

How Does Neapolitan Organised Crime Swear in English and Spanish? The case of Gomorrah in two Different Audiovisual Modalities*

HEATHER ADAMS – MATIAS VEDASCHI OZZOLA

Abstract

The exponential boom in audiovisual content creation this century has led to a significant increase in the translation of audiovisual texts, and, subsequently, in the study of these translations from a wide range of perspectives. Likewise, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to swearing as a social phenomenon, its representation in different types of texts and the ways in which this type of language is then rendered in translation. The last twenty years have seen an upsurge in the research carried out on the translation of swearing in films and series, typically in the rendering in other languages of expressions considered vulgar, rude, foul, blasphemous or taboo that were originally uttered by fictional characters in English. More recently, with the emergence and boom of streaming platforms, an increased amount of audiovisual fiction has been translated into English. In this context, this study describes and analyses the swear words used in the original Neapolitan dialect of the Italian series Gomorrah, based on the type of swearing used, the systems of reference alluded to by taboo expressions and the functions said instances of swearing fulfill. In a second step, it also presents translations of these elements in the English (subtitled) version and the Spanish (dubbed) version, in the light of the constraints involved in each of the modalities of audiovisual translation and the translation techniques used, together with an indication as to whether or not the strength of the language used has been intensified, preserved or attenuated in each translated version.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, Gomorrah, taboo expressions, functions of swearing, translation into English.

NAPOLİTEN ÖRGÜTLÜ SUÇ İNGİLİZCE VE İSPANYOLCA NASIL KÜFREDİYOR?

Öz

İçinde bulunduğumuz yüzyılda görsel-işitsel ürünlerdeki üstel artis, görsel-işitsel metinlerin çevirisinde önemli bir artışa ve buna bağlı olarak bu çevirilerin geniş bir yelpazede incelenmesine yol açmıştır. Aynı şekilde, küfür etme olgusu da toplumsal bir olgu olarak giderek daha fazla ilgi görmüş, farklı metin türlerinde nasıl temsil edildiği ve bu tür bir dilin çeviride nasıl aktarıldığı üzerine çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Son yirmi yılda, özellikle filmler ve dizilerde kullanılan küfürlerin çevirisi üzerine yapılan araştırmalar artış göstermiştir. Bu araştırmalar, genellikle, İngilizce konuşan

* Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; heather.adams@ulpgc.es. ORCID: 0000-0001-7822-431X
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; matias.vedaschi@ulpgc.es. ORCID: 0000-0002-2753-573X
Gönderilme Tarihi: 13 Aralık 2024 Kabul Tarihi: 6 Mart 2025

kurgusal karakterler tarafından söylenmiş, bayağı, kaba, iğrenç, hakaretimiz veya tabu olarak kabul edilen ifadelerin diğer dillere nasıl aktarıldığı üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. Daha yakın bir tarihte ise, yayın platformlarının ortaya çıkışı ve hızlı büyümesiyle, görsel-işitsel kurguların İngilizceye çevirisinin arttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, İtalyan dizisi Gomorrah'nın orijinal Napoli lehçesinde kullanılan küfürleri, kullanılan küfür türleri, tabu ifadelerin gönderme yaptığı kavramlar ve bu küfürlerin hangi işlevleri yerine getirdiği temelinde tanımlamakta ve analiz etmektedir. İkinci aşamada ise, bu unsurların İngilizce (altyazılı) versiyonu ve İspanyolca (dublajlı) versiyonlarındaki çevirilerini, görsel-işitsel çeviri türlerinin her birinde karşılaşılan kısıtlamalar ve kullanılan çeviri teknikleri ışığında sunmakta; ayrıca her bir çevrilmiş versiyonda kullanılan dilin gücünün yoğunlaştırılıp yoğunlaştırılmadığını, korunup korunmadığını ya da hafifletilip hafifletilmediğini belirtmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: görsel-işitsel çeviri, Gomorrah, tabu ifadeler, küfrün işlevleri, İngilizceye çeviri.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to compare the use of swear words in the taboo-laden Italian series Gomorrah in the original Neapolitan and the translated version in English and Spanish, respectively. To this end, we will focus on the use and subsequent translation of these expressions in the mafia crime series set in Naples, based on the novel by Roberto Saviano, which was initially adapted as a film (2008), then shown on Italian TV (2014), and in Spain and the UK (2014). It has subsequently been added to streaming services in all three countries (Sky, in Italy and the UK, Max in Spain and Prime Video in UK and Spain), so may be viewed under the various subscription services offered by these platforms in accordance with their programming. The main language used in the original version of the series is in Neapolitan dialect, peppered with some standard Italian, while the Spanish version was dubbed and it was aired with English subtitles in the UK.

Dusi (2019) describes the process of adaptation of the original novel into first a film and subsequently a five-season series comprising a total of 58 episodes, each of which lasts 50-60 minutes. Previous academic study on the translations of the various formats in which the story of a Neapolitan mafia family and mob were told has examined the translation into English of the original novel (Caliendo, 2014) and includes a number of studies on translation into English of both the film and the series. These include qualitative studies of the translation of the 2008 film directed by Garrone into standard Italian and English subtitles (Cavaliere, 2010) and of the original Neapolitan dialogues and the English subtitles (Costa, 2020). In terms of the series, attention has been paid to how the characters were created in both Italian and in English, based on a study of the blurbs provided with the DVDs (Fruttaldo, 2017a) and on their construction based on lexical- semantic analysis of their dialogues (Fruttaldo, 2017b) as well as to the representation of women in the series in Italian and English (Balirano & Fruttaldo, 2021). Raffi's 2017 study, meanwhile, focused on the translation into English (subtitles) of culture-bound elements and revealed a tendency in the translated text to remain faithful to the original. As a result, the English subtitles include "foreign" Neapolitan elements rather than domesticated English equivalents, to use Venuti's terms (1995). Of

particular relevance to our research is a qualitative study of the swear words used in the film and series based on the Italian version and the translation into English subtitles (Cavaliere, 2019) that concludes that, inevitably, given the opaque nature of the original Neapolitan dialect for anglophone viewers, a considerable amount of the cultural element of the swear words found in the original version does not make it through to the English subtitles.

The Spanish versions have received less attention. Caprara & Sisti's 2011 exploration of elements of linguistic variation in the English and Spanish translations of the film, together with some aspects of the dubbing process that led to some omissions in Spanish version is complemented by Cruz García & Vedaschi's study (2023) of the translation into English and Spanish of nicknames in the series. This latter study detected a marked difference between the "neutralization" of nicknames in the English TT compared to the preservation of the original (Neapolitan) of these elements in the Spanish, leading to a "foreignization" in this latter TT.

Against this backdrop of academic interest in linguistic elements of the story, we set out to carry out a quantitative analysis illustrated by examples of the swearing found in the original version of the dialogues in the 12 episodes of the first season of the series. Our two objectives were to determine firstly, what type of expressions and references were used and what pragmatic functions the swear words fulfilled, and secondly, the techniques used to translate these expressions into English and Spanish, respectively, in order to be able to establish whether the level of vulgarity had been intensified, maintained or attenuated.

To contextualize our study, we will briefly present audiovisual translation (AVT), a burgeoning field of both professional practice and research, the technical characteristics of dubbing and subtitling, as possible conditioning factors for the two translations in question and the recent trend in AVT into the English language, as well as pertinent definitions and classifications regarding swearing in general and taboo expressions in particular. We will also frame translation techniques in AVT, with specific mention of the translation of swear words in this specialized field, and will offer a brief description of the series, the main characters and other pertinent information. The description of the corpus of our study and the methodology applied are followed by our findings in terms of the presence of swear words in the original Neapolitan, broken down by category and function. We then present the techniques used to translate these expressions into English (subtitles) and Spanish (dubbed) and indicate whether these translations preserved, toned down or accentuated the force of the taboo language used. A comparison will then be drawn between these findings in each of the translated versions, illustrated with examples. Finally, our conclusions will review our results and the avenues for future promising lines of research that they open up.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Audiovisual Translation

The technological advances in content distribution over the last 50 years have generated a proliferation of TV channels, streaming platforms and social media, creating a growing demand for AV content that has increased exponentially in recent years, bringing with it a boom in AVT (Zanotti, 2022). In turn, this has led to a corresponding expansion in research into AVT, reflected in the increase in academic publications since the 1980s (Valdeón, 2022). The voracious demand for new

content has led programmers to source their products in non-English speaking countries, leading to a significant rise in the amount of AVT content being translated, or localized, into English, constituting a new market trend (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023).

Audiovisual translation can be carried out in many different modalities, as shown in table 1, including those that facilitate intralinguistic access to audio visual material by people with hearing issues (through a specific type of subtitling), on the one hand, and poor or non-existent sight (through audiodescription), on the other. The remaining modalities involve rendering an original message almost always expressed orally in one language in another, target, language. This can be done either in written format (in subtitles, intertitles or surtitles) or through oral speech (in dubbing, voice over, respeaking, free commentary or interpreting). A further distinction can be drawn between professional subtitling and dubbing, the most prevalent types of practice, and their amateur equivalent, fansubbing and fandubbing. In this study, we work with one subtitled target text (TT) and one dubbed TT, so the constraining technical factors that come into play in each case are relevant: in the case of subtitling, the limits established of a maximum of 2 rows per subtitles and 37 characters/row (Díaz-Cintas et al., 2007), and in dubbing, the need to ensure a) synchronicity with characters' lip movements (Chaume, 2006) and b) that the (written) translation of the original text (OT) sounds like spontaneous oral speech (Chaume, 2012).

Revoicing	Subtitling
1. Dubbing	1. Conventional subtitling
2. Partial dubbing	2. Intertitling
3. Voice-over (including narration)	3. Respeaking (live subtitling)
4. Free commentary	4. Surtitling
5. Simultaneous (and consecutive) interpreting	5. Subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing
6. Audiodescription for the blind and the partially sighted	6. Fansubbing
7. Audiosubtitling	
8. Fandubbing (including fundubbing)	

Table 1: AVT modalities (Chaume, 2012).

Swearing

As Pavesi & Formentelli (2023) state, swear words are desemantised taboo expressions through which we (humans) vent emotions and convey attitudes. By their very nature, they have intrinsic potential to offend others. They are used in fiction to portray characters' emotive reactions and stylistic choices. Swearing can be divided into annoyance and social swearing, the former relieving tension and stress, the latter helping to foster and consolidate relationships in contexts where swearing acts as a kind of social glue.

Swear words can be classified by function as either expletive, abusive or insulting, social or stylistic (Allan and Burrige, 2009). The uttering of an expletive serves to portray the frustration of a character, with no intention to offend, and may express anger or point to some “external element that bothers him, physically or psychologically” (Xavier, 2024, p. 6). When a swear word is intended to offend someone else or express some kind of negative quality regarding an object, it can be considered an insult, or form of abuse. Swearing with a social function can convey either bonds of intimacy and solidarity or “generate conflict between speakers” (Xavier, 2024, p. 7). This function may reflect solidarity among speakers, through a common use of swear words, or create a distance between characters, with the addressee or others being shocked by the use of foul language. Finally, where swearing is used in fiction with a stylistic function, it makes the discourse more lively and more expressive. As Xavier concludes,

As such, taboo words are not arbitrary in films because they may portray 1) sporadic moments of frustration or anger of the character; 2) tense communicative situations where the character insults the other person; 3) relationships of solidarity or distance between two or more characters; or, finally, 4) moments when the character resorts to taboo to make the speech more emotional. (Xavier, 2024, p. 7)

Wajnryb (2005), in her glossary of swearing-related terms, points to the following main types of swearing, in terms of whether the denotative meaning conveys profanity, blasphemy, obscenity or vulgarity, or the taboo words used, as per table 2.

TYPE	DEFINITION
Profanity	Swearing through the use of words that abuse anything sacred. Profanity is broader than “blasphemy”, may not entail an intention to vilify and may simply use religious terminology such as “God” or “Jesus” in a secular and indifferent manner.
Blasphemy	Blasphemy entails deliberate vilification of religion, or anything associated with religious meaning.
Obscenity	Explicit use of indecent or taboo words to refer to intimate parts of the body and the body’s functions and products.
Vulgarity	Foul language that breaks taboos related to intimate language, vulgarity is broader than “obscenity” but is loosely used interchangeably.
Taboo words	Words considered as being off-limits by a particular culture, and may include anything that disrespects a religion, public reference to

	intimate acts, stigmatized topics (e.g. mental illness or birth defects, a person's detention in prison). Also death, income, or religious affiliation.
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 2: Swearing types (based on Wajnryb, 2005).

A further examination of taboo words leads us to the following categories: sex (anatomy, obscenity), scatology (body fluids or solid, death), religion (blasphemy, profanation), family (current and/or ancestors) and *nominalia* (disrespectful) (Fuentes-Luque, 2015).

TABOO TYPE	REFERENCE TO
sex	anatomy, obscenity
scatology	body fluids or solid, death
religion	blasphemy, profanation
family	current and/or ancestors
<i>nominalia</i>	Disrespectful name-calling

Table 3: Taboo Language (Fuentes-Luque, 2015).

It is these categories of taboo language that we will use in our analysis of swearing in the OT and two translated texts (English & Spanish).

Translation Techniques

The strategies, methods, procedures and techniques that translators can be seen to have applied in their work have been addressed by a number of authors, including Vinay & Darbelnet (1958), Nida (1964), Nida & Taber (1969), Taber & Nida (1971), Vázquez Ayora (1977), Margot (1979), Newmark (1988), Delisle (1993), Venuti (1995) and Molina (1998).

In this study, we use the term "translation technique" as it is understood by Molina & Hurtado Albir (2002) to refer to an operation that is generally verbal, the result of which is explicitly visible in the translated product, used to render a translated equivalent at micro-textual level. A technique, in this sense, affects the translated product, is designated by comparison to the original version, refers to textual micro-units, is discursive and contextual as well as functional.

Although a wide range of variables may influence the techniques used by any translator when undertaking a particular assignment, with all the intra- or extra-textual parameters involved, the AVT modalities included in this study require particular care to be taken with the linguistic choices made. The need to reduce the length of the verbal text leads subtitlers to omit less important information and condense the language used (Díaz-Cintas, 2003). To this end, this same author states that subtitlers tend to replace longer words with shorter synonyms, merge sentences together and use abbreviations. In order to ensure proper lip-synch, Chaume (2020, p. 112) explains that translating for dubbing involves the use of repetition, gloss, periphrasis, anacoluthon, paraphrase, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms, reduction and omission.

More specifically, studies on the translation of swearing in audiovisual media have analysed the TT(s) in comparison with the OT from a number of different perspectives (see Valdeón's succinct overview, 2024). The translation of swear words into English in audiovisual content originally

created in other languages has received less research attention, almost certainly because, until recently, the overwhelming majority of AVT was based on original English versions that were translated into other languages. The small body of work in this area features the subtitling modality of AVT and includes Gedik's (2020) exploration of the loss of culture-specific elements when Turkish swear words are subtitled into English through literal translation or omission, a similar conclusion to that drawn by Thawabteh, Al-Adwan & Shqair (2022) in their study of swearing originally expressed in Arabic and then translated for subtitles into English. Meanwhile, Barrera-Rioja's study focusing on omission in the English subtitles of the Spanish series *El Vecino* (2023) concludes that, although many of the swear words of the OT are omitted in their English subtitled version, there was a tendency to maintain the level of vulgarity, sometimes through the compensation for omissions through the "toning up" of some non-marked language in the OT, suggesting a more nuanced approach than those found when translating from Turkish and Arabic.

Studies highlighting the use of certain techniques to neutralize or mitigate the strength of the vulgarity transmitted, either as a form of censorship or for fear of offending the target audience, particularly in subtitling (Díaz-Cintas et. al., 2021; Díaz Pérez, 2020, among many others) have been complemented by Valdeón's findings (2020), showing that, in the first two decades of this century, the dubbed translation into Spanish of a corpus of US and UK series actually tended to use stronger language than the English OT, in stark contrast to previous tendencies towards neutralization of potentially offensive content (seen in many studies including, for example, that of Ávila Cabrera [2016], based on the DVD version of the film *Reservoir Dogs*). In his specific study on the preservation, intensification and attenuation of the translation into Spanish of swear words, Valdeón (2020) used the taxonomy of techniques shown in the table.

Technique	Explanation
Omission	Deleting a swear word
Toning down	A milder swear word is used in the TT than in the OT
Literal translation	The exact same word is used in the TT
Addition	A swear word in the TT where none was present in the OT
Intensification	A stronger swear word in the TT than in the OT

Table 4: Translation techniques (swearing in ATV) (Valdeón, 2020).

For the purposes of our study, we have added that of "substitution", where a swear word in the OT is replaced by a different one in the TT, with no discernable difference to the level of vulgarity.

As we can see in the table below, the use of different techniques will either attenuate, preserve or intensify the level of vulgarity conveyed by the language used in the TT as compared to the OT.

Overall effect in the TT	Technique
Attenuation	Omission, toning down
Preservation	Literal translation, substitution
Intensification	Addition, Intensification

Table 5: Overall effect generated by the use of specific techniques

The TV Series

Our study explores the AVT of swear words in the series *Gomorrah*. The story is set in Secondigliano, a district of Naples in the 2010s. It features the Savastano family, the main drug-dealing family of Secondigliano, and their enemy, Salvatore Conte, the other boss of the district. Pietro Savastano, the patriarch, has entrusted his right-hand man, *Ciro di Marzio*, with training his son, *Gennaro*, to take on the role of the next boss of the neighbourhood and the family. Early in the season, Don Pietro finds himself imprisoned and unable to lead the clan. His wife, Donna Imma tries to take control of it but various factions within and outside of the clan take advantage of the situation and *Ciro* turns out to be a traitor.

THE STUDY

Corpus

To conduct this study, we have used the DVD versions of the series distributed in Italy (2014), Spain and the UK. Specifically, we have carried out a quantitative analysis of the OT, the subtitled version in English and the dubbed version in Spanish of the twelve episodes of the first season (out of five). Each episode is approximately 50 minutes long. The reason for comparing *Gomorrah* in two different translation modes is that these were the AVT modes through which the corresponding target audiences had first access to the series in these countries.

Methodology

As far as the methodology is concerned, we watched the episodes of series 1 several times, noting down the pertinent information from the OT and the two TTs in one excel spreadsheet, which enabled us to gain a complete overview of our corpus of study. Specifically, we watched the OT twice, to take note of all swear words used in the OT, the time code, the character who swore in each instance and a very brief description of the context. Subsequently, one further viewing (pausing where necessary) enabled us to note down how the OT swear words were rendered in TT1 (English subtitles), and another to do the same with the TT2 (in the dubbed track in Spanish). A further two viewings were dedicated to thoroughly checking all our data.

It is worth pointing out that, in the expressions used to swear, there are no significant differences between the Neapolitan dialect and standard Italian, as we can see in the following two

examples, as *cazzo/cazzi* (example 1) remain unchanged while in example 2, the only difference is a contraction between the pronoun (*ci*) and the auxiliary verb (*hai*).

Episode 1 – Season 1 [00:30]	
Attilio, an old member of the can of Pietro Savastano, is talking to Ciro about his kids. He is worried about the fact that they are using social networks.	
OT	Italian text
Attilio: Sta sempre con quello cazzo di computer! Che poi vuliss sape', che cazzo c'ha da scrive? Ciro: Che scrive? Scrive li cazzi suoi!	Attilio: Sta sempre attaccato a quel cazzo di computer. IO vorrei sapere,/ma che cazzo deve scriverci? Ciro: Che scrive? Ci scrive i cazzi suoi.

Example 1: No significant differences between the Neapolitan dialect and standard Italian.

Episode 9 – Season 1 [01:15]	
Michele, the new mayor of a village next to Naples, is talking to Gennaro explaining what he can do in it.	
OT	Italian text
Gennaro: mamma mia, Michele! C'hai fatto due palle tanto!	Gennaro: Mamma mia, Michele!/Ci hai fatto due palle così.

Example 2: No significant differences between the Neapolitan dialect and standard Italian.

Findings and Discussion

Swearing in the OT

The OT includes 311 instances of swearing, with 88% pertaining to the categories of sex and scatology, followed a long way behind by nominalia and finally family, as shown in chart 1.

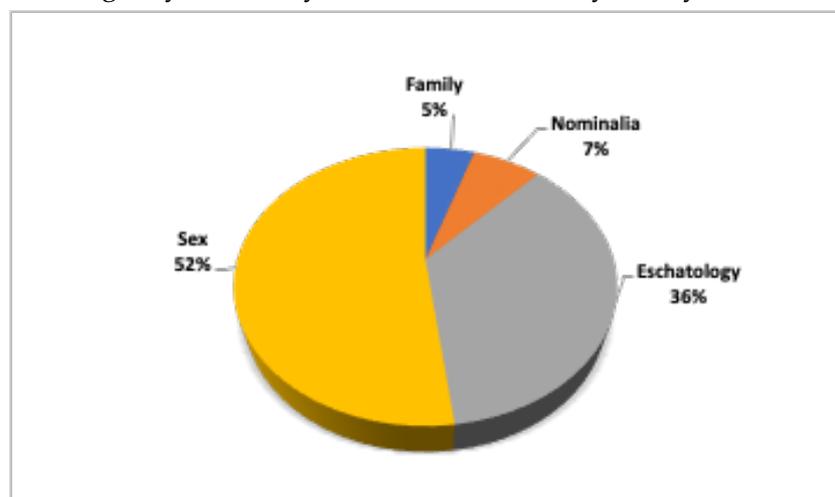


Chart 1. Swear words in the original text.

Table 7 shows all the swear words with more than 10 occurrences, and we have specified the type and the category they belong to. We have also given a literal translation into English to facilitate understanding. Besides these expressions, a further 48 were found, revealing a wide range of different expressions.

Swear word OT	English (literal)	Number of occurrences	Taboo type
Cazzo (adjective)	Dick	58	Sex
Stronzo	Turd	31	Scatology
Stronzata	Bullshit	22	Scatology
Un cazzo ("nothing")	A dick	22	Sex
Pezzo di merda	Piece of shit	18	Scatology
Bastardo	Bastard	10	Family
Cagarsi sotto/addosso	To shit under/on	10	Scatology
Uomo di merda	Man of shit	10	Scatology

Table 6: Swear words found ten times or more in the OT.

As we can see the most commonly-occurring swear word is *cazzo* used as an adjective, with 58 occurrences. However, it is also used in our corpus as a noun to replace the Italian word "niente" ("nothing") or in expressions like "rompere il cazzo" ("to be a pain in the ass"), "fottersene il cazzo" ("not to give a fuck") or "testa di cazzo" ("dickhead"). We can also observe the derived word "incazzato" ("pissed off") and the verb "incazzare/incazzarsi" ("to piss off"). This swear word in all its forms is found a total number of 128 times, which is 41.2% of all swear words in the OT.

If we observe the occurrences of swear words in the OT by function, we can see that 39.55% (123 occurrences) uses correspond to the abusive function, followed by 38.58% (120 occurrences) fulfilling the expletive function. Significantly fewer occurrences (16.72%, 52 cases) can be considered as expressing a social function while only 5.14% (16 occurrences) displayed a stylistic function. Thus, we can see that more than 78% of the swear words used in the characters' dialogues either conveyed

an insult or abusive meaning or portrayed the venting of some kind of negative feeling. The much smaller number of social uses tended to convey distance rather than camaraderie, while the stylistic uses serve to intensify the characters' utterances. The following examples illustrate the four functions, respectively:

Episode 11 – Season 1 [12:03]		
Salvatore Conte is talking to the members of his clan about their plan to kill Pietro Savastano.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Conte: Quando avremo fatto fuori isso e chille merde de suoi guaglioni , noi abbiamo a spartirce u territorio.	Conte: When we wipe him out / and those shits of his, // we'll split the territory	Conte: Cuando hayamos terminado con él y los mierdas de sus lacayos nos repartiremos el territorio

Example 3: Example abusive function.

In this case “merde” in the OT is used by Salvatore Conte to insult his enemies and show that his clan is more powerful than the Savastano's one. This function is maintained both in the Spanish dubbed version with the use of “mierdas” and in the English dubbed version by using “shits”, i.e. by means of literal translation.

Episode 1 – Season 1 [27:11]		
Ciro is talking to Gennaro. He is complaining about the fact that there are many associations against criminality in the neighbourhood.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Ciro: Dice che è peccché hanno messo un'altra cazzo d'associazione! [...] e colle guardie in mezzo alle palle nun se vende!	Ciro: They say there's another fucking citizen watch group. [...] that brings cops And you don't sell with cops around.	Ciro: Dicen que es porque han puesto otra puta asociación. [...] y con la bofia tocando las pelotas no se vende.

Example 4: Example expletive function.

Ciro is concerned about the creation of another neighborhood association against drug dealing and shares his feeling with Gennaro Savastano. The expletive function of the OT given by *un'altra cazzo di associazione* [...] in *mezzo alle palle nun se vende* (literally “another dick association [...] in the middle of the balls you don't sell”) is maintained in the Spanish dubbed version: “otra puta asociación [...] tocando las pelotas no se vende” (“another fucking association [...] touching the balls that don't sell). As far as the subtitled English version is concerned, the translator maintained the expletive function with “another fucking citizen watch group” but omitted it in the second half “you don't sell with cops around”, thereby partially maintaining the degree of vulgarity.

Episode 2 – Season 1 [42:52]		
Pietro is suspicious of Ciro and decides to talk to him.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Pietro: Si tu me reccunti strunzate a me, io mi incazzo.	Pietro: And if you tell me shit... I'll get pissed.	Pietro: Y, si tú me cuentas cuentos a mi, yo me cabreo.

Example 5: Example Social function (distance).

Pietro Savastano suspects that Ciro could be the traitor inside his clan and decides to talk to him. In order to scare him and to show who is in charge, Pietro talks very directly. In fact, as we can see in the OT Pietro uses some swearwords (*strunzate* [“bullshit”] and *mi incazzo* [“I get pissed off”]) to underscore Ciro's inferiority. The English translator maintained this function in the subtitles by translating the swearwords literally whereas the Spanish dubbed translation only partially transfers the function: instead of using “tell me shit” (“si tú me cuentas mierdas”), we hear “si tú me cuentas cuentos”, which can be translated as “if you tell me lies” and “io mi incazzo” is rendered as “yo me cabreo” (a way of saying “I get angry” that is colloquial, but falls short of vulgarity).

Episode 9 – Season 1 [33:13]		
After realizing he did the dirty work for Ciro, Daniele meets his best friend and tries to tell him the truth: he killed one Salvatore Conte's man.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Bruno: Ma che hai fatto? Che cazzo hai combinato?	Bruno: What the fuck did you do?	Bruno: ¿Qué has hecho? ¿En qué cojones te has metido?

Example 6: Example stylistic function.

Daniele, Ciro's lackey, finds out that Ciro tricked him into killing one of Salvatore Conte's men and realizes that Ciro is the real traitor of the Savastano clan. Scared to death, Daniele meets his best friend Bruno to tell him the truth. These examples show the stylistic function of the use of the swearword *cazzo* ("dick" in English) in the OT which is maintained in the Spanish dubbed version with "cojones" ("balls" in English) and in the subtitled English version with "fuck".

Translation into English and Spanish

Chart 2 shows the frequency with which each translation technique was used in the English subtitles.

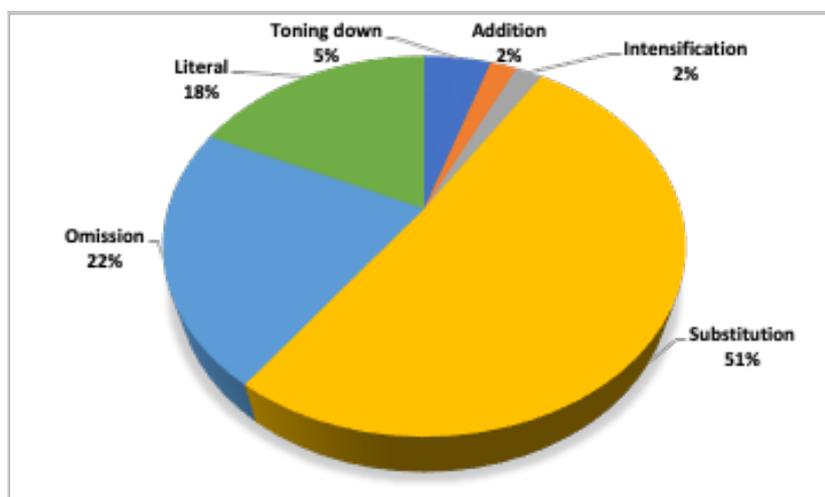


Chart 2. Translation techniques used in the subtitled English version.

If we analyse this data in terms of the specific effect generated in the translated text related to the level of vulgarity by comparison to the OT, we can see that the techniques that preserved the same level, namely substitution and literal translation, jointly constitute 69% of the total. Those that serve to intensify the level of vulgarity (addition and intensification) add up to just 4% of the total, while techniques that attenuate said level (omission and toning down) represent 27%. Thus, the majority of the instances of swearing maintained the same level of vulgarity in the English subtitles as in the OT. The level of vulgarity was increased in only a symbolic number of cases, while just over a quarter of swear words were attenuated in the English version.

A similar pattern emerges in the Spanish dubbed version as we can see in chart 3. The techniques used most frequently were substitution and literal translation, followed at a considerable distance by omission and toning down and finally addition and intensification.

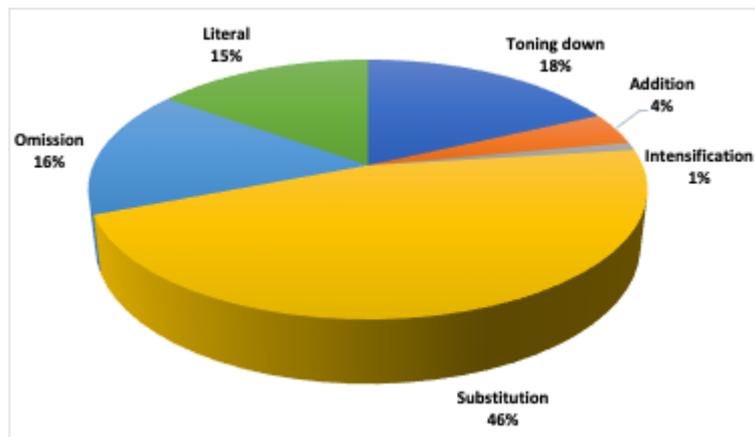


Chart 3. Translation techniques in the dubbed Spanish version.

The techniques that preserve the same level of vulgarity in this case make up 61% of the total, those that serve to intensify the level of vulgarity (addition and intensification) add up to just 5% of the total, while techniques that attenuate said level (omission and toning down) total 34%. Once again, the tendency is to maintain the same degree of vulgarity, with only a small number of cases of intensification observed, and in over 30% of instances, the swear words were less strong in Spanish than in the original.

Comparison Between the Two Translated Versions (English and Spanish)

The comparison between the two translated texts (TT) shows that, in both cases, the majority of the swear words found in the original were translated by swear words of a similar intensity or degree of vulgarity, regardless of whether they were literal translations or substitutions. This is the case in a slightly higher proportion in the English subtitled version than in the Spanish dubbed version. Intensification was observed in a minimal proportion of cases in both translated texts, and the difference between the two was tiny. The percentage difference detected between the two TTs in the case of preservation (a higher percentage in the English version than in the Spanish) was compensated for by the same percentage difference in cases of attenuation, which was more prevalent in Spanish than in English.

Overall effect	TT1 (EN)	TT2 (ES)
Preservation	69%	61%
Intensification	4%	5%
Attenuation	27%	34%

Table 7: comparison between the two translated versions

Further analysis of the specific techniques used to each general effect in both translated versions reveals that, in the case of preservation, both translations contain significantly more instances of substitution than of literal translation (51% and 46% as opposed to 18% and 15%, respectively, for the English and Spanish TTs). Where the level of vulgarity was intensified, addition and intensification were used to a similar (low) extent in both TTs (2% for each technique in TT1 and

1% for each technique in TT2). By contrast, the figures for the use of each of the two techniques that produce an attenuation of vulgarity differ between the two TTs. On the one hand, the English version reveals four times as many uses of omission as those of toning down (22% vs 5%), while the Spanish version yields similar percentages for each technique (18% toning down and 16% omission). The comparatively high percentage of omission in the English version is very probably a reflection of the spatial limitations of subtitling, by comparison with the less rigid constraints of dubbing.

The following examples illustrate these numbers. We have provided two examples each for the preservation of the level of vulgarity in each case, one for intensification (given the very low incidence of this in both TTs) and two each for attenuation.

Examples of Preservation

In this example we can see how the reference to *culo* (“ass”) is maintained in both cases using the literal translation technique.

Episode 1 – Season 1 [10:50]		
Attilio and Ciro are waiting to meet Pietro Savastano and Donna Imma welcomes them.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Attilio: Guagliò! Che stai facendo? Le stai guardando u culo?	Attilio: What are you doing? You’re looking at her ass?	Attilio: Eh, pero ¿qué estás haciendo? ¿Le estabas mirando el culo?

Example 7: First example of preservation

In this example Ciro and Attilio are attending a meeting with Pietro Savastano and all the members of the clan. When they arrive at Pietro’s home, Donna Imma, his wife, welcomes and show them the way to get to the meeting. Attilio notices that Ciro is looking at Donna Imma’s bottom and reprimands him. The word *culo* (“ass”) in the OT is literally translated both in the Spanish dubbed version (“culo”) and in the English subtitled version (“ass”) thus preserving the swearword in the OT.

In the following example we can see how the degree of vulgarity of *cazzo* is maintained in both cases using the technique of substitution.

Episode 2 – Season 1 [08:51]		
Pietro is talking to all members of his clan and Bolletta, another member, is late.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Pietro: Bullè ... 'ndo cazzo stiv'?	Pietro: Bookie ... Where the fuck were you?	Pietro: Bolletta ... ¿dónde coño estabas?

Example 8: Second example of preservation

In this second example all the members of the clan are gathered together to talk about the next moves against Salvatore Conte, the archenemy of the Savastano's clan. Bolletta, a member of the clan, arrives late and Pietro gets angry and asks him very sharply where he had been. We can see that the degree of vulgarity of the word *cazzo* ("dick") in the OT is maintained in both Spanish and English translation using the technique of substitution: the Italian *cazzo* ("dick") is rendered in Spanish as "coño" (pussy in English) and in English as "fuck", which are both expressions used as intensifiers or to convey disdain, just as *cazzo* is in Italian.

Example of Intensification

Example 9 shows one of the few cases in which the translated versions include stronger language than the original *cessa*, in this case through the technique of intensification.

Episode 7 – Season 1 [05:27]		
Ciro is very angry because Donna Imma wants him to sell drugs in a very little area of the neighbourhood. He is now less powerful than before. <i>Ciro</i> insults her.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Ciro: 'sta cessa!	Ciro: Bitch!	Ciro: ¡Será zorra!

Example 9: Example of intensification.

In this example *Ciro* is mad at Donna Imma and he insults her because she has reduced his power in the clan since she took control of it and has now sent him to sell drugs in a very small area of the neighborhood. In the OT *Ciro* used the very informal word *cessa* which means "very ugly woman" or "worthless thing". We can see that through the technique of intensification both the Spanish and English translation included stronger language: the Spanish "zorra" means "slut" and in English "bitch" is used to underscore *Ciro's* anger.

Examples of Attenuation

In this first example of attenuation we can see a change in the specific genital referent that tones down the intensity of the expression used.

Episode 4 – Season 1 [20:41]		
Pietro Savastano is in prison. His lawyer is talking to him.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Pietro: Tu, sai pecché sono quello che sono? Pecché quando ero piccirillo accusi, ca, si qualcuno mi scassa u cazzo, non me faccio da parte.	Pietro: You know what I am. Even as a kid, If someone broke my balls, I never stepped back.	Pietro: Tú sabes porqué soy como soy. Porque cuando era un crío, si alguien me tocaba las pelotas, no me quedaba quieto.

Example 10: First example of attenuation.

Pietro Savastano is in prison and his lawyer is talking to calm him down because he is misbehaving. However, Pietro does not want to know, saying that nobody and nothing can change him. He uses swear words to describe his sharp character: [...] *si qualcuno mi scassa u cazzo* [...] (“if someone breaks my dick”). The English and Spanish versions include a change in the specific genital referent (“if someone broke my balls” in English and “Si alguien me tocaba las pelotas” [“if someone touched my balls”] in Spanish, a modification that tones down the specific expression in both cases.

In this second example of attenuation both translations omit the reference to genitalia present in the OT.

Episode 2 – Season 1 [20:24]		
Malamore, one of the members of the clan, is trying to tell Pietro Savastano that they can act in a different way, but Pietro doesn't accept any pieces of advice.		
OT	TT1	TT2
Pietro: E me lo vuoi dicere tu quello che è giusto? Malamore: No, volevo solo dicere che.... Pietro: Allora non dicere un cazzo, Malamò.	Pietro: Is it you who says what's right? Malamore: No, I just meant... Pietro: Then shut up, Malamò!	Pietro: ¿me vas a decir tú que es lo mejor? Malamore: No, solo decía que ahora... Pietro: ¡Entonces te callas la boca, Malamò!

Example 11: Second example of attenuation.

In this example all the members of the clan are together because Pietro wants to dictate the next steps in the war against Salvatore Conte. Malamore, one of the oldest members, tries to suggest a different way forward, contradicting Pietro's plans. Pietro tells him to shut up using a swear word (*cazzo* ["dick"]) as a way of demonstrating his power. Both the Spanish and English translation attenuate the degree of vulgarity by omitting the reference to genitalia (equivalent force would be conveyed in Spanish by "¡Entonces te callas la puta boca" and in English by its literal translation "Then shut the fuck up, Malamò!"). Neither of the TTs conveys the same function as the OT in this instance: a swear word has been replaced by informal language in both cases.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study contemplated two main objectives: based on a quantitative analysis of the swear words found in the dialogues of the characters in the original Neapolitan version (OT) of the series *Gomorra*, on the one hand to discover the types of swearing used by systems of reference alluded to, as well as the specific function of these expressions in the portrayal of the characters, and, on the other hand, to establish the comparative level of vulgarity of the OT and each of its translated counterparts (English subtitles and Spanish dubbed version), by means of the translation techniques used in each case. In terms of the first objective, we can see that the most frequent systems of reference are those of sex and scatology (88% of cases), and that uses are predominantly expletives or as abuse/insults, and, to a lesser extent, expressions of distance between characters rather than as expressions of solidarity to foster community and stylistic devices to intensify the exchanges of dialogue, all of which is consistent with the depiction of uneducated criminals operating in an unsophisticated mafia organization ruled by violent imposition of authority in a regime of fear and mistrust.

The target texts maintain this linguistic representation of the characters in the frequency, type, function and, broadly speaking, the degree of vulgarity of the swear words used in their dialogues. However, the incidence of attenuation was significant (more than 25% in both texts) and can be attributed largely to the use of the technique of omission in the English subtitles, as we would expect given the need for concision, and to a similar degree of omission and toning down in the Spanish dubbed dialogues. This latter case, in which the intensity of 34% of all swear words was attenuated when translated in Spanish, concurs with the more traditional approaches taken to the translation of potentially offensive elements in films and series and presents an interesting contrast to Valdeón's vulgarisation theory for series translated into Spanish from English over the last two decades. Further study is required to determine whether the source language plays a role in the degree of vulgarity transmitted in the Spanish dubbed version. Finally, very little intensification in the level of vulgarity in the two TTs was observed and the few cases identified could perhaps constitute a very modest attempt to compensate the level of attenuation present in the translated version, in line with Barrera-Rioja's findings in the English subtitles of *El Vecino*.

This intratextual analysis (Xavier, 2024) leads us to contemplate a future extratextual analysis, in terms of how the specific use of swearing in this series contributes to the creation of the characters, set in the specific milieu of organised crime in Naples, with all its cultural constructs and linguistic variation (Caprara et al., 2011; Caliendo, 2014; Cavaliere, 2019), both in the original text and in the

two target text; further work in this sense would complement the results presented here, which would also be enriched by an in-depth study of the use of the various systems of reference in taboo language by language/culture to determine whether any significant patterns emerge. This study also contributes to the incipient studies of the translation of swearing into English in other series/films, as there is considerably less literature available on AVT in this direction, and also into Spanish but in this case from source languages other than English.

REFERENCES

- Allan, Keith and Kate Burridge (2009). *Taboos and their origins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ávila Cabrera, J. (2016). The treatment of offensive and taboo terms in the subtitling of *Reservoir Dogs* into Spanish. *Trans*, 20, 25-40.
- Balirano, Giuseppe and Antonio Fruttaldo (2021). "The Representation of Camorra Ladies in AVT: Gomorrah-The Series and the Negotiation of Interpersonal Meanings across Cultures", *Textus, English Studies in Italy*, 131-154.
- Barrera-Rioja, Noemí (2023). "The Rendering of Foul Language in Spanish-English Subtitling: The case of *El Vecino*", *Íkala, Revista De Lenguaaje Y Cultura*, 28 (2), 1-20.
- Caliendo, Giuditta (2014). "Italy's other Mafia: A journey into cross-cultural translation", In Angelelli, C. (Ed.) *The Sociological Turn in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. John Benjamins. 73-92.
- Caprara, Giovanni and Alessia Sisti (2011). "Variación Lingüística y traducción audiovisual (el doblaje y subtitulado en Gomorra)", *AdVersuS*, 21, 150-169.
- Cavaliere, F. (2010). "Gomorrah: crime goes global, language stays local", *European Journal of English Studies* 14(2), 173-188.
- Cavaliere, Flavia (2019). "Framing Neapolitan Swear words in Contemporary AVT Scenario: Swearing as Lingua-cultural Phenomenon", *Lingue Culture Mediazioni – Languages Cultures Mediation (LCM Journal)*, 24, 1-43.
- Chaume, Frederic (2006). "Dubbing", *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*. Elsevier, 6-9.
- Chaume, Frederic (2012). *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing*. Routledge.
- Chaume, Frederic (2020). "Dubbing", In Bogucki L., Deckerr, M. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility* (pp. 103-132). Palgrave MacMillan Cham.
- Costa, Clara. (2020). *Film Translation - A Comparative Analysis of English Subtitles in Gomorra* (Garrone, 2008). BA dissertation. DOI 10.13140/RG.2.2.16561.51047.
- Cruz García, Laura and Matias Vendaschi Ozzola (2023). "The translation of Neapolitan mafia nicknames in the TV series *Gomorra* into English and Spanish", *Language Value*, 16(2), 100-123. Universitat Jaume I ePress: Castelló, Spain.
- Delisle, Jean (1993). *La traduction raisonnée. Manuel d'initiation à la traduction professionnelle de l'anglais vers le français*. Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.
- Díaz-Cintas, Jorge (2003). *Teoría y práctica de la subtitulación inglés/español*. Ariel.
- Díaz-Cintas, Jorge and Lydia Hayes (2023). "Role Reversal: An Overview of Audiovisual Translation into English", *Íkala*, 28-2, 1-18.

- Díaz-Cintas, Jorge and Aline Remael (2007) *Audiovisual translation: subtitling*. Manchester & Kinderhook: St. Jerome
- Díaz-Cintas, Jorge and Aline Remael (2021) *Subtitling: Concepts and Practices (second ed.)*. New York: Routledge.
- Díaz Pérez, Francisco Javier (2020). "Translating swear words from English into Galician in film subtitles: a corpus-based study", *Babel* (66.3), 393-419.
- Dusi, Nicola (2019). "Adapting, Translating and Reworking Gomorrah", *ADAPTATION*, 12, 3, 222-239.
- Fruttaldo, Antonio (2017a). "Constructing Transcultural Identities: The Case of Gomorrah – The Series", In Landolfi, L., Federici, E., Cavaliere, F. (Eds.), *Transnational Subjects: Linguistic Encounters – Selected Papers from XXVII AIA Conference, II*, 158-170.
- Fruttaldo, Antonio (2017b). "The (Re)Presentation of Organised Crime in Gomorrah-The Series: A Corpus-based Approach to Cross-Cultural Identity Construction", Loffredo Paolo initiative editoriali (Ed.) *I-LanD Journal: Identity, Language and Diversity*, 1, 86-102.
- Fuentes-Luque, Adrián (2015). "El lenguaje tabú en la traducción audiovisual: límites lingüísticos, culturales y sociales", *E-AESLA*, 1.
- Gedik, Tan Arda (2020). "Translation of Turkish Swear Words in Subtitling: GORA", *International Journal of English Studies and Translation*, 8-1, 19-26.
- Margot, Jean-Claude (1979). *Traduire sans trahir. La théorie de la traduction et son application aux textes bibliques*. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme.
- Molina, Lucía (1998). *El tratamiento de los elementos culturales en las traducciones al árabe de "Cien años de soledad"*. Dissertation. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
- Molina, Lucía and Amparo Hurtado Albir (2002). "Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach", *Meta*, XLVII, 4, 498-512.
- Newmark, Peter (1988). *A textbook of translation*. London: Prentice Hall International.
- Nida, Eugene A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Nida, Eugene A. and Charles R. Taber (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Pavesi, Maria and Maicol Formentelli (2023). "The pragmatic dimensions of swearing in films: Searching for coherence in dubbing strategies", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 217, 126-139.
- Raffi, Francesca (2017). "Gomorrah – The Series Flies to the UK: How Is Gomorrah's World Rendered in English Subtitles?", L., Federici, E., Cavaliere, F. (Eds.), *Transnational Subjects: Linguistic Encounters – Selected Papers from XXVII AIA Conference, II*, 179–193.
- Taber, Charles R. and Nida, Eugene A. (1971). *La traduction: théorie et méthode*. London : Alliance Biblique Universelle.
- Thawabteh, Mohammad Ahmad et al. (2022). "Subtitling Arabic profanities into English and that aggro: the case of West Beirut", *Heliyon*, 8 (12), Article e11953.
- Valdeón, Roberto A. (2020). "Swearing and the vulgarization hypothesis in Spanish audiovisual translation", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 155, 261-272.
- Valdeón, Roberto (2022). "Latest trends in audiovisual translation", *Perspectives*, 30- 3, 369-381.

- Valdeón, Roberto (2024). "The translation of swearwords: A pragmatics perspective", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 224, 74-79.
- Vázquez-Ayora, Gerardo (1977). *Introducción a la traductología*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Venuti, Lawrence (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. London: Routledge.
- Vinay, Jean-Paul and Jean Darbelnet (1958). *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A methodology for translation*. Paris: Les éditions Didier.
- Wajnryb, Ruth (2005). *Expletive Deleted: A Good Look at Bad Language*. New York: Free Press.
- Xavier, Catarina (2024). "Swearing in the Movies: Intratextual and Extratextual Functions of Taboo", *Anglosaxonica*, 22-1, 1-15.
- Zanotti, Serenella (2022). "Audiovisual translation", In K. Malmkjaer (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of translation*. Cambridge University Press, 440-460.

Melek İlayda Sarı

Türk Romanında Bilimkurgu

(1996-2019)



Günce Yayınları

Oktay Yivli

Öykü Nasıl Okunur

modern öykü ve yöntem



Günce Yayınları

İPEK DEMİR

Türk Romanında Distopya

(1990-2019)



Günce Yayınları

Yazma Sanatı

Türkçe Doğru ve Etkili Yazma Teknikleri

Prof. Dr. Önder Göçgün



Günce Yayınları