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Translating English Sound Symbolism in Italian Comics: A Corpus-Based Linguistic Analysis across Six Decades (1932–1992)

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Abstract: Linking interdisciplinarity and multimodality in translation studies, this paper will analyse the diachronic translation of English ideophones in Italian Disney comics. This is achieved thanks to the compiling of a bi-directional corpus of sound symbolic entries spanning six decades (1932–1992)—a corpus that was created following extensive archival work in various Italian and American libraries between 2014 and 2016. The central aim is to showcase practical examples coming from published comic scripts and to highlight patterns of translation in each of the five different time windows which were chosen according to specific historical, linguistic and cultural vicissitudes taking place in the Italian nation. Overall, the intention is to shed light on an under-developed area of studies that focuses on the cross-linguistical transposition of ideophonic forms in comic books and to pinpoint how greater factors might influence the treatment of such deceptively miniscule elements in the comic books' pages.

Keywords: Disney; ideophones; multimodality; onomatopoeia; translation

1. Introduction

Prefixes such as multi- and poly- are abundant when talking about texts "merging" verbal and visual elements. Oittinen (2008b, p. 5) describes them as a polyphonic form of art, while Zanettin (2008, p. 20) defines them as multimedia texts. Mitchell (1994, p. 89) suggests an all-embracing term, "imagetexts", that can be used to refer to the "interaction of verbal and visual codes in composite synthetic works", such as comics and picture books. The multimodality of imagetexts also entails sensorial effects coming from unexpected elements: the way in which the pictures are positioned, their shape and the font and colour of the text convey semantic information as well (Oittinen 2008a, p. 6). Eco describes the reception of these "sensorial" texts as a "shuttling back and forth between expression and content" (Eco 2001, p. 94), resulting in what Jakobson calls a self-reflexive language: by using a specific expressive form or "anything that strikes the senses" (be it a picture or a word), the reader is prone to appreciate not only the effect caused but also the stylistic strategy. Such self-reflexivity, according to Eco, complicates the role of the translator because it is difficult to recreate this effect in the target text.

A pivotal characteristic that allows comic strips to come to life is the presence of sound symbolic elements, commonly known as onomatopoeias. In linguistics, "ideophone" is the preferred term to refer to these highly sensorial elements, which are commonly defined as "marked words that depict sensory images" (Dingemanse 2012, p. 655). These include onomatopoeias, namely words used to imitate natural or animal sounds ("bow-wow" for a dog and "meow" for a cat, for instance), but also words that depict other senses via iconic means. The emergence of the new term "ideophone", which originated in the grammar of African languages, arose from the fact that, at times, senses beyond the sonic were depicted by these words and the use of the term "onomatopoeia" felt rather restrictive.

The term "ideophone" thus encapsulates depictions of all kinds of sensory experiences, related to sound but also taste, smell, touch, heat and motion. Comic strips also often include "interjections", which are sometimes mistakenly placed under the "onomatopoeia" umbrella term. Interjections are defined as a "typical case of emotional language" (Poggi 2009, p. 1)—words that are uttered by the speaker with the aim of expressing certain feelings. "Oof" used to express anger or "yuck" to express disgust would be typical examples of English interjections. These forms are similar to ideophones if we consider the fact that they are used as single words, but they differ from them, as interjections can be found in dictionaries while ideophones are not always present in the official vocabulary of a given language (Pischedda 2017). The terms "sound symbolism" or "sound symbolic words" will be used throughout the paper as general terms to refer to all these words that try to depict or express senses and feelings.

The use of ideophones, either in written or spoken form, is often characterised by an effort to "bring to life the narrated events in ways that ordinary words do not" (Dingemanse 2012, p. 664), with clear limitations imposed by the phonetic and syntactic systems of each language. The fact that oral language is ideophone's main mode of expression (Mioni 1990) is a further reason why they have been "largely ignored by traditional descriptions of grammar" (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001, p. 2). Their "vivacity, rhythm and musicality" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 41) result in them fulfilling a "stylistic or poetic function, so it comes as no surprise to find them in many and varied contexts, as well as in different text genres" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 41). The most modern evidence of the usefulness of ideophones is, at least in the Western world, to be found in literature for young readers, particularly picture books and comic books, in which the first ideophone appeared as early as 1896 (Crystal 2007; Noss 2003). The study of ideophones in comics, in particular, also offers an important opportunity to engage in cross-linguistic analysis by comparing how different languages have used, created and translated sound-symbolic forms in a well-received and lively type of mass media.

2. The Italian Ideophone

The first widely known and possibly the most influential attempts to introduce ideophones into the Italian language occurred during the importation of American comics (particularly the Disney saga) starting in the 1930s (D'Achille 2010; Ficarra 2012). These imported English texts have slowly attempted to introduce Italian readers to Anglophonic ideophones, and this process has been unfolding for the past eighty years with interesting linguistic results and cross-linguistic ideophonic exchanges, to the point that scholars (Lorenzetti 2003, p. 54; Thomas 2004) have noticed that the receiving languages are being altered because of this. Newman discussed this specific phenomenon and described ideophones as real "language stretchers" (Newman 2001, p. 252). In the case of Italian, the introduction of ideophones into the language has pushed its speakers to accept certain structures that are uncommon, see consonant-ending words or syllables that are composed by consonants only (see "pss","brrr", "zzz"), a rare structure for Italian (D'Achille 2010, p. 174; Pischedda 2017, p. 595). The importation has also affected the use of ideophones in spoken Italian, with Italian children sometimes using English onomatopoeia as interjections ("gulp!" or "gasp!" are common ones) (Dovetto 2012).

Nerbini should be praised as the first Italian publisher to realise the vast potential of the pictorial elements of comics, particularly for Italian children. On 31 December 1932, Nerbini published the first issue of a new comic book that built on the success of Disney's *Mickey Mouse,* called *Topolino*. The stories were not translated from English but were drawn by Italian authors and appeared with traditional Italian rhyming couplets (Boschi et al. 1990). After the seventh issue of the magazine, in February 1933, stories translated from the American language started being published together with original ones. In 1935, the Milan-based publishing house, Mondadori, bought the copyright for publishing *Mickey Mouse* stories from Nerbini. During the 1930s and part of the 1940s, Mondadori's strategy was to alternate the translation of American stories with new stories, entirely drawn and written by Italian authors. Rhyming couplets were rejected in favour of a more comic-like style, with balloons and onomatopoeic sounds. In 1938, when Mussolini banned the importation of American

comics, the magazine was responsible for creating an emergency plan to gather the best Italian writers and illustrators to create new original stories. Due to Mussolini's regulation, Nerbini slowly collapsed, while the Mondadori team managed to rescue the magazine, actually improving the quality and increasing sales (Boschi et al. 1990). According to contemporary accounts, Mondadori was still allowed to use American comic books for inspiration owing to the fact that Mussolini's children apparently enjoyed Disney's stories (Stajano 1999).

After closing down during the war, *Topolino* reappeared (with its original name restored by the fall of fascism) in 1947. It took the publisher a few years to regain the levels of success of the pre-war comics. The genre became popularly established in April 1949, with monthly publications and a new smaller format. Since the contract with Disney forced Mondadori to periodically buy the rights for American stories, translated stories were still featured.

Since the post-war era, Disney comics in Italy have been drawn and scripted by Italian authors, beginning an independent and profitable business. Currently, the vast majority of Disney stories published in Italy are not translations of American comic books but are produced originally by Italian cartoonists (Pietrini 2009). Despite the serious crisis that hit the industry during the 1980s and 1990s, the Italian comic book has been going through important transformations (Pietrini 2009) and has managed to secure a considerable number of faithful readers. *Topolino* has still the largest market share, although other magazines, such as the ones that publish reprints of older translated and original strips, are among the most sold.

The next section will introduce the challenges posed to translators by ideophones in comic books, particularly when we consider the highly intersemiotic nature of these texts.

3. Translating Sound Symbolism in the Comic Book

The co-existent semiotic, semantic and graphical systems interplaying in texts involving both visual and verbal elements present a challenge for the translator, who must unravel different elements, understand them, process them and then codify them in the target language—all the while making sure that relationships between different layers of meaning remain consistent (Ippolito 2008, p. 94). In order for the target text audience to enjoy the final product, the relationship between these "layers of interpretative activities" (Zanettin 2008, p. 12) needs to be left intact. In such an environment, the interpretive role of the translator is even more important in maintaining these layers for altogether different languages and cultures.

According to Eco (2001), when figures of expression are used, or when we are dealing with text conveying aesthetic patterns, the translator should aim towards "rewriting" (Eco 2001, p. 94). Rewriting is necessary when adhering strictly to the source text would cause an irrevocable loss of meaning (Eco 2001). Languages differ substantially in the way they assign values to phonological patterns. In such a situation, the only solution available to the translator is—in theory—to completely change the form but also the substance of the source text, making it impossible to reach any equivalence in form or substance. The whole aesthetic effect therefore needs to be created through other phonological and/or syntactical means in the target language (Ippolito 2008). The reality of the situation is that often sound symbolic forms remain unchanged for various reasons, which results in the meaning being jeopardised for the target readers. Eco defines this as an "anomalous" but "not infrequent case in the typology of interpretation" (Eco 2001, p. 94), which suggests it might pose more challenges than usual. Such a widely recognised problem in the translation of aesthetic effect has nonetheless been met with relatively little critical attention; practical approaches for such translations remain scarce despite their well-documented emergence as a source of concern. Nevertheless, readers have learnt to make the most of a *foreignised* environment and have, through the years, learned to interpret sound symbolic forms through visual cues. The result of this is a kaleidoscopic landscape of ideophones filling the page of the comic—an intersemiotic portrayal mirroring the clash of various constraints: first of all, (1) the impelling need for these forms to be translated; secondly, (2) format-based constraints (i.e., the image) and (3) cultural-based restraints—such as the prestige of the source language, English

in this case, which could lead translators to leave these expressive forms intact (Chmielewska 2011). If one adds to this the fact that the intense sensoriality of imagetexts makes them the perfect genre for relatively new readers, such as children and young people, who might not have mastered the language yet, the urgency to research this subfield of translation studies becomes apparent.

4. Methodology

The analysis will be carried out through the scrutiny of a corpus of sound symbolic forms (ideophones and interjections) as found in American and Italian Disney comics published across six decades (1932–1992). The bidirectional corpus was compiled manually by the author of this article during several visits to international comic book libraries in both the USA and Italy. The English stories were compiled during a 5-month research fellowship at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, while the Italian strips were collected in two Italian comic book archives (the "WOW Comics Museum" in Milan and the "Centro Fumetto Andrea Pazienza" in Cremona). Firstly, the Italian stories were scrutinised, and data in regard to the sound symbolic forms used were collated in the corpus. These Italian forms were then matched with their original English source text. The result was a corpus of roughly 1100 sound symbolic Italian-English pairs, actively bringing together 60 years of ideophonic creations.

Each source text-target text pair was catalogued under one of the following seven translation strategies, inspired by Delabastita's framework (Delabastita 1989):

- Repetition: the target text was fully repeated, and no changes were applied to the source text. This usually involved forms that were considered understandable by the Italian audience, such as "gasp", "boom" or "zzz";
- Deletion: the original form in the source text was completely removed in the target text;
- Addition: the source-text form was kept but small spelling amendments were applied. This often involved the change of vowels or consonants to make the form appear more familiar to the Italian audience (by removing English letters that are not included in the Italian alphabet, for instance). Examples taken from the stories include: "hurrah" turning into "urrà" or "crack" into "crac";
- Partial/total substitution: this strategy included forms that were completely substituted in the target text. It was deemed necessary to divide this category into two different subtypes: (1) partial and (2) total substitutions. When the form was changed but the same lexical category was employed (for instance, if an English interjection was translated with another Italian interjection), this was marked as a partial substitution. If the target form was completely changed and the lexical category was also modified (an English interjection turning into an Italian ideophone, for instance), this counted as a total substitution. An example of a partial substitution would be "shhh" turning into "ssst" (both interjections), while "slurp" (English noun) turning into "glu glu" (Italian ideophone) would instead count as a total substitution;
- Creation: category used to describe newly-added forms that were not present in the source text;
- English alternative: used to describe English forms in the source text that were substituted with alternative English forms in the target text. This tends to happen more in later stories post 1960s, as the Italian audience was, by that point, used to dealing with English expressions. There are a few instances during the 1980s, for instance, where more complicated English ideophones in the source text were substituted with familiar English forms (such as "gasp", "bang" or "splash") in the target text.

The analysis was split into five different time windows:

(1) Pre- and During War: 1932–42;
(2) Post-war and the 1950s: 1945 to 1959;
(3) 1960s;
(4) Anglophonic Supremacy: 1970s;

(5) Technological Advancements: 1980–92.[1]

This paper should be treated as a continuation of the results presented in Pischedda (2020, p. 24), where the same corpus was analysed but using a different analytical stance. This article finds its originality in the offering of a close analysis of the five time windows with specific practical examples taken from each. The different time frames have been chosen according to specific linguistic and historical events, and these will be clearly presented during the analysis. The two aims of the analysis are: (1) to showcase practical examples from comic strips belonging to each time frame and (2) to understand the linguistic (or non-linguistic) reasoning behind the most common translation strategies used across the six decades under analysis (1932–1992).

5. Results

The following section aims to scrutinise the main tendencies noticed for each timeframe, as offered by the corpus under analysis.

5.1. Pre- and during War: 1932–42

The first ten years of usage of ideophonic and interjectional forms are represented by timid attempts to adapt the American comic format for the Italian audience, and this is reflected in the translation strategies used—the majority of which are distributed among the three main strategies, that involve a degree of change of the source material (partial substitution, total substitution and addition). Cf. Chart 1 below for a comparative look at the percentages:

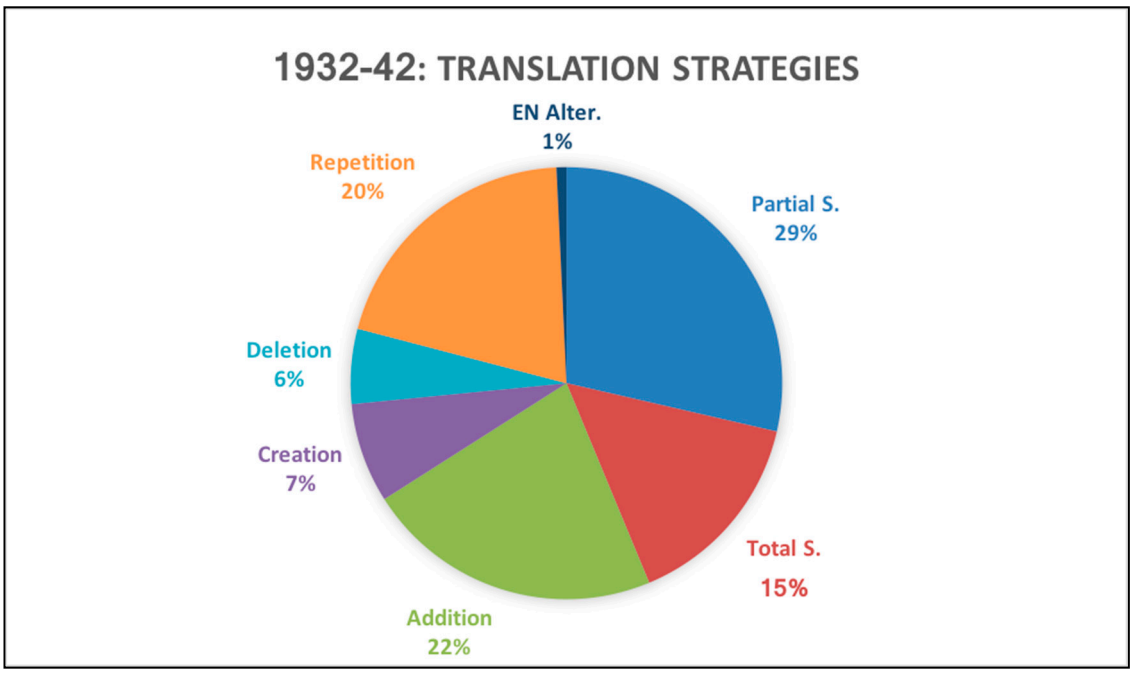

Chart 1. Distribution of translation strategies for the 1932–42 time window.

Interestingly enough, the stories of the first three years (1932–35) show a much higher percentage of repetitions (47 cases out of 183—27% of the total), while there are only 39 repetitions (out of 352 forms—11% of the total) among the translation strategies used between 1936 and 1942. Several reasons for this sudden change towards a much more localised environment could be postulated, although the

[1] Note that the last time window ends abruptly in 1992 because this is the year when the last translated stories were published in the Italian magazine. After 1992, the vast majority of the published stories were original Italian creations.

most likely explanation is that format and graphical considerations were paramount. Italian stories published until August 1935 included the typical early rhyming couplets accompanying each comic strip. The aim of these couplets was to provide a more familiar environment for the reader following on the Italian poetic tradition of the nineteenth century. While the first American comics imported in 1909 featured a complete removal of balloons, trusting the rhyming couplets to do most of the verbal diegetic work (Gadducci et al. 2011), the first Disney stories involved a mix of balloons and couplets. The first translated Disney story with balloons only was published in August 1935 with the title *Tre cani e un gatto* (Osborne et al. 1935)—and it is therefore not a coincidence if the last repetitions appear towards the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936. Until then, the couplets played a major role in narrating the story, so when they fell out of use translators had an opportunity to experiment with other elements of the comic strip, inside or outside the balloons, as shown from the statistics offered above.

Nevertheless, even in the first three years, strategies other than repetitions appear. In a couple of strips from one of the first stories published in Italy, which appeared in in May 1933, the sound of a snowball hitting a person's hat turns from the English "spat" into the Italian "sciac". This is a typical example of total substitution, in which a lexicalised English form is replaced by a non-localised Italian one. It should be noted that in the same cartoon there is also a repetition of the other ideophones present: "zzz-ipp" used to describe the kinaesthetic action of the snowball moving through air.

In the same issue of the magazine there is another example of total substitution, in which the ideophone "clomp", used here to describe the noise of shoes walking on a snowy pavement, is rendered in Italian with a non-lexicalised "plasc plasc" (to be read/pla$\int$ pla$\int$/). The same strip also contains the appropriate translation of the two interjections: the "ho ho" English laughter turns into "ah ah ah" in the Italian version, while "ahhh-choo" used for a sneeze was replaced by the Italian interjection "eetci". Interjections, both due to the ease with which the contents of a balloon could be changed and the fact that they often have equivalents in many languages, involve a higher percentage of localisation, usually through partial substitution, as is the case in the example just offered.

Examples of the partial substitution of ideophones inside balloons can be detected in several strips from a story published in Italy in February 1934. In this case, the animal cries for dogs, cows and cats are present and well known in both languages, so the translation is relatively straightforward. The translation also manages to maintain the high sonic intensity of the source text through vowel lengthening. In this case, all the instances of the letter <w> have been deleted from the Italian version, which shows the earlier tendency to remove graphemes that are not part of the official Italian alphabet. The consonantal removal is also applied in the case of <k> and typical English clusters such as <wh>, <sh> and <ph>. <W> and <wh> are often replaced with <v> or <u> or are simply removed from the word. In the case of <sh>, this is usually replaced by a double s (<ss>) or with <sc>, the Italian orthographic rendition of the /$\int$/ phoneme. <Ph> is often replaced by <f> or, sometimes, <p>. <K> is simply dropped, particularly if in a <ck> cluster, or replaced with a <c> if found in isolation. Finally, the letter <y> is replaced by <i>.

When strategies of addition are not considered adequate and the translator appears not to have found an acceptable alternative, strategies of "deletion" can be used, which involve the complete removal of the expression from the source text. The analysis of the corpus showed that forms inside balloons tend to be deleted more often, although the first time window includes 30 deletions, 17 of which involve a form outside the balloon. The percentage of deletions and creation for the 1932-42 timeframe are not particularly high (respectively, 6% and 7% of the total). What it is interesting to notice is that though these practices must have represented a time-consuming task at the time—considering that everything had to be changed manually—the additional effort involved does not seem to have deterred the Italian editor. It is important to notice that most deletions for this timeframe, 25 out of 30, involve the removal of a form that includes graphemes or clusters of graphemes that are considered Anglophonic.

To summarise, the 1932–42 time window mirrors the initial pivotal stages of importation of English Disney comics into the Italian linguistic and graphical framework. The initial presence of rhyming

couplets accompanying the pictures meant that less expressive forms were initially localised. These first three years (1932–34) represented a period of transition that led, after August 1935, to couplets being dropped and to an evident rise in strategies of partial and total substitution and a drop of repetitions, demonstrating a willingness to provide a more Italianised environment for the reader. Common translation strategies include "addition" and substitution. Addition, in particular, is frequently employed to remove graphemes and lettering considered Anglophonic. This suppression of English linguistic markers could also be an effect of the ban on foreign words imposed by the Fascist regime, which was made official in July 1929 (Gadducci et al. 2011). Generally, it is clear that there was a conscious effort to localise the comic page for the Italian reader, although not every English element was removed and the Anglophonic influence grew more and more and can already be seen in the post-war timeframe, as will be shown in the coming section.

5.2. Post-War and the 1950s: 1945 to 1959

The two-year (December 1943–December 1945) hiatus brought about as a result of WW2 and the fall of Mussolini in 1943 were the cause of several changes for the Italian Disney school (Stajano 1999). In the initial post-war period, most of the stories published were reprints of strips that had appeared in the previous decade. But the real revolution came with the decision to change the format from a newspaper-size to a pocket-book-size *Topolino* in 1949 (Stajano 1999). It was decided that the numbering would start again from issue 1, and the same numbering sequence is still used today, having reached issue 3383 as of September 2020. All the non-Disney stories were removed from the publication, which switched from a weekly to a monthly journal, a schedule which lasted until 1960, when publication reverted to being weekly. These changes are considered to mark "the end of the Prehistory and the start of the real History of Italian Disney comics" (Stajano 1999, p. 3), particularly with the publication of original Italian stories from the end of 1948. While other comic book publishers were slowly shutting down due to a seemingly uninterested audience, the average number of copies of the new *Topolino* sold unexpectedly rose to the point that other publishers tried to copy the same format in order to survive in the business (Boschi et al. 1990).

Chart 2 shows the distribution of translation strategies for the 1945–59 timeframe:

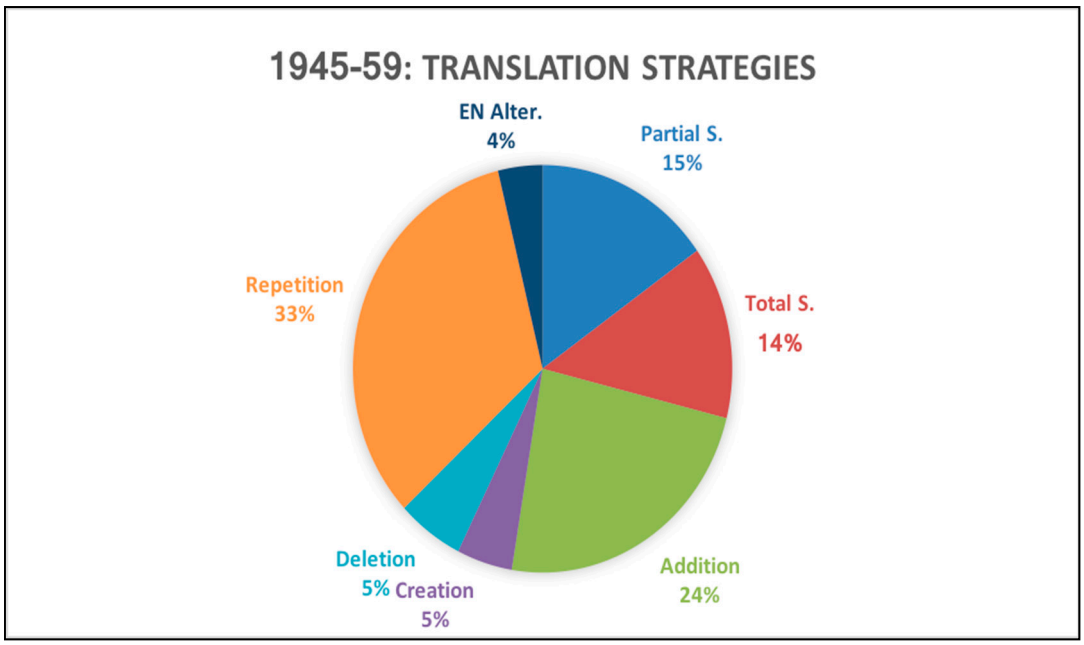

Chart 2. Graph showing the distribution of translation strategies for the 1945–59 timeframe.

The major difference from the previous time window, in this case, is the evident rise in repetitions to the detriment of partial substitutions, which move from a percentage of 29% during the first timeframe to 15%.

In addition to historical and linguistic reasons, there also seems to be a graphical explanation for the rise in repetitions. The change in format, from a newspaper size to a smaller size, that took place in 1949, also had obvious repercussions for the layout and visuality of the stories and, by extension, for the translation of words within their images. It should be remembered that some of the American stories came from large size newspaper pages. Thus, the choice of switching to the pocket size also had consequences in terms of how much of the source text could be changed. In order to ensure readability, "the textual material in the translation may need to be less than that in the source text (or, conversely, the balloons need to be enlarged)" (Zanettin 2014, p. 3), which could be one of the reasons for the rise in repetitions after the change in format.

Total substitutions and strategies of "addition", on the other hand, remain almost unvaried. While during the 1930s an effort was still made to localise most of the expressive forms, showing an audience still attached to pre-comic traditions (see rhyming couplets) and a general avoidance of English forms (also fostered by the strict linguistic purism during Fascism), the post-war years show a growing acceptance of Anglophonic forms into the format. This is also shown by a rise in the number of English alternatives from 1% to 4% of the total and by the fact that the strategies of repetition become the most used ones (from 20% in the previous timeframe to 33% in the current one).

Strategies of addition are still used in the first years of this timeframe to dispose of consonants considered more English-looking. More precisely, the last cases in which an English letter is replaced by an Italian equivalent are recorded in a story published in 1953 ("hooray" to "urrà"; "Squoosh" to "squaasc"). 1953 does indeed seem to represent a turning point in the history of the adaptation of English Disney stories into Italian. All of a sudden, Anglophonic markers seem to become more accepted, and strategies of repetitions are used instead. In a story published in January 1958, for example, most English forms are left intact. Examples include "crash", "tinkle", "pow" and "bonk". It should be noted that a growing presence of non-traditional letters (<x>, <y> and <k>, in particular) in Italian language materials post-WW2 has been noticed in other fields, such as economics, advertising, marketing and politics (Szpingier 2008; Fanfani 2010; Taglialatela 2011).

Unfortunately, the corpus does not include any translated stories published between 1954 and 1957 for unavailability reasons. Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that this switch took place during a precise four-year span (1953–1957), which then proves to host a pivotal turning point in the use and influence of English sound symbolic forms in Italian Disney comics.

In summary, the time window covering the post-war years and the 1950s hosts the first stages of the Anglophonic and American cultural influence on the creation, production and standardisation of Italian Disney comics. The break brought by WW2 meant that the comics industry had to change its directions as the audience had dramatically changed its interests and priorities. The switch from the old newspaper format to a new smaller page size meant that readers could experience a different reading experience. The systematic rise in the influence of English language is shown by the increasing use of repetitions, which meant more and more English expressive forms were left in the Italian comic's page. The time window within 1953–57, in particular, seems to include a clear switch to a highly Anglophonic environment: evidence of this is first of all provided by the fact that consonants typical of the English alphabet that were in the past altogether removed or substituted with more familiar graphemes start being left unmodified at the end of the 1950s, a phenomenon that is particularly accentuated in the next time window, as will be shown. The change in the approach towards English markers meant that strategies of addition were less frequently used, particularly when compared to the previous timeframe's translation tendencies. Some linguistic tendencies provide further evidence of these Anglophile tendencies, as the start of the 1960s saw the beginning of particular linguistic inclinations such as the inclusion of English consonants, and particularly the letter <k>, in typical Italian forms. All these phenomena bear witness to the first phase of radical linguistic changes that

would undisputedly revise the linguistic nature of Disney comics published in Italy. This marks the initial stages of Anglophonic influence in Italian new media (Crystal 2010; Fanfani 2010), which sits right at the end of the 1950s and will show itself through certain translation patterns for at least the following three decades.

5.3. 1960s

The comic books of the 1960s decade bear witness to a complete overhaul of the way expressive forms were represented. Coinciding with the emergence of the Pop Art movement, the graphics of senses within the comic book form at this time undergoes a "renovation process" (Verda 1990, p. 58). Ideophones, in particular, start occupying a more prominent role within the picture, "elastically" stretching in an attempt to visually represent senses and strike the readers' imagination more efficiently. Thanks to this role change, expressive forms eventually became one of the most recognisable features of comic books.

This decade confirms the ongoing Anglophonic influence, evidence of which comes from the noticeable rise in the use of strategies of repetition, as shown by the graphic in Chart 3, below.

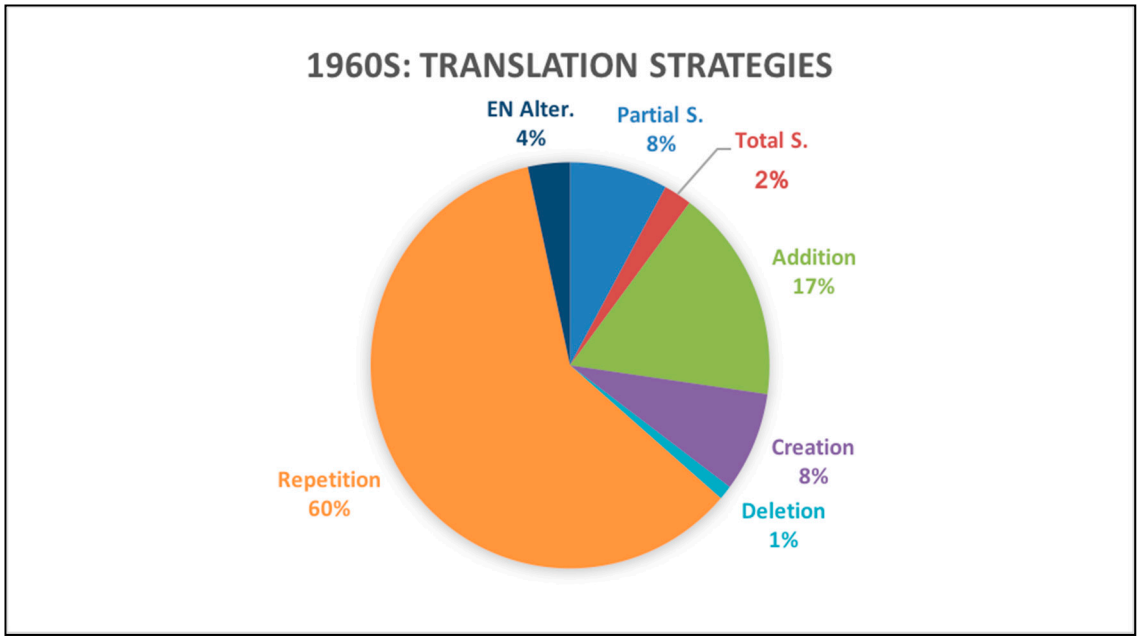

Chart 3. Translation strategies distribution for the 1960s timeframe.

More than half (60%) of the strategies used in this timeframe do indeed include a complete repetition of the source text material. As a consequence of this, all other strategies have lower percentages compared to the previous two decades. Total substitutions, in particular, are subjected to a drastic drop from 14% in the previous decade to 2%, which shows that less effort was made when it came to changing expressive forms completely and that whenever a substitution was deemed appropriate, the translator preferred using the same type of form, and would therefore opt for a partial substitution. This, in turn, provides evidence of the increasingly high reliance on the source text environment and of the influence that the English source material had, by this point, on the Italian target text.

Interestingly, the percentage of English alternatives remains unchanged, confirming the ongoing influence of English forms and how simpler English expressions are used as substitutions for the ones considered too difficult for the average Italian reader to understand.

Repetition of source text material often includes English lexicalised verbs that by this point are part of the comic's linguistic environment and which are therefore most likely to be recognised and

fully accepted by average and, perhaps, more expert readers. Examples of retained forms from a translated story published in August 1965 include *sigh*, *grab*, *zip* and *flip*. The story does not include any substitutions. It is clear that by this point the reliance on the English text material is reaching its peak.

The comic strip changes also include both chromatic modifications of the cartoons and changes in the shape and colour of the balloons, evidence of the technological advances brought in during this decade, which allow for a better control of the comic's environment. It is interesting that these advances do not translate into a higher localisation rate but rather seem to stop at the mere graphical levels.

The same tendencies are detected in another story published in September 1968, named *Pippo e la spazzola del banchetto* (original title: "The Brush Salesman") (Fallberg et al. 1968). Common English ideophones and interjections such as *shake*, *clink*, *thud*, *whack*, *ouch* are left intact. Only one total substitution can be found, and this involves the transformation of an ideophone (*kazoing*) into an Italian interjection (*oplà*—which can be translated as "oopsy-daisy"). Again, a radical change in formats (i.e., colours and shape of balloons) can be noticed.

All in all, this time window can be taken as the time when the influence of Anglophonic forms on Disney comics published in Italy really began to take hold. Some of the best-known English terms that are used in Italian Disney comics made their first appearance in the 1960s: *ouch* (1960), *pant* (1963), *sob* (1965), *gurgle* (1967), *groan* (1969). This proves the shift towards a heavily English target-text environment taking place in the 1960s.

5.4. Anglophonic Supremacy: 1970s

The 1970s timeframe essentially continues the tendencies noticed during the previous decade. The only difference is that the number of repetitions is still on the rise, with a total of 70% of strategies belonging to this type (cf. Chart 4).

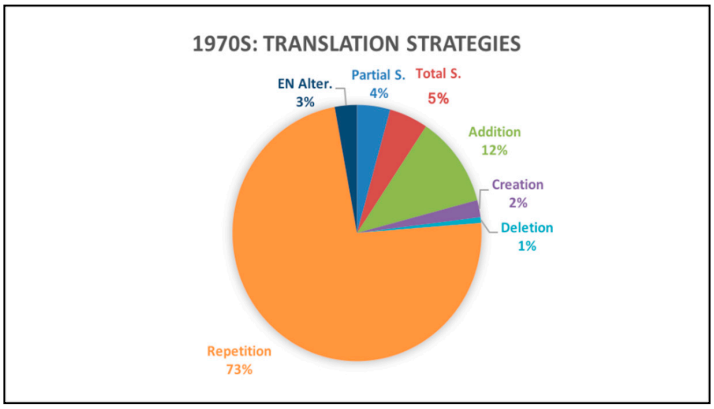

Chart 4. Translation strategies distribution for the 1970s timeframe.

Out of 155 forms recorded for this time window, 102 belong to the repetition category. This timeframe also includes the first story recorded in the corpus that only includes repetitions: *Super Pippo e la ramazza meccanica* ("Super Goof: A Clean Sweep"), published in March 1971 (Murry 1971).

The corpus for the decade includes 16 additions, with no major changes in the way the strategy is applied compared with previous timeframes. There are three cases in which vowel modifications are applied to better suit an Italian audience: *woosh* > *wuush* (June 1970); *foop* > *fuup* (June 1970); *squeak* > *squick* (May 1979), while four other cases simply involve the removal of squared brackets from around the ideophone.

The rest of the additions involve simple modifications that do not necessarily remove any Anglophonic markers but rather add some (such as *cough* > *koff*—April 1974); modifications that remove English markers (*urk* > *urp*—April 1974; *oopsy* > *oops*—August 1975; *humph* > *grumpf*—August 1975) and two other examples that involve a change from an <ee> vocalic cluster to an <ie> one, to imply that it needs to be read as /i/ rather than /e/: *yeow* > *yieow* (May 1973) and *yeeks* > *yieks* (May 1979).

Out of the 13 substitutions found in this decade, eight involve the modification of an interjection while the other five involve ideophones. There do not appear to be any obvious, specific or common reasons for these modifications, a fact that provides evidence of the lack of specific conventions for dealing with these forms, particularly in these years of predominant Anglophonic supremacy. While, in previous decades, specific tendencies could be detected, for this decade a specific type of form is repeated on some occasions but may be modified on others. This, by extension, shows that the different selection of a particular strategy is probably dependent on the personal preferences of each translator and/or editor(s) rather than being based on specific guidelines.

While the period between the early sixties and the early seventies is considered the "golden age of Disney Italian comics" (Stajano 1999, p. 11), the rest of the 1970s marks the start of the years of crisis for the industry of Disney comics published in Italy (Tosti 2011), due to the creation of TV channels that broadcast cartoons, which took the attention away from paper stories. The successes of the previous decades proved difficult to replicate. Stories from these years are considered to be of poorer quality, and this affected the number of copies sold and the whole credibility and success of the *Topolino* magazine. This momentary crisis lasted until the early eighties, when a new director of the magazine (Mr. Gaudenzio Capelli) was appointed, a director who is considered to be responsible for the "recovery" of the past glories of the magazine (Boschi et al. 1990, p. 86). This stalled situation, that characterised most of the 1970s, might have had an effect on the translation strategies used and on the directions taken by the stories published in this time window. As noted before, this decade experienced a degree of confusion when it came to finding a specific direction, a confusion that somehow mirrors the "crisis" of these years.

5.5. Technological Advancements: 1980–92

The 1980–92 timeframe is the last one recorded by this research project, and it presents an intriguing surprise considering the tendencies that have been outlined in the diachronic analysis of the previous time windows. Going against tendencies and statistics that prevailed during the previous timeframes, which would have suggested a further increase in the use of strategies of repetition, this timeframe features a considerable drop in their use. This seems to happen in favour of strategies of partial substitution, which increase from 4% to 17%, and English alternatives (3% to 10%). The percentages for total substitutions and additions remain unchanged with, respectively, 5% and 12%. Creations and deletions also register a slight increase: creations rise by 3 percentage points (from 2% to 5%), while deletions show a considerable increase from 1% to 8% (cf. Chart 5, below).

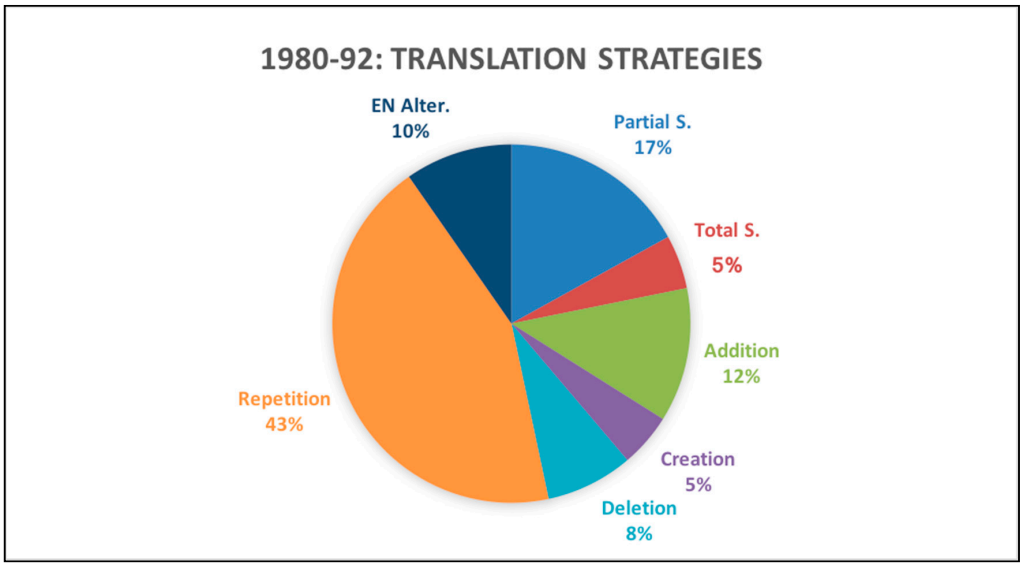

Chart 5. Translation strategies distribution for the 1980–1992 timeframe.

Overall, this timeframe shows a willingness on the part of translators to change tack. While the first story recorded for this timeframe, published in February 1980 (with the title *Paperino il ficcanaso*—'Super Snooper') (Gregory 1980), does show an exclusive use of repetitions, starting from the following translated story published in July 1981, there is an evident prevalence of alternative strategies. Repetitions are still constantly present through the years, but they do not represent the only choice. The last translated story recorded in the corpus, in particular, shows a specific effort to modify the source text in order to tailor it for an Italian audience. Therefore, this story could represent an isolated case or one of the final attempts by the Disney school in Italy to transpose American stories. The story, published in two parts (Weiss et al. 1991, 1992), is the translation of the transposition into comic book format of the famous Disney movie "Beauty and the Beast". Note that after 1992 it was mostly original Italian stories that were published, making translations very rare and obsolete.

All the translated stories published in 1992 show a return to the strategies used in the first couple of decades, together with the use of specific tendencies that were introduced later. Anglophonic markers such as <w>, <k> and <th> are removed, together with other additions that facilitate the reading of these forms for an Italian audience. Nevertheless, English alternatives are still used, such as: *erk* > *gasp*, *ka-pow* > *bang*, *kunk* > *clang*, *sploop* > *splash*. It seems, then, that the last attempts at offering translated stories confirmed the finding that there was a revival of old strategies and tendencies. This revival was marked, for instance, by the return of certain Italianised expressions, both ideophonic and interjectional ones. In particular, one can see the return of interjections such as "uao", "yuhuu", "uffa" and "ahia" to replace their English equivalents and the use of Italianised ideophones, but this time together with some crystallised English lexicalised ideophones ("gasp", "gulp", "sigh", "crash", etc.). See, for example, the translation of "whunk" and "bash" (used to describe punches being thrown) with two English-inspired ideophones ("wup" and "crash", respectively).

6. Conclusions

Ideophones and interjections were shown to be characterised by an intrinsic flexibility and a deep-rooted multimodality, which make them a rewarding topic for theoretical analysis. Drawing on theoretic concepts from comic book studies, theories of sound symbolism and translation theory, a choice of disciplines mirroring the inter-cultural and linguistic dimensions of the subject, a number of findings and conclusions have been proposed.

Studies such as the current one can provide a historical overview of how the treatment of these peculiar words has been changing throughout the years and decades, particularly since their employment in comics. The inherently sonic feature of ideophones and interjections makes these words a particular case in translation studies, and this might lead the translator to avoid the usual approaches used in the field. While the translator might usually be "more inclined to resort to the semantic equivalent" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 42), the sound, particularly in the case of ideophones, becomes "the most important component" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 42). But ideophones do not only include animal noises. The wide range of senses and sensorial experiences described by ideophones makes translating them a highly demanding yet enjoyable task: if, on the one hand, it puts translators to the test, on the other hand it is a highly creative process, that can be both fulfilling and enjoyable, as it fosters linguistic awareness in both readers and translators. Indeed, for each ideophone the skilful "combination of sound and semantics and their interrelationship is unique" (Noss 2003, p. 53).

If the words fail to deliver, there is always the context to give clues to the reader. A consolation when translating these forms is in fact the hope that the graphical features will deliver the meaning—or at least help to clarify it—whenever the linguistic side is failing to do so (particularly when foreign forms are retained). Also, this is evidence of the significant relationship between the visual and the verbal when creating and processing these forms (Catricalà n.d.). Graphical features have indeed been shown to influence the treatment, creation and translation of sound symbolic forms. See, for example, the removal of rhyming couplets from the first Italian Disney strips in 1936, which led to a higher importance given to the visuals, ideophones included—or the *Topolino* format change in 1949, which

had several repercussions on the layout of the magazine and led to a rise in the number of repetitions, as the source text could not be modified as much anymore. Finally, in addition to graphical factors, historical vicissitudes could have significantly influenced the medium of the Disney comic book and its elements, including expressive sound symbolic forms: (1) the censorship imposed by the fascist regime up until WW2; (2) the crisis of the comic book during the 1970s; and (3) the arrival of technological advances during the 1980s (these were partially also noted in Pischedda (2020, pp. 31–32)).

Imagetexts pose such a clear challenge to conventional translation theories because they are generally more self-reflexive than other text types, drawing attention to their stylistic composition rather than just their content. Figures of expression play an important part in establishing meaning in these texts but, especially in the case of ideophones, they present a problem for translators. "There is no unanimous agreement" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 53) over how to negotiate ideophones, considering that this is determined according to many factors: "methods adopted by the translator, the guidelines that govern the translations and the individual style of each translator" (Casas-Tost 2014, p. 53). Nevertheless, certain patterns can and have been detected. Imagetext translators are technically expected to rewrite texts in the target language more fully, taking into account the primitive and non-negotiable relationship between language and meaning if they hope to maintain the coherence of the text—although rewriting has not always been possible, as shown by this research. As such, the translation issue is amplified for translators of young readers' literature, because children, as non-proficient language users, have a peculiar receptivity to the crude expressivity of language and might experience difficulties when processing these foreign forms—although readers might have gotten used to, and have started appreciating and accepting, foreign forms as such. Nevertheless, deeper complexities are clearly involved when dealing with the translation of imagetexts and emphasise the need for new research in this young and thriving field of study.

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