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THE DUBBING OF FOREIGN AND REGIONAL ACCENTS IN *THE SIMPSONS*¹

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Abstract

Although the dubbing of accents is a common phenomenon on our screens, it has not received enough scholarly attention. This study compares the original version with the dubbed version of the animated series *The Simpsons* (Matt Groening 1989-), and analyses 32 characters with a non-standard accent. The research is also based on the first-person experience of María José Aguirre de Cárcer, the current translator of the series to European Spanish. This investigation discloses that factors such as linguistic obstacles, visual restrictions or stereotypes determine the final solution. Despite the close link between accents and identity, the results obtained suggest that most translation techniques imply changes in characterisation to a greater or lesser extent.

Resumen

"El doblaje de acentos extranjeros y regionales en *Los Simpson*"

El doblaje de los acentos es un fenómeno frecuente en nuestras pantallas que no ha recibido, sin embargo, suficiente atención académica. El presente estudio compara la versión original con la versión doblada de la serie de animación *The Simpsons* (Matt Groening 1989-) y analiza 32 personajes cuyo acento diverge del estándar. El análisis

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cuenta además con la experiencia en primera persona de María José Aguirre de Cárcer, la actual traductora de la serie al castellano. La investigación revela que factores como los obstáculos lingüísticos, las restricciones visuales o los estereotipos determinan la solución empleada. A pesar de que el uso de acentos está íntimamente relacionado con la identidad, los resultados obtenidos indican que la mayoría de las técnicas suponen, en mayor o menor grado, un cambio en la caracterización del personaje.

Keywords: Accents. Dubbing. Stereotypes. Multilingualism. Audiovisual Translation.

Palabras clave: Acentos. Doblaje. Estereotipos. Multilingüismo. Traducción Audiovisual.

1. Introduction

“I’m sorry, did my voice go all evil? It is common with Russian accent”, Slava, chapter 20 of season 24 of the series *The Simpsons*

According to the Real Academia Española, multilingualism consists in the coexistence of several languages in a country or territory. One consequence of this coexistence are the accents. The fact that a person has a native language different from the one s/he is talking generates an accent. Lippi-Green (2012: 46) explains this situation in the case of American English:

When a native speaker of a language other than English learns English, accent is used to refer to the breakthrough of native language phonology into the target language. Thus we might say that an individual has a Welsh accent, or a Tagalog accent, because the phonologies of those languages influence the learner’s pronunciation of U.S. English, and any effort to block the L2 accent will be accomplished with differing degrees of success.

This accent originated from the native language will often be accompanied, as we will see in the corpus, by other typical manifestations of multilingualism, such as code-switching.

Although the accents may reflect characteristics such as the social group, in this study we will focus exclusively on diatopic variants, which reveal more or less extensive places of origin, that is, continents, countries or regions.

Regarding the state of the art, audiovisual translation (AVT) of multilingualism, a phenomenon increasingly present on our screens, has been widely discussed in recent years by authors like Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2011), Heiss (2004) or de Higes-Andino et al. (2013). However, one of its most common consequences does not seem to have generated the same interest: the accent. Perhaps it is because this manifestation is related to phonological aspects and they are not only the consequence of the translator’s choices, but above all of the actors’ interpretation. In any case, we agree with Steffensen (2012: 511) that this object of study should be included in the research on audiovisual translation: “The dramaturgical use of accents can be considered an aspect of audiovisual translation (AVT) in the broad sense of the transfer of meanings between cultures through language”.

On the other hand, the use of accents in audiovisual media is closely related to the representation of clichés in both the original version (OV) and the dubbed version (DV). According to authors like Kozloff (2000: 26), the creation or perpetuation of stereotypes through dialogue deserves more attention:

Often overlooked is how much the speech patterns of the stereotyped character contribute to the viewer's conception of his or her worth; the ways in which dialect, mispronunciation, and inarticulateness have been used to ridicule and stigmatize characters have often been neglected.

Faced with this situation, various questions arise. Does the translator use similar strategies when translating accents as when translating other types of manifestations related to multilingualism? Which motivations and which consequences has the election of different techniques? How does s/he act in the presence of stereotypes in the OV? Does translation perpetuate stereotypes? Does it subvert them? Does it modify them?

2. Multilingualism in audiovisual products: representation, functions and dangers

Multilingualism may appear represented in audiovisual texts in different ways and different degrees. Mareš (2000a; 2000b; 2003) [cit. in Bleichenbacher (2008: 23-25)] distinguishes four fundamental strategies in fiction texts: elimination, signalization, evocation and presence.

Elimination, which is the strategy furthest from reality, consists in replacing the language that a character would speak in reality and that does not coincide with the main language of the film with a standard variety of the main language. Since no linguistic clues appear, the viewer will only be able to recognize the character's origin if s/he is able to process extralinguistic clues. In this respect, the semiotic capacity of the image should be recalled, as Whitman-Linsen (1992: 33) points out:

We might go so far as to claim that the relatively versed viewer can recognize a number of nationalities watching solely the people on the screen with the sound eliminated. The Frenchman's shoulder movements and lower-lip idiosyncrasies, the American bearing of the body and free-swinging gait, and the Italian's 'talkative' hand signals can virtually not be mistaken for each other.

Signalization consists of a character explicitly mentioning his/her language or origin in a metalinguistic commentary.

In the evocation strategy the character speaks the main language of the audiovisual product, but includes multiple interferences of his/her native language. Bleichenbacher (2008: 60) states that, although these interferences may

appear on any linguistic level, they often do on a phonological level, through accents, and on a lexical level, through brief code-switches, i.e., the speaker introduces words from his/her L1. This strategy serves to indicate the origin of the speaker, since accents and interferences reveal the character's L1.

Finally, presence consists in including a language that is distinct from the main language of the film. This strategy would be the closest to reality, since it would mean that, for example, when two Russian characters are alone, they speak Russian instead of English or Spanish.

Linguistic variation, transferred through these four strategies, is often present in audiovisual products, since it allows screenwriters and directors to achieve certain objectives. Bleichenbacher (2008: 26) states that it is impossible to make an exhaustive list of the functions that multilingualism can play in an audiovisual product, but highlights three fundamental categories: realism, humor and social criticism. In this section we focus on the first two because of their relevance in the corpus under analysis.

First, the intention to reflect a reality of linguistic and cultural diversity should be highlighted. Bleichenbacher (2008: 26) states that "multilingualism in the text is motivated by the desire to represent a situation of language contact in the story as faithfully as possible". The adventures of the famous Simpson family are developed in a town called Springfield and has a large supporting cast that reflects the social diversity of many U.S. neighbourhoods. In fact, the name Springfield was chosen because it is one of the most common city names in the United States, so it is another attempt by the creators to show a reality that is recognizable by a large part of the original audience. Dore (2016: 122) explains how the series uses language to reflect reality and how it resorts to stereotypical features:

Although they are far from reflecting real interaction *stricto sensu*, TV series try to recreate a sort of idealised community. In order to do this, the language they use is based on those communicative patterns that are deemed prototypical for a given social group. It is therefore not surprising to find that stereotyped language variations are exploited in audiovisual texts to mark differences in social status.

Secondly, linguistic variation is often exploited in the audiovisual media as a comic element. The inclusion of several languages in an audiovisual text can provoke laughter due to misunderstandings or interlinguistic puns, but, sometimes, it is the way a character speaks which is allegedly funny (a resource that can be related to ethnocentric feelings). Regarding dialects, Arampatzis (2012: 67) states that they constitute (2012: 67) "a fairly popular means of creating humorous sequences".

However, whether the intention of the scriptwriter is to add a comic touch, or to indicate the nationality of a character in favour of authenticity, the representation of different cultures in audiovisual products often falls, as we have already mentioned, into the use of stereotypes.

The use and manipulation of language variation to establish character are long-established practices in storytelling; [...] stage actors used language accent to draw character quickly, building on well-established, preconceived notions associated with specific regional loyalties, ethnic, racial alliances or economic status. This shortcut to characterization means that certain traits need not be laboriously demonstrated by means of a character's history and actions and an examination of motive. (Lippi-Green 2012: 104)

Bleichenbacher (2008) reveals in a very interesting investigation on Hollywood cinema how the choice of the characters' nationalities has created and perpetuated dangerous stereotypes and, also, how the application of the strategies of presence, evocation or signalization also affects the characterization of the characters.

Code-switching and interlanguage are typical for negative or laughable minor characters, whereas higher up in the hierarchy, the evil masterminds are more often portrayed as fluent users of standard English [...] characters with pronounced L2 accents, with a preference for code-switching into the replaced language, or with even more obvious instances of interlanguage, are often minor, comical, less powerful, or even downright negative characters. (Bleichenbacher 2008: 83-90)

Moreover, we observe that, in order to bestow the characters with a remarkable trait, there is a tendency to resort to exaggerating the typical features of the community from which they come. Basically, the aim is to make the attributes of the characters sufficiently noticeable so that all the spectators of the target culture are able to identify the difference and recognize the origin of the character. Steffensen (2012: 510-511) analyses the representation of characters from Japan and Botswana in the BBC by means of accents and points out the following:

Accents are used to represent and translate the *outside* in stereotyping ways that tend towards racialisation and towards actors using generic "Southern African" and "East Asian" accents that bear little resemblance to the actual phonological profile of native speakers of Tswana and Japanese. [...] The accent enacted can tell us that a character speaking in English is Batswana or Japanese, or that the listener should believe so. But what happens when the characterisation is unrecognisable to a Batswana or Japanese person and s/he feels that his/her identity has been misrecognised?

Although we will take these aspects into account, the aim of this investigation is not to analyse whether the imitation of accents is accurate or whether a member of that community would feel identified with the accent attributed to him/her, since, as Steffensen mentions in the case of the BBC, the intention is that the accent, and therefore the geographical origin, is recognised by the viewers. We believe that *The Simpsons* (Matt Groening 1989-), in both the OV and the DV, has the same objective.

3. Introduction to the analysis

The analysis consists in a descriptive study that compares the original version of the series with its dubbed version to European Spanish. However, as is well known, this version is obtained after the phases of translation, adaptation, recording and sound mixing, and, therefore, the version broadcast on television may be quite different from the proposal offered by the translator. Therefore, in order to clarify not only how accents are dubbed, but also what role the translator plays in making these decisions, we wanted to analyse not only the product, but also part of the process. This has been possible thanks to the information provided by the translator of the series in Spain, María José Aguirre de Cárcer. Thus, the translation choices analysed in the corpus will often be explained by the justifications of the translator herself.

The corpus includes a selection of 32 characters with an accent that differs from the American standard. It is necessary to emphasize here that the present article does not intend to include all the characters with accents shown in the series, since *The Simpsons* supporting cast is huge and its more than 600 chapters make it one of the longest productions in the history of television. The aim of this study is not to carry out an extensive analysis of the phonetic and prosodic traits of the characters, but, by way of illustration, we will include some of the features that characterise the prototypical accent of the speakers of each diatopic variety analysed. When these traits coincide in both versions they will only be mentioned once.

Three criteria have been used to group the examples. In a way, accents already classify speakers, since, on the one hand, they divide the speakers of a language into native and non-native speakers and, on the other hand, they split the community of native speakers into different geographical areas. Therefore, the first aspect that has been taken into account is whether the accent is foreign, i.e. whether they are speakers of English as a non-native language (L2), or regional, i.e. whether they speak a dialect of English as a native speaker (L1). These two sections are in turn sub-classified according to the result obtained in

the DV: foreign accent, regional accent or standard accent. Finally, the people who share the same language of origin have been grouped, also specifying their country or area of origin. The chapter number has only been mentioned in the case of supporting characters who have scarce appearances in the series.

4. Analysis of the dubbing of foreign and regional accents in *The Simpsons*

4.1. Foreign accent (*English as L2*)

This section lists the OV characters who do not speak English as their native language, but as their second language (L2). Their way of speaking is characterised by an accent which derives from their mother tongue. Below, we will see how this initial situation may lead to three different dubbing results: Spanish with a foreign accent, Spanish with a dialectic accent and Spanish with a standard accent.

4.1.1. English (L2) with a foreign accent> Spanish (L2) with a foreign accent

Table 1. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a foreign accent

TRAITS OF THE FOREIGN ACCENT	CHARACTERS
German. OV German accent. DV German accent. Substitution of the voiced alveolar flap /t/ for the voiced alveolar trill /r/.	(1) Fritz. Germany (chapter 11, season 3). (2) Hans. Germany (chapter 11, season 3). (3) Horst. Germany (chapter 11, season 3). (4) Ütter Zörker. Germany. (5) Hitler. Germany. (6) Rainier Wolfcastle. Austria. (7) Wolfgang Puck. Austria (chapter 11, season 13).
French. OV French accent. DV French accent. Accentuation of the last syllable. Aspiration of the last letter of the word.	(8) Cesar. France.
Italian. OV Italian accent. DV Italian accent. Tendency to emphasize internal unstressed vowels.	(9) Angelo. Italy. (10) Luigi Risotto. Italy. (11) Francesca Terwilliger. Italy.
Japanese. OV Asian accent. DV Asian accent. Substitution of / r / for / l /.	(12) Doctor Sakamoto. Japan.
Russian. OV Russian accent. DV Russian accent. Substitution of the voiced alveolar flap /t/ for the voiced alveolar trill /r/.	(13) Zhenya. Russia (chapter 20, season 24). (14) Slava. Russia (chapter 20, season 24).

This situation, in which the speakers of the original are not native speakers of the source language (SL) and in which the SL does not coincide with the target language (TL), does not present great obstacles in the translation of the geographical variety in the form of an accent since, if we want to maintain the resource, it is sufficient to reflect the typical pronunciation of that community when speaking Spanish. Thus, in the DV the characters speak a Spanish characterized by a foreign accent; that is, they all speak Spanish as a second language and, therefore, include phonological features of their mother tongue. This solution could be called maintenance, since the same resource used in the original version is maintained. Aguirre de Cárcer states that, in order to indicate that a character must have an accent that differs from the standard, she writes the text that the dubbing actor must interpret and includes a note indicating the accent that must be added to it since, as she explains, specifying the character's accent is clearer than writing how it should be pronounced. For example, if one of the characters (1) to (7) said the phrase "I am very hungry", the translator would indicate this as follows: "[With German accent] I'm very hungry"; instead of using phonetic symbols or writing the line of dialogue as a person with a strong German accent would say it. The way in which the foreigner is portrayed will therefore depend to a large extent on the target community's understanding of how that community speaks its language and, above all, on the performance of the actors and the indications of the dubbing director.

It should be noted that when the mother tongue of a character is close to Western countries (Spain or USA) –as in the case of Italian, French or German (examples 1 to 11)– it is easier for the viewer to recognize it. However, when it comes to characters coming from countries that are more exotic to the viewer, we observe that the accent used both in the OV and in the DV is linked not to a specific language but to a family of languages. For example, if the viewer only had access to the audio track, s/he might believe that the character number 12 is Chinese instead of Japanese because the accent used is generally linked to Asian languages.

Apart from the changes in pronunciation with respect to the standard language, we note that signalization is often used, i.e. the characters themselves explicitly mention their language, religion or background. In addition, in order to emphasize that the character is not speaking his/her native language, words or expressions in his first language are often introduced, both in the original and in the dubbed version. Thus, German characters pronounce words like *Nein* or *Guten Morgen*. In this respect, Bleichenbacher (2008: 83) asks in his research on multilingualism in Hollywood "to what extent the use of

interlanguage features for evocation is paralleled by a depiction of non-English L1 speakers as inept L2 users of English (and other languages)?”.

Hans’ (2) way of speaking in the dubbed version is especially striking precisely because it increases the character’s “ineptitude”. In the Spanish dubbing he not only introduces words in his mother tongue, but also makes mistakes both in the language he does not master (“No problema”) and in what would be his mother tongue (the pronunciation of the numbers in German is incorrect). Perhaps this mistake is due to the fact that the dubbed script did not include a pronunciation list, and that the dubbing actor had no knowledge of German.

Maintenance is a very effective solution because it preserves both the resource used in the original version and its function, but it would no longer be viable if the accent came precisely from Spanish, that is, from the TL, as is the case in the following section.

4.1.2. English (L2) with a foreign accent > Spanish (L1) with a regional accent

Table 2. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a regional accent

TRAITS OF THE FOREIGN ACCENT	CHARACTERS
Spanish. OV Hispanic accent. Pronunciation of [θ] at the end of a word as [t]. DV Argentinian Spanish. Pronunciation of the sounds /j/ and /k/ as if they were /j/.	(15) Doctor Nick Riviera. OV: Latin America. DV: Argentina. (16) Nameless character (chapter 4, season 14). OV: Latin America. DV: Argentina.

The OV in examples 15 and 16 show two characters who speak English as L2. Although it is not easy to specify their country of origin, the accent used shows that they are of Spanish-speaking origin. The DV, on the other hand, shows two characters whose Spanish, in addition to being their L1, has a strong Argentinian accent. Therefore, in these two examples, a dialectal variety of the target language is proposed as the equivalent of an accent of a non-native character. This change is due to the fact that the L1 of the OV character coincides with the language of the DV, which makes the maintenance technique discussed in the previous section unfeasible. Despite the fact that this solution appears under various names in the works of other authors such as Reutner, who calls it “indirect equivalence through the varieties of the target language” (2013: 155), or García Luque, who speaks of “presencia de un acento propio de la LM en la LO” (2016), we propose the term “dialectization” because it is short and transparent. It is important to emphasize that during the dubbing process a

decision was made about the origin of the characters and that this nationality was probably chosen because it is easily recognised by the target viewer. The translator herself confirms this hypothesis in Nick's case, since she comments that it was the dubbing director who decided to give the doctor an Argentine accent in order to make him more recognizable and comical. However, it would be important to emphasize again the perpetuation of stereotypes. According to Piñeiro (2004), the characterization of Argentine characters through discursive particularities such as verbal fluency has "propiciado la consolidación del estereotipo de argentino en determinadas profesiones como la de psicoanalista (y determinadas variantes como psicólogo, psiquiatra, terapeuta...)".

4.1.3. English (L2) with foreign accent > Spanish (L2) with standard accent

Table 3. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a standard accent

TRAITS OF THE FOREIGN ACCENT	CHARACTERS
Albanian. OV Albanian accent. Substitution of the voiced alveolar flap /ɾ/ for the voiced alveolar trill /r/. DV standard Spanish.	(17) Adil Hoxha. Albania.

The case of Adil Hoxha is interesting because, despite the fact that maintenance could have been carried out, the DV opts for standardisation. One hypothesis that would explain this decision is that the dubbing team did not know how to imitate an Albanian accent and chose to standardize it, but this decision is inconsistent with the audio track, since director Skinner presents Adil as follows (both in the original and the dubbed version): "You may find his accent peculiar. Certain aspects of his culture may seem absurd, perhaps even offensive, but I urge you all to give little Adil the benefit of the doubt. This way, and only in this way, do we hope to better understand our backward neighbours throughout the world". When we asked María José Aguirre de Cárcer about the standardization of this foreign accent, she was astounded because, in her opinion, if the child has an accent in the OV, he should also have one in the DV. When she saw the chapter dubbed, she told us that it had to be due to a mistake in the dubbing process.

4.2. Regional accent (English as L1)

Characters presenting a dialectal variety of English as their mother tongue (L1) are transferred in the DV in three ways: through a foreign, regional or standard accent. Although these solutions are the same as those found for the

dubbing of foreign accents, we observed during the analysis that the causes and consequences of those translation decisions differ from those discussed in section 4.1.

4.2.1. English (L1) with regional accent > Spanish (L2) with foreign accent

Table 4. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a foreign accent

TRAITS OF THE REGIONAL ACCENT	CHARACTERS
English. OV British accent. Linking r: the / r / is only pronounced when it is followed by a vowel. DV British accent. Adding the sound [u] to words ending in /o/. Alveolar pronunciation of the phonemes / d /, / t / and / r /.	(18) Eliza Simpson (chapter 1, season 16). England. (19) Dr . Bartley (chapter 1, season 16). England. (20) Homer (chapter 1, season 16). England. (21) Jeff Albertson, comic shop (chapter 1, season 16). England. (22) Nameless supporting character. Murdered prostitute (chapter 1, season 16). England.
English. OV accent from South Asia. Pronunciation of the diphthong [j] as [dʒ]. DV South Asian accent. Substitution of the voiced alveolar trill /r/ for the voiced alveolar flap /r/.	(23) Apu. India. (24) Manjula. India.

Characters 18-24 are characterized in the OV by the use of an accent typical of an English dialect. Although in principle the dubbed version is opting for maintaining the accent as we saw in section 4.1.1, there is a substantial change since a foreign accent is added to characters who are native speakers in the OV, i.e., they are transformed to characters who speak the language as non-natives (L2). Steffensen (2012: 514) underlines what the use of a non-native accent implies: “Non-native accent signifies that the bearer of the accent is an outsider, masters the language incompletely and is therefore often considered culturally inferior to native speakers”.

To emphasize the change this implies, we consider that this solution could be called *foreignization*.

The first five characters in this section appear in one of the stories included in the first chapter of the 16th season, which takes place in late 19th century London. In the original version, the Springfield characters become London characters and one of the manifestations of this transformation is the change of accent. However, as we will see in section 4.2.3, not all the British characters

in that chapter have an English accent in the dubbed version. With respect to this maintenance of the British accent, two interesting aspects should be noted. Firstly, the fact that the characters are no longer native speakers in the DV allows the translation to use the code-switching strategy, so that, for example, Eliza includes a word from her native language (“well”) in her speech. On the other hand, it is curious that the accent is not equally strong in all characters. Eliza has a much more exaggerated accent than Dr. Bartley.

In addition to including the British accent, the origin of the characters is highlighted by the register. Aguirre de Cárcer states that she opts for a more correct and archaic Spanish to translate the English language spoken in England. In this way, stereotypes associated with the British are reinforced:

British English is largely associated with a high social class, giving way to two different sets of stereotypes: positive ones, such as elegance, sophistication, good manners and intellectuality, or negative ones, such as arrogance, snobishness and cold-heartedness (Arampatzis 2012: 79-80)

The characters of Apu and Manjula deserve special attention because, although they are native English speakers, it is very likely that in the series they were not conceived as such due to a widespread confusion that Shilpa (2013: 318) clarifies as follows:

Although perceived and received as a “foreign accent” in American culture, Indian English is, in fact, a native form of speaking in India, where the two national languages are English and Hindi. [...] So, although it would be more appropriate to think of Indian English as an inflected version of English that more closely resembles British English, American culture perceives Indian Americans as talking with an accent of a non-native speaker.

In addition, we observe again the tendency to use generic accents that are more related to language families than to specific languages. A trait that we have already pointed out in characters such as Dr. Sakamoto (12). Shilpa (2013: 41) claims that Apu’s accent is not exactly Indian, which reinforces stereotypes:

Apu is identified as Indian in the series, [...] but his accent stands in for a more general South Asian accent. Despite the inclusion of Apu in a social satire of American culture, his signature voice, I argue, is an example of a racialised performance of South Asians in the United States that reinforces rather than challenges stereotypes of South Asian Americans and, more generally, Asian Americans in American media.

The exploitation of clichés is not only found in the use of the accent, but also in the image and the script. These traits of Indian characters persist in the DV and reinforce deep-rooted stereotypes in both the American and the Spanish

society. Manjula and Apu activate the stereotype of the sexist culture in which the man has a job, while the woman stays at home, taking care of their many children.

Moreover, although the accents of these characters are clearly recognizable to a Spanish-speaking audience, their origin is reinforced by the appearance of cultural elements. For example, the dubbed version adds the expression “¡Por los brazos de Shiva!” (which could be backtranslated as “For Shiva’s arms!”).

4.2.2. English (L1) with regional accent> Spanish (L1) with regional accent

This subsection contains two examples in which a regional variety of the SL has been replaced by a regional accent of the TL, that is, a dialect of the TL is proposed as equivalent to the one appearing in the OV.

Table 5. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a regional accent

TRAITS OF THE REGIONAL ACCENT	CHARACTERS
English. OV Southern American English accent. Substitution of /ŋ / at the end of the word for [n]. DV Andalusian accent (?). Drop of /s/ when this sound appears at the end of a word and drop of the intervocalic /d/ (“to” instead of “todo” or “pue” instead of “pues”).	(25) Spuckler family.
English. OV African American accent. Elimination of the postvocalic /r/. DV Cuban accent. Drop of the /s/ at the end of words. Pronunciation of the sound [θ] as [s].	(26) African American comedian. (chapter 13, season 5)

The replacement of a dialect of the SL by one of the TL is a controversial solution that many authors condemn. Slobodník (1970: 142) states the following:

Tous ces auteurs [Georges Mounin, Fedorov, Güttinger, Levý] sont arrivés à des conclusions identiques: l’emploi du dialecte de la langue de but pour rendre les éléments des dialectes de la langue de départ serait erroné et donnerait à l’aspect sémantique (“signifié”) de l’original quelque chose d’absurde et d’indésirablement comique.

Precisely because of this, it seems to be a more accepted solution in comedies than in other genres, but the crux of the matter is that in these cases the dubbing does not maintain an accent that already appears in the original, but chooses one. Moreover, the use of this accent is meant to bear a humorous intention.

Regarding the Spuckler family, the accent used in the original version is the “Southern American English”, which consists in a “one-size-fits-all accent when attempting to ‘sound Southern’” (Lippi-Green 2012: 221). According to the author (2012: 223), one of the main characteristics of the Southern stereotype is ignorance.

Aguirre de Cárcer assures that her intention was to create “yokel” characters like the ones in the original, but at no time did she intend to introduce the Andalusian identity. In fact, many features of their way of speaking would be associated with a sociolect (such as the drop of the intervocalic /d/), but other features such as the drop of the /s/ at the end of a word would be related to geographical accents. Thus, a way of speaking that is related to ignorance is replaced by another that is associated with similar stereotypes (Teruel and Fernández, 2005). In this way, dubbing introduces a cliché that did not appear in the original and perpetuates in this specific case the cliché of the backwardness of Andalusian society. A cliché that has been exploited throughout the history of cinema and television in Spain, both in domestic productions (Teruel and Fernández, 2005) and in dubbed versions of foreign productions (*Hotel Transylvania* (Genndy Tartakovsky 2012), *Toy Story 3* (Lee Unkrich 2010), *Puss in Boots* (Chris Miller 2011) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Michael Anderson 1956), to name but a few).

In the case of character 26, it is important to note that the choice of accent is conditioned by visual restrictions. The image shows a dark-skinned character, which forces the translator to select a Spanish dialect that is likely to be spoken by black people. Therefore, in the dubbed version, the visual channel matches better a character who is Puerto Rican, Dominican or Cuban, rather than Argentinian or Chilean.

4.2.3. English (L1) with a regional accent > Spanish with a standard accent

This section contains examples of characters with a regional accent in the original version that show a standard accent in the dubbed version.

Table 6. Characters dubbed into Spanish with a standard accent

TRAITS OF THE REGIONAL ACCENT	CHARACTERS
English. OV British accent. Linking r: the /r/ is only pronounced when followed by a vowel. DV standard accent.	(27) Henry VIII / Enrique VIII (chapter 11, season 15). England. (28) Elton John. England. (29) Chief Wiggum / Jefe Wiggum (chapter 1, season 16). England. (30) Marge (chapter 1, season 16). England. (31) Selma (chapter 1, season 16). England.
English. OV Scottish accent. Rhotic pronunciation: emphasis of the /r/. DV standard accent.	(32) Willie McDougal. Scotland.

For the viewer of the original series, the diatopic variety used reveals that these characters come from the United Kingdom, either from England or Scotland. The accent that distinguishes them from the rest of the characters disappears in the DV. In some cases, however, the target audience is able to recognize their origin because they embody world-famous, real people (examples 27 and 28), or thanks to the signalization².

Moreover, in the case of the British characters, as we have already mentioned, Aguirre de Cárcer characterizes them with a more refined, correct and archaic language. Therefore, it could be said that a formalisation of the register has been chosen. This is not a major change from the original, which already employs a formal register, but the intention of the translation to underline this formality and, therefore, the stereotype associated with the English in the target culture, is latent.

The translation of characters 29, 30 and 31 is remarkable because, as we have advanced in section 4.2.1, they appear in a chapter with other British characters who are represented in the dubbed version by means of a foreign accent (examples 18-22). In this regard, Lippi-Green (2012: 109) notes a lack of consistency in the use of accents in original audiovisual products and warns that evocation is often used only with some characters, and not with all those who should have a particular accent if this logic was followed:

2. For example, Chief Wiggum (29) comments in the chapter that changes his nationality: "We British sure eat crap."

If a French accent is meant to remind viewers that the story is taking place in France, then logic would require that all the characters in that story speak with a French accent. But this is not the case in animated or live action; for the most part, in movies set outside English-speaking countries only a few actors will contrive the accent of that country.

In the case of dubbing, García Luque (2007: 452) points out that

el tratamiento de los acentos recibe una atención especial cuando alguno de los protagonistas se distingue del resto por su peculiar forma de hablar, pero aquellos casos en que todos los personajes o la gran mayoría de ellos habla con un acento determinado, este factor es obviado en la traducción.

One possible hypothesis is that it has been decided to foreignize only the main characters of the story and standardize the supporting characters. Aguirre de Cárcer has confirmed our assumption by explaining that using a British accent throughout the whole story would have created an overloaded text. However, this criterion has not been applied rigorously, as we observe that characters with few lines like Jeff Albertson (21) or the first murdered prostitute (22) do have an accent, while others like Chief Wiggum (29), who is undoubtedly one of the main characters of the story, do not.

Lippi-Green (2012: 109) points to other causes for the decision to include or not to include accents:

The decision about which actors will try to sound French, for example, is not random, but follows logically from the dominant stereotypes (or in some cases, from the actor's native language). Consider Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale and Wise 1991, directors) set in France. All of the major characters speak English with American accents with three exceptions: the sexy chamber maid, the amorous butler, and a temperamental cook are voiced by actors contriving French accents.

Regarding character 32, it should be noted that allusions to his origin are constant in the visual channel. Willie is a redhead who usually wears a kilt and even plays the bagpipes. Therefore, visual restrictions are both a limitation and an aid to the transfer of information. On the one hand, the fact that the image so often emphasises his nationality makes it obvious to the target audience that the character is also Scottish and therefore the translator will not need to include this information in the dialogue. As Martínez Sierra has stated (curiously in an investigation on the same series published in 2008), the understanding of the target audience is favoured by the great semiotic contribution of the various codes simultaneously broadcast. On the other hand,

the image restricts the translator's possibilities, since the use of other dialects is ruled out (technique analysed in section 4.2.2).

To compensate for the loss of the diatopic linguistic variety, the DV resorts to two paralinguistic particularities. The first is the quality of the voice and the second is the way of speaking (Reutner 2013: 154-155), which encompasses voice intensity, speed and clarity. Thus, in the DV Willie's voice is characterized by a high-pitched timbre and a strong, somewhat hoarse voice, a trait that, according to Reutner, connotes a simple mind. The register chosen for this character is low and vulgar.

The informalization or vulgarization of the register is a frequent technique in AVT³, but it is important to point out that the fact that a speaker has a certain accent does not imply that his/her register is informal. In fact, the informalization or vulgarization of the register is intimately linked to sociolectization, which would consist in proposing a sociolect as the equivalent of an accent, since by lowering the register we usually lower the social class. Thus, systematically translating certain dialects into a colloquial register can perpetuate stereotypes related to the lack of formation of certain social groups.

After analyzing the examples in this section, it could be pointed out that, even when the accent that characterizes the OV characters is standardized, the translator can use other elements to emphasize the differences, such as the register, the quality of the voice or the way of speaking.

5. Results of the analysis

As it has been shown on the analysis of the dubbing of 32 characters characterized in *The Simpsons* by the accent, there are very different ways to face their dubbing. Linguistic factors such as the coincidence of the character's L1 with the language of the DV or the degree of difficulty in representing a given accent in the DV are determining factors in choosing between these translation possibilities, and also extralinguistic aspects such as the intention of the variant in the DV, visual restrictions, the traits that are intended to stand out from the character or even the number of characters with accents that appear in a given episode.

3. Ranzato (2010: 112) states that Italian dubbing tends to replace dialectal features with incorrect or informal expressions and lexicon that do not mark the character geographically. Lomeña's (2009) analysis of the Italian and French translation of Almodovar's film *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* illustrates this situation.

First of all, it should be noted that the appearance of accents in the series is not circumstantial, but a thoughtful decision. Therefore, the translation makes an effort to transfer the accent or, if this is not possible, the features that are being attempted to be highlighted in the OV. It is also necessary to remember that the assignment of characters to different territories is not done exclusively by means of the accent, but that both the original version and the dubbed version are full of clues: character names (“Luigi Risotto, Sakamoto or Fritz”), cultural references (“ravioli, Shiva, Putin”), lexical deformation (“*masticare*”), code-switches (“*Eins, zwei, drei; Well*”) or signalization (“Nein, we are from Germany. He is from the East. I am from the West”).

If the accent is derived from a language other than the L2, the translation offers no major obstacles and maintenance is used (1-14); with the exception of the Albanian character (17). Dore (2016: 132) observes this trend also in the Italian dubbing. The author states that, when the accent is foreign, the most common procedure is to keep it in the dubbed version so that the character has a characteristic accent in the target language.

It is necessary to specify here that sometimes a stronger accent is perceived in the DV than in the OV. This tendency to exaggerate the accent of foreigners is not exclusive to *The Simpsons*, since García Luque (2007: 450) also identifies it in the analysis of other audiovisual products: “Digamos que lo que el original simplemente apunta, el doblaje lo subraya notablemente”. We believe that this exaggeration has two purposes. Firstly, that the viewer clearly recognizes a pronunciation that deviates from the standard and that reveals the origin of the character or, at least, helps him/her to identify the character as a non-native speaker. Second, to increase humorous intent.

However, when the language from which the accent is derived coincides with the target language, the option of adding a foreign accent is ruled out. For this reason, the corpus resorts to dialectization. This solution manages to maintain the accent and origin of the OV character, but implies two changes in characterisation: first, the character becomes a native speaker and, second, his or her country of origin is specified. Characters (15) and (16) are from Latin America, but in the dubbed version, their country of origin is Argentina.

The accents that derive from a dialect of the SL refer to a reality defined within it and whose characteristics are difficult to recognize by the target audience or difficult to express in the TL. It should be noted that in these cases the translator has resorted to three solutions: foreignisation, substitution and compensation.

Foreignisation is actually a variation of maintenance, since the translator keeps the accent that appears in the OV. What changes, however, is that in the OV the character is a native speaker, while in the DV, the character is a foreigner (characters 19-24).

The substitution consists in proposing a regional accent from the TL as the equivalent of a regional accent from the SL. The translation therefore changes the character's origin. Thus, in the analysis we observed, for example, how an African-American character became Cuban by the sake of dubbing (26).

Total neutralisation would consist in using a standard accent and not resorting to any compensation resources (17). This technique could be justified in cases where the accent is a circumstantial trait of the character.

In the corpus analysed, the disappearance of the accent is always accompanied by some additional resource that aims to compensate for the loss, for example, to raise the register (British characters), to lower it (32), or to modify the traits of the voice (32).

Regarding the translation of stereotypes, we note that the DV generally limits itself to maintaining those that already appear in the OV. However, some changes do strengthen stereotypes such as the introduction of mistakes or the use of a stronger accent. In addition, the DV adds stereotypes not included in the OV when it chooses an accent, as discussed, for example, in the case of the Argentinean psychologist (15).

6. Conclusions

“Yo no hablo como Apu, de *Los Simpson*”⁴.

Raj, chapter 08, 1st season, *The Big Bang Theory*.

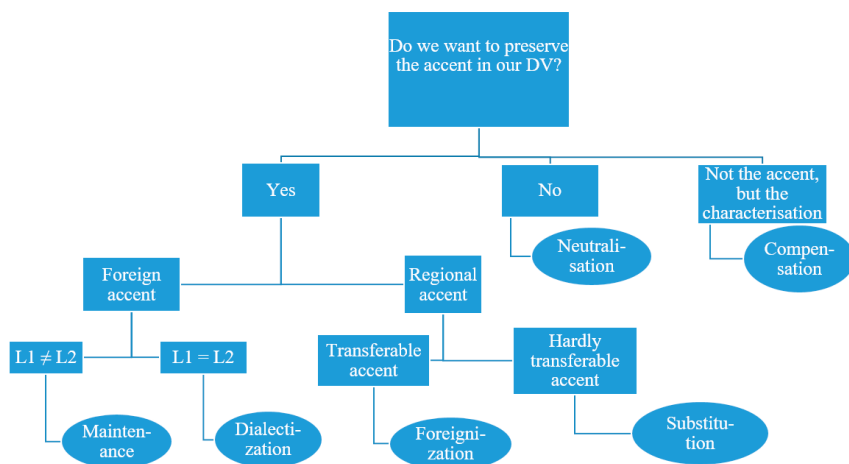
In general, the foreign accents we hear in fictional audiovisual products -both in the original and dubbed versions- are representations that the original and target culture respectively make of the phonological divergences originated by foreign languages and dialects; in other words, French people are represented in the OV just as an American would imitate them, and in the DV just as a Spanish person would imitate them. The objective is not, therefore, a realistic representation, but rather that the spectator relates the character to a language other than the L1.

4. In the original version, the dialogue is a bit different. Howard pretends to be Raj on the phone because he feels embarrassed to speak with a woman. When Howard hangs out, he says to him: “You can now thank me”. Raj answers; “For what? Making me sound like a Simpsons character?”

Furthermore, we observe that these foreign accents can be related to specific languages or language families. For example, French characters have a French accent, but Japanese characters have an “Asian” accent. It is understood that this difference is due to the knowledge of the target audience, who will easily recognise the origin of a character when their country of origin is close or known to the target culture, but who will find it more difficult to distinguish between countries in more remote and unknown areas such as Asia, the Middle East or the Slavic region. On the other hand, exaggerating the accent guarantees the recognition of its origin by the viewer, but representing foreigners with a strong accent that is often seasoned with difficulties of understanding or grammatical and semantic mistakes is, at the very least, an ethnocentric perspective.

One of the conclusions of the analysis is that when choosing the translation technique there are two determining factors: firstly, the intention behind the dubbing process and, secondly, the accent’s potential to be transferred, as well as its relationship with the TL. In the following diagram, which could provide a basis for a proposal to analyse the dubbing of accents, we attempt to summarise how these factors determine the translation technique used.

Figure 1. Main factors influencing the choice of translation techniques



Finally, we present a table that summarizes the consequences of using these six translation techniques:

Table 7. Translation techniques for dubbing accents and their consequences regarding accent and characterization

TECHNIQUE	ACCENT	OV + VD ACCENT	CHARACTE- RIZATION	COMMENTS
Maintenance	Yes	=	=	
Dialectization	Yes	≠	≠	Foreign character becomes native + country of origin is specified.
Foreignization	Yes	=	≠	Native character becomes foreign.
Substitution	Yes	≠	≠	The origin of the character is modified.
Compensation	No	X	?	Attempts are made to transcend character traits and compensate for loss of accent through register, voice quality and speech.
Neutralization	No	X	≠	The character speaks standard Spanish in the DV. The difference is neutralized.

This article is a modest incursion into an object of study that has been little explored in the academic sphere. It would be stimulating to delve more deeply into some of the issues addressed in this research, such as the search for other feasible solutions to this problem or the association between accents and stereotypes. In this regard, an interdisciplinary study could be carried out on the representation of identity in *The Simpsons*, since the series bases part of its humour on the exploitation of stereotypes, but is also capable of questioning or subverting them, as we saw in the interventions of Skinner (section 4.1.3) or Slava (the line of dialogue with which this article began). Similarly, although this analysis has focused on the final result of the dubbing and the intervention of the translator in it, it has become clear that decisions on accents are often made by other professionals throughout the process, so a future line of research that analyses the extent to which each link in the chain is involved in the final result would be of great interest. This would make it possible to

test the hypotheses that we have suggested in the study, such as the case of the standardisation of the Albanian accent. Furthermore, this research has generated a multiplicity of questions which would be interesting to continue investigating, such as the translation of phonological aspects related to social class or idiolects, or the repercussion of the genre regarding decision-making and public acceptability: would the public receive with the same enthusiasm some of the solutions provided in *The Simpsons*, if it were not an animated series or a comedy? In this respect, it might be thought-provoking to keep making progress on the basis of Pym's research (2000), and cross-checking data with live-action, audiovisual products studies (such as Dore 2016), and even non-fiction films.

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Filmography

Around the World in Eighty Days (Michael Anderson 1956)

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Puss in Boots (Chris Miller 2011)

The Big Bang Theory (Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady 2007-)

The Simpsons (Matt Groening 1989-)

Toy Story 3 (Lee Unkrich 2010).

BIONOTES / BIONOTAS

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