

Revoicing Otherness and Stereotypes via Dialects and Accents in Disney's *Zootopia* and its Italian Dubbed Version

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Abstract & Keywords

English:

Since the founding of the Walt Disney Company in 1923, animated feature films have been a pillar of the cinema industry, telling fascinating, timeless stories, and appealing to children all over the world. Over the years, however, these tales have undergone significant changes, variously due to sociocultural development, different perceptions of childhood, and above all the economic need to broaden their target audience. Mono-dimensional drawings and fairy tales have evolved into the computer-generated imagery of films, completely modern in their cinematography and narrative approach.

The growing importance and popularity of these movies has also attracted the interest of translation scholars who have turned their attention to the study of audiovisual texts for children and analysed at length the needs of this specific audience and the strategies adopted in dubbed and subtitled versions. As far as translation is concerned, one of the most interesting and challenging aspects of animated movies in general and Disney animated films in particular is the use of linguistic variation to construct the characters, highlight their geographical origins or generate humorous effects. Therefore, this study investigates how foreign accents and diatopic varieties of US English have been employed in the 2017 Academy Award-winning movie *Zootopia* (Byron Howard and Rich Moore, 2016) and dealt with by the Italian dubbing team during its translation. As the analysis demonstrates, some of the translation choices adopted for the Italian target text (i.e. using local dialects and accents) seem to foster stereotypes regarding the receiving culture and its social stratification, thus subverting in part the ST's original moral message of inclusion and mutual tolerance.

Keywords: dubbing, otherness, *Zootopia*, stereotypes, dialects, accents, animated films

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a continuation in the so-called 'Disney Renaissance' of the 1990s (Booker 2010: 37), which paved the way for a series of animated films that, while maintaining the narrative formula rooted in magic and fairy tales, were more mature than their predecessors in terms of content, references and humour. The turning point of the animation genre could be related to changing cultural perceptions of childhood (i.e. what children can or should understand), and therefore seen as a natural response to the evolution of the Western child and their 'loss of innocence' (ibid. 6, and *passim*). Put more simply, since nowadays children grow up faster, they can be exposed to more complex elements in animation. In more practical terms, however, this development was most probably a simple response to the commercial need for a broader audience after a period of creative stagnation and low box office sales (ibid. 40). Nonetheless, since then animation has been more directly addressed to children *and* their parents, thus creating audiovisual texts that operate on different layers of meaning and, in some cases, may even be defined as 'ambivalent texts' (Shavit 1986: 63-92). In other words, they can be interpreted by a child in a literal sense, but also read in a more sophisticated and satirical key by adults (some noteworthy examples are literary works like *Gulliver's Travels* and *Alice in Wonderland*, but also more recent films such as *Aladdin*; cf. O'Connell 2003).

Critically acclaimed for delivering a positive message of acceptance and tolerance and for telling a story that both kids and adults can emotionally invest in, *Zootopia* (Byron Howard and Rich Moore, 2016) is a computer-animated comedy-adventure produced and distributed by Walt Disney Animation Studios. In a nutshell, the story is set in a modern mammal metropolis called Zootopia, a fantastic city inhabited by English-speaking animals who wear clothes, listen to mp3 music, own computers and smartphones, use the latest apps and take selfies. The most relevant fact regarding Zootopia is that it is a place where both predators (e.g. lions, cheetahs, foxes etc.) and prey (e.g. bunnies, shrews and so on) live in harmony and where 'anyone can be anything'. The film features a heroine, Judy Hopps^[1] (voiced by Ginnifer Goodwin) who is in stark contrast with the Disney princesses of the past (cf. Streib et al. 2016 and their analysis of female characters in 36 mostly animated movies, which were 'G-rated' because suitable to be seen by children). Judy is the first bunny (rabbit) to join the city police force and, despite all prejudices, she solves a mysterious case (several preys have suddenly disappeared leaving no trace) with the help of a fox and con artist Nick Wilde (voiced by Jason Bateman), thus proving that things are seldom what they seem. Most importantly, the film has a complex, dynamic plot and adult themes that carefully construct a metaphorical subtext mirroring our society and its contradictions. For instance, Judy soon discovers that life in Zootopia is not as utopic as she thought. Since prey make up 90% of the population, there are prejudices and discrimination against the predator minorities, which are considered genetically prone to revert back to their primal instincts. This predator/prey dichotomy is the most important allegory in the film and has been used to broadly tackle contemporary issues such as racism and prejudice. Although the anthropomorphic animals may not be identified as belonging to any particular ethnic group, discriminatory references are made that range from forms of nativism and chauvinism to the general stereotyping of behaviour aimed at forcing the characters into meeting certain social expectations. Throughout the movie, stereotypes and biases are challenged and eventually defied.

Considering the context *Zootopia* strives to depict (i.e. one of mammals coming from virtually any part of the world), the audience does not need accents to be reminded of *Zootopia*'s multi-ethnic nature, although this has been found to be the main function of linguistic variation in Disney animated films (Lippi-Green 2012: 115). Nonetheless, the film does employ a wide set of foreign accents and diatopic varieties of US English in order to construct the characters, highlight the animals' geographical origins or generate humorous effects. Whereas the protagonists Judy and Nick speak Standard American English, Gideon and Judy's parents (Bonnie Hunt and Don Lake), who live in the rural neighbourhood of Bunnyburrow, have a slight southern accent; Duke Weaselton (Alan Tudyk) speaks New York City English; Mr. Big (Maurice LaMarche) and his daughter Fru Fru (Leah Latham) have an Italian mobster accent; Chief Bogo (an African buffalo dubbed by Idris Elba) has an East London accent that occasionally includes a South African accent; the Asian elephant Nangi (Gita Reddy) has an Indian accent.

Since the transposition of the linguistic varieties is worthy of special attention, in this study I examine the Source Text (ST) against its Italian dubbed version, or Target Text (TT), to verify what type of strategies and approaches were adopted to tackle this specific issue. Before proceeding, it seems also worth mentioning that the Italian TT follows the Disney tradition of assigning most of the characters' voices to local celebrities to achieve immediate recognition and a sense of familiarity: actors Massimo Lopez (Mayor Lionheart), Diego Abatantuono (Finnick) and Tuscan TV host Paolo Ruffini (Yax) are just some of the cast members. As the analysis below demonstrates, choosing to voice some characters by means of local actors and dubbers sporting specific accents has led to some criticism (i.e. mischievous Duke Weaselton is dubbed by Italian actor and comic Frank Matano using a heavy Neapolitan accent and some overt use of dialect). Consequently, the Italian TT appears to foster stereotypes regarding the receiving culture (Dore 2009), its social stratification and in particular 'the Otherness of the South' (Iaia 2015), thus in part subverting the ST's original moral message of inclusion and mutual tolerance.

2. Otherness and Language Variation in Animated Films

In order to properly understand the process of dubbing in recently released animated films, it is necessary to underline how animation has evolved over time in terms of storytelling, audience and ideology. As mentioned earlier, Booker (2010: 6 and *passim*) argues that developments in animated films may be the result of changes in modern children or rather, of their 'loss of innocence' in comparison with the past. New formulas have also been adopted by other companies, like Pixar Animation Studios or DreamWorks Animation, which have been even braver in their challenges to tradition. An example that is worth mentioning is Pixar's *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995), which was the first feature-length computer-animated film and also the first children's movie to include explicit adult themes and references.

If having a dual audience is by now a fundamental feature of animation, the specific target of children cannot be neglected, together with its educational value. Thanks to the technological boom, nowadays animated films can be easily purchased and watched over and over again, so that the messages and morals transmitted become deeply ingrained especially in the minds of very young children. Drawing on Nielson Company report (2009)[2], Lippi-Green (2012: 102) explains that, for instance, US children aged 2-5 watch more than 32 hours of television per week, while the 6-11-year-olds watch slightly less. In particular, the effect of animation on children's view of 'otherness' has become a popular topic of concern, seeing that Disney producers have made it their habit to set their stories in faraway lands (both in time and space); and in many instances their representation of the Other – visually, acoustically, and in a narrative sense – is somewhat problematic. Di Giovanni (2007) has highlighted the rather asymmetrical relationship that has formed between the narrating and the narrated culture in the Disney movies of the 1990s. In her opinion, cultural otherness remains paradoxically in the background, being referenced only in the form of global stereotypes and metonymies mainly created by the Western world. Meanwhile, American culture and ideology gain the upper hand, as they are projected in the depiction of Others in order to anchor the story to a familiar reality and prevent younger viewers from feeling a sense of strangeness or confusion. Therefore, the elements adopted to reference Otherness and/or establish a foreign environment are those commonly used in the West as symbols of these foreign cultures. For instance, food references are particularly common: visual and verbal references to the *baguette* are almost a must to construct a French socio-cultural context (ibid. 211). Other strategies include the modification of familiar idioms or exclamations to fit the culture portrayed (e.g. in *Aladdin* the line 'Hold on to your turban!' plays on the more straightforward 'hold on tight') and the random addition of elements and expressions belonging to contemporary Western civilisation (e.g. in the case of the ancient Greek protagonist of *Hercules* (Tate Donovan, 1997) by using colloquial expressions such as 'How you boys doing?'; ibid. 213).

It is also useful to remember that Americanisation strategies are a part of a bigger picture. Disney is accustomed to depicting Otherness because its movies are often based on non-American tales (Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Carlo Collodi, Hans Christian Andersen are just some of their sources). This also means that, in order to appropriate cultural icons and claim authorial rights (and allow the subsequent production of gadgets, toys, accessories and merchandising), some significant changes are bound to be made: that is the reason why in *One Thousand and One Nights* Aladino becomes *Aladdin* (Ron Clements, 1992), property of Disney and therefore untranslatable (Zabalbeascoa 2000: 25).

However, what really stands out in the portrayal of Otherness in animated movies is the use of linguistic variation, which contributes fundamentally to the construction of 'exotic' stereotypes. Lippi-Green's (2012: 101-29) study of a corpus of 24 full-length animated Disney films has shed light on the linguistic patterns that emerge from the comparison of settings and characters. Her findings show that most Disney characters speak Standard American English (SAE), with the general exception of movies set in places like France and Italy: in that case, some of the secondary characters speak with a foreign accent to remind the audience of the setting and create an 'exotic' feeling. Most interestingly, about 40 per cent of these characters are portrayed as evil. *Aladdin* provides a blatant example, with the Arabic protagonists looking and talking like Americans and all the evil Arabic characters portrayed with darker skin and heavy accents (ibid. 107). Even when they are not overt villains, non-SAE speakers are almost always simplified into stereotypes that prove to be limiting and problematic: for instance, African American speakers are often depicted as negative characters (like Louie in *The Jungle Book* or the crows in *Dumbo*) and Native Americans as savage and uncivilised (*Peter Pan*, *Pocahontas*; ibid. 118-119). Linguistic variation certainly poses a problem when transferring animated films across language and culture, especially in a country like Italy where accents and dialects bring about positive and negative connotations regarding its social stratification.

3. Dubbing Animated Films (in Italy)

Even in subtitling countries, audiovisual texts for children (from animated movies to TV cartoon series) are (almost) always dubbed given that they need to guarantee entertainment and comprehension for kids who cannot read or still do not read fast enough to keep up with subtitles (Chaume 2012: 6-10). The strategies and procedures chosen by translators are influenced by many factors beyond the technical issues of dubbing. For instance, problems arise when considering the needs of such a specific and composite audience; also, the different functions (mainly pedagogical and humorous) performed by this type of text pose many challenges to their transfer across language and culture. Therefore, dubbers have had to figure out new solutions to deal with new kinds of content and issues. In turn, many scholars have investigated the strategies employed to tackle language variation and accents in dubbed and subtitled versions of animated movies (Zabalbeascoa 2000, Di Giovanni 2003, 2007, Bruti 2009, Leonardi 2008, Minutella 2016). As far as dubbed Italian versions are concerned, these linguistic features have mostly been erased: standard language is used for all characters, especially when it comes to translating American accents and dialects, whose connotations are certainly tricky to convey through localised varieties.

It has long been remarked that dubbing in general, and Italian dubbing in particular, is characterised by standardisation and normalisation to ease the comprehension of the target audience. The term ‘doppiaggese’ (in English *dubbese*; cf. Pavesi and Perego 2006, Romero Fresco 2006), which is loaded with negative undertones, has consequently been used to evoke the artificial, clichéd way of speaking found in dubbed films. It could be argued that, in the case of animated films, using normalising strategies may have positive effects, as they usually lead to the omission of racist stereotypes and prejudices. For example, in the Italian version of *Aladdin* there are no differences between the language of the protagonists and that of the villains, which consequently eliminates the original, implicit notion that people with an Arabic accent should not be trusted (Leonardi 2008: 169; cf. Zabalbeascoa 2000: 28 for similar considerations regarding the Spanish dubbed version). Nonetheless, these strategies may also pose problems, as linguistic variation is generally part of characterisation, providing important clues on the place of origin, social background or personality of the main characters (Hodson 2014: 5-6), and therefore may need to be kept or transposed in some way. Echoing Camuzio (1993, quoted in La Polla 1994), La Polla has proposed the use of ‘doppiaggio creativo’ (creative dubbing), which entails the introduction into the TT of Italian accent inflections (usually relating to southern dialects) or other elements that are familiar to the target audience. For instance, one example may be found in Thomas O’Malley from Disney’s *The Aristocats* (Wolfgang Reitherman, 1970) (together with Jock from *Lady and The Tramp*) as he is a male hero who speaks a socially marked variety of US English rather than the ordinary SAE. The Italian version, which has been critically acclaimed and remains a masterpiece of Italian dubbing, manages to domesticate the original variety in a way that maintains the protagonist’s characterisation and makes him extremely appealing to the audience: O’Malley becomes Romeo, ‘er mejo der Colosseo’ (the best in the Colosseum), and speaks a funny Roman dialect which replaces the original Irish, maintaining the sociolinguistic associations that portray him as a friendly, laid-back alley cat who is at home anywhere, thus making him easy to relate to and memorable for the target audience (Bruti 2009). Similarly, Minutella (2016) shows how a host of regional Northern and Southern accents and dialects have been used to dub language varieties in *Gnomeo and Juliet* (Kelly Asbury, 2011). Raffaelli (1994: 285) has pointed out that the use of creative dubbing is not limited to animated films as it can be found in light-hearted productions such as *Many Rivers to Cross* (1956, Roy Rowland, *Un napoletano nel Far West*) as well as more ‘serious’ ones like *Trash* (1970, Paul Morrissey, *Trash. I rifiuti di New York*). Ferrari (2006) argued that creative dubbing can contribute to the success of the film or programme at the local level, as demonstrated in her analysis of the dubbing of the TV series *The Nanny* (Fran Drescher, 1993-1999, *La Tata*). Elsewhere, I have examined the application of creative dubbing in *The Simpsons* (1987- , Matt Groening), concluding that localising the original varieties into the dialects and languages of the target culture can be justified if it helps to maintain the humour and atmosphere of the ST (Dore 2009: 153). Nonetheless, it is important to note that in all the examples reported above creative dubbing seems to serve humour-related or characterising purposes; no negative connotations are directly or indirectly implied, as some cases reported below also show. Conversely, when translation choices aiming to represent Otherness also contribute to fostering stereotypes regarding the receiving culture and its social stratification, then it may be said that the means does not justify the end (i.e. entertaining the audience); part of the following analysis demonstrates how this happens.

4. Data Analysis

The 2017 Academy Award winning Walt Disney *Zootopia* was released and distributed in the US and worldwide in 2016. The title *Zootopia* is a compound word stemmed from the union of ‘zoo’, in reference to the animal population, and ‘utopia’, designing both the fantasy environment and the perpetuated illusion about the welcoming, open-minded nature of the city. For its UK release, this animated movie was renamed *Zootropolis*, and the title has been kept in several European countries, including Italy. The title derives from the words ‘zoo’ and ‘metropolis’, merely creating a reference to a large city or conurbation inhabited by animals. The change is subtle, but *Zootropolis* sounds more appropriate for an international audience (since non-US speakers pronounce ‘zoo’ and ‘utopia’ differently than Americans), despite losing the foreshadowing in the original title. A spokesperson for Disney also explained that: ‘In the UK we decided to change the US title to *Zootropolis* to merely allow the film to have a unique title that works for UK audiences’ (Lee 2016). However, another reason for this change was that in Europe the name *Zootopia* has already been adopted by many pre-existent brands (from a large-scale zoo in Denmark to a CD of children’s songs in England; *ibid.*). Therefore, the title change has helped avoid the risk of conflicting trademarks. *Zootopia* is set in a civilised fantasy world where humans have never existed, and animals have evolved and taken their place, becoming an allegory of our reality, including the flaws and attitudes that characterise our society. From this setting, a plot unfolds that entertains children while also developing an original subtext. As mentioned earlier, *Zootopia*’s protagonist Judy Hopps is a strong police officer nowhere near the prototype of the classic Disney princesses. Most importantly, she is an active heroine who manages to get acknowledged for her intelligence and hard work by trying over and over again until she eventually succeeds. However, she is also deeply flawed, and past experiences have instilled in her a latent mistrust of predators that occasionally emerges with Nick the fox. Eventually, Nick proves his worth to the world and becomes Judy’s best friend and colleague.

That said, and despite its positive message against stereotypes and linguistic profiling, *Zootopia* is not significantly innovative when compared to the classical stereotypes that Disney movies generally attach to their portrayal of dialects and foreign languages. In the analysis that follows, I will first examine how the cultural representation of Otherness in *Zootopia* is conveyed on the basis of stereotyped behaviours and attitudes. I will then go on to consider how stereotyping is fostered through linguistic variation and how it has been tackled in

translation. By considering the Italian dubbed version, I will show some examples of localisation (e.g. the transposition of American varieties into Italian dialects) that are undoubtedly funny and creative but run the risk of enhancing negative stereotypes related to the target culture.

4.1. Stereotyping and Prejudice

The general attempt to subvert stereotypes in *Zootopia* is achieved by using characters that visually defy expectations. For instance, sergeant Benjamin Clawhauser (voiced by Nate Torrence) plays against the stereotype of the slender, fast cheetah, as he is so big and slow he cannot even catch an otter ('I tried to stop her, she's super slippery! ... I gotta go sit down'). However, all the characters are subject to some form of bias and have to face different kinds of injustice, starting with the protagonists. Judy is underestimated and bullied solely because she is a bunny, which classifies her as 'cute' (see example (1) below), 'weak', and generally not suitable for a job in the police department. When she was little, she was harassed and beaten by a fox who called her 'a stupid, carrot-farming, dumb bunny'. It is only thanks to her determination and strength that she managed to turn things around, becoming the first bunny police officer. Yet, her achievements do not protect her from prejudice as Chief Bogo is clearly biased against her, assigns her to parking duty despite her attempts to show him she is 'not some token bunny'. Example (1) below offers an extremely fitting description of Zootopian society and its contradictions. In this scene, Judy has just arrived at the Zootopia Police Department Headquarters and meets Clawhauser at the front desk for the first time:

ST	TT	Gloss
CLAWHAUSER: I gotta tell ya, you are even <i>cuter</i> than I thought you'd be.	E devo dire che sei più <i>tenera</i> di quanto pensassi.	I must say you're more tender than I thought you'd be.
JUDY: Oh, ah. probably didn't know ... but a bunny can call another bunny 'cute' ... but when other animals do it ... little ...	Oh, ah. Forse non lo sai ... ma se un coniglio dice a un altro coniglio 'tenero' va bene, ma se a dirlo è un altro animale è un po'...	Oh, ah maybe you don't know but if a bunny calls another bunny 'tender' is OK, but if another animal says it, it's a bit...
CLAWHAUSER: I am so sorry. Me, Clawhauser, the flabby, donut-loving cop, <i>stereotyping you...?</i>	Mi dispiace tanto. Mi chiamo Benjamin Clawhauser, colui che per tutti è solo un grasso poliziotto patito di ciambelle <i>che fa brutte figure...</i>	I am so sorry. My name's Benjamin Clawhauser, and everybody thinks I'm just a fatty donut-loving cop who commits embarrassing gaffes...

Example 1

As hinted at earlier, *Zootopia's* main allegory relies on the prey/predator contrast, which could be identified with the white/black racial dichotomy. Yet, such a dichotomy is imperfect, and any race could be identified with the characters, as this example shows. However, since the producers' aim was not to tackle one single issue, but to send a universal message about preconceived notions and discrimination, these fallacies may be overlooked. From a linguistic point of view, the word 'cute' recalls 'nigger' along with its different connotations, as Judy's embarrassed reaction demonstrates. This offensive term used to refer to a black person is often used self-referentially by African Americans in a neutral and familiar way. Although Italian culture is rapidly opening up to other cultures and becoming multi-ethnic, the reference implied in the ST may only be partly understood as Italy does not have a deeply rooted African community that struggled against slavery for centuries. Nonetheless, the Italian translation of 'cute' as 'tenero' conveys the double meaning that still bears an important message of tolerance. It implies a notion of sweetness and cuteness if used figuratively, but it is also often applied to food with the meaning of 'easy to chew', which explains a bunny's dismay at being called that by a cheetah. Clawhauser's immediate apology includes a self-deprecating comment on the way he thinks others perceive him ('a flabby, donut-loving cop') and an overt remark on the way everyone is a victim of stereotyping. Interestingly, the Italian TT has replaced this remark with an even more self-disparaging comment ('fa brutte figure', 'commits embarrassing gaffes'), which unfortunately erases the implied reflection on stereotyping in the original.

Many other instances of the characters' stereotype-based attitude may be detected throughout the film. For instance, the condescending way Mayor Lionheart treats Assistant Mayor Bellwether, a sweet sheep belonging to the family of prey who, like the protagonist, is continuously neglected and humiliated. Bellwether herself explains to Judy that, in spite of her title, she is more of a 'glorified secretary' who 'never gets to do anything important', and even suspects that Lionheart gave her the job just to secure the sheep's votes.

While the mistreatment of these characters serves as a tool for showing how nobody is immune to social bias (even those who belong to the majority group), it may also be seen as a slight nod to misogyny. However, it seems to be no coincidence that the characters who engage in this type of career and must struggle against and put up with patriarchal attitudes are both female; and it is important to note that both Judy and Bellwether, in their refusal to accept the roles they have been relegated to, embody two different kinds of feminist characters (respectively the hero and the villain). Even more specific reference is made to sexist clichés about women, such as Nick's statements: 'Oh, you bunnies. You're so emotional.' or 'Are all rabbits bad drivers?'. None of these items pose major translation problems but should be mentioned because they prove that gender-based bias is in fact one of the themes of the film.

4.2. Accents and Dialects

I would now like to examine some of the characters who are connoted in terms of accents and dialects, along with the possible implications this brings about. One case that stands out is that of the characterisation of Chief Bogo, whose name derives from the Swahili word for 'cape buffalo' (*m'bogo*). As mentioned earlier, he is voiced by Idris Elba, who used his East London accent with a South African touch to it in order to underline the

animal's ethnicity. There has been extensive discussion among academics of the portrayal of African American English (AAE) in Hollywood films. Bucholtz and Lopez (2014: 684) state that the dominant mediated representations of AAE are usually based on a restricted set of grammatical, lexical and phonological features, and are often implicated in reinforcing racist stereotypes. Excluding a few exceptions, like *Lilo & Stitch* (Dean DeBlois, Chris Sanders, 2002) and *The Princess and the Frog* (John Musker, Ron Clements, 2009), featuring the first African princess, Disney productions have often portrayed African Americans as frightening, evil characters or stereotyped them as 'smart-mouthed, lazy, disrespectful' tricksters (Lippi-Green 2012: 119).

Although Chief Bogo's accent is clearly recognisable from phonological peculiarities like the dropping of consonants in syllable-final position (*otter* > *otta*) or the pronunciation of the final ng /ŋ/ as [n] (*taking* > *takin*), there are no stereotypical features in its grammar or lexis. He is introduced as close-minded and spiteful towards the protagonist, but he eventually comes to accept Judy and turns out to be a good chief. In the Italian translation, Chief Bogo speaks in standard Italian; therefore, any specific connotations regarding his ethnicity are erased.

Following Lippi-Green's assessment that in animated films foreigners are generally portrayed as evil, *Zootopia* depicts the only non-American characters as a villain. Mr Big (whose name contrasts humorously with the shrew's size) is a supposedly Italian crime boss^[3] clearly inspired by Vito Corleone (*The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) and is voiced by Maurice LaMarche, who affected an Italian accent to play the role. Mr Big is introduced as he threatens to 'ice' the protagonists (throwing them in cold water to kill them), surrounded by polar bears in suits who act like his personal bodyguards. The Italian portrayal of Mr Big perfectly adapts to the description made by Di Giovanni (2003) of the strategies adopted by Disney movies in the representation of Otherness: 'Italianness' is recreated using items that are familiar to the Western world and easily accessible to the original audience, starting from the reference to the Italian-American folk singer Jerry Vale and ending with the parody of the well-known movie *The Godfather*. In this scene, while speaking in his slow-paced raspy voice, Mr Big complains about Nick's betrayal:

ST	TT	Gloss
<p>MR. BIG: I trusted you into my home. <i>We broke bread together. Gram-mama made you cannoli.</i> And how did you repay my generosity? With a rug made from the butt of a skunk. A skunk-butt rug. You disrespected me. You disrespected my <i>Gram-mama</i> who I buried in the skunk-butt rug. <i>I told you never to show your face here again</i> and here you are, <i>snooping around</i> with this... [addressing Judy] What are you? A performer? What's with the costume?</p>	<p>Io mi fidavo di te, Nicky. Tu sei stato accolto in casa mia. Hai mangiato alla mia tavola. <i>La nonna</i> t'ha preparato i <i>cannoli</i>. E tu come ricambi la mia <i>ggenerosità</i>? Con un tappeto fatto con le chiappe di una puzzola. Un tappeto di chiappe di puzzola. Mi hai mancato di <i>rrishpetto</i>. Hai mancato di <i>rrishpetto</i> a me nonna, che ho seppellito nel tappeto di chiappe di puzzola. Ti ho detto di non farti rivedere mai più, ma tu ti fai <i>trovare</i> mentre ficchi il naso con questa... <i>Chi è?</i> 'n'attrice? <i>Pecché</i> è in costume?</p>	<p>I trusted you, Nicky. You were welcomed into my home. You ate at my table. Grandma made you cannoli. And how do you repay my generosity? With a rug made from the butts of a skunk. A rug of the butts of a skunk. You disrespected me. You disrespected my grandmother, who I buried in the skunk-butt rug. I told you not to show your face ever again and here you are, snooping around with this... What is she? An actress? Why is she wearing a costume?</p>

Example 2

Mr Big's short speech serves a comic function: he accuses Nick of disrespecting him and his family, calling on the stereotypical Italian notions of 'honour' and 'respect' generally associated with the Sicilian mafia. The cultural reference to 'cannoli' (typical Sicilian pastries) is also used to construct the foreign context, since they are considered a symbol of Italian cuisine and food items are immediately recognised by the audience. The word 'Gram-mama' serves the same purpose, modifying the informal English expression 'grandma' in order to make it sound more Italian, the labial /m/ assimilating the consonant cluster /nd/. Mr Big's expressions 'never to show your face here again' and 'snooping around' also recall typical mobster jargon, thus evoking and reinforcing existing biases regarding Italian Americans and crime.

The Italian version adopts a literal approach to the translation of Mr Big's speeches, with hints of informal spoken Italian (e.g. the contraction of 'ti ha' as 't'ha', 'chiappe' for butt). In addition, actor and dubber Leo Gullotta emphasises his own Sicilian accent in order to achieve the maximum humorous effect. The most distinctive phonetic traits in his performance are connected to the use of typical Sicilian phonology in standard Italian words, e.g. the initial /g/ in 'generosità' is pronounced as the Sicilian cluster gg- (/dʒ/); a strongly trilled /r/ (rr- cluster) can be found in both central and initial position (respectively 'generosità' and 'rispetto'); the use of the digraph {sh} (pronounced as /ʃ/) is found in 'rispetto' and 'attrice' (in the former the standard Italian pronunciation of 's' is /s/ whereas in the latter 'c' is pronounced as /tʃ/), the initial digraph {tr} in 'trovare' is pronounced as /tʃr/; and the assimilation in 'pecché' (/pek'ke/) where the /r/ of the standard Italian 'perché' (/per'ke/) is turned into /k/. From a lexical standpoint, Gullotta uses 'me' instead of the Italian standard possessive adjective 'mia', as well as the pronoun 'chi' instead of 'che' (what). Deleting initial vowel sounds when followed by a nasal sound (e.g. 'n for 'uno' or 'una') as in 'n'attrice' is typical for both Sicilian and informal spoken Italian. It is also interesting to note that the religious reference in the ST 'we broke bread together' was replaced by 'Hai mangiato alla mia tavola' (You ate at my table), which retains the idea of gathering together as a family to share food as well as the religious/moral duty of helping whoever is in need. As can be inferred, the existing stereotypes regarding Italians in the source culture and Sicilians in the target culture are consequently maintained and reinforced.

A similar approach is adopted in the creative transposition of Yax the Yak's and Duke Weaselton's voices. Respectively voiced by Tommy Chong and Alan Tudyk, in the original movie they are both characterised by particular speech patterns that are worth examining in detail. Yax is the owner of a naturist club where, much to Judy's dismay, the animals are all completely naked, despite living in a world where mammals have evolved into wearing clothes. He is portrayed as a free spirit, living according to his own philosophy. Consequently, he features a 'hippie' style of English, marked by slow speech with prolonged vowel sounds and frequent use of the words such as 'man' and 'dude' to refer to others. In the Italian dubbed version Yax is voiced by Paolo Ruffini, who plays the role with his natural Tuscan accent and amusing adolescent language used to convey the character's laid-back attitude. Example (3) is taken from the scene in which Judy and Nick visit Yax's Mystic Springs Oasis, the last place Otterton (the missing otter) had been seen going:

ST	TT	Gloss
YAX: You know, I'm going to <i>hit the pause button</i> right there because <i>we're all good</i> on <i>Bunny Scout</i> cookies.	Oh, <i>bella zietta</i> , tranquilla, <i>ti stoppo prima di subito</i> . Ce li abbiamo già i biscotti dei coniglietti scout.	Oh, cute little aunt, calm down, I am stopping you before right now. We already have bunny scout cookies

Example 3

Yax's discourse is again an example of the ingrained stereotyped views held by the animals living in Zootopia: bunnies are more likely to engage in simple, trivial tasks such as selling biscuits rather than investigating a missing member of the community. From a linguistic standpoint, Yax's idiomatic expressions 'hit [or press] the pause button' (meaning 'hold on', 'wait' or 'slow down'[4]) and 'we're all good' attempt to replicate the 'hippie' language that characterises him. What is more, the ST features the pun 'Bunny Scout', which is a play on the similar-sounding expression 'Boy Scout'. The Italian translation 'coniglietti scout' loses the wordplay. However, the use of the Tuscan accent, marked for instance by the attenuation of the post-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ in 'già' (pronounced [ʒ]), accompanies the bovine's peculiar physical appearance (he is unwashed, long-haired and surrounded by buzzing flies), compensating for this loss and providing an overall comic effect. The humorous function of the ST is also counterbalanced by the use of stereotypical Italian teen language, made of hyperboles, slang words, affixations and playful deformations (Ranzato 2015: 164). Examples in this sense are: the expression 'bella zia', a colloquial greeting from northern Italy emphasised here by the use of the diminutive suffix '-etta' (as Yax is addressing Judy, who is much smaller than him); the idiom 'hit the pause button', translated into a form of the verb 'stappare', deriving from the English 'to stop' and used with this meaning by teenagers or in the language of the media; finally, 'prima di subito' (before right now) is a forced, if not semantically incorrect, expression mainly used in advertising to convey a sense of urgency. In order to compensate for the loss of the original language varieties, Ruffini makes use of his Tuscan (Northerner) accent, which is usually perceived as humorous and is not loaded with negative connotations. Conversely, the dubbing team's choice to connote the mischievous Duke Weaselton (dubbed by Italian actor and comedian Frank Matano) with a heavy Neapolitan accent and his overt use of dialect has proved to be more controversial. In the ST, Duke Weaselton speaks with a thick Brooklyn accent displaying recognisable features of English slang (e.g. the contractions 'ain't' and 'em' and double negative; cf. Example (5) below). He is depicted as one of the antagonists: he is a thief, runs a stand of pirated DVDs, and declares that the only thing he cannot refuse is money. Example (4) below is taken from a scene in which Judy chases Duke after he has just robbed a store. While running away, Duke shouts:

ST	TT	Gloss
WEASELTON: Voyage-e, flat foot!	Bon Statt' buon, sbirro!	Take care, cop!

Example 4

The mispronounced French expression 'Bon Voyage-e' has been replaced with the Neapolitan 'statt' buon' (take care), thus probably aiming at producing laughs while also implying the character's ignorance and low social status, or at least his lack of education. The words he uses to address Judy in both texts concur in conveying this diastatic connotation. The English American slang 'flat foot' for 'police officer' is coloured with derogatory undertones, as is the Italian translation 'sbirro', although 'flat foot' is often translated in dubbed Italian using the more literal and neutral 'piedi piatti'. Weaselton's overt dislike of the police force is also reaffirmed in Example (5) below. In this scene, Judy and Nick meet Weaselton while he is at his stand of pirated DVDs while trying to find a lead to solve the case:

ST	TT	Gloss
NICK: Well, well. Look who it is <i>the Duke of Il Bootleg</i> .	Bene, bene. Guarda chi c'è <i>del principe contrabbando</i> .	Well, well. Look who's here, the duke of smuggling.
WEASELTON: What's the deal, Wilde? Shouldn't you be melting down a popsicle or something? Hey, if it isn't <i>Flopsy the Copsy</i> .	E tu che vuoi, Wilde? non hai da fare col <i>business</i> dei ghiaccioli? Ehi, lei non è la coniglietta <i>Zampepiatte</i> ? Sappiamo entrambi che non hai rubato delle cipolle ammuffite. Perché volevi quegli ululatori notturni, Donnolesi. Duke Donnolesi.	Aren't you busy with the popsicle business? Hey, isn't she the flat foot bunny? We both know you weren't stealing moldy onions. Why did you want those night howlers, Donnolesi. Duke Donnolesi.
JUDY: We both know those weren't moldy onions I caught you stealing. What were you <i>gonna</i> do with those night howlers, Wessleton?	Donnolesi. Duke Donnolesi. E non ti dirò niente, me.	And I'll say nothing to you, bunny. And you won't make

WEASELTON: It's coniglietta. E non riuscirai
Weaselton. Duke Weaselton. mai a farmi parlare.
And I *ain't* talking, rabbit.
And *ain't nothing* you can
do to make me.

Example 5

In the ST, Nick plays with Duke's name and calls him 'Duke of Bootleg' to sarcastically comment on his illegal business. Weaselton therefore remarks on the fact that Nick is also involved in some kind of illegal business (melting large popsicles and reselling them as smaller ones). Weaselton then addresses Judy as 'Flopsy the Copsy', alluding to the character Flopsy in Beatrix Potter's children book *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* (1909). Consequently, Judy intertextually refers to Duke as 'Wezzleton', and he immediately corrects her saying 'It's Weaselton'. Judy's reply contains a reference to a character of the Disney movie *Frozen* (Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, 2013). In the latter, the Duke of Weaselton is constantly being called the 'Duke of Weaseltown'; the humorous allusion stems from the fact that both the characters are voiced by Alan Tudyk, which is inevitably lost in Italian. The cultural reference to Beatrix Potter's character is also lost, but the translators have attempted to compensate for it by coining the compound word 'Zampepiatte' (flatpaw), which recalls 'piedi piatti' (flat foot) omitted in Example (4). They have also added the diminutive 'Coniglietta' (little bunny) to retain the original mocking tone. Interestingly, Duke's surname (Weaselton) is the only one that has been translated into Italian; using 'Donnolesi' allows the contrast to be maintained between Duke's surname and Judy's mispronunciation as 'Donnolino' (the suffix '-ino' also seems to allude to his small size). Duke's answer 'Donnolesi. Duke Donnolesi' recalls James Bond's famous catchphrase. In this excerpt, Weaselton/Donnolesi speaks standard Italian, but the original Brooklyn accent is replaced with Neapolitan, featuring a particularly marked pronunciation of /u/ in 'vuoi' (which is closed) and 'business' as /bɪzɪnɪs/.

The Neapolitan dialect and accent chosen to characterise Weaselton fulfil the comic function of the film and can therefore be seen as an instance of what I call *functional manipulation* (Dore 2019). Yet, it inevitably becomes problematic as it clashes with the film's message. As a matter of fact, when released in Italian movie theatres *Zootropolis* was met with the protests of the Associazione Culturale Neoborbonica [Neoborbonic Cultural Association][5], whose spokesperson expressed his concerns regarding the use of the Neapolitan dialect and accent that could ultimately reinforce already existing clichés at the expense of Neapolitans (22 February 2016)[6].

5. Conclusions

Like translating children's literature, dubbing animated films has always been challenging because of the specific audience it entails. Children cannot possibly understand difficult key themes, specific cultural references or overly sophisticated puns (Minutella 2016: 222-223). Until the 1990s Disney films followed very precise and 'protective' patterns, stemming from the ideas of the time about what children liked and what they should be taught: the storylines, the vocabulary and the humour were kept as simple and neutral as possible, with an almost total absence of popular or intertextual references. As a result, translators merely followed the same line, conforming to procedures of standardisation and lexical simplification.

Over time, things have changed considerably and films like *Zootopia* demonstrates that notable progress has been made particularly with respect to the way characters are depicted and conveyed through language. *Zootopia's* display of many instances of linguistic variation (including regional varieties, foreign accents and sociolects) proves Disney's attempt to be open to diversity and move away from the linguistic stereotypes used in the past (Lippi-Green 2012).

Consequently, the new content of movies like this requires a whole new level of creativity and balance to adequately convey the layers of meaning in the source texts, and the dual audience (children and adults) plays a fundamental role in the process of translation. All in all, it could be argued that the Italian translators have given special consideration to the comic *skopos* of *Zootopia* and the young audience it addresses. Italian dubbing often resorts to southern dialects in the translation of comedies, sitcoms and cartoons, thus producing humorous discourse and evoking the 'Otherness of the South' (Iaia 2015: 80). By the same token, in *Zootropolis* these strategies seem to compensate for the loss of the original language and may be easily excusable when they seek to convey the film's sociolinguistics and its humorous function (Dore 2009, 2019). Notwithstanding this, this approach has the same merits and issues of the ST in relation to cultural representation. On the one hand, it has the merit of translating and maintaining the diversity of the ST (e.g. employing southern and northern accents and including features of sociolects like a range of teen language), in a way the target audience can understand and relate to. On the other hand, the choice to adopt a target-oriented strategy hinging on stereotypes and instances of linguistic profiling (especially related to southern Italy) seems to subvert the ST's original message of inclusion and mutual tolerance. The dubbing of Duke Weaselton in particular seems to be one of those unfortunate cases in which the use of creative dubbing for comic purposes ends up perpetuating regional stereotypes related to the target culture, i.e. associating Naples (and southern Italy) with crime and theft.

Hence, far from suggesting that dubbing teams stop using creative dubbing altogether, I would propose considering its implications in more detail before opting for it.

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Notes

- [1] Here the pun involving Judy's surname 'Hopps' is inevitably lost in Italian, as also happens with 'Bunnyburrow' where the pun plays with the two homophonous nouns 'burrow' and 'borough'.
- [2] Nielsen Company Reports are available free of charge at: http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/search.html?q=2009+report&q1=Report&sp_cs=UTF-8&view=xml&x1=contenttypetag&i=1 (last accessed: 25/08/2018)
- [3] However, cf. *The Official Book of Zootopia* that describes Mr Big as a self-made man of humble origins who runs a legitimate business, at [http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Mr._Big_\(Zootopia\)](http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Mr._Big_(Zootopia)) (accessed 20/08/2018).

[4] Cf. The definition provided by the Urban Dictionary for 'press the pause button', <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=press%20the%20pause%20button> (accessed 07/11/2017). I am aware that the Urban Dictionary cannot be considered an entirely reliable source of information. However, I use it here to provide a general understanding of Yax's speaking style.

[5] The *Associazione Culturale Neoborbonica* is a cultural movement aimed at reconstructing the history of southern Italy and promoting southern pride. More info at www.neoborbonici.it (accessed 05/09/2018).

[6] Cf. 'Neoborbonici contro la Disney: «Nel film "Zootropolis" luoghi comuni anti-napoletani», chiesto risarcimento», *Il Mattino*, February 22, 2016 (accessed 05/09/2018).

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