of the whole around it".

Chion's focus on the power of voice to structure and impact on the meaning of the action led to the hypothesis that there are gender innuendoes in the dubbed voices of some characters

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[3] Coates (2004: 147-170) investigates the studies dealing with gender differences in early language acquisition.

[4] Some of the most interesting concepts that he introduced are those of 'vococentrism', i.e. the process through which "the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it" (Chion, 1999: 5); of 'acousmatic sound', that is "a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen" (*ibid.*: 18) and of the opposite category of 'visualized listening'.

of the films analysed here. Within the field of audiovisual translation, voice has been studied mainly from a technical point of view, since it is one of the most difficult aspects to consider in dubbing.[5] The way voices are dubbed, and their synchronization with the characters' movements and gestures, provides the audience with many clues about aspects such as the age of the characters, the role they play and especially certain nuances that the director wants to convey and that are to be maintained in the dubbed versions.

The dubbing which is of interest here is not the voice quality of the main characters – which have been rendered faithfully in both the Spanish and Italian versions – but the lexical register. The English of most of the characters in *EE* has a marked Northern accent. There is a tendency both in Spanish and in Italian not to reproduce this regional variety. Furthermore, in the Spanish versions of *EE* and *BB*, the slight foreign accent of some of the non-English characters which can be well perceived in the original (and the Italian) is neutralized. We could draw on Venuti's term (1995) of 'domesticated translation' to interpret the deletion of the foreign accent of some characters in the Spanish version. On the other hand, the fact that the original version foregrounds this non-British pronunciation can be associated with a general tendency in the UK to perceive negatively, or to consider imperfect, the linguistic varieties that sound different from standard British. As Armstrong (2004: 98) points out "the higher the speaker's social class (level of education, etc.), the more attenuated the regional accent, to the extent that most prestigious accent, […] is sometimes characterized as 'regionless'". Although in the films discussed here it is not the characters' social class or their education level that is noticed, but rather their ethnic origin. The centrality of their accent is the 'imperfect' element which conveys their uneasiness in the British environment.

Of particular relevance are the dubbed voices of some supporting characters who shape the setting while not assuming a relevant role of their own, e.g. the voice of some gay characters in the British and the translated versions. In *EE*, Nazir (Ian Aspinall) the eldest son of a seven-children family of Pakistani origin runs away at the beginning of the action to avoid an arranged marriage. He is later discovered to be gay by two of his brothers and sister who go and look for him at his new work place.[6] In this scene we see him going downstairs while talking to a customer in quite a camp tone. When he sees his brothers and retires to another room to speak to them in private, he takes on a lower pitch, the same he had at the beginning of the action when he had not yet come out. The Italian version reproduces this contrast between, whereas the Spanish does not. Along the same lines the dubbing of the voice of Etienne (Thierry Harcourt), his boss and partner is interesting. There is just an quick exchange of words between them, but it is enough to note that in the original version the pitch of Etienne's voice is slightly higher. However, in the Spanish and, especially, in the Italian version, this tone sounds far more effeminate. We could interpret this emphasis as a compensation for – as was noted previously - the Spanish and the Italian deletion of the characters' regional accent. Furthermore, the Spanish completely deleted Etienne's French intonation: Ignoring this inflexion, which is the striking aspect for a British audience, the dubs may have chosen to compensate this lack of foreign lilt by stressing another element of 'strangeness' which, in this case, is given by the character's affected manners.

In *BJD* there is another gay character, Tom (James Callis), one of Bridget's closest friends. In the original version, his tone of voice is slightly camp (especially in the scene of the fight between Daniel and Mark). The foreign versions, in this case, do not sound particularly altered. As was previously analyzed (De Marco, 2004), other gay characters' voices tend to be also manipulated in the Italian and Spanish dub, and this manipulation manifesting itself by either overemphasizing or neutralizing the camp pitch. Of course camp

[5] Ávila (1997) describes in detail the types of voice and the exercises that a dubbing actor has to do in order to mould it according to different needs.

[6] After Nazir begins a new life far from home, he also changes his name to Nigel.

talk is used within gay communities, but as stated by Harvey (2001: 8-9) it is "more a stylistic device which can be used in certain contexts variously to signal special meanings, solidarities and identities, rather than a 'type' to which they belong […] a marker of identity/community to be used against the stream".[7] It seems that in filmic representations it is rather used for caricatural purposes which lead to promoting stereotypes and prejudices about the manners and the talk of gay people. This idea is supported in Millwood Hargrave's study *Sex and Sexuality in Broadcasting* (1992) in which he states that gay characters are usually placed in stereotypical roles in TV programs. He then suggests that their roles should be established before their sexual orientation becomes apparent, that is, programs should "not place the homosexual's sexuality in the foreground as if it was the most significant feature of their personality" (*ibid*.: 90). The fact that the voice of gay characters has been remarkably emphasized in the Italian versions, or made neutral in some Spanish dubs, may suggest that these countries have a more discriminatory or distrustful attitude towards the gay community. This interpretation of voices falls under cinematographic policy which establishes that this kind of character behaves and talks in a certain way in order to meet the heteronormative expectations of the mainstream audience. The characteristics defining gay people in cinema tend to be either stressed – in order to stereotype their image – or made invisible – since homosexuality may not be perceived by some producers or distributors as commercially interesting yet, neglecting the presence of gay spectators who might find that kind of representation unnatural and unflattering.

The only film in which a gay character plays a role where his sexual orientation is unimportant in terms of the plot is *BB*. Here we only realize that Tony (Ameet Chana) is gay at the end of the action when he discloses this secret to Jess. Until that moment, however, he plays his role as a friend of the main character and does not draw the other characters' and audience's attention to it. His manners and voice are never emphasized neither in the original version nor in the Spanish and Italian ones. There may be a normative-cinematographic reason behind these different treatments. When a character is asked to play the role of a gay and the directors, producers and distributors want his sexuality apparent from the very beginning, then his representation tends to be exaggerated (emphasizing either his gestures or his voice). When, on the other hand, they want to keep it from being known until the end of the action, the gay character's sexuality is not disclosed and, consequently, he is asked to perform like any other (heterosexual) character. This reinforces Toury's concept of norms and policy, i.e. that there is a policy behind any social behavior. In our case, there is a policy behind any cinematographic strategy, choice or performance.

2 The verbal dimension of language

The previous sections have shown that social and sexual stereotypes may easily be moulded and exported through images and sounds. The way in which they may be intentionally constructed in cinema has a strong impact on the audience's perception of reality, on their demands for future releases and, in general, on their interpersonal behavior and the relationships they establish in the social environment.[8]

Nonetheless, verbal language is where stereotypes tend to be most apparently reflected as stated by Hudson (1980: 193) who argues that "language is one of the most important factors

[7] The present study refers mainly to voice pitch but camp talk is a way of speaking and therefore includes a particular usage of lexical and syntactical structures as evident from Harvey's analysis (2001)

[8] 'Demands' here do not refer to people consciously demanding future releases. Rather, they are created by big studios, distributors and producers who keep on providing a certain kind of film, end up persuading people that this is the kind of release that they want to see.

by which social inequality is perpetuated from generation to generation". There has always been a subtle, widespread belief that the appearance, the behavior and the linguistic features of some social group have a higher social standing than those of others. When people interact they consciously or unconsciously tend to evaluate each other. Their way of speaking – in terms of both content and form – may help building a favorable image of some groups and a less favorable one of others which contributes to making language an expression for stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities.[9]

This section will focus on the way in which gender stereotypes come to the surface through the language used by female characters. Particular attention is paid to whether the kind of language they use discloses any traces of homophobic remarks. Also considered are the translations of these exchanges which are investigated as to whether they disclose any similarities and/or differences. The differences are then analyzed as to their kind in terms of the type of allusions they make.

It is assumed that that not only attitudes but also the way in which an individual speaks can be related to gender construction. They are linked to social etiquette and labels that stipulate how men and women are expected to behave.

Exchange 1 (*BB*)

Towards the end of the film, Jules, Jess's best friend and team-mate, joins her at the wedding party of Jess's sister, Pinky (Archie Panjabi). Paula (Juliet Stevenson), Jules's mother, decides to give her a lift to the ceremony. As soon as she notices that Jess is wearing the shoes that Jules had lent her without her mother's knowing, she bursts out saying: 'Get your lesbian feet out of my shoes'. This reaction is the result of some assumptions that Paula had previously formed because she has misunderstood the girls' words during an out-of-context conversation that she happened to overhear. Paula's suspicion seems to be evidenced in this meeting in which she interprets the fact that Jess is wearing her shoes as a clear sign of an intimate relationship between her daughter and Jess. Furthermore, before driving Jules to Pinky's ceremony, Paula notices that Jules has dressed smartly, something unusual for her daughter - another reasons to believe that there is more than a friendship between the two girls. She then pours out her anger by making evidently homophobic remark which, shortly afterwards, takes on far stronger shades. In the subsequent scene, in fact, when Jules tells her mother that just because she plays football does not make her a lesbian, and that being a lesbian is not anything to be ashamed of anyway, her mother hypocritically replies:

Pinky: Oh, no, sweetheart, of course it isn't. No, no! I mean, I've got nothing against it. I was cheering for Martina Navratilova <u>as much as the next person.</u>

[9] Stereotype is here used in the sense of Calefato (1997: 69-73) who defines it as "a verbal expression, an image that somehow sticks to a person, a social group, as well as to a behavior, a feeling, a value, without being filtered through logical reasoning. The stereotype lives on unchanged, leaving some implicit presuppositions that end up being unconsciously taken for granted by the great majority. Because of the implicit messages conveyed by language, stereotypes take root so strongly in our minds that it seems that there are no other words or images that could be used to define an object or action, or to refer to a person" (translation by the author of this article).

Spa Dub	**Pinky:** Oh, no cariño. Por supuesto que no. No, no, no tengo nada en contra. En su momento animé a Martina Navratilova como la que más. [**Pinky:** Oh, no sweetheart. Of course it isn't. No, no, I don't have anything against it. In its moment I used too cheer for Martina Navratilova as much anyone else.]	Ita Dub	**Pinky:** Oh, no. Amore, certo che no. No. No, per me no. No di certo. Io per esempio tifavo per Martina Navratilova come se fosse una normale. [**Pinky:** Oh, no. Sweetheart, of course it isn't. No. No, not for me. For example, I used to cheer for Martina Navratilova as if she were a normal (person).]

Paula's attitude openly discloses her strong prejudice about lesbian relationships, but even more interesting is the offensive way in which her words were rendered in the Italian dub. The original sentence 'I was cheering for Martina Navratilova as much as the next person' is already offensive, since it sounds like a judgement about Martina Navratilova in comparison to someone else who better meets Paula's idea of the 'right' sexuality. The Italian translation for this sentence is *Tifavo per Martina Navratilova come se fosse una normale* [I used to cheer for Martina Navratilova as if she were a normal (person)] which sounds far more derogatory than the English original. This is a case of outright homophobia since it implies that Martina Navratilova is not a normal person. She turns out to be stigmatized as less feminine or less ladylike, just because she does not follow the moral guidelines which define proper sexuality. Here we are faced with a clear example of linguistic construction of identity. Gender boundaries are built up not only through the binary opposition between femininity and masculinity, but also through the opposition between femininity and unfemininity, or between masculinity and unmasculinity. The Spanish version, on the other hand, is far more literal since *como la que más* back translates as 'as much as anyone else'. It is also interesting to notice that both in the Spanish and, above all, in the Italian version, there is a repetition of the negative adverb 'no' in Paula's answer – in the original version there are just three cases of 'no', whereas in the Spanish there are five and in the Italian six. This emphasis makes her words sound even more hypocritical.

There is a very similar misunderstanding about Jess and Jules in a previous scene in which they are seen hugging at a bus stop by Pinky's future parents-in-law. In reality, whom they see is Jules from behind and they think she is an English boy but, as Indian women are supposed to go around only with Indian men, they express their disapproval for Jess's attitude by cancelling the wedding between Pinky and their son. Pinky outbursts in anger by telling her parents that Jess keeps on playing football behind their back and adds:

Exchange 2 (*BB*)

Pinky: No mum. It's not their fault. I bet she was with some dykey girl from her football team!			
Spa Dub	**Pinky:** No, mamá. Ella tiene la culpa. Apuesto a que estaba con una tortillera de su equipo. [**Pinky:** No, mum. It's her fault. I bet she was with a dykye of her team.]	Ita Dub	**Pinky:** No, mamma. È tutta colpa sua. Scommetto che stava con qualche lesbica della sua squadra. [**Pinky:** No, mum. It's all her fault. I bet she was with some lesbians of her team.]

It is strange that we see here a case of women criticizing other women. Women – especially if they are close friends or sisters – are prone to compliment and manifest mutual support for each other in most situations which can be interpreted as an unconscious sign of solidarity of gender affinity, as if there were a natural understanding urging closeness under any circumstance. It is also true, however, that from being the best friends, women can also turn out to be the worst enemies, and this U-turn often shows in unexpected betrayals. Here, Pinky's remark shows prejudices about women who do not conform to the established

heterosexual canon, but in this case it is in the original version, as well as in the Spanish one, that Pinky's words take on a more discriminatory connotation. 'Dykey' is a slang term for a female homosexual, usually used to refer to the stereotypical image of a mannish lesbian. The Spanish *tortillera* conveys the same negative allusion, thus emphasizing Pinky's prejudice and sense of superiority. In Italian, the more neutral *lesbica* [lesbian] was preferred.

Similar exchanges can be observed with gay men. As discussed in the previous section, when gay characters are part of the storyline, their sexual orientation is brought to the foreground as if it were the most representative feature of their performance. But they are hardly ever addressed or described in general terms as 'gay'. They are rather stigmatized through unflattering and offensive synonyms such as 'poof', 'faggot', and 'queer'. A good example can again be found in *BJD*. There is a scene at the beginning of the film in which Bridget, speaking in the third person, introduces her friends Shazzer (Sally Phillips), Jude (Shirley Hendersen), and Tom (James Callis) to the audience without them hearing her. When Tom's turn comes she says:

Exchange 3 (*BJD*)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Bridget: Tom, '80s pop icon who only wrote one hit record. Then retired because he found that one record was quite enough to get him laid for the whole of the '90s. <u>Total poof, of course</u>!</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Spa Dub</td><td>Bridget: Tom, un símbolo pop de los ochenta. Solo compuso un disco de éxito y luego se retiró porque descubrió que con un disco bastaba para tirarse a quienquisiera durante los noventa. <u>Maricón perdido, ¡por supuesto</u>!</td><td rowspan="2">Ita Dub</td><td>Bridget: Tom, idolo pop degli anni ottanta che ha scritto un'unica canzone e che si è ritirato dopo aver scoperto che bastava un disco per rimorchiare per tutti gli anni novanta. <u>Completamente finocchio, chiaro</u>!</td></tr>
<tr><td>[Bridget: Tom, pop symbol of the 80s. He only composed one hit record and then retired because he found that one record was enough to screw anybody during 90s. Completely poof, of course!]</td><td>[Bridget: Tom, pop idol of the 80s who only wrote one record and then retired after finding that one record was enough to pick up for the whole of the 90s. Completely poof, of course!]</td></tr>
</table>

From a merely lexical point of view, we can see that in the three languages stereotypical terms ('poof', 'maricón', and 'finocchio') were used. They are followed by determiners ('total', *perdido* and *completamente* [completely]) whose presence stresses the most derogatory connotations of these words. Moreover, the emphasis on the final adverbial locution 'of course', literally translated in both Spanish (*por supuesto*) and Italian (*chiaro*), has the effect of shifting the attention to what Bridget says about Tom's main vocation in the past years, i.e., to have sex, thus establishing an easy albeit superficial equation: Tom – sex - homosexuality. Before this presentation, we do not have any clue about who Tom is and what his role is supposed to be. Consequently, the words that were to introduce him and the presence and prominent syntactical placement of this adverb at the end of the sentence together with the presentation, may have a misleading effect upon the audience's opinion of him. It may reinforce the already widespread association of homosexuality with sexual intercourse, unfaithfulness and promiscuity, since it seems to suggest that it is typical of gay men to have casual and irregular sexual relationships. It is worth pointing out, however, that the presence of these unflattering attributes in this exchange should not lead to false conclusions about the offensive potential of Bridget's words. Of importance is also the way in which the information is provided when the text interacts with the image. These comments are given through an offstage voice and come after we see Tom asking Bridget if her boss is still 'as cute as ever', and assuming a tender look when a man approaches him to ask his autograph. The audience, therefore, is provided with clear clues about Tom's sexual orientation and, in a certain way, Bridget's words anticipate what they expect to hear. Moreover, we have to consider that sometimes people may speak using demeaning

expressions without really intending them to be taken literally. This happens especially in conversations between intimate friends who often address each other through four-letter words or phrases containing sexual innuendoes. In this case, the offensiveness of such words can be conceived as a token of humoristic tenderness, or as a proof of solidarity which make the interlocutors feel as part of the same group. This peculiar use of vocabulary falls under what Kuiper (1998: 291) calls 'the dark side of politeness'. He draws on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1978, 1987) to examine the ways in which adult males in New Zealand create group solidarity. One of these ways is through demeaning formulae suggesting that a man is no more than a sexual organ, 'wanker', 'cunt' and 'great penis' being three prime examples. Kuiper argues that these forms of address are very common in the circle of football locker rooms where footballers resort to them just to threaten their fear of sexual humiliation (equating male masculinity with female organs or with penis).

In the light of these considerations, Bridget's words could be interpreted in more positive terms since, as the film goes on, we see that Tom and Bridget are very close friends and that the apparently offensive exchanges between them are, in fact, friendly jokes. What makes them slightly homophobic, however, is the fact that – as was mentioned before – Bridget's words are not spoken directly as part of a dialog between her and Tom. The use of an offstage voice creates a distance between the affectionate way in which Bridget (the character) interacts with her friend, on the one hand, and the way in which Renée Zellweger (the actress) is asked to speak, on the other, as if she were the spokesperson for an essentially heteronormative audience. Furthermore, it is interesting to stress that the effect of Bridget's words on a gay audience may vary by culture. It is possible that a gay British or American spectator would not attach much importance to this kind of presentation since, due to the better acceptance of same-sex relationships in Anglo-American society, and due to the well-known sense of humor circulating within the gay community, gay people would think that Bridget – as a friend – is allowed to refer to Tom as a poof. The same cannot be said for gay audiences in Spain or Italy where there has always been less tolerance towards homosexuality. The first thing that a gay spectator may think when seeing this scene, is that the choice to introduce a gay character by making reference to his sexuality, rather than to other aspects of his daily life, is a strategy intentionally devised to perpetuate commonplace prejudices about homosexuality. This appears even more obvious if we pay attention to the way in which Tom is introduced compared to the other friends. Bridget presents Shazzer saying: 'Shazzer, journalist. Likes to say "fuck" a lot!'. In this scene she does not say anything about Jude because she had previously introduced her to the audience as follows: 'Daily call from Jude. Best friend. Head of investment at Brightlings Bank who spends most of her time trapped in the ladies' toilet crying over fuckwit boyfriend'. In this case too we are not faced with very flattering comments: we are automatically pushed to think of Shazzer as a not very "ladylike" speaker, and of Jude as a woman who is not able to make herself liked by men. However, in neither of these cases the emphasis is put on Shazzer's or Jude's sexuality. By contrast, the first thing that is given prominence is their high-level profession.

3 Conclusions

The present study provided some insights into the different perspectives from which gender may be analyzed in cinematographic representations and in audiovisual translation discourse. The aim of this analysis was to see in which ways audiovisual translation may contribute to perpetuating and exporting gender stereotypes from one culture to another.

The analysis of the visual and acoustic dimensions of the analyzed films, together with the analysis of some dialog exchanges, has shown that language – both verbal and non-verbal – may contain innuendoes whose side effects pass often unnoticed to most language users and,

because of this very "imperceptibility", they risk becoming the means through which unpleasant clichés and assumptions about some social groups become rooted in our psyche.

It was noticed that when it is gay men or supposed lesbians who are being addressed, the presence of offensive overtones results in the use of vocabulary either charged with heavy allusions (dykey, poof) which were rendered by equivalent synonyms in the two target languages or of circumstances disclosing strong prejudices (Exchange 1, Italian version), or overemphasizing the effeminate tone of the players' voices. In particular, in the Italian versions this aspect is more perceptible and recurrent, as was seen in the case of the Italian dub of Nigel's and Ethienne's voices in *East is East*.

It could be argued that the representation of womanhood and homosexuality in this study meet the expectations of most Western countries audiences, because this representation seems to be in line with the way of thinking and communicating of British, Spanish and Italian people. Of course, these manners can be 'justified' or tolerated in spoken language because when we speak we are less reflective, but the act of writing or translating implies personal commitment to the text and reflection upon what is being done. Writers or translators, therefore, should be more 'careful' when selecting the right words and phrases and be aware of them potentially conveying messages which may have important social implications. Of course, in the context of cinema and screen translation, it is far more difficult to fill the gap between the wish to meet the audiences' expectations and the need not to provide the seeds which would contribute to making stereotypes and prejudices stable or grow. To meet the audiences' expectations means that films must present situations in which the characters speak and behave like real people do. Hence, viewers should be led to identify themselves with the characters as they appear in films. As stated by González Vera (forthcoming):

> The desire to be relevant to modern society compels the film to present expressions and ways of talking used in our daily life. Among these expressions, we come across marks of expressiveness, colloquial references and swearwords. Their use adds natural manners and spontaneity to the film. In short, they transform artificial situations into credible ones.

The risk of such interdependence of spontaneity and credibility, however, is that the borders between fiction and real life are blurred to the point that it becomes difficult to understand if it is cinema – and media in general – which instills false assumptions and clichés in the audience or the opposite. Audiovisual products are openly exposed to commercial dictates reflecting in what direction the economic and ideological interests of a society go, namely the interests of what sectors of society tend to be favored to the detriment of others. In this way, cinema, and screen translation, may have the power to monopolize the audience's conscience and subtly contribute to implanting and perpetuating unpleasant assumptions, patriarchal stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes that may become to difficult to erase from the psyche.

We live in an era of great social change which have been taking place as a direct consequence of the feminist movement. In this ever-changing time, we should try to foster changes in language as well, taking into account that the meanings of words may have changed, and so have people's connotations of the social values that these meanings assume. In other words, expressions and nuances that some years ago sounded neutral or proper in a particular historical context, may today have taken on different meanings and be perceived in a different way. From this point of view, when texts are translated – or when films are dubbed – the changes which occur in the new social context should be reflected in language too.

Why is it so difficult, then, to promote changes and restrain the perpetuation and diffusion of linguistic stereotypes which reinforce the inequalities between genders? It is easy to think that it happens because language mirrors everyday society as if this were a taken-for-granted and unchanging reality. I do not think that language simply reflects facts. Facts are the result of conscious, human actions. Language is socially constructed, it is not independent of its

users. If we use language it is because we need a means to establish social relationships, and if we consciously interact we are also aware of the use we make of language. Saying that speakers are aware of their linguistic framework means that they know the positive and the negative connotations that words can take on and that they are responsible if their interlocutors feel offended. Placing these remarks in the context of gender issues, it should theoretically be easy to speak without charging the words with sexist, homophobic or racist overtones since we all know that these may result in other dangerous, discriminatory behaviors. If this does not happen, it may well be because people do not really want to dispense with a certain kind of vocabulary. The point is that it is difficult to get rid of something that passes unnoticed to most of the language users because certain expressions are so common, that they have become a familiar, natural and part of our background.

Why to put an end, then, to our points of reference? To stand up against sexism, or against any other form of gender discrimination, would turn out to the disadvantage of those who hold the economic and political power and who control the mass media which have always had a strong power of persuasion on the masses. Mass media, the tools through which their products are made intelligible worldwide (e.g. audiovisual translation), and the increase of academic research in this field are the keystone of change. The present study is an attempt to trigger the debate and to encourage other researchers to embark on studies aimed at the critique and revision of gender stereotypes and gender prejudices.

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