

The Perception of American Adolescent Culture Through the Dubbing and Fansubbing of a Selection of US Teen Series from 1990 to 2013

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at analyzing the construction of American adolescent culture through teen-targeted television series and the shift in perception that occurs as a consequence of the translation process. In light of the recent changes in television production and consumption, largely caused by new technologies, this project explores the evolution of Italian audiences, focusing on fansubbing (freely distributed amateur subtitles made by fans for fan consumption) and social viewing (the re-aggregation of television consumption based on social networks and dedicated platforms, rather than on physical presence). These phenomena are symptoms of a sort of ‘viewership 2.0’ and of a new type of active viewing, which calls for a revision of traditional audiovisual translation (AVT) strategies.

Using a framework that combines television studies, new media studies, and fandom studies with an approach to AVT based on Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury 1995), this dissertation analyzes the growing need displayed by non-Anglophone audiences to participate in the global dialogue and appropriation process based on US scheduling and informed by the new paradigm of convergence culture, transmedia storytelling, and affective economics (Jenkins 2006 and 2007), as well as by the constraints of multimodal translation and the different types of linguistic and cultural adaptation performed through dubbing (which tends to be more domesticating; Venuti 1995) and fansubbing (typically more foreignizing).

The study analyzes a selection of episodes from six of the most popular teen television series between 1990 and 2013, divided into three ages based on the different modes of television consumption: top-down, pre-Internet consumption (*Beverly Hills, 90210*, 1990 – 2000), emergence of audience participation (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 1997 – 2003; *Dawson’s Creek*, 1998 – 2003), age of convergence and Viewership 2.0 (*Gossip Girl*, 2007 – 2012; *Glee*, 2009 – present; *The Big Bang Theory*, 2007 - present). The analysis mainly focuses on the rendition of Extralinguistic Cultural References (Pedersen 2005), providing a general barometer of the dubbing approach.

A diachronic study proves most suited to analyze the evolution of adapting practices in Italy now that the former monopoly of dubbing is challenged by other forms of AVT (fansubbing and partly subtitling). The findings illustrate that for all six shows adaptors tended to use target-language oriented rendering strategies (at least for the first seasons), due to synchrony constraints and a tendency to oversimplify or tame the scripts of teen shows. However, the Italian AVT industry appears to be slowly shifting toward a paradigm reassessment: the positive reception of pioneer attempts made by both DTT and cable networks (most notably, Sky’s improvement and acceleration of the dubbing of *Glee*) signal a higher openness towards less-domesticating rendition strategies and active television viewing. Once more networks

and AVT providers reassess their approach to the translation and delivery of television shows, there might be room for a partial convergence of dubbing and fansubbing practices, which would ideally merge the best features of the long-standing *doppiaggio* tradition (dialogue fluency, careful synching and powerful voice-acting) and the deep knowledge of each show's specificity that is typical of fansubbers.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, dubbing, extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs), fansubbing, teen television, US television

Completion of Thesis

Place: University of Bologna – Department of Interpreting and Translation (Forlì), Italy.

Year: 2014

Supervisors: Professor Delia Chiaro and Professor Raffaella Baccolini (University of Bologna, Italy)

Original language: English