Language Variation in the Dubbing Into English of the Netflix Series *Baby* (2018–2020) and *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017–2020)

Variación lingüística en el doblaje al inglés de las series de Netflix *Baby* (2018-2020) y *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017-2020)

Variation linguistique dans le doublage en anglais des séries de Netflix *Baby* (2018-2020) et *Suburra : Blood on Rome* (2017-2020)

Variação linguística na dobragem em inglês das séries de Netflix *Baby* (2018-2020) e *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017-2020)

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Abstract

Although standard Italian is taught from primary school and is widely prevalent in the media, dialects are still spoken in many households all over the country. This trend is captured by many popular video-on-demand providers such as Netflix and HBO, who are diversifying their offer by promoting their own non-English language productions via both subtitling and dubbing. This article analyses how language variation, particularly in the form of dialect and slang, is adapted for dubbing in the Italian Netflix series Baby (2018-2020) and Suburra: Blood on Rome (2017–2020). Specifically, it examines the most common translational strategies that have been implemented in the dubbing of both series in English. In particular, dialectal elements are often translated directly or generalised, at times, with the addition of taboo words. Correspondingly, youth jargon is largely translated via direct translations or creative additions. Despite having two different age groups at the centre of the narration, similar translation strategies were used in the two series. The qualitative analysis demonstrates that dialect is used to define social disparity, since characters involved with criminality speak principally dialect whereas wealthy students, affluent characters, politicians, and churchmen draw on standard Italian primarily.

Keywords: Netflix, *Baby*, *Suburra: Blood on Rome,* language variation, dialects, slang, Italian-English translation, AVT, dubbing into English

Resumen

Aunque el italiano estándar se enseña desde la escuela primaria y prevalece ampliamente en los medios de comunicación, en muchos hogares de todo el país se siguen hablando dialectos. Esta tendencia es acogida por muchos proveedores de video por demanda, como Netflix y HBO, quienes están diversificando su oferta mediante la promoción de sus propias producciones en lengua no inglesa, tanto
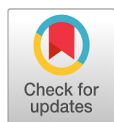
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Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura
Medellín, Colombia, Vol. 28 Issue 2 (May-August, 2023), pp. 1-17, ISSN 0123-3432
www.udea.edu.co/ikala

a través del subtitulado como del doblaje. Este artículo analiza cómo la variación lingüística, en particular en forma de dialecto y jerga, se adapta al doblaje en las series italianas de Netflix *Baby* (2018–2020) y *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017–2020). En concreto, se examinan las estrategias traslativas más comunes que se han implementado en el doblaje de ambas series en inglés. Los elementos dialectales suelen traducirse de forma directa o generalizarse, a veces con la adición de palabras tabú. Por consiguiente, la jerga de los jóvenes se tradujo principalmente mediante traducción directa o adición creativa. A pesar de que las series se centran en grupos etarios distintos, se utilizaron estrategias traslativas similares. El análisis cualitativo demuestra que el dialecto se utiliza para definir la disparidad social, puesto que los personajes que participan en la criminalidad hablan principalmente en el dialecto, mientras que los estudiantes y personajes adinerados, los políticos y los clérigos utilizan sobre todo el italiano estándar.

Palabras clave: Netflix, *Baby*, *Suburra: Blood on Rome*, variación lingüística, dialectos, slang, traducción italiano-inglés, TAV, doblaje al inglés

Résumé

Bien que l'italien standard soit enseigné dès l'école primaire et qu'il soit largement répandu dans les médias, les dialectes sont encore parlés dans de nombreux foyers à travers le pays. Cette tendance se reflète dans de nombreux fournisseurs de vidéo à la demande (*streaming*) tels que Netflix et HBO, qui sont en train de diversifier leur offre en promouvant des productions propres en langues autres que l'anglais par le biais du sous-titrage et du doublage. Cet article analyse comment la variation linguistique, en particulier sous la forme de dialectes et d'argot, est adaptée au doublage dans les séries italiennes de Netflix *Baby* (2018-2020) et *Suburra : Blood on Rome* (2017-2020). Plus précisément, il examine les stratégies de traduction les plus courantes mises en œuvre dans le doublage anglais des deux séries. En particulier, les éléments dialectaux sont souvent traduits directement ou généralisés, parfois avec l'ajout de mots tabous. De même, le jargon des jeunes est largement traduit par des traductions directes ou des ajouts créatifs. Bien que deux groupes d'âge différents soient au centre de la narration, des stratégies de traduction similaires ont été utilisées dans les deux séries. L'analyse qualitative démontre que le dialecte est utilisé pour définir la disparité sociale, puisque les personnages impliqués dans la criminalité parlent principalement en dialecte alors que les étudiants et personnages aisés, les politiciens et les ecclésiastiques utilisent principalement l'italien standard.

Mots-clef : Netflix, *Baby, Suburra : Blood on Rome*, variation linguistique, dialectes, slang, traduction italien-anglais, TAV, doublage vidéo en anglais

Resumo

Embora a língua italiana padrão seja ensinada a partir da escola primária e seja amplamente difundida na mídia, os dialetos ainda são falados em muitos lares em todo o país. Esta tendência se reflete em muitos produtos audiovisuais destinados ao cinema, televisão e plataformas de streaming. Em um esforço para levar histórias locais a uma audiência global, provedores populares de vídeo sob demanda como Netflix e HBO estão diversificando suas ofertas, promovendo suas próprias produções em idioma não-inglês através da legendagem e da dublagem. Este artigo analisa como a variação linguística, particularmente na forma de dialeto e gíria, é adaptada à dobragem na série italiana *Baby* (2018-2020) e *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017-2020) da Netflix. Especificamente, ela examina

como esta variação é traduzida do italiano para o inglês e estabelece as estratégias translacionais mais comuns implementadas na dublagem em inglês de ambas as séries. A análise qualitativa do espaço narrativo dado aos vários grupos sociais que produzem uma alta taxa de variação diastrática, onde muitos socioletos são utilizados por uma gama diversificada de caracteres, demonstra que o dialeto é utilizado para definir a disparidade social.

Palavras chave: Netflix, *Baby, Suburra: Blood on Rome,* variação linguística, dialetos, slang, tradução italiano-inglês, TAV, dublagem para o inglês

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Introduction

Since its creation in 1997 in California as a movie rental service, Netflix has gone a long way, becoming one of the world's leading video-on-demand platforms (McFadden, 2020) with over 209 million subscribers in over 190 countries worldwide, as of June 2021 (Moody, 2021). The spread of online technologies and the coincidental development of mobile devices are undoubtedly among the main factors that paved the way for the growth of internet entertainment providers (Fernández-Costales, 2018, p. 299). Over years of increasing success and diversification of its own business model, Netflix managed to identify and acknowledge viewers' increasing interest in local original productions. The term *local* is used in this paper to indicate original productions in countries other than the US, where the streaming company Netflix was founded. It all started with *Club de Cuervos* (2015-2019), produced in Mexico, followed by the sci-fi *3%* (Aguilera, 2016-2020), produced in Brazil. Although the former achieved resounding success in Mexico, the latter drew international attention. Hence, according to Kelly Luegenbiehl, Netflix's Vice President of Global Franchises, they made the decision to start producing locally to export globally (Ermisino 2019).

This article contributes to the field of audiovisual translation (AVT), a recognised sub-discipline within the wider discipline of translation studies. This research seeks to examine how the linguistic variation present in two Italian television series is rendered from Italian into English dubbed versions. In this vein, the aim is to understand which translation strategies are used for the dubbing of language variation, particularly into the English language, which is more traditionally associated with subtitling. The study reported here was built upon previous work that has only recently been carried out in AVT, providing new insights into the field. The main research questions were: (1) How and to what extent has the language variation of the original been maintained or altered in the dubbed version (Italian-English)? (2) What similar and dissimilar strategies are used to render cultural elements in each of the versions and what impact do they have on the narrative, the plot, and the context? To address these questions, building on excerpts from *Baby* (2018-2020) and *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017-2020), the article presents examples of translation strategies used in the dubbing of both series.

Why Dubbing?

Traditionally, audiovisual literature has included English-speaking countries (as well as Portugal, Greece, and Scandinavian countries) in the list of countries where audiovisual products are commonly subtitled, as opposed to dubbed (Antonini & Chiaro, 2005, p. 97; Chaume, 2012, p. 6). By contrast, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Czech Republic, and Turkey, as well as parts of Central and South America (e.g., Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela), some Asian countries (e.g., China, Iran, Japan, South Korea) and some North African countries are among those where dubbing constitutes the norm in audiovisual translation (AVT) (Gagne & Wilton-Godberfforde, 2021, p. 163). Despite this traditional divide, in 2017, Netflix made the innovative decision to offer both dubbing and subtitles in English for some of its original series, starting with the Spanish *Cable Girls* (original title *Las chicas del cable*) (2017–2020) and the German *Dark* (Odar & Friese, 2017–2020) (Hayes, 2021, p. 2). This choice is reportedly attributed to market demand, since dubbed versions of renowned shows are more popular than their subtitled equivalents, as stated by Kelly Luegenbiehl, Vice-President of Netflix's Global Franchises (Roxborough, 2019). Hence, Netflix's growing investment in dubbing, between 25% and 35% per year, is fuelled by an annual increase in the consumption of dubbed content of 120% (Roxborough, 2019). Moreover, according to Netflix's International Dubbing Manager, Denise Kreeger, most US viewers watched the Brazilian series *3%* (Aguilera, 2016-2020) and the German drama series *Dark* (Odar & Friese,

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2017–2020) taking advantage of the dubbed version (Roettgers, 2018). Around 170 dubbing studios currently collaborate with Netflix, with the platform dubbing audiovisual products in at least 34 languages (Shaw, 2021). Brian Pearson, Netflix's Vice-President of Creative Services, confirmed that US viewership of dubbed content tripled since 2018, a clear sign that a greater audience exists for dubbed products in English-speaking countries.

The expansion rate that the platform is trying to reach in terms of dubbed AV products is astounding. Considering that film and TV studios ordinarily require months to arrange dubbing and then distribute international shows, Netflix's effort in attempting to release new shows every week in multiple languages at the same time (Shaw, 2021) is remarkable. However, despite the platform's determination in overcoming the cultural barrier linked to dubbing in English-speaking countries, followed by rigorous quality control (Shaw, 2021), many viewers are still reluctant. "Dubby" expressions, i.e., wording that does not correspond to natural speech, and lack of lip-sync (synchronisation with the movements of the actor's mouth) (Goldsmith, 2019) were among the most common criticisms towards the English dubbed version of *Money Heist* (original title, *La casa de papel,* Pina, 2017–present), which compelled Netflix to re-dub the first two series. This meant re-adjusting scripts and hiring a new dubbing director as well as a new cast of voice-over actors (Spiteri Miggiani, 2021, p. 3). All things considered, Anglophone viewers are more exposed to potential discrepancies and less susceptible to suspending their disbelief or to unconscious automatism, which is instead typical of those viewers who are used to dubbing (Sánchez-Mompeán, 2021, p. 189).

A Boost to Local Productions: All Roads Lead to Rome

Believing that "great stories can come from anywhere and be loved everywhere" (Netflix, 2021a), Netflix's non-English content investments are also growing in relation to local series produced abroad, and in terms of their success. Standing as a testament, the French action-mystery series *Lupin* (Kay & Uzan, 2021-present) became the most-watched debut of any foreign language series in Netflix's history (Shaw, 2021), before being overtaken by *Squid Game* (Hwang, 2021-present), with its second part becoming the platform's largest non-English title in the second quarter of 2021, with 54-million-member households choosing to watch the French series in its first four weeks (Netflix 2021a). During the third quarter of 2021, the Korean series *Squid Game* (Hwang, 2021-present) turned out to be the platform's biggest TV show ever, with 142,000,000 member households globally watching the title in its first four weeks. The series has been ranked as Netflix's number-one programme in 94 countries (Netflix, 2021b). Additionally, the platform has even committed to intensifying the distribution of local original series by 2022 (Vivarelli, 2021) and increased its offices to 26 worldwide. These include Netflix's first office in Rome, whose opening was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak until the second half of 2022 (Whittock & Goldbart, 2022), in a neoclassic building called Villino Rattazzi, located near the U.S Embassy (Paolini, 2021). As confirmed by Eleonora Andreatta, Netflix Vice-President of Italian original series, this expansion demonstrates the platform's desire to establish a system of relationships and offer great prospects for the Italian creative community (Vivarelli, 2021). In 2020, five new Italian drama seasons were distributed on the platform, including the last chapter of the recurring series, *Suburra: Blood on Rome* and *Baby.* Numerous original films were also added to the platform, most remarkably *The Life Ahead* (original title *La vita davanti a sé*), starring Sophia Loren. The film was critically acclaimed and won a Golden Globe as well as an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song (IMDB).

As of April 2021, ten Italian original TV series were present in Netflix's library (What's on Netflix, 2021), including the above-mentioned *Suburra: Blood on Rome* and *Baby*, which are the

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case studies of this article. Moreover, considering the forecast and enhancement that should be brought to Netflix by opening the hub in the Italian capital, the numbers of Italian Originals should be rising shortly. Therefore, the following section examines language variation, which is a predominant feature in Italian films and series.

Theoretical Framework

This section presents research on dubbing and language variation. Particularly, it addresses research on the increasing interest in English dubbing, as well as the intertwined proliferation of local productions undertaken by new platforms such as Netflix. Additionally, it examines some literature on the audiovisual translation of language variation, with a specific focus on geographic and social dialects.

Dubbing Dialects

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Language variation, in the form of dialect, plays a very important role in the history of Italian culture, as dialects are still spoken in many households all over the country. Numerous studies on language variation have been conducted within linguistics and translation studies since the 1960s, some of which are mentioned in this section. For instance, Halliday et al. (1964) acknowledged that language varies based on the type of situation; therefore, they described language variation as a continuum and divided it into user-related varieties i.e., dialects, and use-related varieties, that is registers (p. 77). In addition, due to its vast nature, the idea of a "whole language" has been considered challenging in translation. Hence, Catford (1965) suggested the idea of varieties within a language, or sub-languages (p. 83). In particular, Catford distinguished between varieties that are permanent to the performer (i.e., idiolects and dialects), and varieties that are transient since they vary with changes in the immediate situation (i.e., registers, styles, and modes) (Catford, 1965, p. 85). Within the study of linguistics, Gregory (1967) expanded on Catford's theory and defined

variation according to situation and context (p. 181). The former describes extra-textual features which can be semantically relevant to the text; the latter relates to the correlation between linguistic features and situational features that are fundamental in processing meaning. Later, building on previous studies, Hatim and Mason (1990) differentiated between dialects, i.e., user-related varieties that are orally and individually distinguishable, and registers, i.e., use-related varieties only different in language form (p. 39). In examining dialect within translation, Chaume (2012) divided dialects into five categories: geographical dialects, temporal dialects, social dialects, standard/non-standard dialects, idiolects (Chaume, 2012, p. 136). Some examples of geographical dialects and social dialects will be analysed below because these were the most common varieties encountered in the script of the first season of *Suburra: Blood on Rome* and *Baby*. Albeit most of the theorists above did not refer directly to the domain of audiovisual translation, they were included in the theoretical framework of this article due to their detailed investigation of language variation and its relevance to the examples found in the corpus examined from the series which are the object of analysis here.

Diatopic Variation: Geographical Dialects

A language varies within the different geographical areas in which it is used, thus generating geographical dialects. Generally speaking, if an audiovisual product contains only one dialect, it is prone to be translated into standard language in dubbing (Chaume, 2012, p. 137). Yet, when two or more dialects of the same language are used in an audiovisual product, the challenges faced by translators are much more complex. Ranzato (2010) suggests that, in limited cases, translators could attempt at translating dialects by playing with syntax and vocabulary in the target language, recreating a non-localised variation of the standard language (p. 120). This choice would be preferable to the not-so-politically-correct decision of replacing a dialect with another, as is the

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case for the Italian dubbing of the American animated television sitcom *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1989-present), where the citizens of Springfield are characterised through the use of particular accents which derive from other specific accents of the original American version (Fusari, 2007, p. 10).

Another hurdle set by diatopic variations is translating accents and pronunciation in multilingual films. When foreign characters speak with an accent, translators need to decide whether to imitate the same accent in dubbing, replace it with another accent if it is the same as the target language, or domesticate the accent by using standardisation techniques (Chaume, 2012, p. 138). The foreignising-domesticating dichotomy was previously examined by Venuti (2008), who puts these two concepts on a continuum and describes them as "ethical attitudes towards a foreign text and culture" (p. 19). Venuti's stance is towards foreignisation, which should make the target viewer aware of cultural and linguistic differences, thus giving more acknowledgement to the translator, although domesticating techniques are more common in British and American translation customs (Venuti, 2008, p. 15).

Diastratic Variation: Social Dialects or Jargons

Languages vary based on speakers' social group; this type of dialect is defined as social dialect. In order for translators to understand the socio-political implications of a specific dialect, they should first recognise the dialectal element in the original text and then verify whether the element is repeatedly used during the audiovisual product, or if it belongs to specific characters (Chaume, 2012, p. 139). For instance, in her research on idiolects in the animated series *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1989-present), Fusari (2007) determined that Bart Simpson's frequently-employed expression "eat my shorts" was translated into Italian as "ciucciati il calzino" (literally "suck your sock") (pp. 2-35). The language and particularly the catchphrase used by

Bart, one of the protagonists of the series, tries to mimic an exaggerated and mostly made-up form of youth slang which Italian translators managed to reproduce by using recreation strategies (Fusari, 2007, p. 7), that is by creating a set of expressions ad hoc for the character.

Language Variation in Other Italian Series Distributed Abroad

In both series analysed, dialect (mostly Romanesco dialect) is spoken predominantly by characters involved with the underworld, whereas affluent students, wealthy characters, politicians, and churchmen use mainly standard Italian. In the adaptation to English, translators did not choose to use an existing English-language dialect to avoid generating an artificial effect (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p, 41), but applied translation strategies that impacted morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. A similar approach was adopted in the translation of other Italian multilingual series based on books of significant international success. For instance, in her study on the literary translation of the series of novels about *Inspector Montalbano* (1994-2020) written by Andrea Camilleri, Segnini (2018) identified that a standard register was used to translate its language variation into Spanish and English although certain attempts at creative additions were undertaken in the translation into Catalan and French (p. 9). Direct translations and localisations of culture-specific elements were also common in the translation into English of Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan tetralogy *My Brilliant Friend* (Segnini, 2018, p. 11). In this instance, the diglossic feature, which distinguished social classes and registers used, was highlighted through indirect speech alluding to dialect (Goldstein & Reynolds, 2015). Even though this analysis was not directly based on the audiovisual version of these novels, the outcomes were very similar, as pinpointed by the study conducted by Bruti and Ranzato (2019).

In their investigation of the strategies adopted to translate popular Italian series containing numerous dialectal features, Bruti and Ranzato (2019)

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found several similarities in the strategies used to translate *Inspector Montalbano* (1999–2021) and *Romanzo criminale – La serie* (De Cataldo, 2008–2010). Specifically, Bruti and Ranzato (2019) found that dialectal expressions in the former were mostly standardised, neutralised, or compensated, although instances of expletive language were translated using marked language when alternative diatopic expressions could not be found (Bruti & Ranzato, 2019, p. 350). Standardisation was also observed as the main strategy for the translation of dialectal features in *Romanzo criminale – La serie* (2008–2010), along with an inclination to use equivalent slang forms in the target language (Bruti & Ranzato, 2019, pp. 351–353).

Method

This article addresses how language variation, particularly in the form of dialect and slang, is adapted for dubbing in the Italian Netflix series *Baby* and *Suburra: Blood on Rome*. It demonstrates that dialect is used to define social disparity by undertaking a qualitative analysis of the narrative space afforded to the diverse social groups who produce a high rate of diastratic variation, where many sociolects are used by a range of different characters. In examining how this variation is rendered linguistically from Italian into English, the article establishes the most common translational strategies that have been implemented in the English dubbing of both series. Additionally, the article determined how similar and dissimilar translation strategies have been employed despite having two different age groups at the centre of the narration.

To answer the research questions, sequences for analysis were selected from the first season of the series *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017) and the first season of the series *Baby* (2018). Only the first seasons of both series were selected for the purpose of this article considering the vast quantity of examples available and due to the space restraints set by the word-limit of a journal article. The analysis centred on how linguistic variation is transposed in the English-dubbed versions of both series. The

Dubbing Studio VSI Los Angeles dubbed *Suburra: Blood on Rome*; the Dubbing Director was Todd Haberkorn whereas the Adaptor was Greg Snegoff. The Dubbing Studio VSI Los Angeles also dubbed *Baby*, specifically Dubbing Director Carrie Keranen and Adaptors Carrie Keranen and Connor DeMita. In order to determine the linguistic elements to be analysed, including their respective translations, a taxonomy of translation strategies was selected. In her study on the dubbing of cultural references, Ranzato (2015) created a corpus-based taxonomy (pp. 83–84) adapted for dubbing from the one generated by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), originally conceived for the subtitling of cultural references in audiovisual translation. Albeit Ranzato's taxonomy is not applied directly to language varieties, it was employed in this study as it is relevant to the extracts analysed.

Findings

The section below addresses how language variation, particularly in the form of dialect and slang, was adapted for dubbing in the Italian Netflix series *Baby* and *Suburra: Blood on Rome*. In order to provide a thorough evaluation, examples of the translation strategies applied to the dubbing of Italian language variation in English are presented. Hence, the most common strategies (e.g., direct translation, generalisation, creative addition, etc.) are illustrated by dialogue excerpts from the corpus, in the following sections of the article.

Suburra: Blood on Rome: A Novel, a Film, a Series

The Italian crime drama series (set in Rome) serves as a prequel to the 2015 film *Suburra*, which was also inspired by the novel of the same name by Giancarlo De Cataldo and Carlo Bonini (2013). It is the first Italian-language original television series produced by Netflix (Niola, 2017) and is inspired by the Mafia Capitale investigation focused on corruption and power struggles among organised crime, politicians, and churchmen in Rome (Caprara, 2019). The investigation, which

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concluded in 2014, resulted in 39 people's detention, including Massimo Carminati and Salvatore Buzzi. Together, they created a system based on political power in order to control contracts in the sector of environmental and social policies, as well as a complex organisational structure that included criminals, politicians, entrepreneurs, and professionals, in addition to connections to organised crime (Pezzi, 2019, p. 515). Using illicit methods such as extortion, bribery, violence, and corruption, Carminati and Buzzi's system is said to have created revenues of over 204 million euros (Fusani, 2014). The label "Mafia Capitale", initially created by the media, is given to the fact that the organisation had a system of a mafia-like association that was not based in southern Italy but in Rome, the country's capital.

Inspired by the investigation, in 2013, judge and playwright Giancarlo De Cataldo and journalist Carlo Bonini published a best-seller novel titled *Suburra* (De Cataldo & Bonini, 2013). The title is due to the homonymous filthy and disreputable but populous neighbourhood of Ancient Rome, home to the urban underclass who used to live there in miserable conditions (Treccani, 2021b). As mentioned above, the film *Suburra* (2015) is inspired by the novel of the same name; however, several differences can be noticed in relation to the characterisation of the protagonists and some narratives that were omitted or modified for the screen (Koch 2017).

The series *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (2017–2020) is made up of three seasons and a total of 24 episodes. The first episode opens with the resignation of the mayor of Rome. This power vacuum creates considerable consequences, particularly, concerning the assignment of some territories in Ostia, which are disputed among many. From the first episode, it is clear that Samurai is the boss and everyone must submit. From the beginning, Samurai is determined to bribe Amedeo Cinaglia, an honest and humble city councillor who initially refuses any enticement. Things change, however, when he realises that in a world like the one he lives

in, candid people do not go far. Sara Monaschi, who works as an auditor for the Vatican, is also interested in the land in Ostia and wants it to be assigned to her husband's building company. She uses her influence on Monsignor Theodosius as a way to achieve her target and plans for him an evening of illegal substances and prostitutes thanks to the help of her young lover Gabriele (often shortened as Lele).

The young man is the middle-class son of a policeman. Lele maintains an on-and-off affair with Sara Monaschi and tries to keep up his small-scale drug trafficking despite the threats received by Samurai for invading his territory. Lele soon meets the other two protagonists of the series: Spadino Adami, a member of a gypsy family who live on the outskirts of Rome, and Aureliano Adami, who, on the other hand, is part of a prominent family in Ostia. The three men happen to witness Monsignor Theodosius fall ill during the soirée, surrounded by drugs and prostitutes, and decide to blackmail him. The fight for Ostia is constantly in the background of the first season whereas the unexpected friendship between the three protagonists is at the forefront. Spadino falls for Aureliano although he is forced by his family to get married to Angelica.

Dubbing Strategies: Suburra

The excerpts in the following tables contain several examples of regionalisms and taboo words with their respective translation for the dubbing offered by Netflix. Usually, in subtitling, swear words and taboo words are softened through the use of euphemisms or totally omitted (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 189); nevertheless, Ciampi's (2019) research on youth identities in dubbing (2019) demonstrated a tendency to apply retention strategies to the translation of taboo words, which could be read as a sign of changes in cultural values (Ciampi, 2019, p. 278). Table 1 presents an example of compensation whereby the swearword (1) *porca de quella puttana*, which could have been translated as "for fuck's sake", was

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Table 1 Compensation of Taboo Words

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Aureliano Adami	Ma *porca de quella puttana* (1), ma ce l'hai l'occhi? Tu lo vedi o no la gente che locali vole frequentà? Su quer chiosco *ce butti du spicci* (2), se riempie. E un certo tipo de clientela, oltre che magnà e beve, *vole pippà* (3).	But *for fuck's sake,* have you got eyes? Do you see or not what kind of places people want to hang out in? On that kiosk *you throw two coins,* it fills up. And a certain type of clientele, other than eating and drinking, *wants to snort.*	I mean, *for Christ's sake,* have you got eyes or what? Do you see *what kinda fucking* places people want? I know it's a dump but t*hrow a little money at it* and it'll fill up! And certain kinds of clients, beside eating and drinking, *they wanna do a couple lines!*

Table 2 Creative Addition of Dialectal Phrase

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Sicilian	O sentissi? *O pidocchio ha la tosse* (4). Però si scordò che *i piccioli* (5) sugnu i nostri.	Did you hear him? *The head lice is coughing.* But he forgot that the *money* was ours.	D'you hear that? *The mouse that roared.* Except he forgot he's roaring with our *money.*

Table 3 Direct Translation and Generalization of Dialect

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
2	Spadino	E *guardie* (6) 'n ce stanno. To' detto, *zio Prete ha smartito* (7). Vedrai mo come *viene a cuccia* (8).	The *guards* are not there. I told you, *uncle priest got scared.* You'll see now how he *comes to the doghouse.*	No *cops* around. What did I tell you, *that fucking priest is ours.* Now watch as *he rolls over.*

mitigated by "for Christ's sake". Yet, the swearing element recurs later in the dialogue, where the Italian word *che* [what kind] was translated as "what kinda fucking". Moreover, the dialectal expressions (2) *ce butti du spicci* [throw two coins] and (3), *vole pippà* [want to snort] are explicitly and creatively translated.

In Table 2, the Sicilian dialectal phrase (4) *o pidocchio ha la tosse* [the head louse is coughing] was translated metaphorically through another creative addition. The additional verb "roaring" is then repeated to translate (5) *i piccioli.* In parallel with the standardised rendition of Roman dialectal expressions, Table 2 shows no reference to the Sicilian provenance of the character. Any viewer who chooses to watch the series dubbed in English can only understand that the dialogue takes place

between a Roman gangster and a representative of the Sicilian mafia based on the context.

Table 3 shows an excerpt providing further examples of Roman dialect. Particularly, in (6) *guardie,* the slang word used to indicate law enforcement, is translated via a direct translation. In (7), *zio Prete* [uncle priest] is rendered into the additional swearword "fucking". In the original script, despite the presence of the word *zio* [uncle], omitted in the English dubbing, no reference is made to a family member. The expression is, in fact, used in central and southern Italian regions as a form of address for older family members and members of the Catholic Church (Treccani, 2021c). Later in the dialogue, the regional verbal expression *ha smartito* [got scared] is generalised with "is ours" to indicate Spadino's realisation that Monsignor

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Table 4 Explicitation of a Geographical Reference

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Tullio Adami	E invece tu pe prima cosa vai lì e je chiedi scusa e je porti i sordi, i tua pe la precisione. Quelli che piji dalla roba *dei Cancelli* (9).	And instead you firstly go there and apologise and you bring him the money, yours to be precise. The one you get from the stuff at the *Cancelli* area.	You're gonna move your butt over there and make some excuse, tell em you're sorry. And you bring the money, yours to be precise, what you make out of *the north end.*

Table 5 Calque of a Taboo Word

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
2	Aureliano Adami	(…) io ce vengo de giorno, quando non c'è nessuno che *me rompe li cojioni* (10)	(…) I come here during the day, when there's no one that can piss me off.	(…) I come here during the day, when there's no one around to *bust my balls*

Theodosiou will very likely fulfil their requests without having the option of refusing. Finally, the metaphor in (8) *viene a cuccia* [comes to the dog-house], intended as "to lie down", infers that the priest is expected to have a submissive reaction and is translated using a direct translation.

Table 4 displays an example of a geographic reference in (9) *i Cancelli,* which is translated with explicitation. Indeed, (9) indicates an area of Ostia towards the southern shore where entry to the beach is free of charge. This is different from the northern and central areas of Ostia Lido where visitors are charged by *stabilimenti* [beach clubs] if they intend to stay on the beach and use parasols, sun loungers, etc. This regional cultural reference would be obscure for anyone even for Italian speakers, who are not familiar with the geography of Ostia and its neighbouring areas. The explicitation in the English dubbing helps viewers understand the geographic clarification made by Tullio Adami to his son Aureliano.

Additionally, Table 5 presents an indirect example of calque, which could potentially be unnoticeable to American viewers since it contains an idiom that belongs to American English (American Heritage®, 2011). Indeed, the dialectal taboo expression (10) *me rompe li cojoni*, from

the Italian *rompere i coglioni* [to break someone's balls], is translated as "bust my balls", which infers the same idea. This translation choice could be considered unclear since more neutral expressions, which bear similar meanings, could have been used, without creating misperceptions in non-American viewers.

Finally, an example of repetition can be found in Table 6, where the form of address (11) *Monsignor* is repeated in English dubbing. In fact, (11) represents a title used with the name of a Roman Catholic priest of high rank (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2021). Although an equivalent noun exists in numerous other languages, the Italian word *Monsignor* is used in standard English, therefore it is repeated in the English dubbing.

Similarly to the analysis proposed above, the following section presents a review of the translation strategies applied to the dubbing of Italian language variation in English for the first season of the series *Baby* (2018).

Baby: A Truly Roman Teen Drama

If you're 16 and live in the most beautiful neighbourhood in Rome, you're lucky. Ours is the best possible world. Like exotic fish in a pristine tank longing for

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Table 6 Repetition of a Form of Address

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Sara Monaschi	D'accordo. Lo so ma la commissione è spaccata. L'altro concorso è in mano alla maggioranza. Quello che conta è il voto del *Monsignor (11)* Theodosiou, sono mesi che ci lavoro. Va bene, oggi lo inchioderò	Agreed. I know but the commission is split. The other bid is in the hands of the majority. What matters is *Monsignor* Theodosiou's vote, it's been months that I've worked on that. Ok, today I will frame him.	I do. I know, but the committee is split, the other company has the majority. *Monsignor* Theodosious's vote is the tie-breaker. I've been after him for months. Fine. Yes, I will nail it today.

the sea. That's why, even though everything looks perfect, to survive... We need a secret life. (Le Fosse et al., 2018)

The opening scene of the series sets a clear ambience: privileged teenagers, wealthy families, and postcard-like sceneries. They feel trapped in their desirable lives, besieged by boredom, and longing for financial independence and sexual freedom. These are the main reasons why Chiara (Benedetta Porcaroli) and Ludovica (Alice Pagani) are lured into joining the underworld of underage prostitution. The former is a model student initially unaware that her parents are separated yet still living together. She is also bored with her upper-class upbringing, which provides her with every opportunity but no sense of satisfaction. The latter is considered a rebel by her schoolmates (mostly because of a sex tape leaked by her popular ex-boyfriend). She has financial issues, due to the erratic behaviour of her mother and the refusal of accepting money from her estranged father. Those two apparently different girls become friends, attend exclusive parties together, and fall into the trap set by entrepreneur Saverio (Paolo Calabresi), who introduces them to the underworld of prostitution (Nicolau, 2018). The series also revolves around teenage love stories as well as more difficult topics such as bullying and drug trafficking.

Written by a group of young Roman authors, *Baby* is loosely based on the 2013 prostitution ring scandal which involved two minors and over 50 high-profile clients in the Roman upper-class

Parioli district (Autieri, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the series *Baby* does not only revolve around the double lives of the protagonists, but also the love affairs of their schoolmates. For instance, Damiano (Riccardo Mandolini), a character who is not linked to real events, moves to Parioli after growing up in Quarticciolo (a deprived area of eastern Rome). Initially, he sells drugs in his new school and falls in love with Chiara. From a language perspective, his character is the epicentre of regionalisms and cultural references particularly linked to his district of provenance, mostly referred to by other characters in a derogatory way. His constant use of dialect, in opposition to the posh pronunciation of standard Italian used by Chiara and her upper-class friends, defines the evident boundary between his disadvantaged upbringing and their privileged background.

Dubbing Strategies in *Baby*

In Table 7, two translation strategies can be identified. The first is a concretisation, whereby (12) *l'interrogazione* is replaced by a "test" in mathematics, losing the connotation of an oral exam, which is usually more feared by students than written exams. Later, (13) *un cazzo* [fuck all] is generalised to "any" and the correspondence with the word "fucking", which bears a similar meaning, is delayed, thus implying the use of a compensation strategy.

The same character, Ludovica, is at the centre of the following excerpt. Despite the presence of only one line, Table 8 displays two translation strategies used. Firstly, the Roman definite

Table 7 Concretisation of a Cultural Reference and Generalization of a Taboo Word

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Ludovica	(…) è che c'ho *l'interrogazione* (12) di matematica… e non so *un cazzo* (13), quindi mi stavo preparando.	(…) it's that I have the maths *oral test*… and I know *fuck all,* so I was preparing.	(…) it's just, I got a *test* today in fucking mathematics… and I don't know *any* of it, so I need to prepare for the worst.

Table 8 Direct Translation of Dialect and Situational Substitution

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Student	Ecco *er Secchiello* (14)	Here is *the Bucket*	Here comes *the Slut*

article *er*, is translated as "the" via a direct translation. The dialectal nuance is not transferred although the intended meaning remains unvaried. Secondly, a situational substitution is used to translate *Secchiello* into "Slut" since the first word is not translated but replaced by a word with a different meaning. The Italian word *secchiello*, literally "bucket", is employed by most characters when referring to Ludovica, probably because her bob haircut reminds them of a bucket hat. The use of the derogatory word "slut" as a substitute is more likely to be linked to the poor relationship between Ludovica and her peers, which, throughout the series, also seems evidently linked to her bad reputation.

Table 9 and Table 10 display different strategies to translate the same word, *coatto*. The Roman term is usually employed to represent a coarse individual who speaks vulgarly, has poor taste in clothes, and tends to live in deprived suburban areas (Treccani, 2021a). In Table 9, the word is translated via a creative addition with a possible allusion to the good looks of the character described.

Nonetheless, the same word is generalised in Table 10, where a negative connotation is added to the character, who is described as a "bad boy". The cultural references to two very different *quartieri* [districts] of Rome were omitted. Indeed, a reference to the upper-class neighbourhood of Parioli is generalised through the use of the adjective "posh", and so is the allusion to the working-class area of Quarticciolo, through the use of the noun "ghetto".

Unlike dialogues among upper-class characters, every conversation between Damiano, a drug dealer, and Falco, his supplier, is marked by a distinct presence of Roman dialect. Frequently, dialectal elements are generalised or translated directly. Examples of this are a) the verb *semo*, replacing the standard-Italian *siamo* [we are]; b) *nun*, rather than the standardised *non* [don't]; c) two apocopes, that is, the truncation of the word *tornare* [to come back] into *torna'* are typical elements of the Roman dialect; d) (19) *tre piotte*, another element of the Roman dialect, is explicitly translated as "300 euros" (Table 11).

Similarly, the same dialectal connotations can be identified in dialogues between Damiano and Fiore, another supplier. As seen in Table 12, the first dialectal exclamation (20) *ma che davero* is omitted although a reference to its meaning is present with a compensation, "I can't believe it!". Moreover, the noun (21) *bottarella* [blow] is generalised as "time" without any specific reference to drug intake as the Roman word would otherwise entail. The interjective expressions (22) *macché* and (23) *aho'*, typical of the Roman dialect, are also eliminated. In the final sentence,

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Table 9 Creative Addition of a Slang Word

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
1	Fabio	E mi lasciate da solo col *coatto* (15)	And you leave me here alone with the *chav*	I'll stay here with your *handsome trash*

Table 10 Omission of Geographical References and Generalisation of a Slang Word

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
2	Fabio	La principessa dei *Parioli* (16) con il *coatto* (17) del *Quarticciolo*? (18)	The princess from *Parioli district* with the *chav* from *Quarticciolo district*?	The *posh* princess has a thing for the *bad boy* from the *ghetto*, uh?

Table 11 Generalisation and Direct Translation of Dialect

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
4	Falco	Allora forse non se semo capiti. A me me devono torna' *tre piotte* (19) entro domani. Poi, come li rimedi, sono cazzi tuoi. Nun me fa torna'.	So maybe we are not understood. I need to have *300 euros* returned to me by tomorrow. Then, how you get them, it's your fucking problem. Don't make me come back.	I guess you didn't understand me. You're gonna hand me *300 euros* by tomorrow and I don't give a shit how you get it. Don't make me come back.

Table 12 Omission and Compensation of Dialect

Episode	Character	Original Dialogue	Back Translation	Dubbing
5	Fiore	*Ma che davero?* (20) A prima *bottarella?* (21) Prova!	*But really?* The first *blow?* Try!	*Is this your first time?* I can't believe it!
	Damiano	No, *macché,* (22) no.	No, *as if*, no.	No, *of course not.*
	Fiore	*Aho'* (23), provala. Questa tra i *fiji de papà* (24) va a *rubba* (25).	*Hey*, try it. This, among *dad's children sells well.*	Try it, *rich kids love* this stuff.

(24) *fiji de papà* [dad's children], is generalised as "rich kids". Finally, (25) *rubba*, an example of doubling of voiced occlusive in intervocalic position, is neither transferred with a dialectal reference; however, the intended meaning is maintained.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to address how language variation, particularly in the form of dialect and slang, was adapted for dubbing in the Italian Netflix series *Baby* and *Suburra: Blood on Rome.* This article provided examples of translation strategies applied to the dubbing of Italian language variation in English. It demonstrated that dialect was used to define social disparity by undertaking a qualitative analysis of the narrative space afforded to the diverse social groups who produce a high rate of diastratic variation, where many sociolects are used by a range of different characters.

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In fact, the use of standard Italian has frequently been associated with higher education and higher social status. On the contrary, the "uncontrolled and dominant use of dialect in daily communication is regarded as a sign of lower education and unsuccessful Italianisation" (Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011, pp. 73–74). In both series analysed, characters involved with criminality speak principally dialect whereas wealthy students, affluent characters, politicians, and churchmen draw on standard Italian primarily.

As mentioned before, in the adaptation to English, translators did not choose to use an existing English-language dialect to avoid generating an artificial effect (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 41), but applied translation strategies that concerned morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Consistently, in examining how language variation was rendered in this study from Italian into English, the article established the most common translational strategies implemented in the dubbing of the two series in English. In particular, dialectal elements were often translated directly or generalised, at times, with the addition of taboo words. Correspondingly, youth jargon was largely translated via direct translations or creative additions as observed in Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10.

In the series *Suburra: Blood on Rome,* dialectal expressions used by characters Aureliano and Spadino were often translated with *explicitations*, generalisations, or creative translations, sometimes, with the addition of a taboo expression via compensation as observed in Table 1, Table 3, and Table 5. In the series *Baby*, similar translation strategies were employed to translate dialectal expressions used by characters Damiano and Fiore as observed in the direct translations and generalisations in Table 11 and Table 12.

Finally, despite having two different age groups at the centre of the narration, similar translation strategies were used in the two series. This could be associated with the fact that the same dubbing studio, VSI Los Angeles, performed the English dubbing of both *Suburra: Blood on Rome* and *Baby*.

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