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Downton Abbey in Italian: Not Quite the Same

Abstract

Language use in the well-known British period drama *Downton Abbey* is very interesting from many points of view. As the story is set in the Edwardian era, the dialogues are characterised by archaic vocabulary and idioms; moreover, they reflect regional and social differences, as the series portrays the aristocratic Crawley family and their servants living in the (fictional) country estate of Downton Abbey. In the light of the importance of diachronic, diatopic and diastratic variation in the series, this paper investigates to what extent these features have been reproduced in the Italian dubbed dialogues, by drawing on a corpus of 16 episodes from the first three seasons.

1. Introduction

Downton Abbey (2010-2015) is a British TV series created by Julian Fellowes and produced for the ITV network. The show has been defined «the television success story of recent years» and «the most successful British period drama since 1981's *Brideshead Revisited*» (Byrne 2015a: 66). The high quality of the writing has often been quoted as one of the reasons for the popularity of the show. In *Downton Abbey* accents, dialects and sociolects are strong markers, which immediately enable viewers to place characters in their social class; moreover, as the story is set in the Edwardian period, the dialogues are full of archaisms and time-specific references.

In the light of the importance of diachronic, diatopic and diastratic variation in the English dialogues of the series, the present paper investigates to what extent these features have been reproduced in the Italian dubbed dialogues. The study is based on a corpus of transcripts of the English source language dialogues and Italian target language dialogues (henceforth, SL and TL respectively) from the first three seasons of the

show. After a brief overview of the difficulties posed by language variation in audiovisual translation (§2), the series and the data used in this study are presented (§3); this is followed by the analysis (§4), and conclusions (§5).

2. Prefabricated orality and language variation in audiovisual translation

The starting point of any study on the translation of audiovisual dialogue is that the latter is generally based on a written script: this is what is referred to in the literature as the «prefabricated orality» of audiovisual texts, i.e. the use of language that is «written to be spoken» (Baños and Chaume 2009, Perego and Taylor 2009, Romero Fresco 2009, Baños Piñero 2010, Chaume 2012). The planned, non-spontaneous nature of film dialogue sets it apart from naturally-occurring conversation, as is explained in more detail in §2.1 below. Furthermore, the language used in films and TV series has been evolving over the years: an overview of relevant literature is presented in §2.2.

2.1 Prefabricated orality

Unlike ordinary conversation, film dialogue performs a number of narrative functions, i.e. placing the story in a specific geographical, temporal and social setting, advancing the plot, describing characters and, of course, entertaining viewers (Pavesi 2005, Perego 2012, Ranzato 2014). Furthermore, «[w]hereas extemporaneous speech is often not intended to go anywhere, in film dialogue every word must earn its place in the script [...]» (Romero Fresco 2009: 48). As a result, it tends to be more compact and contain more explicit references than spontaneous conversation, in order to facilitate comprehension. The need for intelligibility also explains why film dialogue is generally characterised by smoother turn-taking (with less overlapping of voices), a higher degree of standardisation, a more limited presence of language varieties, and higher predictability (Pavesi 2005, Tay-

lor 2006, Perego and Taylor 2009, Romero Fresco 2009, Chaume 2012, Taylor 2012).

To sum up, film dialogue tends «to display neutralising tendencies, remaining more within the sphere of the standard variety of language, and this aspect is even more accentuated in translated film texts» (Taylor 2006: 38). When it comes to dubbing, the language of translated dialogues is affected both by the prefabricated orality of the original dialogues and by the translation-adaptation process: in turn, the latter is influenced by technical constraints, censorship regulations and norms set by dubbing studios and clients (TV channels and distribution companies). All these factors often result in a lack of naturalness in dubbed dialogues, an artificiality that has been referred to as “dubbese”: thus, the language of dubbing is more standardised and predictable than the language used in original productions (Pavesi 2005, Taylor 2006, Baños and Chaume 2009, Perego and Taylor 2009, Romero Fresco 2009, Baños Piñero 2010, Chaume 2012). As regards Italian dubbing in particular, the general tendency is to use standard Italian, i.e. a phonetically unmarked variety of language with a neutral register and standard grammar, inspired by literary models and with frequent fixed translation routines (Raffaelli 1996, Pavesi 2005, Rossi 2007).

However, as Perego and Taylor (2009: 60) note, «there is a historical trend towards a greater degree of realism in film language»: dialogues in contemporary films and TV series tend to feature plentiful deviations from standard language, especially in productions from English-speaking countries (the trend is less far-reaching elsewhere, including Italy). In films which aim to represent reality, dialogues imitate spontaneous conversation as closely as possible: thus, screenwriters draw on existing dialects and sociolects to create convincing characters. Clearly, the gap between SL films and TL dubbed versions is especially wide when films and TV series feature extensive language variation, as is the case in recent UK productions, including *Downton Abbey*.

2.2 Language variation in AVT

Sociolinguistic variation may include dialectal (user-related) varieties, register (use-related) varieties and stylistic varieties (Chaume 2012: 133-144). Dialectal varieties are deeply rooted in their specific SL milieu: for this reason, their translation is often considered almost impossible. However, accents and dialects only become an issue when several ones are used in the same film, since the TL viewers must be made aware that different characters speak differently. This is generally achieved by tweaking TL morphology, syntax and lexicon, rather than by introducing a TL dialect. As a rule, any equivalence between a source language dialect and a target language one is arbitrary: as well as the obvious geographical differences, each dialect has its own socio-cultural values attached to it, so the introduction of TL dialect might add unwanted nuances in the dubbed dialogues. Moreover, the translated dialogues must be as consistent as possible with the other components of the film (images, soundtrack, etc.): the contrast between visibly foreign surroundings and a TL dialect might have an alienating effect on viewers.

In addition, Italian viewers are less used to hearing dialects and regional accents on screen, both in original Italian productions and dubbed films. The Fascist regime prohibited the use of dialects in an effort to promote Italian as a national language: thus, the language used in original films and dubbed versions during that period was an artificial creation devoid of any regionalisms (Raffaelli 1996, Ranzato 2010). After World War II, real dialects and accents featured on Italian screens during Neorealism, but after that brief spell Italian films (and new-born television) went back to speaking standard Italian and have kept up the tradition to this day. Over the years, stereotyped representations of certain dialects have been relegated to specific genres, e.g. Roman, Neapolitan and Florentine dialects for comedy, Sicilian for mafia movies, and so on (Rossi 2007). The range of dialects and their degree of realism has increased only in recent years (Emiliano in the films of Pupi Avati, Livornese in several Paolo Virzì films, “real” Neapolitan in *Gomorra* and “real” Roman in *Romanzo criminale*,

and so on). This trend has not been matched by parallel developments in the dubbed versions of foreign films: although since the 1970s the dubbing industry has gradually introduced sub-standard Italian (including informal registers and slang), dialects still tend to be used only in comedies and animated cartoons, where they may be exploited for comic effect and suspension of disbelief is easier for viewers (Ranzato 2006, Fusari 2007, Chiaro 2008, Bruti 2009, Bruti and Vignozzi, this issue). Therefore, when dubbing translators are faced with films in which SL dialects play a key role, their approach is usually as follows: «dialects are often neutralised in translation or resolved syntactically by utilising ‘wrong’ expressions and lexically by resorting to a highly informal way of speaking, geographically unlocalised and socially unmarked» (Ranzato 2010: 112). This is what Chiaro (2008) calls the «disappearance act» of all language varieties from dubbed versions.

A helpful starting point to approach this aspect of AVT translation is the awareness that no single translation approach can be considered suitable for all audiovisual products: as Bruti and Vignozzi (this issue: 48) note, «how to render dialects is therefore inevitably connected with the genre of the movie and with the effect the dialogue adapter decides to convey to the audience». A case in point is the French comedy *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (Dany Boon, 2008), a film entirely based on the opposition between the standard French spoken by the leading character and the “incomprehensible” *ch'ti* dialect spoken by everybody else. The dubbed version created a fictional variety of Italian, which imitates some of the phonetic features of the original dialect, contains some sub-standard lexical items and quite a few neologisms: the idea was to preserve the humour produced by the language-based misunderstandings, so that TL viewers could easily identify with the protagonist, a newcomer to the North of France (Reutner 2011).¹ A similar example is the film *My fair lady* (George Cukor, 1964), in which the story revolves around the opposition between

¹ Similar strategies were successfully used in the Spanish dubbed version of the same film (Reutner 2013). Moreover, Ellender (2015) has shown that the English subtitled version manages to convey the essence of *ch'ti* dialect as well, despite the written medium and the space and time constraints typical of subtitling.

standard English and Cockney: in the dubbed version the Italian translator created a TL “dialect” through a mixture of existing dialects and inventive solutions (Ranzato 2010).

Retaining the flavour of the original is an achievable goal not only in relation to dialects, but also to sociolects, which provide information about social status, class, education and background. Indeed, very often dialects and sociolects go hand in hand: together, they define characters linguistically, they act as social markers and contribute to portraying informal interaction. AVT translators must understand the social, political and ideological connotations of the SL sociolects and then try to reproduce them in the TL, not necessarily via the same linguistic means. As Chaume (2012: 141) suggests, equivalence «can be obtained through lexical choices where a phonetic deviation was found, or through non-canonical word order to mirror a lexical deviation, i.e. juggling phonetics, grammar and lexis when necessary and even making use of compensation throughout the film». This emerges clearly in the Italian dubbing of films in which these elements play a key role, such as those of Ken Loach or Mike Leigh, who are especially sensitive to linguistic nuances: the Italian dubbed versions of their films demonstrate that it is possible to communicate social differences by playing with TL register, marked word order, ungrammatical structures, and so on (Taylor 2006, Ranzato 2010).

Another important dimension of linguistic variation is the diachronic one, which is commonly found in costume dramas and period TV series. As such products are often literary adaptations, stylistic considerations are especially relevant. When watching period pieces, the enjoyment for viewers lies in recognising passages from favourite novels or plays, in seeing characters come to life on the screen, and, above all, in travelling back in time (Ranzato 2014: 218):

The fascination that period programmes exert is due to their inherent and universal exoticism; an exoticism which is conveyed not only by costumes and settings but also by the linguistic solutions chosen by the authors to define characters. Their authors made an evident effort to characterise the mood of the period by rendering the dialogues realistic from a linguistic and cultural point of view.

One of the tools used by screenwriters to achieve this goal is the use of time-specific cultural references which place dialogues in a specific era and set them apart from the viewers' own time («asynchronous references»; Ranzato 2014). Moreover, given the predominance of the interpersonal function in film dialogue, it is important to represent the relationships between on-screen characters in a convincing manner: the appropriate degree of familiarity between men and women, between people belonging to different social classes, or between older and younger people is a concept that varies considerably over time. Bruti and Vignozzi (2016: 209) point out that «in certain cultures and time periods deferential strategies are used more extensively given the specific politeness requirements in effect at the time». In period dramas this is especially evident in the selection of the forms of address and conversational routines (introductions, greetings, wishes, compliments, and so on) which best fit the historical period and social setting portrayed on the screen (Bonsignori et al. 2011, 2012, Bruti 2013). The key translation difficulty is that such features pertaining to the politeness sphere are encoded differently in different languages. For example, while Italian has three second-person pronouns to express familiarity or distance (the familiar *Tu*, the polite *Lei* and the old-fashioned *Voi*), modern English only uses one pronoun (“you”) and expresses deference and politeness through the use of appropriate honorifics (Pavesi 1994, 1996, Bruti 2013). When translating into Italian, the choice of pronoun is fairly straightforward if there is a clear social asymmetry between the characters; however, it is not always easy to decide when to switch to the familiar form to indicate that two characters are getting closer in the film: there may be narrative or linguistic cues that audiovisual translators need to be able to recognise. Bruti and Perego (2008) analysed the English dialogues of *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995) and found several types of vocatives, including first names, last names, nicknames, titles, titles with the character's last name, titles with the character's first name, vocational titles, kinship terms and various terms of endearment that express differ-

ent degrees of social symmetry/asymmetry and emotional distance/closeness between the characters (Bruti and Perego 2008: 15):

The setting of the story, i.e. 18th century England, determines the choice of types: in fact names, either first or last, and titles are the most frequent form of address. [...] [G]eneric names and offensive terms are very few, and terms of endearment, although quite frequent, are quite formulaic and stereotypical in nature. This is perfectly in keeping with the rules of behaviour of British society at the time Austen wrote: social ranks were quite rigid and forms of address necessarily reflected status configurations.

Interestingly, dubbing choices do not necessarily reflect actual practice in the TL (as borne out by literary usage) in the historical period portrayed on the screen: Bruti (2013) points out that Italian viewers of dubbed costume dramas have come to expect the *Voì* form to express deference, because in the public imagination it has become the linguistic marker of politeness from earlier times, irrespective of the historical period. Moreover, dubbing choices may also be influenced by contemporary habits, to the detriment of historical accuracy: in the Italian dubbed version of *Sense and sensibility*, Mrs Dashwood and her daughters reciprocally use the *Tu* form, although in the 18th century Italian daughters were more likely to address their mother with the *Voì* form.

As this brief overview has shown, although film dialogue is undeniably more standardised than spontaneous conversation, in recent years screenwriters have tried to introduce linguistic variation at various levels. *Downton Abbey* was chosen for the present study because language use in the SL dialogues reflects diatopic, diastratic and also diachronic variation. The next section presents the series and the data used in the analysis.

3. The Downton Abbey sub-corpus: data and methodology

Downton Abbey has been exported to over 200 countries, winning many international awards and obtaining immense popularity. In the UK the first season had about 9 million viewers per episode, and subsequent seasons were very successful too; in Italy the show was broadcast on Retequattro

(the first 4 seasons) and then on La5, with average audience numbers around 1.5 million viewers per episode. The series has achieved a cult status even among young fans everywhere and has sparked off significant online activities: dedicated blogs, fanfictions, fanvideos, live-tweeting during the airing of episodes, etc. (Tralli 2012, Schmidt 2015): this is unprecedented for a period drama, as the genre is usually aimed at middle class adult viewers.

Downton Abbey revolves around two communities that could be referred to as the “upstairs” world (the Crawley family and their aristocratic friends) and the “downstairs” world (their servants). However, the microcosm of Downton Abbey, a fictional country house in rural Yorkshire, contains a complex social fabric: the period portrayed in the series (1912-1925) was a turning point in British history and society, with the rise of the bourgeoisie, the waning of traditional aristocracy and the spreading of unrest among the working class. Before focusing on the characteristics of the original dialogues and on the Italian dubbing of the series, let us have a closer look at the world of *Downton Abbey* (§3.1) and at the corpus used in the analysis (§3.2).

3.1. *The world of Downton Abbey*

The series opens with a historical event which symbolises the end of the “old world”, i.e., the sinking of the RMS *Titanic*, in which Downton Abbey’s heir Patrick Crawley suddenly dies. As the estate and Lord Crawley’s title can only be bequeathed to a male heir, a distant cousin of the Earl, Matthew Crawley, is suddenly catapulted into the world of Downton Abbey. Matthew is a young lawyer from Manchester and his lifestyle, habits and values differ from those of his aristocratic relatives. Matthew and his mother Isobel, who tirelessly works for all sorts of charities, are the epitome of the rising urban middle class. There are many examples of people from different social classes coming into contact and (to an extent) mingling in the series. An extreme case is the relationship (and eventual marriage) between Lady Sybil, one of Lord Grantham’s daughters, and

Branson, the Irish socialist chauffeur. During World War I Lady Sybil decides to train as a nurse and work in a hospital for wounded soldiers; afterwards, she finds she is unable to go back to her previous lifestyle and decides to marry Branson and move to Ireland, against her family's wishes. Her sisters (Lady Mary and Lady Edith) spend most of their time looking for a suitable husband, in line with tradition: however, potential suitors are sought primarily on the basis of their financial position, not necessarily their blood. Lady Mary is happy to consider media mogul Richard Carlisle's proposal in marriage, even though he is a typical *nouveau riche* (as opposed to her own family's "old money"); she eventually marries Matthew, a middle class addition to the family. For her part, Lady Edith ends up having a child out of wedlock and making her way in the publishing world. In fact, the only representative of traditional landed aristocracy is Lady Violet, the Dowager Countess of Downton, with her witty one-liners that fans adore; even her son, Lord Grantham, married out of his class, choosing an American heiress (Cora Levinson) whose money saved the Downton Abbey estate years before the beginning of the series. Lady Cora has adapted well to life at Downton, but is doubly "alien" to its world, as an American citizen and as a rich bourgeois.

Straddling the separation between upstairs and downstairs is Mr Carson, the butler of Downton Abbey. He comes from the working class, but at the same time he shares Lady Violet's distrust of all novelty and disapproves of the many changes brought about by the war, which he invariably sees as "slipping standards". Mr Carson is helped in his job by Mrs Hughes, the Scottish housekeeper: together, they manage a whole community of servants (footmen, valets, maids, kitchen staff, and so on). The most prominent ones are Miss O' Brien, personal maid to lady Cora; Mr Bates, Lord Crawley's valet; Anna, Lady Mary's maid; Mrs Patmore, the cook, and her assistant Daisy; Thomas Barrow, a scheming footman; William Mason, a nice young footman (Daisy's eventual husband); and Tom Branson, the Irish chauffeur.

Critics and scholars have tried to identify the reasons for the phenomenal success obtained by *Downton Abbey* (see for example Hallberg 2012,

Casarini 2013, Byrne 2015a, 2015b). The series has strong links with the period dramas of the past, and in particular with the symbolically titled *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971-1975); indeed, in the wake of the success of *Downton Abbey*, in 2010 the BBC decided to revive *Upstairs, Downstairs* to continue the story and ride the tide of enthusiasm for period dramas (Bruti and Vignozzi 2016). *Downton Abbey* is also closely related to the “heritage film” tradition, i.e. the high quality novel adaptations and nostalgic period films produced in the 1980s and 1990s (including, for example, the Merchant Ivory productions, the BBC Jane Austen adaptations, and so on). The English landscape, stately homes and pretty villages played an important role in these productions, which acted as ideal vehicles for the British heritage industry. The strong visual appeal of *Downton Abbey*, with its attention to period detail in costumes, furnishings, scenery and so on, can be said to be fully in line with this tradition, which explains its great success at home; at the same time, its Britishness makes the series “exotic” to foreign viewers. The show is conservative in its depiction of an idealised, sanitised past in which everybody had a clear role and different social classes lived in harmony under the same roof: in this sense, it has an escapist quality in the face of instability and danger in contemporary society, much in the same way as heritage films were an escapist response to the social turmoil of Thatcherite Britain (Byrne 2015a: 4). The centenaries of the sinking of the Titanic (2012) and the start of World War I (2014) were important worldwide media events, making the Edwardian period especially relevant to contemporary viewers: in the popular imagination, it seems to have become the last golden age of peace and prosperity before the massacres of two world wars and the social unrest of the 20th century, to be looked upon with nostalgia. Indeed, Byrne (2015a: 19) notes that the past few years have seen the production of several period dramas focused on the years leading up to World War I (*Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, *Parade’s end*, *The Village*...).

At the same time, however, *Downton Abbey* renews the period drama tradition, by focusing not only on the aristocratic family living upstairs, but also on the lives of the servants working downstairs. Furthermore, *Down-*

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ton is not a literary adaptation of a classic but an original script written for contemporary viewers, containing clear echoes of past period dramas and famous literary works (Hallberg 2012, Byrne 2015a).

Its success may partly arise from the fact that it represents a departure from most period productions, being not an adaptation of a classic novel but a made-for-TV drama created by the writer of film re-imaginings of the past like *Gosford Park* and *The Young Victoria*, Julian Fellowes. Thus it does not face the challenges of rendering a literary text accessible for a contemporary audience but instead is made with that audience in mind. As such it combines period drama with elements of the soap opera – a large cast of characters, numerous subplots and parallel storylines – and, like *Gosford Park* and in the tradition of (recently remade) *Upstairs Downstairs*, follows the lives of both servants and employers in the eponymous house. (Byrne 2015a: 66)

Downton Abbey has been defined as a post-modern heritage product in its representation of modern preoccupations (Byrne 2015a, 2015b): for example, the plight of the working class, the place of colonised subjects (Branson), the condition of homosexuals (Thomas) and the struggle for women's rights (almost all the main characters are female, and there are explicit references to the suffragette movement). However, the solution to social problems offered by the series is paternalistic: the aristocracy (and Lord Grantham in particular) is reassuringly benevolent and cares for staff by offering employment, welfare in case of sickness, shelter during the war, and so on. Thus, paternalism justifies the class system and ensures social order. In this sense, «*Downton's* most useful and serious message, after all, may be its ability to remind the viewer that, in terms of social mobility, contemporary society is not as far removed from the Edwardians as we might like to think» (Byrne 2015a: 87).

This brief overview has outlined the main characteristics of the show and some of the reasons for its astounding success. Of course, for the purposes of the present paper the main interest of this series is that its microcosm is fairly varied from a sociolinguistic point of view. In order to investigate the strategies employed to render these features in Italian, a parallel corpus of SL English dialogues and TL Italian dialogues has been compiled.

3.2. *The Downton Abbey corpus*

The *Downton Abbey* corpus analysed in the present study includes 16 episodes from the first 3 seasons, corresponding to over 14 hours of SL dialogues and matching Italian dubbed dialogues. The English sub-corpus runs to just over 100,000 tokens and the Italian sub-corpus to about 91,235 tokens² (Table 1).

season and episode	running time (secs)	SL English sub-corpus (tokens)	TL Italian sub-corpus (tokens)
S1 E1	3,954	7,606	7,060
S1 E2	2,879	6,354	5,784
S1 E4	1,400	2,255	2,034
S1 E5	2,889	5,906	4,670
S1 E6	2,910	5,798	5,712
S1 E7	3,780	7,494	7,058
S2 E1	3,971	8,034	6,834
S2 E2	3,175	6,612	6,056
S2 E3	3,190	6,641	5,918
S2 E4	3,148	6,685	5,391
S2 E5	3,184	5,795	6,304
S2 E6	3,189	6,666	5,860
S2 E7	3,183	6,773	6,727
S2 E8	4,043	7,538	5,854
S3 E1	3,989	4,493	4,209
S3 E2	2,835	6,211	5,764
TOTAL	51,719 14 h 26 min	100,861	91,235

Table 1: The *Downton Abbey* corpus

The transcripts were produced by UNINT students on the MA in Interpreting and Translation as a requirement for their audiovisual translation

² There were several cuts in the Italian dubbed version, as the episodes were edited differently to suit the Italian broadcaster's scheduling.

module; they were then revised by *DubTalk*³ researchers to ensure maximum compliance with the project transcription conventions (Bonsignori 2009). They feature three columns: starting from the left, the first one contains the name of the character who is speaking, the central one contains the English dialogue and the last one on the right the Italian dubbed version. The table format makes it easy to compare each line of dialogue with its translation by means of traditional “manual” analysis. In order to complement such observations with more systematic quantitative data, all the files were also converted to “.txt” format to use corpus analysis software, namely *WordSmith Tools* 6.0. The main tools that were used were the frequency lists and the concordancing function. As was mentioned before, the SL dialogues are marked by sociolinguistic variation of several types, often overlapping in the same lines of dialogue and affecting language at all levels (phonetic, morpho-syntactic, lexical and pragmatic). Since the aim of this paper is to identify the main translation strategies employed to recreate the flavour of *Downton Abbey* in Italian, the analysis that follows is focused on the most relevant phenomena, namely diachronic variation (archaisms and time-specific references), diatopic variation (accents and dialects), and diastratic variation (forms of address and vocatives).

4. Analysis

As was mentioned in §3.1, in *Downton Abbey* there are two speech communities, upstairs and downstairs, marked linguistically in terms of accents, lexical choices, register, and so on. Let us begin the analysis with the issue of diachronic variation.

³ The *DubTalk* project is a collaboration between UNINT and the University of Pisa launched in 2013: it has produced a large parallel corpus of original English dialogues and Italian dubbed counterparts of US and UK films and TV series. See <http://dubtalk.unint.eu/> for more details.

4.1 Diachronic variation: archaisms and time-specific references

One of the characteristics which SL viewers notice straight away when watching *Downton Abbey* is the archaic feel of the dialogues, which sound as if they might have taken place at the beginning of the 20th century. This effect has been achieved through a mixture of archaisms (individual words, phrases and idioms), time-specific references, and appropriate pragmatic features (such as formulaic language and the use of specific terms of address reflecting class differences). The time-related aspect has fascinated viewers so much that spotting anachronisms and discussing them online has become a popular hobby, with several articles and blogs dedicated to this issue (for example Lalor and McPherson 2011, Zimmer 2012a, 2012b, 2013, Schmidt 2013): most of them collect idioms and phrases that are considered too modern or too American for early 20th century England. However, determining with nitpicking accuracy the exact date when a certain word began to be used in English is not really the object of the present study: what matters here is that in the dialogues of *Downton Abbey* there are many words and expressions which sound archaic in relation to today's language, and that is the effect that needs to be preserved in translation. Indeed, archaisms are present in exchanges involving all the characters; in addition, the lines uttered by the Crawleys and their friends also feature high register words, loanwords from other languages (mostly French), and frequent cultural references (Greek mythology, the Bible, opera) which hint at a life of privilege and education. Some of the time-specific references are intercultural and, as such, they pose no problem in translation: they include references to World War I battles, the Titanic, the Spanish flu, the Russian tsar, film stars of the silent era, etc. Other elements which help create the temporal setting of the story are references to objects in use at the time (gramophones, tailcoats, corsets, photoplays...), to social customs (providing daughters with a dowry), jobs (draymen), medical treatments (poultices), and so on. The Italian dubbed version reproduces all of these details without any real difficulty.

Some references, however, are both time-specific and culture-specific: therefore, they can be presumed to be unfamiliar to the TL audience. In such cases the dubbed version employs several strategies, depending on the importance of the reference, the context, and the presence of dubbing constraints in the scene. In Example 1 below, Lady Sybil (the youngest of the Crawley sisters) asks for permission to go to a nearby town to attend a meeting of one of her charities.

SYBIL	Papa... can... Branson drive me into Ripon on Friday evening?	Papà? Branson... potrebbe accompagnarci a Ripon venerdì pomeriggio?
LORD GRANTHAM	I don't think so, no. Not after the last time.	Non direi proprio, no. Non dopo l'ultima volta.
SYBIL	Please. There's a meeting of my borstal charity . I've missed two, and I simply must be there.	Ti prego. C'è una riunione delle opere di carità. Ci occupiamo della casa di correzione, è importante.

Example 1 (S1 E6)⁴

“Borstals” were youth detention centres, established in the UK at the beginning of the 20th century and named after the village where the first one was set up: they were highly innovative, in that their main aim was to reform young criminals. The Italian dubbed version loses this specifically British connotation and separates the concepts of “charity” and “borstal”, to explain both more clearly: the latter is replaced with the TL equivalent *casa di correzione* and, given the length of this translation, the second part of Sybil’s line (regarding the meetings that she has failed to attend) is sacrificed.

Other time-specific references involve intertextual allusions to books, films and other works of art. In the example below, Lady Edith announces to the family that she has decided to use her driving skills to help a local farmer; her grandmother is shocked by the idea and compares her niece to a character in a famous children’s book (Example 2).

⁴ In all the examples, the season and the episode number are indicated. Example 1 is from season one, episode six (S1 E6).

EDITH	I said I could drive the tractor.	Posso guidare io il trattore.
LADY VIOLET	Edith! You are a lady, not Toad of Toad Hall .	Edith! Sei una signora, buon Dio, non un cavallo da tiro.

Example 2 (S2 E2)

The wind in the willows (Kenneth Grahame) was published in 1908 (a few years before the events narrated in *Downton Abbey*) and is now a classic of children’s literature in English: in the book, Mr Toad is the wealthy scion of Toad Hall who becomes obsessed with cars and ends up in jail for reckless driving. Although the book has been translated into Italian, it is not as popular in Italy as it is in the English-speaking world. Perhaps this is why the reference has disappeared from the Italian dubbed version, which waters down the meaning of the original: Lady Violet scolds her niece simply for volunteering to work in a farm («you are a lady, not a plough horse»), a lowly occupation unfit for a lady.

Lady Violet’s lines are especially interesting from a translational point of view, as they often amount to witty one-liners; in addition, they frequently contain highly formal and sophisticated vocabulary. In Example 3, she is criticising Isobel Crawley for bossing everyone around at Downton Abbey, which has been turned into a convalescent home for wounded officers. The word she uses to define Isobel is “termagant”, which in medieval times referred to a violent, overbearing god and in Shakespearean times came to mean an arrogant, petulant woman.

LADY GRANTHAM	I think she means well.	Le sue intenzioni sono buone.
LADY VIOLET	Meaning well is not enough. Poor Dr Clarkson. And what has he done to deserve that termagant ?	Ma certo, per lastricare l’inferno. Povero dottor Clarkson. Ma cosa avrà fatto poi di male per meritare quella bisbetica?

Example 3 (S1 E2)

The word *termagante* or *trivigante* can be found in Italian literature (for example in Ariosto’s and Boiardo’s poetry), but has not acquired the specific derogatory meaning related to women. The dubbing translator decided to replace it with an Italian word (*bisbetica*, meaning “curmudgeon”) that is famously used in the Italian title of a Shakespeare play (*La bisbetica domata*,

i.e. “The taming of the Shrew”): this creates a covert (and not necessarily intentional) allusion to the same historical period. Moreover, the translation of Lady Grantham’s repartee (roughly, “she has good intentions”) makes it possible to add a reference to a well-known saying (“the road to hell is paved with good intentions”) in Lady Violet’s line. Although this may be seen as manipulation on the translator’s part, it is nevertheless in line with the character’s spirit.

As the above examples have shown, time-specific references often involve the use of old-fashioned words; moreover, archaisms crop up even when the characters discuss every-day topics, with the effect of immediately plunging viewers back in time. In the first episode of the series, the Crawley family organise a funeral service for Patrick, who died in the Titanic disaster. Afterwards, Lady Grantham invites the family lawyer to «luncheon», but he refuses and asks for the «motor» to go back to London (Example 4 below).

GEORGE MURRAY to LADY GRANT- HAM	You're very kind, Lady Grantham, but I must get back to London.	Resterei volentieri, Milady, ma devo fare ritorno a Londra.
LADY GRANTHAM	But you'll stay for luncheon ?	Come? Non vi fermate a pranzo ?
GEORGE MURRAY	Thank you, but no. I'll eat on the train. In fact, if you'd be so good as to ask for the motor to be brought round?	Grazie, ma non posso, mangerò in treno. In verità vi sarei molto grato se faceste venire l' automobile .

Example 4 (S1 E1)

Both archaisms can be found in many other episodes: the modern “lunch” occurs only once in the corpus, while “luncheon” is the default option for the family midday meal; by contrast, “motor” is less frequent than “car” (5 and 19 occurrences, respectively), but while the former is used by the upper class characters (Lord and Lady Grantham, Lady Mary, Lady Edith), the latter is used by middle class characters (Sir Richard, Isobel) and servants (including the chauffeur), and occasionally by the younger aristocrats. In the Italian dubbed version “luncheon” is systematically

normalised as *pranzo*, as in Example 4; perhaps in certain scenes, in the absence of technical constraints, an Italian archaism (such as *desinare*, for example) could have been used to retain the old-fashioned flavour. As regards the “motor/car” dualism, this is reproduced in the corpus by the contrast between the full form *automobile* and the short form *auto*.⁵ The very modern *macchina* is used sparingly in the TL version (only 5 occurrences) and almost always in the lines uttered by servants. Interestingly, however, when Mr Carson or Mrs Hughes mention cars, this is rendered as *vettura*, in an attempt to reproduce the formal language they always use (Example 5).

MR CARSON (back)	My Lord, would it be acceptable for Bates to ride in front with Taylor? Otherwise it means getting the other car out. He and His Grace are catching the same train.	Ah, Milord, sarebbe accettabile se Bates sedesse davanti con Taylor? In caso contrario serve una seconda vettura . Lui e Sua Grazia prendono lo stesso treno.
LORD GRANTHAM	Perfectly acceptable. And if His Grace doesn't like it, he can lump it!	Più che accettabile, Carson. E se per Sua Grazia non fosse così, tanto peggio per lui!

Example 5 (S1 E1)

In this discussion of archaisms, a few words must be said about the significant number of Gallicisms used by the upper class characters in the series. A girl's suitor is invariably a *beau*, someone accompanying an unmarried girl in public is a *chaperon*, a car driver is a *chauffeur*, a party is a *soirée* and a small room is a *boudoir*, where you sit on a *chaise longue*. Sometimes whole French phrases are used, such as *en déshabillé* and *pas devant le domestiques*; and of course French words are used when referring to food, such as *hors-d'oeuvres*, *hollandaise*, *soufflé*, etc. In the 1920s the French language enjoyed a high status (it was the language of diplomacy, for one thing), and members of the aristocracy would generally be familiar with it.

⁵ Compound nouns for inventions such as *automobile*, *cinematografo*, *fotografia*, and so on were used in their full form when they first introduced: appropriately, in the dubbed version “picture” is translated as *fotografia* (rather than *foto*), the phrase “to go to the pictures” becomes *andare al cinematografo*, and so on.

Clearly, the choice of translation strategy in the dubbed version is based on the frequency of use of the same French terms in Italian. Some are used as borrowings in Italian and can easily be retained in the TL version (for example *chaperon*); in other cases, the translators alternated between the French word and an Italian translation (*chauffeur* and *autista*); and, of course, in many other cases the French word was translated (*ricevimenti* for *soirées*; *fidanzato*, *pretendente* or *innamorato* for *beau*). As a result, there are fewer Gallicisms in the Italian version, which reduces the air of sophistication evoked by the SL dialogues. In Example 6 below, Mary’s choice of the French word *métier* to refer to a lowly occupation (farming) in her snide comment on her sister Edith neatly encapsulates the tense relationship between them.

MATTHEW	Edith seems jolly tonight.	Edith sembra radiosa stasera.
MARY	She’s found her métier . Farm labouring.	Ha trovato la sua dimensione . Zappare la terra.
MATTHEW	Don’t be so tough on her.	Non essere dura con lei.

Example 6 (S2 E2)

Mary’s disparaging joke is fully present in the Italian version, but the French word has been replaced by an Italian idiom which sounds a little too modern (*ha trovato la sua dimensione*, literally “she has found her own dimension”). In Italian she sounds less haughty than in the original: perhaps *la sua vocazione* (roughly, “her own true call”) would have worked better, by introducing a spiritual undertone that contrasts ironically with farming.

The above are only examples of the many archaisms found in the corpus. For reasons of space, it is impossible to illustrate all of them: they include verbs (“to chivvy”, “to elope”, “to fret”...), nouns (“footman”, “valet”, “prig”, “toady”, “floozy”, “dalliance”...), adjectives (“unsullied”, “gallant”, “droll”...), idioms (“in a trice”, “heaven forfend”...), and so on. The general translation approach adopted in the dubbed version seems to consist in the adoption of a more modern TL equivalent whenever an archaism poses a problem, and compensation of the loss by raising the TL

register or by introducing a different archaism elsewhere in the dialogue. Thus, less frequent TL options were selected to translate common words, such as “to hate” (*aborrire*), “to agree” (*convenire*), “to claim” (*addurre*), or “to perform” (*adempiere*); Italian viewers are also treated to archaisms such as *beccamorto* (undertaker), *bifolco* and *fittavolo* (farmer), *dabbasso* (downstairs), and so on. Moreover, the Italian dialogues have a literary ring to them, thanks to the overabundance of the indefinite adjective and pronoun *alcuno/a/i/e* (used in negative phrases instead of the more common *nessuno*), of the demonstrative *ciò*, of old-fashioned intensifiers such as *alquanto* and *oltremodo*, and, above all, of certain logical connectors that are hardly ever used in contemporary spoken Italian, such as *sebbene*, *affinché*, *benché*, *checché*, *purché*, *qualora* (all of them introducing clauses which require verbs in the subjunctive mood), *ebbene*, *sennonché*, *nondimeno*, and so on. A quick check on the Fiction section of the LIT (Lessico Italiano Televisivo) corpus of Italian TV films and series confirms that the above connectors and pronouns are very infrequent in contemporary TV dialogue. In the absence of precise data on the size of LIT and its sub-categories,⁶ a direct comparison between our corpus and LIT cannot be made, but the fact that certain items are not present at all in the latter seems to indicate a conscious effort on the part of the *Downton Abbey* translators to make the TL dialogues sound as old-fashioned as possible.

4.2 Diatopic variation: accents and dialects

Another important appeal of the SL dialogues of the series is the presence of accents and regional varieties. Starting with accents, as a broad basic distinction it can be said that the members of the Crawley family and their aristocratic friends generally use RP, while most of the servants and people from the local village have a Yorkshire accent, with the exception of

⁶ The overall duration of recordings in LIT is 168 hours, comprising Films, Adverts, Fiction, Entertainment, Information and Culture programmes. There are only 5 period dramas out of a total of over 200 programmes, so the corpus may be considered representative of contemporary TV dialogue in Italian (including both original and dubbed programmes).

Mrs Hughes (slight Scottish accent) and Branson (Irish accent). However, the scripts do not specify the precise origin of each and every character, and the actors in the series have their own backgrounds and accents which influence the way they deliver their lines (despite the help of dialect coaches). Indeed, many of the actors in the cast are from the North of England themselves, so as to minimise the distance between fictional and real accents. Thus, it is easy to see why the accents heard in the series were painted with a few broad strokes of the brush and are represented only by some key features that can be recognised by SL viewers as typical of Yorkshire, Scotland or Ireland.

Moreover, as regards the main regional accent in the series, it must be pointed out that the very phrase “Yorkshire accent” is a misnomer, since Yorkshire is the largest county in the UK, with industrial cities and isolated rural areas, and considerable variation in accent and dialect. The exact location of Downton Abbey is not specified, but references to nearby towns and villages make it clear that it lies somewhere between the West and North Riding of Yorkshire, not far from Ripon. Thus, the main traits of the “Yorkshire” accent in the series are as follows:

- the short [a] sound in words like “bath” vs. the long [ɑ:] of standard English;
- [ʊ] instead of [ʌ] in words such as “cut” or “love”;
- the long monophthong [e:] or [ɛ:] instead of the diphthong [ɛɪ] in “late” or “face”;
- the long monophthong [ɑ:] instead of the diphthong /aɪ/ in “prize” or “five”;
- dropping the initial [h] in words like “have”, “here”, “his”, etc.;
- a simple [n] in -ing forms (e.g. “eating”) vs. the final [ŋ] sound.

The above features, along with specific intonation patterns, are especially noticeable when lower-class characters (scullery maid Daisy, footman William, maids Anna and Ethel, and so on) interact with each other and their phonetic articulation is more relaxed. Along similar lines, the accent of the housekeeper (Mrs Hughes) is identifiably Scottish, thanks to her rhotic consonant [r] and to a number of specific vowel sounds. There are online

blogs in which viewers analyse accents in *Downton Abbey* in an attempt to identify them: the very fact that the issue is discussed and that opinions differ proves not only great interest in the series, but also that TV accents are only meant to give viewers a “flavour” and should not be taken as extremely accurate representations of real ones.

The above applies to the upper class characters’ accents too. Most of them seem to use RP, but, interestingly, a “modern” version of RP, rather than the variety that was used at the beginning of the 20th century: «For example, many of the younger actors use some glottal-reinforcement for voiceless plosives like /t/, /p/ and /k/ – perfectly normal for modern ‘mainstream’ RP, but probably less so among early-20th-Century aristocrats» (Trawick-Smith 2012). Although this is certainly anachronistic, it can be regarded as acceptable for a contemporary TV series produced for mass consumption, as it increases the show’s accessibility to modern audiences. Moreover, it also makes it possible to have a stronger inter-generational contrast between Lady Violet (played by Maggie Smith), who speaks a pure version of RP, and the rest of the Crawleys. Some critics have remarked that Lady Cora, played by Elizabeth McGovern, seems to speak with a modern standard American accent, tinged with traces of British English (Trawick-Smith 2012): this is probably the result of her own background as an American actress who has lived in Britain for many years. Once again, it could be seen as an anachronism, since members of the American high society in those times tended to speak with a Transatlantic accent, a blend between Standard American and RP. However, it could be argued that a Transatlantic accent would have been too close to RP to set Cora apart from the rest of the family. Her American accent intensifies her alterity and plays an important role in the narrative: indeed, her Americanness and inability to truly understand the English way of life is often remarked upon by her husband, daughters (especially Mary), and, of course, by Lady Violet. As regards the middle-class characters in the story, such as Matthew Crawley and his mother, it is interesting to see that, although they are presented as coming from Manchester, they have almost no regional accent. British viewers can tell they belong to a differ-

ent class because they use a more standard lexicon, but there is very little in their pronunciation to place them geographically.

All the above accent differences are obvious to British viewers and, to an extent, to all English-speaking ones. This element contributes to creating the atmosphere of *Downton Abbey*: in this sense, accents play a key role in the original English language production. Unfortunately, all of these nuances disappear from the Italian version, in which everybody speaks with a standard Italian accent. This is in line with established dubbing norms, as the replacement of SL accents with TL ones in a period drama would have an unsettling effect on the viewers (§2.2). However, accents are accompanied by other linguistic features, including lexical choices and the use of specific grammatical structures, which characterise the speech of the different social groups portrayed in the series. The real challenge for the audiovisual translator is to ensure that the TL audience can tell that the Crawleys speak differently from their servants: as other studies have shown, the loss of phonetic and prosodic information can be compensated by translation strategies acting at other levels (see §2.2). Let us have a look at a few examples to see whether this goal has been achieved and how.

The sociolect used by the lower-class characters in the series includes some Yorkshire dialect words and expressions, such as “lad” (boy), “daft” (silly), “owt” (something), “aye” (yes), “by ‘eck” (euphemism for “hell”), “bloomin’ ” (euphemism for “bloody”), and so on. Informal vocabulary is also used, such as “jiffy” (moment), “chump” (fool), “gob” (mouth), “to snuff it” (to die), “to be after” (to look for something); slang intensifiers such as “bloody”; exclamations such as “for heavens”, “blimey” (expressing surprise), “for God’s sake” or “for heaven’s sake” (expressing frustration or anger), “give it a rest” (stop it), and so on. Moreover, there are specific morpho-syntactic features, including subject-verb grammatical disagreement, ellipsis of the subject and/or auxiliaries, use of the personal object pronoun “me” for the possessive “my”, use of double negatives, use of “only” as a sentence connector, marked word order, and so on. All of these characteristics emerge in dialogues supposedly taking place at the

beginning of the 20th century, so they are sometimes accompanied by archaisms or time-specific references (see §4.1).

In Example 7 below Daisy visits her sweetheart William on his death-bed (he has come back from the war mortally wounded). In the exchange, both actors have a strong Yorkshire accent; moreover, William uses a regional interjection («by ‘eck») and a main clause with a subject-verb disagreement (“it were” rather than “it was”). Daisy is embarrassed by his display of emotion and replies in pure Yorkshire style: «don’t be daft».

WILLIAM	Here she is. Come over here where I can see you. By 'eck , it were worth it if I get to hold your hand.	Eccola qua. Vieni qui vicino, coraggio. Ne è valsa la pena se posso tenerti la mano.
DAISY	Don't be daft .	Non essere sciocco.

Example 7 (S2 E5)

In the dubbed version there is no interjection in William’s line: although there is no direct equivalent of “by ‘eck” in Italian, alternatives do exist (for example *caspita*, *diavolo*, *accidenti*, and many others) that would give the TL viewers a hint that William does not speak standard English. No clue in this direction comes from the translator’s lexical or morpho-syntactic choices, as William’s sentence in Italian is grammatically perfect. Similarly, Daisy’s deadpan reply becomes a standard *non essere sciocco*, which expresses the same meaning, but without local flavour.

In Example 8 Mrs Patmore (the cook) is angry at Daisy and uses the euphemism “bloomin’ ” to define her; she also uses a verb in the wrong tense (“my word come true” instead of “my word has come true” or “is coming true”). Daisy tries to defend herself and uses a double negative in her reply, i.e. a negative verb form with a negative pronoun (“I didn’t do nothing” instead of “I didn’t do anything”).

ANNA	What’s happened?	Che è successo?
MRS PATMORE	It’s that bloomin’ Daisy! I said she’d be the death of me, now my word come true!	È questa dannata ragazza. Lo avevo detto che sarebbe stata la mia rovina.

DAISY	I didn't do nothing .	Io non ho fatto nulla.
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Example 8 (S1 E5)

Mrs Patmore's Italian sentence contains a typical example of "dubbese", the adjective *dannata* that is often used in dubbed audiovisual products as a translation of "damned", "bloody" or similar expressions. This character often uses idioms and proverbs (in this example, "she'll be the death of me") and her speaking style is funny and forceful. In Italian, Mrs Patmore uses a medium-high register and conjugates complex verb tenses, the indicative pluperfect (*lo avevo detto*) followed by a conditional perfect (*sarebbe stata*): a textbook sentence, if not very likely in a servant's line. Similarly, the translator does not attempt to replicate Daisy's shaky grammar either, or to make her line sound colloquial in other ways.

Example 9 sees Daisy commenting William's fate with footman Thomas, who uses strong language (the vulgar intensifier "bloody" and the vulgar verb "get shafted"), a regional word ("lad"),⁷ a couple of informal expressions ("fed up", "our lot") and a discourse marker ("well"). His line is a typical example of downstairs talk and is delivered in a thick Yorkshire accent.

DAISY	It's not right.	Non è giusto.
THOMAS	No, it bloody well isn't. Well , I'm a working class lad and so is he. And I get fed up seeing how our lot always get shafted .	No che non lo è, maledizione. Appartengo anche io alla classe lavoratrice. E ne ho fin sopra i capelli di assistere a queste continue vessazioni.

Example 9 (S2 E5)

In the Italian dubbed version there is no strong language and the interjection chosen to translate "bloody" is of a high register (*maledizione*), possibly to make the line sound archaic. The translation of "I'm a working class lad" seems unnecessarily wordy (*appartengo alla classe lavoratrice*), and so does the rest of his line, with a fairly sophisticated idiom (*ne ho fin sopra i*

⁷ In the lines uttered by servants a young man is always a "lad", as opposed to a "chap", which is the preferred term used by the upper class characters.

capelli instead of a simple *sono stufo*) and a rare *vessazioni* to translate the much cruder English expression at the end. In fact, in Italian Thomas sounds like a well-educated person, not like a “working class lad” at all.

Incidentally, strong language is very infrequent in *Downton Abbey*: the only characters who occasionally use it are Thomas, Mrs O’ Brien, Mr Bates and even Matthew in rare moments of rage. Out of the 15 occurrences of the word “bloody” in the corpus, over half were omitted, while the rest were translated as *diamine*, *dannazione* and *maledizione* (when used in an interjection such as “bloody hell”), or *maledetti* (when used as an adjective, such as “bloody fool”); similarly, the only occurrence of the swear-word “sod ‘em” in the corpus was translated as *al diavolo*. The very rarity of such expressions in the SL series would seem to indicate their importance: however, the Italian dubbed version avoids using strong language at all times.

In Example 10 a young William has just joined the staff at Downton Abbey and is a bit homesick. He drops a subject in his first line (“takes your mind off things”), as indeed Mrs Hughes does in her reply (“means...”); moreover, she uses the singular form of the auxiliary “to be” with “people” and omits the relative pronoun “who” to link the following clause (“there’s plenty of people here would envy that” rather than “there are plenty of people here who would envy that”). The exchange is colloquial, although William shows deference to the housekeeper by referring to her as “Mrs Hughes”. In this case, the two characters have different accents (Yorkshire and Scottish).

WILLIAM	Well , it's all right, Mrs Hughes. I like to keep busy. Takes your mind off things .	Non importa, va bene così, signora Hughes. Lavorare mi piace. Mi distoglie dai pensieri.
MRS HUGHES	What things have you got to take your mind off? If you're feeling homesick, there's no shame in it.	Quali pensieri può avere un giovanotto come te? Se hai nostalgia di casa, non ti devi vergognare.
WILLIAM	No.	No.
MRS HUGHES	Means you come from a happy home. There's plenty of peo-	Vuol dire che hai una famiglia felice. Sai quante persone ti in-

	ple here would envy that.	vidierebbero qui dentro?
WILLIAM	Yes, Mrs Hughes.	Sì, signora Hughes, certo.

Example 10 (E1 S1)

Once again, the TL version is in standard Italian and formulated in a medium-high register, with the fairly infrequent phrase *distogliere dai pensieri* as a translation of a SL phrase that is not only ungrammatical (ellipsis of the subject), but uses a vague term such as “things”. Once again, vocabulary and grammar are normalised in the TL in the lines of both characters.

In Example 11 below, colloquial expressions (“give it a rest”) and ungrammatical features (the object pronoun “them” used in place of the demonstrative “those”) are accompanied by two time-specific references, i.e. the sinking of the Titanic and the mention of “penny dreadfuls”.

DAISY	Does anyone else keep dreaming about the Titanic ? I can't get it out of my mind.	C'è qualcun altro qui che sogna ogni notte il Titanic? Non riesco a togliermelo dalla mente.
GWEN	Not again, give it a rest!	Non ricominciare, risparmiaci!
ANNA	Daisy, it's time to let go!	Daisy, non ci pensare più!
DAISY	But all them people , freezing to death in midnight icy water.	Tutta quella povera gente, immersa nell'acqua ghiacciata, terrorizzata, nel cuore della notte.
MISS O'BRIEN	Oh, you sound like a penny dreadful.	Oh, parla come un romanzo d'appendice.

Example 11 (E1 S1)

The informal nature of the SL exchange is once again normalised into standard Italian. Moreover, while the reference to the Titanic poses no problems, the use of *romanzo di appendice* as a translation of “penny dreadful” is a dubious choice: although they were published more or less in the same period, the Italian publications were primarily adventure novels and not Gothic thrillers like their English counterparts. What Miss ‘O Brien means is that Daisy is being over-dramatic and must stop focusing on the gruesome aspects of the Titanic tragedy; the Italian sentence does not fully express this connotation.

A final example (12) shows a sentence with a marked word order and a question tag at the end of Mr Bates' line: «Funny our job, isn't it?». This provokes a reaction from Thomas, who asks for clarification; Mr Bates' reply contains another question tag at the end («is it?»), inviting confirmation.

MR BATES	Beautiful. Funny our job, isn't it?	Magnifiche. Che strano mestiere facciamo!
THOMAS	What do you mean?	In che senso?
MR BATES	The way we live with all this pirates' horde within our reach. But none of it is ours, is it?	Viviamo in mezzo a tutto questo, un tesoro dei pirati a portata di mano, eppure nulla di tutto ciò è nostro.
THOMAS	No, none of it is ours.	Nulla di tutto ciò è nostro.

Example 12 (S1 E1)

The Italian version does not attempt to reproduce the above interactional mechanisms. In fact, the left dislocation of the adjective in Mr Bates' first line (*che strano mestiere*) makes the sentence sound quite formal. Furthermore, his second line contains a connector and a relative pronoun (*eppure* and *ciò*) that are not very frequent in spoken Italian (a more colloquial TL version could have been *ma nulla di tutto questo è nostro, no?*). Likewise, Thomas's lines are in standard Italian.

To sum up this analysis of diatopic variation, the examples illustrated here have shown that the Italian dubbed version of *Downton Abbey* tends to flatten regional varieties phonetically, lexically and grammatically. Although not much can be done at the phonetic and prosodic level, perhaps more of an effort could have been made to characterise the servants' speech from a lexical and grammatical point of view, in order to distinguish it from the speech of the upper class characters. Although the resulting TL version is accurate from a semantic point of view, it fails to create two distinguishable speech communities (upstairs and downstairs): unfortunately, this is one of the main attractions of the original language series.

4.3 *Diastratic variation: terms of address and vocatives*

Let us conclude this analysis of *Downton Abbey* with a brief look at diastratic variation. Of course, this dimension overlaps with the previous two (diachronic and diatopic) and with diaphasic variation as well, since in costume dramas great care is taken to select the appropriate conversational routines to fit the historical period and setting (Chiaro 2008: 19):

[...] diachronic variance will tend to crosscut geographical as well as social variance. This is well exemplified by the speech of the characters inhabiting the service quarters of Altman's *Gosford Park* [...] who portray a large number regional varieties of working class British English of the thirties, while the guests 'upstairs' are religiously restricted to the use of pre-war RP.

Social differences can emerge in dialogue in several ways: in period dramas they are especially evident in the forms of address and honorifics. In the first season of *Downton Abbey*, one of the key themes is the gradual development of friendship (and eventual love) between Mary and Matthew: the latter initially addresses Mary as “Lady Mary” and is then told that he can call her “Cousin Mary” (and be addressed by her as “Cousin Matthew”). After a few episodes, the two drop the vocative “Cousin” and start using first names. At this point the following exchange takes place:

MATTHEW	If you really like an argument...	A proposito di sfide verbali...
MARY	Yes?	Sì?
MATTHEW	We should see more of each other.	Non dovremmo cominciare a darci del Tu?

Example 13 (S1 E6)

Matthew’s line («We should see more of each other») is the first explicit signal that he wishes to take their relationship to another level. The Italian version decides to express this change through Matthew’s suggestion that they should switch to the *Tu* form. The cue used by the audiovisual translator is the disappearance of the vocative “Cousin”, and the evident on-screen chemistry between the two characters in the scene.

Interestingly, in the dubbed version the *Tu* form was chosen in the translation of all the dialogues involving parents, sons and daughters, irrespective of class differences. However, the terms of endearment used in the original dialogues vary: the Crawley sisters use the affectionate “Papa” and “Mama” when talking to their parents, and so does Lord Grantham when addressing Lady Violet; Matthew uses a rather more detached “Mother” when addressing Isobel, and so does Cora with her own mother Martha; finally, young servants such as William use “Mum” and “Dad”. The choice appears to be influenced by social status (with upper, middle and lower class characters using different vocatives), but also conveys the closeness of the relationship. Bearing this in mind, the TL version’s choice to translate all of these variants with *mamma* and *papà* seems an oversimplification.

The *Tu* form is the default choice to describe the relationship between characters on first name terms and with the same social status: this can be seen in Example 7 (Daisy and William) and Example 11 (Daisy, Gwen and Anna). Characters of different social classes and characters who are not on friendly terms preface their utterances with the appropriate vocative. Bruti and Vignozzi (2016) compared the original scripts of *Downton Abbey* with those of *Upstairs Downstairs*⁸ to study the most frequent conversational routines (greetings and leave-takings in particular) and found a high frequency of “Lord”, “Lady”, “Ladyship”, “Lordship”, “Milady”, “Sir”, “Mr”, “Mrs”, “Dr”, and so on in both series. As their study did not take the Italian dubbed version into account, let us have a look at how some of these items were rendered in translation in *Downton Abbey*.

Example 14 below shows characters of the same social class (in this case, aristocrats) engaged in a leave-taking routine. They are not especially close: the Duke of Crowborough has been a guest at Downton Abbey and has cut his stay short after discovering that Mary, whom he was courting, is virtually penniless. The Duke respectfully addresses Cora as “Lady Grantham” and she reciprocates using his title, “Duke”; interestingly, however, the Duke addresses Lord Grantham only by the place name,

⁸ The modern series: see §3.1.

without a honorific (“Grantham”), affecting a familiarity that does not exist between them. Lord Grantham is visibly annoyed in the scene.

DUKE	You've been so kind, Lady Grantham , thank you.	Grazie dell'ospitalità, Lady Grantham .
LADY GRANTHAM	Goodbye, Duke .	Fate buon viaggio, Duca .
DUKE	You'll make my farewells to your delightful daughters?	Porgete i miei saluti alle vostre deliziose figlie.
LADY GRANTHAM	They'd have been down if they'd known you were leaving so soon.	Sarebbero qui se sapessero che siete già in partenza.
DUKE	Alas, something's come up which has taken me quite by surprise.	Purtroppo è sorto un problema che mi ha colto alquanto di sorpresa.
LADY GRANTHAM	Obviously.	Ovviamente.
DUKE (back)	Well, Grantham , this has been a highly enjoyable interlude!	Lord Grantham , è stata una visita estremamente gradevole!
LORD GRANTHAM	Has it? And I feared it had proved a disappointment.	Ah davvero? Temevo che fosse stata deludente per voi.

Example 14 (S1 E1)

In the dubbed version, the chosen pronoun is *Voi* throughout the interaction, as there is little familiarity among the three characters; the loanwords *Lord* and *Lady* are adopted in Italian as well to retain the British flavour (see §2.2). However, in the TL version the Duke is equally respectful of both Cora and Robert, whom he addresses as *Lady* and *Lord Grantham*: thus, an interesting nuance is lost.

An example of using a character's surname as a sign of familiarity and affection is how the entire Crawley family address their butler (Example 15). Of course, as the Crawleys and Jim Carson belong to different social classes, they cannot be on first-name terms; at the same time, “Mr Carson” would be too detached for someone who has been with the family for years. Thus, Lord Grantham, his wife, his daughters and even Lady Violet simply address him as “Carson”. The butler, of course, is much more formal and addresses them either as “My Lord/ Milady” or “Your Lordship/ Your Ladyship”; when he is talking about them to other people, he always uses their title and last name for Robert and Cora (“Lord/Lady

Grantham”), and title and first name for their daughters (“Lady Mary/Edith/Sybil”).

MR CARSON	Your Lordship , I have information that I have no proper claim to.	Milord , sono in possesso di informazione cui non mi sarebbe lecito accedere.
LORD GRANTHAM	Well, what is it?	Sì? Di che tipo?
MR CARSON	Well, if Your Lordship can assure me that you'll keep it to yourself.	Se Milord mi assicura la più assoluta discrezione sull'argomento.
LORD GRANTHAM	I promise, Carson . You can drop the last veil.	Avete la mia parola, Carson . Fate cadere l'ultimo velo.

Example 15 (S2 E1)

In the TL version the respect that both characters have for each other is expressed by their mutual use of the *Voì* pronoun: moreover, the vocative “Your Lordship” was replaced by *Milord* (in other exchanges the alternative *Vostra Signoria* is employed), and Robert’s asymmetrical use of the butler’s last name was reproduced, although in Italian it would be more natural to use his first name. Interestingly, this special treatment only applies to high-ranking servants with a close personal relationship with their employers, i.e. butlers, valets and lady’s maids: Lord Grantham addresses his old comrade-in-arms (turned valet) John Bates as “Bates”, Lady Cora calls Miss O’Brien simply by her surname, and Isobel Crawley does the same with her butler Molesley (see Example 16). Strangely enough, however, this does not apply to other two key figures in the Downton Abbey household: the housekeeper is addressed by everybody (masters and servants) as “Mrs Hughes”, and the cook as “Mrs Patmore”. In the Italian version the *Voì* form is mutually used in all the exchanges involving aristocrats and high-ranking servants, such as Mr Carson, Mrs Hughes, Mrs Patmore, and Miss O’Brien, or middle-class professionals such as Dr Clarkson or Mr Murray (see Example 4); the *Tu* form is asymmetrically used by aristocrats when addressing footmen and maids, who are at the bottom of the social scale.

Finally, let us have a look at the slight confusion caused by these conventions in the first encounter between two middle-class characters, Matthew and his mother Isobel, with Molesley, the butler who has been assigned to their house by Lord Grantham. Matthew initially treats Molesley as a social equal and, since they do not know each other, calls him “Mr Molesley”. The latter, however, addresses Matthew as “Sir”, as he is his employer. Isobel steps in to introduce herself and Matthew to Molesley, and then immediately adheres to the master-butler conventions: in the last line, she thanks the butler with a familiar “Thank you, Molesley”.

MATTHEW	Can I help?	Desiderate qualcosa?
MR MOLESLEY	I'm Molesley, Sir , your butler and valet.	Sono Molesley, signore . Maggiordomo e vostro valletto.
MATTHEW	Mr Molesley , I'm afraid/	Signor Molesley , temo che/
ISOBEL	May I introduce ourselves? I am Mrs Crawley , and this is my son, Mr Matthew Crawley .	È un piacere conoscervi, signor Molesley . Io sono la signora Crawley e il signore è mio figlio, l'avvocato Matthew Crawley .
MR MOLESLEY	I'll just give Mr Taylor a hand with the cases.	Do una mano a Taylor con le valigie.
MATTHEW	I can/	Lo faccio io.
ISOBEL	Thank you, Molesley .	Grazie, Molesley .

Example 16 (S1 E2)

In the Italian version, the *Lei* form is used by everyone in the exchange. However, as regards the use of vocatives, there are some inconsistencies: while Matthew addresses the butler as *signor Molesley*, Isobel copies him in her first line but then abruptly switches to a simple *Molesley* in the last line. This is odd and reduces the impact of the scene: in the original, Matthew's insistence in addressing the butler as “Mr” stands out precisely because Isobel does not. Moreover, when she introduces herself and her son, she describes Matthew as *l'avvocato Matthew Crawley*, thus conforming to the Italian preference for professional titles. Finally, while Molesley comes across as extremely polite in the SL scene, referring to the driver as “Mr Taylor”, in Italian he sounds very polite to his employer but on friendly

terms with the chauffeur, referred to simply as *Taylor*. All these slight changes in the TL version appear unnecessary and result in a loss of interesting subtleties.

There are many other aspects that could be illustrated to discuss the importance of diastratic variation in *Downton Abbey*, but it is hoped that these brief observations on the use of forms of address and vocatives have shed some light on the difficulties of conveying these nuances across languages.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The corpus-based study presented in this paper had the aim of illustrating the main features of diachronic, diatopic and diastratic variation in the *Downton Abbey* dialogues and exploring to what extent the Italian dubbed version manages to reflect them. Our starting point was the awareness that in general dubbing practice, variation is flattened and dialogues are normalised, for various reasons (Chiaro 2008: 23):

Translating linguistic variation for the screen and retaining original connotations is an extremely complex task. It is therefore not surprising that a common strategy to deal with variation is simply not to deal with it and homogenize it into the standard, mainstream variety of the target language.

Recent audiovisual products tend to be characterised by more linguistic variation, in an attempt to make dialogues realistic; in addition, in period dramas dialogues need to be a plausible linguistic representation of a different time. The fact that the SL dialogues of *Downton Abbey* are characterised by overlapping layers of linguistic variation means that reproducing them in another language and culture is especially difficult. As regards diachronic variation, paragraph §4.1 has shown that the archaic flavour of the original has been more or less preserved in the TL version, thanks to the presence of international time-specific references and the translation of a number of culture-specific ones; when it was not possible to translate the SL archaisms, the latter were replaced by other SL references that are

better known to Italian audiences. In addition, compensation strategies were used to insert other archaisms elsewhere in the dialogue: in particular, certain connectors and pronouns which are hardly ever used in contemporary spoken Italian were “sprinkled” all over the text to give it an archaic feel.

In terms of diatopic variation, the presence of several SL accents (and especially Yorkshire) is a serious obstacle. In the TL version there is no phonetic or prosodic difference between the characters who speak with a Yorkshire, Irish, Scottish, American or RP accent in the original: while this loss is unavoidable, perhaps more could have been done at the morpho-syntactic and lexical levels to convey to Italian viewers at least the main differences between the speech of the upper-class characters vs. that of the servants. The sociolect used by the majority of the downstairs characters is a mixture of Yorkshire dialect, informal words, and deviations from standard word order and syntax: unfortunately, the examples discussed in this paper show no attempt to reflect any of this in Italian (§4.2).

Finally, as the entire series revolves around a highly structured society that is beginning to crumble (see §3.1), the pragmatic conventions used both in symmetrical and asymmetrical interactions are very important. For reasons of space, section §4.3 has focused only on two selected features, i.e. forms of address and honorifics. The TL version seems to conform to the existing dubbing norms for period dramas in the mutual adoption of the *Voì* form when characters wish to show deference to each other. However, there are some special cases in which the dubbed version seems to have missed out on interesting (if subtle) nuances, especially as regards asymmetrical interactions.

Overall, the analysis has shown that the Italian dubbing of *Downton Abbey* is accurate and makes for enjoyable viewing: however, the very characteristics which make it such a special and original period drama are, to an extent, lacking from the dubbed dialogues, which perhaps goes to explain the more muted popularity of the show in Italy. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate further reflection on the importance of language

variation in audiovisual translation and in dubbing in particular, and possibly contribute to improvements in the industry as well.

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