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Audience Reception of Translated Audiovisual Texts and the Problem of Visual and Verbal Shared/Unshared Knowledge

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Most consumers in industrial and post-industrial societies spend more time looking at a screen than reading the printed page. For the purposes of this article, 'screen' will be understood as that of cinemas and TV/monitors (terrestrial/satellite TV, VHS cassettes and, increasingly, or in some countries, now exclusively, DVDs). Attention will be limited to entertainment products (feature films, situation comedies, fiction series, soap operas). If the viewer does not live in an English speaking country, the vast majority of feature films, especially at the cinema, and a large proportion of the other genres mentioned above will be imports from the USA, thus necessarily having undergone some form of interlingual transformation, i.e. usually dubbing or subtitling. This article will concentrate on the situation in Italy, notoriously a 'dubbing country', though, in recent years, a greater variety of choice is available than previously. In larger Italian cities some cinemas offer original language films, usually on selected weekdays, but these screenings appear mostly to target foreign audiences (for example, American students on their 'year abroad' in Italy) and they are not normally subtitled in Italian (unless the copy comes from a major Italian film festival, where all films must be shown in the original language, with subtitles in the language of the country putting on the festival) An alternative for curious Italian viewers is now the DVD, with its choice of the original language and dubbed soundtracks and optional interlingual (in a varying number of languages) and intralingual subtitles. Despite this increased linguistic choice, however, one has the impression that less linguistically sophisticated Italian viewers (arguably the majority!) mostly prefer to stick to the dubbed version, which is the mode they are used to at the cinema and on TV. Other European countries (including traditionally 'dubbing countries', such as France, Spain and Germany) present a substantially more varied picture¹.

The situation in the Anglophone world is in no way reciprocal. While non English speaking consumers are exposed to a vast amount of translated material (not only of audiovisual texts but also literature, popular and otherwise, etc.) their counterparts in English speaking countries see (or read) little that was originally produced in another language. In the case of films (which are mostly subtitled, when

¹ J. DÍAZ CINTAS, *Audiovisual Translation in the Third Millennium*, in eds. G. Anderman - M. Rogers, *Translation Today. Trends and Perspectives*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 2003, p. 196-197 illustrates the changes taking place in some European countries, including a switch to dubbing for some restricted film genres in traditionally 'subtitling countries', such as Denmark, though he gives what, in my view, is an over optimistic account of the reception of foreign films in the USA.

made available), there is considerable resistance to the foreign. Except for national film theatres and a number of 'art house' cinemas, few foreign films are distributed and, when they are, they tend to be restricted to the above mentioned, somewhat élitist environments. TV viewers watch home made products or (mostly) US imports (where appropriate). Translation plays a minor role in the Anglophone media world.

1. Dubbing: covert or overt translation?

One of the most frequently discussed dichotomies, albeit on a cline of 'more or less', in translation studies is that posited by Juliane House between 'covert' and 'overt' translation². The former tends to hide its origins as a translation, presenting itself, as far as possible as a (second) original, while the latter draws attention to its translational status. At first sight translated audiovisual texts, by whatever method, would appear to belong to the latter category, and this is the view of, among others, Peter Fawcett³:

...a dubbed or subtitled film is always an overt translation....In dubbing we can see the lack of sync, and...many audiences have become expert in spotting dyschrony not only in the sense of a mismatch between mouth shape and sound heard but also between sound heard and cultural stereotypes...In other words, in a dubbed film we are constantly aware through images and non-matching mouth movements of the presence of a foreign language and culture, and this may explain the shift in attitude that has taken place towards the use of voice-overs in documentaries.

He is closely followed in the article on dubbing in a well known translation studies encyclopedia⁴. Opinion is not however unanimous as the following quotation from Henrik Gottlieb, a leading expert on subtitling shows⁵:

Subtitling is an *overt* type of translation, retaining the original version, thus laying itself bare to criticism from everybody with the slightest knowledge of the source language.

[...]

As opposed to subtitling, dubbing - the ever present rival - offers a discrete, *covert* mode of translation, replacing the entire dialog track, and sometimes even the accompanying music & effects track, with a target-language version.

Gottlieb, in my view correctly, makes a clear distinction between the two main modes of audiovisual translation. There is no doubt that subtitling is an extreme case of overt translation (something like a written text with a translation on the facing

² J. HOUSE, *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment*, Narr, Tübingen, [1977] 1981 and *Translation Quality Assessment. A Model Revisited*, Narr, Tübingen, 1997.

³ P. FAWCETT, *Translating Film*, in ed. G.T. Harris, *On Translating French Literature and Film*, Rodopi, Amsterdam & Atlanta, 1996, pp. 65-88 (pp. 75-76).

⁴ M. BAKER - B. HOCHÉL, *Dubbing*, in ed. M. Baker, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London & New York, 1998, pp. 74-76 (p.76).

⁵ H. GOTTLIEB, *Subtitling: diagonal translation*, in «Perspectives» 2 (1994), pp. 101-121 (p. 102).

page). After all, the subtitles are a written addition to the original film, which is otherwise untouched, and the subtitler is obliged to bear in mind that a number of the members of the audience may have a good enough knowledge of the source language (at least in the context of some speech communities) to note any drastic changes, and probably disapprove of them. Certain manipulations, which, when considered necessary for facilitating audience reception or for other more sinister reasons, such as moral or political censorship, can be applied in the case of dubbing⁶, are much more problematic with subtitling. As far as Fawcett's main argument for dubbing as overt translation is concerned, anyone accustomed to watching dubbed films in Italy, like the author of the present article (and presumably his readers) would be able to assure the British scholar (obviously very little accustomed to dubbing) that the high level of professionalism reached by the teams working in the Italian dubbing industry (dubbing script writers, dubbing directors and dubbing actors etc.) make the crucial contribution to the illusion that the foreign actors are actually speaking Italian (albeit in a foreign cultural setting) and deal very well with matching the new language to the original actors' body language (not only facial expressions)! Admittedly the cultural setting can cause reception problems, as we shall see later on in this article.

2. The Nature of Audiovisual Texts

Thanks especially to semiotics, the notion of 'text' has been expanded well beyond written genres⁷. The film is an obvious case of a unit of meaning, which communicates through more than one channel. In a ground breaking article, Dirk Delabastita, among much else, provides a clear picture of the communicative mechanism of the audiovisual product as a semiotic macro-sign: ⁸ a) visual presentation - verbal signs b) visual presentation - non verbal signs c) acoustic presentation - verbal signs d) acoustic presentation - non-verbal signs. In the case of dubbing, the only total replacement is performed on c) (i.e. the source language dialogue) and, on occasion, partially, on d) (i.e. music), while a) (i.e. written texts such as shop signs, newspapers, book covers, letters etc.) and b) (the setting of the film, dress codes, body language etc.) are left intact, though a) can be subtitled where possible (for example in the case of letters being read by an actor) and, in the case of the setting of the film additional written informative captions not present in the original film can be provided (though this is infrequent).

Rather surprisingly, given the multimedial nature of the texts involved,

⁶ I have investigated elsewhere such a strategy in the case of the British made hit *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. See: J. DENTON, *The Domestication of Otherness: film translation and audience intercultural awareness assessment*, in ed. C. Taylor, *Tradurre il cinema*, Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione, Trieste, 2000, pp. 145-155. and *Who's Afraid of Otherness? Film Translation and the Foreignizing/Domesticating Dilemma*, in ed. G. Calabrò, *Teoria, didattica e prassi della traduzione*, Liguori, Napoli, 2001, pp. 115-127.

⁷ For a thorough presentation see: S. NERGAARD, *Translation and Semiotics in the 90s*, «Textus» 12 (1999), pp. 459-480.

⁸ D. DELABASTITA, *Translation and Mass Communication: film and T.V. translation as evidence of cultural dynamics*, in «Babel», 35 (1989), pp. 193-218 (p. 199).

research in audiovisual translation has not devoted much attention to dialogue-image interaction, which is a fundamental feature of the genre. One can find hundreds of articles dealing with comparison (now more descriptively than prescriptively) between source and target verbal exchanges, which, in this context, are somewhat limited. The work of Frederic Chaume Varela, among others, has now, however, begun to redress the balance in an area where much more research needs to be done⁹. Chaume rightly insists on the need for the screen translator to maintain cohesion and coherence between dialogue and image (in many cases necessarily, if the scene in question is to make any sense to the target audience) and suggests ways in which this can be done by means of numerous examples. Significantly (for one of the examples to be discussed at the end of the present article) he argues for total substitution if this is the only way in which target audience participation is to be maintained (for example where the overriding consideration is to make the viewer laugh in a humorous scene, where a close translation of the dialogue would disrupt verbal-visual cohesion and coherence).

3. Audiovisual Translation Research and the Shift to Audience Reception

In a wide ranging, pioneering study on film dubbing, Bollettieri Bosinelli¹⁰, in line with George Steiner's widely discussed hermeneutic approach¹¹, placed the audience at the centre of the stage (as it were), pointing out that "Film-viewing, like reading, involves an act of translation from the text to the internalized discourse of the reader". Audience reception is fast becoming a leading feature of audiovisual translation research, which is now going well beyond the rather limited contrastive film dialogue studies, which stood for too long at the core of this sub-discipline of Translation Studies¹².

⁹ See, for example, F. CHAUME VARELA, *Translating Nonverbal Information in Dubbing*, in ed. F. Poyatos, *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1997, pp. 315-326 and *Textual Constraints and the Translator's Creativity in Dubbing*, in eds. A. Beylard et al., *Translators' Strategies and Creativity*, Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1998, pp. 15-22, as well as P. ZABALBEASCOA, *Dubbing and the Nonverbal Dimension of Translation*, in ed. F. Poyatos, *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1997, pp. 327-342, also K. WEHN, *About Remakes, Dubbing & Morphing*, in eds. Y. Gambier and H. Gottlieb, *(Multi)media Translation*, Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2001, pp. 65-72.

¹⁰ R.M. BOLLETTIERI BOSINELLI, *Film Dubbing: Linguistic and Cultural Issues*, in «Il traduttore nuovo» 42 (1994), pp. 7-28.

¹¹ G. STEINER, *After Babel*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, [1975] 1998.

¹² A thorough survey of the latest research trends and needs in audiovisual translation studies by Yves Gambier was presented at the conference entitled *Between Text and Image. Updating Research in Screen Translation* held in Forlì in October 2005 (proceedings forthcoming). The Interpreters' and Translators' Centre of the University of Bologna in Forlì is undoubtedly producing the most innovative work in the audiovisual translation field, as the sophisticated research by Delia Chiaro and her

Semiotics has highlighted the role of the reader (easily extended to the viewer) in full realization of text meaning¹³. However, the reader is posited as a model (or ideal) entity constructed by the text to be emulated, as far as possible by the empirical reader, so as to be able to interpret the text according to the author's intentions¹⁴. The now well established discipline of Media Studies has devoted an enormous amount of work to reception and response to print and audiovisual media, though by empirical readers/viewers subjected to interviews, contacted via Internet etc. The extension, now in progress, to Translation Studies and, in particular, its audiovisual branch is an overdue move and one would expect there to be countless opportunities for inter-disciplinary cross-fertilization. This, however does not appear to have happened, at least, not yet¹⁵. For example an internationally famous study of the reception of the US soap opera *Dallas* in various social contexts (including ones where the viewers' native language was not English)¹⁶ provides no discussion of the possible consequences for viewer response of the fact that some of them watched the soap opera in a translated version (i.e. via subtitles). Likewise, a thoroughly researched comparison of reception by women viewers in Italy of the US soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* (in Italy simply known as *Beautiful*) and locally produced *Un posto al sole*, following the guidelines of other internationally well known work in similar cases¹⁷, found, not surprisingly, that the locally produced soap opera was appreciated for its greater realism and closeness to issues felt to be more relevant for an Italian audience than the dream world of the rich characters in the American programme (a great hit in Italy nonetheless!), but never considered the idea that this contrast could

colleagues into audience response shows. Much of their work is forthcoming in conference proceedings (for example, the European Society for Translation Studies Congress in Lisbon in 2004 and the conference held in London in February 2004 entitled *In so Many Words: Language Transfer on the Screen*). M. PAVESI, *La traduzione filmica*, Carocci, Roma, 2005 pp. 9-27 provides a useful overview of current issues.

¹³ See NERGAARD, *op. cit.*, p.469. U. ECO, *Lector in fabula*, Bompiani, Milano, 1979, pp. 50-66.

¹⁴ E. NARDOCCHIO ed., *Reader Response to Literature. The Empirical Dimension*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin & New York, 1992, is an exception to this. See also I. KOVACIC, *Reception of Subtitles. The non-existent Ideal Viewer* in «Nouvelles de la FIT - FIT Newsletter», 14 (1995), pp. 376-383, in the field of audiovisual translation.

¹⁵ In the introduction to Y. GAMBIER - H. GOTTLIEB eds., *(Multi)media Translation*, Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2001, (p. ix), the editors comment on the widespread indifference of media studies scholars to language issues (in the widest possible context), which lie at the heart of translation studies.

¹⁶ E. KATZ - T. LIEBES, *The Export of Meaning. Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*, [Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990] Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993.

¹⁷ S. CAPECCHI, *Ridendo e sognando (con le soap). Il pubblico di Un posto al sole e di Beautiful*, RAI-ERI, Roma, 2000.

also have (socio)linguistic aspects (i.e. the neutral accents used by the dubbing actors in *Beautiful* and the more realistic Neapolitan accents, with their affective connotations, in the Italian product – which is set in Naples). Neither do language issues appear to be a priority area for the large scale European research project (based in Italy) called *Eurofiction*¹⁸.

4. Audiovisual Translation and Audience Knowledge

At a conference held some years ago in Turku (Finland) entitled *Translation and Knowledge*, the names Minsky and Schank appear in more than one list of references following papers in the proceedings¹⁹, thus showing the close link that can be set up between translation studies and cognitive linguistics. The concepts of ‘frame’ (Minsky) and ‘script’ (Schank), the former meaning data structures by means of which knowledge is stored in memory and the latter covering event sequences²⁰ have proved very useful (despite controversy over their exact nature) in descriptive translation studies examining translators’ attitudes to problems represented by knowledge gaps in target readers/viewers as compared with the receivers of the source text. Frames and scripts are both verbal and visual and frequently culture bound. While members of the source speech community are expected to draw upon their background knowledge, which source text producers take for granted, to fill in the parts of a text that are not made explicit, when the same text is processed in a translated version and source culture specificity is foregrounded, unless the translator supplies information that he/she considers unavailable to the majority of the new target language reader/viewership, misunderstanding, misinterpretation and even bewilderment can occur. Nevertheless, there are severe restrictions on the ways in which new information can be provided in a translation (especially in the particularly ‘constrained’ case of audiovisual texts), if the translator believes that this kind of intervention is legitimate, even when technically possible (and not all of them do).

5. From Close Translation to Substitution and Beyond

¹⁸ The first report appeared in M. BUONANNO ed. *Eurofiction 1997. Primo rapporto sulla fiction televisiva in Europa*, RAI-ERI, Roma, 1998. The Swiss member of the research team has, however, published some translation oriented work, for example: U. GANZ-BLÄTTLER, *Series in Synch: Language Transfer as Cultural Transfer in the European TV Market*, in eds G. Bechelloni and M. Buonanno, *Television Fiction and Identities. America, Europe, Nations*, Ipermedium, Napoli & Los Angeles, 1997, pp. 147-158.

¹⁹ Y GAMBIER - J. TOMMOLA eds., *Translation & Knowledge*, University of Turku - Centre for Translation and Interpreting, Turku, 1993.

²⁰ For discussion of these and other related concepts see: G. BROWN - G. YULE, *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 238-271.

In the last section of this article three specific cases of audiovisual transfer will be examined, along a cline of: restricted intervention – partial substitution – total replacement. The purpose of these small case studies is to expand on the issues raised in the previous sections.

5.1 *Priest/Il prete*

One of the themes of the British film *Priest* (1994) (released in Italy with the title *Il prete*) is the clash between an older, radical priest (Matthew) in charge of a Liverpool Catholic parish and his new young (both politically and theologically) conservative assistant priest (Greg). Soon after the new assistant arrives Father Matthew is surprised to find two newspapers at the breakfast table. The following dialogue ensues (the text of the dubbed version immediately follows the English original):

M: Did you order this?
L'hai ordinato tu?
G: Yes.
Sì.
M: What, every day?
Per tutti i giorni?
G: Is it a problem?
Sì. E' un problema?
M: Well, it's two papers. It's a bit extravagant.
Due quotidiani è un po' eccessivo.
G: Have you finished with it?
L'hai già letto quello?
M: I haven't touched it. I despise Rupert Murdoch.
Non l'ho neanche toccato. Disprezzo Rupert Murdoch.
G: Well, he speaks very highly of you.
Lui invece ti ammira molto.

Reading this exchange on the printed page clearly shows the frequent interdependence of dialogue and image in an audiovisual text. Without the visuals, the verbal exchange would be difficult to interpret (note the deictics ‘this’, ‘it’) even for a British audience (being an English speaker is not sufficient; the receiver requires a first hand knowledge of contemporary British culture). We already know that Matthew is politically more radical than Gregg, so it is not surprising that the former normally reads the *Guardian*, which the latter would reject as ‘trendy lefty’. It is thus not surprising that Gregg prefers *The Times*, which belongs to the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, who is not exactly popular in more radical circles! The two newspapers are clearly visible in the visual sequence and the very short scene ends with each priest reading his favourite newspaper.

The British scriptwriter could count on the further knowledge expected to be stored in the memory of his British audience in the form of *Guardian*, *The Times* and ‘Rupert Murdoch’ frames. The close Italian translation cannot count on the same kind of stored knowledge (Rupert Murdoch was not well known in Italy in 1994!) and the inference made is more likely to be something like ‘Father Matthew doesn’t think the

parish can afford two daily newspapers'. A small, sophisticated minority (which does not include my students at the University of Florence, on whom I tested this sequence!) might go further, but this common cultural knowledge in British society is unlikely to be interculturally shared (at least in connotative terms) to any substantial extent.

Shortly after the beginning of the film the well known skyline of Liverpool and its neo Gothic Anglican and modern Catholic cathedrals can be seen; well known, that is, to British (and possibly some other English speaking) viewers. The caption LIVERPOOL (evidently considered quite unnecessary in the original film) does not appear as an addition to the Italian version, explaining an unfamiliar skyline for the target viewers. There is no verbal reference to Liverpool anywhere in the film. An initial exchange between the archbishop and Father Matthew mentions a new assistant priest "from down south" who "wants to come up here and do his bit for the inner city". This is dubbed as: "lavora nel sud attualmente...vuole venire quasù a fare qualcosa per la sua città natale". The fact that the Italian version inevitably and conventionally has no socially or geographically based accent differences hides the fact that Gregg does not speak with a local accent and is not originally from Liverpool from Italian viewers. This translational choice was probably made because of the conceptually problematic term 'inner city'. Furthermore, British viewers live in a multi-denominational society, unlike Italians. Therefore when the two priests knock on the doors of a popular housing estate saying (in the Italian version) "Salve! Questa è una famiglia cattolica?", the frequent rude remarks they receive as answers are more likely to lead Italian viewers to think this unknown, rather ugly town 'quasù' is rather un-Christian or anti-clerical, rather than that the family in question may well be protestant. The typical Irish (most Liverpool catholics are of Irish origin) funeral wake that takes place in a pub (Italian viewers are unlikely to have an 'Irish wake' script stored in their memories), the Irish and local accents and growing drunkenness contributing to the identification of the participants for British viewers, remains a mysterious, bizarre happening for the new target audience of the dubbed version. De-coding difficulties can be explained by insufficient frame and script repertoires on the part of target language viewers. The above, rather intuitive remarks are, to some extent, supported by a rather rough and ready survey among a group of students following a course I held on audiovisual translation at Florence University in mid 2007, who watched the first thirty minutes or so of the Italian dubbed version of the film, during which the scene is set for the following dramatic sequence of events.

5.2 *The Nanny/La tata*

A very different case is represented by the Italian version of the American situation comedy *The Nanny*, originally shown in Italy, with the title *La tata*, on Canale 5 from 1993 and then on Italia Uno from 1998²¹. It was a big success (evidence being the high audience ratings and subsequent advertising income, and the setting up

²¹ For more detailed treatment see: C. FERRARI, *The Nanny in Italy: Language, Nationalism and Cultural Identity*, in «Global Media Journal», 3 (2004) (electronic version).

of a 'Tata Fan Club'). This success was, to a great extent, due to the decision made by the dubbing script writer, Guido Leoni, and approved by the TV channel, to turn the common Jewish woman Fran Fine from Queens in New York, who starts a job as the children's nanny for an upper class English gentleman, whom she eventually marries, with an even more common mother Sylvia, into an Italian immigrant from near Rome called Francesca Cacace, who had moved to New York to live with her Auntie Assunta (i.e. her mother Sylvia in the original version). This change was made possible of course by the dubbing mode, which entirely replaces the original dialogue. It was also helped by the 'Mediterranean look' of the dark haired actress Fran Drescher. The other characters (Fran's British employer, his children and domestic staff) remain intact, as far as their identity is concerned. The decision to drastically alter the nanny's ethnic origins was made because of the continual references on the part of Fran and her circle to Jewish customs, use of Yiddish words etc. all well known in New York but little known in Italy and, in any case, very problematic as far as intercultural/interlingual transfer was concerned. The extent to which changes had to be made, once the original strategic translational decision had been taken, can be seen in the following sequence (a flashback to a period when Fran was a little girl):

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD FRAN:

Ma, why can't we have a Christmas treeeee?

FRANCESCA A OTTO ANNI:

Ma zia, perché non possiamo fare l'albero di Natale come gli altri?

YOUNGER SYLVIA:

Because, my darling, we are of the Jewish faith. And as Jewish people, we celebrate Hanukkah.

GIOVANE ASSUNTA:

Per quest'anno dovrai accontentarti di addobbare candelieri. Non ho molti soldi; o questi o torce elettriche.

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD FRAN:

It's so boring compared to Christmas. Like why don't we have a Hanukkah parade?

FRANCESCA A OTTO ANNI:

Ma non è come avere un albero di Natale. Non potevamo almeno chiedere un prestito?

YOUNGER SYLVIA:

Oy, after all that walking we did in the desert, we like to sit on the holiday. Preferably by a pool in Miami Beach. Hi, Ma.

GIOVANE ASSUNTA:

E a chi, se ogni banca che mi vedeva da lontano si affrettava ad attaccare il cartello "chiuso per ferie"? Per quei quattro solleciti che ci hanno mandato mi sembra un po' troppo! Ciao bella!

Again this passage foregrounds the link between the verbal and visual. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah (or 'Festival of Lights') takes place between late November and late December and involves the lighting of one candle or oil lamp each of the eight nights of the duration of the festival. The candles (if lamps are not used) are placed in a special candelabrum which holds eight lights (plus one extra). This explains why the reference to the candles, visible on screen, had to be introduced, while the rest is changed out of recognition.

The strategy worked perfectly, even in the episode when Fran and her British employer get married, in her words, in the Italian version, by ‘un prete e un assessore’, though the presumed civic official is dressed in a rabbi’s robes, an electric light bulb is broken and the ceremony takes place under a canopy!

5.3 *Neighbours/Un posto al sole*

The last case I shall briefly examine is not really one of translation at all, even in the broadest sense in which some see the phenomenon. Here we have an example of an alternative to the need to turn to translation of foreign imports, though they cost less than original productions and are badly needed to fill programme schedules²². *Un posto al sole* (from October 1996 on RAI Tre and still going strong!) was the first real Italian soap opera to rival the hit American imports. Its only connection with the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* (which is also enormously popular in Great Britain) is the fact that it is co-produced by Grundy Worldwide (now owned by Pearson Television). Instead of the usual procedure of translating a work originating in a foreign culture it was decided to produce something closer to home with which an Italian audience could identify more easily, in this case an apartment house in Naples, rather than the suburban Australian street, in which *Neighbours* is set. In urban settings Italians mostly live vertically rather than horizontally²³ and the content of other popular soap operas of the working-class, street centred homely type so popular in Great Britain, such as *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*, is not considered suitable for a ‘Latin’ audience (or an American one, for that matter). The case of *Un posto al sole* is one of ‘the Empire fights back’, at least on TV!

²² Often foreign programmes (such as American sit coms) have to be bought as part of a package including, say, films which the Italian channel is anxious to broadcast; see M. BUONANNO, *Indigeni si diventa*, Sansoni, Milano, 1999, p. 14.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 144-150.