

Table of Contents

1-Introduction	1
2- Audiovisual Translation	3
2.1. Subtitling	3
3-Corpus	6
4- Extratextual and Intratextual factors	9
5-Analysis	13
5.1. Semiotic Dimension: Culture-bound terms	13
5.1.1. Brands and Institutions	15
5.1.2. Phrases, idioms and slang	19
5.2. Communicative Dimension: Swearing	26
6- Conclusion	30
7-Documentation	31
8-Bibliography	32

1-Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to analyse the subtitling process in a film, specifically the translation of culture-bound terms and swearwords. The subject of this analysis is the film *Trainspotting*.

I have chosen the field of Audiovisual Translation because over the last year I have developed an interest in the aspects that are exclusive to this discipline. I specifically chose subtitling over dubbing as the focus of my essay due to the recent increase in Spaniards who watch both film and television with subtitles (VOSE).

The reason I chose *Trainspotting* as the subject of my analysis was mainly due to my impression that a British film would present more problems regarding culture-bound terms for my analysis than an American film, although both are well known around the world. Aixelá (1996) argues that “such a supremacy in the most popular media channels [...] imply that the receiving society is subject to a progressive familiarity with Anglo-Saxon culture” (p.55).

I also chose this film because I wanted to explore a film that dealt with lower-class Britons and the way they speak, not in a way that mocked their accents but rather just presenting them as realistically as possible. Finally, I wanted to choose a film that was generally well received by both critics and general audiences. *Trainspotting* seemed to meet all these criteria, and since I was already familiar with the film I decided to use it for my analysis.

The film is not only set in Scotland, but Scottish and British brands, products and institutions, as well as the Scottish lower-class way the characters speak, riddled with swearwords and expletives, are an essential part of the overall tone of the film.

Translating these features into another language while maintaining the Scottish identity as much as possible is one of the more challenging parts of the translation process.

The purpose of this essay is to explore some of the difficulties the film presents when carrying out its translation into Spanish, and the ways in which the translator approaches these problems.

2- Audiovisual Translation

Rosa Agost defines audiovisual translation as “a specialised translation that deals with texts destined to cinema, television, video and multimedia products” (1999, p.15).

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2012) point out that some people do not consider Audiovisual Translation “proper translation” due to the restrictions of the medium. Instead, they use the term adaptation, a term which could have influenced the fact that many scholars have overlooked this activity until very recently (p.8).

Among the various types of audiovisual translation modes, two stand out: dubbing and subtitling. It must be noted that a subtitle is not a transcript of the dub displayed on screen, as they are separate texts that are produced independently in most cases. These two modes have their own sets of rules and restrictions, and thus the resulting texts may present some significant differences. In this analysis, we will look at the subtitles of the film *Trainspotting*. Henceforth, the term “translation” when used in the context of the film will refer exclusively to the subtitled, and not to the dubbed version.

2.1. Subtitling

According to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2012):

Subtitling may be defined as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards and the like) and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)(p.7).

Good subtitling may seem at a surface level easier to carry out than a good dub, as dubbing is inherently more restrictive (sound having to match the image at all times). However, subtitling has its own set of rules and conventions that must be followed in order to make it clear and easy to follow.

Most professional subtitles adhere to a series of norms and conventions to ensure that they can be followed easily by the audience.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2012) provide a list of requisites to produce a good subtitled product.

Firstly, interlingual subtitling is restricted to two lines, the equivalent of two twelfths of the screen. When the text presented is brief and only requires one line of text, it is becoming more common to place it on the bottom line, although the top line has also been used extensively: this depends generally on the style guide the company decides to use.

As for the fonts used, they will also depend on the style guide, but sans-serif fonts are preferred. The number of characters per line also varies depending on a number of factors, including the alphabet and the medium: TV subtitles are usually limited to 37 characters at most, whereas DVD and cinema allow up to 40 (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2012).

Subtitles should be on screen no less than one second, regardless of their length. As a general rule, it is preferable to write a one-line subtitle than a two-line one, if the length of the said subtitle allows it.

Aside from formal aspects, there are other issues that a translator must take into account when approaching the translation for subtitles. These issues include regional and social

variation (dialects, accents, sociolects, etc.), the use of taboo words and swearwords which are “often toned down in subtitles or even deleted” (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2012. p. 95) and the translation of culture-bound terms. They will be the main focus of our analysis, as it aims to explore the cultural factors that pose a challenge for a translator, and how the translator chose to overcome these problems in the subtitling of *Trainspotting*.

3-Corpus

Trainspotting is a 1996 film directed by Danny Boyle, based on the homonymous novel written by Irvine Welsh, which was published in 1993. It explores the life of a heroin addict, Mark Renton, and his group of outcasts living in 1990s Edinburgh. The film was widely acclaimed and is still to this day one of Boyle's most popular works.

The plot is not focused on any particular event of Renton's life, and instead consists of a collection of self-contained stories about Mark and his friends. These stories deal with a number of themes such as sexual relationships with underage students, the death of a child and finding a job, but they are all connected in one way or another to the central theme of the film: drug addiction, specifically heroin.

An aspect of the film that somewhat facilitates the task of the translator both for dubbing and subtitling is the inclusion of a narrator. Renton narrates a lot of the story, and this is always done through the use of voiceover. The reason why this makes the translation process easier is that in an audiovisual medium, spoken language (the sound) generally has to match the character speaking (the image). This greatly limits the options when dubbing because of the need for visual, character and content synchrony (Agost, 2012, p.58- 59) and to a lesser extent when subtitling. This is because the translated text must match the original performance and also be simultaneous to it, which means there is a limited amount of time to get the same information across in the target language. *Trainspotting* has many moments of voiceover, including the majority of the famous opening sequence (0:00:30-0:05:50).

This essay will focus on the translation of the subtitles of the DVD version of the Spanish release of the film by Universal Studios in 2010. More specifically, we will

look at two of the most remarkable aspects of the translation, namely culture-bound terms and the use of swearing.

According to the Online Cambridge Dictionary, “trainspotting” is “the activity of watching trains and writing down the numbers that each railway engine has”. It has another meaning among drug addicts, as it is a slang term for finding a vein when taking heroin. Neither of these definitions will be familiar to a Spanish-speaking audience, or any non-British audience. There is no direct equivalence for either of the meanings, as trainspotting is not an activity that takes place outside the UK. According to Irvine Welsh, author of the original novel, trainspotting, much like the use of heroin, to an outsider will seem like a bizarre practice, but for those who partake (either in trainspotting or heroin consumption) it makes perfect sense. Thus, the title has several layers of meanings, which a British audience may understand upon watching the film, but unfortunately there is no way to communicate all these nuances to a foreign audience. This is most likely the reason why the original title *Trainspotting* has been maintained in all Spanish releases of the film, as it is an activity that is not part of any other culture outside Britain.

Reasons for choosing this film

Since *Trainspotting* is a British film, it raises several questions as to how to approach the translation into Spanish, especially considering the amount of vernacular uses and slang featured throughout the film. Moreover, it approaches dialogue in a way that is believable and raw, being extremely close to the way the characters, being from Edinburgh and working-class, would speak. Several institutions, brands and names exclusive to British culture are also mentioned, which foreign audiences will be less familiar with than their American counterparts.

Trainspotting is also mentioned by Díaz Cintas and Remael in their book *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling* (2012) because “the actors speak with such strong Scottish accents that the movie was distributed in the United States with English subtitles” (p.17). This is what is known as intralingual subtitles, as opposed to interlingual subtitles, which are the subject of this essay. This shows just how challenging the film can be, not only for those who are non- native speakers of English, but even for those natives who may not be used to the specific variety of English used in the film.

4- Extratextual and Intratextual factors

In order to approach the analysis of the translation, we must first understand that when carrying out the task of translating a text there are two different types of factors that will condition this task: extratextual (also known as external) and intratextual (or internal). These were presented in Christiane Nord's *Text Analysis in Translation* (1991).

In order to exemplify the factors described in the model, there follows a description of each and what their role is in the film analysed in this essay.

What Nord (1991) describes as **extratextual factors** would be:

-Sender: this concept generally overlaps with that of text producer or author. In the case of the film, these would be the screenwriters who wrote the original script, or Source Text (ST henceforth), but also the translator, as "he has to produce a text having the same effect on TT recipients as the ST on SL recipients" (Pobocikova, 2012, p.21).

-Intention: determined by the sender. The Target Text (TT henceforth) produced by the translator should adhere to the intention of the original ST as much as possible. *Trainspotting*, for example, tries to highlight the hardships the characters go through and provide social commentary on drug addicts and outcasts.

-Recipient: these are both the SL audiences and TL audiences, who are different from each other in at least two aspects: cultural background and linguistic communities. Hence the differences between the ST audience (British) and TT audience (Spanish) must be taken into consideration, as they will very likely differ significantly in their cultural background and some concepts in the ST may be familiar to the British audience while they may be alien to the Spanish. In the analysis we will look at these

differences more closely, as they are the main reason culture-bound terms are hard to translate.

-Medium: depending on the medium through which the text is shown to the recipient, there will be certain assumptions made by the audience as to what to expect. Pobocikova (2012) points out that “offensive language certainly has a different effect in a film dubbing, or even in subtitles, and in a textbook” (p.21). In the analysis we will explore in depth the relationship between medium (subtitles in a film) and offensive language, as it is one of the most notable issues in the audiovisual text.

-Place and Time: Not only place and time of production, but also of reception. The translator must take into account whether the text is still “modern” and the cultural and political conditions of the place of reception. Nord (1991) also argues that “the dimension of place grows in importance when there exist more language varieties used in different regions of the same language culture” (p.61). This is especially relevant in *Trainspotting*, as the language used is the Scottish variant of British English, and the time of the release (1996) should also be taken into account, as some words can even become obsolete by the time a text is translated (as seen in Example 5).

-Motive: the reason why the text was produced. In the case of this film, it is most likely entertainment, although there are other audiovisual products (such as documentaries) which have other motives.

-Text function: according to Nord (1991), text function is “the communicative function which a text fulfils in its concrete situation of production/reception” (p.70). this means there can be many different text functions depending on the individual viewer, as text function is what the film conveys to each person that experiences the film.

Intratextual factors, on the other hand, include:

Subject matter: the main topic of a text. This is a fundamental factor in the analysis of any text. Popovic (1981) argues that “subject matter can be embedded in a cultural context and indicate some of the reader’s presuppositions” (p.23). This makes the main topic of *Trainspotting* (young lower class Scottish people dealing with heroin addiction in the 1990s) a multi- layered topic, as the place and time of the events, as well as the character’s age and social class are not only part of the categories which will be mentioned below, but are an integral part of the text and removing any of them would drastically change the text as a whole.

Content: content is defined as “the reference of the text to objects and phenomena in an extralinguistic reality” (Nord, 1991, p.90). This factor is the cohesion of a text, and how language works in the said text.

Presuppositions: presuppositions are very important when translating culture-bound terms. They are “implicitly assumed by the speaker, who takes it for granted that this will also be the case with the listener” (Nord, 1991, p.95). This may lead to problems if the audience is not aware of certain aspects of the culture of the ST, and it is the translator’s responsibility to “adjust the level of explicitness to the (assumed) general background knowledge of the intended TT recipient” (Nord, 1991, p.90). In the translation of the subtitles of the film, the translator has opted for a domesticating approach, which assumes that the audience have little knowledge of the source text culture.

Text composition: this is what Nord describes as the structure of the text. Generally this is only considered for written texts, as it involves the division of the text in paragraphs

or whether the text is divided into chapters. As the object of our analysis is a film, it is assumed that the whole text is a unit and is not divided into smaller texts.

Non-verbal elements: as the name suggests, this term describes any sign, image or visual medium in the text that has no verbal component, but is still part of the text. This gains significance when translating an audiovisual text such as a film, as non-verbal elements appear on screen constantly and the translator must always take them into account.

Lexis: Lexis is described as a very broad term, as it encompasses a range of features, including “levels and registers, word formation, connotation, rhetorical figures (...) parts of speech, morphological aspects (...) collocations, idioms, addressing, selection of words, degree of originality, (...), etc.” (Pobocikova, 2012, p. 26-27). These factors are abundant throughout the film, as the characters have a tendency to use most of these devices in their speech.

Sentence structure: refers to the syntax and the way sentences are organised. While in our analysis this feature will not be explored in depth, it must be approached carefully, as syntax may be used as a device, and “the author’s intention may be realised through various syntactic figures”(Pobocikova, 2012, p.27).

Suprasegmental features: Nord describes these as serving to “highlight or focus certain parts of the text while pushing others to background (sic.)” (1991, p. 80). These features are “those which do not fall into any of the previous categories of lexical and syntactical segments, sentences, paragraphs, etc.” (p.27). They can be found both in literary and audiovisual texts. In audiovisual texts they stand out because intonation can be appreciated more easily. In the film there are a few instances of use of rhyme, as seen in examples 8 and 9 of the analysis.

5-Analysis

The analysis of the translation will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with culture-bound terms, and will comprise the majority of the total analysis. These fall under what Basil Hatim and Ian Mason describe as the “semiotic dimension” of translation. The second section will be dedicated to swearing, as it is also an aspect that has great prominence in the film and the translator approaches it in an unconventional way. This feature will have its own section as it belongs to a different dimension of translation, the “communicative dimension” or “register” (Agost, 1999, p.144).

5.1. Semiotic Dimension: Culture-bound terms

This part of the analysis will focus specifically on the differences met in the translation from the source language to the target language culture (Spanish). It should be noted that for the most part the source language is English, but with most of the characters being Scottish there are certain differences that must be considered.

In their book *Discourse and the Translator* (1990) Hatim and Mason define translation as “the process which transforms one semiotic entity into another, under certain equivalence conditions to do with semiotic codes, pragmatic action and general communicative requirements” (p.105). The semiotic dimension of a translation will therefore consist of extratextual concepts that are exclusive to the source text culture, and the way the translator brings them closer to the target language audience.

Most of this analysis will focus on the culture-bound aspects of translation, which is a part of the semiotic dimension. Culture-bound terms refer to any word or phrase that belongs to the Source Text (ST henceforth) culture. While there are many cultural

differences between the Source Language culture and Target Language culture, this analysis aims to discuss those that have most impact in the film, namely:

- Brands and institutions

- Phrases, idioms and slang

For the analysis of the techniques used in this cultural aspect of the translation, we will be using Jan Pedersen's essay *How is Culture Rendered in Subtitles?* (2005). While there are numerous classifications of translation techniques by many scholars, we will adhere to Pedersen's classification as much as possible due to it being specifically about the dimension of the translation process discussed in this essay and also to maintain a degree of unity throughout the analysis. In order to understand Pedersen's definitions of these strategies there are a few concepts that need a prior explanation. He uses in most cases the term ECR (Extralinguistic Cultural Reference), which is a "reference that is attempted by means of any culture-bound linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process, and which is assumed to have a discourse referent that is identifiable to a relevant audience as this referent is within the encyclopaedic knowledge of this audience" (p. 2).

Pedersen points out that "intralinguistic culture-bound references, such as idioms, proverbs, slang and dialect are not included in this model". However, the same terminology will be used throughout the analysis to avoid confusion, as Pedersen states that "it is possible that the model could be adapted for the study of those as well".

5.1.1. Brands and Institutions

Brands

In some instances, the film uses brand names which might not be as well known in the target language countries. In these cases, the translator most of the time will resort to using generalisation. Generalisation is defined as “replacing an ECR referring to something specific by something more general” (Pedersen, 2005, p.6).

This strategy manages to get the target audience to understand what the original is referring to without a significant loss of meaning, as in most cases the specific brand of a product makes very little impact on the overall meaning of a sentence. It is also an indication that the translator has opted for a domesticating approach to the translation as opposed to foreignisation, as the translator is not relying on the audience’s prior knowledge of foreign brands. Subtitling in this version of the film seems to have followed for the most part a domesticating approach.

Example 1

(0:06:31)

ST: Paracetamol, mouthwash, vitamins, mineral water, *Lucozade*

TT: Paracetamol, enjuague bucal, vitaminas, agua mineral, bebida isotónica

We find an instance of a brand being replaced by its description. *Lucozade*, a drink most people in the UK would be familiar with, has been translated as “bebida isotónica”, which is a broader term in which *Lucozade* will be included.

Generalisation works especially well in this context because the brand itself has very little weight in the overall meaning of the sentence in which it is used. In this instance,

the brand does not matter, what matters is that the audience knows what Renton is describing is an isotonic drink, and Lucozade is the one most people in the UK will have heard of. While in Spain there are similar well known drinks such as Gatorade or Powerade, it is advisable not to include the name of a brand that was not in the original text in a translation.

Example 2

(1:01:42)

ST: How about one of these *Pot Noodles* by the way?

TT: Por cierto, ¿qué tal una sopa de sobre?

Pot Noodle is another brand often found in British supermarkets; however, this one differs slightly from the previous example. *Pot Noodle* is not “sopa de sobre”, at least not the way Spanish people may picture it. It is actually a brand of instant noodles, rather than soup. So here the translator used a combination of generalisation (by avoiding naming any brands) and cultural substitution.

In any case, while the meaning might have been slightly changed, the original line in the dialogue still conveys the same idea: that Renton is low on funds and he has to resort to eating very cheap food. After all, both “sopa de sobre” in Spain and *Pot Noodle* in Britain are foods generally associated with students and people who do not spend much money on food, so the connotative meaning remains the same in both versions.

Institutions

For the translation of names of institutions, one of the most frequent strategies is cultural substitution. This strategy involves replacing the name of an institution in the source language culture (in this case, British) with the closest equivalent in the target language culture (Peninsular Spanish).

Example 3

(0:14:47)

ST: *Department of Employment*

TT: Oficina de Empleo

There are several instances of cultural substitution throughout the film, and it is especially effective when these are used with public institutions, as in this case. While in Spain there is no Departamento de Empleo, there is an Oficina de Empleo, which has the same function as the British Department of Employment. This way, no significant part of the original meaning is lost, as the agencies have the same purpose, and there is probably one in every country, albeit with different names.

Example 4

(0:35:50)

ST: Swanney taught us to adore and respect the *National Health Service*.

TT: Swanney nos enseñó a adorar y respetar a la Seguridad Social.

In this example, the NHS (National Health Service) is the British institution that mirrors the Spanish Seguridad Social. It should be noted that here the translator shows that s/he

is taking a domesticating approach towards the translation. Translating *National Health Service* as “Servicio Nacional de Salud” would also be a valid option as its meaning can easily be inferred; nevertheless the translator opted to bring the translation closer to the audience by using the cultural equivalent “Seguridad Social” instead of a calque.

Example 5

(0:13:48)

ST: First hint of that and they’ll go directly to the *DSS* “this cunt is no trying”

TT: Al más leve indicio irán directos al paro: “este cabrón no se esfuerza”

The DSS is another institution that has a parallel in Spanish culture. This time, however the translator opted for the more general term, “el paro”. DSS stands for Department of Social Security (in the UK), and was dissolved in 2001, but since the film was released in 1996 it would still be functioning at the time. The option of using “Seguridad Social” might have been more accurate, but “el paro”, while being a more general term, is still serviceable.

5.1.2. Phrases, idioms and slang

The characters in the film are almost exclusively working class, Scottish and with a low level of education. Furthermore, a good number of the main characters are drug addicts, including Mark Renton, the protagonist and narrator. These factors result in the use of very broad Scottish accent throughout the film, but also in the use of idioms, phrases and words that give away their background as members of a low echelon of society.

Most of these fall under the category of “lexis” in Christiane Nord’s model (see Section 4), which includes “rhetorical figures (...), collocations, idioms, addressing, selection of words...”. Despite being classified as intratextual factors, Crystal and Davy (1969) argue that “in any text, the stylistically significant characteristics of lexis clearly reflect the extratextual factors of the situation in which the text is used, including the participants using it for communication”(p.81). This means that the uses of these idioms and phrases by the characters in the film are both intratextual and extratextual, as it is a reflection of the external British (and specifically Scottish) working class culture.

Example 6

(0:25:30)

ST: *Casual sex*

TT: Sexo ocasional

Here there is an issue with the translated text, in that the translation is correct but fails to convey the meaning of the original. *Casual* may indeed be translated as “ocasional” but in this context it does not make sense. In the scene Spud’s girlfriend is trying to wake him by suggesting that they have casual sex. In this instance *casual* means “without emotional intimacy or commitment”, rather than “occasional”. In any case, this meaning

of *casual sex* does not have a direct equivalent in Spanish, so it is justifiable to go with the closest one possible. “Sexo sin ataduras” could have been an option here, but since it is Spud’s girlfriend saying it, it is not completely accurate either, as this option implies a lack of commitment that is not present in Spud’s relationship with his girlfriend.

Example 7

(0:30:18)

ST: -What, *holding hands*?

-No, not holding hands

TT: -¿El qué, hacer manitas?

-No, hacer manitas no

In this case, the translator has introduced a meaning in the subtitles that was not in the original. In the English version, Renton and Diane are walking down the street and she holds his hand. Since she is underage, Renton pushes her away and tells her they should not be doing it because it is illegal. That is when Diane asks him “What, holding hands?”. The choice to translate this as “hacer manitas” is likely to cause confusion among the audience because there is a discrepancy between what is shown on screen (holding hands) and the expression Diane uses in the subtitles, which carries sexual connotations. Interestingly, the original is a sentence that has no connotative meaning and is supposed to be taken at face value, whereas the translation is a colloquial Spanish phrase. Generally, it is the translation which gives up the connotative meaning of the original, generally in favour of clarity. “Hacer manitas” would make sense as a translation of “making out” or “canoodle”, which not only mean the same but are also

used in an informal register. All things considered, the more literal option “cogerse de la mano” would have been a more faithful translation.

Examples 8 and 9

(0:54:49)

ST: *Come alive, thirty-five*

TT: El 22, los dos patitos

(0:54:50)

ST: *Box of tricks, 66*

TT: El 15, la niña bonita

This is a particularly interesting case. In Christiane Nord’s model, this would be considered a suprasegmental feature, as it is informative but also stylistic, in this case through the use of rhyme. Renton is at a bar playing bingo with his family and the announcer is calling the numbers as they come out. What the announcer says after each of the numbers is just to make a rhyme. Curiously, the translator has opted for a complete shift by not only changing the phrase after the number, but the numbers themselves. “Los dos patitos” is a way to refer to the number 22 that most Spanish viewers will have heard at some point. It must be noted that the numbers themselves are not really important in the original; they are more of a background murmur, a cue to let the audience know that Renton is playing bingo.

Example 10

(0:34:23)

ST: Lizzy's gone Mark. *She's gone and fucking dumped me*

TT: Lizzy es historia Mark. Se ha largado y me ha dejado plantado

Here, the translator has used literal translation, as s/he has chosen to translate “she’s gone and fucking dumped me” as “se ha largado y me ha dejado plantado”. While this translation is close enough to the meaning of the original, it is likely that the translator has neglected the use of “she’s gone and” as a way to emphasise the following action. So in this context, Tommy is using the second sentence as a way to say that Lizzy has dumped him. “Gone and” typically has negative connotations and is used to condemn someone’s actions. It is not uncommon to hear phrases such as “you’ve gone and ruined it”, although only in informal contexts. The verb “go” is not used with the literal meaning. A close equivalent in Spanish might have been “va y me deja plantado”.

Example 11

(0:37:08)

ST: Hey Rent boy, *nae fuckin' skag*

TT: Rents. Nada de puto iaco

Here, Frank the bartender warns Renton not to purchase any heroin. However, he does so using slang and the Scottish form “nae” instead of “no”. This helps portray Frank, who has very few lines throughout the film, as a member of the same social class as Renton and his mates. “Skag” is a word used abundantly throughout the film, more so than the Standard English “heroin”. In the Spanish subtitles, “skag” is translated in

different ways: in this case as “iaco” but we can also find “caballo”, “heroína” or simply “droga”.

Example 12

(0:41:51)

ST: You better *clean up your fucking act sunshine*. Cut that shite, do it forever

TT: Más te vale hacer borrón y cuenta nueva, chato. Deja esa mierda para siempre

In this part of the film we find several figures of speech that are challenging to translate faithfully. Firstly, “clean up your act” is a phrase meaning roughly “pull yourself together” and is generally directed at people who are struggling with addiction (as is Renton’s case) or those who are generally unstable and disruptive in some way. The Spanish “hacer borrón y cuenta nueva”, while having the added connotation of starting from the ground up, is close enough to be called the cultural equivalent of “clean up your act”.

Another interesting issue is Begbie’s ironic use of “sunshine”. This is a word that is generally reserved for showing great affection towards someone, which upon watching the scene is clear that is not the case with Begbie and Renton. The choice of translating it as “chato” works well because it also changes meaning depending on the context.

Example 13

(1:01:44)

ST: I’m fucking *Lee Marvin*

TT: Me muero de gusa

Probably one of the more obscure expressions in the film, “I’m Lee Marvin” is Cockney rhyming slang for “I’m starving”. It is interesting that Begbie uses Cockney phrases, as for the entire duration of the film he speaks with as broad a Scottish accent as any of his friends, if not more. Although many Brits know a little Cockney rhyming slang, as it has expanded beyond its original area in London’s East End, so it might be considered as a British element.

As for the translation, there really is no way to explain that Begbie is using rhyming slang to a Spanish speaking audience, or even what Cockney is and the assumptions that British viewers might make when hearing someone use it, because there are only a couple of seconds at most to make the audience know what Begbie is saying. This could be solved by means of a footnote in a literary translation, but as seen in Section 2.1., subtitling is limited to a fixed amount of characters per line. Thus, the translator opts for the expression “me muero de gusa”; “gusa” in this case being a word used in very informal settings to refer to hunger. The solution is an expression that has the same meaning (that Begbie is hungry) while also keeping a small part of the cultural assumptions and implications of the original.

Example 14

(1:05:25)

ST: Look I’m not a fucking *buftie* and that’s the end of it

TT: No soy un puto maricón y no hay más que hablar

Another obscure slang term, again spoken by Begbie, *buftie* is a highly offensive way of referring to a homosexual man. In Spanish it could be compared to ‘maricón’, which is the translator’s choice and the most clear cultural equivalent. Nevertheless, *buftie* is far

more obscure, but as in the previous example, there is not enough space in the subtitle to explain to the audience all the cultural implications that the word carries. As mentioned above, subtitles are limited to around 40 characters per subtitle on screen, which is not enough to go into detail about the meanings of terms such as *buftie*.

5.2. Communicative Dimension: Swearing

There is another aspect that will be explored in this analysis, which is the use of swearing throughout the film. This does not fall under what Hatim and Mason describe as the semiotic dimension of translation, but rather under what is known as communicative dimension. This is what is commonly referred to as “register” and it encompasses the particular way of speaking of each character. Characters will speak differently depending on their background, region, and social class, and this must be taken into account when carrying out a translation.

Trainspotting is a film which features heavy use of swearing, which serves to show the characters’ condition as lower class individuals. Generally, higher class people or those with a higher level of education will tend to swear less than their working class counterparts, often using euphemisms or minced oaths when they do. In the film the characters not only use these words often, but use them almost everywhere, as means to give “verbal emphasis” to what they are saying and not necessarily because they want to express emotion (Wang, 2013).

Whereas dubbing most of the time will attempt to use similar swearwords where the original does, subtitling is usually more cautious in its use of them. This is not the case in this particular subtitle. *Trainspotting* is a famously explicit work, and as such, the translator must take this into account as well when carrying out the translation task. The use of swears and expletives in this film is very abundant, to the point where the translator makes the choice of being explicit even when generally subtitling is “toned down” (as seen in Section 2.1).

Although the translator has chosen not to censor most instances where characters swear (likely in order to adhere to the raw and brash tone of the whole film), there are a few examples of omission of swearwords, and even some instances where they are added despite not being in the original version. This is known as compensation.

Example 15

(00:07:31)

ST: *Custom fucking designed* for your needs

TT: Diseñados para tus necesidades

In the original English version, the drug dealer uses an expletive between the first adjective (*custom*) and the second one (*designed*), which the former premodifies. This is a common feature of informal speech used to emphasise a certain word or phrase; in this case, the dealer wants to sell Renton some drugs. Hence, he makes this addition of a swearword as if to remark the idea that the drugs are “designed for his needs”. This specific word (*fuck*) is only used in very informal and vulgar speech; however, it is frequent to see other less taboo words used in the same manner, for instance *bloody* or *blooming*. Wang (2013) argues that emphasis, as one of the main functions of swearing, is generally accompanied by stress or elongation of the swearword, in order to “emphasize the intended force of the speakers” (p.74). This means that the dealer uses the swearword to make his statement more clear, or to sound more convincing.

Example 16

(0:20:48)

ST: *big time*

TT: un huevo

In some rare instances, the translator will use expletives or foul-sounding words even if the original does not in that particular instance. Here, *big time*, meaning “a lot” could have easily been translated as ‘mucho’ or ‘un montón’, but the translator chose the more vulgar ‘un huevo’. In most cases, it is ill-advised to include expletives in a translation if the original does not have them. In the case of *Trainspotting*, it could be argued that since the whole film is crude and vulgar in tone, adding more explicit language is not only justified, but it also brings the translation closer to the tone of the original. After all, there are more instances of omission of swearwords than addition overall in the film’s subtitling (such as in Example 10 and Example 13), so in a way it is a kind of compensation.

Example 17

(0:16:05)

ST: This *hard cunt* comes in

TT: Cuando entra el tipo duro ése

This is one of the places where the translator has opted not to translate a swearword. In fact, *cunt*, while very common throughout the film, is considered extremely rude and vulgar. The choice of not translating this word could be due to the translator’s restraint, but considering that he does not shy away from swearwords for most of the film, it makes little sense that this instance would be omitted. The more likely option is that due to the constraints of the medium he chose the shortest equivalent option, “tipo duro”. The translator could have opted for a more explicit expression to be faithful to the

original, but it would have led to more confusion as there are no explicit expressions similar to “tipo duro” in Spanish.

6- Conclusion

Trainspotting is a film that caused great controversy at the time it was released. This is because it is crude, violent and at times uncomfortable and unpleasant to watch. And the task of translating such a film, with all its regional slang, obscure cultural references and endless stream of swearwords is a complex one. While this subtitled version is not without its flaws, it does provide some creative solutions to the myriad of problems that the original presents. This analysis has tried to showcase the techniques employed by the translator when faced with two of the greatest obstacles of this translation: the use of culture-bound terms (belonging to the semiotic dimension) and the use of swearing and register (communicative dimension). While there are many others, these two prove consistently difficult throughout this film, and are the ones that provide the most interesting content for an analysis. Beyond the content of the translation, there have been several examples where the translation has been limited by the restrictions that subtitling entails, such as characters per subtitle. But while formal restrictions are generally followed strictly, other conventions of subtitling may be challenged. A clear example is that of swearwords and expletives: generally they are toned down or omitted altogether, whereas in this subtitle we find that the translator has chosen to ignore this convention in order to adhere to the general tone of the film.

This means that while subtitling is certainly bound by a set of rules, there is a myriad of possibilities when approaching a translation of the audiovisual text. This essay has tried to prove that in spite of its restrictions, Audiovisual Translation can be approached in many different ways, and should be regarded as highly as all other forms of translation.

7-Documentation

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Corpus

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