

ACCENTS AND STEREOTYPES IN ANIMATED FILMS

The case of *Zootopia* (2016)

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Abstract – Language variation is an extremely useful tool to convey information about a character, even when this means playing with stereotypes, which are often associated to some dialects and sociolects (Lippi-Green 1997). Accents generally bear a specific social meaning within the cultural environment of the source text, this being the main reason why they are often particularly difficult to translate with varieties of the target language, even though there are several cases where this strategy proved to be a valid choice, especially in animation (Ranzato 2010). Building on previous research on the language of cartoons (Lippi-Green 1997, but also more recently Bruti 2009, Minutella 2016, Parini 2019), this study is aimed at exploring language variation and how this is deeply connected to cultural stereotypes in the animated Disney film *Zootopia* (Howard *et al.* 2016). After giving an outline of the social and regional varieties of American English found in the original version (Beaudine *et al.* 2017; Crewe 2017; Soares 2017) a special focus will be given to the Italian adaptation of the film through the analysis of the strategies chosen by adapters to render a similar varied sociolinguistic situation in Italian, with particular interest in the correspondence between language and stereotype.

Keywords: sociolinguistics; accents; AVT; dubbing; animation.

1. Introduction

In the field of sociolinguistics, it is now widely accepted that language has a “clue-bearing” role, that is to say that it contributes to give information on the speaker’s identity on the basis of his/her idiolect. This means that when someone speaks, we are likely to develop our own ideas about his/her social background, geographical origin, ethnic belonging, age, etc. (Trudgill 2000, pp. 1-3). Language variation is such an important social marker in everyday life that cinema often relies very much on it in order to depict contemporary society and to build strong individual identities for characters through language. However, audiovisual dialogue is a written text made to be spoken, that is why it can only rely on some devices to imitate spoken language as closely as possible, but it will always have some differences with it (Gregory

1967; Kozloff 2000). There is no doubt, however, that language variation is an extremely useful tool to convey information about a character, even when this means playing with stereotypes, which are very often associated with some dialects and sociolects. In this sense, language varieties can be considered as “lingua-cultural elements”, particularly difficult to translate into other languages. It is often argued by scholars that the employment of other regional varieties in translation could give rise to grotesque effects, but there are several cases (see Section 2) in which such strategies have proved to be interestingly creative, especially in animation (Pavesi 2005, p. 38; Chiaro 2008, pp. 9-13, and 2009, pp. 158-159; Ranzato 2010, pp. 54-60).

This article is aimed at exploring language variation and how this is deeply connected to cultural stereotypes in the animated Disney film *Zootopia* (Howard *et al.* 2016). After providing an outline of the social and regional varieties of English found in the original version, mentioning characteristics and significance according to the characters that employ them, a special focus will be given to the Italian dubbed version of the film through the analysis of the strategies chosen in this particular case by adapters to render a similarly varied sociolinguistic environment in Italian, with particular interest in the correspondence between language and stereotype.

Zootopia was chosen because stereotypes, race and racism are the main topics of the film, whose portrayed relationship between predators and preys stands for the race-related problems in US society (Beaudine *et al.* 2017, p. 231). This is also confirmed by Nielsen, who argues that “the anthropomorphism of animals in animation provided filmmakers with the ability to reflect and reinforce contemporaneous social structures and behaviors” (2019, p. 68). Moreover, as stated by Crewe (2017, p. 30), different kinds of discriminations are here indirectly conveyed through language.

As regards methodology, the investigation started with the repeated viewing of the film and with the consequent selection of pivotal scenes from the point of view of language variation. Analysis of the transcription of the English dialogues followed, taking into consideration phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic features; online comments by native speakers and the still sparse academic research on the film by other scholars were of much help in this phase. Finally, an even closer examination was carried out on the Italian adaptation of the film, by listing all the scenes where characters speaking an Italian dialect appear and providing an analysis of the main linguistic characteristics and the social meaning that they bear.

2. Accents and dialects in animated films: AVT strategies

As mentioned in the introduction, film dialogue is written with the aim of imitating natural conversation, and various strategies and elements can be employed to give the dialogue a specific function; for example, language can be exploited to “reveal characters”, using Kozloff’s words (2000, pp. 43-46). Kozloff also argued that in cinema we can often hear the so-called “clichéd dialects”, which, by locating the character’s sociocultural identity, lead directly into stereotyping (2000, p. 82). While spectators usually link accents and dialects to some kind of personal features and stereotypes, creators generally tend to rely on these social prejudices intentionally, since linguistic variation is frequently used for purposes of humour, as their conspicuous use by comedians all over the world confirms. According to Hodson,

Language variety is one of the ways in which stereotypes can be triggered. [...] ‘matched guise’ tests demonstrate that listeners have strong associations between particular varieties of English and the personal qualities of individuals. This explains why filmmakers find language variety such a convenient tool for sketching in character background: it exploits the audience’s existing preconceptions about the people who use that variety. However, it also explains why using language variety in this way can so quickly slide into character stereotyping (2014, pp. 66-67).

Even though cartoons are further from reality than live-action films, dialogues are built to be as close as possible to reality in this genre too, and usually humour is precisely one of the greatest motives of their creation. As a matter of fact, accents and dialects are frequently employed in animation to trigger humour, but also to convey some specific connotations. For instance, British English in cartoons and in Hollywood films is often chosen to connote evil characters, whose sense of austerity is generally in contrast with the friendly American accent of the protagonist. This connotation has received attention by Ranzato (2018a, pp. 242-243 and 2018b, pp. 223) and it can also be observed in the dedicated section of the corpus-based website *Dialects in Audiovisuals*,¹ where we find listed as examples Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmatians* (1961), Scar in *The Lion King* (2000), Lady Tremain in *Cinderella* (1950), Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Jafar in *Aladdin* (1992), Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* (1953), Edgar in *The Aristocats* (1970) (Ranzato *et al.* 2017).

¹ The *Dialects in Audiovisual* website is a repository of files on films and TV series whose main characters speak a social or regional variety of British English, categorised according to their function in the dialogue. The project, coordinated by Irene Ranzato, was inspired by the *Trafilm* project on multilingual films (<http://trafilm.net/>) and can be visited at <https://dialectsinav.wixsite.com/home/>.

A detailed analysis of Disney films and their large use of accents and dialects has been carried out by Lippi-Green (1997/2012), who discovered some general tendencies in the use of different varieties for specific types of characters:

Characters with strongly positive actions and motivations are overwhelmingly speakers of socially mainstream varieties of English. Conversely, characters with strongly negative actions and motivations often speak varieties of English linked to specific geographical regions and marginalized social groups. Perhaps even more importantly, those characters who have the widest variety of life choices and possibilities available to them are male, and they are speakers of MUSE² or a non-stigmatized variety of British English. [...] Even when stereotyping is not overtly negative, it is confining and misleading (Lippi-Green 1997, 101).

Connotations and stereotypes linked to language are almost always culture-specific, which is the reason why translating dialects, sociolects and the representation of ‘otherness’ in general (Di Giovanni 2007; Iaia 2018) is undoubtedly one of the hardest tasks for translators. In fact, replacing a source language variety with a target language one could give origin to undesirable and grotesque effects. As a consequence, the most common strategy when translating regional and social varieties is that of omitting them in favour of the standard language; in other words, “a common strategy to deal with variation is simply not to deal with it and homogenize it into the standard, mainstream variety of the target language” (Chiaro 2008, 23).

There are, nevertheless, some very interesting exceptions of popular and iconic creative translation strategies in Italian dubbing, such as the imaginary dialect used by Eliza Doolittle in the Italian adaptation of *My Fair Lady* (a mix of Central and Southern Italian dialects) and the common use of Sicilian dialect to render the Italian-American accents of some characters in films like *The Godfather* (Parini 2009 and 2019; Ranzato 2010, 58). It is in animation, however, that we find more creative adaptations in terms of language variation. The most popular one is the Italian dubbed version of the red cat Thomas O’Malley in *The Aristocats* (1970), known in Italy as Romeo, characterised by his marked use of the Roman vernacular. Thomas/Romeo is considered to be a remarkable exception in the field of the analysis and translation of audiovisual dialogue not only for the creativeness of its Italian dubbing, but also because in this case neither his socially-marked US English in the original version (he uses several features that are generally associated to working class) nor his diatopic variety in Italian are negative

² The acronym MUSE (Mainstream US English) includes all the US varieties which are not stigmatised in social or regional terms (Lippi-Green 1997, pp. 85-87).

characterisations, as pointed out by Bruti (2009). Even Lippi-Green, however, had identified O'Malley as an exception to her results on the accent of main characters, arguing that his sociolect is to be ascribed to the fact that he is included among the “rough lovers, [...] who need the care and attention of good women to settle them” (2012, 126).

A similar example of use of Italian regional varieties in dubbing with no negative connotations is Tony's Neapolitan in the second dubbed version of the 1955 film *Lady and the Tramp*, which replaced the Sicilian characterisation of the first version with the aim of eliminating any connotation that this variety had acquired in that period, following its use in mafia-related films (Rossi 2006, 325-327).

This tendency of including regional varieties in the Italian dubbed version can also be found in more recent animated films (not Disney productions, in these cases), such as *Shark Tale* (2004), where Sicilian and Neapolitan accents can be heard (Bianchi 2010; Parini 2019) and *Gnomeo & Juliet* (2011), adaptation of the Shakespearean tragedy *Romeo & Juliet*, where the opposition between the two families is reinforced in the Italian dubbed version by the opposition between Northern dialects and Southern dialects (Minutella 2016; Bruti and Vignozzi 2016). As argued by Minutella (2016), the translation into Italian of *Gnomeo & Juliet* constitutes one of the most interesting translations characterised by the creative use of regionality:

the dialogues of the Italian version are extremely creative. Interviews with dubbing professionals have revealed that they are the result of an adaptation process by many rewriters, and also of improvisation while dubbing. This operation was aimed at increasing the humorous load of the lines, at making the film more entertaining. *Gnomeo & Giulietta* is thus a creative attempt at conveying humour through language variation, and of a collaborative effort by all the dubbing professionals involved in the final Italian version, who playfully engaged with the linguistic resources of regional Italian and local dialects (ibid., 252-253).

Minutella (2016) also adds that this greater freedom in cartoons in dealing with accents and dialects when translating regional varieties of the original is probably due to the fact that in animation the audience expects to find less verisimilitude than in other genres, which may stick more closely to reality. Ferrari similarly argues that regional accents “simply offer an additional humorous element in the already abundant range of extravagant sound effects common in animation” (2011, p. 45), referring to *The Simpsons* (1987-present), which is, together with *South Park* (1997-present), the greatest example in animation for television of use of regional and social varieties in the Italian translation, aimed at increasing the comical effect of some characters.

3. The case of *Zootopia*

Zootopia is a 2016 animated comedy film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios. It is the 55th Disney animated feature film and it was directed by Byron Howard and Rich Moore and co-directed by Jared Bush. It received a very positive critical response and earned several accolades and awards, such as the 2017 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. As far as its audience reception is concerned, it crossed the \$1 billion box office mark, becoming the third Disney animated film to do so.³

The film is set in a world populated by anthropomorphic animals that apparently live peacefully together despite belonging to different species. The protagonist is Judy Hopps, a bunny, who moves from her rural birthplace to the big city of Zootopia in order to make her dream of becoming a police officer come true. Although nobody seems to believe in her, she is eventually the academy valedictorian and starts her job as police officer in the city, while still struggling with her chief's and colleagues' prejudice about her tiny physical appearance and for being a female. In order to do that, Judy volunteers to solve the case of the disappearance of Mr Otterton, one of the fourteen predators who have recently been missing. With the help of Nick Wilde, a con artist red fox, she finds out that all of the animals were imprisoned because they had become aggressive due to an injection of a drug made of night howler, a type of flower that has severe psychotropic effects on mammals, as part of a conspiracy conceived by the little sheep Dawn Bellwether, the mayor's assistant, who wanted to discredit predators in order to create a society based on the supremacy of the preys.

Various scholars have discussed the main topic of the film as being discrimination in general, from racism to sexism and their related stereotypes, underlining how language can be a key tool for discriminating (Beaudine *et al.* 2017; Crewe 2017; Soares 2017; Nielsen 2019). As argued by Beaudine *et al.*,

Through *Zootopia*, Walt Disney Animation Studios has created a utopian space for mammalian creatures, where predators and prey live side by side in harmony; a space “where anyone can be anything.” *Zootopia* attempts to utilize the literary device of metaphor to explore stereotypes, race and racism; the consequences of one's actions; and the power that one being's beliefs can hold. Disney Animation uses both the physical appearance and the ethos of a variety of mammals in order to extend their racial metaphor.

(...) Grand themes woven throughout the film address a number of relevant discussions to be had with students, including how to live in a world chock full

³ Visit *Box Office Mojo* for further information: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl4031743489/> (last accessed 4/09/2020).

of stereotypes, race, and racism; that consequences come with an action; and that there is power in one's beliefs (2017, p. 227).

3.1. Accents in the original version

Following the detailed analysis conducted by Soares (2017), the two most striking American accents that we find in the film are Southern American English and African American Vernacular English, both stereotypically related to a given kind of characters. The former is usually linked to ignorance and lack of education (Lippi-Green 2012, pp. 214-234), and speakers are often labelled as “dumb” and “uneducated” (Wolfram, Schilling 2015, p. 79); the latter is generally linked to lower classes too, but more specifically to criminals (Lippi-Green 2012, pp. 182-213). It is not by chance, then, that a character coming from a rural environment speaks with a Southern accent (Gideon Grey, voiced by Phil Johnston) and a robber/smuggler employs an Afro-American one (Duke Weaselton, voiced by Alan Tudyk). While the character of Duke Weaselton is dubbed in Italian with a regional accent which is often linked to the same stereotypical feature and which, for this reason, will be analysed in the following section, Gideon Grey's way of speaking is rendered with a standard accent in Italian, where the character's idiolect was maintained through the use of the stuttering.

<p>Gideon: Hey, Judy. I-I'd just like to say I'm sorry for the way I behaved in my youth. I-I had lotta self doubt that manifested itself in the form of unchecked rage and aggression. I was a major jerk.</p> <p>Judy: Well, I know a thing or two about being a jerk.</p> <p>Gideon: Anyhow, I brought y'all these pies.</p> <p>Mr Hopps: Hey, kids! Don't you run through that <i>midnicampum holicithias</i>.</p> <p>Gideon: Well, now. There's a four-dollar word, Mr. H. My family always just call them Night Howlers.</p> <p>(<i>Zootopia</i>, 2016, min. 1:18:19)</p>	<p>Gideon: Ciao, Judy. Voglio solo dirti che mi dispiace per come m-mi sono comportato da piccolo. A-avevo molte insicurezze e le mascheravo manifestando aggressività e una rabbia incontrollata. Ero proprio un idiota.</p> <p>Judy: Aah... io so bene che vuol dire essere un idiota.</p> <p>Gideon: Be', comunque i-io ho portato queste torte.</p> <p>Signor Hopps: Ehi, bambini! Non passate sopra le <i>midnicampum holicithias</i>.</p> <p>Gideon: Accidenti, che nome complicato, signor Hopps. A casa mia li hanno sempre chiamati Ululatori Notturni.</p> <p>(<i>Zootropolis</i>, 2016, min. 1:18:19, adaptation)</p>
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Table 1
Southern American English in *Zootopia*.

Southern American English is of course a vague label that includes different kinds of Southern dialects, but Lippi-Green finds the monophthongisation of /ai/ to /a:/ as a phonological particularity shared by all of these varieties (2012, p. 214). The character of Gideon Grey, as pointed out by Soares (2017, p. 29), provides several examples of this feature, as shown in the excerpt above (Table 1) in the words *I* [a:], *my* [ma:] and *night* [na:t]. In the same scene, his speech also presents a phonological assimilation in “a lot of”, pronounced [ˈlatə] (rendered in the excerpt as *lotta*, in an attempt at eye dialect) and the use of *y’all* (contracted form of “you all”) to indicate the second-person plural (Soares 2017, pp. 27-29), which are other two distinctive features of Southern American varieties.

As mentioned above, Gideon Grey comes from a rural area of the animal world of Zootopia, a characteristic which is well represented, stereotypically, in his idiolect, but it is interesting to note that although Judy shares the same social and geographical background (and actually her parents do have a slight accent), she speaks a perfect General American variety, which was also noted by the audience as some online comments show.⁴ This could be due to the creators’ will to show that she is neither dumb nor uneducated, as a Southern American accent usually suggests, but that, on the contrary, she is smart and well-educated. In fact, “one of the primary characteristics of the stereotyped Southerner is ignorance, but it is a specific kind of ignorance – one disassociated from education and literacy” (Lippi-Green 2012, p. 223). This situation seems to be part of a tendency in Disney films, whose main characters are most likely to speak a standard form of English despite their social background, probably because they need to be seen as positive characters, and standard forms are traditionally considered the “best” (Lippi-Green 1997, p. 101).⁵

Apart from American English varieties, Soares (2017) identifies some other accents in the film, which she calls “foreign accents”. In this group three characters are included: the pop star Gazelle, voiced by the popular singer Shakira, who for this reason has a Latin American accent; Mr Big, a crime boss shrew voiced by Maurice LaMarche, who stereotypically speaks with an Italian American accent, as a reference to Mafia-related films (a feature which will be examined in the following section); Chief Bogo, a buffalo who is the chief of the Zootopia Police department, voiced by Idris

⁴ See

https://www.reddit.com/r/zootopia/comments/du5org/what_specific_type_of_accent_does_gideon_grey_have/ (last accessed 9/12/2019).

⁵ The scholar mentions as iconic examples *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (2000), where the protagonists have a standard American accent, while some of the secondary characters’ accents are used to locate the situation in a specific place (Arabia in the first case, Africa in the second).

Elba, a British actor whose accent⁶ – even though he is not a negative character (see Section 2) – conveys austerity and formality, which is a coherent choice for the character’s status. The most noticeable main features of his accent are the way he pronounces the letters “r” and “t”, which are also the traditional features that distinguish British English from American English. In particular, in the excerpt in Table 2 below, we can hear how /t/ is clearly pronounced when between two vowels, such as in words like *priority*, *Delgato* and *duty*, instead of being “flapped” as it happens in American English; moreover, when the sound /r/ comes before consonants or at the end of the word it is totally omitted: *first* /fɜːst/, *birthday* /bɜːθ,deɪ/, *care* /kɛə/. Interestingly, while the r-dropping is highly prestigious in the UK, it is rather a lower-class marker in the US (as in the case of Duke Weaselton, as shown in the following section).

Chief Bogo:

Everybody, sit. I’ve got three items on the docket. First, we need to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Francine... Happy birthday.

Number two, there are some new recruits with us I should introduce, but I’m not going to because... I don’t care.

Finally, we have 14 missing mammal cases. All predators, from a giant polar bear to a teensy little otter. And City Hall is right up my tail to find them. This is priority number one. Assignments. Officers Grizzoli, Fraggire, Delgato: your teams take missing mammals from the Rainforest District. Officers McHorn, Rhinowitz, Wolfard: your teams take Sahara Square. Officers Higgins, Snorlof, Trunkaby: Tundratown.

And finally, our first bunny, officer Hopps... parking duty. Dismissed.

(*Zootopia*, 2016, min. 15:00)

Table 2
British English in *Zootopia*.

3.2. Language variation in the Italian adaptation

Zootopia was released in 2016 in Italy with the title *Zootropolis* and its dubbing was entrusted to SDI Media Italia under Massimiliano Manfredi’s direction. The Italian dialogues are particularly interesting because they constitute an example of how the employment of Italian regional varieties can be a valuable strategy to render humour and give clues as to the characters’ personality and social background despite the risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes.

⁶ As argued by Dore (2020) and confirmed by online comments by native speakers, (see, for example, <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-different-accent-used-by-different-animals-in-Disneys-movie-Zootopia>, last accessed 4/09/2020), Elba here affects a South-African accent to characterise the African buffalo, but since it is very mild and sounds rather English to an American audience, it appears safe to affirm that it conveys the same “sophisticated” effect.

The first example that we encounter is Duke Weaselton, already mentioned in the previous section, a criminal weasel that has stereotyped original accent and is translated with a Neapolitan accent in the Italian version:

<p>Judy: Stop, in the name of the law!</p>	<p>Judy: Fermo! Fermo in nome della legge!</p>
<p>Duke: Catch me if ya can, cottontail! (...)</p>	<p>Duke: Prendimi se ci riesci, coda a fiocco! (...)</p>
<p>Judy: You! Stop! Excuse me... excuse me... pardon...</p>	<p>Judy: Tu! Fermo! Scusate... permesso... scusate... permesso...</p>
<p>Duke: Bon voyage, flatfoot!</p>	<p>Duke: Statt' buon', ah shbirro!</p>
<p>Judy: Hey! Stop right there!</p>	<p>Judy: Ehi, fermo dove sei!</p>
<p>Duke: Have a donut, coppah!</p>	<p>Duke: Beccati la ciambella!</p>
<p>FruFru: Oh my God, did you see those leopard print jeggins? (<i>she screams</i>)</p>	<p>FruFru: Oh mio Dio, avete visto quei jeggins leopardati? (<i>grida</i>)</p>
<p>Judy: Oh! (<i>she catches the doughnut</i>) I love your hair...</p>	<p>Judy: Oh! (<i>afferra la ciambella</i>) Bella acconciatura...</p>
<p>FruFru: Aah... thank you...</p>	<p>FruFru: Aah... grazie...</p>
<p>Duke: (<i>he giggles</i>) Come to papa!</p>	<p>Duke: (<i>ridacchia</i>) Bella di papà.</p>
<p>(<i>Zootopia</i>, 2016, min. 28:40)</p>	<p>(<i>Zootropolis</i>, 2016, min. 28:40, adaptation)</p>

Table 3
African American English in *Zootopia* and Neapolitan accent
in its Italian adaptation.

Different previous studies on language variation in *Zootopia* have come up with different perceptions on Duke Weaselton's accent: while Soares identifies his speech as an African-American Vernacular one (2017, p. 30), Dore (2020) briefly mentions he speaks with Brooklyn accent. Basing on these two insights and the fact that the two accents generally share several features, one may suggest that the character speaks African-American New York English (Blake *et al.* 2015, pp. 288-291), but in order to make a safe

assertion, a deeper study including interviews with the filmmakers, the dubbing-actor Tudyk and the audience would be needed. What is interesting for this study is the fact that Tudyk is neither Afro-American nor from New York, so he intentionally tried to affect an accent that would be associated with the world of criminality. Some of the features that he adopts are the use of the non-standard *ya* for “you” and the non-rhotic pronunciation of the colloquial word “copper” (associated with the working-class in the US – see Section 3.1). Furthermore, Soares (2017, p. 31) adds that in other scenes he also uses th-fronting and ng-coalescence (*nothing*: [nʌfɪn] instead of /nʌθɪŋ/).

The accent of Naples often has similar negative connotations in Italy, associated with robbery and smuggling. Perhaps this is why the character of Duke (whose surname in the adaptation becomes Donnolesi) is dubbed by the Neapolitan comedian Frank Matano (see Table 3), who emphasises his accent using [e] instead of /ɜ/ (*riesci*), the metaphony in the word *buono* ([bwɔn] instead of /bwɔno/) and the affrication of preconsonantic /z/ in the colloquial word *sbirro* ([ʃbir:o] instead of /zbir:o/) (Sobrero, Miglietta 2006, p. 93). The dubbing team’s choice to hire Matano for the part (and, perhaps, to ask him to emphasise his accent) was undoubtedly controversial. After the film was released, representatives of the *Movimento Neoborbonico* – a cultural association promoting Southern pride in Italy – complained about the fact that the film enhanced “unjustified” and “intolerable” negative clichés about Neapolitans (Armiero 2016).

In the scene above we also meet FruFru, daughter of the shrew mobster MrBig, who is dubbed by the Sicilian comedian Teresa Mannino. The use of the Sicilian regiolect in Italian dubbing is a widely employed strategy to translate the Italian-American accent (whose use in cinema was explored by Haller 1987), as shown by Parini (2009, 2019) in her analysis on the transposition of this language variety. The Italian adaptation of *Zootopia* apparently followed this tradition.

As shown in Table 4, in the Italian dubbed version FruFru’s accent is only marked in the use of [ɜ] instead of /e/ in several cases (*avevi, promesso, ieri, gigantesca*), even in final position making it sound almost an /a/ (*che, grazie*), while her father uses many other regional features (see Table 4) like the affrication of /s/ (*rispetto* [riʃpɜt:o]), [g] instead of /k/ (*casa, mancato*), the consonant doubling in initial position (*generosità, rivedere*), the affrication of the cluster /tr/ pronounced as [tʃr] (*trovare, mentre, costretto*) and the r-dropping when it is at the end of a syllable (*perché* [pek:e]) Mr Big’s idiolect is also marked on a morphosyntactic level through the use of the possessive *mea* (instead of *mia*, which, on the contrary, is used as a complement pronoun in Sicilian, like the Italian *me*) and *cu’* instead of the question word *cosa* (Sobrero, Miglietta 2006, p. 93; Parini 2019, p. 258). It is interesting to point out that, contrarily to what happened with the

characterisation of Duke as a Neapolitan speaker, the use of the Sicilian regiolect for a mob boss did not trigger any formal protest or resentful reaction. Parini observed that even in the case of *Shark Tale* there were no indignant reactions and, as the scholar suggested, further research in the field of perception studies may offer interesting views on the hypothetical reasons (2019, p. 260).

<p>Mr Big: I trusted you, Nicky. I welcomed you into my home. We broke bread together. Grandmama made you a cannoli. And how did you repay my generosity? With a rug made from the butt of a skunk. A skunk-butt rug. You disrespected me. You disrespected my grandmama, who I buried in that skunk-butt rug. I told you never to show your face here again, but here you are. Snooping around with this... What are you? A performer? What's with the costume?</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>FruFru: Daddy! It's time for our dance. Ah! What did we say? No icing anyone at my wedding!</p> <p>Mr Big: I have to, baby, daddy has to. Ice 'em!</p> <p>FruFru: Wait, wait! She's the bunny that saved my life yesterday. From that giant donut!</p> <p>Mr Big: This bunny?</p> <p>FruFru: Yeah! Hi!</p> <p>Judy: Hi... I love your dress...</p> <p>FruFru: Oh, thank you!</p> <p>(<i>Zootopia</i>, 2016, min. 48:19)</p>	<p>Mr Big: I' mi fidavo di te, Nicky. Tu sei stato accolto in gasa mia. Hai mangiato alla mia tavola. La nonna t'ha preparato i cannoli. E tu come ricambi la mia ggenerosità? Con un tappeto fatto con le chiappe di una puzzola. Mi hai mangato di rishpetto. Hai mangato di rishpetto a mea nonna, che ho seppellito dentro al tappeto di chiappe di puzzola. Ti ho detto di non farti rivedere mai più, ma te fai trovare mentre ficchi il naso con questa... Cu' sei? Un'attrice? Pecché hai un costume, eh?</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>FruFru: Papiiino, è l'ora del nostro ballo! Oh! Che cosa avevi promesso? Niente tuffi nel ghiaccio al mio matrimonio!</p> <p>Mr Big: Ma devo, piccola, papino è costretto. Freddateli!</p> <p>FruFru: Fermi! Lei è la coniglietta che ieri mi ha salvato la vita da quella ciambella gigantesca.</p> <p>Mr Big: 'Sta conglietta?</p> <p>FruFru: Sì! Ciao!</p> <p>Judy: Ciao... bel vestito...</p> <p>FruFru: Ah, grazie!</p> <p>(<i>Zootropolis</i>, 2016, min. 48:19, adaptation)</p>
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Table 4
Italian American accent in *Zootopia* and Sicilian accent in its Italian adaptation

<p>Yax: Yeah, some mammals say the naturalist life is weird. But you know what I say is weird? Clothes on animals! Here we go. As you can see, Nangi is an elephant, so she'll totally remember everything. Hey, Nangi, these dudes have some questions about Emmitt the otter.</p> <p>Nangi: Who?</p> <p>Yax: Emmitt Otterton. Been coming to your yoga class for like... six years.</p> <p>Nangi: I have no memory of this beaver.</p> <p>Judy: He's an otter, actually.</p> <p>Yax: He was here a couple of Wednesdays ago. Remember?</p> <p>Nangi: No</p> <p>Yax: Yeah, he was wearing a green cable knit sweater vest and a new pair of Quarteway slacks. Oh! And a Paisley tie, sweet Windsor knot. Real tight, remember that, Nangi?</p> <p>Nangi: No.</p> <p>Yax; Yeah, and we both walked him out and he got into this big old white car with a silver trim. Needed a tune up, the third cylinder wasn't firing. Remember that, Nangi?</p> <p>Nangi: No.</p> <p>(<i>Zootopia</i>, 2016, min. 38:45)</p>	<p>Yax: Sì, per alcuni animali il naturalismo è strano. Ma sapete cos'è strano? Gli animali vestiti! Siamo arrivati. Come vedete Nangi è un elefante, sicché sicuramente ricorderà tutto. Ehi, Nangi, loro c'hanno da ffarti delle domande su Emmitt la lontra.</p> <p>Nangi: Chi?</p> <p>Yax: Emmitt la lontra, frequenta il tuo corso di yoga da ttipo... boh, sei anni?</p> <p>Nangi: Non ricordo affatto questo castoro.</p> <p>Judy: In realtà, è una lontra.</p> <p>Yax: Dai, è stato qui due mercoledì ffa, te lo ricordi?</p> <p>Nangi No.</p> <p>Yax: Ma sì, indossava un bel gilet di lana intrecciata e pantaloni di vwelluto a costine, sai. Ah! Aveva una cravatta con un motivo cachemire con un nodo moolto stretto. Te lo ricordi, Nangi?</p> <p>Nangi: No.</p> <p>Yax: Ma sì, che siamo usciti con lui e lui è salito su quell'enorme auto bianca con le rifiniture argentate – c'avrebbe anche avuto bisogno d'una aggiustatina al terzo cilindro. Te lo ricordi, Nangi?</p> <p>Nangi: No.</p> <p>(<i>Zootropolis</i>, 2016, min. 38:45, adaptation)</p>
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Table 5
Tuscan accent in the Italian adaptation of *Zootopia*

A domesticating approach was also adopted with another character, Yax (voiced in the original by Tommy Chong – see Table 5), a yak owner of a naturist club that speaks with a Tuscan accent, which is usually perceived as humorous with no particular negative connotations. In the source text, Yax

speaks with a “relaxed” idiolect marked by a slow pace and the prolonging of vowel sounds, and he can be associated to the “surfer dude” trope due to his frequent use of some lexical items typical of this stereotypical figure, such as *dude*, *totally* and *like*.⁷

Yax is dubbed in Italian by the Tuscan comedian Paolo Ruffini, who makes large use of the main typical phonetic feature of his accent, which is known in Italian linguistics as *gorgia*, that is to say the substitution of voiceless stops with their corresponding voiceless fricative consonants when in post-vocalic position; therefore, sound /k/ is pronounced as [h] (as in *sicuramente*, *corso*, *ricordi*, etc.) and /t/ as [θ] (*naturalismo*, *vestiti*, *auto*, etc.). Other marked regional features that can be heard in the dialogue above are the substitution of palatal affricate /tʃ/ with the fricative [ʃ] (*c'hanno*, *c'avrebbe*) and the gemination of consonants when they are in initial position, as in *farti*, *fa*, *velluto*, written in the text (Table 5) with a double initial (Sobrero, Miglietta 2006, pp. 88-89).

As regards the social implications of the Tuscan accent, in Yax's case they do not seem to follow the traditional stereotype of the witty and sassy Tuscan character (largely depicted in the history of Italian cinema by actors like Roberto Benigni and Leonardo Pieraccioni), and his voice quality is coherent with his “hippy” appearance, so it was probably adopted here just for comic purposes and with the aim of giving Ruffini the opportunity for a star turn, in Kozloff's words (2000, pp. 60-61). His lines, in fact, are loaded with aesthetic and commercial effects that keep the audience's attention on the character (Kozloff 2000), hence his accent is to be considered an integral part of his acting talent. In point of fact, more or less the same can also be said for the other *Zootopia* characters mentioned in this section, who were all dubbed by well-known Italian comedians.

4. Conclusion

The animated film *Zootopia*, which reached over \$1 billion worldwide, is one of the most successful Disney films of the last few years. The population in the world of *Zootopia* base their discriminations on geographical origin, race, education, language and physical appearance, reflecting the exact same social mechanisms that we find in the real world, which is what creators explicitly denounced with this film, after spending some time gathering information about the world of animals and noticing similarities with the human world

⁷ Visit the *TV Tropes* website (<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SurferDude>, last accessed 15/12/2019) to know more about the topic and to find other examples on this stereotypical character in fictional works.

(Guerrasio 2017). In particular, they wanted to give a lesson to present-day society (and especially the American society, where racial discrimination is still a big social problem) showing through the happy ending that race and physical appearance have nothing to do with being bad or good (Beaudine *et al.* 2017).

Nevertheless, the same creators, whether consciously or not, appear to have drawn on stereotypes traditionally connected to some linguistic varieties and accents in order to trigger humour, which is one of the main aims of animated films (Chiaro 2010; De Rosa *et al.* 2014). This article has tried to explore the varied linguistic scenery of the original version of the film, discussing phonological and morpho-syntactic features together with their social implications. Discussions on the presence of different American accents and how they might be perceived by viewers base mostly on previous studies on the film (Crewe 2017; Soares 2017; Nielsen 2019) and on personal insights that were built on online research (Reddit.com, Quora.com, Tvtropes.org) and then expanded through an attentive reading of manuals on accents and dialects in the USA (Lippi-Green 1997, 2012; Blake *et al.* 2015; Wolfram, Schilling 2015).

The second part of the paper has consequently analysed the Italian dubbed version, showing that localising and domesticating strategies were adopted during the translation process; as a matter of fact, three Italian regional accents can be heard in the Italian version: Neapolitan, Sicilian and Tuscan. Those were explored in the article through the analysis of some of their linguistic features and allophones and the illustration of their social significance and function in the text: humour is in two cases out of three triggered by stereotypes linked to the language varieties.

What this investigation could not explore, or at least not systematically, was the audience's opinion on the techniques of linguistic characterisation in the film, which could actually shed better light on the identification of accents and on their connotations in this context, both in the source and target text. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore reception and perception studies as a next step in this research, in order to enrich the analysis and discussion on the topic. However, as a result to the qualitative analysis described in this article, it can be argued that the Italian adaptation of the film creates the same atmosphere and funny tone of the original, making use of the same tools. This confirms that even though the use of regional varieties in the target text can be risky, in the case of animation this strategy is often used to reach specific ends. In fact, as Minutella argues, "animation allows for greater freedom and more leeway for creativity in the representation/manipulation of language variation" (2016, p. 253). Nonetheless, if we can dare to say that from the linguistic and translational point view the Italian adaptation works, it could obviously be argued that it is

not ethically right to associate dialects to their traditional stereotypical connotations (e.g. Neapolitan for a smuggler, Sicilian for a mobster). In fact, the strategy undoubtedly enhances regional prejudice through language, undermining the aim of teaching children not to judge people drawing on appearance, ethnic origin or sex. This does not mean that adapters should avoid creativeness in the translation of accents and dialects, but before including language varieties in the target text they should ascertain that their use would cause no ideological controversy (Di Giovanni *et al.* 1994, p. 104).

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