

CUPCAKES, MARSHMALLOWS AND MUFFINS

The Italian Translation of Food and Drinks Cultural References in Animated Films

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ABSTRACT • The aim of this paper is to explore the presence of cultural references in animated films and to investigate the approach adopted by Italian dubbing professionals to deal with such culture-specific elements. The analysis is based on a corpus of eleven American animated films produced between 2001 and 2018 by companies such as Disney, Disney-Pixar, DreamWorks, 20th Century Fox, Illumination Entertainment, Universal Pictures. By analysing the transcriptions of the English and Italian dialogues and the films, the paper identifies food and drinks cultural references and examines the translation strategies used in Italian dubbing. A comparison of older and more recent films throws light on differences through time as well as on translation patterns. The linguistic analysis of the English and Italian dialogues is complemented with comments by two Italian dubbing professionals on dubbing practice in Italy.

KEYWORDS • animated films, dubbing, cultural references, food and drinks, dubbing professionals, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

Anglo-American animated films are popular audiovisual products which are dubbed all over the world and which are watched by a wide audience made up of both children and adults. In recent years, several translation scholars have devoted their attention to the presence of linguacultural otherness in animated films. They have focused in particular on the translation of linguistic variation, stereotypes, humour and cultural references (see Di Giovanni 2007; Bruti 2009; Chmiel 2010; González-Vera 2015a, 2015b; De Los Reyes Lozano 2017; Minutella 2015, 2020, 2021; Parini 2019; Dore 2019; Pagrandytė and Astrauskienė 2021, Monti 2023 among others). The aim of this article is to explore the presence of cultural references in animated films and to investigate Italian dubbing professionals' approach to deal with such references. The study is based on the analysis of a corpus made up of eleven American animated films released in the 21st century between 2001 and 2018. The films were produced by U.S. Big Majors such as Disney, Disney-Pixar, DreamWorks, 20th Century Fox and Illumination Entertainment and they were box office successes.

As far as the methodology and stages of analysis are concerned, the study is based on the examination of the films as available on DVDs and on streaming platforms as well as on the written

transcriptions of the dialogues.¹ The films were watched several times and the film dialogues in English and in Italian were transcribed. Then, cultural references (CRs) of different types were identified. The following stage of the investigation consisted in examining the translation strategies adopted in Italian dubbing and in comparing older versus more recent films.

This article will provide the results of a preliminary analysis on the translation of references to food and drinks. The study aims at answering the following questions: how are food and drinks cultural references translated in Italian dubbing? Is it possible to detect any translation patterns? Are there any differences in translation approach through time? Furthermore, in order to provide a fuller picture of how such cultural references are translated in Italy, the linguistic analysis is complemented with comments by Italian dubbing professionals on dubbing practice.² It is worth pointing out that this is a work in progress which is part of a larger study on the translation of cultural references referring to food and drinks, famous people and intertextual references/allusions.

2. The films

The films making up the corpus were selected according to the following criteria: they contained instances of references to food and drinks, allusions and names of celebrities; they were released between 2000 and 2018; they were produced by Big U.S. Majors; they were box office successes. The chosen films are listed in table 1 below in chronological order. The title is followed by the year of production, the name of the director(s) and the production company:

Film Title	Year	Director(s)	Production Company
<i>Shrek</i>	2001	Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jensen	DreamWorks Animation
<i>Shrek the Third</i>	2007	Chris Miller, Raman Hui	DreamWorks Animation
<i>Despicable Me</i>	2010	Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud	Illumination Entertainment/ Universal Pictures
<i>Rio</i>	2011	Carlos Saldanha	20th Century Fox Animation/ Blue Sky Studios
<i>Brave</i>	2012	Mark Andrews, Brenda Chapman, Steve Purcell	Walt Disney Pictures – Pixar Ani- mation Studios
<i>Monsters University</i>	2013	Dan Scanlon	Walt Disney Pictures - Pixar Animation Studios
<i>Despicable Me 2</i>	2013	Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud	Illumination Entertainment/ Universal Pictures
<i>Big Hero 6</i>	2014	Don Hall, Chris Williams	Walt Disney Animation Studios – Walt Disney Pictures
<i>Rio 2</i>	2014	Carlos Saldanha	20th Century Fox Animation, Blue Sky Studios, FortyFour Studios
<i>Despicable Me 3</i>	2017	Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin, Eric Guillon	Illumination Entertainment/Uni- versal Pictures
<i>Ralph Breaks the Internet</i>	2018	Phil Johnston, Rich Moore	Walt Disney Animation Studios – Walt Disney Pictures

Table 1. The films

¹ I would like to thank my students of the Lingua Inglese I magistrale LM-94 course, a.a. 2019-20, 2021-22 and 2022-23 and Francesca Cozzitorto for their help with the transcriptions.

² I would like to thank Elena Di Carlo and Roberto Morville for answering my questions.

2. Cultural References and Allusions

This section will provide definitions and categories of Cultural References and Allusions and will describe the translation strategies that can be used in audiovisual translation to deal with them. Various scholars have put forward definitions of Cultural References (CRs) or Culture-Specific References (CSRs) and different terms to name such words or expressions. Chiaro provides the following definition:

Culture-Specific References (CSRs) are entities that are typical of one particular culture, and that culture alone, and they can be either exclusively or predominantly visual [...], exclusively verbal or else both visual and verbal in nature (2009: 156).

As pointed out by Ranzato, this definition may be too narrow, since “on many occasions cultural elements may belong to more than one culture” (2016: 58). It is thus necessary to broaden the definition. A Cultural Reference or Culture-Specific Reference can be defined as an entity – a word/expression/text/image – which refers to a concept or object which is typical of one or more cultures and may be unknown in the Target Culture (TC). Franco Aixelá defines Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) as

textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text. (1996: 58)

Pedersen prefers the term Extralinguistic Cultural Reference (ECR), which is defined as follows:

Extralinguistic Cultural Reference (ECR) is defined as reference that is attempted by means of any cultural linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process. The referent of the said expression may prototypically be assumed to be identifiable to a relevant audience as this referent is within the encyclopaedic knowledge of this audience (2011: 43).

As far as classifications are concerned, scholars have provided various categories (Newmark 1988; Franco Aixelá 1996; Antonini and Chiaro 2005, Chiaro 2009; Ranzato 2015, 2016; Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007, 2021). Antonini and Chiaro (2005: 39) and Chiaro (2009: 156) divide Culture-Specific References into the following categories:

- a. Institutions (including judiciary, police, military) (e.g. ‘All rise’; ‘Your Honour’, Supreme Court; barristers, etc.)
- b. Educational references, for instance to ‘high school culture’, tests, grading systems, etc. (e.g. ‘A’ grade, cheerleaders, clubs, etc.)
- c. Place names (e.g. London, Barcelona, Piccadilly Circus, Tate Gallery)
- d. Units of measurements (e.g. pounds, miles)
- e. Monetary systems (e.g. pounds, dollars)
- f. National sports and pastimes (e.g. American football, cricket, double dutch)
- g. Food and drink (e.g. pancakes, BLT, froot loops, *cannolo*, *burrito*)
- h. Holidays and festivities (Thanksgiving, Bar Mitzvah, Diwali)
- i. Books, films and TV programmes (*Matilda*, *Avatar*, *Modern Family*)
- j. Celebrities and personalities (Ringo Starr, Topol, The Cookie Monster, Shakira)

Intertextual Cultural References or Allusions should also be added as a separate category of Culture-Specific References, as suggested by Ranzato (2016: 70-72). An allusion is “a variety of uses of preformed linguistic material [...] in either its original or a modified form, and of proper names, to convey often implicit meaning” (Leppihalme 1997: 3). Allusions, in the form of intertextual references, are often used in films and TV series and are sometimes exploited for humorous purposes. Some animated films contain several instances of intertextual cultural references or allusions, which are aimed especially at making the adult audience laugh.

In this article we will discuss Culture-Specific References related to food and drink, which are sometimes intertwined with Intertextual References or Allusions.

As far as translation is concerned, various approaches can be adopted to deal with CRs and different categorizations have been proposed. This study will adopt the translation techniques described by Chaume (2012: 145-147), with slight modifications. According to Chaume, in dubbing the following techniques can be used:

- 1) Retaining the CR in the original language, that is, using a loanword (e.g. ‘Halloween’, ‘burrito’);
- 2) Orthographic adaptation of the CR (e.g. ‘London’ becomes ‘Londra’ in Italian, ‘Londres’ in Spanish);
- 3) Literal translation (for instance, ‘Thanksgiving Day’ is literally translated into Italian as ‘Giorno del Ringraziamento’, in Spanish as ‘Día de Acción de Gracias’);
- 4) Glosses or explicitation (where the meaning of the CR is explained in the Target Text; for example, ‘haggis’ in Italian becomes ‘*insaccato scozzese di pecora*’) – it is worth noting that this strategy can be adopted in dubbing only if the characters are off screen, because the target text is much longer than the original one; on the other hand, if the characters are on screen and the mouth is visible, that is, if lip synchronisation or isochrony were needed, it would be difficult or impossible to synchronise a long explicitation with the original term;
- 5) Cultural adaptation or substitution. This technique neutralizes the strangeness and exoticism of the CR, since it replaces the original word or expression with a term usually belonging to the target culture (or another culture) but having a similar function. An example of cultural substitution is ‘baseball’ replaced with ‘*calcio*’ (football) in Italian, since it is the most popular sport in the target culture. However, visual elements might preclude this technique (if the images show a baseball match being played, the dubbed version cannot call it ‘*calcio*’-football). In Ranzato’s classification of translation strategies for CRs in dubbing (2015), the scholar calls this technique “transposition or cultural substitution”. It is further divided into three types: a) limited adaptation, b) absolute universalization, c) cultural substitution. Cultural adaptation or substitution in fact may replace the original CR with a new element which still belongs to the source culture, but is less obscure for the target audience (“limited adaptation”), or with an element which is more popular, more international or universal (“absolute universalization”), or with an element which belongs to a different foreign culture, or with an element from the target culture (“cultural substitution”).
- 6) Omission of the CR;
- 7) Creation of a new CR (a new culture-specific element is added even though it was not present in the ST).

To the above techniques, we can also add a further explicitation strategy which consists of using a more general word (*generalization*), and another one consisting of using a more specific word (*specification*):

- 8) Translation by a more general word (a superordinate/hypernym): a specific term is replaced in the target text by a more general word (e.g. ‘Heathrow’ translated as ‘aeroporto’-‘airport’;

‘scone’ translated as ‘dolce’). This strategy is also referred to as “generalization” (see Díaz Cintas and Remael 2021: 210);

9) Translation by using a more specific word or hyponym (*specification*): a more general word is replaced in the target text by a more specific word (e.g. ‘flower’ translated as ‘rosa’ or as ‘tulipano’-‘rose’ or ‘tulip’) (see Díaz Cintas and Remael 2021: 210).

3. Analysis

This section investigates how Cultural References referring to food and drinks are translated in the animated films corpus. Instances of cultural references to food and drink were identified in the twelve films analysed, and the translation techniques adopted by dubbing professionals were examined. The following are some examples which will illustrate how dubbing professionals have dealt with this type of CRs. The films are discussed in chronological order and food and drink CRs are in bold.

3.1. Food and drink cultural references in *Shrek* (2001) and *Shrek the third* (2007)

This section will provide some examples from the *Shrek* films, which contain several humorous lines based on the presence of cultural references as well as allusions to fairy tales, nursery rhymes, songs, and references to famous people. The films are a subversion of fairy tales in which intertextuality and parody play an important role. Several words referring to food and drinks can be found in the films. Only a few will be discussed here. The first example is from *Shrek* (2001). The evil Lord Farquaad wants to catch all the fairytale creatures, who are hiding in Shrek’s swamp. Lord Farquaad captures and tortures the Gingerbread man (Gingy), asking him where the fairytale creatures are. The man ironically quotes some lines from the fairy tale *The Gingerbread man* (“Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me. I’m the gingerbread man!”). However, the Gingerbread man cannot actually run, since Lord Farquaad has broken his legs. In the dubbed version, the allusion to the fairy tale is kept, since the lines from the story are translated literally, and the name of the food cultural reference (the biscuit called Gingerbread man) is also translated literally. The following example illustrates this point.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<LORD FARQUAAD>	Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me. I’m the gingerbread man!	Vai vai, vai, il più veloce che sai. Son pan di zenzero , acchiapparmi non potrai!
<GINGY>	You’re a monster!	Sei un mostro!

Table 2. Example 1 from *Shrek* (2001)

The Gingerbread man then pretends he is ready to confess. He alludes to a popular nursery rhyme and its protagonist, the muffin man. Some lines from the nursery rhyme (written in italics in the following table) are mentioned by Gingy and Lord Farquaad. For an Anglo-American audience who is familiar with this popular song the exchange is highly humorous, while to an Italian audience unaware of this text the exchange would not be very funny if translated literally.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<GINGY>	Okay, I'll tell you. <i>Do you know the muffin man?</i>	D'accordo, te lo dirò. Tu conosci l' uomo-focaccina?
<LORD FARQUAAD>	The muffin man?	L' uomo-focaccina?
<GINGY>	The muffin man.	L' uomo-focaccina.
<LORD FARQUAAD>	<i>Yes, I know the muffin man, who lives on Drury Lane?</i>	Sì, conosco l' uomo-focaccina, che vive nella farina?
<GINGY>	Well, she's married to the muffin man.	Beh, lei è sposata con l' uomo-focaccina.

Table 3. Example 2 from *Shrek* (2001)

Neither the nursery rhyme nor muffins were well-known in Italy at the time the film was released (2001). The Italian monolingual dictionary *Devoto-Oli 2007* does not contain the word 'muffin', while the bilingual dictionary *Oxford Paravia* (2001) considers it an untranslatable culture-specific word similar to a 'tortina' or 'focaccina'. As a result, both the nursery rhyme and 'muffin' were translated in dubbing through cultural substitution, by using elements typical of the Italian culture. The 'muffin man' becomes 'uomo focaccina' ('focaccina' is a small bun similar to pizza bread, and in this case it evokes the idea of a food which is soft), while 'Drury Lane' is turned into 'che vive nella farina' (who lives in flour). It is worth noting that 'focaccina' is also considered the literal translation of 'muffin'. In fact, bilingual dictionaries such as the *Oxford Paravia* (2007) and the *Sansoni* (2006) list 'focaccina' as the translation equivalent for 'muffin', though the two objects are different, one being salty and the other one being sweet, and also having different forms. What they have in common is the softness. The Anglo-American food cultural reference (muffin) and the allusion to the nursery rhyme are lost, whereas the dubbed version manages to retain at least the rhyme, which plays an important role in the song. Today muffins are widespread in Italy, they can be bought in supermarkets and in bakeries, and the Anglicism 'muffin' is part of the Italian vocabulary, therefore it would probably be used in dubbed dialogues. However, in 2001 the dubbing professionals working on the Italian version of the film presumably thought that 'muffin' was not familiar enough to Italians and opted for an Italian type of food.

The same strategy of cultural substitution, and elimination of the American cultural reference, is adopted in other scenes in the same film. In example 3 below, Donkey is happy because he is staying with Shrek.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<DONKEY>	This is gonna be fun! We can stay up late, swappin' manly stories, and in the mornin', I'm makin' waffles.	Sarà uno spasso, faremo notte fonda, ci scambieremo storielle da uomini e quando sarà mattina, cucinerò ciambelle.

Table 4. Example 3 from *Shrek* (2001)

In the above example, the Anglo-American cultural reference 'waffle' is translated by cultural substitution, using 'ciambelle' (doughnuts). In 2001 this type of food was probably unknown in Italy and it was therefore turned into a more common sweet. For instance, the word was absent from the Italian monolingual dictionary *Devoto-Oli 2007*. On the other hand, in 2023 waffles are commonly found in Italy, in supermarkets, though they have not entered many dictionaries of the

Italian language. For instance, ‘waffle’ is absent from the *Devoto-Oli 2023* dictionary, whereas it is present in *Lo Zingarelli 2023*.

Example 4 below contains a further instance of cultural substitution in *Shrek*. The ogre has explained to Donkey that “Ogres are like onions. [...] They have layers.” Donkey does not appreciate this similarity, since most people do not like onions because they stink and make you cry. So he tries to think of another food that has layers and that people like. He comes up with the dessert ‘parfait’, which is sweet and consists of layers of ice-cream, merengue, fruit, chocolate, etc.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<DONKEY>	You know what else everybody likes? Parfaits . Have you ever met a person, you say: “Hey, let’s get some parfait ”, they say: “Hell no, I don’t like no parfait ”? Parfaits are delicious!	Sai cos’altro piace a tutti? Le lasagne . Hai mai conosciuto qualcuno a cui dici: “Ehi, prendiamo le lasagne ”, e lui risponde: “Non mi piacciono le lasagne ”. Le lasagne sono squisite!

Table 5. Example 4 from *Shrek* (2001)

In the Italian dubbed version ‘parfait’ is replaced through cultural substitution by a typical savoury Italian dish which has layers and which most people love: ‘*lasagne*’. This is an excellent example of cultural substitution which can be used in the dubbed version since the food mentioned (parfait) is not shown on screen.

In *Shrek the third* (2007) the same strategy is applied to food and drink references. In example 5 below, a cocktail which is unknown in Italy is replaced by an Italian liqueur. In the Poisoned Apple tavern, Prince Charming asks for a Fuzzy Navel.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<MABEL>	What do you want, Charming?	Che cosa vuoi, Azzurro?
<PRINCE CHARMING>	Oh, not much, just a chance at redemption... And a Fuzzy Navel! And Fuzzy Navels for all my friends!	Oh non molto, solo un’occasione per riscattarmi, uhuhuh. Ed un rosolio invecchiato! Un rosolio invecchiato per tutti i miei amici!
<CAPTAIN HOOK>	We’re not your friends.	Non siamo amici tuoi.

Table 6. Example 5 from *Shrek the third* (2007)

In the above example the cocktail Fuzzy Navel is replaced, through the technique of cultural substitution, by a liqueur which is more familiar to an Italian (adult) audience (*rosolio*). Once again, this technique can be used in dubbing because the objects referred to are not shown on screen.

Three further instances of cultural substitution can be found in the same film. In example 6 below, Donkey addresses his child Bananas. The typical American habit of “roasting marshmallows” was probably not well-known in Italy in 2007,³ so ‘marshmallows’ are replaced by ‘*cialde*’ (‘wafers’ or ‘thin waffles’).

³ Although some people in the audience might have been familiar with the image of Snoopy and Woodstock

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
DONKEY	...and Bananas, no roasting marshmallows on your sister's head.	E Banane, non arrostire più cialde sulla testa di tua sorella.

Table 7. Example 6 from *Shrek the third* (2007)

In example 7 below a 'Dutch fudge torte' (then unknown in Italy) was replaced by a chocolate and cream dessert which is quite common in Italy (*profiterole*).

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<DONKEY>	Okay, I see a a a Dutch fudge torte with cinnamon swirls!	Vedo un un un bel profiterole al cioccolato con una spruzzata di cannella.

Table 8. Example 7 from *Shrek the third* (2007)

In example 8 below, through the technique of cultural substitution the typically British spongy cake called 'crumpet' – that is, "traditional British teatime treat that is a type of griddle cake, known for its cratered surface" (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/crumpet>) – is replaced with the more typically Italian '*focaccine*' (small focaccia bread).

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<SNOW WHITE>	[...] and eating crumpets smothered with loganberries.	E mangeremmo focaccine colme di mora-lampone.

Table 9. Example 8 from *Shrek the third* (2007)

All the examples discussed in this section show that the dubbing professionals translating the *Shrek* films (translator Elena Di Carlo and dialogue writer and dubbing director Francesco Vairano) opted for a cultural substitution technique: they chose food and drinks which were known by an Italian audience, adopting a domesticating approach. In the *Shrek* films (2001, 2007) the strategy of cultural substitution prevails. Though the objects referred to in the original and dubbed dialogues are definitely different, this technique of cultural substitution was possible because the scenes in the films did not contain any images showing the food and drinks mentioned in the dialogues. It is worth pointing out that a similar "preference for domesticating techniques" was observed by González-Vera (2015a) in the Spanish dubbed version of the *Shrek* saga. According to the Spanish scholar, "this tendency makes the text more accessible to the Spanish audience and results in the Spanishisation of the *Shrek* saga" (2015a: 262). A further reason for this target-oriented approach is the humorous purpose of the presence of cultural references in the *Shrek* saga.

The following sections will discuss how food and drink cultural references were translated in other films released in the following years, that is, between 2010 and 2018.

roasting marshmallows in the *Peanuts*' comic strips, the dubbing professionals working on the Italian version probably thought that the habit of roasting marshmallows was too distant from the Italian cultural context.

3.2. Food and drink cultural references in *Despicable me* (2010)

The film *Despicable Me* contains some references to food. In example 9 below, Gru's muffin has been eaten by his dog. The word 'muffin' was retained in the dubbed version, opting for the technique of loanword. The cake is briefly seen on screen. This strategy differs from the one used in the *Shrek* films.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<GRU>	Kyle! Bad dog! No! No! No! Sit! My muffin !	Kyle! Cane cattivo! No! A cucina! È il mio muffin .

Table 10. Example 9 from *Despicable Me* (2010)

In example 10 below, the word 'Cheeto' (a brand of crunchy cheese-flavoured snacks) is translated in the dubbed version using the Italian word '*salatino*' which means 'salted cracker/savoury'. A brand – not known in Italy – is replaced by a hypernym/general word through a strategy of generalisation. The film shows the little Agnes with a Cheetos puff snack in her hand, but in the dubbed version the general, Italian word is clearer and more direct.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<AGNES>	Ooh! My caterpillar never turned into a butterfly.	Ooh! E il mio bruco non si è trasformato in farfalla.
<EDITH>	That's a Cheeto .	Quello è un salatino !

Table 11. Example 10 from *Despicable Me* (2010)

Another food cultural reference which is rendered in dubbing through a general word is 'Gummy bears' (small, bear shaped fruit gum candies, similar to a jelly), which is generalized into '*gelatine di frutta*' (fruit jellies), eliminating the reference to the shape of the candies.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<AGNES>	I bet their house is made of Gummy Bears !	Scommetto che la casa è fatta di gelatine di frutta !

Table 12. Example 11 from *Despicable Me* (2010)

3.3. Food and drink cultural references in *Rio* (2011)

In the film *Rio* (2011) two food cultural references were found: 'marshmallows' and 'spring roll'. In example 12 below, marshmallows are shown in close-up in the film, as the bird Blu is preparing his breakfast (a cup of cocoa with marshmallows and chocolate-chip cookies). In the dubbed version the cultural reference is conveyed by means of a loan word, keeping the English word.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<BLU>	Ah! This is the life. The perfect marshmallow -to-cocoa ratio.	Ah! Questa sì che è vita! Miscela perfetta di marshmallow e cacao.

Table 13. Example 12 from *Rio* (2011)

On the other hand, the Asian dish ‘spring roll’ (example 13) is rendered in the dubbed version through its Italian name, its literal translation, i.e., ‘*involtino primavera*’.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<BLU>	You see, out here I'm just a hors d'oeuvre. Nothing more than a feathery spring roll .	Visto? Visto? Qui, io sono solo un antipasto. Un involtino primavera piumato.

Table 14. Example 13 from *Rio* (2011)

3.4. Food and drink cultural references in *The Lorax* (2012)

The Lorax (2012) contains one food cultural reference in the original version and two in the dubbed version. In fact, ‘marshmallow’ is added in the dubbed dialogues to translate the English ‘junk food’. This choice is due to the fact that the images have just shown a character opening a giant marshmallow pack and feeding all the forest animals with these sweets. The translation strategy is thus one of creation of a new cultural reference in the dialogues (since the CR existed as a visual element, and in written words). A second cultural reference is ‘pancake’, which is uttered twice in the original version, and once in the dubbed version (with one omission). The preferred strategy is that of loan word, since in 2012 pancakes were already popular in Italy and since the visuals show Onceler preparing pancakes in his kitchen. By 2012, then, both marshmallows and pancakes were American sweets known in Italy. Example 14 below shows the use of ‘pancake’ in *The Lorax*.

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<THE ONCE-LER>	# Pancake , the pancake .# Uup!	#Spadello i pancake .# Puuh!

Table 15. Example 14 from *The Lorax* (2012)

The popularity of pancakes in Italy is testified also by the fact that other films such as *Rio 2* (2014) and *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (2018) show and mention them in dubbing.

3.5. Food and drink cultural references in *Brave* (2012)

The Scotland-based Pixar film *Brave* contains only one food cultural reference, i.e., haggis. It is a traditional Scottish food which is likely not to be familiar to an Italian (young) audience, and which could thus undergo a process of generalization or explicitation through a gloss. The dubbing team decided to keep the word as a loan in the Italian dialogues, despite its referent being

quite obscure. The reason is that we can see some slices of haggis in the plates of Merida's three younger brothers and that their mother, Queen Elinor, actually explains what the food item is in the following utterance. Since her children play with the food and are disgusted by it, she explains what it is (Example 15 below).

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<p data-bbox="252 533 475 562"><QUEEN ELINOR></p> <p data-bbox="252 622 536 651">(one of the BOYS gagging)</p>	<p data-bbox="619 533 968 593">Boys, you're naughty! Don't just play with your haggis.</p> <p data-bbox="619 654 968 761">Och, now, how'd you know you don't like it if you won't try it? That's just a wee sheep's stomach! It's delicious! Mmm.</p>	<p data-bbox="991 533 1329 593">Bambini, non giocherellate con il vostro haggis!</p> <p data-bbox="991 654 1329 761">Oh, andiamo, come fate a sapere che non vi piace se non lo assaggiate? È solo lo stomaco di una pecorella! È squisito! Mmm.</p>

Table 16. Example 15 from *Brave* (2012)

3.6. Food and drink cultural references in *Despicable me 2* (2013)

Despicable Me 2 contains several food references belonging to different international cuisines. Some belong to Mexican culture, since although the film is set in the United States, the antagonist Eduardo Perez/El Macho is the owner of a Mexican restaurant. Verbal and visual stereotypes referring to Mexican culture are present. American and Indian food are also mentioned. Most of the references are conveyed in dubbing using a loanword: *churros*, *guacamole*, *poulet tikka masala* and *cupcakes* (2 occurrences) are retained in the dubbed Italian dialogues. 'Cupcakes' becomes 'cupcake' (singular) in Italian, since Anglicisms tend to lose the -s of the plural when used in Italian. Only one food reference is translated by a more general word: the German-derived 'pretzels' becomes 'salatini' (savouries) in the dubbed version.

Food and drink cultural references in *Monsters University* (2013)

Monsters University (2013) contains two occurrences of 'cupcake(s)', which are rendered in dubbing through the use of a loanword (cupcake) and through the explicitation technique, using the more general word/hypernym 'dolcetto'. There is therefore a tendency to keep the American food name unchanged. The visual elements contribute to this choice, since when Randy says that he has prepared some cupcakes he wants to offer to other students in order to make new friends, the images show typical cupcakes decorated with cream and red letters creating the expression "be my pal". However, other food references in the film are translated by means of cultural substitution. This is due to the fact that they are part of humorous expressions/exclamations, and they are not actually meant to denote any typical food. Examples are the name 'Smoothie', translated in the dubbed version as 'Bigné', the exclamation 'Cheese and crackers!' translated as 'Cacio con le pere!' (cheese with pears) and 'Salisbury steak!', turned into 'Polpettine!' (small meat balls). These are all humorous exclamations which can generate laughter in the audience only if the culinary reference is understood. As a result, the dubbing team decided to recreate expressions which sounded humorous in Italian, using more common Italian dishes. The function of the culinary word/expression seems to call for the technique of cultural substitution. This is in line with a previous study on culinary references in animated films dubbed into Spanish: when there was a humorous purpose, there was "a tendency towards a TL-oriented technique" (González-Vera 2015a: 261).

3.7. Food and drink cultural references in *Rio 2* (2014)

The original version of *Rio 2* contains four occurrences of ‘pancake(s)’, which are translated in the dubbed version 3 times by means of a loan word, and once by omission (in order to avoid a repetition in the same utterance). The word ‘pancake’ is repeated since the blue macaw Blu and his family often prepare pancakes for breakfast and live like humans, rather than birds. A further instance of American food and drink cultural reference is ‘Slurpee’. It is the brand name of fuzzy slushies (partially-frozen drinks with different flavours) sold in the United States. Since neither the drink nor the brand name exist in Italy, and since no images show the object, ‘Slurpee’ is translated in dubbing by cultural substitution, choosing ‘*ghiacciolo*’ (‘icicle’), which is frozen, sweet and can be sucked. Example 16 below shows the line in English and in Italian:

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<PEDRO>	They got mosquitoes that suck your blood like Slurpees .	Ci sono zanzare che ti succhiano il sangue come un ghiacciolo!

Table 17. Example 16 from *Rio 2* (2014)

3.8. Food and drink cultural references in *Despicable me 3* (2017)

Despicable Me 3 contains two food references. One is maintained (the invented foreign dish ‘*pomodoro la kumquat*’ is retained in the dubbed version to highlight its strangeness and foreignness), while the Anglo-American ‘pot pie’ is conveyed in dubbing through the technique of explicitation/gloss: its meaning is explained in Italian. In example 17 below, ‘pot pie’ (a meat/chicken stew with a pie crust) is translated as ‘*pasticcio di carne*’ (meat pie/stew).

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<DRU>	My stomach feels all queasy. I shouldn’t have eaten that pot pie .	Ah, ho stomaco tutto scombus-solato. Non dovevo mangiare pasticcio di carne .

Table 18. Example 17 from *Despicable Me 3* (2017)

3.9. Food and drink cultural references in *Ralph breaks the Internet* (2018)

Ralph Breaks the Internet contains four food references: burrito, tortilla chips, pancake and milkshake. They are retained in the dubbed version as loanwords, except for ‘tortilla chips’, which is translated by means of generalization (the more general, less specific word ‘*patatina*’- ‘chip’ is preferred). ‘Pancake(s)’ and ‘milkshake(s)’ occur several times and are shown in the film, since in a videogame Ralph and Vanellope feed a bunny and a kitty, giving pancakes to the bunny and milkshakes to the kitty, until the bunny, having eaten too many pancakes, explodes (see example 18 below).

Name of Character and situation/comments	Original version	Dubbed version
<VANELLOPE>	Uh, Ralph, you might wanna try feeding the kitty for a little while.	Ehm, Ralph, perché non pensi anche un po' al gattino?
<RALPH> <Bunny explodes>	Noo. The kitty gets the milkshake . The bunny gets the pancake!	Noo. Al gattino va il milkshake . Al coniglietto va il pancake!

Table 19. Example 18 from *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (2018)

4. Comments on translation strategies through time

The most frequent translation techniques in the films analysed are translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word, translation by explicitation, i.e., using a more general word (generalization), and omission. Analysing translation strategies through time, also focussing on how the same cultural reference is treated in different films, we can observe some patterns. The typical American sweet ‘marshmallow(s)’ is turned into a different type of food in *Shrek* (2001), using a strategy of cultural substitution, whereas it is retained as a loan word in three films released ten years later, after 2010: *Rio* (2011), *The Lorax* (2012), *Big Hero 6* (2014). This tendency towards foreignization after 2010 may be due to the fact that globalization has made such products available and more commonly known in Italy and to the fact that, in the more recent films, images show the food mentioned in the text. ‘Muffin’ also has a similar pattern: it is translated through cultural substitution before 2010 and is retained as a loanword after 2010. The same occurs with ‘pancake(s)’: they are mentioned and shown in *The Lorax* (2012), *Rio 2* (2014) and *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (2018), where the dubbed versions opt for retaining the original word as a loan. ‘Cupcake(s)’ is a further Anglo-American cultural element which tends to be retained in Italian dubbing: in the dubbed version of *Despicable Me 2* (2013) the loanword is used and in *Monsters University* (2013) the loan word is used once, and the second occurrence of ‘cupcake’ is translated by a more general word, through generalization (*dolcetto*).

5. The point of view of Italian dubbing professionals

In order to provide a fuller picture of the approach to cultural references in dubbed animated films, two dubbing professionals who have worked on animated films since the 1990s were contacted. Elena Di Carlo (translator and dialogue writer) is the translator of the *Shrek* films and the *Rio* films. Roberto Morville (former Creative Director of the Walt Disney Company, Italy, now working as dialogue writer) was the supervisor of all the Disney and Disney-Pixar films analysed in this article. In personal communications conducted in October 2022, both professionals argued that in the past more adaptation and creativity were allowed and, as a result, the Italian versions of films and TV series could be more target-oriented. In recent years, on the other hand, U.S. clients ask dubbing professionals to keep close to the original version and request a higher degree of fidelity to the original dialogues. Di Carlo points out that in the *Shrek* films, translated by her and adapted by Francesco Vairano, they could be creative and play with the Italian language, and adapt cultural elements to the Italian culture, whereas now U.S. clients expect the dubbed version of a film to adhere to the original version. Adaptation to the target audience is possible only for humorous purposes (Di Carlo, personal communication, 2022). Morville explains that the difference in the approach towards American and foreign cultural references has changed dramatically

over the years, since low cost companies and therefore the possibility to travel more, as well as the Internet, have contributed to internationalization. As a result, more English and more cultural references are retained in dubbing. In the 1980s and 1990s, on the other hand, many people did not even know McDonald's. So it was normal and absolutely right to 'Italianise' certain terms for comprehension, which necessarily has to be quick when dialogue is concerned. There is no time for pausing and pondering on the meaning of a word (Morville, personal communication, 2022).

6. Conclusions

This article has investigated the translation techniques used in the Italian dubbing of animated films focusing on culture-specific references related to food and drink over a time span of approximately 20 years. Analysis suggests that before 2010 the prevailing strategy was translation by cultural substitution, whereby a foreign cultural element was replaced in the dubbed version by a 'domestic' or more familiar cultural element having similar connotations or functions in the Italian culture. Loan words, on the other hand, were less frequently adopted. This degree of adaptation was possible also due to the fact that in these films no visual elements matched the verbal ones, so adaptation could take place. In films produced after 2010, on the other hand, the strategy of translating using a loan word prevails, whereas instances of cultural substitution and adaptation are less frequent. The technique of generalization using a hypernym (translation by a more general word) is also adopted in various cases. A domesticating approach thus seems to prevail before 2010, and a more foreignising one in the after-2010 films. This is confirmed by the two dubbing professionals interviewed. A more foreignising approach in recent years is definitely influenced by globalisation (Italians are more and more acquainted with food and drinks belonging to the American culture and to other foreign cultures). Another factor influencing this foreignising approach is the fact that some of the films actually show the food and drinks (pancakes, cupcakes, marshmallows, muffins, milkshake are some examples).

It is worth pointing out that these are preliminary qualitative results on a small-scale investigation. Further research on a larger corpus and with a precise quantitative analysis is needed to ascertain whether these observations on dubbing practice can be confirmed and are actually translation patterns/norms in Italian dubbing. Both a diachronic and a synchronic approach could provide interesting results. Moreover, this study focussing on food and drink references is part of a larger project investigating other types of cultural references (celebrities/personalities and inter-textual cultural references or allusions). Future studies can thus use a larger corpus (also adding films produced and dubbed between 1950 and 2000), explore the translation of various categories of cultural references, and perhaps also compare the approach adopted by dubbing professionals in different languages.

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