"SUNT! THAT'S FRENCH, WITH A CEDILLA!"
Subtitling and Dubbing *The Boys in the Band* into Italian

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Abstract – Voice is one of the means through which fictional people are characterised in audiovisual products. Through their voice characters reveal their thoughts and personalities, including external and internal elements, such as their age, geographical and social origins, gender and sexuality, among others. The linguistic variety analysed in this article is the audiovisual fictional representation of gayspeak, which is used to index characters' homosexuality. This is a case study that focuses on the subtitling and dubbing of the 2020 Netflix adaptation of *The Boys in the Band*, which is an American drama film based on the homonymous play written by Mart Crowley in 1968; it can be considered a seminal work for gay literature, in that it is allegedly one of the first plays to address homosexuality openly, something that had never been seen before. The original script in English, the Italian subtitles and the script of the Italian dubbing will be analysed in parallel, with particular attention to some scenes which will be selected and discussed on the basis of their relevance in the use of gayspeak and its translation. This research focuses on the excerpts that creatively deviate from the original text, at least in one of the two audiovisual modalities analysed.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation Studies; Gayspeak; sexuality; dubbing; subtitling.

1. Introduction

The Boys in the Band is a 2020 American drama film released by Netflix and directed by Joe Mantello; it is based on the 1968 homonymous play by Mart Crowley, who also wrote the screenplay for the Netflix adaptation. Crowley had already adapted his play for a 1970 film version directed by William Friedkin. Unlike the 1970 film, the 2020 Netflix adaptation includes a cast of exclusively openly-gay actors, including Matt Bomer, Charlie Carver, Robin de Jesús, Brian Hutchison, Jim Parsons, Zachary Quinto, Andrew Rannells, Michael Benjamin Washington and Tuc Watkins. It is the story of a group of gay friends who meet for Harold's birthday party at Michael's Upper East Side flat, in New York.

The 1968 play is a seminal work for queer literature, in that despite being staged in a pre-Stonewall era – i.e. before the 1969 Stonewall riots that led to gay liberation – it can be considered one of the first plays to openly address homosexuality, something that had never happened before. When it premiered Off-Broadway in 1968, it ran for more than 1,000 performances and was enthusiastically reviewed by mainstream critics (Kushner 2018). To 21st century audiences, the representation of gay men in the play and the cinematic adaptations seems to be outdated. The same was true of the 1970 film, released in a post-Stonewall era, when gay people struggled against (among other things) their stereotypical representations promoted and reiterated in literature and the media; some in the gay community denounced the film "as a pernicious and pandering offering-up of stereotypical self-hating queens and closet cases to a nearly universally homophobic public" (Kushner 2018), but also as "a scabby relic of an unmourned, unliberated, unenlightened time" (Kushner 2018). The play and the film adaptations do indeed feature stereotypical gay men who can be seen as stock-characters, as they are simplistically meant to represent a certain type of homosexual man. This is the case with Emory, who

embodies the flamboyant, loud and effeminate gay man; Harold, who represents the gay dandy man, obsessed with the aesthetic side of life; Larry, who embodies the promiscuous, unfaithful homosexual; Alan, the gay man "in the closet" who is married to a woman but has homosexual tendencies; Bernard, who represents the African-American gay community that suffers from a double stigma, both sexual and racial. Nonetheless, Kushner (2018) claims that the play

> is of value not as a catalogue of antiquated outrageous behavior, but as a sharp description of a kind of moment: right before the explosion, right before the spark that ignites the revolution, the moment that the clawing and pecking and scrabbling inside the egg begins, but before the shell begins to shatter.

As much as the play is now considered outdated in the way it portrays gay men, it was pure avant-garde when it appeared in the late-Sixties, as it was allegedly the first example of a play with an explicitly gay plot, reflecting a shift in the portrayal of gay men on stage and screen towards "more multifaceted, more complex, more liberated homosexuals than the either parodistic or the tortured and closeted gay men and women of earlier cinema" (Ranzato 2012, p. 380). The play made mainstream many terms that in the following years would become associated with gayspeak, i.e. the linguistic variety supposedly spoken by gay men.

2. Aims and methodology

This article intends to analyse the way American gayspeak is translated into Italian in the 2020 Netflix adaptation. In particular, it is aimed at investigating two audiovisual translation (AVT, henceforth) modalities available on Netflix, i.e. subtitles and dubbing, in order to discuss the different choices that have been made to convey the characters' gayness into Italian. This can be considered a case-study as it focuses on one audiovisual product and seeks to shed light on some of its crucial aspects.

The film has been watched several times, both in English and Italian, and a parallel corpus[1] has been created, including the script of the original dialogues, the Italian subtitles and the script of the Italian dubbing; it is worth clarifying that the scripts have been obtained by manually writing down the spoken dialogues, whereas the subtitles could be easily downloaded from the platform. The parallel corpus includes 2,995 tokens – i.e. individual words – which refer to those passages that were deemed worth analysing because interesting strategies were used in the two translation modalities. The three texts will be analysed in parallel and some scenes will be selected and discussed on the basis of their relevance in the use of gayspeak and its translation. Scenes that have been translated literally will not be analysed, as this research focuses on those translations that creatively deviate from the original text, at least in one of the two modalities analysed. As will be discussed in the next section, it should be borne in mind that this study analyses a fictional representation of gayspeak, and that any generalisations made are only applicable to fictional gay men and their alleged linguistic variety as reproduced in this particular audiovisual product.

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[1] "A corpus consisting of the same texts in several languages. This typically means a set of texts written in one language together with each text's translation into a second language (or into several other languages)." (McEnery, Hardie 2012, p. 248)

3. Fictional Gayspeak

Voice – both spoken and written – is one of the means available to writers and directors to give their characters a personality and identity. The quality of voice changes according to sociolinguistic variables such as age, social and geographical origin, gender, sexuality, to name just a few. The linguistic variety analysed in this article is the audiovisual fictional representation of gayspeak, a variety that is allegedly used by fictional gay men and which indexes the characters' sexuality. The term gayspeak was coined by Hayes in a paper published in 1976 (then re-printed in Cameron, Kulick 2006). Its fictional representation is non-spontaneous and pre-fabricated as it attempts to imitate spontaneous spoken language (Pavesi *et al.* 2015, p. 7) but it has been written, polished, corrected and rehearsed, so that it lacks spontaneity; all the elements of authentic spoken language – i.e. hesitations, digressions, repetitions, etc. – have either been eliminated or retained to characterise fictional speakers (Kozloff 2000, p. 18); these elements are meaningless in authentic orality but acquire their own significance when used in fictional orality, as they can index an insecure, timid character. This work lies in the field of what Ferguson (1998) defines as ficto-linguistics, i.e. the study of fictional linguistic varieties occurring in literature; Hodson (2014, p. 14) later expanded it to include "the study of language varieties in all works of fiction, including narrative poetry, film and television." In the light of Kozloff's functions of film dialogues, gayspeak is used in fiction primarily for "character revelation" (2000, p. 33), that is the construction of characters' personalities. The characters' identities are thus post-structurally constructed on the basis of what they do and how they sound, as identity is a social and cultural construction that is also based on language, in the light of the constructive relationship existing between language and identity (Motschenbacher 2011, p. 153).

Following Kozloff's argument, since the fictional representation of gayspeak is mainly aimed at revealing characters' sexuality, it should be easily recognisable by the audience; for this reason, fictional gayspeak is endowed with a reduced number of linguistic features that are reiterated in fictional products. This is directly related to the use of stereotypes, which is a common practice in the process of media characterisation (Gross 1991, pp. 26-27). Linguistic stereotypes are reiterated and reinforced by media (Lippi-Green 2012), and can be seen as "uninformed and frequently culturally-biased over generalisations about subgroups that may or may not be based on a small degree of truth" (Swann *et al.* 2004, p. 298). Stereotyping relies on an exaggeration of the differences existing between two poles of a binary system, on the basis of a reduction of the characteristics of the weaker members to a limited number of traits. It takes place where there are significant inequalities of power, and "identities which are problematic in some way tend to be the ones that become focused on" (Baker 2008, p. 13). Hall (1997, p. 258) argues that "stereotypes get hold of the few simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity." As for stereotyping, Ranzato and Zanotti (2018, p. 1) claim that "representation is always the result of an act of selection of traits and features, both visual and verbal."

With specific reference to gayspeak, Ranzato (2012, p. 371) states that "fictional homosexuals and their fictional language […] are more often than not stereotyped." Gross's (1991) study investigated the linguistic and paralinguistic features that are generally – and stereotypically – attributed to gay men, i.e. lisping speech, limp-wristedness, and the effeminate sashay. Orrù (2014, p. 76) argues that paralinguistic features such as gestures are of the utmost importance when it comes to determining one's

sexuality, whereas Crystal (1975) is of the opinion that the peculiar quality of gayspeak is mainly due to prosody, simpering voice, wider pitch-ranges, glissando effects, the use of complex tones, falsetto, breathiness and huskiness in the voice. Zwicky (1997) also includes subjective stance, irony, sarcasm, resistance, subversiveness, meta-commentary, embeddedness, discursiveness, open aggression, seductiveness, reversal and inversion.

4. Queer AVT

This article intends to approach AVT Studies from a queer perspective. von Flotow and Josephy-Hernández (2019, pp. 296-312) maintain that "the application of gender-focused theories to AVT Studies has been developing only since the early 2000s." Following their argument, there allegedly are three ways of approaching gender issues in audiovisual translation: the analysis of feminist Anglo-American products and their rendering into Romance languages; the parallel investigation of subtitled and dubbed versions of Anglo-American products; the analysis of source texts with queer language and contents, and their translation. This study will be in line with the third approach (exemplified by the works of Chagnon 2014; De Marco 2009, 2016; Lewis 2010; Ranzato 2012, 2015; Villanueva 2015, just to mention some), as AVT Studies and Queer Studies are at each other's service. Besides, it will also consist in a comparison of the subtitled and dubbed Italian versions of the film, thus following also the second approach. Ranzato (2012, p. 371) states that "the field of audiovisuals portrays plenty of speech communities suitable to the study of researchers; […] one of the most interesting idiolects spoken by a community is the so-called gayspeak, the modes and ways of homosexual communication." Bauer (2015, p. 8) argues that "translation serves as a framework for analysing how sexuality travelled across linguistic boundaries, and the politics of this process". He goes even further by declaring that "translation—understood in the broadest sense as the dynamic process by which ideas are produced and transmitted—offers compelling new insights into how sexual ideas were formed in different contexts via a complex process of cultural negotiation." In the light of these assumptions, translation is a gender-constructing activity, which shares with gender its performative nature (Butler 2006, p. 45). Following Butler's argument, "gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes; [..] what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body" (Butler 2006, p. 9). Thus, the construction of gender is deeply rooted in society, and each society performs gender differently. Focusing on the Italian translation of gayspeak, Ranzato (2015, p. 202) claims that "the relative poverty of the Italian gay lexicon as compared to the richness of the corresponding English terminology is a fact." This is allegedly due to cultural and chronological reasons, since "the Italian culture has opened up to homosexual themes much more slowly than the Anglo-Saxon world" (Ranzato 2015, p. 202); the first publication on gayspeak, indeed, dates back as early as 1941 (re-edited in Cameron, D. and Kulick, D. 2006) – Legman's *The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary*. She adds that

> one of the first consequences of this state of affairs is that the language of homosexuals has long remained in Italy the language of a ghetto, and still today the relatively poor lexicon available is an objective obstacle even for the most unprejudiced translator" (Ranzato 2015, p. 202).

Moreover, Harvey (2000, p. 295) argues that gayspeak "is regularly attested in fictional

representations of homosexual men's speech in […] English-language texts from the 1940s." He highlights that "when translating such fiction, translators need merely to be aware of the comparable resources of camp in source and target language cultures" (2004, p. 295). Besides, von Flotow (2000, p. 16) claims that sexuality is "a field that is notoriously difficult to translate for reasons of cultural and generational differences." If Anglo-American gayspeak is today a well-developed linguistic variety, Italian gayspeak is not. Consequently, Italian translators struggle to find creative solutions to render the features indexing gayness in the source text. To put it another way, translators' task is sexualising the translation to make gayness visible also in the target text.[2]

5. Comparison and trends

This section will provide a comparison of the original and translated texts included in the parallel corpus. All the excerpts mentioned in the following subsections include the original English text, the Italian subtitles and the Italian dubbing respectively; back translations will be provided in footnotes. For a better discussion of the content, the trends found in translation will be organised into categories corresponding to some typical features of gayspeak. The data have been visualised in *Figure 1*, which includes five macro-categories that have been traced in the corpus, that is gender inversion, explicitness, diminutives, foreignisms and euphemisms. They will be discussed in the following subsections.
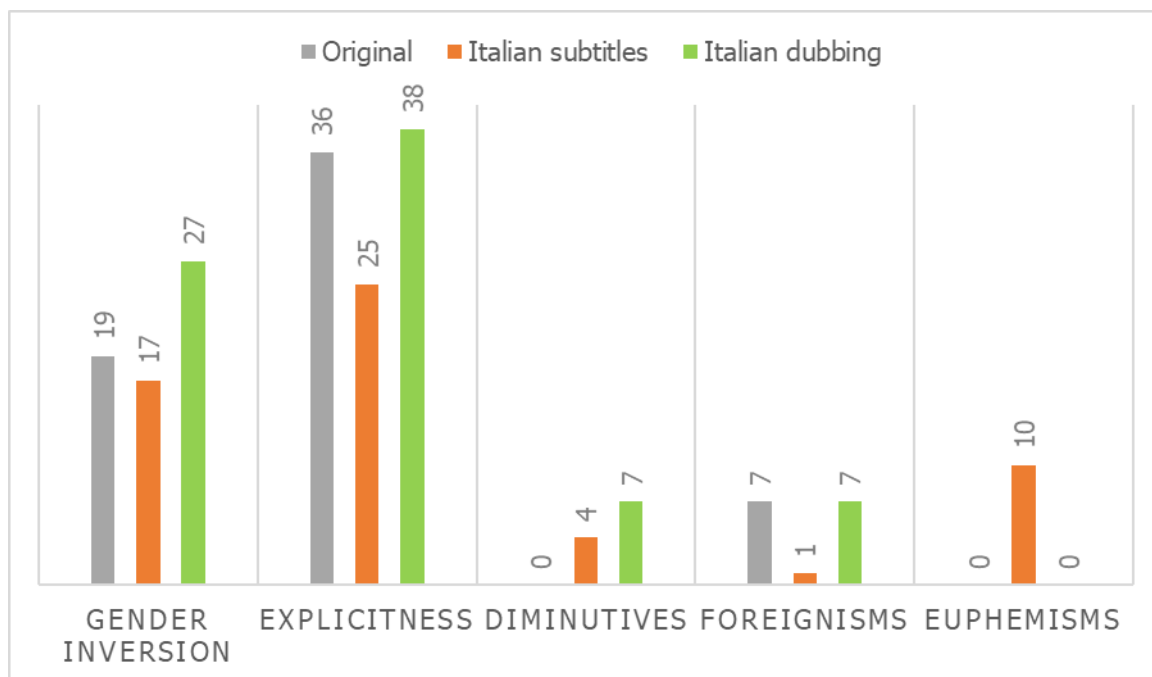

Figure 1
A comparison of the macro-categories traced in the corpus.

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[2] For a detailed analysis of this topic, see Baer, Kaindl (2017) and Epstein, Gillett (2017).

Subtitles and dubbing follow two different paths, in that their reception is different, thus leading to different translation decisions; this might be a piece of advice for further research on the reception of gayspeak depending on the audiovisual translation modality. Dubbing is a form of revoicing, as it is based on replacing the original soundtrack with a new, translated one. Several factors have to be taken into account in dubbing, such as synchronisation, the imitation of a spontaneously spoken language, the interaction between image and words (Chaume 2006). Dubbing is often less faithful to the original, as the translation must take into account the factors mentioned above; it means that dubbing is generally a more creative translation of the original, whereas subtitles tend to be "more synthetic and literal. […] This means that many nuances and subtleties are lost […]" (De Marco 2009, p. 193).

5.1. Gender inversion

Gender inversion is a typical linguistic feature of camp talk (Harvey 1998, 2000). It refers to the inversion of grammatical gender markers, such as personal pronouns and possessive adjectives and pronouns, but also the use of words that are commonly attached to women when referring to men. Harvey (2000, p. 245) claims that in camp talk "the clearest surface evidence of inversion is provided by the reversal of gendered proper names and the reversal of grammatical gender markers". Gender inversion is a way that queer[3] people have to criticise the rigidity of heteronormative gender roles, which are based on the assumption that "everyone is heterosexual and the recognition that all social institutions (…) are built around a heterosexual model of male/female social relations" (Nagel 2003, pp. 49-50). In this way, queer people underline that their biological sex, which is determined by their genitalia, does not necessarily correspond to the gender they want to perform. This is particularly evident in the case of drag queens, who are often cited in the research available on these issues as the epitome of gender as a "free-floating artifice" (Butler 2006, p. 10). This is due to the performative turn in Gender Studies, welcomed by Butler (2006), who theorised the concept of gender outside the rigid binary system woman/man. Following her argument, gender is performatively created by individuals, and language and its characteristics – e.g. gender inversion – is an instrument through which people perform their gender identities.

As can be seen in Figure 1 and the examples cited below, the use of gender inversion is more frequent in the Italian dubbed version of the film. This means that the subtitled version is standardised and the sexualisation of the original dialogue through the use of gender inversion is lost in the Italian subtitles. Two main trends have been found in the corpus:

1. gender inversion in both the original and dubbed texts, but not in the subtitled version. Italian dubbing manages to convey creatively the gender inversion that can be found in the source text (ST), thus making the characters' homosexuality visible in translation as well. It is a form of sexualisation of the target text (TT) so that gayness can cross the borders of different languages and cultures, as can be seen in the few examples below, which have been selected among many others for their significance in this study. Emory, who epitomises the flamboyant and stereotypically effeminate gay man, has been hit by Alan, who represents the closeted gay man. When Harold arrives at Michael's flat for his birthday, he asks Emory why he has a nosebleed.

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[3] This adjective is here used as a more inclusive synonym of LGBTQI+.

> **Emory**: That piss-elegant *cooze* hit me.
> [SUB.] Questo *bastardo snob* mi ha picchiato.[4]
> [DUB.] Quella *fichetta presuntuosa* mi ha picchiato.[5]

Note that, throughout the article, the second line contains the Italian subtitles, whereas the third line, the Italian dubbing. The female term of address, *cooze*, which is used to refer to "a woman considered sexually attractive" (*Collins Dictionary*) is here used to address Alan, who is the most "reserved" man in the group. Emory uses gender inversion as an act of protest against Alan, who hit him just because he is openly gay. The Italian dubbing keeps the gender inversion of the original as it uses "fichetta", which is commonly used to refer to particularly beautiful girls and women, often out of reach and conceited, not particularly brilliant. In addition to this, it should be noticed the diminutive form with the use of the suffix -etta, which is a common feature of Italian gayspeak (Orrù 2014). All these aspects have been lost in the subtitled version, where the reference to femininity is replaced by a generic, masculine "bastardo snob".

Another example worth mentioning is the scene where Michael forces his friends to play a game consisting in telephoning the only person that each of them has loved the most, and revealing him/her their love. The second part of the play focuses entirely on this game, which makes the characters suffer and eventually leave the flat.

> **Michael**: I can do without your goddamn spit on my telephone, you *nellie coward*!
> [SUB.] Basta sputare sul mio telefono, *vigliacco effeminato*.[6]
> [DUB.] E mi risparmio volentieri la tua saliva sul mio telefono. *Checca vigliacca*.[7]
> **Emory**: I may be *nellie*, but I'm no *coward*!
> [SUB:] Sarò *effeminato*, ma non sono *un vigliacco*![8]
> [DUB.] Sarò *checca*, ma non sono *una vigliacca*.[9]

The derogatory term *nellie* refers to "a fussily effeminate male; a male homosexual" (*Collins Dictionary*); this term was originally just a diminutive form of the female proper name Helen. The derogatory nature of the term is only retained in the dubbed version, where the term of address "checca" is used as a pejorative word for gay. Besides, the term "checca" is feminine in Italian, thus the adjective "vigliacca" which agrees with the feminine noun that it accompanies. The Italian subtitle, instead, makes use of a sort of explanation of the word   *nellie*, which sounds quite unnatural if we consider that they should translate a spoken variety; besides, "vigliacco effeminato" does not reproduce gender inversion, as both terms are masculine in Italian.

The last example in this section belongs to the scene where Michael tries to explain to Alan, his closeted friend, that Donald and Larry are a couple.

> **Michael**: No man's still got a roommate when he's over 40 years old. If they're not lovers, they're *sisters*.
> [SUB.] Nessun uomo che ha più di 40 anni ha un coinquilino. E se non sono amanti, sono *gay*.[10]

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[4] This bastard snob hit me.
[5] That pretentious hottie hit me.
[6] Stop spitting on my phone, coward and effeminate man.
[7] And I can certainly do without your spit on my phone. Coward fag.
[8] I may be an effeminate man, but I am not a coward!
[9] I may be a fag, but I am not a coward!
[10] No men over 40 have a roommate. And if they are not lovers, they are gay.

[DUB.] Nessun uomo ha un coinquilino superati i 40 anni. Se non sono amanti allora sono *zitelle*.[11]

The gender-inverted kinship term *sisters* is translated as "zitelle" in the Italian dubbing, which keeps the inversion of the gender and adds a colourful and local touch to the translation, in that "zitella" is an archaic expression especially used in the South of Italy to refer to an un-married, mature woman. Interestingly, *sisters* is rendered as "gay" in the Italian subtitles, which make use of a term that was pejorative at the time the film is set (i.e. late-1960s), but which passes unnoticed in the 2020 Netflix adaptation, in that it is today a perfectly acceptable and not pejorative term in Italian. This way, however, the irreverence of gender inversion is cancelled out.

2. The second tendency noticed is the addition of gender inversion in the dubbing, which is not to be found in the original and the subtitled versions. This may be seen as a way of compensating the lack of a corresponding Italian version of Anglophone gayspeak by exploiting and exaggerating certain features of gayspeak that can be easily rendered in Italian. In the following extract, Michael welcomes his friends by inviting them to help themselves with some crab.

   Michael: Listen, *everybody*, there is some cracked crab out there.
   [SUB.] *Ragazzi*, c'è del granchio in tavola.[12]
   [DUB.] Ascoltate, *ragazze*, c'è del granchio fuori.[13]

The term *everybody* is rendered into Italian as "ragazze", which is a term of address commonly used among girls and young women. It is interesting to notice that in the original version, the pronoun *everybody* is gender-neutral, which means that it does not reveal the gender of the people it is addressed to. When translating gender-unmarked terms from English into Romance languages, translators have to be aware of the different gender systems at the basis of the source and target languages. In other words, languages categorise gender differently. In Old English, gender was grammatically significant, but today only few traces of it can be found in some nouns (e.g. actor/actress) and third-person singular pronouns and adjectives. Corbett (1991) believes that a distinction must be made between languages with both grammatical and pronominal gender (e.g. Italian), and languages with only pronominal gender (e.g. English). To put it in a nutshell: Italian has completely different gender systems compared to English, which poses many problems in the translation process. Similarly to the example above, Michael tries to convince Emory to follow him in the kitchen, and he addresses Emory by saying

   Michael: You're a natural-born *domestic*.
   [SUB.] Sei un *domestico nato*.[14]
   [DUB.] Sei una *casalinga nata*.[15]

A *domestic* is "a person who is paid to come to help with the work that has to be done in a house such as the cleaning, washing, and ironing" (*Collins Dictionary*). It is interesting to

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[11] No men have a roommate after 40. And if they are not lovers, then they are spinsters.
[12] Guys, there's some crab on the table.
[13] Listen, girls, there's some crab out there!
[14] You're a natural-born butler!
[15] You're a natural-born housewife!

notice that in the dubbed version the gender-unmarked *domestic* becomes feminine, as if all domestics were women; this is due to the fact that some jobs are mainly attached to women, and others to men. Besides, the domestic who is paid for his/her job becomes a "casalinga", which refers to a "woman who deals with household chores and has no other occupation".[16]

5.2. Explicitness

Explicitness refers to the use of direct words and expressions, such as insults and derogatory terms. Brown and Levinson (1987) define insults as threats to a person's negative face, i.e. threats to the desire to be appreciated and recognised. A negative face-threatening act (FTA) occurs when this desire is disregarded, and the speaker is indifferent to the addressee's positive self-image. In Culpeper's (1996, 2011) framework – the first scholar to study impoliteness as such and not just as the opposite of politeness, as was the case in previous studies (among others, Brown, Levinson 1987) – negative impoliteness is defined as "the use of strategies designed to […] scorn or ridicule, be contemptuous, do not treat the other seriously, belittle the other, invade the other's space, explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect" (41). Among queer people, it is common to re-appropriate homophobic terms that have been historically used as FTAs by (mainly) heterosexual people and turn them into typical terms of address (e.g. queen, fairy, fag). In this respect, Harvey (1998) maintains that "ambivalent solidarity" is fundamental in the construction of a shared identity among non-binary people, since both the sender and the receiver of the FTA are mutually affected by it. He defines ambivalent solidarity as

> a feature of camp interaction in which speaker and addressee paradoxically bond through the mechanism of the face-threat. Specifically, the speaker threatens the addressee's face in the very area of their shared subcultural difference [..]. Consequently, the face-threat, while effectively targeting the addressee, equally highlights the speaker's vulnerability to the same threat. (Harvey 2000, p. 254)

Culpeper (2011, p. 215) asserts that, generally, mock impoliteness ''takes place between equals, typically friends, and is reciprocal.'' This is especially true for queer people, who may use homophobic insults towards other queer people as a form of cultural reappropriation of heteronormative pejorative terms, equally highlighting both speaker's vulnerability to the same threat.

   In both the Italian subtitled and dubbed versions, there is a tendency towards rendering derogatory words used to address homosexual people with the neutral word "gay". Besides, as will be shown with the following extracts, the term "gay" is used indistinctively to translate a wide range of derogatory terms, such as *queer*, *fag*, *faggot*, just to mention some. This is a signal of the lack of an equivalent range of terms in Italian, but also a way to mitigate the explicitness of the ST. Donald and Michael are talking about the birthday party that they are organising for their friend Harold.

> **Michael**: God, if there's one thing I'm not ready for, it is five *screaming queens* singing "Happy birthday".
> [SUB.] Dio, non sono affatto pronto per cinque *checche isteriche* che cantano "Tanti auguri!"[17]

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[16] Donna che attende in casa propria alle faccende domestiche e non ha altra professione. (Treccani)
[17] God, I'm not ready for five hysterical fags singing "Happy birthday"

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[DUB.] Se c'è una cosa per cui non sono pronto sono cinque *pazze sguaiate* che cantano "Happy birthday".[18]
Donald: Who's coming?
Chi viene?[19]
Michael: I think you know everybody anyway. I mean, the same *old tired fairies* you've seen around since day one. Actually, you know what? There will be seven, counting Harold and you and me.
[SUB.] Penso che tu conosca tutti. Sono le stesse *vecchie reginette sfrante* che vedi in giro da sempre. In realtà saremo in sette, compresi tu, io e Harold.[20]
[DUB.] Penso che tu conosca tutti. Insomma, le solite *checche appassite* che hai visto in giro dal primo giorno. Anzi, pensandoci bene saremo in sette contando Harold, te e me.[21]
Donald: Are you calling me a screaming queen or a tired fairy?
[SUB.] Io sarei una checca isterica o una reginetta sfranta?[22]
[DUB.] Mi stai dando della pazza sguaiata o della checca appassita?[23]
Michael: Oh, I beg your pardon. There will be six tired, screaming fairy queens and *one anxious queer.*
[SUB.] Perdonami. Ci saranno sei checche sfrante e isteriche e un *gay ansioso*.[24]
[DUB.] Ci saranno sei pazze sguaiate e appassite e un *finocchietto ansioso*.[25]

As can be seen from the extract above, both types of translation tend to use gender-inverted, derogatory terms. This is the case with the term *queen*, which refers to "an effeminate homosexual man" (*Collins Dictionary*), which is rendered in the subtitles as "checca", a derogatory Italian term to refer to a "homosexual man showing a particularly effeminate behaviour[26]"; "checca" translates the word *fairy* in the dubbed version, probably indicating that the Italian translators have quantitatively fewer terms available than in English. In addition, diminutives are added in the Italian subtitles, where *queen* is rendered as "reginetta", which includes both a gender-inversion and the use of a diminutive suffix. However, it is particularly worth mentioning that the term *queer* has been completely neutralised in the subtitles, where it has been rendered as "gay"; the same term has been rendered as "finocchietto" in the dubbing, which is a vulgar form to refer to a homosexual man.[27] The words "gay" and "finocchio" are also used in other scenes to translate the terms *fairy*, *fag* and *faggot*, respectively in the subtitled and dubbed versions, as the following extract shows:

Michael: Oh Christ. How sick analysts must get of hearing how mommy and daddy made their darlin' into a *fairy*.
[SUB.] Oh Gesù. Sai quanto saranno stufi gli analisti di sentire che mamma e papa hanno reso *gay* il loro bimbo?[28]
[DUB.] Santo cielo, saranno stanchi gli analisti di sentire di come mamma e papa hanno trasformato i loro angioletti in *finocchi*?[29]

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[18] If there is one thing I am not ready for, it is five loud crazy girls singing "Happy birthday"
[19] Who's coming?
[20] I think you know everybody. They're the same old overripe queen you've always seen around. Actually, there will be seven, counting you, Harold and me.
[21] I think you know everybody. I mean, the same withered fags that you've seen around since day one. Actually, on second thoughts, there will be seven counting Harold, you and me.
[22] Am I supposed to be a hysterical fag or an overripe queen?
[23] Are you calling me a loud, crazy girl or a withered fag?
[24] I beg your pardon. There will be six hysterical and overripe fags, and an anxious gay.
[25] There will be six loud and withered crazy girls and one anxious poof.
[26] Omosessuale maschio dagli atteggiamenti molto effeminati. (*Treccani*)
[27] volg. Omosessuale maschio. (*Treccani*; vulg. Male homosexual).
[28] Oh Jesus. How sick and tired analysts must be of hearing that mum and dad have made their child into a gay.

> […]
> **Donald**: […] You're the type that gives *faggots* a bad name.
> [SUB.] Sono i tipi come te a infangare il nome dei *gay*.[30]
> [DUB.] Tu sei il tipo che dà ai *finocchi* una cattiva reputazione.[31]
> **Michael**: Oh, and you, Donald, you are a credit to the homosexual. You're a reliable, hard-working, floor-scrubbing, bill-paying *fag* who don't owe nothing to nobody.
> [SUB.] Mentre tu, Donald, dai lustro agli omosessuali. Sei un *gay* affidabile che lavora sodo, lava i pavimenti, paga le bollette e non ha debiti.[32]
> [DUB.] Oh, invece tu Donald, sei un dono per gli omosessuali. Un *finocchio* paga bollette, fidato, volenteroso, che strofina pavimenti e non deve niente a nessuno.[33]

However, not only is explicitness to be found in the use of derogatory terms of address, but also in the use of double-entendre, i.e. the co-presence of two meanings, one of which must be sexual; it is one of the features included in *ludicrism*, in Harvey's (2000) framework for analysing camp talk. To put it another way, through the use of double entendre the speaker can say something explicit while appearing to say something unremarkable (Harvey 2000). This is evident in a scene between Michael and Emory:

> **Michael**: It's the delivery boy from the bakery.
> [SUB.] È il fattorino della pasticceria.[34]
> [DUB.] È il ragazzo delle consegne della pasticceria.[35]
> **Emory**: Ask him he's got any *hot cross buns*!
> [SUB.] Chiedigli se ha dei bei *bomboloni*![36]
> [DUB.] Chiedigli se ha un *cannolone ripieno*![37]

The double-entre based on the term *buns* originates from the fact that in English it has a double meaning, in that it refers to both "small bread rolls. They are sometimes sweet and may contain dried fruit or spices" and "buttocks [mainly US, informal]". Both the subtitled and dubbed versions keep the semantic field of bakery, but the translation "cannolone ripieno" in the dubbing seems to be more sexualised than "bomboloni", in that it hints at the phallic shape of male genitalia with the addition of the augmentative suffix -one, which refers to the size of both the cannoli and the delivery man's penis.

5.3. Diminutives

The use of diminutives has already been addressed in the previous sections; this is because these macro-categories cannot be considered separately, but they rather intermingle with each other. The use of diminutives is allegedly a typical feature of women's language (Lakoff 1975), and is one of women's linguistic features that are shared by gay men. The use of diminutives is particularly significant in Italian through suffixes like *-etto*, *-uccio*

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[29] For Heaven's sake! How sick and tired analysts must be of hearing that mum and dad have made their little angles into faggots?

[30] You're the type that digs the dirt on gays' name.

[31] You're the type that gives faggots a bad reputation.

[32] Whereas you, Donald, you bring lustre to homosexuals. You're a reliable, hard-working, floor-scrubbing, billy-paying gay who has no debts.

[33] Whereas you, Donald, you're a blessing for homosexuals. A bill-paying, reliable, hard-working, floor-scrubbing faggot who owes nothing to nobody.

[34] It is the delivery boy from the bakery.

[35] It is the delivery boy from the bakery.

[36] Ask him if he's got any krapfen.

[37] Ask him if he's got any big filled cannoli.

and *-ino* (and their feminine and plural forms), which is one of the most recurrent strategies used to characterise a fictional gay man as such (Orrù 2014, p. 76).

The use of diminutives in the subtitled and dubbed versions is a kind of addition to the ST where diminutives are not to be found, as a compensation for the lack of specific terms and expressions established in Anglo-American gayspeak, and the consequent losses in translation. Diminutives seem to be slightly more significant in the dubbed version, as in the following examples:

> **Emory**: That *piss-elegant cooze* hit me.
> [SUB.] Quel *bastardo snob* mi ha picchiato.[38]
> [DUB.] Queella *fichetta presuntuosa* mi ha picchiato.[39]
> […]
> **Michael**: Here's a cold bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé I bought especially for you, *kiddo*.
> [SUB.] Una bottiglia ghiacciata di Pouilly-Fuissé che ho comprato per te…[40]
> [DUB.] Ecco una bottiglia gelata di Pouilly-Fuissé. L'ho comprata per te, *piccolina*.[41]

The first example has already been discussed above, in the section devoted to gender-inversion, as the term *cooze* is rendered with a neutral term in the subtitle (i.e. snob), whereas the dubbed version re-creates the gender-inversion of the ST with the term "fichetta"; it is at the same time a derogatory and explicit term, which is characterised by the addition of the feminine-singular diminutive suffix *-etta*. In the second example, the vocative *kiddo* has been completely eliminated in the subtitled version, whereas in the dubbed version it has been rendered with the feminine-singular diminutive term of endearment "piccolina".

5.4. Foreignisms

The use of foreign expressions is typical of camp talk (Harvey, 2000), which give it a touch of cosmopolitanism. This is particularly true of French terms, which are a way gay men have to stereotypically parody aristocratic mannerism. Harvey (2000, pp. 251-252) claims that

> the use of French in English grows out of an appropriation of aristocratic gestures which has a long history in camp. […] King (1994) has argued that one can trace a historical connection between the appearance of camp behaviour in homosexual subcultures in early 18th-century urban England and the newly established bourgeois economic and political hegemony. He suggests that homosexual subcultures deliberately challenged the emerging model of selfhood posited by the middle classes.

Similarly to the previous characteristics of gayspeak, foreignisms are mainly to be found in the dubbed version, as is shown in the following example, where Harold, who resembles the stereotypical dandy and refined gay man, is parodying his friends' dubious culinary tastes:

> **Harold**: As opposed to you, who knows so much about *haute cuisine. Raconteur, gourmet,* troll. […] Have a little *vin ordinaire* to wash down all that depressed pasta. *Sommelier, connoisseur,* pig.

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[38] This bastard snob hit me.
[39] That pretentious hottie hit me.
[40] A cold bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé I bought for you…
[41] Here's a bottle of Puilly-Fuissé I bought for you, little girl.

[SUB.] Ha parlato l'esperto di *alta cucina. Affabulatore, buongustaio, viscido*. […] Prendi del *vino da tavola* per mandar giù quelle tristi lasagne. *Sommelier, intenditore*, maiale.[42]

[DUB.] Al contrario di te che sei un conoscitore di *haute cuisine. Raconteur, gourmet*, troll. […] Oh avanti Tesoro, sforzati un po'. Bevi del *vin ordinaire* per mandare giù tutta quella pasta depressa. *Sommelier, connoisseur*, porco.[43]

All the French terms – with the exception of *sommelier*, which is a French borrowing that is commonly used also in Italian – have been translated into Italian in the subtitled version. The dubbed version conveys the foreignizing and aristocratic touch by keeping the French words, which tend to be foregrounded in the TL because they are not very common, though understandable.

5.5. Euphemisms

The use of euphemisms, which is a way to mitigate the irreverence of Anglo-American gayspeak, is only to be found in the subtitles. Some cases of euphemisation have already been mentioned in the previous sections; this is the case of the neutral term "gay", which is used to translate explicit terms like *queer*, *fairy*, *fag* and *faggot*; or the word "snob" to render the derogatory term *cooze*. A further instance of euphemisation can be found in the initial dialogue between Michael and Donald:

Donald: Yeah, it's called *Butch Assurance*.
[SUB.] Per rassicurare gli uomini veri.[44][DUB.] Si chiama garanzia maschia.[45]
Michael: Well, it's still hairspray, no matter if they call it "*Balls*".
[SUB.] Possono chiamarla "*testicolo*", ma resta sempre lacca."[46]
[DUB.] Ma è solo lacca per capelli anche se si chiamasse "*palle*".[47]

Michael complains that a hairspray he has bought is called "Control", and that the word "hairspray" is nowhere to be found on the can. Besides, he notices that the words "for men" are repeated 37 times all over the can. Donald replies by saying that it is a sort of "butch assurance", in that it is designed to appeal men who, stereotypically, wish to have control. Michael replies by saying that even if the hairspray were called *balls*, which is a reference to male genitalia, it would still be a hairspray to him. The term *balls* has been rendered as "palle" in the dubbed version, thus keeping the explicitness of the ST, and as "testicolo" in the subtitled version; the use of a technical term in the subtitled version is a way to euphemise the explicitness of the colloquial term *balls*.

6. Conclusions

This cross-study has sought to trace the most significant deviations existing between the Italian subtitled and dubbed versions of the cinematic adaptation of Mart Crowley's *The*

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[42] The expert in haute cuisine has spoken. Charmer, gourmet, slimy. […] Have some table wine to swallow those sad lasagne. Sommelier, expert, pig.

[43] As opposed to you who are an expert in haute cuisine. Raconteur, gourmet, troll. Come on, darling, make a little effort. Have some vin ordinaire to swallow all that depressed pasta. Sommelier, connoisseur, pig.

[44] To reassure true men.

[45] It is called butch assurance.

[46] They may call it testicle, but it would still remain a hairspray".

[47] But it would be hairspray even if it was called "Balls".

Boys in the Band, which has been chosen for its significance in the panorama of Gay Studies, as well as its recent remake on Netflix. Italy has historically been a dubbing country, even though the reception of subtitles is gradually changing, especially because of the new platforms available and the increasing number of people who can understand English. The translations provided through subtitles and dubbing differ because they must take into account different elements, the former being a visual kind of translation, the latter being an aural rendering into a TL.

To the author's surprise, the Italian dubbing of the Netflix adaptation has proved to be more explicit and irreverent in re-constructing the characters' homosexuality in the TL. To put it another way, the process of sexualisation as a way to make homosexuality visible in translation is more significant in the dubbed version of the adaptation. The preconception preceding the collection of the actual data discussed in this work was that since dubbing is the main channel through which Italians still watch Anglo-American audiovisual products, and being it aural and more immediate, it would be more indirect in the portrayal of the characters' sexuality; some features of gayspeak were believed to be avoided in dubbing, if not because of the linguistic limitations that Italian has in rendering Anglo-American gayspeak. It is surprising to see that in almost all the categories that include the typical features of gayspeak – i.e. gender inversion, explicitness, diminutives, foreignisms – dubbing is the translation modality that scores higher frequencies when compared to subtitles, with the exception of euphemism, which has been used to categorise all the strategies that tend to mitigate the irreverence of the original gayspeak (see *Figure 1*). All the categories mentioned above (except for euphemism) are always to be found in the dubbed version, also when they do not occur in the original version, as is the case with the word "everybody", which is rendered as "ragazze", thus improving gender inversion in the dubbed version; or the use of diminutives such as "piccolina" and "fichetta", which translate respectively "kiddo" and "cooze". This is a way to compensate for the lack of an Italian equivalent of gayspeak, thus increasing the occurrence of linguistic features that are commonly and stereotypically associated with homosexuality in Italian, as was mentioned in Orrù (2014). Other features are to be found both in the original and the dubbed version, but not in the subtitles, as is the case with "sisters", which was rendered as "zitelle" in the dubbing and as "gay" in subtitles, thus creatively conveying gender inversion only in the former translation modality; similarly, the use of double-entendre, which belongs to the category of explicitness, is to be found in the original and dubbed versions, but not in the subtitles, as is the case with "hot cross buns", dubbed as "cannolone ripieno" and subtitled as "bomboloni". The French terms "raconteur" and "connoisseur" are kept in the dubbed version, but they are translated into Italian in the subtitles (i.e. "affabulatore" and "intenditore"). The last category analysed, euphemism, is a way to mitigate the irreverence of Anglo-American gayspeak; it is no surprise, at this stage, that this technique is only to be found in the subtitled version, as in "balls", subtitled as "testicolo" and dubbed as "palle".

To sum up, this study has proved that in the Netflix adaptation of *The Boys in The Band*, the characters' homosexuality is made more visible in the dubbing rather than in the subtitled version; this means that, despite being a more immediate AVT modality when it comes to its reception by the audiences, it has proved to be more efficient in re-creating the fictional homosexuality through the use of typical linguistic features of gayspeak that have been reiterated in literature and the media.

This article is just a first tentative of a more generalisable study that may seek to analyse how the use of gayspeak differs in Italian subtitles and dubbing; similar research could be done from a diachronic perspective by analysing audiovisual products portraying

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gay men in different decades in order to investigate how gayspeak is translated also on the basis of changes occurring in society and censorship; the different strategies adopted in subtitling and dubbing gayspeak might also be studied in the light of Reception Studies.

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