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**Audiovisual
translation: a
descriptive and
comparative study
of taboo language
and swearing in the
Italian dubbings of
*South Park***

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A me stessa, ai miei sforzi e alle
mie battaglie.

"Swearing is an art form. You can express yourself much more exactly, much more succinctly, with properly used curse words."

(Coleman Young)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Taboo language and swearing are part of everyday communication. They are important means through which people express emotions and attitudes depending on the context and situation, which is crucial in helping them feel part of a certain community. All languages have their taboo and swear words which are distinguished by several factors: social and historical changes, language evolution, and cultural differences. Indeed, because each culture determines its own taboo and swear words based on its own values and beliefs, it can be difficult to find a good solution when it comes to translation. Depending on the extent of intensity and social acceptance, vulgar language may be subjected to censorship or self-censorship and then eliminated or toned down by means of euphemisms or other strategies to convey more or less the same meaning. This is what happens in audiovisual translation, when TV series or films are adapted from one culture to another. Hence, the objective of this thesis is to comment on the transposition and adaptation from English to Italian of taboo and swear words in the two Italian dubbings (old and new) of the American TV sitcom *South Park*. The series in question was chosen for its great use of vulgar language, black humor, and satire. The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will introduce audiovisual translation and the various types of language transposition. Particular attention will be paid to dubbing, especially in Italy, and the technical and linguistic constraints in its adaptation and transposition. The second chapter will be devoted exclusively to taboo language and swearing. It will begin with the origin and definition of taboo language and swearing and will continue with a description of the various areas to which they belong and the semantic and pragmatic functions they play within language and society. Also, within the same part, their use in movies and television series will be discussed. The chapter will then focus on vulgar language in audiovisual translation: its censorship and transposition within dubbing, with particular attention to the influence of English in Italian adaptation of taboo language and swearing. The third chapter, on the other hand, will introduce animated TV series and the sitcom that was taken as an example for this study. This section will describe the characteristics of *South Park*, such as the story, plot, and characters, and then focus on the distribution and censorship of it in America and Italy. Finally, the last chapter will present a descriptive study based on both a qualitative and quantitative comparative

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approach of the transposition for the two Italian dubbings of the sitcom. In the introduction to the study, the objectives and methodology of the analysis will be clarified. Next, the areas of taboo and swear words together with the translation techniques used for the research will be defined. After that, examples from the sitcom episodes will be presented along with comments on their translation. Hence, through the analysis of numerical data extracted from the examples, it will be possible to see how and to what extent taboo elements succeed or fail in overcoming interlingual and cross-cultural barriers. In other words, it will be revealed whether the two Italian dubbings manage to maintain the ideological value of taboo language and swearing or whether these terms and expressions are modified, toned down, or censored. In addition, it will be confirmed or disproved whether the first Italian dubbing is less vulgar and therefore more censored than the second one. A summary of the work done will then be presented in the conclusions.

CHAPTER 1

AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

1. An overview of audiovisual translation

With the advent of sound cinema in 1925 thanks to the film and television production company *Warner Bros.* the film industry began to pose the problem of exporting film products abroad. Language and cultural barriers were major problems because they made it impossible to export American films to countries where English was not spoken. Therefore, the film industry began to consider what solutions were most appropriate for this problem. At first, each film was shot in different languages to create multiple versions that would then be distributed in countries corresponding to the target language. The actors had to act in multiple languages, and this was very difficult. Hence, this method was quite effective, but it was economically very expensive. Then, the cinema began to create "parallel films" (or *remakes*): the original film was shot with actors of other nationalities to bring the film closer to the target culture and language. The plot of the film was the same, only the actors and language changed. Finally, thanks to the development of new technologies and thanks to globalization, audiovisual translation began to spread. Audiovisual translation (TAV in Italian and AVT in English), is a special form of translation that is not limited to the simple linguistic and cultural transposition of a text from language A to language B but is a more complicated process in which several elements must be considered. As Ranzato (2010) states, "Language transfer occurs on textual types that present an interrelation between different codes: visual, verbal and sound." In fact, the text or "audiovisual product" is a multimodal product composed of multiple semiotic systems that simultaneously communicate with each other through distinct channels or codes. For this reason, audiovisual translation is also called multimodal translation including both screen translation and multimedia translation because audiovisual products are distributed through electronic devices such as the television or computer screen (Chiaro 2013: 2). Perego and Taylor (2012) try to define this complex mechanism in their definition: "The term audiovisual translation refers to an activity involving the transfer of the overall meaning of a source text and the subsequent production of a new text equivalent to the original one in another language."

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This definition implies the fact that the translator has to create a "new" text because translating a complex system such as a film or a multimodal text means "to break it down into all its constituent parts and then reconstructing it" (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato 2005). Indeed, to interpret a multimodal text, the translator must consider all its semiotic modalities including language, image, music, color, and perspective. All these components are important in conveying the entire message of the work to the audience (Chiaro 2013: 1). To give a more concrete definition then, Delia Chiaro (2013: 1) suggests that audiovisual translation is the transmission of linguistic and cultural elements of audiovisual media from the source language to the target language. Therefore, it could be argued that audiovisual translation focuses not only on interlingual transfer but even on inter-semantic transfer (Pérez-González 2019: 30). There are many and varied modes of audiovisual translation. Thanks to the spread of new technologies and new media, today AVT has become a broad field that also includes new types of translation, such as subtitling for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and audio description for the blind or those with certain visual impairments (Chaume 2013: 106). In general, audiovisual translation modes fall into two categories: on the one hand, there are all types of audiovisual text transfer between two different languages and cultures (subtitling, dubbing, etc.); on the other hand, all those that take place within the same language and culture (subtitling for the deaf, audio description, etc.). In terms of technological development, thanks to the introduction of DVDs, the growth of the Internet, and the vast amount of multimedia material available online, the need to make content understandable to the entire population have boosted the growth of audiovisual translation (Perego, 2005). Popular channels such as *YouTube*, for example, offer subtitling services that make the material on their portal accessible to everyone. Although self-generated subtitles are not as reliable, they remain useful for understanding even a small part of the meaning. This shows how important it is to overcome the language barriers with translations available to all. In addition, technologies have made audiovisual translation increasingly easier and faster to accomplish (such as the creation of subtitles). Today there are easy-to-use professional software programs that speed up and facilitate the work of translators. In addition to these, several free programs can be downloaded online that have made the practice of fansubbing and amateur subtitling increasingly popular (*Subtitle Workshop*, *Media Subtitler*, *Virtual Dub*, and *Aegisub*). As already mentioned, audiovisual

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translation represents a growing field of translation, which, however, has only developed in the last century. Its peculiarities, due to its polysemiotic character, have made its inclusion in classical translation and its recognition at the academic level difficult (Díaz Cintas, Remael 2007). In fact, this discipline has only become an object of study at the academic and theoretical level since the 1950s, as it was previously considered outside the scope of translation (Díaz Cintas 2004). In terms of naming, however, the term "audiovisual translation" was chosen because it is more comprehensive than, for example, the often-used term "film translation," which excludes a good portion of audiovisual products (DVDs, documentaries, video games) that are translated for export to other countries.

1.1. The codes of AVT

As has already been mentioned, audiovisual text is a very complex medium because it consists of verbal and nonverbal elements, the meanings of which may be clearly "visible" or "hidden" by other forms of communication. For this reason, the translator must consider all the components that accompany the linguistic transmission such as that consisting of the visual sphere formed by the images and the kinesics and mimicry of the characters, and the aural sphere consisting of both dialogues and voice-overs or sounds and music. The characteristics of the latter such as pitch and volume are also important. Therefore, to be able to reproduce all this in the target language, according to Chaume (2004) and Ranzato (2011) the translator must consider the different codes that characterize AVT:

1. The linguistic code: is part of all types of translation. In audiovisual translation, the linguistic code of an audiovisual product consists of a written text that must be represented orally and appear spontaneous and natural. Therefore, the translator in the target text must maintain the spontaneity and the characteristics of the original text.
2. The paralinguistic code: other signs characterize normal conversation and are important in the transfer of meaning, namely short or long silences, pauses, tone of voice, or laughter. All of these must be included in translation because they are an essential part of human conversation. In subtitles, this is possible through the use of punctuation (three dots for pauses, exclamation marks for tone of voice, etc.).

3. The music and special effects code: background songs are part of the translation process and must be adapted considering rhythm, syllables, accentuation, and rhymes. The translator should try to understand whether the song lyrics are crucial to the meaning of the multimodal product and whether they should be translated or not. For dubbing, the translator may choose to use the original soundtrack or a different one. For subtitling, on the other hand, the sung text is represented using italics or appropriate symbols to differentiate it from the spoken text.

4. The sound arrangement code: is the last of the sound channel codes that have a direct impact on the translator's work. The audiovisual text is made up of diegetic sound, which belongs to the story, and extra-diegetic sound such as off-screen voices. Since extra-diegetic voices are not tied to the image and their origin is not visible on the screen, in his work the translator has the opportunity to express himself more freely because he does not have to consider lip synchronization, one of the constraints present in dubbing.

5. The iconographic code: is one of the fundamental codes among those transmitted through the visual channel and represents a major constraint for audiovisual translators. It represents the transposition of icons, clues, and symbols into the target language and culture, which must be aligned with the sound component. In general, iconographic symbols cannot be translated linguistically except when accompanied by an explanation or when their translation is essential for the comprehension of the story. In these cases, the iconography is explained through translation or by referring to it within the dialogue. The aim is to achieve a translation that respects the image by including some linguistic sign more or less related to the iconography on the screen.

6. The photographic code: represents changes in lighting, perspective, and colors. For example, in dark scenes where the identity of the person speaking is unknown, italics are used in subtitles.

7. The framing code (or planning code): is very important because the various shots of a subject or object give meaning to the subject or object itself. In Dubbing practice, it takes on even more importance because in close-ups the translator has to consider lip synchronization to choose the right words to achieve phonetic or lip synchronicity without changing the meaning of the words. In these cases, the level of creativity required is very high.

8. The mobility code: represents proxemic and kinetic signs and distinguishes the language of cinema from all other languages. Proxemic signs represent the spatial distance in communication between people, that is, the distance between the characters involved in a scene and the camera. In subtitling, when the translator stands in front of a scene in which more than three people are speaking at the same time, the distance between the character and the camera could be the criterion for choosing the subtitle to be inserted. In this case, the people or the person near the camera are chosen first because they are likely to be more relevant in terms of meaning.

9. The graphic code: represents all the written and descriptive parts such as titles, subtitles, and captions found in a film. These parts should be translated if they are essential for a complete understanding of the message.

10. The syntactic code (film editing): represents how images are linked together such as the position of the various scenes within the audiovisual work. Visual or verbal repetition of an iconic sign in a scene can lead to an overlong translation. One solution may be the use of a pronoun, synonym, or ellipsis in the translated text. However, the various translation problems can be solved by looking at the entire scene or subsequent scenes.

1.2. Techniques of language transfer

There are different types of audiovisual translation. A multimodal text or audiovisual product can be subjected to various modes of language transfer depending on the requirements. The various modes differ from each other according to the technical means used or the translation solutions implemented. Each can be more or less effective and have its advantages and disadvantages. One of the important things to emphasize is that all of these techniques are intended to promote the inclusion of all kinds of audiences (from normal-sighted and speaking people to the deaf and the blind). Several scholars have described the various audiovisual translation techniques including Gambier (2003), Perego (2005), Chaume (2013), and La Grassa and Troncarelli (2016). According to La Grassa and Troncarelli (2016), they can be divided into two broader categories: *captioning* and *revoicing*. The first one is defined as a written text inserted into the audiovisual media to transfer its meaning from one language to another or to clarify the meaning of the source language. In contrast, the second refers to the transfer of speech from one language to another in oral form. According to Gambier (2003), there are at

least thirteen types of audiovisual translation: some of them are called *dominant* because they are more common (subtitling, dubbing, consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, voice-over, free commentary, simultaneous translation, multilingual production); while the others are called *challenging* because of their difficulty (script translation, simultaneous or live subtitling, surtitling, audio description, and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing). In addition to these, Perego (2005) and Chaume (2013) identify four others, namely, narration, respeaking, fansubbing and fandubs. These can be briefly defined as follows:

1. Subtitling. It is the most widely used and well-known captioning technique. It consists of translating an audio track (consisting of verbal elements such as writing, signs, captions, dialogue between characters, voiceovers, and various information contained in the soundtrack) into short written texts or subtitles that are generally placed at the bottom of the screen and are subject to technical and content restriction. Subtitles can be of three types: interlingual, intralingual, and bilingual (Diaz Cintas, Ramael 2007: 8-9). Interlingual subtitles refer to translation from one language to a different language, while intralingual subtitles are not a true translation, but are used for deaf people and foreign language learners. In both cases, their form changes: those for the deaf are adapted with slower reading rhythms or texts with a more specific description with unmarked syntactic structures and lexical forms (Perego 2005: 63), while those for learners contain the full version of dialogues. Bilingual subtitles, on the other hand, are used only in some countries where more than one language is spoken (Netherlands) or in cinematographic or other international festivals (Diaz Cintas, Ramael 2007: 18) and are arranged in two lines, one above the other.

2. Dubbing. This, on the other hand, is the most important technique of revoicing and involves replacing the original soundtrack with a new soundtrack translated and adapted to the target culture and then recorded entirely so as to create in the target viewer the illusion of seeing the original product. In general, dubbing is more difficult and expensive than subtitling because it is much more subject to constraints since it is directly linked to the images on the screen. In fact, the translation can also undergo significant changes because, in addition to the literal meaning of the lines, voice actors must make sure that there is perfect synchronization between speech and lips and that the intonation matches

the actors' facial expressions. Moreover, there can also be difficulties in translating slang and culture-specific elements to find an appropriate counterpart in the target language.

3. Consecutive interpretation. It consists of the translation of an oral speech divided into several parts. The interpreter's task is to understand and memorize the entire speech while also taking notes so that he or she can briefly present it in another language. This type of translation is longer and requires a certain amount of attention from the audience. This technique is usually used during interviews, festivals, trials, or events where there is an audience that speaks a language other than the speaker.

4. Simultaneous interpretation. In this case, the interpreter translates a speaker's oral speech without ever stopping. In this modality, which is not always accurate, the interpreter may work inside a soundproof booth equipped with a console and headphones and provides interpretation to listeners via a microphone that can be connected to an instrument to listen to the translation. It is generally used during conferences, interview meetings, or other international events. According to Chaume (2013: 109), there is also the simultaneous interpretation of films, which is a form of interpretation that is falling into disuse. The translation process is identical to simultaneous interpretation, the only difference is that here the interpreter is inside the cinema and translates entire films by himself. He translates and voiceovers all the dialogue and the actors, whether they are men women, or children. Usually, the translator has a chance to see the scripts and take notes before the screening. This technique is very common in Thailand.

5. Voice-over. This technique is very similar to dubbing, in fact, it is also called "half-dubbing." It involves translating, adapting, and recording the soundtrack of an audiovisual product from one language to another, which overlaps with the original. The translation can be heard louder and clearer than the original audio which remains audible in the background so as to facilitate understanding of the original soundtrack (La Grassa, Troncarelli 2016: 230). Dialogues are recited by professionals (Perego 2005: 28-29) who, however, do not have to follow the synchronization rules of dubbing. In addition, this technique involves a summary of the content that is done before recording the audio. In this way, voice-over is easier and less expensive than dubbing and is employed especially by television channels in some programs such as interviews or documentaries (Pérez-González 2019: 33).

6. Free commentary. It is a written reworking of the text within an audiovisual product and is mostly used in documentaries and short films (Perego 2005: 31). It maintains a certain detachment from the source text because being very flexible, this technique allows the addition of explanations or translations of specific cultural elements or the elimination of other superfluous elements. Simple and short sentences are preferred (Perego 2005: 32).

7. Simultaneous translation. It consists of the sight translation of an already prepared script into the target language. This method is used in film festivals or film libraries when there are time constraints or when there is no possibility of using other options. The audience can hear both voices and usually, the synchronization is not very good.

8. Multilingual production. It consists of the production of audiovisual text in different languages, a common practice in countries where more than one language is spoken. The founding treaties and acts issued by the organs of the European Union can be an example of multilingual production because they are intended for countries where different languages are spoken, in fact, it is necessary for these documents to be drafted in all languages considered "official."

9. Script translation. It consists of translating scripts, not for public distribution, but to obtain financial support from audiovisual product suppliers for international co-production.

10. Simultaneous or live subtitling. It is generally used in television programs and differs from classical subtitling in that subtitles are inserted at the time the interpreter or translator translates the audio or live speech. A technician is assigned to quickly write the written text of the oral interpretation that is provided by the interpreter at the same time. This technique is also used for live news broadcasts.

11. Surtitling. This mode of audiovisual translation is used almost exclusively for plays. It is so called because the translated text is projected onto screens placed above the stage in theaters. Through it, spectators can enjoy the performance in their language.

12. Audio description. This technique is intended for an audience of people who are blind or visually impaired. It consists of the addition of a voice that cannot be seen on the screen, which provides relevant information (such as the arrival or the various movements of a character rather than the description of noise) for people who cannot see what is happening in the scene. The information included should neither be too exhaustive to risk

tiring the viewer nor too poor to risk making the multimodal text incomprehensible. In this way, the viewer can combine the information from the sound channel with that from the visual channel and have a global comprehension of the whole audiovisual text.

13. Narration. Similar to the commentary technique, this technique is used in documentaries and short films because the translation accompanies the images on the screen and describes what is shown. For this reason, it is very similar to voice-over because there is no need to follow lip synchronization, although the rhythm must be maintained as the original text and the target text are transmitted synchronously (Perego 2005: 30). Moreover, another element that makes it different from voice over is the fact that the translation is usually done by a single person who does not use any tone of voice or type of direct speech. This mode is perceived as completely detached from the images as it is devoid of colloquialisms and very formal.

14. Respeaking. It is one of the most recent techniques. It consists of cooperation between man and machine while an interpreter simultaneously translates what is heard in the audiovisual text, the software is responsible for transcribing what the interpreter says onto the screen. Thus, it consists of an immediate change from an oral translation to a written translation. This technique has already been used for some events, but it is still under development because of its poor accuracy (Perego, Taylor 2012).

15. Fandubs and fansubbing. They are homemade dubbing and subtitles, especially for TV series, cartoons such as the anime genre, and films that have not yet been released in the target language country (Chaume 2013). In both cases, they are made by true fans of the translated genre. They download the texts of the films from the Internet and use free editing and manipulation programs to insert new subtitles or delete the original soundtrack and insert a new home-recorded dubbing. In reality, these techniques are not exactly conventional; in fact, people can face different legal consequences depending on the country. Fansubbing and fandubbing are in both cases amateur and not professional audiovisual translation techniques; in fact, they are not precise, and the technical parameters are different depending on people's choices.

2. Dubbing: from a close perspective

Dubbing, as has been described above, consists of "translating and lip-syncing the script of an audiovisual text, which is then performed by actors directed by a dubbing director

and, where available, with advice from a linguistic consultant or dubbing assistant" (Chaume 2013). Therefore, it focuses on replacing the soundtrack of an audiovisual product with a new one. It could be defined as a total mode of audiovisual translation, since it involves all elements of the audiovisual product such as intonation, rhythm, images, etc. In the late 1920s, with the need to transpose sound films into the various target languages intended for the export market, it became the most popular means of audiovisual translation, especially in Europe. The two factors that increased its popularity were the collapse of multilingual film productions –foreign audiences preferred to see the original actors rather than their local counterparts– and the low regard for subtitling, which was considered a rather useless audiovisual modality in countries with low literacy and refusal to conform to the main language (Chaume 2013). Thus, some sound engineers began to develop this new kind of revoicing technique that became popular, especially in some European countries, such as Italy, France, Spain, and Germany (which have developed a real tradition in dubbin). In fact, in the 1930s, totalitarian regimes, including Fascism, began using dubbing to protect national cinema and the local film industry, given the increasing development of foreign, especially American works. The choice of dubbing, however, was functional for censorship purposes. Indeed, censorship was imposed on language and content, and protectionist laws were imposed to control the import market. The fact that many countries used this technique for national control did not allow for linguistic and cultural development both outside and within the same country where control was exercised. This was also reflected in the performance of voice actors and dubbing techniques in general. Because of censorship, dubbing had to follow strict rules, and there was little room for originality or innovation. For this reason, at first, the filmic speech was pretty poor and "standardized." Over time, however, with the fall of totalitarian regimes, thanks to the skill of selected voice actors, and improved lip synchronization and sound, scripts began to be more and more convincing, and so dubbing began to give viewers the illusion of seeing an imported film as if it was the original. Almost 80 years later, dubbing has developed worldwide and finds application in almost all audiovisual products, exported or within countries themselves, such as commercials, movies, TV series, and even in new technologies such as video games. In addition, new online distribution and streaming platforms have made possible the rise of dubbed productions destined for more and more countries and thus translated into more

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and more different languages. Indeed, today this audiovisual mode has greatly improved thanks to new tools and the large number of professionals working in this field, although even now in some countries dubbing is still a tool of national control, such as in China. In any case, despite new technologies and new means of distribution, it remains a very difficult practice to achieve especially from the point of view of production time and cost. Dubbing can be disadvantageous because it is a practice that cannot be applied immediately and needs a certain amount of attention and professionalism especially if it is intended for a certain audience (such as children). The work of dubbing must take into consideration the audiovisual product (documentary, cartoon, film, etc.) and its purposes (whether distributed to inform, for education, or other purposes). Hence, due to the time and cost of production, audiovisual products are generally dubbed into the official languages of the countries; in fact, countries hardly pay to dub the products even in the various minority languages or dialects. To conclude, dubbing is a time-consuming process that can be subject to various obstacles related to technical, linguistic, and cultural constraints.

2.1. Dubbing and censorship in Italy

In the 1930s, during the Fascist regime, dubbing had a large following in Italy, becoming the most widely used audiovisual translation medium in the country. During the totalitarian regime, dubbing was a useful tool to support national political control. Foreign films had to be dubbed into Italian and the language used in dubbing had to represent national identity; therefore, it had to be free of dialectal, regional, and foreign influences. Voice actors had to use "standard" Italian, which, however, was the result of "an ideological and cultural homogenization" (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato 2005: 12) that eliminated the diversity of codes and registers of the original audiovisual text and employed "syntactic and lexical preciosisms completely out of context" (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato 2005: 13). This contributed to the creation of a model of Italian filmic speech characterized by stereotypical terms that did not reflect the use of the popular language. However, censorship was directed not only at the language itself, but also at the content; anything that was not considered appropriate to the politics and culture of the time was neutralized or eliminated, such as anti-fascist references (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato 2005: 14), or the view of the Italian mafia criminal in American films. Therefore, the film's

dialogue and narration could be manipulated to preserve national morality and decency. There was thus a very strong linguistic and cultural flattening that led to the "Italianization" of names or the elimination of cultural, slang, or vulgar references in foreign films (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato 2005: 16-18). Only with the development of imported English did translators begin to abandon formally correct Italian to introduce new terms into audiovisual texts. The openness toward freedom in translation, however, led to the formation of calques and borrowings that became part of the Italian language, especially in lexical references belonging to youth slang and language or vulgarisms that were originally neutralized or eliminated. Only in the 1970s, with globalization and the change in the general view of dubbing in Italy, did people begin to seek a certain spontaneity and authenticity in speech. Italian dubbing began to receive great prestige, and dubbers began to perfect their skills more and more, including vocal expression, interpretive and acting skills, and diction. Today, this form of audiovisual translation is the main means of national language unification. In addition, over the years, thanks to the needs and development of this medium, academic studies on dubbing have also increased.

2.2. Technical aspects and constraints of dubbing

The work behind a dubbed product is considerable and is carried out by many professionals such as translators, adaptors or dialogue writers, sound technicians, and voice actors. When an audiovisual work is dubbed, it must go through several stages before it is fully realized. It is these stages along with the use and treatment of dialogue that differentiate dubbing from other audiovisual modalities. The original scripts that correspond to the language channel must be translated and then adapted to coincide with the visual and sound channels. Hence, the figure of the translator must collaborate with that of the adaptor who is specialized in synchronizing the various semiotic channels, and then the final product is completed by the voice actors who try to convey the performance of the original to the best of their ability. For this reason, in dubbing, there are fundamental constraints concerning the translation and adaptation of it to be respected. Furthermore, these constraints must be considered along with the rules and parameters defined by each dubbing country that must be known in all dubbing companies.

According to Fois (2012), the stage of adaptation is one of the most important stages of dubbing since:

Adaptation must submit to constraints of several kinds, which end up influencing the final result: while a literary translator can work on the text and modify its phrase order-specifying or adding elements if necessary- so that the text sounds adequate for the target language, the most challenging aspect for an adaptor to overcome is including the contents of the line in the timing imposed not only by the acting, but also by the possible synthetic features of the source language (Fois 2012: 6-7)

During this phase, all linguistic and extralinguistic elements such as the duration of the lines, lip movement, facial expressions, movements and gestures of the actors, and what is represented in the scenes must be considered. All this could be concentrated on an important component of dubbing, namely synchronization. The role of synchronization is crucial in giving viewers the illusion that the actors are really speaking their language. For Chaume (2012) it is considered an aspect of dubbing in which the translation into the target language must coincide with the articulatory and bodily movements of the actors along with the pauses and alternating lines of the source translation. According to him, there are three types of synchronization:

- Phonetic synchronization or lip synchronization. It consists of adapting the line being recited to the articulatory movements of the actors on the screen. This aspect is very important because the lip movements must coincide as precisely as possible with what is being said. Attention must also be paid to those moments when the actor moves his lips while not saying a word, or simply sighs; these moments of emptiness must be well handled in the target product. The adaptor must try to fit the right words at the right times and if necessary, modify the sentence to achieve the best result. Vowels and consonants, especially bilabials and fricatives are the most problematic sounds to adapt, especially when strongly emphasized by actors. Sometimes lines are flipped to match a word with the precise time (Fois 2012). This mechanism is important especially when the actors are in the foreground but also if their mouths move when they are in profile or slightly with their backs turned.

- Kinesic synchronization. It consists of the synchronization of lines with the actors' gestures, movements, and facial expressions. While an actor shakes his head, he cannot

say the word yes and vice versa. Hence, gestures and expressions must be in harmony with the lines. The speech must represent what the viewers see in the images.

- Isochrony. It consists of synchronizing the target text with the source text by respecting the alternation of utterances and pauses. The length of the translated lines must match the length of the utterances in the source language.

The easiest lines to achieve from the point of view of synchronization are those in which the characters are out of frame or off-screen. In fact, in them, the lip-sync constraint does not exist, which allows for a more complete and adequate translation because they do not have an immediately visible impact on the scene. Sometimes, however, to respect lip synchronization, the quality of the translation is lost as well as the communicative effectiveness of the lines. Certain expressions or utterances, while fitting the lips and facial expressions, do not best represent the communicative situation or visual and sound combination. To overcome this problem, the adaptor might opt for creative dubbing based on an original approach to the script, to achieve a more natural and realistic effect and succeed in engaging the viewer while remaining as faithful as possible to the original story (Díaz Cintas, Orero 2010: 443). With animated films, for example, this is not a problem since lip synchronization does not exist or at least is not as impactful as for real characters. Thus, there is a certain level of flexibility in professional practice, especially when dialogues are very long and meaty, and certain information must be retained (Diaz Cintas, Remael 2007: 90). In addition to the strictly linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects, according to Fois (2012), attention must also be paid to the more technical aspects of the adaptation process. To facilitate the work of the voice actors, the adaptor must include in the script several indications:

- The time code (TC). Since the scenes are not dubbed in succession, it is important to facilitate the work of the voice actors. The TC is inserted at the beginning of each scene to find it more quickly or to signal when one or more characters are speaking (Fois 2012).
- All indications that can help define a scene (specific abbreviations are used here). For example, IC (in-scene) and FC (out-of-scene) are used to indicate the positions of characters inside or outside the scene. DPS (back turned) or even iIC and fFC when a line starts in-scene and ends out-of-scene (Fois 2012).

- All technical indications that define how the line is performed. In this case, the indications can also be represented in parentheses as: (/) for pauses and (. . .) for censorship. The script should also indicate whether the line is Orig. (to be kept as the original), SM (on mute), ANT (ahead of audio in headphones), or ACC (overlapping between lines). Finally, laughter, shouting, or phone conversations must also be reported using EFF (phone effect, radio, etc.), and, in the case of fight scenes, VERS and REAZ (verses and reactions) are used (Fois 2012).

- Synopsis. It consists of a brief summary of the plot, a list of characters, and corresponding pronunciations.

Among the technical aspects of dubbing are also those that do not concern the adaptation phase, but directly the dubbing or mixing phase (Chiaro 2009). During the dialogue creation, in fact, according to Chaume (2012: 19), dubbers must pay close attention to their performance. The voice actors must understand every piece of information about the script such as the personality of the characters and try to express their moods and emotions as best they can. For this reason, the work done beforehand by the adaptors is very important. Fois (2012) describes the performance of dubbers in these terms:

> The word performance is not used lightly: the challenge for a dubber is expressing all range of emotions and "re-act" the original, only not in an open set with proper costume or make-up, but rather in the little space of a dark studio, with only a lectern and a screen to help identification; the actor has at least complete freedom in helping his performance using all kinds of expressions and movements: the dubber has to stick to the original performance, there can be no freedom in choosing how to say a line (which becomes really painful in case of poor acting). Moreover, since the vocal emission varies according to the movements of the actor's body, the dubber has to imitate (in the small space mentioned above) every position, as insignificant as it may appear, to make sure that the voice comes out with the same intensity. This might sound quite easy, but aspiring dubbers know very well how difficult it is to reproduce a fight scene, or a nervous monologue, and be convincing. The dubber is a real actor who voluntarily chooses to communicate only with his/her voice, leaving aside any other communicative elements (body language above all) of a performance.

Thus, dramatization is a fundamental aspect of the success of dialogues and is considered a real constraint in dubbing. Voice actors may produce performances that do not respect

the intonation, volume, or pitch of the voice of the original model, and this can lead to exaggerated or too-flat performances. Professionals, therefore, should try not to recite everyday dialogues with too much emphasis or too little enthusiasm, so that the dialogue will flow as naturally as possible. In addition, it is worth noting that the concept of exaggerated or monotonous performance stems from the consideration of the audience in the target language, and therefore a professional should study the source and target language patterns to achieve high-quality dubbing (Chaume 2012: 19).

Finally, in addition to these aspects, to create a realistic effect in the final dubbed product, sound quality must also be considered. In fact, in the final stage of dubbing, it is crucial to intervene in everything that characterizes and complements the new soundtrack. Chaume (2012) identifies four important rules:

- In the new soundtrack, the dialogue or paralinguistic sounds (coughing or laughter) of the original soundtrack cannot be audible.
- Dubbing must be recorded inside soundproof booths so as not to create interference or risk having background noises in the recording.
- Voice actors should use a higher tone of voice to make dialogue easily comprehensible to the audience.
- It is appropriate to add specific sound effects when characters are far from the camera or when their backs are turned to create an audible echo effect.

2.3. Linguistic and cultural transposition in dubbing

A proper transposition of the original dialogues is necessary to make the dubbing and consequently the actors' speech appear natural and convincing to the audience. The process of transposition for dubbing must consider two crucial aspects: the creation of a target text that respects the source text and its acceptability in the target culture. When transposing the source text, the translator and adaptor, in addition to considering the technical aspects and constraints mentioned above, must also consider all those linguistic and cultural elements that may hinder an adequate linguistic and cultural translation. The relationship between language and culture is crucial because translating an element from one language to another also means translating those elements that are not only linguistically, but also culturally different. Culture-specific elements in audiovisual

products can represent both verbal and nonverbal signs belonging to the visual or acoustic channel (Ranzato 2010: 39). A proper transposition of an audiovisual product must consider all the different layers that form it. For this reason, this process is very long and difficult since it begins with the translation of dialogues and ends with their adaptation to images and audio. Today, thanks to the spread of information and globalization, it is easier to translate and adapt the dialogues of an audiovisual product into other languages. Many cultural references are now understandable to many people from different cultures and different countries; however, some idioms and expressions may still be unclear to viewers. The continuous evolution of language and cultural development always lead to the creation of new words and expressions not yet widespread. As a result, the adaptor and translator must choose the right strategies to solve the problem of the cultural and linguistic gap. The purpose of transposition should be to overcome language and cultural barriers to make the understanding of the new dubbed text as close as possible to that of the viewers watching the original product, even if this means major changes from the translation point of view. According to Canu (2013: 11), "these strategies are based on the oppositions between 'homologation' and 'foreignization,' that are resolved by 'compensation' (and thus, by displacements and explicitations)." These words are very similar to those Venuti uses in his "'domestication - foreignization' model" (1998: 240). In this case, homologation or domestication means the manipulation of the text to bring the cultural references of the source language closer to that specific target language. This means making those expressions that are difficult to understand simpler, making them seem almost part of the same culture. However, this strategy is not always effective because it may make the dubbing neutral and less interesting, as all the cultural differences of the source culture are removed. Also, in this way, the images/audio may not be in line with the text. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt this strategy to the text using compensation, which consists of two different approaches: displacement and explicitness. (Canu 2013: 11). When some cultural references are difficult to explain because they are too long for the line, thanks to displacement the translator can retrieve the cut-off part of the information, reinserting it at another time. Canu uses the example of the acronyms *NYPD* and *LAPD* (*New York Police Department* and *Los Angeles Police Department*) to explain this strategy by saying that initially, the translator might render these acronyms with "police department," or more simply "police" deciding to insert the city information

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later on another line if the context and articulatory synchronism allow him to do so (2013: 12). On the other hand, explicitation is used to explicate information that is recognizable to the audience but implicit in the source text to make it more understandable. The example the scholar uses is *prom* which is usually rendered in Italian as "ballo di fine anno." Since it is a word that does not exist in Italian but is still understandable from the context, the translator must make it explicit. Because of the limitations of synchronization, this strategy can be difficult to use because clarifying expressions or references through an explanation is not always possible from the point of view of time and lip synchronization. On the contrary, the purpose of foreignization is to maintain some distance between the source and target culture by keeping cultural references or translating them sometimes in a "wrong" way. The translation of these references can lead to calques from the point of view of language or alienation from the point of view of the audience's perception of the text. The risk is that viewers will perceive the translated reference as alienated because the translation or decoding of certain elements takes place according to linguistic and grammatical constructions that are similar to the source language, and therefore distant from the target language. This can lead to a phenomenon called "doppiaggese" or "dubbese," which creates an unnatural effect (from a phonetic and meaning perspective) in certain expressions and terms due precisely to translation *clichés*, semantic and lexical calques or borrowings (Pavesi, Malinverno 2000; Perego, Taylor 2012: 161). An example of these translation clichés is the case of the translation of the word *fuck* (in Chapter 2). These clichés can make the filmic speech of dubbing fictitious and unspontaneous. However, despite this issue, foreignization is also very useful in identifying the cultural context of the audiovisual product and recognizing it. Sometimes cultural references are difficult to render precisely because of the diversity and distance with which they are perceived in the target language. However, in some cases, their distance helps to situate the reference in a given culture. Canu gives the example of sports teams or restaurant chains: the *New York Yankees*, or *McDonald's* (2012: 13). These references are almost always retained for two reasons: on the one hand, they are a fundamental part of understanding the cultural context of the dialogue, while on the other hand, they are recognized by everyone due to globalization. Hence, some cultural references can be retained, and some that should be replaced to facilitate their comprehension of the audience. There are many categories of cultural references to which

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more attention should be paid: geographical locations, units of measurement, foods and beverages, games, proverbs and sayings, institutions, and legal systems, humor and puns, idiomatic expressions, taboo and swear words, intertextuality, and finally sociolinguistic variations (Canu 2013). Indeed, cultural references, are not only related to specific terms or expressions, but also to everything that characterizes the sociolinguistic variety and context of the characters and the story within the source language and culture: ways of being, different accents, different geographical and cultural backgrounds, different ways of speaking. Therefore, in recoding the source text, the translator/adaptor must also consider the social (diastratic), situational (diaphasic), and geographical (diatopic) dimensions, which are very important. The dialogues in the source text are acted by characters from different classes or social groups, and this also leads to the use of expressions such as slang that contribute to the characterization of a certain community. They should be translated by choosing from the various reference possibilities that can be found in the target language to express the same nuances of meaning without distorting the characteristics of the original characters. The translation should respect particular situations in the dialogues, for example, if a character has a particular accent, an accent among those existing in the target language should be used to maintain the same effect in the viewer. In addition, translators and adaptors should also consider that some cultural references are perceived differently by viewers because they are the result of sociocultural beliefs and behaviors. This is the case with anything that is considered taboo and varies from one language and culture to another. Another purpose of transposition should be to not alter the ideological meaning of the audiovisual text and thus also the emotional charge that terms and certain cultural expressions convey. This can create difficulties in adapting some cultural references, such as taboo and swear words, because, despite their importance in the text, their perception may differ from audience to audience. Another factor that plays an important role in linguistic and cultural transposition is censorship and self-censorship of certain linguistic and cultural elements. Indeed, the choice to censor (eliminate or change) certain elements leads to a manipulation of the text that is never consistent with the source text or even with the expectations of the target viewer. For this reason, translators and adaptors should avoid an overly censorious and manipulative attitude, to get the same emotional intensity to the target audience as that of the original (Parini 2013: 161).

CHAPTER 2

TABOO LANGUAGE AND SWEARING

1. Taboo language and swearing: an introduction

Language is the means of communication through which people express their ideas, emotions, and opinions. People use different ways and words to express themselves, and this also depends on the context in which they are used. The use of a certain type of language in a given context, therefore, can determine the entire human interaction. The link between language and context shows that there are social factors that play a crucial role in directing language use among speakers. These factors are social structure, environment, and values. Thus, all societies and cultures are different, but they all have words and expressions that are strictly forbidden, especially in public. These words can have a strong impact on people and society because of their meaning, which is why they are also banned by authorities and laws. Swearing, profanity, "bad" language, etc., are some of the labels that have been attributed to these expressions, and the confusion in their definition can be explained by the existence of a wide variety of them. They are prohibited mainly because they can morally harm people, which is the main reason why people try not to utter them. Taboo terms are avoided by people to respect good manners, not to create moral harm to people, or even to respect other people's religion. In fact, they are used only at certain times and contexts so as not to cause embarrassment or offense, because when people use them, it is mainly to express negative emotions such as anger, frustration, or disappointment. Although their negative consideration is associated with rudeness, discourtesy, and disrespect, the various communicative roles, and effects they can play or generate are surprising. Moreover, their role is associated with the wide range of semantic and pragmatic meanings they convey. They are an important part of the language; in fact, it cannot be denied that precisely because they are forbidden, they are usually one of the first things children or adolescents learn in school and other environments. This happens because people feel part of a group when they can share something, and this reinforces social interactions. Their importance in society and language is also evident from their use in movies or TV, as well as in all audiovisual productions.

1.1. Definition of taboo and taboo language

When thinking of the word taboo the first thing that comes to mind is something to hide that embarrasses people and therefore to avoid. According to psychology, Freud (1989: 39) defines taboo as a sort of ambivalent behavior toward an object or rather toward an action concerning it. He defines taboo in the context of ancient Aboriginal Australians and explains that Aboriginal Australians profess totemism as their system of tribal life. Totems can be found in form of animals, plants, and some natural phenomena which are believed as their "guardian spirit" protecting them from danger by their oracle. The totem symbolizes a power to prevent incest among the totemic clans (in Bram, Putra 2019). In our society, the taboo is strongly linked to behaviors and customs declared "sacred and forbidden." When a behavior is considered immoral it is also forbidden by society. In fact, "Taboos are proscriptions of behavior arising out of social constraints on the individual's behavior where it is perceived to be a potential cause of discomfort, harm or injury" (Allan 2019: 2). In other words, something can be considered taboo if it causes harm or offense to a person, and which is often prohibited by the law. So, taboos can be linked to actions, but they can also be linguistic taboos. In his broader and more exhausted definition of taboo, the scholar Trudgill (2000: 18) underlines the strong connection between behavior and language: "taboo can be characterized as being concerned with behavior which is believed to be supernaturally forbidden or regarded as immoral or improper; it deals with behavior which is prohibited or inhibited irrationally. In language, taboo is ted with things which are not said, and in particular with words and expressions which are not used". In these terms, taboo acts are related to any action that should be avoided, while taboo words are related to any word that should not be uttered. In any case, taboos are not only actions related to a certain activity, but can also be words related to those actions, although not all taboo words are related to taboo actions. For example, when talking about excretion, the act itself is not considered taboo because it is a normal thing that people do every day; what is considered taboo, however, is talking about it. Another example could be incest. This practice is strongly forbidden by society and for this reason, every word connected to this sexual activity automatically becomes a taboo word (e.g., *motherfucker*). Therefore, for Allan and Burridge (2006: 2) every word that is linked to taboo activity becomes a taboo word. This idea is supported by Fairman (2009: 29) in his book *Fuck Word Taboo and Protecting Our First Amendment*, who explains

that when thinking about excretions and the body parts that come in contact with them, people have an immediate reaction of disgust. For this reason, acts and words that give this kind of reaction are both considered taboo. To continue, some people consider taboo words offensive and shocking, while others are not bothered by them. Indeed, the degree of acceptance of a taboo action or word depends exclusively on how it is considered in a certain society. In other words, taboos are different in every culture and every society has its own taboo words based on religion, social beliefs, behaviors, and history. What is considered taboo in one society could not be considered the same way in another one. Therefore, they are certain taboos that are considered universal for example sexual taboos, and others that are specific to a determined culture. People from different countries who don't share the same values can have difficulties understanding foreign taboo words. What is important to say in this case is that taboo words are also linked to politeness: "it means that to avoid any misunderstanding, each person who belongs to different cultures with different values should not talk about words that can shock them, especially in polite conversations" (Anggita 2015). Every society has its moral code that people should always try to respect. People try to avoid taboo words not only because they are forbidden, but also to not offend other people. Farb (in Anggita 2015) explains that the words become taboo because the community encloses them with a symbolic value that belongs to a specific culture. Before people gave them a taboo connotation, words of this kind were simply normal words. In the black American community for example, using the word *nigger* to refer to a black person is considered something normal if the word is pronounced by a black man or woman, but it is considered very offensive if pronounced by white people. Therefore, people learn what taboo words are and learn to distinguish them through socialization (Jay in Anggita 2015). Another important consideration to be made is that taboo words depend on the relationship between people as much as on the circumstances inside the context. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), taboo language is "a proscription of behaviour for a specific community of one more persons at a specifiable time, in specifiable contexts". Indeed, there is a strong connection between context and taboo words. Wardhaugh (2006: 238) states that certain things are not said because they cannot be said, but because people don't talk about them or rarely discuss on them. So, there is a certain tendency to censor oneself when it comes to taboos. People try to use euphemisms or other expressions to avoid using directly taboo words and the

examples are many. As far as sexual taboos are concerned, to avoid saying the sentence "having sex with someone" people prefer "sleeping with" rather than "making love." But despite the censoring of language, taboo language is very present in our daily interactions. People use taboo words for different reasons in different contexts and situations and this causes their modification and evolution: "Taboo and the consequent censoring of language motivate language change by promoting the creation of highly inventive and often playful new expressions, or new meanings for old expressions, causing existing vocabulary to be abandoned" (Allan, Burridge 2006: 2). In terms of history, over the years, the taboo has changed considerably, and what we consider normal today, yesterday was considered inappropriate and vice versa. Some taboos that used to be considered obscene are slowly being broken down thanks to social revolution. Freedom in society causes freedom in the language in a certain way. What is important to underline is the fact that taboo changes because our society is evolving, and this evolution is evident both from a socio-linguistic and pragmatic point of view.

1.2. Origin of taboo and taboo language

The origin of the English word taboo dates back to the 18th century when it became popular for the first time. This word was not invented by English or American people, it was borrowed from the Polynesian culture. In fact, taboo derives from the Tongan *tabu* with which it shares not only the sound but also the meaning. According to the English anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, the word means "to forbid" or "forbidden" and can be applied to every prohibition, order, injunction, or rule of etiquette (in Allan, Burridge 2006). Going a few steps back, this word was discovered for the first time by Captain James Cook on his voyage to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the Sun in Tahiti (1768–1771). During his travels, he used to write a personal logbook in which he described all the peculiarities and unusual things he saw among the Polynesians. In one of his notes, he wrote that the women of that society always ate alone because eating with men was forbidden. According to Cook, they did this because it was right and they followed their customs, but there was no real reason behind it; simply eating with men was seen as a bad thing. Therefore, he began to question some issues and traditions of a culture different from his own and began to realize that many things were considered taboo for Tahitians. However, it was not until the third voyage that he first used the word

tabu or taboo with this meaning to represent Tahitian customs. In 1777 he wrote "*Taboo as I have before observed is a word of extensive signification; Human Sacrifices are called Tangata Taboo*, and when anything is forbid to be eaten, or made use of they say such a thing is Taboo; they say that if the King should happen to go into a house belonging to a subject, that house would be Taboo and never more be inhabited by the owner; so that whenever he travels there are houses for his reception" (Cook in Allan 2019). As can be seen from these words, taboos covered different aspects of Polynesian life and were accepted and included by society without hesitation. However, Cook was not the only one to write about Tahitians, in fact also William Anderson who was a surgeon on the same ship led by the captain, wrote this:

> [Taboo] is the common expression when any thing is not to be touch'd, unless the transgressor will risque some very severe punishment as appears from the great apprehension they have of approaching any thing prohibited by it. In some cases it appears to resemble the Levitical law of purification, for we have seen several women who were not allow'd the use of their hands in eating but were fed by other people. On enquiring the reason of it at one time they said that one of the women had wash'd the dead body of the chief already mentioned who died at Tonga, and another who had assisted was in the same predicament, though then a month after the circumstance had happen'd. It also serves as a temporary law or edict of their chiefs, for sometimes certainly articles of food are laid under restriction, and there are other circumstances regulated in the same manner as trading &c when it is thought necessary to stop it (Cook in Allan 2019).

In these lines, Anderson also uses taboo to refer to something material, so it is clear that this word was not only related to customs or traditions but also concerned with special meanings or objects. Therefore, in South Pacific Island society, taboos were derived from religion, customs, and sacred objects, and had a kind of supernatural power too. In fact, since ancient times, people have always held the belief that words acted as a bridge between gods and humans and were therefore sacred. For this reason, there were words or things that Polynesians could not even utter or do because it was their duty not to do so or because they could only be uttered or done by people of higher social status. Indeed, thinking about the fact that women could not eat with men, is an example of a taboo related to social caste: women were forbidden to do certain things because they were inferior to men. For example, the Polynesian caste system was no different from what

happened in the United States in the 1960s when black women had to prepare dinner for white people but could not share it with them. Even today, many taboos in Western society remain of this nature. They are ultimately based on traditions of etiquette and are thus defined by culturally sensitive social parameters such as age, gender, education, social status, and the like. Food can be an example: in most cultures, there are several taboos on food, and most of them are based on religion. Islamists cannot eat pork, while most Hindus are vegetarians. Today cannibalism is forbidden, but it was not so in ancient cultures. Thus, the meaning of taboos and the taboos of the past conditioned and contributed to the evolution of our taboos today and led people to consider certain words or certain objects and customs a prohibition.

1.3. Definition of swearing and swear words

When talking about taboo language it is necessary to talk about swearing as well. People use different aliases to refer to swearing or swear words: bad words, curse words, cuss words, dirty words, four-letter words, expletives, epithets, obscenities, profanity, blasphemy, bawdy language, foul language, rude language, vulgar language, or taboo language (Fägersten 2012). All these labels give a very rough idea of swearing and are not exhaustive. For instance, the word profanity is too narrow, as it invokes words with religious meaning, while cursing/expletives may only refer to interjections (*shit!)*, and bad language may be considered wrong, since it may lead to what can be evaluated as "bad grammar" (Andersson, Trudgill 1990). In their research, more than one scholar has defined swearing and swear words in different ways. For instance, in his definition of swearing Montagu (1967) describes swearing in a broad way including in its meaning foul language, oaths, and profanity, while McEnery (2006: 25) uses a more inclusive approach, defining swearing as one of several types of the wider phenomenon known as bad language. Therefore, swearing is very difficult to define because the existence of all these different definitions suggests a tendency toward the interchangeability of terms and consequently a subjective view of swearing. What is important to underline however is the fact that swearing is included in the taboo language, so they should not be considered true synonyms. Therefore, swearing itself is considered an activity that comprehends the use of swear words. Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 53) state that "swearing is a type of language use in which the expression:

a. refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture

b. should not be interpreted literally

c. it can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes."

Therefore, swear words and expressions used in swearing can be considered taboo words. However, Karjalainen (2002: 18-20) explains that "swearwords are part of taboo words. Taboo words or words that refer to taboo are swearwords. Although all swearwords are taboo, not all taboo words are swearwords". Indeed, Ljung (2011) writes that to qualify an utterance as an instance of swearing, it must violate certain taboos that are or have been regarded as inviolable principles in deemed cultures specifying that the taboo violation consists in the use of taboo words, but not necessarily. As a matter of fact, he gives the example of some standardized insults used all over the world that involve the mother or sister figure: "You mother!" / "You sister!" Indeed, this is related to the fact that swear words sometimes must detach themselves from their literal meaning to be considered as such. To explain it better, taking into consideration words like *fuck* or *shit*, people would perfectly agree that these words can count as swear words, but probably it would not be the same for suck or cow. All those words could be defined as taboo for a specific culture or language, and therefore judged as offensive or inappropriate, but the seconds are not literally swearing. Hence, these words have a normal meaning but are used as vulgar expressions for a special purpose. As a result, what defines swearing is the pragmatic meaning of the words or expressions used in this activity. Swearing represents bad, vulgar, or rude language within a context and according to people involved in this act. Therefore, as Limbrick (in Fägersten 2012) explains, it is the social codes that determine swearing. For instance, swear words can be found in different kinds of formal and informal contexts. According to Fägersten "swearing refers to the use of words which have the potential to be offensive, inappropriate, objectionable, or unacceptable in any given social context" (2012). This suggests that the act of swearing has to do with a specific behavior that is considered offensive and negative. The notion of swearing encompasses the use of certain words with a particular semantic meaning. In his revolutionary investigation on swear words, Montagu (1967: 100) writes about swear words as "all words possessing or capable of being given an emotional weight" and again, Allan writes "swearing is the strongly emotive use of taboo terms" (2019). In conclusion,

to give a more complete overview that can best encapsulate the concept of swearing, Ljung (2011) amplifies Andersson and Trudgill's definition, and gives his criteria for swearing:

1. Swearing is the use of utterances containing taboo words.

2. The taboo words are used with non-literal meanings.

3. Many utterances that constitute swearing are subject to severe lexical, phrasal, and syntactic constraints which suggest that most swearing qualifies as formulaic language.

4. Swearing is emotive language: its main function is to reflect, or seem to reflect, the speaker's feelings and attitudes.

1.4. Taboo and swear words from a semantic and pragmatic perspective

Taboos and swear words assume a variety of social, personal, oral, and emotional roles depending on the context, the interlocutors, and the way they are uttered. Indeed, it is important to define the pragmatic and semantic features they assume in the different cases. In his study to assess the offensive force of swear words, Tartamella (2006) divides and precisely defines these characteristics. According to him, from the semantical point of view swear words are characterized by *connotation* and *denotation*. The first refers to the ideas or affective values that surround a particular term. Indeed, when someone says a swear word it immediately reminds people of the most unpleasant aspects of it rather than the figurative concept of the word itself. Taboo and swear words have the power to force the listener to imagine concretely the object or idea they refer to. For instance, *excrement* is a normal word with a common meaning, but calling it derogatorily using another word like *shit*, can evoke all the unpleasant aspects of the referent such as the revolting stench, the filth, or the risk of contracting disease. On the other hand, when he talks about denotation, he says that it refers to all those semantic areas of taboo and swear words that define human experience: sex, death, disease, bodily functions, or religion to give an example. He states that these aspects are common in most languages and cultures and the way they are handled and conceived in a scale of values is what unites a society. From the perspective of pragmatics, that is the meaning words acquire about people's behavior and context of use, according to Tartamella (2006) swear words have three characteristics. These are divided as follows: 1) register and use, 2) illocution, and 3)

perlocution. It is important to say that swear words are marked by great lexical and stylistic variety and can be found in different registers: low, formal, informal, slang, colloquial, etc. It depends on the degree of formality and on the type of relationship people have, but also on moral rules. Therefore, this is why low registers are appropriate in certain contexts like the familiar one and inappropriate in others. However, taboo language and swearing are considered inappropriate in every situation. Taboo language comprehends thoughts and behaviors that society judges too powerful, dangerous, or mysterious to speak openly about. Furthermore, because to utter a swear word means to perform an action violating a certain taboo, the second characteristic explains exactly that swear words are illocutionary acts. In other words, as Allan and Burridge (2006) state "taboo is identified with emotional release, aggression, lack of control, intemperance and intolerance." Indeed, people tend to swear when they are angry, frustrated, or for other reasons, sometimes just to feel better. As a consequence of this, swear words also produce a variety of effects, from surprise, shame, and fear, to disgust. Tartamella (2006) concludes his statement by explaining that, in any case, the two most important things that define a swear word are the dysphemistic connotation and the low register, explaining that only religious terms ("Jesus Christ!", "God!") are an exception of this criteria. This happens because they are just sacred terms used in profane contexts, therefore, definitely forbidden.

1.5. Ways of using and functions of taboo and swear words

The reasons why people choose to utter swear words are first and foremost socio-cultural and psychological. Ljung (2011: 4) states that taboo and swear words can be used as a tool to show the emotions or feelings of the speaker on what is being said, but they can also cause different reactions in the listener. It has always been said that because swear words are taboo, they are associated with negative emotions, but they can also be used in positive situations to express positive feelings. In fact, they have different functions and can be used in different ways. As far as the modalities are concerned, according to Pinker (2007), there are at least five different ways of swearing:

1. Descriptive: taboo and swear words are used in their literal meaning, that is the association of the word with its first meaning without interferences on the context (*shit = excrement*).

2. Idiomatic: taboo and swear words are used as idiomatic expressions, which can have different meanings if separated. Some expressions like "I'm fucked up" convey a certain meaning, in this case it refers to a drunk person, but if separated ("I'm fucked" from "up"), the meaning changes completely.

3. Abusive: most people use swear words to abuse or offend other people, expressing emotions like anger or frustration ("Fuck you!").

4. Emphatic: taboo and swear words are also used in a positive way to create a strong connection between people, to emphasize for example joy, or to support someone positively ("Your idea is fucking brilliant!").

5. Cathartic: taboo and swear words are used spontaneously by the speaker to express feelings in a specific moment, like surprise or shock, and are not addressed to someone in particular ("Oh fuck!").

These ways of using taboo and swear words are connected to the functions they assume according to the context and degree of confidence between people. Tartamella (2006: 12) in his book on swearing, lists eight functions that swear words can have: 1) to vent; 2) to excite; 3) to express disgust; 4) to have fun or entertain; 5) to approach; 6) to draw attention, provoke, threaten; 7) to exclude or disparage; 8) to offend, denigrate, curse. All these are considered negative or positive according to the situation. In his master's thesis on translation, Buttiglione (2018: 218) suggests that these functions can be divided into three areas: negative, positive, and one or the other depending on the contest. In the first, he includes all functions that assume a negative value for both the speaker and the listener (to disgust, threaten, marginalize, and offend). Almost all expressions belonging to this category imply or highlight a certain kind of social tension (Azzaro, Cohen, Malavolti 2007). The second includes all expletives that are used simply because of the evocative power of their sound in expressing emotions (to vent, amuse, and approach). These are very important in some societies because they are a sort of relief for people since stress can cause health problems. In addition, taboo and swear words can also have the opposite effect of an insult, they can be used to shorten the distance between people. For example,

sometimes when two friends meet (especially men) they insult each other to symbolize their friendship. This shows the intimacy and strength of the relationship that exists between the two, it is not an occasion to offend the other. It can also happen in a football team or a class group, and in this case, swearing is useful to strengthen interpersonal bonds. The last function of the second category is linked to humor. Swearing has always been an essential ingredient of comedy since the time of the Greeks and the Romans and today some words are still used in shows, films, or TV series all over the world. In comedy swear words are used to talk about reality less seriously because they reduce the emotional charge of the moment. Another form of humor can be represented also by invectives which as Wajnryb (2005) states, are a more refined or indirect form of offense and can have numerous degrees of subtlety which can entail irony, puns, wit, and wordplay. This form of insult can be used also to mock someone in a gentle or sarcastic way. In the last category, there is only one function, to excite. It is necessary to distinguish between swear words used in a situation of intimacy, or between two people or a couple in intimacy for example, and two people that don't have intimacy for whom these words can become offensive, inappropriate, or abusive.

1.6. Categorization of taboo language and swearing

Taboo language is an umbrella term meant to denote forbidden as well as obscene and vulgar language, and as has already been explained, it also incorporates swearing within (Cordisco, Di Sabato 2008: 101). Parallel to the areas they cover and their pragmatic and semantic characteristics, taboo language and swearing can be divided into several categories. According to Jay (2009), there are ten of them:

- Cursing: it means to wish harm or evil on someone. Taboo and swear words of this kind belong especially to the area of religion, in fact, "by cursing someone we ask a higher power to bestow harm upon them" (Ferklová 2014: 22). Indeed, some institutions such as society or church emphasize the existence of certain words that are considered sacrilegious to the institution itself. For this reason, the outrageous person must be punished by God or another supernatural power, although it is very questionable whether cursing can cause harm to anyone. However, today it is easier for people to use expressions like "Fuck you", which belongs to the sex area, instead of "Damn you." This

happens because the use of taboo words changes over time and because as Jay states these expressions are now "conventionalized expressions of hostility or anger" (Jay 2009: 2).

- Profanity and blasphemy: the two are separated but belong to the same area of taboo language. Profanities are expressions that employ religious terminology in a profane way. Profanity means ignoring or behaving indifferently to one's religious beliefs, thus not obeying church rules, especially linguistically ("For God's sake, go away!"). While blasphemies are expressions that directly want to attack religious figures or religious doctrine. Blasphemy is using the name of the Lord in vain to attack the church ("Screw Jesus!"). Today these expressions have lost their power and use because the Church itself has lost its power.

- Taboo: everything that is charged with a supernatural power and/or that is forbidden by society and culture which operates to suppress or inhibit certain behavior, thoughts, or speech. In this case, Jay includes this among the categories of taboo and swear language, but it is more correct to say as Ferklová (2014: 23) states that "it is more accurate to view offensive language as one of the taboos implemented by society". Therefore, it can be said that actually this is the big category that enfolds all categories of taboo language and swearing in general.

- Obscenity: expressions that represent something disgusting or considered immoral and repulsive. All words considered obscene are sanctioned by the law because they are considered unprotected speech and for this reason, people cannot utter them freely. In legal terms, the government and its laws control the use of these words which are subject to restriction. Taboo words from this category are many and they belong to different areas like death or killing, but also and especially sex (*motherfucker*, *cunt*, *tits*). Sex-related language is considered way more indecent and obscener than physical violence.

- Vulgarity: it is the language of the "street", generally associated with people from a lower social class who are not well educated. This category is very generic and according to Jay "vulgarisms are not necessarily obscene or taboo, they just reflect the crudeness of street language" (2009). So, vulgar words may belong to different areas and do not necessarily have to be offensive, but just inappropriate for the context and the moment (*booger*, *slut*).

- Slang: an informal language that is peculiar to a group, part of the nonstandard vocabulary, and subject to changes. It is not considered a real category of taboo language,

but it goes hand in hand with it, because it is present in sub-groups of society, especially among teenagers, artists, or athletes. It helps to identify taboo language since some swear words may be used as slang but are not necessarily offensive. Slang is also related to illegal activities and drug use because it can serve as an abbreviation for other complex expressions or words used in dirty business. For example, expressions like "black beauty" can be used in place of *amphetamine*. In this case, it must be considered arbitrary because when slang words become popular among people, they force other subgroups to invent new ones.

- Epithets: swear words used in an abusive way in place of the name of a person or a thing. Strongly connected to emotions, for Jay "they are powerful in presentation (loudness or duration) and in offensiveness than other types of cursing, for example, joking." (2009: 7) It is very common for people to express frustration or anger by yelling after having hurt themselves using swear words and expressions (*fuck off*, *shit*, *damn*). They may also be uttered to mark a sense of hostility against someone, for example when a person skips the line at the supermarket or in a shop.

- Insults and slurs: the first are used to mock someone or treat a person with disrespect and insolence, and thus are verbal attacks, while slurs are uttered to disparage or to cast aspersion upon people. Both "do not have to originate from taboo categories, it is the intention of the speaker that makes them offensive" (Ferklová 2014: 24). They may be used with derogative meaning to refer to the social, physical, ethnic or racial characteristics of a person expressing all the stereotypes created in society. They may be formed by animal imagery (*pig*, *dog*, *cow*, *bitch*, *jackass*), physical characteristics (*four eyes*, *bubble but*, *fat ass*), ethnic and racial insults (*nigger*, *honkey*), and social deviations (*whore*, *fag*, *slut*). However, African Americans may use the word *nigga* not as an insult, but as a funny way of talking about themselves.

- Scatology: all human waste products are considered part of this category. These taboo and swear words are common especially among children because they are used as childish insults (*poop*, *piss*, *fart*), while among adults there is an attempt to use more refined words by avoiding direct expressions referring to excrement or body products because they are considered very vulgar.

1.7. Areas and types of taboo and swear words

Taboo and swear words are many. Some of them, as has already been observed, are almost universal, that is, they are generally found in all cultures while others are culture-specific. This depends on the degree of acceptance and the value they receive in a given society. In any case, based on the characterizations made by Allan and Burridge (2006), Jay (2009), Hughes (2006), Ferklová (2014), and Wajnryb (2005), taboos and swearing include different areas that can be classified as follows:

- Sex (sexual acts, body parts as well as related bodily functions, including menstruation). "Sexual activity is tabooed as a topic for public display and severely constrained as a topic for discussion" (Allan, Burridge 2006: 144). It is well known in fact that most swear, and taboo words belong to this area. The deviations from traditional procreative sex between wife and husband (masturbation, adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, etc.) are the most offensive of all because they are against religious rules and principles. Some of these like adultery are considered taboo in any case, religion or not. Another example is prostitution, which can be offensive in many cultures.

- Bodies and effluvia (excrements, sweat, blood, urine, etc.). In general, all bodily waste products and health issues are considered taboo because of the repulsion they produce. Indeed, Jay states that "the products of disgust become a form of insult in almost every culture" (2009: 166).

- Food and drugs (gathering, preparation, and consumption). Food is a matter of health and a prescription of society. Jews and Muslims for example, don't eat pork because it is forbidden by their religions, and this contributes to the creation of insults that highlight this characteristic. However, there aren't many swear words related to this area, on the contrary, there are different euphemism that refers to sexual body parts that are very common among languages such as *nuts* for testicles or *muffin* for vagina.

- Naming (racist, ethnic, and sexist insults). It is forbidden to use swear words that may offend people with different skin colors or nationalities. Words such as *nigger* can be very offensive to a community, and for this reason, only politically correct words are accepted. Allan and Burridge (2006: 105) noted that new taboos have evolved in today's society toward other minorities or social groups (people with disabilities, different sexual genders, or religions) and explain that these are perceived with the same intensity as racism. Disabilities are defined as both physical and mental (*cripple/idiot*). Animal names

can be used as sexist insults too. For example, there are a lot of animal words associated with women such as *bitch* (Wajnryb 2005: 133).

- Diseases, death, and killing (including hunting and fishing). Allan and Burridge reveal that these taboo and swear words can be largely attributed to fear and superstition: people do not speak about disease and death to not attract them (2006: 203). Then, to provoke or cause discomfort to someone who is fighting against life and death or wishing death or disease to someone can be very offensive in all cultures.

- Religion (sacred beings, objects, and places). All words associated with spiritual power are considered sacred in every religion, and therefore, cannot be named in vain (the name of God). However, as Jay (2009: 167) states, swearing that refers to religion is not considered offensive to other people as it is to devotees. Religious swear words can be divided into two groups: "celestial" (the good, Jesus Christ) and "diabolic" (the evil, hell). In some cultures, they are no longer popular or have lost their original weight.

1.8. Sex-related taboo and swear words

The biggest category of taboo language and swearing is represented by sexual taboos. As Allan (2019) underlines "[n]othing is taboo for all people under all circumstances for all time", but this statement does not count for the area of sex. Sex-related language has always been subject to prohibition and condemnation since ancient times, and it still continues to be. Sexuality is part of everyone, it is the force that drives human life and therefore, one of the most important things in our society. Anyway, although its normal nature, sex is considered the major source of taboo expressions. The development of the sexual revolution and gay liberation between the 1960s and 1970s helped soften censorship on sexual topics, but when it comes to language, there is still difficulty in uttering such words freely. This happens because some practices like homosexual ones or extra-marital sex are still forbidden by religion or society, and therefore, difficult to treat. In addition, sex-related language is not only avoided by the prescriptions of society or institutions, but also by people themselves. For some people, sex is related to practices that should remain private because they represent people's inner side and their animal nature. Self-imposed censorship contributes to the negative consideration of sexual language. In fact, because of this stigma given to sexual taboos, people prefer to use euphemistic expressions in public instead of using direct words. From this, it is easy to

infer that sexual taboos are context-related and depend on the speaker's intentions or the formality of the situation. People prefer to opt for other words with similar or different connotations and emotional loads than to use language directly related to sex. Indeed, "the taboo of sex deserves the consideration of 'multi-faceted' taboo: it is an area of human experience that stands at the crossroads of religious, psychological, and social impositions. This three-fold understanding of sex can help to explain the remarkable staying powers of taboo over the centuries" (Crespo-Fernández 2018). The sexual theme then, constitutes a contradiction itself: "sex may be forbidden yet tempting; shameful yet seductive" (ibid). In fact, it represents the quintessential taboo, because even if censored by social etiquette, it remains something that people cannot avoid talking about. This ambivalence of sexual taboo can be seen in the development of language and more precisely in the huge number of synonyms used to refer, for example, to genitalia or the act of sex itself. According to Burridge (2004: 212), taboo "provides a fertile seedbed for words to flourish – and the more potent the taboo, the richer the growth". Therefore, since sex is the most powerful of all taboos, it offers a wide and growing range of terms and expressions. Furthermore, today, the sexual discourse includes new themes such as pornography, sadomasochistic practices, or masturbation, and everything related to the sexual sphere contributes to the creation of new sexual expressions. Hence, according to Crespo-Fernández (2018), "sex is a complex phenomenon that should be understood in a broad sense […]. The range of possibilities is great and so is the choice of vocabulary. In order to offer a representative picture of the way sexual taboos are dealt with in language, we should consider the different aspects that make up a whole in people's experiences with sex".

2. Taboo language and swearing in television, movies and TV series

Nowadays, the use of taboo and swear words is no longer such a rare occurrence. Socio-cultural changes in recent years have contributed to the spread of these words and expressions in daily interactions: from the sexual revolution to the development of language and critical thinking about religion or other important issues, together have shaped the language people use today. Therefore, swearing and taboo words have become an important part of people's everyday language and communication. As a result, these kinds of expressions can also be found in cultural products such as social media, books,

songs, television, etc. From the 1950s onward, using swearing and taboo language in front of a large audience became something normal. Slotkin in 1994 (in Xavier 2020) had already found that the presence of taboo words in the media is underlined by a change in the attitude of the linguistic community toward this type of language. Similarly, Sapolsky and Kaye (2005: 293) state that "Music, films and television have pushed the boundaries of expletive use. Words once considered taboo are now commonplace." Therefore, the increased frequency in society's use of these types of words shows that some of them have also been standardized within the media. Swearing, once offensive to traditional beliefs, has become a basic staple of many popular television programs and TV shows, and many academic researchers can confirm so. For example, in a study devoted to the analysis of taboo language in north American prime time television, Kaye and Sapolsky (2004) point out not only that taboo language has become more and more frequent on television, but also that over the past few years, this frequency has been noticeable even in cable channels. They also point out that taboo language has increased especially in the 9-10 p.m. time slot and in sitcoms. What is also interesting to know, however, is the type of swearing used on television in recent years. In fact, from 1990 to 1994 there is a decrease in the percentage of milder swear words and an increase instead of stronger ones particularly sexual and excretory swear words, while the opposite happens from 1994 to 1997 (Kaye, Sapolsky 2001: 316). In another study, however, it is evident that since 1997 there has been an increase in all types of swearing, particularly excretory swear words (2004: 561). On the other hand, by 2009 "the percentage of profanity represented by light swearing [had] steadily declined [...] indicating a gradual tightening of spoken language in prime time" (2009: 32). Therefore, it is interesting to note that there has been a steady change in the types of swear words used on television over time. Other studies such as Ávila-Cabrera's (2015a) on movies like *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Inglourious Bastards*, confirm an increase in offensive and taboo language also in American movies. Indeed, Hollywood films contain a great amount of taboo and swear words: the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) set an incredible record for the use of the f-word in its dialogues, but it still lags behind the 2014 Canadian comedy *Swearnet: The Movie*, which

won the Guinness World Record for 935 uses of the f-word[1]. In any case, there is a great use of this language in TV series as well, as confirmed, for example, by Beseghi's (2016) recent studies based on tv series such as *Girls* (2012) and *Orange is the new black* (2013). What is important, however, is to point out that the change in the use of swearing is also due to the evolution of content and themes used in scripts or plots. Socio-cultural changes have shifted the attention to more current issues such as those directed toward adolescents. And it is precisely teen programs, movies, or TV series that record the highest number of taboo words. In fact, the viewers or audiences to whom films or programs are targeted are also considered another important point in the change of taboo language. For instance, some tv series like *Sex Education* (2019) treat teen themes like sexuality with the use of very direct and explicit words. This reflects the current linguistic and cultural landscape: young people use very colorful language due to fashion or their membership in different social groups. However, in addition to this, an increasing demand for important current topics such as sexual openness in terms of gender and social inequality leads to a loss in the consideration of taboo and thus to a more explicit language. TV programs or movies starring teenagers or generally reflecting certain issues have now become increasingly credible and realistic. The dialogues uttered by the young characters appear natural and spontaneous, precisely because they are representative of teens' social and communicative behaviors. In conclusion, swearing is used more and more in audiovisual products and TV also because it fulfills multiple functions for the narrative. It creates characterization, realism, humor, and consistency, which are very important to convey ideologies and controlling viewer emotions, contributing to establishing settings and developing plotlines (Bednarek 2019a). Swear and taboo words have to deal with very important factors such as censorship and regulations by various governments.

2.1. The functions of taboo language and swearing in audiovisual products

Movies and TV series try to reflect reality, and thus the communicative situations that people experience every day, for this reason, today there is a great use of slang, cultural

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[1] https://www.joe.co.uk/entertainment/the-wolf-of-wall-street-is-only-fking-third-in-the-list-of-sweariest-films-ever-16448 (last accessed 21/11/2022)

references, and taboo language on screen. Therefore, the language used on TV or in movies reproduces someone's identity, culture, language, or community. Dialogues contain particular words and expressions that provide clues to viewers about the plot or the character's history. In fact, taboo and swear words are important because they also contribute to the characterization of the characters themselves. According to Norrick (in Xavier 2020), "swearing appears (only) in dialogue (set off in recognizable ways) to delineate certain types of characters or to signify emotion." Thanks to particular linguistic choices in the way of speaking of the characters, such as grammar and accent or pronunciation, people can identify within a place, a time, and a social group. In addition, as Xavier (2020) writes, due to the effects they have on their transmission, but also on the reception of extralinguistic meanings, one must consider two characteristics of movies and TV series. These are first of all the immediacy and ephemerality of the audiovisual product and then its multimodality. In fact, unlike the literary context, where the reader has time to assimilate the communicative meaning in the speech of the invented characters, on the screen this time is shortened to a limited period. Therefore, the time available to get information about the characters and various relationships is very limited so this information must be discovered as quickly as possible. Taboo language and swear words can facilitate this process because swearing is an emotional language and therefore reaches people more easily. This means that characters are given recognizable language that can express relevant details which are exaggerated on purpose to get people immediately into the story. Taboo language, in fact, helps in the creation of certain common stereotypes that can be positive or negative depending on people's considerations. In the popular imagination and according to Norrick (in Xavier 2020), "traditionally, these [characters who swear] were lower class characters and always men, while they have increasingly become middle and higher class and increasingly women as well as men". Soler Pardo (2011; 2015) also points out that taboo language in cinema is associated with the villain, or the bad, someone who is evaluated negatively by the viewer. According to him (2011: 141), "cursing in films, for example, is a way of representing, antiheroes: the thief, the gangster, the bank-robber who do not succeed in his/her mission." In movies, most of the speakers who use taboo language are part of the mafia world and commit crimes such as murder, drug trafficking or jewelry trafficking. This is the major stereotype that such language creates in the cinematic imagination, and it is

well explained by Ávila-Cabrera (2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2016) or Ilaria Parini (2014) regarding American mafia movies. In addition, taboo language and swearing may also be related to dialectal marks other than the standard one as it is explained in the studies done by Dobrow and Gidney or Azad (in Xavier 2020) on animated films or programs. They agree that linguistic variation and the use of swearing are used as a representation of linguistic stereotypes at the ethnic, social, and regional levels. In fact, the use of low-register language is usually associated with the lower classes, the suburbs, or the most marginalized communities. Thus, taboo language in audiovisual fiction tends to represent the villain, that is, the character or group of characters away from the center of power and prestige. Usually, taboo language is perceived negatively in film or television productions, however, it can also be a symbol of solidarity, creating empathy among the audience and the characters. In fact, depending on the different functions it performs in narrative, taboo language can also have positive aspects and can even lead people to perceive negative figures as positive or vice versa. An example is the case where taboo and swear words are used for humorous purposes. Considering the comic aspect of taboo words in unexpected situations, the inadequacy of the taboo words to the context generates humor and laughter in the viewer. Consequently, this use of words to amuse can generate empathy with the viewer who values positively the use of taboo language even by the antagonist of the story. In fact, this happens in movies or TV series with violent, but still comic themes. At the same time, when a character from a higher social status like an advocate or a doctor uses swearing can be judged negatively by the viewer because there is a break in the characterization of the character that leads to a break in the viewer's expectations. In conclusion, as Bednarek (2019a; 2019b; 2020) suggests, swear and taboo words have different stylistic and narrative functions that are very important in audiovisual products.

2.2. Taboo language and swearing in American screens

The American film and television industry has rules outlined by commissions, associations, and councils. Swearing in movies is monitored by a self-regulated age rating system devised by the *Motion Picture Association* (in Shafer, Kaye 2015), which serves as a potential warning for possible offensive and taboo content. Each studio rates its own movies as follows: "G" (approved for a general audience of all ages), "PG" (parental

guidance suggested), "PG-13" (some material may be inappropriate for children under 13), "R" (children under 17 require accompanying parent or adult guardian), "NC17" (no one 17 and under admitted). For example, the use of a single sexually charged word, even if only as an expletive, in a movie requires at least a PG-13 rating, while more than one expletive of this kind or just one of them inserted in a sexual context requires a full R rating (*Classification and rating rules* in Shafer and Kaye 2015). On the other hand, who regulates swearing on broadcast television in the evening and night from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., is *FCC* (*Federal Communications Commission*). It does not censor broadcasts, but it does enforce violations of broadcast indecency usually by fining a network after it has aired a program containing an indecent incident (this does not happen with preview programs). Therefore, it does not judge words as indecent prior to airing and if not under regulations, but it operates after having received any kind of complaint from viewers (*FCC* in Shafer and Kaye 2015). Broadcast television is also self-monitoring; in fact, it has adopted an age-based rating system similar to that used by the *Motion Picture Association of America*, which has been improved in 2007 including labels with content warnings. According to *FCC*, these labels are "V" which stands for violence, "S" for sexual content, "L" for coarse language, and "D" for suggestive dialogue. However, the system has been criticized for inadequate protection from offensive content, in fact, as *PTC* (*Parents Television Council*) states, authors may feel free to include swearing in programs (in Shafer, Kaye 2015). Another example of a voluntary rating system is the *TV-MA*, which indicates whether or not a TV series may contain crude and indecent language (Bednarek 2019b). As a result, the US audience has become upset for the increasing use of swearing and taboo words, especially on television. Despite public demands to reduce indecency, the US television and film industry seems to have decided to relax its standards, allowing some offensive words to be included in television programs and shows, as well as in movies or TV series. In some recent studies, it is reported that 58% of viewers think there is too much swearing on television, while another study points out that 70% of viewers believe that this kind of language on American television is getting worse (in Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2011). As Bednarek states, the use of swearing for some viewers is normal and funny (2019b), but there are also more conservative groups of people who complain about the use and control of vulgar language on TV (Kaye, Sapolsky 2009). Although swearing is increasingly common in comedy,

most often it is uttered in a non-humorous way and directed at another character (2001: 922). Therefore, people's complaints are generated not only by the abundance of swearing but also by the type of swearing present in US television programming. This is because viewers are concerned that "verbal vulgarities on television lead to more cursing in everyday conversation and to a general breakdown in civility and personal values" (Marks in Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2010). Werner's study (in Fägersten, Bednarek 2022) on the use of swearing in movie and TV subtitles, clearly illustrates the change of swearing in relation to external socio-cultural factors, production codes, or changes in the US TV industry. Due to the decrease in the perception of taboo as well as the rise of uncensored cable/streaming services that are not subject to regulation by authorities, network TV programs are also trying to assert their right to include more adult content and language (Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2010: 45). Although viewers may be offended by what they hear, cable and premium channels are not under *FCC* limitations, and therefore have more freedom in introducing swearing and taboo inside TV programs. Swear words, particularly those having a stronger effect on the audience, highlight the changing norms of television and media language (Fägersten 2014; 2017). A perfect example is *South Park*, which recorded 162 mentions of the word *shit* in the same episode even though the word was used precisely as a parody for the excessive use of swear words (Friend in Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2010). Anyway, as Bednarek (2019a) states in her study on the multifunctionality of swear/taboo words in television series, in the US, standards with respect to the use of profanity on TV are taken seriously. For example, in the first six months of 2006 alone, more than 300,000 complaints were received for swearing and offensiveness in TV programs (although not necessarily all related to language).

2.3. Taboo language and swearing in Italian screens

Even in Italy, there are regulations that come into force when taboo language and swearing are used on TV and in movies. As far as cinema is concerned, the government has definitely abolished state censorship which means that ministerial commissions no longer have the power to evaluate films[2]. Instead of these bodies, the *Commissione per la*

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2   https://www.wired.it/play/cinema/2021/04/06/abolita-censura-cinematografica-italia/ (last accessed 23/11/2022)

classificazione delle opere cinematografiche[3] (Commission for the Classification of Cinematographic Works) was established to verify the correct classification of cinematographic works by operators. In fact, it is the owners and producers themselves, as is already the case in almost all western countries, who define and rate movies. The government is only invited to intervene in cases of any abuse that will be sanctioned later. This applies to theatrical releases only. Therefore, there is a kind of self-regulatory system where producers or distributors classify film works while the commission decides whether these are appropriate or not for the national audience. Movies are classified considering people of all ages, especially children and adolescents. The commission assesses whether works are for all, works are not suitable for children under 6 years old, works are prohibited for children under 14 years old (except for children over 12 years of age accompanied by an adult), and whether works are prohibited for children under 18 years old (except for children over 16 years of age accompanied by an adult)[4]. For television channels, on the other hand, it is television companies that decide how to evaluate films, dramas, and various TV shows and programs broadcast on television. They have their own instruments and criteria for evaluating the various works in order to protect the physical, moral, and mental well-being of children and people in general. Television networks must comply with the rules of the *Codice di autoregolamentazione TV e minori*[5] (Self-regulation Code for TV and Minors), which requires prior information and reporting on programs suitable only for viewing by adult audiences or a problem on those transposed exclusively for children. In fact, if programs intended only for an adult audience are aired before 10:30 pm, television companies will undertake to announce in advance that the broadcast is not suitable for younger viewers by using iconographic signaling systems as well. If the broadcast will have interruptions, the warning will be repeated after each interruption. For example, state-owned *RAI* channels used to send a verbal warning before showing certain programs that might contain scenes or language inappropriate for children. Now, a red or yellow colored line below the "Rai sign"

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[3] https://www.ilpost.it/2021/04/06/italia-censura-cinematografica/ (last accessed 23/11/2022)

[4] https://cinema.cultura.gov.it/chi-siamo/commissioni/commissione-per-la-classificazione-delle-opere-cinematografiche/ (last accessed 23/11/2022)

[5] https://www.agcom.it/tutela-dei-minori (last accessed 23/11/2022)

indicates whether the films are only for adults or also for children. For private *Mediaset* channels, a dot of various colors is used depending on the target audience: green (for everyone), yellow (children with adult presence), red (recommended only for an adult audience without age specification), and red that remains for the entire duration of the broadcast (adults only)[6]. In general, from 7 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. television tries to avoid programs where taboo language or swearing, or otherwise language that may offend religious denominations and feelings is used. In addition, there is a time slot (from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.) that is considered absolutely protected, indeed there is prior control and absolutely no use of a certain kind of language[7]. However, in Italy, some TV programs or series that use offensive language or make use of violent scenes are usually broadcast late at night. Therefore, as Delia Chiaro (2007) suggests in one of her studies, "television companies are willing to pay producers a lower price than that which is normally paid for a product that can be screened during prime time and, therefore, to a wider audience. Not only, but a program screened late at night is in turn likely to gain lower profits in terms of advertising." Industries that invest in TV marketing want to attract a large number of possible buyers, so they try to advertise their products when most people are watching TV. Usually, some TV companies ask translators to censor programs that contain taboo language so that they can be shown freely even in prime time as in the case of the TV series *Grey's Anatomy* (2005). Similarly, regarding the use of censorship through translation, Chiaro (2007) exposes the doubt that there may be a "blacklist" of English words and references considered strictly taboo on Italian TV, although there is no real evidence of such a list. Italian adaptors are thus pressured to censor or manipulate particular references in television programs, movies, or series to protect people and children from potentially harmful content. For the various platforms, however, the parental control system is applied, whereby the responsibility for program viewing is given directly to the family. For instance, in the more recent *Netflix*, *Amazon Prime Video* or *Infinty TV*, the adaptation especially of TV series does not present great manipulation

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[6]

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sistemi_di_classificazione_delle_trasmissioni_televisive#:~:text=CLASSIFI CAZIONE%20TUTTI%20%3A%20Adatto%20a%20tutte,a%20partire%20dai%2016%20anni. (last accessed 23/11/2022)

[7] https://www.mise.gov.it/images/stories/mise_extra/codice-tv-minori-pdf.pdf (last accessed 23/11/2022)

or censorship, as the audience can choose what to watch on their own, unlike TV programs that tend to adapt the product to the tastes of the general public. Even in the Italian scene despite there being more freedom now, swearing is not really accepted. In fact, the *Movimento Italiano Genitori* (Italian Parents Movement) has established a TV Watchdog to protect children from harmful content. This observatory over the years has attacked several television broadcasts or movies aired because considered harmful to children and adolescents and full of vulgar language. Emblematic is the case of the anime series *Sailor Moon* (1991) which was attacked by the members of *Moige* as being guilty of undermining the sexual identity of boys, inducing them to homosexuality (Renna 2022). Therefore, the censorship and manipulation of vulgar content in Italy is not only due to the need to comply with various TV or film regulations, but also due to the social perception of various themes and taboo language.

3. Taboo language and swearing in audiovisual translation

Several academic studies have focused on the treatment of taboo language and swearing in audiovisual translation: in subtitling (Díaz Cintas 2001; Scandura 2004; Ávila-Cabrera 2015; Baines 2015) and in dubbing (Pujol 2006; Soler Pardo 2013; Beseghi 2016). While other studies have explained the translation of vulgar language more from the sociocultural or linguistic point of view (Díaz Cintas 2012; Fuentes-Luque 2015; Zottola 2019; Santaemilia 2008). All these studies show the difficulties translators face in translating and adapting taboo language and swearing, generally describing the strategies used and the reasons behind some interferences, omissions, censorship, or self-censorship. The treatment of taboo language can be one of the greatest challenges in AVT. In fact, "if the translator's job is always difficult, translating tabooed words is particularly problematic in that one has to take into consideration not only the usual problems that the translation of any text poses – even scientifically aseptic ones, if such things exist – but also other particular considerations that affect tabooed expressions" (Chamizo Domínguez 2018). As has already been seen, "taboo has been traditionally defined as something prohibited or excluded from use because it is considered improper or inadequate" (Chamizo Domínguez 2018: 92). For this reason, along with slang and cultural references, taboo words are considered a very difficult obstacle for audiovisual translators to overcome. Therefore, despite the evolution of AVT in recent years,

especially from an epistemological, professional, and ethical point of view (Chaume 2013), taboo language remains a problem for its ethical consideration and thus acceptability. Despite this, the use of taboo and swear words has increased considerably in movies or television productions. This change which affects western society, calls for greater care in the translation of vulgar language. For Chaume (2004b: 1), "the main function of audiovisual translation is to produce a similar effect on the target culture audience as the source text produced on the source culture audience", from which it might be claimed that taboo language and swearing should be rendered to produce the same effect on the target culture (Ávila-Cabrera 2015a). Indeed, in audiovisual translation, TV series and movie dialogues must be adapted to the target culture or conformed to the target language (Gambier 2003). In fact, according to De Rosa (2022), translators involved in dubbing and subtitling must necessarily be aware of the multicultural function and different variations of taboo and vulgar language above having pragmatic and linguistic competence on it. When it comes to differences not only on a linguistic level but also on a cultural level, audiovisual translators should be able to resolve the various divergences by finding the best alternatives and strategies. Therefore, taboo language must be considered from its socio-cultural perspective, which means that "what could be considered taboo in a society could be not perceived in the same way in another one and have a higher degree of social acceptance" (Sanz-Moreno 2018). As far as acceptance is concerned, Malinverno and Pavesi (2000) write that vulgar expressions are subject to linguistic interdiction, which means that sometimes their use is deemed unsuitable for the public context. In fact, as discussed in the chapters before, the use of taboo language depends largely on the social context and environment in which it occurs. To continue, there are some words and expressions that can be considered universal taboos, such as sex, and others that have a different degree of tolerance depending on the society, such as religion, the use of expletives, or scatology (Sanz-Moreno 2018). As has already been widely explained, in some countries it is considered more offensive to utter God's name in vain than to express sexual innuendos or racist epithets (Hughes 1991), and this can lead to several possible translations in the target language. Dewaele (2004: 205) writes that "S-T words are multifunctional, pragmatic units which assume, in addition to the expression of emotional attitudes, various discourse functions." In films and tv series taboo and swear words can be used to express anger, anxiety, indignation, etc., therefore,

this kind of language has different functions and represents the speaker's personality and idiosyncrasies; and can be used especially for insulting (Allan 2015). Hence, "The translation of taboo words and swearwords is crucial when they contribute to characterization or when they fulfil a thematic function in a film" (Díaz Cintas, Remael 2007: 197). Moreover, the use of taboo words in movies and tv series makes the characters of the film look natural to express their emotion because supports the representation of real life in the plot of the story. Soler Pardo (2013) explains how translators face a lot of troubles in translating movies and TV series since they should pay attention to all these elements together: the sociocultural element, the emotive power, the evolution and the censoring of taboo language; instead of trying to please the audience. In conclusion, as Fägersten and Bednarek (2022) state, the presence of taboo language and swearing in movies or TV series and programs is influenced by three things: time (by social changes, laws, and authority), culture (cultural differences), and censorship (tv broadcasts and cinema).

3.1. Censorship, censoring and self-censorship in the audiovisual translation of taboo and swear words

When it comes to translation and audiovisual translation of taboo language and swearing it is impossible not to mention censorship. Censorship plays an important role in the broadcasting of certain television programs or the showing of films in movie theaters. When movies or tv series are not suitable for a certain audience, the viewers are warned in advance, or censorship is carried out (in some cases certain programs are not even broadcast). Therefore, censorship implies a change in the original product. When a text is subject to censorship it is usually manipulated to convey the same message in a different way. This does not necessarily mean a complete deletion, but some sort of correction is definitely taking place. Manipulation and censorship go hand in hand, although they are often given a negative meaning. As Renna (2022) suggests, the manipulation of the target text is often necessary when linguistic constraints and audience expectations regarding context require it. Censorship not only suppresses information but also decides how to deal with the values and morals of the culture. Allan and Burridge (2006: 13) define censorship as "the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is condemned as subversive of the common good". For "subversive of the common good" the two scholars

refer to the fact that censorship of certain taboos is supposed to protect people from some kind of harm. For example, censorship of religious or sexual swear words protects people from moral harm, whereas censorship of violence protects them against physical harm (ibid). This also applies to television and cinema: "[…] what causes audiovisual products to be censored is the will from television broadcasters to 'protect' the younger audiences from 'potentially harmful' contents" (Renna 2022). Hence, because taboo language and swearing constitute a real constraint on language and people, censorship becomes a tool for monitoring and protecting the social, moral, and physical environment in which people live. It occurs within a social and cultural context and tends to conceal some information in order to enhance others. Therefore, it represents social control that is related to cultural behavior. People, for moral or cultural reasons, force themselves not to utter certain words, and this leads to the act of censoring as well. Censorship is imposed by authorities or those in power while censoring of language involves a restriction in behavior; mostly on an individual basis (Allan, Burridge 2006: 24). Censoring of language is also important in the process of audiovisual translation because it encompasses both censorship and self-censorship. As Vigo (2020) suggests voluntary and self-imposed censorship sometimes coincides with an imposed mode. While censorship is a collective process in that it is implemented by the state, governments, and the self-regulation of the film industry itself, which sets its own limits, self-censorship is a solitary task that is difficult to perceive because there are no pre-established rules (in Soler Pardo 2013). Because of their restrictive policies, governments that impose censorship somehow make translators' lives "easier" by setting clear and explicit rules to regulate censorship and translation regarding socially significant topics such as identity construction, religion, or political issues. On the other hand, democracies and liberal governments that do not provide similarly explicit norms force translators to "guess" what they need to remove from a text (Vigo 2020). Therefore, translators must refer to sociocultural contexts to be able to translate, so they tend to self-censor themselves to respect "the common good." In fact, the use or non-use of taboo language and swearing on TV or in movies has always been a matter of debate in audiovisual translation also for this reason. The need to have language suitable for any audience, regardless of age or gender, and to avoid the use of vulgar, immoral, or harmful vocabulary often makes translators choose the path of censorship and self-censorship.

3.2. Censorship of taboo and swear words in Italian dubbing

There are several academic studies on the treatment of swear words and taboo language in audiovisual translation in Italy, particularly about dubbed films or TV series imported from the US. Pavesi and Malinverno (2000), for example, deal with the use of taboo language in audiovisual translation and the problems associated with transposition from English to Italian. Chiaro (2007) studies the treatment of sexual references on the Italian screen. Azzaro (2005) in his book discusses swearing in movies. Bianchi (2008) analyzes the use of teen slang in the adaptation of the TV series *Baffy*. Bucaria (2007; 2009) studies the relationship between translation and censorship in Italian television and the humorous function of swearing in TV series. Ledvinka (2010) discusses censorship and omission in Italian dubbing and subtitling. Parini (2013; 2014) analyzes the domestication of taboos and swearing in audiovisual works such as dubbed mafia movies. While Ranzato (2010; 2012; 2013; 2014) deals with film translation as a creative act or as censorship. All of these studies have identified a general trend toward the omission, if not elimination, of taboo language and swearing over the years. Therefore, Italian translators have always censored or manipulated taboo language in audiovisual texts. This is obviously due to the long tradition of censorship that was established in the country under the Fascist regime. As Renna's (2022) study shows, in the past, especially between the 1990s and the 2000s, movies and TV series were more censored than now. The censorship practice occurred at the linguistic and extralinguistic level while also considering the context and themes presented. Hence, especially scenes high in sexual references (homosexuals, incestuous relationships, etc.) were highly subject to language censorship. Of course, this was mainly due to moral, cultural, and social considerations and beliefs, in other words, differences in the level of tabooization of certain topics between the two cultures (Parini 2014). Cultural references that contained these themes, could not be broadcast on television or shown at the cinema, especially in a country still under the influence of the Vatican and the Catholic Church (Renna 2022). In recent years, the threshold of acceptability of vulgar language has changed considerably in the country. Significant progress has been made in current dubbing practice at the linguistic level, however, there are still categories of taboo language subject to linguistic interdiction. Religious taboos and references to the Holy Family have always been and still are prohibited in Italy. Profanity in movies or TV series,

such as using the name of an animal (e.g., *dog*) along with the name of God, is still strictly forbidden. Moreover, despite the increase in immigration and hostility toward foreign people, in general, ethnic and racial insults are less widespread and used than, for example, sexual slurs. Usually, these are neutralized or toned down causing a great loss of meaning in audiovisual products dealing with certain social issues (Zanotti 2012). Instead of them, insults that are part of the homosexuality or gender difference areas are frequently used. They are put directly in place of the original racial slur or added to the word to give the phrase a stronger emotional and offensive charge (Filmer 2011: 148). Despite this practice, when homophobic or concerning insults of different genders are presented in the original audiovisual text, they are usually neutralized or softened (Del Carlo 2021: 47). This shows that the tendency to censor or rather self-censor the text is still very much present in Italy (Sandrelli 2016: 126). However, it is impossible not to notice that the tendency to mitigate or tone down certain words and expressions can sometimes also lead to a more vulgar translation due to the few choices available and the compensation strategy used by translators/adapters. (Sandrelli 2016: 141). Thus, it can be argued that although censorship and content manipulation have changed over time from very restrictive control to openness to taboo topics, questions remain about the transposition of some vulgar expressions. In addition, some studies explain that it is not only the socio-cultural component, censorship, or self-censorship that influences the transposition of vulgar language into Italian, but also the linguistic influence or lack of semantic and functional correspondence between the source and target language (Parini 2013: 154).

3.3. Influences on the adaptation of taboo and swear words from English to Italian

Manipulation and censorship in audiovisual translation can also occur due to linguistic issues and difficulties in transferring taboo and swear words from English to Italian. When meanings are transcoded from one language to another, the frequency and flexibility of some expressions appear different due to choices of omission, attenuation, or the use of euphemisms that differ significantly from the original. Thus, the choice of translation depends on the semantic and functional correspondence between the two languages, on technical constraints, and on the translators' (and primarily the scriptwriters') permission to work creatively (Labov in Pavesi, Malinverno 2000). For

example, some expressions are changed because they sound completely foreign to the audience, while other vulgar expressions in American movies or TV series don't appear at all in the dubbed version because they don't belong to the Italian language. Another noteworthy factor is the technical limitations typical of dubbing: articulatory constraints, for example, are particularly relevant because taboo language is often an expression of emotion, physically manifested by marked and violent lip and facial movements. According to Pavesi and Perego (2006), Italian adaptors go to great lengths to make Italian adaptations of TV series and films "invisible" enough to produce as little interference as possible from one language to another. Nevertheless, contamination phenomena between English and Italian occur at the lexical and phraseological levels, which have a very strong sociolinguistic impact on viewers and their language. According to Pavesi and Malinverno (2000), there are two viable paths in front of an audiovisual work: the first one, in which translators repeat expressions literally or use *clichés* that represent a fixed form, and the other one, in which more innovative and even imaginative expressions are used. As far as the first path is concerned, in some cases, there are equivalent expressions in Italian for some English taboo and swear words, such as *son of a bitch* which becomes *figlio di puttana* or *shit* which becomes *merda* (ibid). However, this is not possible for other expressions. For *motherfucker*, for example, a literal translation is rarely possible since it would represent a very strong taboo, that of incestuous sexual intercourse, which is strictly forbidden in the Italian language. The solution could be to use semantically related terms such as *bastardo* or *figlio di puttana* or different expressions such as *stronzo*, *pezzo di merda*, *rotto in culo* (ibid). In the latter case, the reference is no longer to illegitimate birth, but the taboo becomes scatological, or the masculinity of the person is questioned. Even the translation of *goddamn* sometimes deviates greatly from the original. When translators use a euphemism like *cavolo*, the sense and communicative force of the English word is sometimes lost. This is also evident in the use of expressions such as *Dio*, *maledetto*, *maledizione*, *dannazione*, and *accidenti* which could give rise to stereotypes or translation clichés. In addition, some literal translations like those used for acts of invocation or cursing such as *che diavolo* or *maledetto* lose intensity and aggressive valence compared to the original (ibid). In Pavesi's (1994) analysis of some Italian dubbings, it becomes clear that stereotypes created by the translation process from English are nothing new. Expressions such as

"L'ho costruito io questo fottuto posto con queste fottute mani" or "Devi avere un maledetto quoziente intellettivo. Sei maledettamente dotato" are the result of a movie translated from English. These lines correspond to clichés that contribute to the identification of Italian in dubbing and have become entrenched in the target language. For example, in early films dubbed from English, *goddamn* or *gaddamn it* was translated with milder expressions such as *maledetto* and *malededizione*, mostly due to the technical limitations of dubbing (length of the English expressions and lip synchronization), while now these words are used also to translate strong sentences like "The man was a fucking stallion" dubbed as "Quell'uomo era un maledetto stallone" (ibid). Another example of a cliché is the translation of the English expletive *fuck off* with the name of the person following it such as "Vaffanculo Lance! Vai al telefono" which is related to the excessive use of vocatives in the English language (ibid). As far as the second path is concerned, namely the creation of more original expressions, Pavesi and Malinverno (2000) found the line "Ehi, palle di merda!" to translate "Bullshit!" in the movie *The Warriors* (1979). This expression originally arose from a technical constraint (a labial occlusive foreground) and evolved into a peculiar insult. According to the two scholars, the imaginative aspect of this and other translations leads one to consider the connection between the translations for the Italian film scene and the spoken language (ibid). Some adaptors try to modify expressions in original ways because of the various American expressions that native Italians might consider strange. A native Italian speaker would never utter expressions like "Sei un fottuto Bastardo", which is why they sound strange. While other times, expressions that are more common in American films are adopted in the Italian language, such as the word *fottuto*, which is typical of central and southern Italy and is usually translated as *fucking*, and which may have spread to other geographical areas perhaps through the vehicle of dubbed films (ibid). Moreover, the word *fuck* or *fucking* represents a major problem in the adaptation from English to Italian, mainly because of its polyfunctionality and the lack of corresponding terms (Parini 2014; Pavesi, Malinverno 2000). As mentioned above, there is a tendency in Italian dubbing to weaken or even omit some vulgar words, due to the lack of syntactic flexibility of some Italian terms. For example, when certain constructions such as *son of a bitch* are used as an adverb or in adverbial constructions such as "Remember that night it was raining like son of a bitch" in the movie *Hero* (1992), where the taboo expression means "a lot" or

"so much", the Italian translation "Ti ricordi quella sera che pioveva tanto?" loses its taboo effect. The same happens when names become verbs, such as "I'm just bulshitting you" in the movie *Indecent Proposal* (1992), translated as "Stavo solo scherzando". In some cases, there is a real change of register, actually, in the movie *White Sands* (1992), the line "Just don't bullshit me anymore" becomes "Solo, non mi piace essere preso in giro" (Pavesi, Malinverno 2000). In summary, Italian dubbing of TV series and movies have begun to change over the years. Even the most chaste translations, such as *per la miseria* or *porco mondo* in *Taxi Driver* (1976), have become more faithful to the original. The word *cavolo* is the perfect example: it used to be the only term for the word *fuck*, but now it is almost always replaced by its less polite counterpart *cazzo*.

SATIRICAL ANIMATED TV SERIES

1. Satirical animated TV series: from history to characteristics

Vulgarity, violence, and satire are popular ingredients in current television production. Thanks to the widespread of television channels and platforms facilitated by digital technology, people can choose what to watch, and this has paved the way for new television programs. In the 1950s there was a gradual increase in programs that dared to be satirical, controversial, and political. The shift from networks to cable broadcasting has led to a greater selection of channels and more diverse programming around the world. Today, therefore, satirical humor has become one of the broadest and most influential comedy genres ever. This is especially true of "adult" animated series such as *The Simpsons* (1989), *Futurama* (1999*)*, *Family Guy* (1999), and others, which have caused a great stir for their content. Since the 1990s, animated series or satirical cartoons have become increasingly popular among people, but cartoons in this genre have always existed in some sense. Satirical animation did not originate with current television series, but long before with what can be called "politically incorrect" cartoons. In the 1920s and 1930s the Fleischer brothers' *Betty Boop* and *PopEye*[8], could hardly be considered educational cartoons for children. Betty's character, for example, had become famous for her frames in which she appeared naked, while *PopEye*, who knocked out his rivals with his fists, was an example of gratuitous violence for children. *Disney* also created some short films that dealt with the themes of alcohol and prohibition, as well as various sexual themes. According to Karl Cohen in the book *Forbidden Animation*[9], among the various Disney shorts, there were some that had gags with female animal underpants. Betty's character, as well as many others in the animations of that period, was censored when the *Motion Picture Production Code* of 1930 (known as the *Hays Code*) went into effect, which began to censor scenes of a certain type in movies and cartoons. One of the adult animated films that became famous precisely because of its genre is 1972's *Fritz the Cat*.

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[8] https://www.cinematographe.it/serie-tv/serie-animate-politicamente-scorrette/ (last accessed 01/10/2022)

[9] https://filmschoolrejects.com/brief-history-cartoons-adults/ (last accessed 02/10/2022)

The film dealt with several explicit contents and became the first American "X-rated" (suitable only for adult audiences) animated film. Although it was not aimed exclusively at adults, the cartoon *The Flintstones*, which was the first animated series to debut in prime time in America, also contained themes of adult life. The series centered on characters living in a prehistoric universe whose society closely resembled American life in the 1960s. The Flintstones family appealed primarily to children but was also enjoyed by adults because of the mix of jokes and stories. Overall, it was an animation program aimed at families and not just adults, but it proved that a cartoon, in general, could be broadcast in the evening slot and be successful. It is clear that most animated television series for adults or teenagers, at first, were comedies for laughs, focused more on traditional humor, and the producers would not have imagined the success of adult cartoons in general. Twenty years later, animation has been revisited, introducing vulgar language and predominantly adult content. Ironically, the medium of cartoons, initially aimed at children, was implemented to deal with current affairs, politics, and social denunciation. Children's animated series generally deal with topics suitable for kids, such as themes of friendship, responsibility, and self-acceptance[10]. In other words, simple, common themes suitable for the whole family that usually present a story with a lesson. While children's programs offer a more aseptic worldview and convey lessons through stories, adult cartoons do not have to adhere to that formula. There is more freedom to explore darker themes and delve into real life through the human struggles that characters face, despite not being explicitly human. This genre shows that although the characters, setting, and medium convey fictional stories, the problems of humanity and current events can still be present. Topical contents combined with black humor and satire aim to satisfy the age and maturity of the respective viewers. Thus, it was that satirical cartoons like *The Simpsons* rode the crest of the wave, becoming a model destined to be replicated in almost all subsequent products. The series is one of the most iconic cartoons of American satire on an international level and inspired the revival of satirical comedy, creating a new genre of which many other programs are now a part. *Family Guy*, for example, deals with the main problems of humanity: alcoholism, physical problems, sex addiction, and more.

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[10]   https://newuniversity.org/2018/01/23/the-relevance-of-adult-cartoons-in-pop-culture/ (last accessed 02/10/2022)

South Park (1997) and *American Dad!* (2005) are probably the most satirical of all, while *Futurama* is the TV series that makes a prediction about the future of humanity. These series paint worlds that are almost always exaggerated and closely related to reality, often bringing to the screen caricatural versions of real existing characters in the world of *Hollywood*, music, or international politics. Animated series such as those listed can be compelling despite being unreal cartoons because they use satire and parody. Satire, which is often condemned, allows the audience and thus the community and society to see the obscured reality of things. Therefore, satire is for the people because it exposes them to real social events, encouraging critical thinking through mocking the vices, flaws, and hypocrisy of humankind. And this is precisely why it is often criticized by people. The edgy humor, controversial topics also related to religion, and the use of swear words and taboo expressions create contrasts among people who disagree with the airing of certain programs. In fact, many people resent when these cartoons target figures important to their culture or religion, such as priests or even simply the figure of God. For example, associations such as *Moige* or the *PTC* have always opened great controversy about the viewing of these TV series by an underage audience, believing that some shows, aired in time slots where children can watch them, convey counterproductive educational messages. Despite the criticism and various controversies, these television series are much loved by people. The past two decades have shown that animation is an effective and popular medium for telling not only educational stories for children, but also stories that make adults think. In fact, the ingenious idea behind the union of satire and animation is this: since they are only unrealistic cartoons, they can go on to deconstruct reality and expose current issues and topics, because they do so with that innocence that characterizes children's cartoons. For example, Jason Mittell (in Florberger, Lundborg 2014: 7) argues that animated series, through caricature and hyper-exaggeration, can force one to question the codes of realism associated with live performance systems. Hence, a cartoon in his view can still be as real and convincing as most non-animated sitcoms. But because they are "just cartoons," scriptwriters can inflict humiliation and trauma on them without making the audience feel bad for the characters (ibid).

2. *SOUTH PARK*: an introduction

South Park is an American sitcom created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone and developed by Brian Graden for the American *Comedy Central* program. The series revolves mainly around four main characters (Stan Marsh, Kyle Broflovski, Eric Cartman e Kenny McCormick), namely four elementary school children and their adventures in the fictional town of South Park, located within the real South Park Basin in the Rocky Mountains of central Colorado. In addition to the four main characters, *South Park* features a large cast of characters, including students, families and elementary school staff; joined by contemporary personalities and celebrities such as Donald Trump, Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez, and Ben Affleck; and controversial characters such as Satan, God or Hitler. It is one of the few television programs set in the Mountain West region; in fact, it brings the entire culture of this region to the screens: the snowy climate, mountaineering, the Mormons, cattle ranchers, and Old West theme parks. Among the main settings, in addition to South Park Elementary School, there are various neighborhoods and stores on the town's main street, the mountain range, various real places in Colorado such as Casa Bonita and Cave of the Winds, and many other places within the region. The plots of each episode are different and therefore usually not related to each other unless the story has been divided into two or more episodes. In addition, the stories may refer to typical city events, but also to supernatural and extraordinary circumstances. This is where the whole fantasy of the series comes in, because it is the boys who keep calm and act like adults when these events cause panic or incongruous behavior among the adult population which is portrayed instead as irrational, gullible, and prone to overreaction. The four children are often confused by the contradictory and hypocritical behavior of their parents and other adults and perceive them as having a distorted view of morality and society. The story of *South Park* began in 1992, when Trey Parker and Matt Stone, while attending the University of Colorado, created an animated short, entitled *Jesus vs. Frosty*[11]. The short features an early sketch of *South Park*'s main characters presented in a very rough manner. In 1995, Brian Graden (*FOX* executive), after seeing their short film, commissioned Parker and Stone to make a second work entitled *The Spirit of Christmas*, to send to his friends as a Christmas card. The style of this second product already had many features in common with the first season of the

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[11] https://southpark.fandom.com/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 02/10/2022)

future series. The short film depicts Jesus and Santa Claus (who will also later appear as characters in the series) battling it out in martial arts. Neither succeeds in winning, but both come to a truce. The meaning is obviously related to religious and cultural origins, in fact, the subject of the video was the "true meaning of Christmas." The short was later included in episode 4x17 *A Really Shitty Christmas*, in which the main characters try to "save" Christmas in their town. The short film was very successful and spread quickly through videotape duplication and the Internet where it became viral. The success prompted the two authors to proceed with the creation of the series. Hence, in the opening sequence of the first four seasons of the series, a clip of the short film can be seen inside a large billboard and a fight sequence between Jesus versus Frosty inside an old television set. The series bases its success on the cartoon creation technique which allows the sitcom to be simple but also effective because it allows it to report on topical issues in real time. The authors are the main creators of each episode of the series, which they create and invent together with other collaborators in only three days (75% less than episodes of other animated series such as *The Simpsons*). In addition, dubbing is mainly done by the entire staff. Parker and Stone voice most of the male characters in *South Park*, while other voice actors and members of the production staff dubbed and still dub some minor and recurring characters for the various episodes. Female voices usually were voiced by Mary Kay Bergman until 1999 before her death, after which several female voice actors followed, including April Schneider. The series officially began on 13 August 1997[12], and is currently in its 25th season, with a total of 315 episodes, one feature film, two specials, two TV movies and 7 short films. Nowadays it is broadcast in the US, and many other countries. The sitcom has been renewed until the 30th season, enough to carry the show until at least 2027.

2.1. Genre, themes and use of language

South Park deals with political and topical issues in American culture as well as other cultures and countries, challenging taboos and ingrained societal beliefs through parody and black comedy. Each episode opens with an ironic disclaimer: "All characters and events in this show, even those based on real people, are completely fictional. All

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[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 02/10/2022)

celebrity voices are impersonated badly...The following program contains vulgar language and, because of its content, should not be viewed by anyone." In fact, the sitcom makes use of gags, violence, sexual content, references to popular culture, and satirical portrayals of celebrities. The four children and most of the other child characters use taboo language and swear words, some of which are often obscured because of their strong impact. The very fact that it is fourth graders using such strong language is what makes the series even more controversial. There are many themes, personalities, religions, and ideas that the animated series puts forth. Stronger and more controversial issues are also addressed in the series, for example, child abuse in all its forms is a recurring theme along with homosexuality, obesity, mental health, and the subject of death[13]. The series is also famous for tackling current issues (such as the 9/11 attack) in an almost contemporary way. Other issues such as the environment, pollution, and global warming are also often addressed with irony. The subjects the show usually makes fun of include members of the Republican and Democratic parties, the Liberals, the Fundamentalists, and the most fanatical and hostile atheists, political correctness maniacs, the Industrialists, and the Hippies. Some characters are more stereotyped than others: the Mexicans, for example, are depicted with difficulties understanding and learning English and with little desire to work. The African Americans, the Canadians, the Chinese, the Italians (Luigi, an Italian child who controls the "proceeds" racket from teething fairy tips, rarely appears), the Jews, the Scientologists, the Mormons (the only ones who would go to heaven in the series), and the Muslims (although after the Muhammad cartoons, Islamic characters appear less frequently) are also victims of satire. In addition, several celebrities being part of the leftist party (Michael Moore, Al Gore, Barbra Streisand, George Clooney and others) are regularly mocked in the series. According to the authors, the plots are like parables based on religion or other topics that allow the show to poke fun at both controversial issues, ridiculing them from any perspective. In fact, according to them, the main purpose of the series is to entertain people by mocking and satirizing any topic, without any favoritism[14]. Early episodes featured more veiled themes and contained softer humor. Although social satire was present from the beginning, it became more prevalent

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[13] https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/ItAnimazioneOccidentale/SouthPark (last accessed 02/10/2022)

[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 02/10/2022)

as the series progressed and retained some of the scatological humor so beloved by characters in an attempt to remind adult viewers of "what it was like to be eight years old." Indeed, for Stone and Parker, the show remains child-centered and should be watched as such. The introduction of the satirical element to the series was the result of adding a "moral center" to the show, to make it rely less on being simply crude and shocking to be appreciated by the audience. For Parker, there is still an aspect of "underlying sweetness" in child characters, who often come across as cruel or absurd, but retain all their innocence. Usually, the main characters or other characters would reflect on what had happened during an episode and convey the important lesson from it with a short monologue. In the early seasons, this speech commonly began with a variation of the phrase "You know, I learned something today..."

2.2. The main characters

Stanley Marsh (Stan): is the alter ego of co-producer Trey Parker, and the character who illustrates to the audience the message or moral of the episode, i.e., the "good guy," Stan is a quiet, rational child, dealing with bizarre situations along with his group of friends through logical solutions. He always tries to question the actions of adults and his friends but is sometimes embarrassed by the way people react to situations. His main characteristic is that whenever a girl he likes speaks to him (particularly Wendy Testaburger), he vomits uncontrollably[15].

Kyle Broflovski: is one of the few Jewish characters in town, which leads him to be discriminated against and teased even by his friend Cartman. Kyle is the alter ego of co-producer Matt Stone; in fact, he and Stan are best friends. He is very intelligent and compassionate but sometimes appears skeptical and aggressive, especially toward Cartman, with whom he is always at odds. Together with Stan, Kyle often offers a reasonable perspective on classic societal behaviors; therefore, they are the two leaders of the group.

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https://southpark.fandom.com/wiki/Portal:Characters/Major_Characters#Supporting_Characters#Supporting_Characters (last accessed 02/10/2022)

Eric Theodore Cartman: is often the most involved character and usually the one around whom most events revolve. He is inspired by Archie Bunker (a fictional character from the US sitcom *All in the Family*). Cartman is the most manipulative, spoiled, lazy, aggressive, stingy, selfish, bigoted, and crude child in the series. He is the impersonator of evil because he enjoys judging and bullying other children in the school, including his friends. He does not tolerate and despises all religions and minorities; in fact, he regularly insults Kyle because he is Jewish and Kenny because of his poverty and shows no feeling of love toward them except for personal interests. Cartman also demonstrates unusual entrepreneurial skills in business and sometimes disguises himself to imitate Adolf Hitler, whom he idolizes for his anti-Semitic views. Eric, in short, is the voice of ignorance and racism, devoid of compassion, doing nothing to improve himself and change his outlook on life. However, despite all this, many think he is the most revolutionary character in the whole series.

Kenneth McCormick (Kenny): he comes from a poor family and is the most silent and misunderstood boy in the series because he generally never speaks. His language is unintelligible to the viewer because he always has the hood of his orange parka closed until it almost entirely covers his face and mouth except for his eyes. Although what he says cannot be understood, he is the one who uses the most explicit language of all (perhaps that is why he was deliberately censored in this way by the writers), and he is also the most knowledgeable about sexuality: he loves beautiful girls, pornography, and sex jokes. During the first five seasons Kenny dies in each episode in the most grotesque and different ways, but he always inexplicably reappears alive in the next episode. In the episode *Mysterion Rises*, Kenny reveals that he is immortal, in a sense, and always wakes up in his bed after each death. Kenny is killed irreversibly at the end of the fifth season, but the writers bring him back to life to great surprise in the following season, and from then on, he dies only on special occasions. Whenever he dies, his friends merely recite a few good words to describe their comrade's passing, but no one seems to despair or feel sorry for their friend; in fact, Kenny gets very angry with them for never remembering his death.

Leopold Stotch (Butters): is inspired by Eric Stough, an animation director/producer who works on the show. Butters attends South Park elementary school along with the other children. He is an important character from the first seasons, but it is in the sixth season

that he becomes a key character when he replaces Kenny after his disappearance by becoming one of the main characters and helping the other children in their adventures. Butters is innocent, endowed with great goodness, very shy, and introverted, and his behavior is almost carried to the limits of stupidity. Because of his excessive goodness, he is often attacked by his classmates and especially by Cartman, who always tries to take advantage of him, although perhaps in the end he also turns out to be his "best friend."

2.3. Animation, format and music

South Park has a very simple, almost minimalist style that rejects the hyperrealism of *Walt Disney* or Japanese *Manga*-style cartoons. It tries to escape the institutionalization and conservatism of the cartoon industry and does so by rejecting the aesthetic perfection of common cartoons (La Canfora 2016: 14). The show's animation style is inspired by the cut-out paper cartoons made by Terry Gilliam for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, which Parker and Stone have always loved. Except for the pilot episode and the shorts, which were produced using cut-out animation (stop motion) with construction paper, all episodes of the sitcom are created with computer animation. With the use of software such as *Autodesk Maya*, episodes are created more quickly while maintaining the same style and look of the cutouts. Only some of them feature sections of live-action footage or use other animation styles such as *Anime* style in small parts of a few scenes. Almost all characters are the same size, angle, and two-dimensional shape, and can be recognized only by their clothing, hats or headgear, and skin and hair colors. The only and more obvious difference is between children and adults: the former are small, round, have no noses, and have large heads and eyes; the latter are taller, angular, and have smaller heads. Both the characters and the objects or background do not look very realistic: very strong (almost saturated) primary and secondary colors are used without gradients, while the geometric shapes are extremely minimalist, almost stylized. The animation of this cartoon is very limited. The movements of the characters are mechanically animated and do not offer the same freedom of movement as hand-drawn characters precisely because of the creation technique (limited animation where mouths, eyes, and noses are glued on the head and later photographed) chosen by the creators. The characters do not move their heads but only their eyes and mouths creating little fluid and jerky movement, while the settings remain static, leading the viewer to focus on the characters. This does not allow

the head shape to change depending on expression and perspective which tends to be the same. When real-life inspired and famous characters enter the scene, they are represented in two ways: with photographic cutouts of their real heads and faces, or in a caricature fashion with a face reminiscent of the show's traditional style. Other characters, such as the Canadian population, are often represented in an even simpler way: they have simple almond-shaped eyes, and their heads move up and down when the characters speak. This is done to identify or highlight the characters' features, sometimes even to ridicule them. The authors used a technique from the cartoon world (Vaudeville) regarding framing: most of the characters show their faces to the viewers and address the audience directly by looking into the camera. Through this mechanism, viewers are reminded that what they are watching is pure fiction, the characters are just ideograms. The cruder and more banal the depiction, the less real they seem, allowing the comic effect to become more obvious. All these characteristics allow the authors to work on a symbolic level by focusing more on content than the image, while also allowing viewers to focus on themes and meanings. Apart from the pilot episode, which took three months to complete, and unlike other sitcoms, which take about nine months to complete, the creators and contributors of *South Park*, thanks to their technique, can generate an episode in only three weeks or even four days. The speed at which the episodes are produced allows the program to draw on topical news stories that occur day after day. For example, the season 12 episode *About Last Night* focused on Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential election and aired less than 24 hours after the winner was announced, using segments of dialogue from Obama's actual victory speech. South Park is created following the sitcom format: each episode lasts about 22 minutes and always follows the same storyline: there is a beginning, a problem with a climax followed by chaos, a resolution of the problem, and the return to normality. Each episode usually focuses on a single storyline. The sequence is not always the same, but events usually follow a basic pattern. Often chaos arises from a disappointment or misunderstanding or a shocking event, typical of great sitcoms, but the characters do not always succeed in resolving problems in the end. Usually, at the end of each episode, viewers learn a moral along with the characters in the series. The sitcom almost always begins with text and themes that lay the groundwork for parody and make it immediately clear that these are fictitious events. Through the statement appearing in the opening sequence, "All characters and events [...]" the writers

scoff at possible censorship and explain that it would be completely unnecessary because the program itself was created to be extreme but fake. This initial writing works because it attracts the viewer who is tempted to watch the sitcom. After this warning, the episodes start immediately with an opening theme song, which infuses people with energy and charge. Throughout the series, the authors have created three different ways of opening episodes that reflect different aspects of the show. In the beginning, in the first version, the children greet and smile at the audience as they are taken to the elementary school by bus. In this way the town of South Park welcomes people. In the second version, on the other hand, the text is more technological and sped up, which shows that the show has better animation, and has become popular. Finally, in the third version, human hands are seen impersonating the characters. This has a very deep meaning: the hands, in fact, symbolize the assembly work of the series when it was still in its infancy. The usual two background images always appear behind the characters during the initial song: a snowy mountain and the flat main road. The goal is to make South Park equal to any typical mountain town in the United States. The theme song has also changed over time, both in lyrics and music type. At first, the show's theme song was a soundtrack performed by the band *Primus* and sung by the band's lead singer, Les Claypool, and the show's four central characters during the opening title sequence. The opening theme song has been remixed three times throughout the series changing from folk-rock with bass, trumpets and rhythm drums to an electro-funk arrangement with pop qualities to a breakbeat-influenced electro-rock arrangement. In addition, the music and songs played and sung within the episodes are also of extreme importance. Some city characters often play or sing songs that influence a group's behavior, educate and motivate or even accompany certain scenes. However, the performances of some characters are not always approved by the four children. For example, the cook in the elementary cafeteria (called Chef) sings songs to children in some scenes to teach them something or to refer to the plot, although most of the time these songs always contain some sexual reference that leads children to not understand the teaching. Throughout the various seasons, then, there have also been several songs sung directly by famous singers. For example, Rick James, Elton John, and Ozzy Osbourne performed briefly in the episode *Chef Aid* of the second season.

2.4. US and worldwide distribution and censorship

South Park is distributed in America by *Comedy Central*, a cable and satellite TV channel best known for its comedy content and for programming other popular TV series such as *The Office* (2005) and *Futurama*. The success of *South Park* has prompted more cable companies to broadcast *Comedy Central*, making it one of the fastest-growing cable channels. The series is currently broadcast in 90% of television markets in the US and Canada, where it is estimated to generate $25 million a year in advertising revenue. Internationally, the sitcom is also broadcast in many other countries such as India and Australia through subsidiaries of *Comedy Central* and *Paramount Media Networks*, both subsidiaries of *Paramount*. In addition, through distribution agreements with the channel, other independent networks also broadcast the series in other international markets. Since March 2008, *Comedy Central* has made all episodes legally viewable for free streaming on the Internet at the *South Park Studios* site. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in America the networks are independently accountable for the content of the shows they air. The two authors have never censored the sitcom; it is the distribution channels that censor the program according to their broadcast licenses. In America, if broadcast material is deemed offensive by the *FCC* (Federal Communication Commission), networks can face heavy penalties. The sitcom, of course, because of its provocations, raised numerous protests from those who considered the program offensive and disparaging, sparking the fury of numerous people. The frequent portrayal of taboo topics, general toilet humor, accessibility to younger viewers, disrespect for conservative sensibilities, negative portrayal of liberal causes, and depiction of religion for comedic purposes generated controversy and debate throughout the series. *Comedy Central* the US *TV-MA* television censorship system, however, defended the sitcom by pointing out that the series is broadcast for mature audiences. According to the US television content rating system, which evaluates the content and suitability of television programs for minors, episodes of the sitcom are broadcast with a "TV-14" rating (indicating that the program contains material that many parents would deem unsuitable for children under the age of 14). In addition, another point in favor of the series is the fact that it is broadcast only at night (not before 7 p.m.) and never during the day, when children are likely to watch it. However, these arguments have not stopped the *Parents Television Council* from frequently criticizing it, as well as other Comedy Central programs. The founder of *PTC* L. Brent Bozell III and the founder of *Action for Children's Television* Peggy Charren

have condemned the show[16]. Among the episodes that the *PTC* has criticized is the fifth season episode *It Hits the Fan* for its use of the word *shit*. The word was used a total of 162 times (one word every eight seconds). Similarly, the use of the word *nigger* during the 11th season episode *With Apologies to Jesse Jackson* was also criticized. Despite the 43 uncensored uses of the racial slur, the episode generated far less controversy than previously thought as most of the black community and the *NAACP*[17] (*National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*) praised the comical way in which the perception of other races and how black people feel when they hear the word in question is conveyed. Other episodes or scenes in the series have sparked the anger of various associations such as the *Anti-defamation League*, which has received many complaints about the animated series. Some religious activist groups have also made major protests against the various parodies of the Catholic Church. For example, the *Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights* pointed out the fight scene between Jesus and Satan in one of the episodes of the series because it profaned the name and decorum of the Catholic religion. Other episodes declared offensive by the Catholics include *Bloody Mary* (in season 9), which depicts the miracle of the Virgin Mary bleeding from behind, later discovered to be menstrual blood. Due to various protests then, *Comedy Central* had to censor several episodes, such as that of the depiction of Muhammad in the episode *Cartoon Wars Part II* (in season 10) after the various controversies over the Jyllands-Posten's Muhammad cartoons and the constant mockery of the concept of climate change using the views of deniers. Other episodes, such as the episode *Trapped in the Closet* (in season 9), were censored because accused of exposing Scientology, depicting it as a major worldwide scam. The episode also pokes fun at one of its major exponents Tom Cruise, who has called for the elimination of the episode and further reruns. Because of the many taboo topics, several countries have had to stop the broadcast of some episodes or even stop the broadcast of the entire sitcom, as in the case of China. Due to the several topics and some characters such as the Dalai Lama, Winnie the Pooh, summary execution, cannabis cultivation, and organ explantation appearing for example

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[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 04/12/2012)

[17] https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_for_the_Advancement_of_Colored_People (last accessed 04/12/2022)

in the episode *Band in China* (in season 23*)*, *South Park* was completely banned in the country. Some articles the series referenced were banned from the public, while all keywords and related topics were banned on Chinese search engines and social media sites. Episode 200 depicting the Buddha snorting cocaine, however, prompted the Sri Lankan government to ban the series entirely. Numerous calls for censorship also came from Britain after the US airing of an episode titled *The Snuke* (in season 11), in which Queen Elizabeth II commits suicide after her failures to suppress the US War of Independence. In this episode, the British are called "the most terrible enemies America has ever known." Due to various family protests, some students were banned from wearing *South Park*-related T-shirts, just as happened in the 1990s for Bart Simpson T-shirts, after *The Simpsons* were accused of being un educational to children. *South Park* gadgets were also banned from many other public places. In addition, the principal of a UK public school asked parents not to let their children watch the program after eight- and nine-year-olds voted *South Park* character Cartman as their favorite personality in a poll.

2.5. Distribution in Italy and censorship

South Park landed in Italy in the 2000s and was first broadcast on the Italian channel *Italia 1* from January 2000 to May 2003 and then on *Comedy Central* (the substitute for *Paramount Comedy*)[18] starting in February 2005. The pilot episode dealt with the theme of Christmas and opened with a sequence of the Virgin Mary giving birth. Initially, the entire series was launched in prime time, but because of the content, *Italia 1* decided to air it late at night, after 11 p.m. In 2006, the first four seasons were also broadcast by the satellite channel *Jimmy*[19] in the original language with Italian subtitles, along with *MTV* and *Italia 2*. Originally, the sitcom was broadcast only up to the fourth season, with incomplete episodes due to censorship. Only in 2006 were all episodes, including those previously censored, rebroadcast. Parts of some episodes were cut out mainly because they dealt with controversial and politically and socially strong topics for an Italian audience. In particular, three episodes that dealt with the topic of pedophilia and the

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[18] https://southpark.fandom.com/it/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 04/12/2022)

[19] https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 04/12/2022)

relationship between the Catholic Church and disability were manipulated. In one of these episodes (*Giù le zampe dai bambini* in Italian), Cartman realizes that he has entered a chat room of pedophiles on an online site, who invite him and his friends to a meeting of "child lovers." While in the other two episodes (*Predica bene razzola male* and *Probabilmente*) the Pope and other figures in the Catholic Church are attacked: in catechism it is explained to the protagonists that during their first confession they must tell a priest all their sins or they will go to hell. The children then become concerned about Timmy, a paraplegic child who cannot speak, trying to help him in an attempt to get him to heaven. *Italia 1* was forced to modify or tone down the dubbing of the first four seasons partly because of numerous complaints received from *Moige*, which accused the series of using violent language unsuitable for children. Today the program is available only on streaming platforms (*Paramount Plus*, *Amazon Prime Video,* and *Pluto TV*).

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH

1. Methodology and objectives of the study

The following study is based on a qualitative and quantitative descriptive and comparative analysis between the two dubbed Italian versions and the original English script of *South Park*. Only the first season of the sitcom, consisting of 13 episodes, was considered for this research. The English examples in the corpus were taken from the official scripts of the series made available on the official fandom website[20], while those in Italian were transcribed previously by watching episodes of both the dubbed Italian versions and the English original version. The examples were transcribed by hand out of necessity because it was not possible to have the Italian scripts, which were never published. Based on the transcription results, the areas of taboos and swear words and the translation techniques for the comparative analysis were defined. The examples in the corpus are based on expressions or words within whole lines spoken by the various characters in the episodes. Given the large number of taboo and swear words in the series, it was decided to use only some of the examples found for each taboo area, otherwise, the work would have been too long. Therefore, for the qualitative analysis, it was decided to provide 10 examples (for a total of 120 examples) for each area and make a brief comment for each of them based on the previously defined translation techniques. Sometimes several vulgar words or expressions referring to different categories were found in the same line. In such cases, only the slur belonging to that specific area chosen for analysis was considered, while the other swear words were mentioned in the commentary. Several lines containing taboo or swear words not found in the English version were found in the Italian dubbings. In addition, new lines were found containing taboo and swear words (in the first dubbing) that were not present in the original version. It should be noted, however, that this study is based on a translation analysis, which means that lines in which the English version does not contain taboo or swear words were not considered (although some of them were presented later and considered for a general commentary on the research). The purpose

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[20] https://southpark.fandom.com/wiki/South_Park (last accessed 28/12/2022)

of this study is first to find out how much the two Italian dubbed versions of the sitcom differ from the original, and secondly, whether there are any differences between the first and second Italian dubbing. The taboo areas are useful for breaking down the various taboo and swear words and expressions and defining them appropriately, while the translation techniques are useful for understanding whether there have been changes in the dubbing at the translation level: whether the text appears censored or more vulgar, or whether it remains unchanged in its ideological value. De Laurentiis' (2016) study was taken as a model of inspiration for this research.

1.1. Definition of the areas of taboo and swear words

The areas of language interdiction used in this study are those listed in Chapter 2 under "Areas and types of taboo and swear words." On the other hand, when it comes to the various categories of taboo language in general (obscenity, vulgarity, expletives, epithets, profanity, etc.), they were used only within the comments related to each example to define the type of taboo and swear word or expression. One important thing to notice is that no changes have been made regarding the definition of these areas; they are the following:

1. Sex (sexual acts, body parts related to genitalia as well as all bodily functions related to them, including menstruation, masturbation, adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, sexual interjections, etc.)
2. Bodies and effluvia (all bodily waste products and the body part related to them such as excrement, sweat, blood, urine, fart, ass, brain, etc.)
3. Food and drugs (food names for genitalia or other body parts and waste product, the different use of drugs, and different names for defining them)
4. Naming (racist, sexist, and ethnic slurs, epithets, and insults; insults related to disabilities, different sexual genders, or different religions; homosexuality and animal names used as sexist insults)
5. Diseases, death, and killing (hunting and fishing, wishing evil, declaring murder or intention to kill someone)
6. Religion (interjections and expletives containing or insulting sacred beings, objects, and places; the name of God and Devil used alone or in blasphemies, etc.)

1.2. Definition of translation techniques

The translation techniques chosen for this research were developed from the study of Molina and Hurtado (2002) and were adapted for this study. In this case, the translation techniques are used to see whether the ideological value of vulgar words or expressions has been removed, attenuated, retained, or modified. To find out whether the Italian versions of this sitcom were censored or toned down or whether swear words were retained in their translation, the following were defined:

- Elimination: when the ideological value of the original is suppressed.
- Attenuation or Reduction: when the ideological value of the original is reduced or minimized in meaning and vulgarity.
- Equivalence: when the same ideological value of the original is retained.
- Amplification: when an ideological value, which is not present in the original but understandable from the context, is made explicit; or the ideological value is increased with a stronger or vulgar one, or another ideological value is added compared to the original.
- Substitution: when the ideological value of the original is changed with a different value.

2. Description of the corpus

For the purpose of this research, some information about the episodes, dubbing, and characters are presented below.

2.1. The Italian dubbings

As mentioned above, the examples in the corpus are taken from the 13 episodes of the first season of *South Park*. Since the sitcom was broadcast in Italy with two different dubbings (until the fourth season), it was decided to consider only the complete first season for this study. The first four seasons, therefore, were dubbed by two different dubbing companies. The first dubbing was carried out by the Italian dubbing company *SEFIT-CDC* (based in Rome) for the TV channel *Italia 1*. The dubbers were forced to modify the dubbing using euphemisms and expressions derived from slang to censor swear words and vulgar language after the numerous complaints from the Italian

association *Moige* (which had forced the channel to even cut some episodes or scenes). Then, in 2007, *Comedy Central* replayed the episodes of the series (including those from the first four seasons) with a more faithful and uncensored dubbing. The dubbing was handled by the Turin dubbing company *O.D.S.* One important thing to say about the translation and transposition of this sitcom is that since it is an animated series, it does not have to observe certain basic rules that characterize the dubbing of TV series and movies with real people. Thus, restrictions due to lip synchronization, for example, are not fundamental here. In addition to this, one thing that characterizes the first Italian dubbing is also the presence of "beeps" sounds after some swear words. These, however, do not obscure the dubbing but are added immediately after the expression or word. In this way, they appear more of circumstance than really useful for their purpose. It almost seems as if they were added more for fun or to make the dubbing sound somewhat "more censored."

2.2. Episodes and principal characters appearing in the first season

The episodes of the series with the US and Italian release dates are presented in the following table:

n°	Original Title	Italian Title	Prime TV US	Prime TV IT
1	*Cartman Gets an Anal Probe*	*Cartman si becca una sonda anale*	13 August 1997	6 January 2000
2	*Weight Gain 4000*	*E se ingrasso... Ciccia*	20 August 1997	12 January 2000
3	*Volcano*	*Spara alla lava*	27 August 1997	12 January 2000
4	*Big Gay Al's Big Gay Boat Ride*	*Gay è bello*	3 September 1997	19 January 2000
5	*An Elephant Makes Love to a Pig*	*Un elefante fa l'amore con una maiala*	10 September 1997	19 January 2000
6	*Death*	*Una questione di morte o di morte*	17 September 1997	26 January 2000
7	*Pinkeye*	*Tutti zombie per Kenny*	29 October 1997	26 January 2000
8	*Starvin' Marvin*	*Donato l'allupato*	19 November 1997	2 January 2000

9	*Mr. Hankey, the Christmas Poo*	*Uno stronzo per amico*	17 December 1997	6 January 2000
10	*Damien*	*Niente colpi sotto l'aureola*	4 February 1998	2 February 2000
11	*Tom's Rhinoplasty*	*Tom il bello*	11 February 1998	9 February 2000
12	*Mecha-Streisand*	*Quel mostro di Barbra Streisand*	18 February 1998	9 February 2000
13	*Cartman's Mom Is a Dirty Slut*	*La mamma di Cartman se la fa con tutti*	25 February 1998	16 February 2000

Characters:

Kenny McCormick

Eric Cartman

Kyle Broflovski

Stan Marsh

Ike Broflovski (Kyle's little brother)

Gerald Broflovski (Kyle's father)

Sheila Broflovski (Kyle's mother)

Wendy Testaburgher (Stan's girlfriend)

Randy Marsh (Stan's father)

Sharon Marsh (Stan's mother)

Marvin Marsh (Stan's grandfather)

Shelley Marsh (Stan's sister)

Jimbo (Stan's uncle)

Herbert Garrison (the elementary school teacher)

Carol McCormick (Kenny's mother)

Stuart McCormick (Kenny's father)

Jerome McElroy (the elementary school chef)

Officer Barbrady (the city officer)

Veronica Crabtree (the school bus driver)

Principal Victoria (the school principal)

Terrance and Phillip (Trombino and Pompadour in Italian, the characters from a fictional TV show)

Pip Pirrip (an English child arrived from a cultural exchange)

Bebe (Wendy Testaburgers' best friend)

Father Maxi (the reverend of the church)

Mayor McDaniels (the mayor of the city)

Mr. Mackey (the school psychologist)

TV NEWS caster

Satan

Jesus

Damien (Satan's child)

3. Analysis of the corpus

The analyzed examples divided into the different areas of swear and taboo words are presented below. They are divided into tables showing the English line, the episode number, the Italian lines, and the translation technique used for each Italian version. Following each table is a brief commentary of each example marked by the number presented in the table. Of course, the comments for each example do not consider all the grammatical, lexical, or ideological differences but only the most significant ones.

1. SEX

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique
1. Cartman: Shut up, dildo! (Ep.1)	Zitto, minchiolo! **Attenuation**	Sta zitto, moccioso! **Substitution**
2. Cartman: Screw you, hippie! (Ep.2)	Vaffanculo, hippie! **Equivalence**	Fottiti! **Equivalence**
3. Kyle: Rotten, they're both really drunk, but they won't have sex. (Ep.5)	Una merda. Sono sbronzi, ma di scopare non se ne parla. **Amplification**	Male. Sono entrambi ubriachi, ma niente sesso. **Equivalence**
4. Terrance: Take that, you stupid dick. (Ep.6)	Beccati questo, cazzone. **Equivalence**	Prendi questo, stupido minchione. **Equivalence**
5. Cartman: Lehh, eh, screw you guys! (Ep.7)	Fatevi un clistere ai quattro formaggi!	Andate a farvi fottere!

	Substitution	Equivalence
6. Cartman: Did you make love? (Ep.11)	Avete fatto roba? **Attenuation**	Avete scopato? **Amplification**
7. Wendy: Don't fuck with me! (Ep.11)	Non cerchi di incularmi! **Equivalence**	Non cerchi di fottermi! **Equivalence**
8. Cartman: Oh, weak! Chef's gonna make sweet love to Ms. Ellen! (Ep.11)	Cazzarola! Chef stasera si cucina la signorina! **Attenuation**	Porca troia! Vuoi vedere che questa sera se la tromba?! **Amplification**
9. Mr. Garrison: It's strange, but suddenly I feel really confident about myself, and I've decided to quit teaching, and do what I've always dreamed of doing: hang out and screw hot chicks. (Ep.11)	È strano sapete ma a un tratto mi sento molto sicuro di me stesso e ho deciso di lasciare l'insegnamento per dedicarmi a quello che ho sempre sognato, andare in giro a intortarmi gnocche! **Attenuation**	È stano ma a un tratto mi sento molto sicuro di me stesso e ho deciso di lasciare l'insegnamento per dedicarmi a quello che ho sempre sognato, andare in giro a cuccare tante pollastrelle! **Attenuation**
10. Cartman: Screw you, triangle thief! (Ep.12)	Ladro di triangoli! **Elimination**	E tu sei un ladro di triangoli! **Elimination**

1. In this example from the first episode, the four main characters are waiting for the school bus. Kyle's little brother, who is just a baby, joins them at the bus stop but is repeatedly told to go back to the house. Cartman, fed up with the situation, calls the little *dildo*. He uses an erotic object to refer to the child, perhaps not to use other words since, as is also evident from the scene, none of the children except Kenny are aware of the meaning of the word. Cartman himself does not know the meaning of the word, but he knows that it could serve the function of an insult. The first Italian version uses the word *minchiolo* instead of *dildo*. This word, although nonexistent in the Italian language, may be derived from the word *minchia*[21]. This word is used in southern Italy to refer to male genitalia. Since a dildo can also be a penis-shaped object or otherwise perform that function, the word *minchiolo* may have been used to mitigate the ideological meaning of

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[21] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/minchia/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

the English phrase. The term may have been intended to replace *dick head*, which would be a more vulgar insult to refer to someone really stupid or naive. Thus, the Italian phrase appears almost ironic and innocent. In the second dubbing, however, the term *moccioso* is used to refer to the little one in a derogatory way. In this case, the term stands for a child who is still small but is trying to behave like a grown-up; in fact, Ike is only a baby but would like to follow his brother and his friends. Here the ideological meaning of the original sentence changes.

2.5.9.10. In line 2, Cartman and Stan are arguing because Cartman won the prize for the best essay in the class (by cheating) that was supposed to go to Stan's girlfriend. After hearing himself called *fat*, Cartman responds to his friend by telling him to "screw off" and calling him a *hippie*. He expresses his anger by using an expletive with an abusive function. *Vaffanculo* and *fottiti* similarly translate *screw you*, however in the second Italian version the epithet *hippie* is eliminated. Cartman often offends his friends by calling them various things because of their family problems or because of his consideration of them. The word *hippie* to Cartman is like an insult, since to him being a hippie is a negative thing, however, in this particular case the word serves to reinforce the main expletive without significantly affecting it, like an addition. Therefore, despite this deletion, in general, the insult appears equally equivalent to the original, since *fottiti* turns out to be strong enough to render the ideological meaning of the English phrase even without the word *hippie*. A similar thing happens in examples 5 and 10. In the fifth example, Cartman uses the same curse expression to vent anger on his friends. The only difference is that in the first Italian version, there is a creative substitution of the phrase "screw you", with "fatevi un clistere ai quattro formaggi." The expression changes its function and becomes almost ironic. It seems that it was preferred to tone down the English version by using a less strong sentence. In Italian, the expression literally means "get a four-cheese enema," which makes no sense given the meaning of *enema* (the placing of fluid into the rectum for medical purposes). The Italian phrase used in this way relates to the figurative meaning of "screw you" but softens it and makes it funny. And again, the same expletive appears in example 10, but in this case, in both the old and new Italian versions, the expression is completely removed. In example number 9, however, the expression "screw hot chicks" is toned down in both Italian versions with two similar and almost synonymous phrases. In fact, in the first dubbing, the expression "intortarmi

gnocche" is used, while in the second dubbing, it is changed to "cuccare tante pollastrelle," both of which mean to seduce or conquer beautiful girls.[22][23]

3. In the fifth episode, the main characters try to mate an elephant with a small pig to create a genetically modified animal. In this scene, the school cafeteria chef, asks the boys how the experiment is going. Kyle replies that the two animals are drunk (after taking alcohol for mating) but will not have sex. In this descriptive sentence, the English taboo verb *to have sex* is translated in the first dubbing using the verb *scopare* which in Italian is a more vulgar way of referring to the intimate act. While the new version uses the term equivalent to the English one. In addition, the English version uses *Rotten*[24], a slang term to refer to a state in which a person is so drunk that he or she loses his or her decency. In the old Italian version, this word is translated as *una merda* (*poo* in English) with the meaning of "very bad." This change is also visible in the new dubbing, which instead uses only the word *bad* (*male* in Italian). This substitution might be due to the fact that in the episode the children's experiment is not working, so it was preferred to describe the situation, since the fact that the animals are drunk is described afterward. In this case the first dubbing comes out much more vulgar than the second.

4. In the given example, the speaker is Terrance, who is the main character together with Philip in the TV show that the children from *South Park* always watch (translated as Trombino and Pompadour in Italian). The TV show in question is a comedy show where, however, swearing, satire, and violence are used: the program is the epitome of junk TV. Here Terrance throws a punch at Philip and calls him "stupid dick." In the first Italian version, the term is translated as *cazzone*[25], a derogatory acronym of the word *cazzo* in Italian, meaning a silly, vulgar person. While in the second version, *minchione*[26], an acronym for *minchia*, is used along with the word *stupid*. In this case, the word *stupido* (stupid in English) is a reinforcer of *minchione*, but it does not add ideological value to the Italian line. Perhaps the word *stupid* was added to keep two words as in the English sentence. However, in English "stupid dick" works because *dick* alone could lose the

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[22]https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/intortare/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[23] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/cuccare/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[24] https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=rotten (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[25] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/cazzone/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[26] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/minchione/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

value of the silly person, while in Italian the meaning is already included in the word *minchione*. In this case, the insult has no derogatory function, but its purpose is to entertain and amuse people. Terrance and Philip are friends and often make jokes with each other, punch each other or say vulgar things, just as it happens in reality.

6.8. In episode eleven, Cartman asks Chef if he has made love to teacher Ellen. The euphemistic expression "to make love" in English is toned down in the first Italian version with the use of the expression "fare roba/e." It indirectly refers to the sexual act but does not make it explicit, so there is an attenuation of the verb. In contrast, in the second version, the verb *scopare* is much more vulgar. In this way, the Italian version amplifies the ideological meaning of the original sentence. The same occurs in example 8. The first Italian version uses the verb *cucinare*[27] to translate "to make love", which in Italian is used to indicate that a determined person is "treated in a certain way." The early Italian dubbing may have considered the verb *cucinare* (to cook) for the simple fact that Chef is the cook in the school cafeteria. The verb is then figuratively linked to the image of having sex with the woman. In the Italian language, it is common to use these euphemistic phrases to indicate the sexual act without resorting to verbs such as *trombare*, which instead appears in the second Italian version. This verb is used in a vulgar way like the verb *scopare*. In addition, the expletive "Oh weak!" (One of Cartman's favorite expressions), which in the English version means to be lame or a loser is instead translated as "Cazzarola!"[28] and "Porca troia!" The first one is a colloquial euphemistic interjection derived from the word *dick* (*cazzo*), while the second expression is a sexual slur used as an interjection and both express astonishment and surprise. In general, the second Italian version is more vulgar than the first one.

7. This example is from a scene in which Wendy Testaburgher threatens teacher Ellen not to meddle in her love affairs. The expression "don't fuck with me" becomes "non cerchi di incularmi" in the first Italian dubbing, and "non cerchi di fottermi" in the second. The two expressions are similar, and both convey the same ideological value as the original, namely "non cercare di fregarmi" in Italian. The English phrase has an idiomatic value that is expressed through the combination of the verb *to fuck* with the preposition *with*

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[27] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/cucinare/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[28] https://dizionario.internazionale.it/parola/cazzarola_2 (last accessed 29/12/2022)

followed by the object pronoun *me*. Hence, this expression works because of the composition of these words that separated would not have the same meaning.

2. BODIES AND EFFLUVIA

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique
11. Cartman: Ow! My ass! (Ep.1)	Aaah! Le chiappe! **Attenuation**	Uh, oh! Il mio culo! **Equivalence**
12. Cartman: That hurts, you buttlicker! (Ep.1)	Ehi! Mi fa male, leccaculo! **Equivalence**	La smetti di urlarmi nel culo?! **Substitution**
13. Kyle: No, no thanks, that stuff tastes like pee. (Ep.3)	No grazie, quella roba sa di pipì. **Equivalence**	Io no, grazie. Quella cosa sa di piscia. **Amplification**
14. Terrance: You're an asshole, Phillip. (Ep.6)	Coglione, Pompadour. **Equivalence**	Sei una testa di cazzo. **Equivalence**
15. Stan: Kyle, don't be such a butthole! (Ep.6)	Non fare lo sbomballa marroni! **Attenuation**	Kyle, non fare la femminuccia! **Substitution**
16. Phillip: Hey Terrance, now that you've farted, I think I might fart too. (Ep.6)	Ehi, Trombino ora che hai scorreggiato tu, penso che dovrò farlo pure io. **Equivalence**	Ehi, Trombino, adesso che l'hai mollata, penso che dovrei fare anche io lo stesso. **Attenuation**
17. Cartman: Poor piece of crap. (Ep.7)	Povero sordo merdoso. **Substitution**	Povero pezzo di merda. **Equivalence**
18. Chef: Pink eye my ass. I've seen this kind of thing before. (Ep.8)	Ma quale congiuntivite. Io questa cosa l'ho già vista altre volte. **Elimination**	Congiuntivite un corno! Io questa cosa l'ho già vista. **Attenuation**
19. Stan: I'll kick your ass, Cartman! (Ep.11)	Ti sbucio il culetto! **Attenuation**	Ti apro il culo Cartman! **Equivalence**

20. Wendy: I was just in the bathroom, and Ms. Ellen was in there taking the biggest dump I've ever seen. (Ep.11)	Ero in bagno e c'era la signorina Ellen che stava facendo la cacca più grossa che abbia mai visto.	Sai ero in bagno e ho visto la signorina Ellen che faceva lo stronzo più grande sulla faccia della terra.
	Attenuation	**Equivalence**

11. In the current example, Cartman realizes that there is something wrong with his backside because it hurts. Cartman utters "Ow my ass!" which has a cathartic function, since it is an expletive of shock and pain combined with the use of a vulgar word. The second Italian version is equivalent to the English one, while in the first Italian dubbing instead of the word *culo* (ass) is *chiappe*. In Italian, this word means *buttocks* and is less vulgar than the word *ass*, in fact, the ideological meaning of the original is toned down.

12. Here the children tease Cartman because his butt hurts while he complains about his pain. Cartman addresses Stan by calling him a *buttlicke*r. The old Italian version renders the original example perfectly, while in the new dubbing, there is a substitution of the entire line. The second version seems to have nothing to do with the vulgar expression, indeed, no taboo or swear words are present. Cartman literally tells Stan to stop yelling at his ass. This translation choice may be due to the visual component. Because of the style of the cartoon, in the scene Stan's character makes an awkward movement toward Cartman's butt making the viewer think he is looking right at his bottom.

13. In this scene, Stan's uncle asks the four children if they want to drink alcohol, but Kyle refuses by saying that gin tastes like pee. Although there are no particular insults in this sentence, *pee* is still a taboo word being a bodily fluid that can create disgust. In both Italian versions, the line is equivalent to the original. *Piscia* and *pipì* in Italian are synonyms, but the first word comes across as a bit more derogatory than the latter, in fact, *piscia*[29] can be translated in English as *piss* (which is more vulgar).

14. 15. The fourteen example comes from a skit of the Terrance and Phillip program. The word *asshole* is translated using the word *coglione* in the first Italian dubbing and with the expression "testa di cazzo" in the second version. Both versions are equivalent to the English line because the ideological meaning is properly rendered: a foolish person. This

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[29] https://dizionario.internazionale.it/parola/piscia (last accessed 29/12/2022)

is an obscene insult meant to amuse which changes the semantic value in Italian. In both Italian phrases, the insult moves from the category of bodies and effluvia to sex because it refers to male genitalia. Example number 15 is also more or less similar because the English script uses a synonym for *asshole*: *butthole*. In this case, however, there is an interesting translation that according to Pavesi and Malinverno's (2000) study can be called original. First of all, the term *marroni*[30] in Italian is a euphemistic way of referring to the more vulgar *coglioni* (balls in English). On the other hand, sbomballa is related to the verb *sbomballare*[31] which comes from the Roman dialect, more specifically from the expression "me stai a sbomballà" which means to annoy or disturb. The first Italian dubbing was done by Roman dubbers, which is why some lines of the first dubbing sound strange or different to viewers from other Italian regions. Thus, the old version appears funnier and less vulgar, as not everyone may understand the expression, but they perceive the playful tone. The expression "non fare lo sbomballa marroni" literally means "don't be a pain in the ass" or "don't be an asshole." However, in the second dubbing, they preferred to opt for the expression "non fare la femminuccia!" [32]which in English could be translated vulgarly as "don't be a pussy." the example in question was taken from a scene in which Cartman and Stan want to continue watching their favorite TV program after Kyle's mother forbids them to do so. Kyle tries to warn them out of fear of his mother or to be responsible. Hence, the Italian expression may refer to Kyle being afraid of his mother. The original sentence is replaced with another one that has a different semantic and ideological value.

16. This example is also taken from a scene in Terrance and Phillips program. Phillip uses the verb *to fart*, which is considered taboo because of its inappropriate meaning. The old Italian version is equivalent to the original, while in the new version, the term is toned down. In fact, in the second dubbing, the euphemistic expression "l'hai mollata" is used to express the same meaning.

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[30]   https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/parole-oscene_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/   (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[31] http://www.pancera.it/Manuale.html (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[32] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/femmina/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

17. In this line Cartman uses a vulgar exclamation addressed to Kenny because he is not listening to him. This vulgar insult is made equivalent in the second Italian dubbing, while in the first there is a substitution of the expression. Perhaps "sordo merdoso" was used instead of "piece of crap" due to the fact that Kenny cannot hear even after being called repeatedly by his friend. In a sense, the Italian adjective *merdoso* relates back to the meaning of the original insult, because it means "shitty," but the word *deaf* totally changes the ideological meaning of the original sentence. There is no corresponding equivalent for the Italian expression; perhaps it could be translated as "fucking deaf!".

18. Chef does not believe that the city has been infested with an outbreak of pinkeye. He utters "pink eye my ass!" which in the first Italian version is completely eliminated. As far as the second Italian dubbing is concerned, however, the obscene expression is softened with the popular exclamation "un corno!"[33] instead of the more vulgar "un cazzo!"

19. In this scene Stan yells at Cartman using an exclamation to express all his anger. The English expression is toned down in the first Italian version, using a regional expression different from the standard Italian one. This is another example of the influence of Roman dialect on dubbing, in fact, "ti sbucio" means "to break," while *culetto* is the diminutive of *culo*. This sentence is clearly more toned down than in the second dubbing where the expression is more vulgar but has the same ideological value as the original.

20. In this example, Stan's girlfriend speaks negatively about teacher Ellen using the obscene word *dump*. This scatological taboo is translated as *cacca* in the first Italian version and as *stronzo* in the second. Although cacca perfectly translates the English word, it still turns out to be less strong than the phrase in the second dubbing, indeed, this word is used more by children. On the other hand, the word *stronzo*, which may be a vulgar epithet in other cases, perfectly translates the vulgar charge of *dump*.

3. FOOD AND DRUGS

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique

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[33] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/corno1/ (last accessed 29/12/2022)

21. Cartman: Heh, somebody's baking brownies. (Ep.1)	Ehi, che profumo di biscotti. **Substitution**	Attento a non cagarti addosso. **Amplification**
22. Cartman: I'll kick you in the nuts! (Ep.5)	Ehi, ora ti sparo un calcio nelle palle! **Amplification**	Ok, ti prenderò a calci in culo allora! **Amplification**
23. Randy: Whoa, Mayor, you, uh, making gravy in there? Heh, heh, heh, heh. (Ep.6)	Wow, sindaco. Ha fatto il cioccolato caldo lì dentro. **Substitution**	Wow, sindaco. Anche lei con la diarrea? **Amplification**
24. Cartman: My uncle says that smoking crack is kinda cool. (Ep.6)	Mio zio dice che fumare bucce di banana è una figata. **Substitution**	Mio zio dice che fumare crack è veramente figo. **Equivalence**
25. Cartman: Hey, let go of me! God-! Ey! I'll kick you in the nuts. D'you hear me?! (Ep.8)	Ehi, ehi, che succede!? Ehi, lasciatemi! Vi do un calcio nei marroni, figli di sultana! **Equivalence**	Ehi, ehi, ma che succede!? Lasciami o ti do un calcio nelle palle, brutto stronzo di merda! **Amplification**
26. Mr. Garrison: Hoh, boy, I'm gonna need some more smack. (Ep.11)	Oh, qui ci vuole un'altra bella sniffatina. **Attenuation**	Cazzo, mi serve un altro tiro di coca. **Amplification**
27. Cartman: My name isn't Eric Cartman, it's Eric Running Water. Now, can I borrow your bike, or do I have to kick you in the nuts and steal it? (Ep.13)	Non mi chiamo Eric Cartman ma Eric acqua corrente. Mi presti la bicicletta o devo prenderti a calci nei marroni? **Equivalence**	Non mi chiamo Eric Cartman ma Eric acqua che scorre. Allora mi presti la bicicletta o devo prenderti a calci in culo? **Amplification**
28. Cartman: Well. First I kick you in the nuts as hard as I can, then you kick me in the nuts as hard as you can, and we keep going back and forth until somebody falls. The last one standing gets the arrowhead. (Ep.13)	Allora, io ti darò un calcio nei marroni più forte che posso, poi tu lo dai a me più forte che puoi e andiamo avanti così finché uno dei due non cade, chi resta in piedi si tiene la punta. **Equivalence**	Ecco, prima ti do un calcio nelle palle più forte che posso, poi dai a me un calcio nelle palle più forte che puoi e andiamo avanti finché uno dei due non cede, chi resiste si tiene la freccia. **Amplification**

29. Cartman: Come on, let me kick you in the nuts for it! (Ep.13)	Se lo vuoi fatti dare un calcio nei marroni! **Equivalence**	Ridammelo o ti prendo a calci nelle palle! **Amplification**
30. Cartman: ...and I told him. I said, 'Kyle, I will kick you in the nuts.' But he didn't give it back to me. So I kicked him square - in the nuts, and he cried - like Nancy Kerrigan! (Ep.13)	E io gli ho detto, Kyle ora ti do un calcio nei marroni, ma lui non me l'ha ridato, così gli ho mollato un bel calcio nei marroni e lui ha urlato come Jenny MCcarthy. **Equivalence**	E a quel punto gli ho detto Kyle ti go un calcio nelle palle, ma lui non me lo voleva ridare e allora gli ho tirato un calcio nelle palle e si è messo a urlare che pareva Shakira. **Amplification**

21. While the four children are on the school bus, Cartman smells a bad odor coming from the seats in the back (Stan has farted). In the original dubbing, the expression "baking brownies"[34] in American slang refers to the strong smell of farting or the act of "shitting one's pants." The old Italian dubbing seems to miss this expression and replaces the line with one that changes its original ideological meaning. The second Italian version, on the other hand, perfectly captures the value of the slang expression and maintains the meaning by making it explicit.

22.25.27.28.29.30. In Example 22, Cartman uses the phrase "I'll kick you in the nuts" against one of his friends. The word *nuts*[35] is often used in English to mean "testicles" instead of the less polite form *balls*. In Italian, this expression can be translated as the more vulgar phrase "Ti prendo a calci nelle palle," or as "Ti prendo a calci nei marroni," which perfectly maintains the value of the English euphemistic expression. *Marrone/i* in Italian is a type of chestnut so this word may be a euphemistic equivalent of *nuts* even though they do not have the same meaning. In addition, in the first Italian version, the verb *sparare* (to shoot) is used in place of *tirare*, but the meaning of "kicking someone" is retained. Instead, in the second Italian version there is a change in the semantic value: "a kick in the nuts" becomes "a kick in the ass" ("calcio in culo" in Italian). Again, this sentence comes out more vulgar than the English one. The same thing happens in Examples 27, 28, 29, and 30 where "kick in the nuts" is translated as "calcio/i in culo" or

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[34] https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Baking+brownies (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[35] https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/nuts#nuts__2 (last accessed 29/12/2022)

"calcio/i nelle palle" in the second Italian version, while the first one uses the euphemistic word *marroni*. Moreover, in example 25 a phrase is added in both Italian versions. The insult "brutto stronzo di merda" (in English could be "fucking asshole") is found in the second dubbing, mitigated by a different expression in the first one (see table 4). Then, perhaps, the Italian dubbers preferred to eliminate the English expletive "God-!" for the simple reason that it is almost completely silent in the original scene.

23. In this scene, the mayor of the city of South Park comes out of the bathroom and a citizen asks her if she has "made gravy in there."[36] This expression has two meanings: the literal meaning is "making gravy," but it can be a slang expression for "making liquid poop" or "having diarrhea." In fact, in the first Italian version, this meaning is expressed using "hot chocolate." In Italian sometimes, although it is less common, the word *cioccolata* is used to talk about *poop*. It is an almost childish expression to avoid pronouncing a more unpleasant scatological expression. In the second dubbing, on the contrary, the ideological meaning of the English expression is made explicit with the Italian word *diarrhea*.

24. Here, in Cartman's sentence, there is a taboo with reference to drugs. "Smoking crack" is a taboo in that the use and explicitness of drug use can be a sensitive topic for viewers. In the old Italian dubbing, this reference is changed to "banana peels."[37] In 1960s America, smoking banana peels was said to have a psychedelic effect, and smoking bananas had become a real habit. The expression may therefore have been used by Italian dubbers to avoid using the word *crack* which is stronger. The phrase "banana peels" replaces the drug. In this case, it cannot be considered as a reduction of the vulgar or offensive meaning of *Crack* because banana peels are not a real drug since not everyone recognizes it as such. Thus, the phrase is perceived ironically by the viewer for this reason.

26. In this example there is another reference to drugs: "I need more smack". In American slang, the word *smack*[38] stands for heroin or cocaine but can also refer to "being high" or

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[36] https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=making+the+gravy (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[37]

https://psychonly.wordpress.com/2017/05/26/banana_hoax/#:~:text=The%20Great%20Banana%20Hoax, quelli%20indotti%20dalle%20sostanze%20psicoattive (last accessed 29/12/2022)

[38] https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/smack (last accessed 29/12/2022)

"under the influence of marijuana" (to be smacked). The original expression in this case could be translated into Italian as "ho bisogno di una botta" which is a typical expression for saying "to do coke." In the first dubbing, the original expression is translated as "un'altra bella sniffatina", which minimizes the meaning of the original, perhaps also because of the suffix -ina indicating a diminutive. While in the second dubbing, the phrase is made more explicit: "un altro tiro di coca". Moreover, in this version, the vulgar interjection *cazzo* replaces *oh*.

4. NAMING

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique
31. Cartman: I would if I could, you son of a bitch! (Ep.1)	Lo farei se potessi, figlio di sultana! **Substitution**	Smetterei se potessi, figlio di puttana! **Equivalence**
32. Stan: Well, we can't do anything for now, that fat bitch won't let us. (Ep.1)	Non possiamo fare niente. Quella crosta col pus non si ferma. **Substitution**	Non possiamo fare niente per adesso, tutto per colpa di quella troia. **Equivalence**
33. Kyle: You bastards! Come back here! Coomme baack! (Ep.1)	Brutti figli di puttana! tornate qui. Tornate quii! **Equivalence**	Brutti Bastardi! Tornate subito qui! Tornate quii! **Equivalence**
34. Jimbo: You pansy! give me that gun. (Ep.3)	Che checca! Dammi quel fucile. **Equivalence**	Sei un idiota! Dammi quel fucile. **Substitution**
35. Cartman: Stan's dog's a homo. Stan's dog's a homo. (Ep.4)	Il cane di Stan è finocchio. Il cane di Stan è finocchio. **Amplification**	Stan ha un cane frocio. Stan ha un cane frocio. **Amplification**
36. Kyle: Uh, oh, this, this is, the new retarded kid. (Ep.5)	Questa è una nuova alunna con problemi di obesità. **Substitution**	Quello è il nuovo bambino ritardato. **Equivalence**
37. Cartman: Hey! Why don't you go back to San Francisco with the rest of the Jews?! (Ep.5)	Ehi! Perché non te ne torni a San Francisco dai tuoi parenti negri?! **Substitution**	Ehi! Perché non te ne vai a San Francisco con il resto degli ebrei?! **Equivalence**

38. Stan's Grandpa: You pompous son of a whore! (Ep.6)	Pomposo figlio di una ballerina. **Substitution**	Sei solo un vigliacco come tuo padre. **Substitution**
39. Cartman: That's a bunch of crap! Kyle's mom is a dirty Jew! (Ep.6)	Sono un mucchio di cazzate! La mamma di Kyle è una repressa! **Substitution**	Sono solo stronzate! La madre di Kyle è una sporca ebrea! **Equivalence**
40. Officer Barbrady: Hoh, what a bitch! (Ep.12)	Che sbomballona! **Attenuation**	Fila via brutta strega! **Substitution**

31. In this example, Cartman replies to his friend Stan by calling him "son of a bitch." This insult is translated in the first Italian version in an interesting way. Instead of the word *bitch* (*puttana* or *troia* in Italian), the word *sultana* is used, which means "mother or wife of the male term *sultan*." This is an example of creative translation (Pavesi, Malinverno 2000), created specifically to tone down the sexist slur by using a word that has nothing to do with the meaning of vulgar or taboo. In the second dubbing, the line is equivalent to the original.

32.40. In this scene, the children are inside the school bus and talk about the driver using the expression "fat bitch," which in the first Italian version is replaced with a less vulgar insult: "scab with pus" ("crosta col pus" in Italian). The insult does not disappear, but it changes semantic value and becomes an expression of the bodies and effluvia category. The expression "scab with puss" in fact, could be disgusting to people. Although the form of the insult appears more attenuated than the original, in this case, it is not an attenuation but a substitution since the ideological meaning is completely different. In contrast, in the new dubbed version, the word *bitch* remains unchanged, but the adjective *fat* modifying the noun is removed. Despite this elimination, the ideological value remains the same. The word *bitch* is also used to express irritation in example 40. Indeed, in this scene, Officer Barbrady is irritated by the presence of Barbara Streisand and would like her to leave. In both Italian versions, there are two different translations. In the first dubbing, the term *sbomballona*, derived from the Roman word *sbomballare* (see table 2), is used with the meaning of irritating and unbearable person. The dialect expression could be translated as "che stronza!" which is the equivalent of "what a bitch!" because, in this example, it literally refers to a hateful and detestable person. Therefore, due to the fact

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that the Roman expression remains a less common and less known variant, and not all viewers perceive its meaning, it is an attenuation. In the second dubbing, however, there is a substitution: the expression "fila via brutta strega" (go away ugly witch). This insult has another ideological value compared to the original.

33. In all episodes of the sitcom Kyle always utters the same famous phrase i.e., "brutto/I Bastardo/i!" in Italian and "you bastard/s" in English. Indeed, in this example, there is an equivalence in both the first and second Italian dubbing. The only difference is that in the first version, instead of *bastardi* there is the expression "figli di puttana," but the semantic and ideological value of the vulgar insult remains the same.

34. In this example, taken from a scene in which the children are hunting with Stan's uncle, the latter utters "you pansy!" (a gay male person with a very feminine attitude and a sensitive character). This homophobic insult can be translated into Italian as "che checca!", so the first Italian version is equivalent to the English line. In the second Italian dubbing, however, the term is replaced by another insult: "sei un idiota." Although belonging to the same category of taboo, this expression conveys a different semantic meaning: that of a stupid person.

35. In episode four, Stan has a small dog with a scarf around his neck and which likes other male dogs. Cartman teases Stan because his dog looks gay. The friend uses the word *homo* (homosexual) as a homophobic insult against the dog. In this case, the function of the taboo word is to mock someone and is rendered with a more vulgar and derogatory word in the first Italian version: *finocchio*.[39] The term has the same meaning but amplifies the ideological value of the English phrase, as does the word *frocio* (*faggot*). Thus, even in the second Italian version, there is an amplification.

36. In this sentence, Kyle points out to the school bus driver his new pet (an elephant) and in order to bring it to school he tries to hide his identity by saying that it is the new handicapped child, calling it "the new retarded kid." In the first dubbing, there is a substitution of the word *retarded* with the expression "problemi di obesità" (obesity problems). In this case, the visual component is important to understand the possible reason for this substitution. The Italian dubbers may have wanted to change the phrase

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[39]   https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/parole-oscene_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/   (last accessed 29/12/2022)

due to the fact that the elephant is a large animal, so perhaps it was more appropriate to say that the child had problems with obesity. In contrast, in the second dubbing, the value of the original version is retained.

37.39. Kyle is Jewish and for this reason, Cartman always offends him. In this example, Cartman tells his friend to go back to his Jewish relatives in San Francisco. This expression turns out to be a racial slur because of the tone and meaning attached to it. In the first Italian dubbing, this insult changes, in fact, the word *negri* (*nigger* in English) is used instead of Jewish. The word is replaced with a stronger insult, which, however, has little to do with the original version precisely because the meaning is different. In the second dubbing, however, the original expression is retained. In Example 39, another insult with the word *Jew* can be found, however, here, Cartman insults Kyle's mother by calling her a "dirty Jew." While the expression is retained in the new Italian dubbing, in the older one it is replaced with "la mama di Kyle è una repressa" that is to say, "Kyle's mother is a repressed person." Thus, the vulgar and derogatory meaning of the original phrase is lost.

38. In this scene Stan's grandfather addresses Cartman, trying to provoke him. The expression he uses consists of the word *pompous*, referring to Cartman being chubbier than the other children, and the expression "son of a bitch." In the first Italian dubbing, an attempt was made to tone down the insult with a quite creative expression. The word *pompous* is retained, but the rest of the phrase is replaced with "figlio di una ballerina"[40] (son of a ballerina). The dubbers may have chosen this term because of the fact that prostitutes in the past were also skilled dancers. Thus, the meaning of the phrase is modified. And in a way, the same thing happens for the second dubbing. The meaning of the English phrase changes completely because of the choice to tone down the insult through the sentence "Sei solo un vigliacco come tuo padre." With this sentence the old man says that Cartman is "as cowardly as his father," in fact, the ideological value of the original sentence is completely distorted.

5. KILLING

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[40] https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storia_della_prostituzione (last accessed 29/12/2022)

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique
41. Mr. Garrison: Oh, really, Kyle? What is it this time? Another prostate tumor? (Ep.1)	Davvero Kyle? Come mai? Qualcun altro con un tumore alla prostata? **Equivalence**	Ah, davvero Kyle? Per caso hai un altro tumore alla prostata? **Equivalence**
42. Cartman: Hey, I'll blow your friggin' head off. (Ep.3)	Ehi! Ti faccio saltare quella cazzo di testa! **Equivalence**	Ehi! Ti faccio saltare in aria la testa! **Attenuation**
43. Stan: I'll kill you! (Ep.3)	Ti ammazzo! **Equivalence**	Ti ucciderò! **Equivalence**
44. TV NEWS caster: Thanks Tom, police are requesting that if you see this little eight-year-old boy you immediately kill him and burn his body. That's all for now. (Ep.5)	Grazie Tom. Se vi imbattete in questo bimbo di otto anni, la polizia vi chiede di ucciderlo e bruciarne il corpo. Per adesso è tutto. **Equivalence**	Grazie Tom. La polizia dice che se dovessi incontrare il ragazzino dovrai ucciderlo immediatamente e bruciare il suo corpo. È tutto per ora. **Equivalence**
45. Grandpa: I killed my grandpa when I was your age. (Ep.6)	Io ho ammazzato mio nonno quando avevo la tua età. **Equivalence**	Io ho ucciso mio nonno quando avevo la tua età. **Equivalence**
46. Cartman: You piece of crap! I'll kill you! (Ep.6)	Ehi, pezzo di muffa, ti ammazzo! **Equivalence**	Vecchio pervertito, ti ammazzo! **Equivalence**
47. Stan: No buts, Wendy! I wish you were dead! (Ep.7)	Niente ma, Wendy. Crepa e stra crepa! **Amplification**	Niente ma, Wendy. Vorrei che fossi morta. **Equivalence**
48. Damien: Because I... burn them and kill them? (Ep.10)	Forse perché li brucio e li ammazzo? **Equivalence**	Perché io gli do fuoco e li ammazzo? **Equivalence**
49. Cartman: I hate you! I want you to die! Die!! (Ep.10)	Ti odio! Devi morire. Io voglio vederti morto! **Equivalence**	Ti odio! Voglio vederti moto! Morto! **Equivalence**
50. Cartman: I am going to fucking kill you guys, seriously. (Ep13)	E adesso brutti pezzi di merda io vi ammazzo a tutti e due, ve lo giuro!	Brutti stronzi, pezzi di merda, adesso vi ammazzooo!!

	Amplification	Amplification

41. In the following episode, Kenny has diarrhea, which is why he always has to go to the bathroom. Mr. Garrison then, with an irritated air, asks him if he has another prostate tumor (an excuse the child often uses to go to the bathroom). This sentence does not contain an insult but is still a taboo related to diseases. Both Italian versions render it with the equivalent term in Italian.

42. After going out on the hunting trip, Stan's uncle teaches the children to shoot. Cartman is angry with Stan and threatens to shoot him in the head. The original version uses the expression "I'll blow your friggin' head off." The adjective *frigging*[41] comes from a term used in the past (1800-1900) meaning "to have sex." In the first Italian dubbing, the adjective is retained, and the phrase is translated into "cazzo di testa". In contrast, in the new dubbing, there is a softening as the term is removed.

43.45.46.50. In example 43 Stan replies to his friend Cartman with an exclamation expressing anger and frustration. Stan yells "I'll kill you!" which is translated with an equivalent phrase in the two Italian versions. Wanting to kill someone or claiming to have killed or having the intention to kill is considered offensive and evil in many cultures. In fact, in example 45, the murder has already been committed. Stan's grandfather claims to have killed his own grandfather when he was a child, and this fact is reported in the same way in the Italian lines. The same offensive exclamation is also used in examples 46 and 50. In the first example, however, there is also the scatological expression "piece of crap." It reinforces Cartman's phrase by giving emphasis to the violent expression that comes next: "I'll kill you." In the first Italian dubbing, this pejorative expression is attenuated with a different term: "pezzo di muffa" (piece of mold), while in the second dubbing, this phrase is replaced by "vecchio pervertito" meaning "old pervert" (referring to grandfather). However, both expressions do not change the ideological value of the expression "I'll kill you" (belonging to the taboo area analized). In example 50, things are different. Here, Cartman utters "I'm going to fucking kill you guys" which could be translated into Italian as "Cazzo! Vi uccido ragazzi!". *Fuking* in this case modifies the verb "to kill" and it can be translated in Italian with the expletive "cazzo!" but in the two

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[41] https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/frigging (last accessed 29/12/2022)

Italian versions it is transformed giving rise to a new insult: "brutti pezzi di merda." In this way, both Italian versions amplify the ideological value of the original. Moreover, in the second dubbing, there is a double insult because the word *stronzi* is inserted between the expression "brutti pezzi di merda".

44.48. Two sentences with a very strong meaning are used in these examples. The two verbs to kill and to burn (meaning to burn someone alive or dead) are used both in the first example where the TV news incites citizens to kill and burn the corpse of a child and in the second example where the son of Satan realizes he has no friends because he burns and kills them. In the Italian versions, both verbs are retained as well as the meaning of the sentences.

47.49. In these two examples, there are two similar expressions: "I wish you were dead" and "I wish you would die." These are two taboo phrases that mean "wishing death on someone." In the first Italian dubbing of the first example, this expression in Italian is rendered with the verb *crepare*. This verb in Italian is considered more vulgar when used as an insult, in fact, the ideological value of the line is amplified. The second Italian version, on the other hand, is equivalent to the original. The same is true for the Italian versions of example number 49, where the expression "I want you to die!" retains its ideological meaning.

6. RELIGION

English Original script	First Italian dubbing + translation technique	Second Italian dubbing + translation technique
51. Kyle: Ah, damn it! My little brother's trying to follow me to school again. (Ep.1)	Che palle! Il mio fratellino Ike mi sta seguendo di nuovo a scuola. **Equivalence**	Oh dannazione! Il mio fratellino vuole di nuovo seguirmi a scuola. **Attenuation**
52. Cartman: God damn it! (Ep.1)	Che spremuta di cocomeri! **Substitution**	Ohh merda! **Equivalence**
53. Mr. Garrison: To hell with Kathie Lee Gifford! (Ep.2)	Me ne sbatto di Kathie Lee Gifford! **Substitution**	Adesso, al diavolo Kathie Lee Gifford! **Equivalenza**
54. Stan: Ah, damn it, I can't do it! (Ep.3)	Caccole bollite, non posso farlo!	Ah, dannazione non posso!

	Substitution	Attenuation
55. Kyle: Oh my God! Look at his leg (Ep.3)	Chiapperi! Guardate la sua gamba. **Attenuation**	Porco cazzo! Guardate la sua gamba. **Amplification**
56. Chef: Get the hell out of here Johnson! I don't want no God damn pinkeye! (Ep.7)	Frega cazzi a me. Io la congiuntivite acuta non la voglio! **Substitution**	Allora stammi alla larga Johnson. Non voglio rischiare di beccarmela anch' io. È chiaro?! **Elimination**
57. Chef: Not you, dammit! (Ep.10)	Tu no, brutto pirla! **Equivalence**	Non tu, imbecille! **Equivalence**
58. Stan: What the hell are you doing, Cartman? (Ep.11)	Che stai facendo Cartman? **Elimination**	Che cazzo fai Cartman? **Equivalence**
59. Stan: Cartman? What the hell are you doing dressed up like an Indian with a bear necklace? (Ep.13)	Cartman cazzo fai vestito da indiano con quella collana di orso? **Equivalence**	Cartman, come ti sei conciato? Non siamo ancora a carnevale! **Elimination**
60. Stan: Go to hell, Cartman! (Ep.13)	Fatti un clistere! **Substitution**	Va all'inferno Cartman! **Attenuation**

51.52.54.57. In example 51 Kyle uses the expletive "damn it!" to express frustration as his brother won't leave him and his friends alone. In the first Italian version this expletive changes semantic value, in fact, a word from the domain of sex interdiction is used to express the same meaning: "che palle!" (Balls or nuts). On the other hand, in the second Italian version, it was preferred to keep the semantic reference by translating "oh dannazione!" These two exclamations are different in Italian. As Pavesi and Malinverno (2000) argue, in Italian the words *maledetto/maledizione* or *dannato/dannazione* are not considered true vulgarities and lose their aggressive value. In fact, many times other vulgar or obscene insults are used to maintain the same ideological value even if taken from other categories. For this reason, the interjection "che palle!" Is not a substitution but is an equivalence. In addition, expressions such as "dannazione!" or "maledizione!" in Italian are considered somewhat old because people no longer use these terms for swearing. Therefore, in this case, the second Italian version although retaining the

semantic reference is more toned down than the other because it is considered less vulgar. An example of blasphemy formed by the expletive "damn it" and the name of *God* is used in Example 52. In the first Italian version, it is replaced with an exclamation that is not vulgar or religious, but creative and ironic: "che spremuta di cocomeri!" It can be literally translated into English as "what a watermelon juice!" In the second Italian dubbing, however, the interjection "Oh merda!" that is to say, "Oh shit!" is used to translate the English expression. Again, the exclamation changes semantic meaning but not ideological value, as the expression turns out to be equivalent and strong in the same way as the original. Also, in Example 54 there is an original expression to translate "damn it." In fact, in the first Italian dubbing, the phrase "caccole bollite" (boiled boogers) is used instead of the expletive. This ideological substitution is not vulgar, in fact, it attenuates the meaning of the English version, while in the second version there is again the word *dannazione*, which softens the meaning of the English phrase. Finally, in Example 57 the expletive is substituted in both Italian versions. In the first one, the Italian dubbers use the insult "brutto pirla", which could be translated as "fucking stupid/idiot." While in the second dubbing, a similar word is used, namely *imbecille*. In this case, the reasons for similar choices may be due to the visual component since the character directly addresses his interlocutor by looking at his face.

53. In this example, Mr. Garrison expresses all of his meanness and hate against his rival Kathie Lee Gifford. The teacher uses the expletive "to hell with Kathie Lee Gifford," which in the new Italian dubbing is translated with an equivalent sentence "to hell with Kathie Lee Gifford." It is semantically equivalent, that is, *hell* retains the function of an intensifier, but has a lower ideological and emotional value in Italian (Pavesi, Malinverno 2000). While in the first dubbing, the translation is different, in fact, the expletive is replaced by "me ne sbatto di Kathie Lee Gifford!" which in English can be translated as "I don't give a damn about Kathie Lee Gifford." Despite being a substitution for the different semantic value, the verb *sbattersene*[42] in Italian is still considered vulgar.

55. In this example from episode 3, Kyle pronounces "Oh my God!" towards the monstrous creature living in the city woods. The profane expression is translated in the

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first dubbing with the original interjection "chiapperi!" It is very similar to an Italian expression used to express astonishment: "capperi!" but in this case, it has been transformed into an exclamation related to a taboo. It can be perceived as a euphemistic way of not referring to *buttocks*, although it is not widely used, and is almost a childish expression. On the other hand, there is a vulgar expletive that in English could be translated as "for God's sake" or "holy shit." Compared with the original English version, the former Italian version is toned down, while the second version has increased ideological value.

56. In the following example, Chef sends Johnson away because he has become a zombie, while the whole town thinks there is a pinkeye outbreak. Two phrases related to religious taboos can be found here. The first one is rendered in two different ways in Italian, in the first case, it is replaced by "frega cazzi a me" which can be translated as "I don't give a damn," while in the second one, it is well translated but loses the religious taboo. In the first translation, however, the meaning of the expression, while retaining a certain vulgarity due to the word *cazzi* (dicks in English), changes completely. On the other hand, the expression "God damn pinkeye" is removed in both dubbings.

58.59. In these two examples, the expression "what the hell..." is used. In the first Italian version of Example 58, as well as in the second version of Example 59, the expletive is eliminated. In contrast, in the other two versions it is retained, as is its ideological value, although it changes the taboo category.

60. In this example Stan insults Cartman using the expression "go to hell." The expletive is replaced in the first Italian dubbing with the famous phrase used by the protagonists in the series: "fatti un clistere" (see Table 1). In the second dubbing, on the other hand, the phrase is translated with the Italian equivalent "go to hell," which, however, for the reasons listed above is more attenuated than a possible vulgar translation such as "go fuck yourself."

7. Other relevant examples for the study:

As has already been mentioned in the methodologies of this study, in addition to the examples related to the six areas of language interdiction, there are also some examples where English lines do not contain swear or taboo words, but Italian ones do. These examples are presented below:

English Original script	First Italian dubbing	Second Italian dubbing
Cartman: Shut up you guys, it's not working. (Ep.1)	Smettila, tanto non ci casco.	Andate a fanculo. Con me non funziona.
Stan: You're just saying that Cartman. (Ep.11)	Non dire fregnacce Cartman!	Non dire puttanate Cartman!
Cartman: Eeyy! (Ep.12)	Stronzo!	Ehii!

These three lines are a clear example of addition because they do not amplify or add an extra ideological ("vulgar") meaning over and above what is already present in the original, nor do they replace it. In this case, it is evident that sometimes the vulgar additions are found only in the first Italian dubbing, in others only in the second, and on other occasions in both dubbings. However, this does not apply to the lines presented below, where swear and taboo words are added only in the first dubbing. Therefore, the next table shows some examples of new lines that do not exist in either the original or the second Italian dubbing:

English Original script	First Italian dubbing	Second Italian dubbing
No line	Cartman: Ebreo! (Ep.9)	No line
No line	Kyle: Vaffanculo! (Ep.9)	No line
No line	Kyle: Brutto frocio! (Ep.12)	No line

These lines are spoken when the characters are not in frame; they are voice-overs. However, they are perfectly audible to the viewer, who can recognize the characters' voices. Perhaps the fact that the characters are not framed partly justifies the addition of the vulgar lines. As voice-overs, they were not taken into account for the qualitative analysis, but they are nevertheless interesting for the conclusions of the study.

4. Results of the study

Based on the results obtained from the qualitative analysis of the examples presented for each area of swear and taboo words, the quantitative analysis based on the percentages of the data obtained from the sum of the translation techniques is presented below.

**4.1. Translation techniques used in both Italian dubbings**
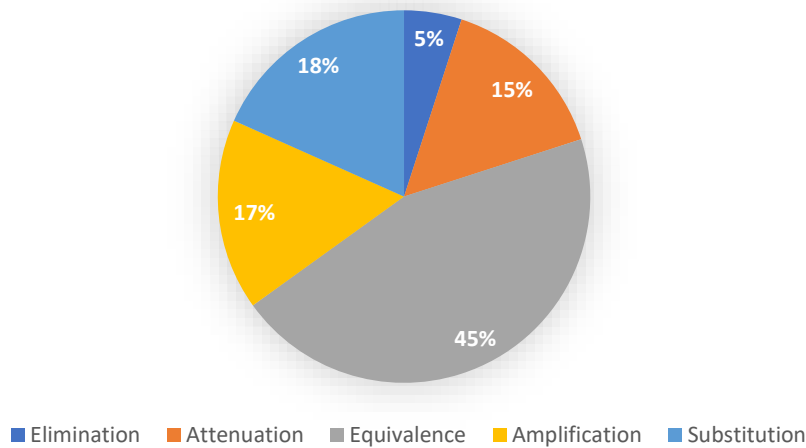
Regarding the translation techniques found in both Italian dubbings, it is evident that the most commonly used translation technique is equivalence (45%). This finding is important to state that both Italian dubbings are in most cases faithful to the original. The second most used technique is substitution (18%) followed by amplification (17%). As was noted in the qualitative analysis, however, substitution does not always mean a change of ideological value in subtraction. Sometimes substitution occurred not to attenuate the ideological value, but to exaggerate it and make it more vulgar with the use of other words. These percentages also show that in some cases Italian dubbings are even more vulgar than the English version. As can be seen, in only 5 percent of the examples found were the swear words removed, while for 15 percent they were toned down.

4.2. Translation techniques used in the first Italian dubbing
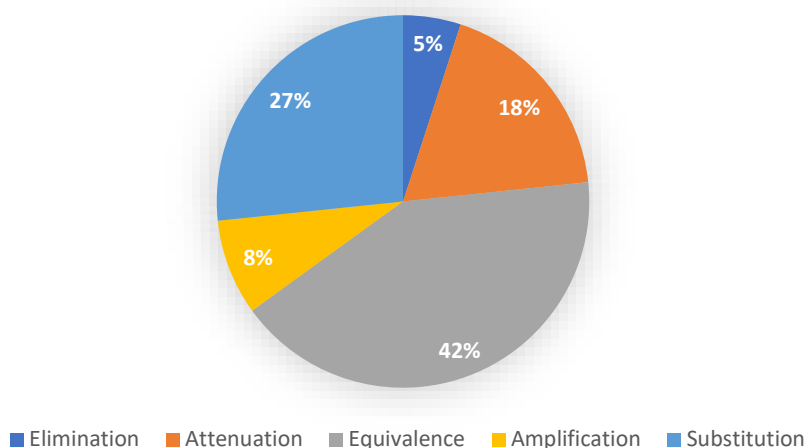
In this graph referring to the first dubbing, equivalence remains the translation technique with the highest percentage (42%), followed by substitution (27%). The only substantial change is seen in attenuation (18%), which is higher than in the first graph. Elimination (5%), on the other hand, remains low, as does amplification, which drops to 8% this time. From these data, the first dubbing would appear to be more attenuated, but from the sum of the elimination, substitution, and attenuation percentages the result is 50%, which is the same result as from the sum of the equivalence percentage with the amplification percentage. Therefore, actually, the first dubbing does not seem so censored or toned down if these data are compared with those of the previous chart.

4.3. Translation techniques used in the second Italian dubbing
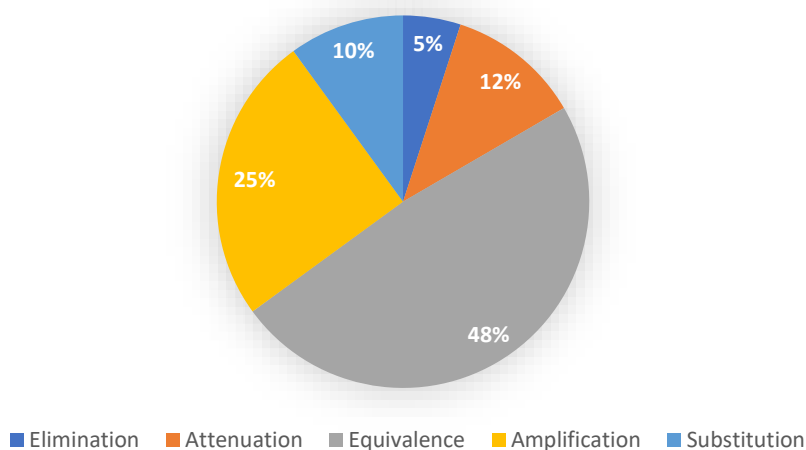
Finally, in this graph, the percentages of the second Italian dubbing are revealed. Here again, equivalence is the most commonly used technique (48%), and it is also higher than in the first dubbing. Elimination remains constant (5%), while the percentages of the other techniques change. Attenuation (12%) and substitution (10%) are lower than amplification, which rises to 25%. From this data, it can be seen that there is a certain difference from the first dubbing. The second dubbing is more equivalent if not more vulgar than the English version.

5. Final considerations

From the qualitative and quantitative data obtained in the previous sections, the conclusions of this work can be drawn. From the examples collected, it is possible to observe that the vulgar terms and expressions in this sitcom are many (more than 400). The swear and taboo words found in this study come from all the taboo areas described; there are no areas that contain more examples than others, they are all more or less homogeneous. As for the numerical results, it can be seen that both dubbings are quite equivalent to the original English version since the equivalence translation technique is the one that dominates in all charts. In general, it can be confirmed that the Italian dubbings of *South Park* remain quite faithful to the original script. The ideological value of the vulgar expressions used in the various lines is maintained by sometimes increasing the vulgar value and sometimes replacing or reducing it. There is then a tendency to amplify the ideological value of the lines by also adding words or expressions that are not present in the original script (this applies to both the first and second dubbing). In terms of the differences between the two dubbings, however, it can be inferred that the first dubbing is not as toned down as originally believed. In fact, as can also be seen from the qualitative analysis, some translations of the first Italian version are even more vulgar than those of the second one. It seems that the voice actors followed two paths: on the one hand, they tried to tone down the lines, while on the other hand, they added or amplified their vulgar charge. Indeed, as the examples reveal, there are some vulgar expressions or words in the first dubbing that the original script does not contain. In addition, as noted through the transcript, new vulgar expressions are inserted only in the first dubbing. According to the qualitative analysis, it also emerges that the first dubbing is more "original" than the second one. Some expressions were more difficult to analyze

because they are derived from dialect variations or expressions that are no longer used today. In some lines, Roman dubbers do a job of "reinterpreting" vulgar content. Many times, in the first dubbing, funny euphemisms are used to mask the vulgar tone of the lines, or new expressions are created to make the dubbing more similar to the original version. The new dubbing, on the other hand, lacks this creative initiative; in fact, it remains more equivalent to the English version partly because it does not deviate much from the original script. Of course, this study is based only on a few examples from the first season, so it should be emphasized that for a more in-depth investigation, the other seasons should also be analyzed. Beyond that, the results of this study could be consolidated by analyzing the other examples omitted in this research. In conclusion, despite the fact that the sitcom was re-released with a new dubbing seven years after it was first aired and despite *Moige*'s complaints about censoring the old dubbing, both Italian versions do not deviate much from the original; in fact, they are almost more vulgar.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this paper, it is finally possible to draw conclusions from what has been said so far. In order to carry out a study on taboo language and swearing in audiovisual translation, it was necessary to divide this paper into the four chapters indicated above. The first chapter was devoted entirely to AVT in order to give a broad overview of its definition, characteristics, and various types of language transfer, focusing more on dubbing practice, especially in Italy. Since the heart of the research was to analyze vulgar language in the two different Italian dubbings of an American TV sitcom, it was essential to clarify what determines the transposition and adaptation of dialogues, both from a technical, but especially from a linguistic and cultural point of view. Indeed, it was useful to describe the general difficulties that can be encountered in linguistic and cultural transposition from English to Italian, before moving on to describe the specific difficulties in translating taboo and swear words. The second chapter, therefore, could only focus on taboo language and swearing. First, it was essential to give a definition of both and to describe the areas they cover and the semantic and pragmatic functions they hold within everyday language and communication. The use of taboo expressions and swearing is something that is defined differently by each culture and change based on context, intentions, and interlocutor. Although not socially acceptable in certain contexts, this type of language is a key tool in determining the nature, feelings, and emotions of characters in movies and TV series. In fact, after analyzing the general characteristics, it was necessary to introduce vulgar language in audiovisual products, along with the functions they perform within them. In the same part, since each country and each distribution network define its own criteria, the norms governing the use of vulgar language on Italian and US television and theater screens could not be missing. In this way, it was then possible to move on to discuss taboo words and swear words in audiovisual translation. Through the studies conducted by scholars so far, it has been possible to analyze the different approaches used in the audiovisual transposition of taboo and swear words. As far as the approaches are concerned, censorship and self-censorship in audiovisual translation of vulgar language, more specifically in Italian dubbing, have also been defined. Finally, to conclude this section, influences in the adaptation of taboo language and swearing from English to Italian were presented. In the third chapter, attention was

turned to the sitcom chosen for this thesis: *South Park.* It was important to introduce the series and its distribution in America and Italy for the purpose of the research. Finally, based on what was defined earlier, the fourth chapter presented the qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted on the transposition and adaptation of the two Italian dubbings of the sitcom. This descriptive and comparative study was defined according to specific criteria. The examples selected for this work were divided into tables corresponding to the different areas of taboo language and swearing, accompanied by a commentary on their translation for each example. Then, thanks to the translation techniques that were defined in the introduction, it was possible to derive numerical data on which the final conclusions of the study were drawn.

Since the academic studies on taboo language and swearing done so far had shown some tendency in mitigating or eliminating vulgar language in movies or TV series, what was discovered from this work was somewhat surprising. Although it has been pointed out that euphemistic strategies were used to tone down the lines in the first dubbing of *South Park*, it has been shown that in reality, the attempt to make the series less vulgar in its ideological content has not been so effective. Both dubbings manage to maintain the ideological value of vulgar expressions, and in some cases, the lines are made more vulgar than in the original script. In conclusion, the comparison between the first and second Italian dubbing of this sitcom revealed that the treatment of taboo and swear words in AVT does not always result in the choice to censor and thus mitigate their ideological value.

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