

De Bonis, G. (2014). Alfred Hitchcock presents: Multilingualism as a vehicle for ... suspense. The Italian dubbing of Hitchcock's multilingual films. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series. Themes in Translation Studies*, 13, 169—192.

## **Alfred Hitchcock presents: Multilingualism as a vehicle for ... suspense. The Italian dubbing of Hitchcock's multilingual films**

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*This study aims to shed light on the role multilingualism plays in Alfred Hitchcock's films, by examining the different solutions adopted by Italian audiovisual translators to cope with the multilingual situations represented. The comparative analysis carried out between the original versions of the thirteen multilingual films directed by Hitchcock and their Italian dubbed versions has identified three different macro-strategies: first of all, the neutralisation of the different languages present in the original version via dubbing the entire film into Italian. Secondly, the preservation of the different lingua-cultural identities through a combination of dubbing with other screen translation modalities such as contextual translation, and interpretation performed by one of the film's characters. Finally, a third strategy is the quantitative reduction of the multilingual situations present in the original version of the film, with all the inevitable consequences that this may have on viewers' suspension of linguistic disbelief.*

### **1. Preliminary remarks**

This study aims to shed light on the role multilingualism plays in Alfred Hitchcock's films by analysing the different solutions envisaged by the Italian translators to cope with the multilingual situations represented. From his early sound films shot in the 1930s, before moving on to Hollywood, to the end of the 1960s, when he directed *Torn Curtain* (one of his most well-structured multilingual films), Hitchcock resorted to multilingualism and played with languages on several occasions, with different intentions. More precisely, out of the 53 films made by the universally acknowledged master of thrill, fourteen can be considered as multilingual.

The term 'multilingual' in relation to Hitchcock's work refers to those stories which have an international setting and characters from various parts of the globe, supposedly speaking different languages. In other words, these films portray multilingual situations in which a primary language is present along with one or more secondary languages. The primary language is the prevailing, most significant one in terms of quantitative presence throughout the film. From a narrative viewpoint,

this so called “dominant language” can be considered as the film’s main language of communication (Heiss, 2004), meaning that most of the dialogues resort to it. In Hitchcock’s films the primary language is always English. Conversely, secondary languages are those which are less present in the film from a quantitative perspective. Nonetheless, these languages may play a crucial role if considered from a qualitative standpoint, be it either narrative or semiotic.

Before moving to the detailed analysis of the films, a number of preliminary observations are required to clarify the theoretical framework which will be used. Generally speaking, multilingualism on screen appears to have three main functions: realistic rendering, conflict, and confusion (De Bonis, 2014). With regard to realistic rendering, multilingualism serves as a means to enhance viewers’ perception of the reality depicted on screen, particularly if the story has characters of different nationalities. Realistic rendering is an attempt at ‘vehicular matching’ (O’Sullivan, 2007, 2011; Sternberg, 1981) or, in other words, making each fictional character speak the language he or she would use in real life. Multilingualism can also express conflict, mainly in dramas, when lingua-cultural identities are sharply depicted and strongly maintained on screen, giving rise to communication problems between characters which can be hard to solve. Finally, when identities are mixed up on screen in a somewhat disorderly fashion, the result is confusion, a feature commonly found in comedies in which multilingualism usually creates a humorous effect.

Both conflict and confusion of lingua-cultural identities are effective strategies which help produce the distinctive feature of Hitchcock’s films: suspense. Therefore, multilingualism turns out to be essential in the unfolding of the films’ plots and, consequently, it has to be carefully handled in translation. A comparative analysis will be carried out between the original versions of thirteen films and their dubbed Italian versions. In this study, we focus exclusively on the dubbed versions because Italy has traditionally been a dubbing country and our aim is to examine the translated versions which target a wide audience: the so called theatrical versions. Italian subtitled translations of Hitchcock’s films are available on the DVDs, along with the dubbed versions, but we discuss one of them only: the Italian subtitling of a film made in the 1930s.

## **2. *The Secret Agent*: subtitling and multilingualism**

*The Secret Agent* (1936) is Hitchcock’s only multilingual film which has never been dubbed into Italian. It seemed important to include it in the study not only for the sake of completeness but also because the strategies used by subtitlers to handle the multilingual situations in the film do not differ significantly from the ones adopted by dubbing professionals. The

film was first released for the VHS market with the title *Amore e mistero* (*Love and mystery*) and later on DVD with a different title, *Agente segreto* (*Secret agent*), and with new subtitles.

*The Secret Agent*<sup>1</sup> is a spy story with romantic elements, a very common feature in Hitchcock's filmography (Truffaut, 1966). Although most of the events occur in Switzerland, English is the primary language in the film, German, French and Spanish being the secondary languages. German is present throughout the film both for a more realistic representation and for staging conflict between characters (the scene at the casino is an example of this). It also plays a crucial role in the film's narrative development, as the plot revolves around the identification of the German spy that the film's protagonists – two British secret agents – are assigned to murder.

In the scene in which Mrs Caypor (Florence Kahn) gives Elsa Carrington and Robert Marvin (Robert Young) a brief lesson in German, multilingualism functions as a means of increasing suspense, since the lesson takes place at the same time as her husband, the mistaken target, is being cold-bloodedly murdered by "the General". The combination of the alternating cut and multilingualism, along with close-ups of the dog who is manifestly nervous, all play a part in raising emotional tension. From a narrative standpoint, during this lesson Marvin gives a decisive clue when he ironically claims: "I don't understand a single word of German, but I speak it fluently", displaying "bad pronunciation" of German, as the amateur teacher immediately remarks.

Robert Marvin is the antagonist in the film: his assumed unfamiliarity with foreign languages has already been revealed in a previous scene, the only one which contains some French. French is used here in a different way from German: to create confusion by aiming at a slightly humorous effect. While riding on a coach in the night, Marvin keeps courting Elsa and, in an attempt to favourably impress her, he even tries to speak some French to the driver, with awful results. He sarcastically comments that he is "a well-equipped young man at home in every language". Marvin's ostentatious display of his limited linguistic skills is a deception and a capital semiotic marker in the film, since in the end he turns out to be the real German spy. In this respect, language and lingua-cultural identity both become vehicles for suspense, leading to decisive happenings.

The original version on the DVD leaves secondary languages untranslated throughout the film. Viewers are thus asked to resort to 'contextual translation' (Baldo, 2009a): the overall context and the images help them draw the meaning of what they see on screen. In other words, contextual translation exploits the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts (Chaume, 2012; Chiaro, 2009), their distinctive feature of conveying meaning through the combination of different, interwoven semiotic codes: verbal, non verbal, visual and acoustic. Films always require a multimodal or multimedia type of reading (Zabalbeascoa, 2010;

Zarate, 2010) in which overall meaning can be retrieved through an integrated interpretation of several semiotic components. The two Italian subtitled versions followed the same strategy, leaving secondary languages apparently untranslated.

A number of Spanish words are often uttered by “General” Pompilio Montezuma de la Villa<sup>2</sup> (Peter Lorre), who speaks his own idiolect, a combination of broken English and Spanish, which Bleichenbacher (2008) would call ‘interlanguage’. In this case language is a key device to portray this peculiar character: in other words, its function is characterisation (Bleichenbacher, 2008; Sanz Ortega, 2011; Wahl, 2005, 2008). This has important consequences for translation, since the character’s idiolect has to be maintained somehow and conveyed to the audience of the subtitled film. The two Italian subtitled versions go about this in different ways.

The version for the VHS market tried to reproduce the character’s idiolect by introducing a number of semantic and syntactic mistakes in the Italian subtitles. As a result, the “General” tends not to conjugate Italian verbs properly, always using the infinitive form. This is, in fact, a common strategy in Italian dubbing when it comes to representing foreign people with a poor command of the language. Yet, there are two main problems associated with this strategy. First, the character ends up having a much poorer command of Italian than of English in the original version. Second, broken Italian can be negatively perceived by viewers, who may mistakenly consider it as a sign of the subtitler’s incompetence. The DVD version, on the other hand, opted for a total standardisation of the General’s idiolect. Italian viewers, therefore, have to rely exclusively on the multimodal reading of the film in order to perceive the slightly humorous effect that the character’s English achieves.

The written messages in the film represent an interesting case of “cushioning translation”. ‘Cushioning translation’ and ‘embedded translation’ (Baldo, 2009a, 2009b) are alternative terms for contextual translation. The two concepts were originally used by Camarca (2005) in relation to literary texts, but can easily be applied to audiovisual texts as well. Cases of cushioning translation occur when a single foreign word is inserted into a conversation in the dominant language so that all the other words of the dialogue explain its meaning, operating as a sort of dictionary or thesaurus.<sup>3</sup> In *The Secret Agent* all the notes and telegrams in German are first shown in the original language and then replaced with their English translation; in O’Sullivan’s (2011) terms, this is ‘translating dissolve’. Translation thus appears directly in the film’s images as the verbal part of the visual code. Both Italian subtitled versions translated only the English in the film.

### 3. Dubbing and minimum multilingualism

In this section we explore the solutions devised for the Italian dubbing of three films in which Hitchcock resorts to minimum multilingualism, reducing the presence of secondary languages to one or two scenes alone: *Rebecca* (1940), *Strangers on a Train* (1951) and *The Wrong Man* (1956). At first glance these films seem to be multilingual only from a merely formal perspective since, in narrative terms, all of their relevant dialogues are in English. Consequently, a multilingual situation present in the films may be easily reduced to a monolingual situation in the dubbed version, without drastically altering the overall narrative design. This is exactly what happens in the Italian dubbing of both *Rebecca* and *Strangers on a Train*, which become completely monolingual in their Italian versions. Nevertheless, something does appear to be lost in translation, because in the original versions of these films the presence of multilingualism is all but futile or unmotivated.

In *Rebecca*<sup>4</sup> multilingualism is essentially concentrated in the first part of the film, set in Monte Carlo. The Italian version, *Rebecca, la prima moglie* (*Rebecca, the first wife*), maintains French<sup>5</sup> only when the language remains in the background, spoken by secondary characters such as waiters in restaurants and hotel staff. Conversely, French is dubbed into Italian in the only scene in which it is more prominent. Mr and Mrs de Winter have just got married. As they are leaving *la salle des mariages* (“the registry office”), the clerk calls them back, saying: “*Monsieur, vous avez oublié votre carnet de mariage!*”. The bride immediately asks the groom: “What did he say?” and he answers: “He said I forgot the proof that we are married.” In order to sound coherent and plausible, the Italian dubbed dialogue was partially rewritten as follows:

- (1) Clerk: *Signore, avete dimenticato il certificato di matrimonio!*  
 = [Sir, you forgot your marriage certificate!]  
 Mrs de Winter: *Andiamo?*  
 = [Shall we go?]  
 Mr de Winter: *Sarà un altro modo per convincerci che ci siamo sposati!*  
 = [It will be another way to convince ourselves that we really got married!]

From a narrative standpoint, nothing particularly relevant seems to happen in this bilingual sequence: the meaning of what is said is not left ambiguous for the viewer as translation is provided by de Winter himself. Yet multilingualism is there for a reason. Its presence is far from meaningless or accidental; rather, it represents a deliberate choice made by “Hitchcock, The Enunciator” (Bellour, 1977). Indeed, multilingualism functions here as an enunciative marker, a semiotic device which

allusively preannounces that the newlyweds will not live happily ever after. Thus, the Italian dubbed version does not have the same impact as it is more explicit about what was simply hinted at in the original version.

Something similar also happens in the Italian version of *Strangers on a Train*,<sup>6</sup> known under two different titles: *L'altro uomo* (*The other man*) and *Delitto per delitto* (*Murder for murder*). From a narrative viewpoint, the film appears to be monolingual, since English remains the main language of communication throughout. Some French is used by the film's antagonist, Bruno Anthony, in one scene only. This scene shows the first tennis match played by the main character, Guy Haines. After the match Haines goes to his fiancée, Anne, and her sister Barbara, who are in company of the Darvilles and of Bruno. The latter is introduced to Guy as a friend of Monsieur and Madame Darville. The two men pretend not to know each other.

(2a) Bruno and the Darvilles speak in French, in the background – audible but not utterly comprehensible.

Madame Darville (to Guy, with a French accent): Mr. Anthony has been telling us such charming stories. Very funny. (To Bruno) *Est-ce que vous connaissez l'histoire du croque-mort?*

= [Do you know the one with the gravedigger?]

Bruno: *Oui je la connais!* (He laughs)

= [Yes, of course I do!]

French is used as a means to establish the distance between the two men, underlining Bruno's social standing and education. Moreover, an integrated reading of the different semiotic components involved in the scene makes it clear that French (the verbal code), combined with the increase in the volume of the background music (acoustic code) and the close-up of Bruno's tie pin (visual code), is meant to contribute to the suspense of the scene, producing a sense of confusion and dismay in both Guy and the viewer. Since the Italian dubbing adopts a more explanatory attitude<sup>7</sup> by neutralising the bilingual situation, the overall effect is likely to be seriously compromised, not to say totally lost in translation:

(2b) Bruno and the Darvilles speak in Italian, in the background – much more comprehensible as opposed to the original.

Madame Darville (in standard Italian): *Il signor Anthony ci ha raccontato delle barzellette magnifiche. Ne ha una riserva! Conoscete per caso quella del becchino?*

= [Mr Anthony has just told us such funny jokes. He knows plenty of them! Do you know the one with the gravedigger?]

Bruno: *Certo che la conosco!*

= [Of course I do know it!]

A more ideological intrusion is visible in the Italian version of *The Wrong Man*, entitled *Il ladro (The thief)*. The film is the true story of an innocent man, the Italian-American Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero (Henry Fonda), who is mistaken for a criminal. In the dubbed version not only do all the occurrences of Italian present in the original version (mainly greetings and terms of address) inevitably merge with the rest of the dialogues dubbed from English into Italian, but all the traces of Italianness (the Italian-American accent of some characters) are deliberately deleted and censored. Thus, Italian surnames are replaced with more Americanised counterparts: Balistero, the main character's surname, turns into the more neutral Balister, while La Marca, Molinelli and Ferrero become respectively Lamonde, Mulligan and Ferrer.

With his wife's support, Balistero embarks on an odyssey to prove his innocence by reconstructing his alibi. In an attempt to find possible witnesses, he goes with Rose (Vera Miles) to look for Mr Molinelli at his apartment. The scene contains a brief dialogue in Spanish with one of Mr Molinelli's neighbours: since the woman claims not to understand English, Manny speaks in broken Spanish to her. The woman comments: "*El señor Molinelli? Hace tiempo que murió!*". Vera asks Manny: "What did she say?" and he answers: "Molinelli is dead". The volume of the background music starts to turn up and simultaneously Vera bursts into tears exclaiming: "That's perfect!".

In this sequence Spanish not only accentuates conflict and tension, but it is also employed to slow down and dilate the pace of the narration. The translation is provided within the film, with Manny doing the interpreting for both Vera and the audience. Multilingualism, linguistic conflict, time dilation are all decisive elements to emphasise Manny's difficulty in finding witnesses, as one by one, every single person who could help him is no longer in a position to do so. The Italian dubbing maintains the dialogue in Spanish, revoiced by the dubbing actors in order to harmonise the voices. Interestingly, in the Italian version Mr Mulligan is simply missing, not dead: "*El señor Mulligan? Hace tiempo que es desaparecido!*".

It is worth noting that the meta-linguistic reference in the original dialogue is deleted in the dubbed version, a fairly common practice in Italian dubbing. Manny asks Mr Molinelli's neighbour: "Do you speak English?" to which she answers in Spanish: "*No. No hablo inglés señor.*". In order to sound plausible, the Italian dubbed dialogue was partially rewritten as follows:

- (3) Manny (in Italian): *Sto cercando il signor...*  
 = [I'm looking for Mr...]  
 Neighbour (in Spanish): *No... No comprendo.*  
 = [No... I don't understand.]

#### 4. Dubbing and postcarding multilingualism

In what follows we discuss the strategies adopted in the Italian dubbed versions of three films by Hitchcock which may be called “multicultural films”: *Notorious* (1946), *I Confess* (1953) and *Topaz* (1969). Not only is the presence of multilingualism reduced to the minimum in these films, but also the use of different languages never operates as a vehicle for suspense. Although they have an international setting with characters coming from different continents, the different lingua-cultural identities are simply hinted at rather than clearly expressed through different languages. English always remains the main language, while secondary languages are recalled through indirect procedures such as the actors’ accents, forms of address and greeting or a limited number of foreign-language utterances.

In other words, these films appear to resort to multilingualism as a ‘postcarding method’ (Wahl, 2005), employed only to signal the national origin of a character or the country where the story is set. This type of strategy involves linguistic homogenisation (Cronin, 2009; O’Sullivan, 2007, 2011; Sternberg, 1981): characters who come from different countries and should thus speak different languages actually turn out to speak a single language (English), while their real languages are evoked through the aforementioned devices (on the subject of replacement strategy, see also Bleichenbacher, 2008).

In *Topaz*, which features American, Russian, French and Cuban characters, everyone speaks fluent English throughout the film, while their lingua-cultural identities may be easily inferred both from the terms of address they use – such as *Monsieur* and *Madame* or *Señor* and *Señora* – and from the actors’ accents. It is worth noticing that Hitchcock mainly cast native speakers for each nationality present in the film. In the dubbed version, however, all the characters speak a standardised Italian showing no traces of different accents, although it should have been quite feasible to make them speak with a slight foreign accent.

*I Confess* has a number of similarities with *Topaz*. Although the story is set in Quebec City, in French-speaking Canada, the main characters always use English. Some French is, however, partially present in the film through the common strategies of the homogenising convention or replacement (Bleichenbacher, 2008), mainly in the form of accents and terms of address. The film even presents a brief sequence in which Ruth (Anne Baxter), the female protagonist, speaks to her maid in French. Since this scene has a reduced impact on the unfolding of the story, it was translated into Italian in the dubbed version entitled *Io confesso* (*I confess*). The Italian dubbing not only adapted into Italian all the French terms of address,<sup>8</sup> but also neutralised the different accents present in the original version of the film.

With specific regard to foreign accents, while the antagonists Otto and Alma Keller (O.E. Hasse and Dolly Haas) – who escaped from Nazi

Germany – both have a broad German accent when they speak English, in the Italian version their linguistic identity is stripped of any kind of foreign intonation. The Italian dubbing opts for neutralisation even in the final sequence of the film, when one single word is uttered in German: Alma Keller is shot to death and asks for “*Verzeihen*” (“forgiveness”), with a translation provided within the film by Father Michael (Montgomery Clift), the film’s main character. In the dubbed version Father Michael ends up simply repeating what the dying woman has just said, in order to make it more audible.

(4) Alma: *Perdono... Perdono.*  
 = [Forgive me... Forgive me.]  
 Police Inspector: *Cosa? Cosa dice? Perdono? Ma cosa intende?*  
 = [What? What's she saying? Forgive me? What does she mean?]  
 Father Michael: *Ha detto “Perdono”.*  
 = [She said “forgive me”.]

The homogenising convention also operates in *Notorious*. The two main characters, Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) and T.R. Devlin (Cary Grant), are both American. Although the film’s antagonist, Alex Sebastian (Claude Rains), and his mother are supposed to be foreigners, they always use English, even in private conversations when they plot against Alicia. Their origin can, however, be easily inferred from the slight German accent that Sebastian’s mother (Austrian actress Leopoldine Konstantin) has when she speaks English. But in the Italian dubbed version entitled *Notorious, l’amante perduta* (*Notorious, the lost lover*), the Sebastians speak standard Italian without the trace of a foreign accent.

Despite the fact that most of the film’s events take place in Rio de Janeiro, the presence of Portuguese is minimal and restricted to a few sequences. The only instance when Portuguese comes more to the foreground occurs when Cary Grant’s character orders a drink in a café. In the Italian version Portuguese is revoiced by the dubbing actor, to avoid a perceptible difference between Cary Grant’s voice and that of the dubbing actor. *Notorious* also features a number of French sentences which can be heard clearly in the party scene at the Sebastians’ house, with the aim of showing the international origin of the guests. As French always remains in the background, operating mostly as a sound effect, the Italian dubbing chose to maintain it in its original version.

It is worth highlighting that today the homogenising convention remains a fairly common practice in the Italian dubbing of multilingual films. While the different languages present in the original version are generally reduced to one (Italian), characters’ nationalities are often differentiated by resorting to stereotypical accents that foreigners are presumed to have when trying to speak the viewers’ mother tongue (De Bonis, 2014). Despite its feasibility, the Italian dubbing of the three films

discussed in this section did not exploit the possibility of recreating foreign accents. Thus, the Italian dubbed version never manages to convey the same degree of postcarding multilingualism as the original, and there is even more homogenisation.

### **5. Dubbing multilingualism between neutralisation and preservation of lingua-cultural identities**

We now turn to the Italian dubbed versions of the seven films by Hitchcock in which multilingualism plays a more crucial role in the overall narrative design. The films are: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Lifeboat* (1944), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) and *Torn Curtain* (1966). All of them have an international setting and their theme is generally either espionage/counter-espionage or war, especially World War II.

Besides contributing to a more realistic representation of people and situations, the secondary languages present in these films create either conflict or confusion in the interactions between characters. In particular in the films Hitchcock directed in the 1930s and the 1940s multilingualism often seems to go in both directions, in different sequences and sometimes even simultaneously within the same scene. Thus, multilingualism appears to be intimately associated with what Hitchcock used to define as ‘understatement’ (Truffaut, 1966), that is, representing a situation in a less dramatic fashion through a combination of drama and humour, triggering mixed emotions in both characters and viewers.

As far as the Italian dubbed versions are concerned, two different macro-strategies can be observed: on the one hand, preservation of the different lingua-cultural identities present in the original version; on the other, quantitative reduction of the multilingual situations. In the first case a standard of prevalence is always adopted: the film’s primary language (English) is dubbed into Italian, while secondary languages are generally maintained in their original versions and left untranslated. Conversely, in the second case both primary and secondary languages tend to be translated into Italian in most of the cases. The consequent alteration of the multilingual situations, however, may result in Italian viewers facing some curious instances of linguistic inconsistency.

The preservation of lingua-cultural identities can be observed in the Italian dubbing of five films: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The Lady Vanishes*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Lifeboat* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). Secondary languages are left untranslated (‘contextual translation’: Baldo, 2009a, 2009b). More precisely, the Italian dubbed version of *Foreign Correspondent* entitled *Il prigioniero di Amsterdam* (*The Amsterdam prisoner*), also distributed with the

alternative title of *Corrispondente 17* (*Correspondent number 17*), maintains both Dutch and Latvian. The dubbed film was initially reduced to 90 minutes as opposed to the 120 minutes of the original film; the Italian DVD now features the full-length film. The scenes that had been initially cut preserve their original soundtrack accompanied by Italian subtitles. The Latvian in one of the scenes is not subtitled, as opposed to the English dialogue; in other words, the same strategy is used as in the dubbing of the film.

In the Italian versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *The Lady Vanishes*, entitled respectively *L'uomo che sapeva troppo* (*The man who knew too much*) and *La signora scomparsa* (*The lady vanishes*), secondary languages were generally revoiced by Italian dubbing actors. It is worth noting, however, that for both films the current dubbed version contained in the DVD is not the one used for the release in Italian cinemas. Both films were redubbed at a later stage: *The Lady Vanishes* in the late 1960s, while *The Man Who Knew Too Much* was redubbed twice, first in the 1970s and again in the 1990s. Two different solutions were chosen to deal with the presence of Italian as one of the secondary languages in both films.

In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* Italian mainly operates as a means of characterisation. It is spoken by the manager of the hotel in Saint Moritz where the Lawrences, the film's main characters, are vacationing. In the dubbed version, it is neutralised and merges with the rest of the dialogues dubbed into Italian. On the other hand, in *The Lady Vanishes*<sup>9</sup> Italian functions as a vehicle for suspense, as it is used by a train passenger to evade the questions asked by Iris Henderson, the film's protagonist, about Miss Froy, the missing lady to whom the title refers. Italian is here replaced by Spanish, a fairly common practice in Italian dubbing in similar cases<sup>10</sup> (Patou-Patucchi, 2006).

In addition to contextual translation, another translational technique to deal with secondary languages in a multilingual film is interpretation performed by one of the characters (Baldo, 2009a, 2009b). This is what can alternatively be described as "translation provided directly on screen" (our definition) or 'diegetic interpreting' (Bleichenbacher, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2007, 2011), and it involves one of the characters' carrying out the linguistic mediation. In such cases the secondary language can be left untranslated in the dubbed version as well, whereas the interpreting into the film's primary language is, obviously, translated into Italian. Cases of interpretation performed by a character can be found in *Foreign Correspondent*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) and mostly *Lifeboat*.

*Lifeboat*<sup>11</sup> is a very interesting example of diegetic interpreting in Hitchcock's multilingual production, because it massively resorts to this translational technique to deal with its secondary language, German. The film is about conflict: between social classes (each character respectively representing one), between languages (English versus German) and,

especially, between cultural and political identities (on the one hand, the Western World and the Allies and, on the other, Nazi Germany represented by the German survivor). In this respect, not only is multilingualism a means to accentuate conflict, but it also becomes a vehicle for suspense, because the shipwrecked people always look at the German man with suspicion, never trusting him entirely.

The accurate interpretation performed by Connie (Tallulah Bankhead) never manages to cancel the barrier between the German survivor and the other shipwrecked people. The man is indeed deceiving his travel companions: not only is he an enemy officer, but he can also speak English fluently. Since German plays a crucial role in the film from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective, in the Italian version, entitled *Prigionieri dell'oceano* (*Captives of the ocean*), it was revoiced by the dubbing actors in order to avoid a perceptible difference between the voice of the original actor and that of the dubbing actor. Indeed, if the bilingual characters of a film are not revoiced in the dubbed version, they end up having two different voices, depending on the language they speak.

This is exactly what happens to the other two non-professional interpreters in the Italian versions of *Foreign Correspondent* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (American remake). In the former, John Jones, the film's protagonist, has some difficulty convincing two Dutch policemen to follow him to the old mill, where the diplomat Van Meer is being held by enemy agents.<sup>12</sup> He finally meets a little girl, who interprets between him and the policemen. The girl is dubbed into Italian when she speaks in English to Jones, but the actress's original voice is kept when the character speaks Dutch. Similarly, in the Italian version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*<sup>13</sup> the French character, Louis Bernard, has a different voice when he interprets from Arabic to Italian for the McKennas, since the part in Arabic is maintained from the original version. The mediation is relevant, because it is the means through which Bernard befriends the couple on the bus to Marrakesh. The character is revoiced by the dubbing actor whenever he code-switches from Italian to French.

The two scenes in which Bernard speaks French are not subtitled into English, thus leaving viewers in the dark to some extent. This is deliberate and aims to increase the mystery in which the Frenchman seems to be shrouded. Who is Bernard, actually? Why did he befriend the McKennas on the bus to Marrakesh? Why did he stand them up after inviting them to dine together? Why is he following the couple to the restaurant the same night? Multilingualism thus contributes to casting doubt on this character, alluding to something ambiguous that is happening or is about to take place. A similar role is played by Dutch in *Foreign Correspondent*, in particular in the scene set at the windmill, where the main character, John Jones, discovers that the diplomat Van Meer is being kept hostage by terrorists. Although Jones does not speak

Dutch, he understands that something suspicious is happening. Given that both French and Dutch turn out to be essential to the unfolding of the story, the Italian dubbing consequently opted for maintaining the two languages.

These cases of amateur interpreters in films bring to light a technical constraint that dubbing has to face when it comes to dealing with bilingual characters: the problem of harmonising the voice of the original actor with that of the dubbing actor. With the exception of French and German, in the examples discussed above all secondary languages are maintained in their original versions, inevitably producing a perceptible gap between the two voices. Thus, not only may viewers immediately notice the inevitable difference, but they also end up experiencing what Chiaro (2008, 2009) calls a 'lingua-cultural drop in translation voltage'. In other words, the suspension of linguistic disbelief, upon which dubbing is built as a screen translation mode, can be seriously compromised, revealing dubbing's artifice.

Revoicing secondary languages appears to be an effective way to overcome successfully the problem of harmonising the voices. Nonetheless, this turns out to be a possible solution only in theory, because revoicing a secondary language means casting dubbing actors able to speak or at least to acoustically imitate the language concerned. When it comes to non-Western European languages (say, Arabic or Russian), it may become almost impossible for Italian dubbing to revoice them, simply because there may be no bilingual actors available to do the job. To our knowledge, the only cases in which Arabic was partially revoiced by dubbing actors are the Italian versions of recent films such as *Body of Lies* (Ridley Scott, 2008), *Route Irish* (Ken Loach, 2010) and *Des Hommes et des Dieux* (Xavier Beauvois, 2010).<sup>14</sup> More importantly, casting bilingual actors for more exotic languages also entails a problem of cost effectiveness, which is a crucial consideration in the dubbing industry (Paolinelli & Di Fortunato, 2005).

*To Catch a Thief*<sup>15</sup> is different from the films discussed above in that it is more of a romantic thriller (Truffaut, 1966). It has an international setting and consequently stages certain multilingual situations. Although the story takes place in France, English is the main language of communication. Since the plot does not pivot around the opposition of different lingua-cultural identities, Italian dubbing professionals opted for a quantitative reduction of the bilingual situations represented. Thus, French is maintained when it is in the background, to give the viewer a flavour of the general atmosphere, but it is dubbed into Italian in the two scenes when it comes more to the foreground. It goes without saying that neutralising the languages present in the original version often makes the Italian dubbed dialogues sound redundant, implausible and even bizarre.

In these two scenes multilingualism functions both as a narrative element that serves the plot and as a semiotic device to increase the

tension. The first scene is set at the casino: John Robie drops an expensive chip down the cleavage of a French roulette player in order to draw the attention of Jessie Stevens (Jessie Royce Landis), one of richest people vacationing on the Côte d'Azur at the time. As the French player seems not to speak English, the croupier translates in French what Robie has just said. The confusion and linguistic incomprehension, as well as Robie's simulated embarrassment, immediately capture the bystanders' attention, arousing their curiosity.

(5a) Robie: I'm terribly sorry, madam, I... (looking around helplessly)

Woman: *Ne vous excusez pas, Monsieur. Ce n'est pas bien grave.*

Robie: Yes, but Madam that... (to the croupier) That was a ten thousand franc plaque!

Croupier: *Madame, ce monsieur dit il s'agit d'une plaque de dix mille francs.*

Robie: Maybe she doesn't... Madam, if you'd rather not take my word... (The French woman hands him ten thousand francs' worth.) And I'll trust you too. I won't count it!

In the Italian version entitled *Caccia al ladro (To catch a thief)* the dialogue appears not only redundant, but also not entirely credible. Since the characters are supposed to understand one another, one might wonder why someone has to repeat, in the same language, what another has just said:

(5b) Robie: *Mi spiace molto, Madame.*

= [I'm so sorry, *Madame*.]

Woman: *Non state a scusarvi, Monsieur. Non è poi così grave.*

= [Do not apologise, *Monsieur*. It's not that serious.]

Robie: *Sì, ma vedete, Madame... Mmm ... Era una fiche da diecimila franchi!*

= [Yes, but see, *Madame*... Mmm... That was a ten thousand franc plaque!]

Croupier: *Madame, il signore dice che si tratta di una fiche da diecimila franchi, dunque...* (added as the man is temporarily off screen)

= [*Madame*, this gentleman says it a ten thousand franc plaque, so...]

Robie: *Beh, forse la signora... Se non volete credere a quanto ho detto non fa niente, signora. Grazie tante. Io invece vi crederò. Non starò a contarle!*

= [Well, maybe the lady... If you don't want to take my word, it doesn't matter, madam. Thank you so much. Me, on the contrary, I'll trust you. I won't count them!]

The other case in which French is foregrounded in *To Catch a Thief* occurs during the funeral of Foussard, one of Robie's former associates. The daughter of the deceased, Danielle (French actress Brigitte Auber<sup>16</sup>), insults Robie furiously, code-switching from English to French, and chases him away. The use of French has a double effect. First, it contributes to a more realistic rendering of a private situation such as a funeral disturbed by an intruder: Danielle's irritation, her increasing anger, her deep sorrow have a much stronger emotional impact as she expresses them in her mother tongue. The sequence would not have achieved the same result had the actress performed her lines in any other language. As a second effect, multilingualism also functions as a vehicle for suspense. Danielle accuses Robie of being "*un ignoble assassin*" ("a vile killer") and "*un voleur*" ("a thief") and then she repeats some of the insults in English. French clearly accentuates conflict between characters ('horizontal dimension of communication': Sanz Ortega, 2011), while it may lead viewers to confusion ('vertical dimension': Sanz Ortega, 2011) if they do not understand the language. Multilingualism thus contributes to casting doubt on Robie's innocence, as Danielle insinuates with her accusations, making the audience suspicious of him for the first time. The state of uncertainty in which viewers are left, however, lasts only for a short while, as the character herself provides a rough translation on screen.

(6a) Danielle: *Nous enterrons mon père, aujourd'hui et je vous prierai de ne pas confondre ce cimetière avec la Chambre des Députés! Qui vous a demandé de venir ici, John Robie? Personne ne vous a invité. Sans vous, mon père vivrait encore. Mais vous n'êtes qu'un ignoble assassin, cynique et sans pitié! Killer! It's because of you he's dead!*

Bertani: *Danielle, ma petite, pas en public! Vous avez tort.*

Danielle: *Mais vous êtes tous une bande de lâches. Si personne n'ose le dire, moi je le ferai.* (English to Robie) *Get out of here! Killer! Voleur! Murderer!*

In the Italian dubbed version this scene does not have the same force as in the original, because English and French are both translated into Italian:

(6b) Danielle: *Stiamo sotterrando mio padre. Non confondete il cimitero con la Camera dei Deputati! E a voi Robie chi vi ha chiesto di venire qui? Se non fosse per voi, mio padre sarebbe ancora vivo. Siete un essere ignobile, cinico e senza pietà! Assassino! E' morto per causa vostra!*

= [We are burying my father. Don't mistake this cemetery for the House of Parliament! And you, Robie, who invited you here? My father would be still alive if it weren't for you. You are a vile person, so cynical and ruthless! Killer! He's dead because of you!]

Bertani: *Hai torto. Cerca di calmarti!*

= [You're wrong. Try to calm down!]

Danielle: *Non siete che una banda di vigliacchi. Se nessuno osa dirvelo, lo faccio io! Fuori di qui! Andatevene! Ladro! Assassino! Vigliacco!*

= [You're just a bunch of cowards! If nobody else dares to tell you, I will do it myself! Get out of here! Go away! Thief! Killer! Coward!]

Since in the Italian dubbed version there is no trace left of any linguistic incomprehension, the sophisticated role played by multilingualism is inevitably lost. Doubt is created in a more direct way. Nonetheless, it may be argued that the overall meaning of the sequence is conveyed anyway, despite the neutralisation of the bilingual situation.

The quantitative reduction of the multilingual situations present in the original version of a film is also the strategy adopted in the Italian dubbing of *Torn Curtain*.<sup>17</sup> Not only does this film resort to multilingualism very frequently (quantitative standpoint); it also uses it as a vehicle for suspense (qualitative perspective). While English is the prevailing language, Norwegian, Danish and Swedish are present as secondary languages, which generally remain in the background for a more realistic representation of the different geographic situations in which the film's events occur. The story opens with a cruise on the North Sea aboard a Norwegian liner, then the action moves to Copenhagen, most of the film's events take place in East Berlin, and finally it concludes on the Swedish coast. In the Italian dubbed version entitled *Il sipario strappato (Torn curtain)*<sup>18</sup> the secondary languages are all maintained in their original version.

Compared to the other secondary languages, German may rather be considered a co-primary language because of its significant presence in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Besides a more realistic representation in view of the fact that most of the film's events are set in East Germany, German is employed to accentuate conflict between characters (diegetic level) as well as to make viewers feel the tension (extra-diegetic level). In other words, it gives the plot a boost while at the same time serving as a semiotic device to increase suspense, very often within the same scene. In the Italian version German was quantitatively reduced where Italian dubbing professionals deemed it was possible to do so. More precisely, German is dubbed into Italian whenever it is spoken by bilingual characters who code-switch from German to English either within the same scene or from one scene to another. These characters speak standard Italian without a trace of foreign accent.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, German is maintained when it remains in the background or when it clearly produces linguistic incomprehension and conflict, thus functioning as a vehicle for suspense. In this latter case the preservation of two languages in opposition appears as the only adequate solution to

follow in order not to compromise the overall coherence of the narrative. However, a careful viewer might wonder why some German characters speak Italian throughout the film, while others use German. For instance, the Italian dubbing maintains German in the final sequence of *Torn Curtain*, when the two protagonists reach the Swedish coast on a freighter. They are hidden in two large baskets which are about to be dumped ashore when a German ballerina begins to suspect something. Suddenly she starts to shout something in German. This ballerina was also a passenger on the same plane to East Berlin as Armstrong. On their arrival, she mistakenly believes the journalists are there to greet her, until she is told in German that the press is actually awaiting the American professor. In order to increase the humorous effect of this brief sequence, the Italian dubbing has chosen to translate German into Italian.<sup>20</sup> As a result, if on the previous occasions the ballerina always spoke Italian – as is the case for all the German bilingual characters in the film – in the final scene she quite unexpectedly, and inconsistently, uses German. In this case the secondary language is maintained since it clearly functions as a vehicle for creating and increasing the suspense of the scene.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. Concluding remarks

This study has explored the role multilingualism plays in Alfred Hitchcock's work, focusing on the implications it has in the construction of the distinctive feature of his films: suspense. From his early productions of the 1930s to those at the end of the 1960s, so called "secondary languages", though restricted in quantitative terms, play nonetheless a crucial role in qualitative terms in Hitchcock's films.

Three main functions of multilingualism were identified: realistic rendering, conflict, and confusion. If realistic rendering aims at enhancing viewers' perception of the reality depicted on screen, particularly if the film's characters come from different parts of the world, conflict as well as confusion of languages and lingua-cultural identities both become effective semiotic strategies to create and maintain suspense. Since secondary languages are never subtitled into English, viewers are asked to resort to contextual translation in order to guess what happens or is about to take place. In other words, multilingualism is an important device which makes it possible to leave the audience in a state of uncertainty and doubt, increasing emotional tension and directing the spectators' attention to what speakers of secondary languages are saying. At the same time, multilingualism often appears as an important narrative element in the unfolding of the plot.

A comparative analysis between the original versions of the fourteen multilingual films directed by the master of thrill and their Italian versions, focusing almost exclusively on the dubbed versions, has helped outline the different strategies used by the Italian audiovisual

translators to deal with multilingualism in Hitchcock's films. Three different macro-strategies have been observed. First, the neutralisation of the languages present in the original version by dubbing the entire film into Italian (in the cases of minimum and/or postcarding multilingualism). The second strategy involves the preservation of the different linguistic-cultural identities present in the original version through a combination of dubbing and other techniques such as contextual translation and diegetic interpreting. Since these are already present in the original films, the Italian dubbed versions simply mirror them in view of maintaining the capital role multilingualism plays as a vehicle for suspense in the films in which it occurs.

Between these opposing poles is the quantitative reduction of the multilingual situations, when dubbing professionals deem it feasible to do so. Thus, both primary and secondary languages tend to be translated into one language – Italian – most of the time. As a result, in the Italian dubbed versions the presence of secondary languages is quantitatively reduced and qualitatively altered, in comparison with the original films. Such a strategy may have negative consequences for the suspension of disbelief, since viewers are confronted with a number of curious cases of linguistic inconsistency.

Both neutralisation and quantitative reduction of multilingual situations are strategies associated with the specificities of dubbing as a screen translation mode. They are due to a combination of two factors: on the one hand, the ideological choice made by the Italian dubbing industry (the distributor of the film, dubbing professionals such as dialogue writers and dubbing directors) and, on the other, the technical constraints dubbing has to face (that is, the problem of harmonising the voices in cases of bilingual characters).

This study has attempted to show how “the use of multilingualism and interlinguistic situations is perfectly consistent with a number of basic narrative principles, such as conflict, character configuration, spatial opposition, mimesis, and suspense management” (Delabastita & Grutman, 2005, p. 24), all of which are elements present throughout Hitchcock's multilingual production. What may be more problematic is that multilingualism appears to be in sharp contrast with dubbing, which by definition involves more linguistic flattening and homogenisation than certain other forms of film translation. Since the production, distribution and, consequently, the translation of multilingual films is on the increase,<sup>22</sup> it would be interesting to examine how Italian dubbing has dealt with new or more recent thrillers which resort to multilingualism.

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- 1 During World War I, the English novelist Edgar Brodie (John Gielgud) is sent to Switzerland by the British Intelligence Service to kill a German agent. During the mission he meets first a fake general (Peter Lorre) and then his colleague Elsa Carrington (Madeleine Carroll). After mistakenly targeting an innocent old man – named Caypor - as the German operative, both Edgar and Elsa start questioning the morality of the mission.
  - 2 This funny character has a very long surname or, rather, a list of surnames. Humorously, he is always interrupted whenever he tries to introduce himself to other characters.
  - 3 Conversely, cases of embedded translation occur when during a conversation the meaning of a question is drawn from its answer by resorting to code-switching strategies.

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- 4 The film is based on the eponymous novel written by Daphne du Maurier in 1938. A young and naive paid-companion (Joan Fontaine) meets wealthy widower Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier) – Massimo in the Italian version – in Monte Carlo. They fall in love, marry and go to Manderley, de Winter's large country estate in England. The second Mrs de Winter clashes with the housekeeper, Mrs Danvers (Judith Anderson), and discovers that the memory of the first wife Rebecca still has a strange and powerful grip on her husband and the servants.
  - 5 It only consists of short phrases and sentences, mainly terms of address such as *Monsieur*, *Madame* or *Mademoiselle*. As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, this is a quite common strategy aiming at a more realistic rendering of what occurs on screen: resorting to some expressions or words in a different language from the film's main language of communication is a way of enhancing viewers' perception of the linguistic reality in which the story takes place.
  - 6 The film is an adaptation from the 1950 novel of the same title by Patricia Highsmith. Tennis star Guy Haines (Farley Granger) meets a stranger on a train, who proposes to him a criss-cross murder. The man, whose name is Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker), will kill Guy's estranged wife on condition that Guy kills Bruno's hated father. Guy does not take Bruno seriously until his wife is found murdered in an amusement park. When Bruno, who is a psychopath, understands that Guy does not intend to kill his father, he begins to harass him, determined to persuade Guy to fulfil his part of the deal.
  - 7 A sort of explanatory intrusion by Italian audiovisual translators may be also found in the opening sequence of the film. Through an alternating cut, the camera only focuses on the feet of two men reaching the railway station: the rest of their bodies will not be framed until the two men bang their feet against each other as they get on the train. These two men are actually the film's main characters, namely Guy Haines and Bruno Anthony. The scene is deliberately constructed with no verbal comment in order for the images to speak for themselves. In the Italian dubbed version a voice-over is added to provide the viewer with extra information not present in the original version. As a result, the dubbed version ends up overtly explaining what can be easily drawn from the visual code, thus revealing and spoiling the overall meaning of the sequence.
  - 8 Interestingly enough, in the Italian version Ruth's maid turns out to be the only character to use the term of address *Madame* in French. This appears as a partial compensation for the neutralisation of French.
  - 9 Travellers on a trans-European train are delayed for a night due to bad weather conditions in a small fictional country somewhere in the Balkans called Bandrika, which is governed by a

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dictator. The passengers are hosted in a small village hotel, where socialite Iris Henderson (Margaret Lockwood) meets an old woman named Miss Froy (Dame May Whitty). Shortly after the journey is resumed, Miss Froy mysteriously vanishes from the train.

- 10 The reason for this choice lies in the assumed lingua-cultural affinity between Italians and their Spanish "cousins".
- 11 The film is set during World War II. In the North Atlantic, several British and American civilians are stuck in a lifeboat after their ship and a U-boat sank each other in combat. The survivors are from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds: an international journalist, a rich businessman, a radio operator, a nurse, a steward, a sailor and an engineer with communist tendencies. Troubles start when they pull aboard a German survivor, Willy (Walter Slezak), who denies being an enemy officer.
- 12 The American reporter John Jones (Joel McCrea) is sent to Europe to find out what is really occurring on the eve of Second World War. While in Amsterdam to attend a peace conference, where the Dutch diplomat Van Meer (Albert Bassermann) is expected to give an important speech, Jones witnesses the "apparent" murder of the man. He immediately sets off after the gunman, only to find that the real Van Meer has been kidnapped and is being held by some Nazi spies. Jones does his best to get to the bottom of the matter and to set the diplomat free.
- 13 Ben and Jo McKenna (James Stewart and Doris Day) are spending a summer holiday with their son Hank in French Morocco. One day, they accidentally meet the mysterious Louis Bernard (Daniel Gélin) on a bus to Marrakech. Bernard is actually a French secret agent on assignment in Morocco. The next day Bernard is shot to death in the local marketplace, but before dying he manages to tell Ben of an assassination about to take place in London, planned by some terrorists. Fearing that their plot would be revealed, the conspirators kidnap Hank and carry him off to London with them. The couple thus goes back to London, searching for their son. The film is the American remake of the previous film with the same title shot in 1934 in the UK (see Chiaro Nocella, 1999). In the British version the plot is almost the same, but the first part of the takes place in Saint Moritz, Switzerland.
- 14 Respectively entitled: *Nessuna verità* (*No truth*), *L'altra verità* (*The other truth*) and *Uomini di Dio* (*Men of God*). They are all films in which Arabic remains a secondary language, however, and thus has a reduced presence on screen as opposed to the film's primary language – English in the first two films, French in the third.
- 15 The story is set on the French Riviera, where the American expatriate John Robie (Cary Grant) has moved - after retiring from his occupation as a "cat burglar". As a new series of

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jewel robberies leads the police to suspect him, Robie makes every effort to catch the real thief in order to prove his innocence.

- 16 The Foussards are French, but they speak (fluent) English almost all the time in the film. They both have a clear French accent when they speak English. Conversely, in the dubbed version they speak standard Italian without a trace of French accent. See the aforementioned considerations on the homogenising convention made in the previous paragraph.
- 17 American Professor Michael Armstrong (Paul Newman) defects to East Germany, followed by his reluctant assistant-fiancée Sarah Sherman (Julie Andrews). In reality, his defection is not genuine: his real mission is to steal a secret mathematical formula from a renowned scientist in Leipzig and to escape back to the West as soon as he obtains it.
- 18 The Italian word “sipario” for “curtain” refers only to the stage. The double meaning and the allusion to the Iron Curtain is lost in the Italian title, since the Italian equivalent for “Iron Curtain” is “cortina di ferro”.
- 19 Polish Countess Kuchinska (Russian actress Lila Kedrova) is the only character who also has a slight foreign accent in the Italian dubbed version. The reason for this choice lies in the fact that the character makes several mistakes as she speaks English. Language thus becomes a very important means of characterisation for this unusual and funny character. Not only does her Italian dubbed counterpart have a slight Slavic accent, but her Italian also sounds broken from time to time.
- 20 Humorously, the German ballerina is never the star whose arrival is anxiously awaited by the press. Something similar also happens when she arrives in Sweden. She is also the lead ballerina in the crowded theatre, from where Michael and Sarah escape after being spotted by the woman. In the Italian version she also speaks Italian on this second occasion.
- 21 The Italian version mirrors the original version by resorting to “contextual translation” (Baldo, 2009a and 2009b). Although no subtitles are provided, what the German ballerina says is self-evident: the visual code, combined with the overall context, helps the viewer to infer the meaning of the verbal code.
- 22 On polyglot cinema see also Dwyer, 2005; Berger & Komori, 2010.