

## Speech Act (Im)Politeness and Audiovisual Constraints in Translation for Dubbing: Gain, Loss, or Both?

 **Vittorio Napoli**✉

Università di Pavia

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### Abstract

The present article sets out to explore the under-researched relationship between linguistic (im)politeness and audiovisual translation, by taking the speech act of requests as object of analysis in English films and in their dubbed Italian versions. As dubbing constraints often lead translators to depart substantially from the original utterance, the study shows how linguistic changes can result in alterations of the (im)polite load inherent in the requests from original film versions. The study focuses on pragmatic strategies for realizing requests in English film dialogues and shows that dubbing constraints may underlie the adoption of different pragmatic strategies for the requests of target-language dialogues. The (im)politeness shifts that this linguistic modification process entails may make the same character come across as more or less (im)polite in the target-language version and are, for this reason, worth investigating.

**Key words:** audiovisual translation, dubbing, dubbing constraints, (im)politeness, pragmatics, requests.

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to bridge the gap, existing in audiovisual translation research, regarding the relationship between linguistic (im)politeness and dubbing constraints. More specifically, the present contribution aims to shed light on the impact that linguistic changes of the original utterance, brought about by the need to respect dubbing constraints, have on the pragmatic and (im)polite import of the translated speech act. The rationale behind this study is that exploring whether and to what extent (im)politeness-related pragmatic features are subject to modifications in AVT (in my case, modifications dictated by the need to respect synchrony constraints) is of crucial importance, because (im)polite speech very much contributes to characterization. Viewers come to sympathize with (or distance themselves from) characters also depending on how (im)politely they are perceived to be interacting with other characters. In our everyday life, linguistic (im)politeness has a critical role in shaping people's relationships: whether we perceive our interlocutor to be polite or impolite very much determines whether we ultimately come to like or dislike him/her (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). It is thus hardly surprising that, when consuming a product of fiction (be it a narrative text or a film), how characters' personalities are construed, as well as feelings of sympathy or dislike for them, are largely dependent upon (im)polite speech strategies (Culpeper, 1998, p. 83; Mandala, 2011, p. 211; Pleyer, 2017, p. 61). Precisely in view of the important function that (im)politeness has in cuing certain types of characterization, the production team of a film, which can be regarded as the "collective sender" (Dyrel, 2012, p. 167) skilfully employs (im)politeness as a fundamental resource for shaping character's personalities and for affording a given characterization. By the same token, on the other end of the vertical plane of film communication, which involves the collective sender and audience (Guillot, 2017), viewers, tapping into their repertoire of (im)polite norms in everyday speech, draw on characters' (im)polite language to arrive at the characterization intended by the collective sender.

Shifting the focus to audiovisual translation, if the translator alters the (im)polite load of the original speech act, owing to inevitable linguistic changes brought about by the need to respect audiovisual constraints, this might also alter aspects of characters' characterization in the translated version. In other words, the same character might come across as more/less polite in the dubbed version than in the original version. When speaking about characterization, reference is made to local (as opposed to global) characterization, namely how a given character might be construed by the viewer (in this case, more or less polite) relatively to the interactional exchange at hand. This paper takes a qualitative approach and, by analysing single request pairs (original and translation) collected from a variety of English films and from their dubbed counterparts, it shows that linguistic changes made by dubbing translations which result in a different (im)polite import of the translated utterance, may originate in audiovisual constraints proper to dubbing. The ultimate aim of the contribution is thus to reveal that respect of acoustic/visual synchrony may underlie shifts in the (im)politeness degree of requests in Italian dubbed films, with respect to their original versions.

## 2. Theoretical framework: the speech act of requesting

Requests were first defined by Searle (1969, p. 71) within the framework of Speech Act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) as: “attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.” Later on, when Politeness started to establish itself as an academic field, Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that the speech act of requests, as many other speech acts, had important implications for politeness. Through issuing a request, for instance, the requester is imposing on the requestee in that, by getting him/her to do something for his/her own benefit, the requester is impinging on the requestee’s desire to be autonomous and free from imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson borrowed the notion of “face” earlier introduced by Goffman (1967) as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 213) to coin the label “face-threatening acts.” Face-threatening acts are speech acts which somehow undermine the hearer’s face. For this reason, the speaker will need to exploit politeness strategies, if he/she wants to avoid confrontation and preserve rapport with the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson argued that people’s face has two facets: “positive face” and “negative face.” Positive face is defined as “the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62), whereas negative face is “the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62).

Requests are negative face-threatening acts in that asking someone to do something which benefits the speaker while being at the cost of the hearer (Leech, 2014, p. 136) violates the requestee’s right to be free from imposition. If the requester intends to maintain or enhance rapport with the requestee (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), thus attending to the interpersonal, besides the ideational aspect of communication (Halliday, 1973) to preserve social comity, he/she needs to minimize face threat. Speakers can minimize face threat, thus engaging in polite behaviour, by decreasing the illocutionary force of the speech act through: (1) the use of indirect, rather than direct realization strategies (e.g., “Could you pass the glass?” instead of “Pass the glass”) and/or (2) through the use of mitigating pragmatic strategies called “downgraders” (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Achiba, 2003; Savić, 2004; Rue & Zhang, 2008; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield, 2012) such as: providing a justification for the request (e.g., “Can you lend me your pen? I forgot mine at home) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), voicing appreciation for the requestee (e.g., “Would you tell me who your hairdresser is? You have such wonderful hair”) (Leech, 2014) or using linguistic devices to consult and value the requestee’s opinion, like question tags (e.g., “Close the window, would you?”) (Trosborg, 1995).

On the other hand, speakers may also want to engage in intentional impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003; Bousfield, 2008), by challenging rapport with their interlocutor instead of maintaining or enhancing it (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), thus seeking social conflict. In this case, they will strengthen face threat by increasing the illocutionary force of the request by means of direct strategies, rather than indirect strategies, and through the use of intensifying pragmatic modifiers, called “upgraders” (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg,

1995; Achiba, 2003; Savíc, 2004; Rue & Zhang, 2008) such as: time intensifiers (e.g., “Do it now”) (Rue & Zhang, 2008), adverbial intensifiers (e.g., “You really need to do this”) (Trosborg, 1995) or threats (e.g., “Get out of here, otherwise I will kick you out”) (Achiba, 2003). Now that the theoretical framework for requests has been introduced, next section briefly surveys the seminal work on audiovisual constraints in dubbing translation.

### 2.1. Synchronization Issues in AVT Studies

The feature which sets AVT apart from other forms of translation is that it not only involves the linguistic, verbal component of communication but also other acoustic/visual non-verbal semiotic codes which accompany the translated dialogue on screen (Díaz-Cintas & Anderman, 2008; Díaz-Cintas, 2009; Perez-Gonzalez, 2014). Scholarly attention has been devoted to space and time constraints in translation for subtitling (Gambier & Gottlieb, 2001; Gottlieb, 2004), lip synchronization constraints in translation for dubbing (Whitman-Linsen, 1992; Herbst, 1997; Chaume, 2004) and, both in dubbing and subtitling, to constraints involving characters’ suprasegmental oral features, kinesics, proxemics and facial expressions (Valentini, 2008; Baños-Piñero & Chaume, 2009; Thawabteh, 2011; Chaume, 2012; Dolati & Jalali, 2015; Sánchez Mompeán, 2016). Zooming in on dubbing, several studies have demonstrated that translators’ choices are largely shaped by visual codes (Chaume, 1997; Petitt, 2004; Pavesi, 2013), as well by aural non-verbal codes, namely suprasegmental features of dialogues (Zabalbeascoa, 1997; Valentini, 2008; Sánchez-Mompeán, 2019) with audiovisual translators attempting to attain good intersemiotic coherence (Chaume, 1997; Baumgarten, 2008) between verbal and non-verbal information.

Focusing on synchronization constraints in translation for dubbing, the first scholar who specifically addressed the issue was Fodor (1976) who, paying special attention to phonetic synchronization and taking quite a utopic stand, advocated for the need to reach perfect correspondence between on-screen characters’ lip articulation and dubbing actors’ lip articulation. Synchronization issues in translation for dubbing continued attracting scholarly interest afterward (Mayoral, Kelly, & Gallardo, 1988; Whitman-Linsen, 1992; Goris, 1993; Zabalbeascoa, 1997; Chaume, 1998), until Chaume (2004, p. 43) proposed the first comprehensive taxonomy of synchronization types. The scholar distinguished between: (1) “phonetic synch” or “lip synch” which is reached when the lip movements of the translated utterance suit those of the on-screen character, (2) “kinetic synch” or “body movement synch” which obtains when what the dubbing actor says is coherent with the on-screen character’s gestures, kinesics and proxemics, and (3) “isochrony” which refers to the fact that the on-screen character’s and the dubbing actor’s utterance length must coincide. Whitman-Linsen (1992, p. 54) had previously also mentioned “acoustic synchronization” which predicts that the translated cue should be consistent with the suprasegmental aural features of the character’s original utterance (e.g., prosody, voice tone and pitch, etc.) and which is also relevant for the present study, as the examples in sec. 4 will show.

There is general agreement among AVT scholars that synchronization in dubbing highly influences translation choices, thus limiting translators' freedom of action (Martín, 1994, p. 326; Herbst, 1997, p. 102; Formentelli & Monti, 2014, p. 190). The relationship between audiovisual constraints and translation solutions has not only been addressed theoretically but also empirically, with many studies showing that the translator's need to respect such constraints can be responsible for the translation solution ultimately adopted. For example, Minutella (2015) dealt with the phenomenon of source-language interference in Italian dubbed films translated from English, which manifests itself through the presence of anglicisms at the lexical, sentential and pragmatic level. Minutella argued that interference may sometimes originate from the need to respect lip-synchronization constraints. In a similar vein, Valentini (2013) provided examples of verb-particle contractions in Italian films dubbed from French which are calqued on their source counterparts, for reasons of isochrony. Pavesi (1994, p. 137) and subsequently Rossi (2006, p. 310) observed that the English post-utterance question tag in original film versions "will you?" is often rendered in Italian dubbed dialogues with the literal solution "vuoi?" which is unnatural in real-life Italian and thus contributes to the creation and the viewers' perception of "dubbese" (Díaz-Cintaz, 2004; Romero-Fresco, 2012). As Pavesi (1994) and Rossi (2006) argued, this solution might stem from the translator's unavoidable need to make the on-screen actor utter an utterance which matches the lip movements of the original character. Bollettieri Bosinelli (2002) postulated that the English discourse marker "I mean" is often translated into Italian as "insomma," because it requires a lip articulation similar to the original, even in instances when an Italian speaker would not naturally say so. In a similar vein, Galassi (2000, pp. 7–8) pointed out that the Italian words "bello" and "amico," which sound strange when used in the vocative function, are routinely employed to translate "mate" and "man," again for reasons of lip-synch. Addressing foul speech, Pavesi & Malinverno (2000, p. 80) noted that the Italian words: "stronzate," "cazzate," "puttante" and "balle," which arguably sound bizarre in Italian when used non-sententially as interjections, often translate the English "bullshit" because they require a similar articulation of the lips. Adopting a sociolinguistic viewpoint, Pavesi (1996, p. 120) argued that Italian dialogues dubbed from English often display the combination V form + addressee's name, which is quite unusual in naturally-occurring Italian where V forms are normally accompanied by honorific titles (Mr./Mrs./Professor, etc.) and require the addressee's surname. The underlying hypothesis behind such uncommon forms is that the Italian construction would pose problems for lip-synchronization.

However, what still remains unexplored in AVT research is whether, and to what extent, translators' changes of the original cue, owing to audiovisual constraints, specifically affect the (im)polite load inherent in the original speech act. In all fairness, it must be allowed that pragmatic features of language, broadly speaking, have been only sparingly dealt with in dubbing translation (but see: Chaume, 2004; Matamala, 2007,2009; Romero-Fresco, 2012), with very few studies specifically addressing (im)politeness issues (Bruti, 2009a, 2009b; Bonsignori, Bruti, & Masi, 2011; Mariottini, 2012) and no study at all on the relationship between synchronization issues and (im)politeness.

### 3. Data Collection and Research Methodology

Requests were collected from a sample of English films and their dubbed Italian versions. Twelve English films, together with their counterparts dubbed into Italian, were selected from the Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue (Pavesi, Formentelli, & Ghia, 2014), a relational database containing dialogues of English films, of their dubbed versions and of original Italian films. My study is by nature onomasiologic and takes a function-to-form approach: (im)politeness-loaded request strategies were collected and analysed comparatively between original and translation according to their pragmatic function, namely (in)directness and illocutionary modification, and not to their linguistic form. For this reason, the classic corpus concordance search method, suitable only for studies adopting form-to-function approaches, had to be discarded in favour of a “manual” data collection. Such method entailed watching all films entirely (English and dubbed films), since this was the only way to capture all instances of requests. To give an example, searching the corpus for the politeness marker “please” or for the phrase “can you,” routinely associated to the speech act of requests, would only have retrieved one part of all request instances, leaving out all non-conventionally indirect requests of the kind: “It is cold in this room,” uttered to indirectly ask the hearer to close the window. The Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue, like most linguistic corpora (Jucker, Schneider, & Bublitz, 2018) is not annotated pragmatically for speech acts, hence the need of a manual search.

As far as the process of data identification and annotation is concerned, I only considered instances in which the action requested was at the benefit of the speaker and at the cost of the hearer, as also argued by Leech in his definition of requests (2014, p. 136). The films chosen for data collection are shown in table 1 below, which classifies them by genre.

Table 1.

*Films From the PCFD Watched for Data Collection, Divided by Genre*

| Genre                      | Films                                  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Romantic comedies          | <i>My Best Friend’s Wedding</i> (1997) |
|                            | <i>Runaway Bride</i> (1999)            |
|                            | <i>Notting Hill</i> (1999)             |
| Dramas                     | <i>Secrets and Lies</i> (1996)         |
|                            | <i>Looking for Eric</i> (2009)         |
|                            | <i>The Queen</i> (2006)                |
|                            | <i>Bend it Like Beckham</i> (2002)     |
| Romantic/dramatic comedies | <i>Ae Fond Kiss...</i> (2004)          |
|                            | <i>Autumn in New York</i> (2000)       |
| Thrillers/crime stories    | <i>Match Point</i> (2005)              |
|                            | <i>Ocean’s Eleven</i> (2001)           |
|                            | <i>Saving Grace</i> (2000)             |

One thousand two hundred twenty-seven requests were collected from English films and were annotated together with their translated counterparts. After collection, requests were categorized according to whether they were issued through direct vs indirect strategies, on the one hand, and whether they contained illocutionary downgraders vs upgraders, on the other hand. Realization strategies and pragmatic modification were the two parameters employed to measure the (im)polite load of requests. The functional categories for (in)direct realization strategies and for downgrading/upgrading pragmatic modifiers were borrowed from coding schemes adopted in previous studies of requests, conducted within the fields of Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Interlanguage Pragmatics (Trosborg, 1995; Márquez-Reiter, 2000; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Barron, 2008; Ogiermann, 2009).

After requests were collected and annotated in an Excel spreadsheet according to realization strategy and pragmatic modification (when the latter was present), I focused on instances where shifts in the (im)polite load of the translated request were observed in dubbed dialogues. In other words, I only focused on cases where the translated request was changed into a more direct/indirect one, or into a more mitigated/intensified one. Such cases turned out to be three hundred and two in total. Once instances of (im)politeness shifts were identified, I moved on to retrieve, through the time code also annotated in the Excel file, the scene where the original request occurred. Watching the scene was key in identifying cases where the pragmatic shift had most likely been caused by dubbing constraints having entailed the need to linguistically modify the utterance.

Before moving on to examine the results, a caveat is needed: while the researcher's speculations about the fact that changes in the original request strategies/pragmatic modifiers responsible for (im)politeness shifts in the translated version were due to audiovisual constraints, are very plausible, they should be taken with caution. This study is based on what emerges from translations as a "product" and not as a "process," which would have required observational, cognitive-based introspection methods that give access to the reasons why the translator has made certain choices, such as think-aloud protocols or retrospective interviews (Jääskeläinen, 1989; Risku, 2014). This means that the researcher cannot make certain claims regarding the fact that linguistic changes were due to synchronization constraints. Having reached this conclusion, the author was careful in selecting cases where the audiovisual context in which the request occurred left little doubt as to the fact that linguistic (and so also pragmatic) differences in the translated utterance stemmed from the translator's need to respect synchronization constraints. It should also be stressed that, in the dubbing process, the translator may not be one person, since the translation process sometimes involves the figure of the translator and that of the adapter. Consequently, when the term "translator" is used throughout the paper, reference is made to the all-encompassing notion of "collective translator," regardless of where linguistic changes to the original utterance were made (whether in the translation or adaptation process).



#### 4. Results

Table 2 below contains the examples of the request pairs considered for the present analysis. For reasons of space, I was only able to discuss four examples taken from four of the twelve films making up the whole corpus and mentioned in Table 1 above.

Table 2.

*Instances of Original and Translated Requests and Title of the Film From Which They Were Taken*

|           | Film                        | Request in English                               | Request in dubbed Italian           |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Example 1 | <i>Looking for Eric</i>     | Will you get up for school?                      | Devi andare a scuola.               |
| Example 2 | <i>Ocean's Eleven</i>       | Just find him, will ya?                          | Me lo trovi, per favore.            |
| Example 3 | <i>Match Point</i>          | God, have a heart!                               | Abbate cuore!                       |
| Example 4 | <i>Match Point</i>          | I'd think you'd want to stop living such a sham. | Smettila di fare giochetti con me.  |
| Example 5 | <i>Bend it Like Beckham</i> | And you three shouldn't encourage her.           | E voi tre non dovete incoraggiarla. |

In a scene from *Looking for Eric* (example 1), Eric, Jess's father, bursts into his son's room while he is still sleeping and tries to get him out of bed for him to go to school. After delivering a series of reprimands which fall flat, at min. 6.25, Eric angrily shouts out the request: "Will you get up for school?" In the dubbed version, Eric's request is changed into a deontic form: "Devi andare a scuola" (back translation: "you must go to school"). As can be noticed, not only does an indirect request in the original, delivered through a question about willingness, become a direct one, but the translated request is delivered through a deontic verb, which represents a pragmatically strong strategy, even compared to imperatives (Fraser & Nolan, 1981). The reason for this translation shift towards more pragmatic directness (and potentially towards more impoliteness) probably originates in the need to better suit Eric's prosody, voice tone and voice volume. The translator may have deemed it inappropriate to make the character in the target version deliver an indirect, and so a more polite request, while he is shouting angrily. For this reason, he/she may have opted for a direct and more impolite strategy to reach better intersemiotic coherence with the aural, non-verbal mode. In this instance, the translator's linguistic changes could lie in the attempt to attend to acoustic synchrony (Whitman-Linsen, 1992, p. 54).

In *Ocean's Eleven* (example 2), Rusty pretends to be a detective to get his ally Basher off the hook: a real policeman is arresting his comrade Basher and Rusty wants to find an excuse to make the "colleague" go away, so that the two can escape and bring their plan to completion. To be left alone with Basher and be able to flee, Rusty asks the policeman to find Griggs, a made-up colleague. When the policeman asks who Griggs is, Rusty impatiently reiterates the request a second time: "Just find him, will ya?" (min. 0.21.52). The tag phrase "will ya?" here functions as a pragmatic upgrader (in this case it is an "uptake-securing device") since its meaning is: "did you understand?/was I clear?" and so triggers an impolite construal. The request illocutionary intensification in the original is coherent



with the character's angry tone: the use of an uptake-securing device, together with the other upgrader "just", which when accompanying an imperative form strengthens its requestive force (Beeching, 2017, p. 467), is in line with Rusty's bossy and conceited attitude. In the dubbed version, the request is translated as: "Me lo trovi, per favore" (back translation: "find him, please"). Quite unlike the English utterance, the illocutionary strength of the translated utterance is reduced and orients more to politeness than to impoliteness: not only was the downgrader "per favore," absent from the original, added in the translation, but two upgraders were removed ("just" and "will ya?"). The consequence of these linguistic changes is that an overall shift towards a higher degree of politeness is observed in the translated dialogue. While "just" is absent from the translation since Italian does not have any equivalent term for it, at least when used in its intensifying pragmatic function, as far as "will ya?" is concerned, it became a downgrader in the translation (per favore), probably for reasons of synchronization issues. It seems likely that the translator, having to make the dubbing actor pronounce something to cover the on-screen character's movement of the lips when he utters: "will ya?", to attend to isochrony constraints, added the politeness marker "per favore." In fact, Italian does not have any equivalent for the tag question "will you?" used as a pragmatic upgrader, apart from "hai capito/è chiaro?/mi sono spiegato", which would have been too long to match the duration of "will ya." It is then highly likely that the translator resorted to the phrase "per favore," because it is the illocutionary force indicating device for requests (Searle, 1969) and is cognitively easily retrievable. In addition, it should be mentioned that Rusty is shot in a medium close-up when uttering the request and lip-synch constraints are even more binding in this scenario (Chaume, 2007). Nonetheless, the outcome of this linguistic modification is a pragmatically infelicitous request: "per favore" added to the politeness load of the translated utterance, while at the same time the removal of the two upgraders "just" and "will ya?" attenuated its impoliteness. A more polite request, however, clashes with the visual and the oral non-verbal modes: a character with an angry face who is shouting out a request with a bossy attitude is certainly not expected to use polite speech.

Isochrony constraints here may have forced the translator to opt for a translation solution which risks, however, to cue a wrong characterization: in the original version, Rusty issues a request in such a way as to come across as arrogant and aggressive, in full coherence with the non-verbal information (gaze and shouting), while he is attempting to get power over the enemy. Quite on the contrary, in the dubbed version, the same character is made to speak as if he were polite and tactful. It can be concluded that, unlike the first example, when a shift towards politeness improved intersemiotic coherence, in this case isochrony constraints were at odds with prosodic and kinetic synchrony constraints. In having to make a choice, the translator prioritized the former but this inevitably resulted in an infelicitous pragmatic utterance in the dubbed version.

At min. 1.50.31 of *Match Point* (example 3), Chris is desperately appealing to detective Mike Banner's and his fellows' goodwill to believe his plea and not hold him responsible for Nola's murder. In an imploring tone, Chris says to Mike: "God, have a heart!" In the Italian version, the request is translated as: "Abbate cuore" (back translation: "have a heart"), in which the pragmatically intensifying interjection "God" (coming under the functional category of "cathartic expressions") was

removed by the translator. This suppression does not come without consequences for the illocutionary force of the translated request, since the function of cathartic expressions and interjections, broadly speaking and not only in requests, is that of venting one's feelings, be them frustration, surprise, happiness, etc. (Goddard, 2014). If a cathartic expression is used in a request, where the speaker's illocutionary intent is that of having the hearer bring about some action, it acts as an upgrading modifier, since the expression itself serves to signal to the requestee that the requester particularly desires or even desperately needs the action. In this case, leaving out the cathartic expression in the translation resulted in a more mitigated (and consequently less impolite) request, since the actor's pleading attitude was not conveyed with as much pragmatic force as in the original and the request impositive load was diminished. As to the reasons for the omission, the hypothesis is that the actor's open mouth and detached lips when he pronounces the phoneme /ɒ/ of "God," have made it impossible for the translator to opt for the literal solution "Dio/Oddio," where the semi-closed vowel /i/, which requires that the lips be very close to each other, would not have matched the original semi-open vowel /ɒ/, where the on-screen actor's lips are visibly apart. This speculation seems highly plausible since the character is shot in a close-up, a condition which makes lip-synch constraints more binding for translators (Chaume, 2007). Moreover, a literal rendition such as: "Dio, abbiate cuore!" would also have been longer than the original: "God, have a heart!" In this case, lip-synch constraints and isochrony probably represented a hindrance for a correct transposition of the original request illocutionary force and impoliteness. The result of this pragmatic shift in the translated utterance is that Chris may come across as milder and more considerate in his plea, to the Italian viewer.

In a scene from *Match Point* (example 4), Nola, the girl with whom Chris is having a secret affair, is venting her frustration against Chris because he will not leave his girlfriend to be with her. At min. 1.16.05, she delivers the following request to him: "I'd think you'd want to stop living such a sham," which in the translation for dubbing becomes: "Smerttila di fare giochetti con me" (back translation: "stop playing games with me"). In the dubbed cue, the original request delivered through an indirect strategy becomes a direct request, issued in the imperative form. In addition, the original utterance contains the downgrader "I'd think" (named "subjectivizer"), whereby the request proper is embedded in a main clause containing a putative verb (I'd think...). Putative verbs lower the epistemic stance of a proposition, broadly speaking, so if the proposition embedded is a request, its illocutionary force is reduced and its politeness increased. Also, the putative verb in this case is in the conditional mood and not in the indicative mood ("I'd think" vs "I think"), which further mitigates the speech act pragmatic force. Because the multiple levels of pragmatic mitigation of the original utterance which are all absent from the translated request, the utterance in the dubbed version turns out to be much less mitigated and thus more impolite, because: (1) the realization strategy is changed from indirect to direct, (2) the downgrader "I think" disappears and, with it, also (3) the use of the conditional mood. In this case, the dubbing translator might have intended to attain better intersemiotic coherence by attempting to bring the character's level of politeness more in line with the visual information (Nola's angry gaze with eyes wide-open, disapproving facial expression and excited gestures) as well as with the oral, non-verbal information (Nola's voice is trembling with

tension and she is on the verge of breaking down). The interrelation of these highly meaningful non-verbal modes, which together convey a sense of anger and disapproval to the viewer, may have led the translator to intensify the pragmatic strength of the translated utterance and make it more adequate for a request-reprimand: Chris did not stand by the promise to leave his girlfriend for Nola, so the context where the request is delivered is that of criticism. In this specific case, acoustic and kinetic synchrony may all underlie the translator's decision to increase the request impolite load (or at least decrease its polite load) in the dubbed dialogue.

The last example (example 5) is taken from *Bend it Like Beckham*. Jasmine's mother is invited to a TV programme to speak about her daughter's love for football. She is angry at the hosts since they outspokenly approve of her daughter's passion, which they should not because, in the Indian culture, football is a masculine sport and is not for girls. At min. 2.16, Jasmine's mother issues the following request to the hosts: "And you three shouldn't encourage her," which in the translation for dubbing was rendered as: "E voi tre non dovete incoraggiarla" (back translation: "and you three mustn't encourage her"). In this case, the weak deontic modal verb in the original ("you shouldn't") became a strong deontic form in the translation ("you mustn't"). The character is delivering a request-reprimand while resorting to a whole set of non-verbal communicative strategies (both belonging to the visual and the oral mode) that reinforce her criticizing attitude: she is half-shouting at the hosts, she heavily gestures, she points her index finger in an accusing demeanour and has a bothered facial expression.

It stands to reason to hypothesize that, given the multisemiotic context in which the request occurs, the translator assessed the use of a weak deontic form as unsuitable and opted for a request-reprimand pragmatically stronger and less polite, delivered in a plain deontic form. As a literal translation in the conditional form ("voi tre non doveste incoraggiarla") would have been grammatically and functionally possible in Italian (and would not have been an issue for lip-synch and isochrony constraints), the pragmatic shift was probably triggered by two types of audiovisual synchrony: kinetic synchrony (character's irritated face, angry gaze, gestures and pointed finger) and acoustic synchrony (on-screen character's high voice volume and pitch). Once again, constraints related to issues of audiovisual synchronization probably underlie the translator's decision to make the request in the dubbed dialogue more impolite.

## 5. Discussion of Results

The results emerging from the present investigation have shown how synchronization constraints typifying translation for dubbing can determine audiovisual translators' choices in terms of (im)politeness shifts. In particular, two scenarios have emerged. Sometimes, audiovisual translators alter the degree of (im)politeness of the requests to attain better intersemiotic coherence with the audiovisual context, thus making a change "for the better." Some other times, when having to obey lip-synch and isochrony constraints, these being particularly binding, translators are forced to alter the request linguistic realization strategy and, with it, the request (im)polite load. In such cases,

however, changes in the (im)politeness of the translated request clash with the rest of the non-verbal information (visual and acoustic synchrony and character's general attitude), so in these instances the change is "for the worse." An example of the latter scenario comes from the scene in *Ocean's Eleven*, where the linguistic modification of the original utterance, potentially due to isochrony constraints, caused an (im)politeness shift which was pragmatically infelicitous in that the polite import conveyed by "per favore" clashes with the non-verbal visual and oral information from the character.

Apart from this case and the one from *Match Point*, where the original "God" was omitted since it was not literally translated into the Italian "Dio/Oddio" for reasons of lip-synch constraints, in the remainder of the three cases, the need to respect audiovisual constraints resulted in the translated utterance attaining a good level of intersemiotic coherence with the non-verbal information, compared to the original utterance. For instance, in the scene from *Match Point* where Nola is reproaching Chris, the translator most likely judged Nola's request in the English cue "I'd think you'd want to stop living such a sham" as overly polite and tactful for the character's attitude and the non-verbal modes which accompany its delivery. The audiovisual translator's decision to turn an indirect, polite request into a direct and more impolite one in the dubbed dialogue, was probably motivated by the intention to respect kinetic and acoustic synchrony.

From these observations, two considerations can be drawn. The first is that, in some cases, audiovisual constraints typifying translation for dubbing (especially lip-synch and isochrony constraints) result in pragmatic losses. The second consideration which is worth further investigation is that in some other cases, translators, by altering the linguistic realization of the speech act and so its pragmatic (im)polite import to make it better cohere with the remainder of the non-verbal information, demonstrate good pragmatic "intersemiotic" skills. Put it differently, cases of enhanced intersemiotic coherence between the pragmatics of the translated speech act and the pragmatics of the non-verbal modes in dubbed dialogues suggest that audiovisual translators can: (1) rightly assess the meaning of non-verbal modes in film dialogue (character's gaze, facial expressions, prosody, voice tone and volume, proxemics, etc.) and (2) adequately suit the pragmatic, (im)polite load of the translated speech act to the "illocutionary force" of the non-verbal information.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Research has often addressed the issue of how audiovisual constraints in dubbing and subtitling limit translators' freedom in their linguistic choices, which earned audiovisual translation the label "constrained translation" (Titford, 1982). Academic enquiry on the topic has been conducted theoretically (Fodor, 1976; Whitman-Linsen, 1992; Goris, 1993; Chaume, 2004) and empirically, with studies carried out both in dubbing (Galassi 2000; Pavesi & Malinverno, 2000; Bollettieri Bosinelli, 2002) and in subtitling (Pisarska & Tomaszkiwicz, 1996; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Guillot, 2010; Hosseinnia 2014). However, as far as dubbing translation is concerned, past research has focused on how audiovisual constraints shape translation solutions at the lexical and sentential level of language

analysis (Dardano, 1986; Chaume, 1997; Petitt, 2004; Rossi, 2006; Pavesi, 2013; Minutella, 2015; Rodríguez-Medina, 2015), while neglecting the issue of whether the pragmatic force and, more specifically, the (im)polite import of speech acts are also affected. The present study is the first attempt to bridge this gap, by showing that audiovisual constraints in dubbing can indeed have an influence on the (im)politeness of target-language dialogues and can represent, depending on cases, a gain or a loss. Further research should be carried out on the way (im)politeness travels on-screen from one language to another, with more studies addressing how the (im)polite load inhering face-threatening acts other than requests (complaints, disagreements, refusals, etc.), as well as face-enhancing acts (compliments, apologies, thanks, etc.) is handled, altered, improved or lost in the translation process. More systematic research on the issue would allow drawing a comprehensive picture of how speech act-based (im)politeness travels in AVT, how this impacts on characters' characterization in the source and target language audiences and how translators fare with the pragmatic level of language analysis in audiovisual translation. To conclude, another enticing strand of research worth pursuing consists in investigating whether audiovisual constraints in dubbing and in subtitling translation, very different by nature, result in different ways of handling (im)politeness in speech acts. In fact, different representations of (im)politeness in subtitled and dubbed texts may lead to viewers reacting differently in terms of characters' characterization. If attention is then turned to the viewer as the end-user of audiovisual products, exploring the issue of (im)politeness in various forms of AVT may greatly contribute to the emerging and burgeoning field of perception and reception studies which represent the future of the discipline.

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