

Title: Doctor or *Dottore*? How well do honorifics travel outside of Italy?

ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates the results of a corpus-driven analysis on the translation from Italian into Dutch of "realia" in subtitles. In Translation Studies, "realia" are generally defined as words and expressions with culture-specific meaning. In the present paper, we focus on a particular type of "realia", namely honorifics. The analysis of "realia" is part of a broader research project on the circulation and reception of Italian films in Flanders (Belgium) (Caniato in preparation). This research employs a bilingual parallel corpus, duly aligned and annotated, and draws on six films (70.910 Italian words; 58.987 Dutch words). The "realia" were categorized according to the translation strategy used in the subtitles (direct translation, generalisation, omission, retention, specification, substitution, official equivalent; Pedersen 2011). For our contribution, we specifically looked at the subtitles in the film *Malena* (Tornatore 2000). The film is set in Fascist Italy and employs the Italian custom of honorifics with a view to, *inter alia*, creating humour, adding a regional flavour to the language, describing the characters' relationship with power, etc. However, these cultural aspects, condensed in the "realia" of the dialogue list, are barely reflected in the Dutch subtitles. *Malena* is a good example, therefore, of how subtitling, as a cultural process, involves the re-negotiation of meanings. When crossing borders, some meanings of a film are accepted, while others are resisted. Acceptance and resistance influence the subtitling process and, consequently, the translation of "realia". The choice and frequency of a certain translation strategy reflect the process of re-negotiation of meanings, something which precedes the subtitling process (Caniato 2013).

Keywords: Honorific, film, Italian, Dutch, audiovisual translation

1. Introduction

This paper aims to contribute to the study of "realia" in the field of Audiovisual Translation Studies.

We will illustrate the role played by "realia" in a film dialogue, identify their communicative function and analyse the translation strategies employed to translate them into Dutch subtitles. We will go on to prove that "realia" are linguistic elements that condense symbolic and cultural meanings that are difficult to render in a target language.

According to the tradition of Translation Studies, "realia", otherwise also defined as *cultural words, names of particular entities, culture-specific words, ECRs*, etc. are words that refer to elements of daily life, history, culture, or products of a certain geographical area of the world that are not known in other areas. We will refer to these words as "realia" because this is the most widely diffused term.

Vlahov and Florin (1969) were among the first to define what "realia" are¹. According to them:

In every language there are words that without standing in any way out of the original verbal co-text, nevertheless are not prone to be transferred in another language with the usual means and they require a special attitude from the translator: some of these words pass in the text of the translation in unchanged form (they are transcribed), others may partly keep in translation their morphological and phonetic structure, and others must be replaced at times with lexical units of entirely different value or even "composed". Among these words one can find names of elements of daily life, history, culture, etc. of a people, a country, a place that do not exist among other peoples, countries and places. These very words in translation theory have received the name of "realia" (Vlahov and Florin in Osimo, 2004: 63, our translation).

The definition of "realia" proposed by Vlahov and Florin was followed by many others. Robinson calls these words "realia" (Robinson 1997). Schäffner & Wiesemann (2001), define "realia" as *culture-bound phenomena and terms, culture-specific items*. Newmark refers to them as *cultural words* (1988: 94). Nedergaard-Larsen uses the locution *culture-bound words* (1993). Valentini (2009) proposes the expression *names of particular entities*. Pedersen calls them ECRs, i.e. *Extralinguistic Cultural References* (2005, 2007, 2011). Loponen (2009) proposes to use the neologism "irrealia" to define invented fictional elements presented as real in fiction.

Pedersen's definition is particularly interesting, because it refers to the competence of the audience. Thanks to Pedersen, the question of "realia" shifts from the point of view of the translator, to that of the target audience that designates the reference horizon for the

¹ We know about their study from two sources: Osimo (2004) and Verstraete (2004), because Vlahov and Florin published *Neperovodimoe v perevode. Realii* in Russian.

reception of "realia". However, in this paper we have chosen the more common term "realia" instead of Pedersen's notion of ECRs. The major reason lies in the fact that Pedersen's taxonomy of ECRs does not include honorifics. As Pedersen focuses on the "extralinguistic", he does not take into account honorifics, which are commonly considered to be an 'intralinguistic' phenomenon. In our view, however, honorifics as they are used in Italy (cf. infra), can be considered as a clear example of how some "realia" present a complex interlacement between interlinguistic and extralinguistic aspects. For this reason, we have adopted the taxonomy proposed by Valentini (2009), which follows the tradition of Vlahov & Florin (1969).

Despite the fact that scholars use different terms to define what "realia" are, there is general consensus when it comes to recognizing their scientific interest, due to their twofold nature that allows the study of the culture in the language and of the language in the culture.

The study of "realia" has aroused a great deal of interest in Audiovisual Translation Studies (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007, Loponen 2009, Pedersen 2005, 2007, 2011, Nedergaard-Larsen 1993, Ranzato 2010), because a cultural product, such as a television programme, a soap opera, a fictional film, etc. is so rich in "realia" that it is difficult to discriminate between those that are essential, and should consequently be translated, and those that can be omitted to meet the limitations of subtitles. In fact, in a film dialogue, "realia" are very frequent and functional cultural elements, given that they connect the audiovisual text to reality, fulfilling, as they do, a substantial cohesive function between the audiovisual text, the *direct world* and the *indirect world*². This cohesive function is determined by the twofold nature of the "realia", that are both connotative and denotative elements. According to Vlahov and Florin, within "realia":

the connotation, and therefore also the colour, is part of the meaning, and accordingly it is translated together with the semantic meaning of the word. If one can not do so, if the translator can only transmit the "naked" semantics of the lexical unit, for the reader of the translation the loss of colour is expressed by the incomplete perception of the image, that is, in substance, his misrepresentation (Vlahov & Florin in Osimo (wd)).

In this contribution, we study honorifics, which we consider a specific type of "realia". Some scholars who have studied the translation of "realia", propose a classification of them (Díaz-Cintas

² We use the expressions *direct* and *indirect world* as indicated by Eugeni (2011: 10) to define the world of reality and that of representation. As indicated by Loponen (2009) in fictional texts, there are also invented elements presented as real in the imaginary world, but in fact non-existent at referential level. These are the "realia" that belong to the indirect world.

& Remael 2007, Newman 1988, Nedergaard-Larsen 1993, Pedersen 2011, Ranzato 2010, Straight 1981, Valentini 2009). Vlahov & Florin (in Osimo w.d. and in Verstraete 2004: 27) list among "realia" words belonging to different categories that can be defined as honorifics (brigadier, mayor, sheriff, councillor, lord, Sir, Madam, etc.)³. Díaz-Cintas, & Remael (2007: 201) also propose a taxonomy that lists words that belong to the world of *Work* among "realia" (farmer, gaucho). We follow this lead here, considering honorifics to form part of "realia". This is one of the reasons why we decided to adopt the classification proposed by Valentini (2009: 294) that also incorporates honorifics under the "realia" heading, calling them *Honorary and professional titles*⁴.

The reason why we study honorifics is their importance in the Italian culture, which is testified by the variety and frequency of use of appellation and titles of honour in the Italian language. Italian honorifics are used to convey respect, demonstrate recognition of hierarchies and social positions (inferior, equal, superior) and express an attitude towards power. Whereas honorifics in Italian are widespread, their use in Flemish Dutch is by far less frequent. This difference gives rise to the question how Italian titles of honour are translated when a cultural object such as a film has to be presented to a foreign, in this case Flemish, audience.

2. Definition of honorifics.

The type of honorifics we intend to study in the Italian film *Malena*, are nominal honorifics, which we define as two different polite forms of address that are nominal⁵, as opposed to verbal. These include honorific titles such as *Sir*, and professional titles such as *Doctor*. Whilst the academic study of forms of address is quite widespread (Agha 2007, Dickey 1997, Jacobs 2012, Lagorgette 2006, Shanson 1997, Wierzbicka 1992), less attention has been paid to the forms referred to as First Name/Title plus Last Name (Brown & Ford 1964, Hock 1984, Wierzbicka 1992). The study of terms of address in Italian (Balboni 2007, Mazzotta 2008) and their Flemish Dutch counterparts (Martiny 1996, Vermaas 2004) is relatively new. Historically, the use of terms of address in Italian goes back a long time and is well established. Back in the XIV century, Dante Alighieri (in his *Divine Comedy*) used the title *Dottor* (Doctor) to address his guide Virgil in their difficult journey in Hell (If, XVI, 13). However, Dante did not mean *medical doctor*, a profession that Virgil did not practise, but *teacher*, deriving the term directly from the Latin verb *doceo* (to teach). As such, he immediately caused the necessary confusion when the term was brought into modern times.

³ Our translation.

⁴ Our translation.

⁵ E.g. relating to substantives.

Nowadays, Italians are still partial to using honorifics, not least in spoken language. Indeed, honorific titles such as *signore* (Sir) and *signora* (Madam) are the common polite forms to address a man or a woman in everyday life. These words should be combined with formal verb forms (such as verbal forms in the subjunctive and conditional modes), defined by Brown & Gilman (1960) V-forms, and can be accompanied by surnames (as in *Signora Rossi, entri pure*, Mrs Rossi, please come in). The male form *signore*, when combined with a surname, is truncated in *signor* (*Signor Rossi*). The term *signorina*, traditionally used to address unmarried, or young, women, is subject to discussion, as it is considered politically incorrect, and, as such, rapidly becoming obsolete (Sabatini & Mariani 1993).

Male

Signore (Sir, Mr)

Signor Rossi

Female

Signora (Madam, Mrs)

Signora Rossi

Fig. 1. Use of the honorific titles *Signore* and *Signora*.

Professional titles are also very common, in both professional and informal contexts, and they are used both in combination with the surname and without it.

A person with a law degree has Avvocato before their name. An engineer has Ingegnere (abbreviate to Ing. in correspondence), an accountant has Ragioniere (abbreviate to Rag. in correspondence), and an architect has Architetto. An elementary school-teacher is addressed as Maestro (m) or Maestra (f); a teacher at junior school level (11 years plus) is addressed as Professore/Professoressa (Shanson 1997: 118).

The combination of the two forms is also possible. One can address a doctor with the combined form *Signor dottore*. A non-contemporary example of this use can be found in this sentence verse:

Fiordiligi Dorabella and Don Alfonso: *Preso han l'arsenico signor dottore* (Mozart & Da Ponte 1790: 34)⁶.

The following glossary presents a short list of the most common professional titles with their equivalents in English.

Professional Title

Architetto

Avvocato

Cavaliere

Translation

Architect

Lawyer

Knight

⁶ They have taken arsenic Mr Doctor, our translation. *Così fan tutte, ossia La scuola degli amanti* (*Thus Do They All, or The School for Lovers*), opera buffa by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, first performed in 1790, whose *libretto* was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Commendatore | Commander |
| Dottore | Doctor |
| Generale | General |
| Geometra | Quantity surveyor |
| Ingegnere | Engineer |
| Ingegnere della motorizzazione | Engineer of motorisation |
| Monsignore | Monsignor |
| Onorevole | Honorable |
| Professore (male) | Professor |
| Professoressa (female) | Professor |
| Ragioniere | Accountant |
| Reverendo | Reverend |
| Senatore | Senator |
| Eminenza | Eminence |
| Santità | Holiness |
| Tenente | Lieutenant |
| Ufficiale | Officer |
| Eccellenza | Excellency |

Fig. 2. The most common titles in Italian.

3. Honorifics in Italy and Belgium.

With more than 60 million inhabitants, Italy is a major European country. Belgium has a population of only 10 million and is divided into two independent regions characterised by different languages: Flanders, where the official language is Dutch, and Wallonia, where French is spoken. Dutch, as in the Netherlands, is spoken in Flanders by 6.3 million (out of a total of 10 million). Even though Dutch is the language that unites the Netherlands and Flanders, Belgium's linguistic situation is not helped by the fact that the Dutch spoken in Flanders is different from that in the Netherlands (De Caluwe, 2002, Geeraerts 2001, Goossens 1975, Impe & al. 2008). In a study on the linguistic differences between subtitles in Flanders and in the Netherlands, Remael & al. (2008) compare the difference between the formal standard language spoken in Flanders and in the Netherlands to the difference between formal English spoken in the United States and Canada.

In this study, however, we refer only to Flemish Dutch.

Nowadays, honorific titles such as *Mijnheer* (Sir) and *Mevrouw* (Madam) are the common polite forms to address a man or a woman. These words could be used in combination with V verbal forms and could be accompanied by surnames.

Male

Mijnheer, De Heer (Sir, Mr)
Mijnheer Vleminckx

Female

Mevrouw (Madam, Mrs)
Mevrouw Vleminckx

Fig. 3. Use of the honorific titles *Mijnheer* and *Mevrouw*.

The use of professional titles in Flanders is very rare. Indeed, professional titles are hardly, if ever, used, other than in official settings. Their use is constantly diminishing and is, in fact, actively being discouraged by the many sites that offer language advice⁷. Another major aspect that marks the difference of honorifics in Italy and Flanders is their legal value. In Italy, the use of titles has recently come under attack because of an inconsistent interpretation of a Royal Decree dating back to 1938 which specifies that anyone earning a MA-level degree can, by law, carry the title *Dottore* (Doctor). The regulation has been copied *verbatim*, and confirmed, in a Ministerial Decree (Act No. 240/2010 Art. 17 Para. 2, Gelmini Reform) that states that the title *Dottore* (Doctor) relates to anyone holding a BA degree. This decision goes against the trend in the EU where the use of study titles across the EU, as prescribed by the *Bologna Process*, has been made consistent. In this matter, the Italian tradition differs from the international one, in that the title Doctor, which is normally reserved for PhD holders, is also used for BA and MA degree holders. Italian PhD holders can use the title *Dottore di ricerca* (Research Doctor) which, in the practice of the language, is, once again, reduced to *Dottore* (Doctor). The importance of study titles and their translation in Europe should not be underestimated. The European Union has always invested a great deal of time and effort in the free movement of goods, people, capital and workers (*four freedoms*⁸) within the Member States. This freedom of movement, inevitably, implies the mutual recognition of study titles within the EU. With this in mind, the EU has created *Eurydice*⁹, an entire European network that provides a legal framework for the internal recognition of study titles. Italy forms the exception here, as anyone who has completed three years of university in Italy can be, and is indeed, called Doctor in everyday life, whilst in the rest of Europe, the title is reserved for PhD holders only.

4. Methodology

We will further discuss the translation of honorifics based on the film *Malena*, which is an interesting test case because of the high number of honorifics it contains.

The film, which was released, and subtitled, in Flanders in 2000, is presented here as a case study that illustrates the problem of translating honorifics from Italian into a language that does not share the same cultural attitude towards polite forms of address. Comparable problems are illustrated in scholarly literature on

⁷ As an example we report here <http://taaladvies.net/taal/advies/tekst/21#4>

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=457>

⁹ Eurydice: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/>
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/>

languages, including Akan (Agyekum), Japanese (Dittrich & al. 2011, Matsumoto 1997, Nariyama & al. 2011, Siegel 2000), Korean (Kyoko & Ho-min 1986) and Russian (Grevile 1981).

Malena forms part of a corpus of Italian films translated from Italian into Dutch in Flanders in the period between 2000 and 2006 (Caniato in preparation). The corpus consists of the Italian Film Dialogue of six Italian films (70.910 Italian words) and their subtitles (58.987 Dutch words).

| Title | Abbreviat ion | Duration | Words film dialogue | Words subtitles |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>La meglio gioventù 1</i> | LMG1 | 2h55 min. | 17.550 | 16.826 |
| <i>La meglio gioventù 2</i> | LMG2 | 2h57 min. | 15.522 | 14.465 |
| <i>Malena</i> | MAL | 1h49 min. | 6.681 | 4.469 |
| <i>Non ti muovere</i> | NTM | 2h5 min. | 5.574 | 4.088 |
| <i>Pane e tulipani</i> | PET | 1h54 min. | 9.625 | 7.248 |
| <i>L'ultimo bacio</i> | UB | 1h55 min. | 15.958 | 11.891 |
| Total | | 13 hours | 70.910 | 58.987 |

Fig. 4. The Italian films of the corpus.

It is a parallel, bilingual, and annotated corpus obtained from the digital version of the films (DVD). In our corpus, "realia" have been classified according to the system proposed by Valentini (2009) for the annotation of Forlixt1, which is a corpus specifically conceived for audiovisual translation. Forlixt1 is one of the major corpora for the study of dubbed films.

Forlixt 1 comprises scenes of films and transcripts aligned on a scene-by-scene basis so that occurrences can be retrieved along with their translation, from language A into language B, but also from language B into language A (Valentini & Linardi 2009).

We decided to adopt the categories of "realia" proposed in the corpus Forlixt1 because they were created to classify audiovisual texts, and they include categories such as Honorifics and Diseases that proved indispensable for our research¹⁰. We also adhered to a

¹⁰ These categories are: Clothing; Food and beverages; Hierarchies; Games and entertainment; Institutions, associations, organizations, political parties; Education; Books, films, opera, magazines and television programs; Diseases; Currencies and units of measure; Anthroponyms; Famous persons and celebrities; Market and cultural products; Religion; Sport; Honorifics; Toponyms; Holidays and national festivities (our translation).

division in scenes (as opposed to division in subtitles or lines), although the scenes are generally used as units in the corpora of dubbed, rather than subtitled, films. We consider a scene to be a non-separable semiotic unit where the narration of one or more actions happen in the same place, in continuity and in a unity of time (Valentini, 2009: 81).

The films have been tagged according to their title, number of scenes, categories of "realia", presence of monocultural "realia", translating strategies, etc. Thanks to these tags, it was relatively straightforward to identify and isolate honorifics in the corpus. Once the honorifics in the film *Malena* were identified, we analysed them to find the underlying translation strategies that were used to render them into Dutch, using the classification proposed by Pedersen (2011). In his taxonomy of translation strategies applied to "realia" in subtitles in Scandinavian countries, Pedersen identifies seven main strategies: Retention, Specification, Direct Translation, Generalisation, Substitution, Omission and Official equivalent (Pedersen 2011: 74). The same categories were utilised to identify the translation strategies of our corpus.

Retention is used when the term of the Source Text is retained in the subtitle without major changes. The following examples are extracted from the corpus.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>MAL, 1, IT¹¹ Questa sera, alle ore 17 il Duce parla alla nazione! Tonight, at 17 hours Il Duce talks to the nation!</p> | <p>MAL, 1, NL Hedenmiddag om vijf uur spreekt Il Duce het volk toe. Tonight at 5 hours Il Duce talks to the nation.</p> |
|--|--|

Fig. 5. Retention.

Specification is used to add information making the subtitle more specific than the film dialogue, for example by expanding, or explaining, a name or acronym.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>MAL, 20, IT Renato, la miglior pistola del West! Renato, the best gun in the West!</p> | <p>MAL 20, NL Renato, jij hebt de grootste van het Wilde Westen. Renato, you have the biggest of the Wild West.</p> |
|--|--|

Fig. 6. Specification.

Direct translation. The only thing that changes is the language, without semantic changes. Proper names are rarely translated, but

¹¹ The Italian films of the corpus are indicated by their title and the number of the scene as found in the corpus. The first column includes the Italian dialogue, the second the Dutch subtitles. The line underneath shows our translation in English. The bold text is ours.

this strategy can be used, for example, for public institutions or geographic names.

MAL,15, IT

Buongiorno, posso parlare con l'**avvocato** Centorbi?

Good morning may I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?

Fig. 7. Direct translation.

MAL,15, NL

Kan ik **advocaat** Centorbi spreken?

May I speak with the lawyer Centorbi?

Generalization. This strategy makes the subtitles less specific than the film dialogue through a hyperonym or a paraphrase.

MAL, 37, IT

Ordine del **Fascio!**

Order of the Fascist party.

Fig. 8. Generalization.

MAL, 37, NL

Opdracht van de **regering.**

Order of the government.

Substitution. The "realia" are replaced by other "realia" that may belong to the same culture or to a completely different one.

MAL, 10, IT

E io dico al **generale** che tu non mi vuoi mai mandare all'esercitazione del partito fascista!

And I say to the general that you do not ever want to send me to the exercise of the Fascist party!

Fig. 9. Substitution.

MAL, 10, NL

Ik vertel de **Partijsecretaris** dat ik niet naar de exercitie mocht.

I tell to the Party Secretary that I was not allowed to the exercise.

Omission. The "realia" are not in any way reproduced in the subtitles. This strategy is probably used more often in subtitles than in other forms of translation because of the specific limitations imposed on subtitles. Indeed, subtitles normally stay on screen for a limited time and are one or two lines long.

MAL, 1, IT

Camerati di **Castelcutò!**

Comrades of Castelcutò!

Fig. 10. Omission.

MAL, 1, NL

Kameraden.

Comrades.

Official equivalent. It can be determined by both common use or by a decision taken at an administrative level.

MAL, 13, IT

Ma guarda questo... Dieci **Lire**, alla cassa.

MAL, 13, NL

Tien **lire**, bij de kassa.

But look at him... Ten Lire, at the cash register. Ten Lire, at the cash register.

Fig. 11. Official equivalent.

The corpus-based quantitative analysis of "realia" is complemented by a qualitative *press analysis* of the films, viz. an analysis of articles published in papers, magazines and sites in Flanders that review the films of the corpus. The press analysis as proposed here aims to identify the different themes of the film and correlate them with the presence of "realia". We have analysed the reviews of the film *Malena* that were published in the Flemish press, as well as the synopsis of the film as it appeared on specialized websites from the moment the film was released to the present day. On the basis of the reviews of *Malena* that appeared in the Flemish press, we reconstructed the plot of the film as it was presented to potential viewers. Then we linked the development of narration to the use of honorifics in the different scenes of the tagged corpus. The aim of the *press analysis* is twofold: while it seeks to single out the cultural meanings of the film, it also wants to link these meanings to the "realia" of the film itself.

5. The translation of honorifics in *Malena*: quantitative analysis

Plot. The film *Malena* relates the story of Renato, a boy who is secretly in love with Malena, the beauty of the Sicilian village of Castelcutò. All the men in the village desire Malena, while all the women envy her for her beauty and call her a whore. Malena's husband is fighting in the Fascist army, and Malena thinks that he is dead. She is surrounded by men's desire and women's despise, and she cannot defend herself. Malena has to face a process of adultery and rape. She has no money and no-one to protect her and, as in a self-fulfilling prophecy, she becomes a prostitute to survive. When her husband unexpectedly returns, Malena's social integrity is restored thanks to his love. Although Malena's husband has been informed by Renato that she has been a prostitute, he does not reject her.

Compared to the other films of the parallel corpus, *Malena* contains an average amount of words for its duration, but it has a rather high concentration of honorifics: the 53 honorifics appear in 24 scenes (out of a total of 64 scenes), representing 38% of the honorifics of the entire corpus.

This high concentration is particularly challenging for the translator who does not have the same range of honorifics in his/her own language. Although, in line with Pedersen's results (2011: 158) we might expect Retention to be the most used translation strategy, in *Malena*, we found Omission to be significantly more common than Retention. In the whole corpus, Omission is used as a translation

strategy in 25% of cases, whilst for Malena’s honorifics, it accounts for 45% of the cases. Retention is used for Malena’s honorifics in 11% of the cases, but in the whole corpus the strategy accounts for 28% of the cases.

The 53 honorifics found in the film were translated applying 6 translating strategies out of 7: Generalisation, Direct translation, Omission, Retention, Specification and Substitution. No Official equivalent was used to render the honorifics.

| Translation strategy | Honorifics |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Omission | 24 |
| Direct translation | 18 |
| Retention | 6 |
| Substitution | 3 |
| Generalisation | 1 |
| Specification | 1 |
| Total | 53 |

Fig. 12. The translation strategies applied to honorifics.

As shown in figure 13, 45% of the honorifics in the Source Text have not been rendered in the Target Text.

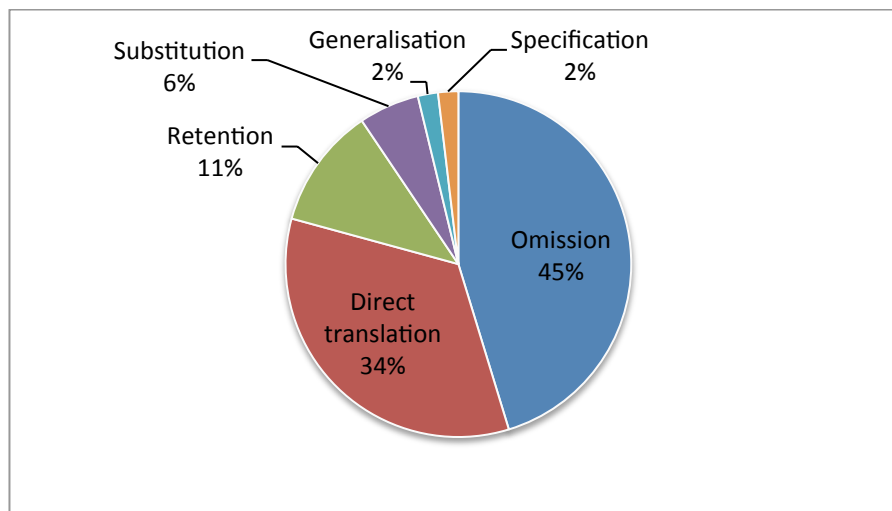


Fig. 13. The translation strategies applied to honorifics in Malena.

This result is at odds with the same statistical results extracted from the whole corpus, where Omission plays a less relevant role.

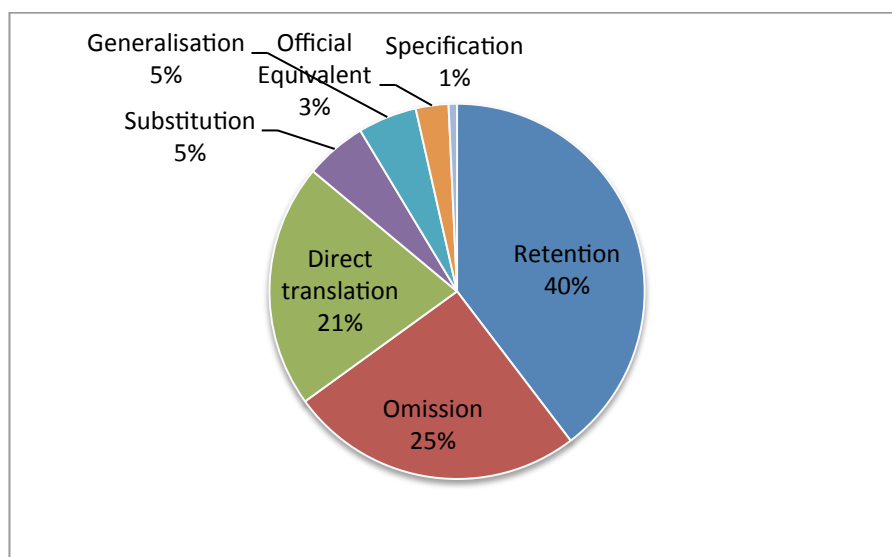


Fig. 14. The translation strategies in use in the whole corpus.

As can be observed in Figure 14, in the whole corpus, Omission is only applied in 25% of the cases to translate "realia". In 40% of the cases, Retention is the most frequently used strategy, in contrast to 11% of the film *Malena*.

The omitted honorifics are:

Italian Honorific English translation

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Avvocato | Lawyer |
| Cancelliere | Chancellor |
| Dottore | Doctor |
| Eccellenza | Excellency |
| Geometra | Quantity surveyor |
| Pretore | Praetor |
| Professore | Professor |
| Ragioniere | Accountant |
| Segretario | Secretary |
| Signora | Madam |
| Tenente | Lieutenant |

Fig. 15. The omitted honorifics.

These honorifics were not translated in the film according to a unique strategy: the title *signora*, for example, was translated with the strategy of Retention.

MAL,15, IT

Buongiorno **Signora** Malena.

Good morning Mrs. Malena.

Fig. 16. Retention of Signora.

MAL,15, NL

Goedemorgen, **signora** Maléna.

Good morning, signora Maléna.

In the same vein, the honorific *Il Duce* (article + noun) was retained in four scenes (MAL,1, MAL,22, MAL,37, MAL,50) out of a total of five. The honorific is used in IT only for Benito Mussolini, the

dictator who was keen to compare himself to ancient and glorious Roman emperors. It is the Italian translation of the Latin word *Dux* (leader).

MAL,1, IT

Il Duce

The leader

Fig. 17. Retention of *Il Duce*.

MAL,15, NL

Il Duce

The leader

The honorific *avvocato* (Lawyer), used with vocative value was always omitted.

MAL,39, IT

Avvocato.. vi prego

Master... please

Fig. 18. Omission of *Avvocato* with vocative function.

MAL,39, NL

It was not omitted when it has an attributive function.

MAL,15, IT

Buongiorno, posso parlare con

l'**avvocato** Centorbi?

Good morning may I speak with
the lawyer Centorbi?

Fig. 19. Direct translation of *Avvocato*.

MAL,15, NL

Kan ik **advocaat** Centorbi

spreken?

May I speak with the lawyer
Centorbi?

The professional titles *geometra* (Quantity surveyor) and *ragioniere* (Accountant) appear in the corpus only in one scene, and one case is just not enough to advance hypotheses about the strategies adopted in these specific cases. These Omissions are not surprising, given that these professions do not have an exact equivalent in Flemish (*landmeter* and *boekhouder*). To give an example, in Italy, a *geometra* is responsible, inter alia, for the design of buildings, which is not the case in Flanders.

MAL,15, IT

Che faccio col **geometra**?

What do I do with the surveyor?

Fig. 20. Omission of *Geometra*.

MAL,15, NL

MAL,54, IT

Ragioniere, questa sera

Accountant, tonight

Fig. 21. Omission of *Ragioniere*.

MAL,15, NL

One may expect that a honorific such as *Dottore* would have been rendered in the film with an Official Equivalent, but, in fact, this is not the case. This title only occurs in 3 scenes (MAL 15, MAL 33,

MAL 37), it is omitted in MAL, 15 and MAL, 33 and is rendered in MAL, 37 with a confusing abbreviation. Because of the unclear use of *Dr.* in Dutch, we marked the translation as Direct.

MAL,37, IT

Signora, Voi siete accusata di avere coinvolto il dottore Gaspare Cusimano in una segreta e impropria relazione amorosa mirando al disfacimento della di lui famiglia. Lo conoscete il **dottor** Cusimano?

Madam, You are accused of having involved doctor Gaspare Cusimano in a secret and improper love affair aiming at the disintegration of his family. Do you know Dr. Cusimano?

Fig. 22. Direct translation of *Dottore*.

MAL,37, NL

U wordt ervan beschuldigd Dr. Gaspare Cusimano te hebben verleid...tot een geheime en amoureuze relatie... met als doel zijn gezin te ontwrichten. Kent u **Dr.** Cusimano ?

You are accused of having seduced Dr. Gaspare Cusimano ... to a secret and amorous relationship ... with the aim of disrupting his family.

Do you know Dr. Cusimano?

This abbreviation refers, according to the dictionary Van Dale¹², only to the academic title *doctor*. Anyhow, sometimes in Flanders *Dr.* can be used also to refer to the professional title of *medical doctor (arts or dokter in Dutch)*¹³ of the Italian dialogue. Similarly, the word *professor*, used in MAL, 47 to address a teacher of a Liceo (high school, pupils aged 14-19, Shanson 1997: 118) is translated in the subtitle as *Professor* and not as *Mijnheer*, the term normally in use in Flemish schools.

These cases testify to the difficulty which the translator faces when confronted with Italian honorifics, so much so that that is the probable cause for the absence of Official Equivalents to render the honorifics in the film.

6. Interpretation of the data: cultural meaning of honorifics

In order to gain a better insight into the decisions underlying these translation strategies, we decided to resort to a qualitative approach, much like content analysis, and more specifically to a particular sort of content analysis, namely *press analysis*.

On the basis of press analysis, we reconstructed the plot of the film as it was presented to potential viewers. Based on the analysis of the plot, the scenes and the honorifics occurring at different points of the narration, we propose that *Malena* can also be seen as a film about power and hierarchies.

Honorifics occur in many scenes of the film (24/63). Since honorifics highlight the political and social role of the characters, their

¹² <http://www.vandale.nl/>

¹³ <http://www.vrt.be/taal/doctor-dokter>

prevalence throughout the film seems to emphasise the rigid social hierarchy that dominated Italian culture in the era depicted in the film.

A closer inspection of the use of the honorifics that refer to the protagonist Malena suggests that they primarily serve to express the hypocritical relationship that the characters have with power and hierarchies: independently from what people actually think of him/her, a public figure retains his/her honorific title as long as his/her official status is preserved, but loses it as soon as his/her public role changes.

At the beginning of the film (scenes MAL,14, IT; MAL,15,IT; MAL,18, IT), Malena is called *Signora*, since she is married and respectable, although it is rumoured that she is a *whore*¹⁴. Then the drama happens (scenes MAL,35,IT; MAL,36,IT; MAL,37,IT; MAL,38,IT, MAL,39,IT; MAL,40,IT) upon which, while all public figures (lawyers, doctors, soldiers, etc.) retain their titles, Malena is no longer a *Signora*: the honorific is never used in these scenes. At the end of the film (MAL,63, IT), when order is restored, she is called *Signora* again. The restored use of the word confirms the restoration of her status of respectable wife, now of a veteran, in the new political order of post-war Italy.

The use of honorifics referring to the character of Malena suggests that the film can also be seen as a reflection on social hierarchies and hypocrisy towards all forms of power.

While the reflection on power is present in every culture, the actual form of this reflection varies from culture to culture. In Italy, this is one of the main cultural *themes*, deeply entrenched in literary and cinematic tradition, as borne out by literary examples that date as far back as Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* or Machiavelli's *The Prince*, to more recent cinematic works such as *Il divo* (Sorrentino 2008) or *Vincere* (Bellocchio 2009).

In the next section, we deepen our understanding of the cultural references that are at the Italian viewers' disposal when they watch a film like *Malena*. As is evident from the following (non-exhaustive) survey, the Italian viewers can count on a specific encyclopaedia that is not shared with other cultures.

7. Italian honorifics: cultural references

Italian theatre and literature can help us understand how power and hierarchies are represented in the Italian tradition and what the attitudes are towards them.

The title of *Dottore* (Doctor) was first formally used by the University of Bologna (approx.13th century) to "denote an academic degree other than that of *magister* and reserved for those who

¹⁴ Unluckily the word *whore*, not being a honorific, did not enter the classification.

teach medicine, law and theology”¹⁵. The title and profession were the inspiration behind the mask of the *Dottore* in the *Commedia dell’Arte* (Rudlin & Crick 2001), but the type of the false scholar existed in popular representations way back in time and can probably be compared to the *senex* of Latin comedy and to the *pedante* (pedantic) of 16th-century Humanist comedy. While the *Dottore* is the personification of the fortunate who can study and become rich and important, it also diminishes their very authority. According to Marin (2002: 120), the masks of the *Commedia dell’Arte* are the historic mirror of the Italian attitude towards the powerful: they express veiled sarcasm and outright cowardice, improvised and bombastic homage, but also display Harlequin and Pulcinella’s surreptitious and persistent contempt of authority. Many literary and cinematic works have followed this tradition: *The betrothed* (novel, Manzoni 1840), *The Leopard* (novel Tomasi di Lampedusa 1958, film Visconti 1963), *Divorzio all’italiana* (film Germi 1961), *Il processo di Frine*, (film De Sica 1952). The film *Malena* represents with similar costumes and a similar attitude the public figures of Castelletto: while they deserve deference and respect, they are also the subject of irony, contempt and Verbally Expressed Humour (Attardo 1994). It may seem farfetched to revisit these literary quotations to explain *Malena’s* representation of powerful figures, but it is important to stress that most, if not all, Italians share the same encyclopaedia in front of a *Dottore*, and think that it is reasonable to laugh at them. At the same time, in modern Italy, everybody who has a bit of power is called *Dottore*, without any reference to the medical or academic profession. In conclusion, the emphasis on the honorifics in *Malena*, and their specific use when they refer to the main character, suggests that the film can also be seen as a reflection on social hierarchies and power in general. However, whereas the Italian audience can easily understand this aspect of the film, this is not necessary the case for other audiences. It is safe to say that the use of honorifics as a way of expressing *cultural meaning* that forms part of the Italian encyclopaedia is not shared by other, in this case Flemish, audiences.

8. Discussion: why the translation of honorifics is problematic in Flemish Dutch

As already explained above, the use of honorifics in Italy is different from that in Flanders, and honorifics express a view of hierarchies and power that is difficult to be appreciated by a non-Italian audience. These cultural aspects, condensed in the “realia” of the dialogue list, are barely reflected in the Dutch subtitles.

¹⁵ http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dottore_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/. My translation.

In *Malena*, honorifics are expressed with different communicative purposes, such as deference, respect, irony, verbally expressed humour, etc. Deploying all these layers could prove problematic for non-Italian audiences, no matter how accurate the subtitles are. For instance, as it has been pointed out by Chiaro (2006: 198), and many other scholars (Chiaro 2010a, 2010b), the translation of Verbally Expressed Humour is an especially thorny issue, both practically and theoretically.

The quantitative analysis presented in section 4 has shown that more than half of the honorifics included in *Malena* are omitted (45%) or retained (11%), while only 6% are substituted, i.e. adapted in order to have an intelligible reference in the target culture. Moreover, one third (34%) of the honorifics are translated directly.

In what follows, referring to Pedersen's analysis of the translation strategies, we will attempt to account for the results of the quantitative study, while integrating them in the results of the qualitative analysis.

Pedersen (2011: 105) lists seven parameters¹⁶ that influence the choice of translation strategy employed by the subtitler in dealing with "realia". One of the parameters, transculturality, is the most influential from the point of view of communication, for the subtitler must decide whether the audience of a certain film is, in fact, able to understand certain "realia" if s/he should intervene in the translation to support the audience. Monocultural "realia" are those generally understood by the source culture but are not present in the encyclopaedia of the target culture. Not all members of the source culture know these "realia", but we can assume that they are accessible to the majority of the audience.

A Monocultural ECR¹⁷ causes a translation problem, which arises because the referent of an ECR can be assumed to be less identifiable to the majority of the relevant TT audience than it is to the relevant ST audience, owing to differences in encyclopaedic knowledge (Pedersen 2011: 107).

Monocultural "realia" often cause translation problems because there is no equivalent in the target language; there is merely a formal correspondent. A source language may well have a correspondent in the target language which could be used in the translation, but the mere existence of a correspondent does not mean that it carries the same meaning in the target language. In the case of honorifics in the film *Malena*, it would be possible to translate "realia" into Dutch, except that the translation does not respect the tradition, use or meaning, for that matter. Honorifics

¹⁶ Transculturality, Extratextuality, Centrality, Polysemiotics, Media-specific constraints, Co-text, Subtitling Situation.

¹⁷ According to Pedersen (2011) ECR (Extralinguistic Cultural References) is a more accurate way of defining "realia".

exist in Dutch but are used differently and on different occasions. To quote one of our previous examples, it is possible to become a *geometra* (Surveyor) in Flanders, but you cannot carry a legal title and be referred to the honorific like you can in Italy. While in Italy, it is possible to earn this title after five years of secondary school, the Flemish education system does not include a type of secondary school where one can only study this subject. Moreover, the Flemish title of *Landmeter* (Surveyor) is not, or can only marginally be, used as honorific.

All these observations lead us to conclude that the use of honorifics in Italy, and by extension in Italian films, is exquisitely monocultural.

Pedersen's analysis provides us with a trail to assess the translation strategies adopted in the case of *Malena*. The qualitative analysis presented in section 5 supports the interpretation of honorifics as monocultural "realia": neither the social functions, nor the connotative values of honorifics are transparent for non-Italian viewers. Monoculturality can therefore be seen as the reason why Omission is the main translation strategy used for the "realia" analysed in this paper (45% of the cases) and Direct translation is the second most common strategy. Given their monocultural character, honorifics can only seldom be adapted, Substituted (6%) or, in fact, rendered with an Official Equivalent by the translator. Faced with honorifics, the subtitler, expressing also an evaluation of their importance, has mostly decided that they were not to be rendered in Dutch. As a consequence, however, one of the themes of the film, i.e. the reflection on hierarchies and power, is no longer available to the Flemish audience.

To summarize, the analysis of the "realia" has shown that honorifics in *Malena* are very prevalent and that, as such, they flag a peculiarity of this film. Moreover, the examination of the translation strategies has taught us that rendering honorifics is problematic and that, in many cases, the subtitler has avoided rendering them in the target language. The qualitative analysis of the press has further shown that the problem inherent in translating the honorifics in *Malena* is not only related to the differences in the education systems between Italy and Flanders (as in the case of *geometra* for example), but also to the attitude towards power that the use of honorifics expresses in the Italian cultural context. In other words, the problems in the translation of honorifics from Italian to Dutch are not primarily located at the level of denotation, since there are in Dutch formal equivalents for the Italian titles, but are, in fact, located at the connotative level, because Italian honorifics also express a wide range of speakers' attitudes that are absent in the Dutch equivalents.

Based on the results of the qualitative study and on Pedersen's analysis of the parameters that influence the choice of the

translation strategies, we came to the conclusion that in most of the cases, Italian honorifics can be seen as monocultural "realia" and that, because of the translation strategies predominantly used in subtitles (Omission, Direct translation), one of the themes of the film, namely the reflection on hierarchies and power, becomes barely accessible to non-Italian viewers.

9. Conclusion

"Realia" are cultural elements that appear frequently in a film dialogue and carry a fundamental cohesive function: they connect the audiovisual text, the *direct* and *indirect world*. If we think, for example, of place names, which, generally speaking, make up the lion's share of "realia" present in a film¹⁸, their contribution to the credibility of the film is vital. The fact that *Malena* takes place in Castelcutò and that this is a specific village in Sicily during WWII is an irreplaceable element of the semiosis: all the "realia" that relate to this location add referential value to the fictional narrative. As it happens, this cohesive function is determined by the connotative and denotative nature of "realia". Their denotative nature influences the level of referentiality of the text, their connotative nature represents the symbolic and cultural meanings of the film.

In conclusion, we can look at "realia" as a twofold element that allows the study of the culture in the language and of the language in the culture. This means that, to fully understand the connotative dimension of "realia", we need to understand the symbolic dimension of the cultural meanings of a film. Only by creating a connection with the connotative dimension of "realia" and the symbolic meanings of a film can we hope to go beyond "the naked semantics of the lexical unit" (Vlahov & Florin in Osimo wd). Honorifics are a category of "realia" frequently used in Italian. They are polite terms of address required in many formal social encounters. They express respect and professional recognition; they carry legal value and denote social hierarchy. In the film *Malena*, they are used to convey all these meanings. But they are also used to express the bombastic homage, combined with the surreptitious and tenacious contempt, of which the public of many Italian works of cinema and literature is acutely aware. This is one of connotative levels of the honorifics that subtitles should try to preserve, because they reflect the symbolic meaning of the film. The analysis of the translating strategies used in the subtitles of *Malena* shows a general underestimation of this connotative level of communication.

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¹⁸ Together with proper names of persons (Caniato in preparation).

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