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Figure (High resolution)

Figure (High resolution)

Film Dubbing and Collaborative Pedagogy

In this article, we discuss the multi-layered collaboration occurring among students, students and teachers, and among instructors in the context of an advanced Italian course at the college level. We specifically showcase the project-based learning activity *Ma chi parla?* (Who is Talking?), during which students generated the audiovisual translation from English to Italian of film and television show excerpts. We argue that, in its implementation in Fall 2018 at our institution, *Ma chi parla?* fostered creativity, engagement, and pluralism thanks to its collaborative structure, in addition to establishing a decentralized co-laboratory of cultural experiences. The article also frames *Ma chi parla?* as a starting point to reflect on audiovisual translation, in particular dubbing, as a long-standing tradition in Italy, to illuminate its history, to question its cultural effects, and to problematize its pedagogical applications.

Keywords: Collaboration; Creativity; Foreign Language Pedagogy; Dubbing; Project-Based Learning

Introduction

This article presents collaboration as a crucial feature in the production of screen narratives as well as a fundamental practice in foreign language pedagogy. We showcase and analyse the project-based learning (PBL) activity *Ma chi parla?* (Who is Talking?), which involved the

audiovisual translation (AVT) of film and television show excerpts in an advanced Italian language and culture course in Fall 2018.[1]

Ma chi parla? was the result of the fruitful combination between AVT as a pedagogical activity in the foreign language classroom, the cultural practices of dubbing and subtitling in Italy, PBL methodology, collaborative pedagogy, and creativity, thus offering the opportunity to discuss filmmaking and pedagogy as spaces of shared dialogue. The classroom converted into a decentralized co-laboratory of cultural experiences springing from the engagement and pluralism of instructors and students alike. In particular, creativity arose throughout the different stages of the PBL and from collaboration occurring at different levels: among students, among students and instructors, but also among instructors within and outside the classroom. Finally, *Ma chi parla?* was a starting point to re-think dubbing as a deeply rooted tradition in Italy, unpack its history, and problematize its cultural effects and pedagogical applications. We present these reflections as we discuss the possible shortcomings of our first application, and different venues for future extensions and variations.

Project-Based Learning: Creativity and Collaboration

PBL is a pedagogical method that is generally favoured by teachers for fostering students' diverse skills while addressing real-life situations in a collaborative setting.[2] In PBL activities, students engage in a long-term and multi-stage course assignment; in our case, they produced the dubbing and subtitling of a film or television show clip. While the importance of collaboration in

[1] Author1 was the instructor in the course, while Author2 joined the class as a guest co-instructor.

[2] See for example Stephanie Bell, 'Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future', *The Clearing House* 83 (2010), 39-43, (pp. 39, 41): "Learners pursue knowledge by asking questions that have piqued their natural curiosity. [...] The active learning process of PBL takes students' various learning styles and preferences into account." As this article highlights, PBL activities may be attempted at all ages and levels of education.

PBL has already been stressed by scholars, *Ma chi parla?* allows us to underscore how collaboration can enhance creativity inside and outside the classroom.[3]

Our understanding of creativity in the foreign language classroom is not much linked to the production of "creative" (i.e., literary) texts but rather to the emphasis on a creative *process* or approach to the language via PBL, through which students use their linguistic ability to come up with the solution to a problem, while also establishing a fruitful dialogue with their classmates and instructors. In these terms, our theoretical backdrop resonates with the reflections of Rodney H. Jones on the creative nature of language itself, in that language allows us to "do things in the world; to solve problems, to form and maintain social relationships, to get what we want, and to avoid getting what we don't want."[4] Following Jones' understanding of creativity, language learners participate in the creative process since, like any language users, "they are able to exploit language's inherent capacity for creative action."[5] Emphasizing the inherent creative dimension of language, we also put the relational dimension of creativity in the foreground, which provides a theoretical foundation to collaboration in our experience of PBL.[6]

By introducing our PBL activity *Ma chi parla?*, we argue that PBL is particularly versatile in fostering creativity through its emphasis on collaboration, practicality, and the creative process, rather than focusing or privileging an exclusive creative outcome. A PBL

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[3] "The focal point of the learning process moves from the teacher to the learners, from working alone to working in groups." Iosif Fragoulis and Iakovos Tsiplakides, 'Project-Based Learning in the Teaching of English as A Foreign Language in Greek Primary Schools: From Theory to Practice', *English Language Teaching* 2 (2009), 113–119 (p. 114). For a recent summary of definitions and approaches to collaboration in pedagogy, see Beathe Liebech-Lien and Ela Sjølie, 'Teachers' Conceptions and Uses of Student Collaboration in the Classroom', *Educational Research* (2020), 1–17 https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1839354 [accessed 13 November 2020].

[4] Jones, Rodney H. and Jack C. Richards, "Creativity and Language Teaching", *Creativity in Language Teaching: Perspectives from Research and Practice*, ed. by Rodney H. Jones and Jack C. Richards (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 8.

[5] Jones and Richards, p. 8.

[6] The scholarship on creativity has often blurred the boundaries between creativity and collaborative learning, as clarified in Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, "Theoretical and pedagogical perspectives on orchestrating creativity and collaborative learning" in *Educational Research Review* 6 (2011), 169-184 (p. 171-172).

activity is meant to stimulate the students' ability to address and solve real-life problems in collaboration with their peers. Thus, in our case, not only did students learn the fundamental skills of productive communication and teamwork in Italian, but they also negotiated strategies to collectively solve the problem of producing AVT in the context of Italian culture. Moreover, PBL facilitates the emphasis on creative processes rather than outcomes since it is a long-term, multi-stage assignment. The length of our assignment, six weeks, granted continuity in learning throughout the term and facilitated building relations. Finally, while the instructor(s) may never cease to provide guidance and feedback, a PBL activity is student-driven and develops according to the students' questions and preferences. For this reason, PBL allows teachers to strike a balance between class structuring, monitoring, and supporting on the one hand, and spontaneity, flexibility, and freedom on the other hand. This balance is at the core of creative teaching.[7]

AVT in the Classroom

Our PBL activity *Ma chi parla?* features reverse dubbing and reverse intralingual subtitling, since students were offered a contextualized communicative situation in English, which they were asked to render in Italian.[8] We nestled *Ma chi parla?* in an advanced course of Italian language and culture designed to strengthen students' speaking and writing skills by having them pay attention to grammar and the acquisition of new vocabulary.[9] Scholarship in foreign

[7] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 174.

[8] Dubbing is a revoicing translation task, along with audio description and voice over. Either by substituting the original spoken audio, or adding spoken descriptive or narrative sounds, the original purpose of all revoicing translation tasks is to make an audiovisual product accessible to those who otherwise would not be able to understand it. See Jennifer Lertola and Cristina Mariotti, 'Reverse Dubbing and Subtitling: Raising Pragmatic Awareness in Italian English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners', *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 28 (2017), 104. AVT includes revoicing as well as subtitling. The latter may be a written translation (interlingual subtitling) or a condensed transcription of the spoken language (intralingual subtitling). Both dubbing and subtitling may be standard (when the foreign language is translated into the users' first language) or reverse (a translation from first to foreign language).

[9] The course was the third quarter in the two-year sequence in Italian offered at our institution. Class met four days a week for fifty-minute-long meetings and was entirely in Italian. Students had a textbook on which they could rely

language pedagogy has remarked that, in all of its forms, "dubbing has proven to be an effective didactic tool inasmuch as it provides students with an opportunity to speak and improve their intonation, pronunciation and general fluency."[10] Moreover, the PBL on *doppiaggio* (dubbing) and *sottotitolaggio* (subtitling) fit the thematic profile of the course, which paid particular attention to cinema and its connections with other media, such as comics. Thus, the PBL contributed to provide students with a multifaceted look on the cinematic industry and related forms of visual storytelling. Finally, by becoming *doppiatrici* and *doppiatori* (dubbers), students could enhance their intercultural competence. More specifically, they were invited to think critically about the processes of cultural export and the role of translation into Italian in the context of the reception of foreign cultural products in Italy.

Working on reverse translation was also particularly helpful to enhance students' motivation and encourage a creative use of the language in the reflective stages of our PBL. The scholarship on AVT has underlined the benefits of dubbing and subtitling exercises in the classroom by conducting quantitative or qualitative assessment of students' performance and impressions.[11] Moreover, it has been stressed how dubbing exercises featuring reverse translation

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for grammar review. Since *Ma chi parla?* was just one of the several assessment tools employed, only a few class meetings were dedicated to it and part of the work was completed at home.

[10] Anastasia Beltramello, 'Exploring the Combination of Subtitling and Revoicing Tasks: A Proposal for Maximising Learning Opportunities in the Italian Language Classroom', *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 8 (2019), 93-109 (p. 93). See also Jennifer Lertola, *Audiovisual Translation in the Foreign Language Classroom: Applications in the Teaching of English and Other Foreign Languages.* (Voillans: Research-publishing.net, 2019); Serena Bianco, "Imparare a tradurre il cinema: appunti per una didattica dell'italiano LS basata su un modello di integrazione delle quattro abilità linguistiche", *Natura Società Letteratura. Atti del XXII Congresso dell'Adi – Associazione degli Italianisti*, ed. by A. Campana and F. Giusti (Rome: Adi editore, 2018); Noa Talaván and Avila-Cabrera, José. "First insights into the combination of dubbing and subtitling as L2 didactic tools." Yves Gambier, Annamaria Caimi and Cristina Mariotti (eds) (2015). In *Subtitles and Language Learning*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2015, 149-172; Talaván, Noa and Rodríguez-Arancón, Pilar (2014); Martine Danaan, "Dubbing projects for the language learner: a framework for integrating audiovisual translation into task-based instruction" in *Computer Assisted Language Learning* Vol. 23, No. 5, December 2010, 441–456.

[11] Scholars that conducted quantitative research commented, for example, on using subtitles as a task to improve oral comprehension in a multimedia environment. Noa Tavalàn, "Subtitling as a task and subtitles as support: pedagogical applications" *New Insights into Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. by Jorge Díaz Cintas, Anna Matamala and Josélia Neves (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), p. 295. More recently, a study on dubbing reports that, at the end of the project "students felt significantly better, more comfortable, relaxed,

can be especially instructive when it comes to fostering pragmatic competence, the knowledge of the acts and functions of speech.[12] Working on dubbing in reverse translation cements pragmatical competence thanks to the constant interactions and negotiations needed to carry out the activity. While we did not compare data nor did we submit a survey to assess the activity, final course evaluations showed a significant and overall appreciation for the creativity of the assignments proposed in the course. Students also often expressed their enthusiasm undertaking the dubbing assignment in class and during office hours.

Ultimately, we found that the choice of reverse translation particularly benefitted students during the reflective stages of PBL. The centrality of reflection in our pedagogical method resonates with Maria Pilar Pastor's approach to metacognitive reflection on reverse translation from Italian to Spanish.[13] In particular, our students had the chance to reflect upon the linguistic choices they had made in their dubbed version of the clip, along with more general reflections on dubbing as a profession and the cultural implications of their linguistic choices. *Ma chi parla?* led students to reflect on the cultural and linguistic adjustments that inform the perception of US culture abroad. At the same time, this activity urged students to reflect upon their own experiences far from home, both past and future, and to become more aware of their own cultural identity. Therefore, not only did students become better Italian speakers by experimenting with *doppiaggio* and *sottotitolaggio* in a PBL activity, but they also found an enriching opportunity to foster their cultural awareness and see themselves as citizens of the world.

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confident and decided when expressing orally." Alicia Sànchez-Requena, "Audiovisual Translation in Teaching Foreign Languages: Contributions of Dubbing to Develop Fluency and Pronunciation in Spontaneous Conversations", *Porta Linguarum* 26 (2016): 17.

[12] Jennifer Lertola and Cristina Mariotti. "Reverse Dubbing and Subtitling: Raising Pragmatic Awareness in Italian English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners." *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 28 (July 2017), 103-121, (p. 105).

[13] Maria Pilar Pastor, "Traducción inversa (italiano-español) y reflexión metalingüística: instrumentos y procesos cognitivos", *inTRAlinea Special Issue: Le ragioni del tradurre*. 2019, p. 1.

Phases of the PBL

Ma chi parla? developed over the course of six weeks in a class with six students and it followed the four main phases of a PBL activity. The different phases of a PBL activity start with students working in groups, identifying an inquiry or issue (speculation phase), and pursuing the needed research to tackle it (design phase). Then, each group works on its outcome or product while the students practice skills specific to the course (implementation phase). Finally, the groups share their results with their peers and all participants reflect on the experience (evaluation phase).

The speculation phase set the stage; it served to stimulate interest and guide students towards their film or television clip choice. It included several activities to be completed in class during the assignment's first week: an introduction to the history of dubbing in Italy; a speaking task in the form of a debate; a listening task with Italian revoicings from US films and actors, in which students guessed the film's title and actor's name; and a reading and writing task aimed at practicing literal and parodical translation by playing with idiomatic expressions.[14] In this phase, we also introduced a video editing software students could use to complete their dubbing.[15]

At the end of the first week, the design or second phase began: each group researched and chose a three-minute-long scene from a non-Italian film or television show. We asked students to select an audiovisual text that they knew well and with which they had a strong cultural, linguistic, or sentimental connection. Students then presented their choices to the class, including

[14] Some of the debate questions were: 'guardi i film in inglese?' (Do you watch films in English?), 'preferisci i sottotitoli oppure i film doppiati?' (Do you prefer subtitles or dubbed films?), 'pensi che il doppiaggio sia difficile?' (Do you think the work of a dubber is hard?), 'ti piacerebbe essere un doppiatore?' (Would you like to be a dubber?), 'la tua traduzione sarà più creativa o più letterale?' ('will your translation be more creative or more literal?').

[15] We proposed our students use VideoPad. We chose it because it is a free video editing software that works both on Windows and Mac computers. One of our student groups, however, used iMovie to complete their AVT. We wish to thank here, Name for their technical assistance.

a note on the nature of their translation and whether it would be literal or creative, how, and why. In this instance, we provided feedback, especially about feasibility and appropriateness.

Third, there was the four-week-long implementation phase: students captioned their chosen clip and performed a reverse translation to Italian. They could practice writing in the indirect speech form, by transcribing the dialogue, as well as creative writing, by making the dialogue itself. This written script would be what they record during the dubbing session and what they would add as subtitles. In this phase, we provided grammatical written feedback. This was also where students had the opportunity to be linguistically creative: they could introduce parody or irony by conflicting their translation content with the images, or they could venture into different regional accents as explained below.

Finally, the sixth week was the evaluation phase: students uploaded their dubbed videos on the class website and in class, they critically presented their project highlighting successes and challenges. At home, they recorded a self-reflection video on their experience as *doppiatrici* and *doppiatori* of a non-Italian film or television clip of their choice.[16]

Multi-layered Collaboration

We entitled our activity *Ma chi parla?* to recall how Italians would initiate a conversation on the phone, similarly to the English "Hello?," in order to stress the project's dialogical aspect as well as to underline the vocal duplicity of a dubbed video, since dubbing inherently questions the convergence of voice and speaker. We thought that the emphasis on conversation in the activity's title would well represent the fruitful collaboration that we hoped students would

[16] While all class meetings occurred in person, the course also had two online platforms: the university's learning management system Moodle and a separate private website hosted by Wixsite, where all audiovisual inputs were uploaded by students.

experience throughout the different PBL phases. In fact, during *Ma chi parla?*, collaboration went beyond the classroom. The enactment of collaboration was specifically fourfold, involving students, students and instructors, co-instructors, and instructors across disciplines.

Collaboration at the student level created opportunities for creativity, while also allowing students to express their diverse points of view and adapt the Italian language to their own interests. *Ma chi parla?* urged students to negotiate their perspectives on a film by agreeing on the choice of which film to use and the specific scene to dub. Our students decided to create AVTs of a scene from Quentin Tarantino's 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*, a clip from the US sitcom *Friends*, and a scene from the 2004 comedy by Jess Shaffer, *Eurotrip*. These choices show a preference for US and Italian-American culture, but in virtue of being the students' own selections, they contribute to the intercultural exchange at the centre of *Ma chi parla?*.

Another important goal in the design and the implementation phases was for the students to agree on which strategies to employ in the translation. A first example comes from the student pair who worked on *Pulp Fiction* and adapted the original script to a very similar script in Italian. While closely following the original, however, the two students included their own experience in substantial ways. First, in Tarantino's scene, the character Vince says to his dining mate Mia 'I heard you did a pilot', which our students dubbed as 'Hai fatto un doppiaggio?' (Did you have a dubbing gig?). Second, the iconic diegetic and Anglophone music in this scene became a classic Italian tune independently chosen by the students. Third, while speaking in Italian, the couple has a French-inspired and Milanese accent, respectively. The Milanese accent resulted from the study-abroad experience in Milan of one of the students; the French-inspired accent was chosen by the second student as a cross-language challenge mixing the two romance languages that the

student was currently studying. In short, this student pair had a textual approach to AVT, as we may also infer from one of their reflections recorded on video at the end of *Ma chi parla?*:

> [Fare] un doppiaggio persuasivo è molto difficile specialmente perché ogni lingua ha un ritmo e una cadenza propri […]. Credo che [quello del doppiatore] è un mestiere un po' poetico, essere la voce dietro lo schermo, essere una voce disincarnata. (It is very difficult to dub in a persuasive way, especially because each language has its own rhythm and inflection [...]. I believe that the job of a dubber is a poetic profession: being the voice behind the scenes, a disembodied voice.)

The student making this statement was a Comparative Literature major and their comments clearly show how their literary interests resonated with the dubbing project.

A second example coming from the *Eurotrip* dubbing indicates a more holistic take on *doppiaggio*. One of the two students involved in this project came from a study-abroad experience in Florence, completed just before the beginning of the course. By then, soccer had become a central part of the student's understanding and reception of Italy and Italian culture. It was with no surprise that the student convinced their classmate, also passionate about sports, to work on a film scene from *Eurotrip* featuring soccer hooligans. In the sequence, two college students from Ohio enter a bar, which turns out to be full of intimidating Manchester United fans. Once the fans inquire on their whereabouts, the students pretend to be fans of the same team and make up a song to enchant them. Our students' AVT re-localized the soccer team to Italy, and the English hooligans became fans of the soccer team AS Roma (Fig. 1 and 2).

The approach to dubbing in this project was linguistic, technical, and professional: our students performed a Roman accent and used regionalisms (such as *mò*) to interpret the hooligans; they included written indications of diegetic sounds in the subtitles, where they also used capitalization for different voice volumes (see Fig. 1). What is more, they re-created and recorded with extreme precision some of the additional sounds, such as clapping and the chafing

of clothes. By behaving as voice actors and sound technicians, they approached the PBL activity to enhance not only their Italian, but also their professionalizing skills such as audio recording. The student who first came up with the idea of working on soccer commented:

> la mia esperienza con il doppiaggio non solo era una voce fuori campo [*sic*] ma anche la creazione dell'ambiente che si sarebbe sentito in un bar […]. [Alla] fine, mi sono [reso] conto che la nostra scena non doveva essere identica all'originale […]. Il nostro lavoro, il prodotto finale, semplicemente era la nostra interpretazione della scena originale. (My experience with dubbing not only implied being a voice over [*sic*], but also creating the environment that one would have heard in a bar [...] Eventually, I realized our scene did not have to be identical to the original […] Our work, the final product, was simply our own interpretation of the original scene.)

This comment shows how students were receptive to the creative opportunities that the PBL activity opened for them. Moreover, by collaborating on a common interest such as soccer, the students were able to share with their classmates what impressed them most about Italy: soccer, but also the variety of accents in the Italian language.

Collaboration between students and instructors was necessary to coordinate the different phases of *Ma chi parla?* and to offer resources that would help students finalize their projects. Not only did we introduce a software that students could use to include new audio files to the videoclip of their choice; we also helped them work on accents and dialect patterns, which they hoped to integrate into their dubbing exercise. As teachers, we saw ourselves as collaborators or orchestrators of the students' learning experience. In the words of Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen: "the teacher's role is not only that of facilitator, but also fellow collaborator, joining the students in collaboration processes. This means that teachers as real-time orchestrators should focus on enhancing collaboration processes, including channelling and

focusing learning processes… instead of providing correct answers."[17] We assisted students by drawing on our knowledge as instructors, mentoring and monitoring but not limiting the students' agency.

We practiced collaboration by also activating a network that could help the students have access to additional sources. In the case of *Eurotrip*, for example, we had the assistance of native speakers from Rome. A Professor of Italian in the US that grew up in Rome kindly gave us their input while we assisted the students with the writing of the script, reporting typical Roman expressions or oral contractions. Later, when students were ready to practice dubbing, a friend of ours living in Rome registered audio files pronouncing the same script with their Roman accent.[18] We forwarded the audio files to the students so that they could use them as a model for their dubbing performance. The audio files were particularly useful to students who were also excited to see such a plurality of subjects involved. Therefore, they engaged in their project with even stronger motivation. Indeed, on their part, the students had also recruited occasional collaborators, roommates or friends living on campus, to reproduce the clapping and cheering of a crowd, and other sounds from the original soundscape.

Another significant layer of collaboration that generated the *Ma chi parla?* activity and continued throughout its subsequent phases has been the collaboration between the two authors of this article. As Ph.D. Candidates and Teaching Fellows, we often brainstormed pedagogical practices on an informal basis. The advanced Italian course that Author1 taught in Fall 2018, while Author2 was completing their doctoral dissertation, offered us a new, and more formal, venue for discussion and collaboration. Author1 invited Author2 to join them as a guest co-instructor, and our collaboration took the form of occasional co-teaching in the classroom, where

[17] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 175.
[18] We take the opportunity to thank our friend, NAME, in Rome.

the students acknowledged the presence of two instructors, as well as regular meetings outside the class. Before the start of the quarter, we consulted with the Director of Language Program at our institution on the feasibility of the project; in the first few weeks of the term, we tailored the guidelines of the PBL assignment to the specific needs of *Ma chi parla?*.[19]

Our co-participation significantly enriched the course. Not only did we divide up preparation, feedback, and grading labour, thus easing our individual workload, but our constant conversations also streamlined the process, and helped us anticipate possible problems, questions, and errors. In addition, with two instructors in the class rather than one, we decentralized the traditional classroom authoritative system on several levels, balancing the student-instructor ratio and exposing our students to two different Italian accents as well as two separate insights on the *doppiaggio* practice in Italy.[20] Last but not least, once *Ma chi parla?* was over, we carried this communal experience on our individual career paths in different universities across the United States.[21]

The fourth level of collaboration has been among instructors teaching different foreign languages. In June 2019, we attended a workshop on the principles of project-based learning in the foreign language classroom, where we met a Lecturer in the Asian Languages and Cultures Department at our institution, who also utilize dubbing to incorporate project-based learning in their Chinese classes. A major difference between our approach and our colleague's, was that the latter asked their students to use fully authentic material in Chinese for their dubbing, i.e., material produced in China by Chinese native speakers. Our colleague guided their students

[19] While project-based learning is regularly integrated in intermediate and advanced Italian classes at our institution, the novelty of our approach was to dedicate the PBL to dubbing and subtitling.
[20] We are both Italian native speakers, growing up in different regions in the South and North of Italy. We also differ in age for a few years and our educational backgrounds are similar but do not completely overlap.
[21] Author1 continued to participate in workshops on PBL at our institution and joined a cohort of innovative pedagogy fellows in 2019. Author2 presented the project-based learning activity at a different R1 institution in the US in February 2020.

through the different phases of their PBL, which included the annotation, translation, and dubbing from Chinese to English. A second difference was that our colleague engaged the students throughout ten full weeks (corresponding to the total length of the course), whereas in our case, the ten weeks were partially dedicated to our course's remaining assignments and to our own preparation for the PBL. Despite these differences, we were able to create professional bridges. Our collaboration with other instructors also *de facto* addressed the need to create and support "a collaborative and confidential atmosphere between teachers in educational organisations," in addition to triggering reflections for further implementations.[22]

Reflections

Time and logistic limitations made it impossible for us to repeat the activity *Ma chi parla?* with different students at the same institution, which would have helped collect a broader corpus of data and advance more extensive hypotheses on the outcomes of the project. Nevertheless, our joint experience with *Ma chi parla?* was fruitful enough to spring a wide range of considerations touching not only on the shortcomings of our first implementation, but also on the possibilities for improvement, and variation.

Our choice of reverse translation came with the idea of allowing students to personalize the class' content and providing them with opportunities for reflection on dubbing as a profession and an intercultural practice. We recognize, however, the advantages of opting for direct (Italian-to-English) or intralingual (Italian-to-Italian) translation, where students work on fully authentic material that was not originally tailored for classroom use and is rich in idioms. Students may thus recognize linguistic phenomena and enhance their socio-linguistic

[22] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 176.

competence.[23] Proceeding in the opposite direction, i.e., with a dubbing exercise from English to Italian, required an imaginative effort on our students' part, since they drew on their personal experiences and the resources we made available as instructors. While students were overall very excited about their projects, the references to Italian culture were not equally distributed among the different AVT projects. In fact, we did not clarify a method of assessment for the integration of cultural elements, and therefore did not take into consideration these nuances upon grading. We look forward to engaging with direct and intralingual dubbing/subtitling in our future courses to further weigh the differences among these translation practices.

In *Ma chi parla?,* our approach to dubbing was hybrid and flexible, and included not only presenting dubbing as an intercultural, creative, and professional practice, but also allowing students the freedom to choose among cinema and television, and to personalize their AVT.[24] The hybridity of our approach favoured students by allowing them to choose the level of complexity of their dialogues and the videoclips they found more compelling for their projects. This was particularly helpful given the different levels of proficiency in the class and the students' diverse backgrounds. Moreover, not all students were equally at ease with the dubbing and subtitling technology; we could argue, indeed, that students who were more at ease with the technology also approached the translation assignment more creatively.[25]

While the flexibility of our approach had clear advantages on account of students' diversity and wide range of linguistic and technological skills, we recognize that a more tailored

[23] Anastasia Beltramello, 'Exploring the Combination of Subtitling and Revoicing Tasks: A Proposal for Maximising Learning Opportunities in the Italian Language Classroom', *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 8 (2019), 94.
[24] On the specificity of television shows and the different relationship established with the audience compared to cinema, see Daria Motta, "Il doppiaggio televisivo come strumento didattico per l'insegnamento dell'italiano LS. Dall'adattamento culturale dei testi alla didattica della fraseologia" *Italiano LinguaDue* 1 (2017), 70-82 (pp. 72-73).
[25] In this regard, we agree that at least one student group in the class would have largely benefitted from having more time at their disposal to complete their activity, and that one possible solution could be to extend the timeline proposed to all students.

and consistent approach to dubbing could benefit the entire course hosting *Ma chi parla?*. Maintaining a general approach to AVT served the purpose of introducing students to dubbing as a multifaceted intercultural practice; yet the professional and intercultural dimensions of dubbing in Italy deserve to be discussed more in depth with students. This could lead to 1) a more thorough investigation of the Italian tradition of dubbing in an historical framework, and its cultural and linguistic repercussions; 2) a discussion on the evolution of dubbing as a professional practice, with the emergence of unofficial and parodic versions on the internet and social media; 3) a critical reflection on dubbing as an intercultural practice, with the potential of renovating and decolonizing the Italian studies curriculum. In the next paragraphs we expand on these three avenues and provide brief examples.

1) As for a more historically grounded approach to dubbing, it is worth recalling that dubbing, as a post-production technique, started in the early 1930s in the United States with the goal of simplifying film exports and their distribution in non-Anglophone countries. In Italy in the same years, there was a concurrent interest in dubbing following the pressure of the Fascist regime, whose tight control over the media would allow officials to manipulate and neutralize unwanted elements in the original version of foreign films.[26] Further, dubbing "made foreign movies accessible to wider audiences, counteracting the high levels of illiteracy that characterized certain contexts (e.g. Italy) and ensuring larger profits."[27] Since the royal decree of 1933 that made it mandatory for the dubbing process to be carried out within the Italian national borders, *doppiaggio* has become a trademark of foreign cinema in Italy.[28] Likewise, the dubbing

[26] Perego and Pacinotti, pp. 40-41.
[27] Perego and Pacinotti, p. 41.
[28] Angela Sileo, 'Dubbing or Simil Sync? A Study on Reception in Italy', in *Reception Studies and Adaptation: A Focus on Italy*, ed. by Giulia Magazzù, Valentina Rossi, and Angela Sileo (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), pp. 171-190 (p. 174).

of non-foreign films has a long tradition in Italy. Among the causing factors, we recall the cheaper costs of recording audio in post-production rather than in sync; the difficulties of working with a multinational film crew, which was a common practice especially in the decades after World War II; and the preference for experienced actors to dub debuting performers.[29] Since its inception in the 1950s, Italian television has been subjected to a similar multi-layered mediation process, since the majority of television shows that are produced outside of Italy is dubbed when broadcasted across the country.

When discussing dubbing, the cultural capital of the *doppiatori*, translators, technicians, and distributors involved in the industry should not be underestimated.[30] On the one hand, being a *doppiatrice* or *doppiatore* is still a highly regarded and profitable profession.[31] On the other hand, the financial investments performed in the domestication of films and television shows deeply shape the country's cinematic environment by affecting linguistic choices such as the translation of film titles.[32] On this note, the Italian language is ripe with interferences resulting from the influence of televised and filmic Italian over the Italian-speaking population. Often called with the pejorative term *doppiaggese*, this variant of Italian is "caratterizzata da appiattimento delle differenze linguistiche, ridondanza e preferenza per elementi esogeni al posto

[29] To give an example, in Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945), Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi dub themselves, but Carla Rovere, who plays the role of Pina's sister, Lauretta, is dubbed by Rosetta Calavetta (who will later become the official dubber of Marilyn Monroe). Austrian Harry Feist, who plays the role of Fritz Bergman, is dubbed by Giulio Panicali. See Massimo Giraldi, Enrico Lancia, and Fabio Melelli. *Il doppiaggio nel cinema italiano* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 2010), p. 26.

[30] Luca Barra, "Mediating satire. Italian adaptation and dubbing of US sitcoms," in *The Power of Satire*, ed. by Marijke Meijer Drees and Sonja de Leeuw (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), pp. 71-80, (p. 74).

[31] Roderick Conway Morris, "When in Rome, Don't Trust Actors' Voices," *The New York Times* (1992) https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/18/style/IHT-when-in-rome-dont-trust-actors-voices.html [accessed 13 November 2020]

[32] Chiara Bucaria, "Between marketing and cultural adaptation. The case of comedy film titles in Italy," *Humour Translation in the Age of Multimedia*, ed. by Margherita Dore (London: Routledge, 2020), 94-115 (p. 110).

di equivalenti italiani."[33] *Doppiaggese* results from a variety of causes (such as the synchronization process, poor working conditions, and human errors) and its creation may be traced directly back to the needs of the film and TV distribution industry.[34]

Unearthing the implications of *doppiaggio* would provide a space for reflection and discussion on history and language with exercises preceding the reverse AVT practice. In-class discussion based on academic and journalistic publications on the topic would first prepare students, who could then watch film and television clips in the original and in their Italian version. With the instructor's guidance, they could contrast and compare the two texts' languages and cultural references.[35] In order to foster language production and creative collaboration, students in groups could also translate the titles of non-Italian films, next to discussing the implications of the titles' existing translations.

2) A professional approach to dubbing would also consider the most recent evolution of revoicing practices, and the increased accessibility of dubbing and subtitling technology, which likely already informs students' own experience with revoicing practices in the classroom. While domestication is still very commonly used to mediate the import of foreign cultural products in Italy through dubbing, we may be going towards a broader acceptance of subtitling of foreign audiovisual products, and an unofficial, plural access to dubbing and subtitling on the internet and social media. As already noted by Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti:

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[33] "[It is] characterized by a flattening of linguistic differences, redundance, and a preference for exogenous elements, taking the place on the equivalent in Italian." Angela Sileo, "Il doppiaggio: interferenze linguistiche sulla soglia tra inglese e italiano," *Altre modernità* 1 (2015), 56-69 (p. 59). According to some scholars, however, Italian dubbing has reached high linguistic levels in recent years, liberating itself from the *doppiaggese*'s issues. See Daria Motta, p. 74.

[34] As a matter of fact, a very limited number of adaptors works on the totality of dubbed products and is thus responsible for the largest share of language to which the Italian public is exposed every day. Angela Sileo, pp. 58-59.

[35] Examples of well suited videoclips abound. One for all comes from the animated television series, *The Simpsons*, where groundskeeper Willy is a Scott dubbed into a Sardinian. See Chiara Ferrari, "Dubbing The Simpsons: Or how groundskeeper Willie lost his kilt in Sardinia", *Journal of Film and Video* 61.2 (2009): 19-37.

> In the past few years, an increased consumption of multimodal products worldwide has led to faster distribution, with shorter waiting times between the release of the original production and its translated versions, and more exposure to different translation modalities. This is particularly true of predominantly dubbing countries, where (younger) viewers are getting increasingly open and accustomed to subtitling as a way of gaining quicker access to multimodal products available on the Internet or on streaming distributors like Netflix.[36]

The structural changes affecting the film and television industry point toward subtitling as a modality preferred to dubbing and a larger corpus of available material to watch. This is particularly true for younger generations of viewers.

Moreover, as internet access, social media and phone application usage, software creation, and artificial intelligence experiments increase, the dividing lines between official and unofficial dubbing and subtitling are more and more indistinct. Also referred to as fandubbing/subtitling or cyberdubbing/subtitling, unofficial dubbing and subtitling are multifaceted practices. They entail revoicing and captioning of products before their official release, proposing new translations parodying the official ones or satirical dubs of interviews by entertainers and politicians, and employing dubbing and subtitling as activism aimed at raising politically founded concerns.[37] They may be performed by professional *doppiatori* as well as amateurs, such as the Italian YouTube and television personality, Fabio Celenza.[38] Unofficial AVT has been changing the relationship between the identity of those who are completing it and the translated product (moving from a centralized industry to a plurality of subjects),

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[36] Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti, 'Audiovisual translation through the ages', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. Łukasz Bogucki and Mikołaj Deckert (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 33-56 (p. 41).

[37] On the specific case of fan-dabbing in Italy see Gabriele Spina Alì, "A Bay of Pigs crisis in southern Europe? Fan-dubbing and parody in the Italian peninsula", *European Intellectual Property Review.* 37, n. 12 (2015): 756-764.

[38] Celenza has a YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/c/FabioCelenza/featured) and is often invited on Italian television programmes, such as *Propaganda Live* on the La7 channel.

decentralizing the translation's sources and the languages available for translation, questioning the quality standards of a dubbed film or television show, and cultivating on and off-line communities.[39] In the past decade, phone applications and artificial intelligence have also offered different types of AVT and are undoubtedly posing new ethical and regulatory challenges.[40] Even internet memes, namely, humorous images or videos combined with a written text, may be considered examples of AVTs in the digital age. Since they are sites of constant and endless remaking, instructors have started using them in foreign-language courses to enhance storytelling, writing, and cultural skills.[41]

Ma chi parla? has the potential to question the practice of dubbing as an established profession with certain standards. Already in 2018, we encouraged a decentralized and non-binary approach to AVT, allowing students who identify as women to dub male actors, in ways that are closer to unofficial dubbing and subtitling. We deem imperative that existing realities in the AVT world are brought into the classroom, not only as fodder for discussion on cultural practices but also to bridge in-class dubbing and subtitling and the outside world. Conversations could take place on the students' own familiarity with unofficial AVT and a self-reflection on the choices made for the dubbing could follow. In addition to having an activity that may professionalize in full, since it would present all options, showcasing unofficial AVT would open a creative and less forbidding space.

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[39] For analysis of the array of terminology and theoretical approaches to AVT, see Frederic Chaume, "Is audiovisual translation putting the concept of translation up against the ropes?", *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 30 (2018): 84-104. For the term "cyberdubbing" and for an analysis of official vs unofficial dubbing practices, see Rocìo Baños, "Fandubbing", *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. by Ł. Bogucki and M. Deckert (Palgrave: 2020), pp. 209-226.

[40] See for example TikTok, Dubsmash, MadLipz, MyLingo, and DeepDub. On the future challenges that new technologies impose on the *doppiaggio* industry see https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/doppiatori-addio-l-attore-originale-parla-lingue-diverse-grazie-all-ai-AD45uULB, last accessed June 11, 2021.

[41] For an example from an Italian-language course, which also stresses the importance of creativity in the Italian language classroom, see Elena Emma Sottilotta and Danila Cannamela, "Six memos for teaching Italian as a foreign language: Creativity, storytelling, and visual imagination in the language classroom," *EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages* 6 (1) (2019).

3) Lastly, as an intercultural practice, *Ma chi parla?* has the wherewithal to critically interrogate film and television show reception and distribution, joining the efforts to decolonize the Italian curriculum, and film/media studies more broadly. Dubbing is an enduring cultural practice heavily contributing to the univocal ways in which foreign films and television shows are received and integrated in Italian culture. When foreign products are released exclusively or predominantly in their dubbed version in Italy, the collective imagination and frame of reference surrounding them are inevitably affected. Thus, the lack of "neutrality" in dubbing pointed out by Luca Barra extends well beyond the linguistic features of *doppiaggese*.[42] When we introduced *doppiaggio* during the PBL activity, the example we provided to encapsulate the cultural system activated through dubbing was a clip from Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind*, or *Via col vento* in Italian.[43] We pointed out the extent at which dubbing influenced the reception of the film in Italy. Because of *doppiaggio*, the actress (Vivien Leigh), her character Scarlet O'Hara (presented to the Italian audience as Rossella O'Hara) and the *doppiatrice* Lydia Simoneschi are one and the same entity to the Italian viewer. *Via col vento,* and in particular the first Italian dubbing of the film released in 1949, has been watched by generations of Italians both on the big screen and on television. The filter that the Italian language establishes acoustically and visually—since all the English texts on screen are replaced by Italian translations—contributes to turn the Italian-dubbed film into a new cultural object almost separate from the original.

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[42] Barra, p. 72.

[43] *Gone with the Wind* is the screen adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's homonymous 1936 novel. The film was awarded the 1940 Best Picture Oscar, in addition to other eight Academy Awards. Considering inflation, the film is still acknowledged as the highest grossing film of all times. Jacqueline Steward, 'Why we can't turn away from 'Gone with the Wind'', *CNN* (2020) https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/12/opinions/gone-with-the-wind-illuminates-white-supremacy-stewart/index.html [accessed 10 November 2020]. *Gone with the Wind* has been repeatedly contested for its nostalgic portrayal of the ante-bellum US South and as a film that is refusing to acknowledge the horrors of slavery and offering a problematic depiction of Black people. As Jacqueline Steward points out, the film's cultural significance has not diminished with time, precisely for the influence that *Gone with the Wind*, along with other classic Hollywood films, has had on the popular perception of history, both in the United States and worldwide.

As an example of how to approach dubbing through a decolonializing lens, we wish to indicate a few important aspects of the *Gone with the Wind* dubbing that may be addressed both in the classroom and in scholarship with the goal of problematizing the Italian studies canon and mainstream culture. It is historically significant that the 1949 Italian dubbed version (directed by Franco Schirato) survived a 1977 new *doppiaggio* by Roberto De Leonardis, where dialogues were updated in ways that could be more faithful to the original—for example, maintaining proper names in English—while also attempting to attenuate verbal racism.[44] The enduring success of the 1949 dubbed version has made it so that the excerpts of dialogue such as 'Francamente me ne infischio' (which translates Rhett Butler's line 'Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn') stand as iconic citations in Italian popular culture, up to today.[45] We would also argue that the 1949 version translates the racism of the original in ways that resonate with the racism targeting Black subjects in Italy at that time and beyond, so that the alleged cultural authenticity of the US film, and its Italianization through AVT found in racism a common ground. Finally, the verbal patterns of the 1949 version—with Black characters using verbs in the infinite mode, and white characters addressing others with the formal 'voi' in intimate conversations—are also reminiscent of the 1937 Mondadori translation in Italian of Margaret Mitchell's novel, therefore positing the question of a Fascist legacy in the dubbing itself.[46]

While a deeper dive into *Gone with the Wind* is beyond the scope of this article, this example shows our activity's potential to uncover the enduring cultural relevance of *doppiaggio*

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[44] See Nunziante Valoroso, 'Review: *Via col vento* (*Gone with the Wind*, 1939)', in *Asinc: Rivista in rete in italiano e in inglese di critica del doppiaggio*, http://www.asinc.it/rec_dtt_00.asp?Id=210 [accessed 13 November 2020] and Maria Elena Daverio, 'Nove statuette per un longseller', *Q.b. online* https://www.fondazionemondadori.it/rivista/margaret-mitchell/nove-statuette-per-un-longseller/ [accessed 13 November 2020].

[45] De Leonardis' 1977 version, instead, has a moderate 'francamente, mia cara, non me ne importa niente.' See Daverio.

[46] Daverio.

and why we find it important to address it in foreign language classes in order to create an equalized space for reflection and discussion on colonizing cultural practices.[47] Specifically, the history of *Via col vento* on the one hand and popular dubs by the YouTuber Celenza, who uses Southern dialects for his dubbing, on the other, would open the door for a conversation on Italian regionalism and language-based discrimination. Once students propose dubbing and subtitling that employ Italian variants, as they did in our case with Milanese and Roman accents, a post-activity reflection could highlight the stereotyping often sitting at the core of screen narratives and facilitate a dialogue among students on their own linguistic choices and understanding of the cultures of Italy.

Conclusions

In this article we presented and analysed *Ma chi parla?*, a project-based learning activity engaging students of an advanced Italian class in reverse dubbing and subtitling. We argue that collaboration was essential in fostering creativity during the implementation of the assignment and that multiple subjects were involved in a collaborative and creative experience including both students and instructors.

We clarified the theoretical background of our activity by emphasizing the importance of creativity in language and clarifying how the relational dimension of creative language exchange finds in collaboration the most promising pedagogical settings. The validity of our activity from a pedagogical perspective is also supported by the abundant scholarship on AVT in the foreign language classroom, and reverse translation more specifically, where students' fluency, programmatic awareness, and intercultural competence appear to benefit from this method.

[47] For the analysis of official dubbing in Italian and the idea to compare these texts with alternative versions created by students see Daria Motta, p. 74.

While we recognized collaboration as the engine of our successful activity, we also took the opportunity to reflect on its shortcomings and possible improvements, extensions, or variations. We emphasized the hybridity of our approach and how it advantaged a diverse student population. Yet, we also acknowledged that a more tailored and nuanced approach to the professional, linguistic, and intercultural implications of Italian dubbing promises to be extremely relevant. In particular, variations of the project could go in the direction of engaging students more rigorously in the history of dubbing from its specific political connotations during Fascism until the most recent unofficial (but still, potentially professional) forms of fundubbing on the internet and social media. Moreover, students can participate in a critical reflection on dubbing and its role in promoting cultural discrimination, especially in relation to accents and other stereotypical representations.

Overall, *Ma chi parla?* was not only a successful experience of collaboration inside and outside the classroom, but also the springboard toward an enriching investigation of dubbing and subtitling's potential in the classroom. Collaborating creatively, and creating collaboratively, thus became synonymic expressions of shared processing and meaningful language exchange benefitting students and instructors alike. We look forward to implementing *Ma chi parla?* and its variations in our future classes and hope that these reflections inspire new forms of creative collaboration among colleagues.

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Figures

Figure 1: Still shot from the *Eurotrip* dubbing project, which was uploaded on the class website. The subtitles show how students adopted the Roman dialect in their project.

Figure 2. Still shot from the *Eurotrip* dubbing project, which was uploaded on the class website. The subtitles show how students translated the original film lines using cultural references that are meaningful both from a US and an Italian perspective.

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Film Dubbing and Collaborative Pedagogy

In this article, we discuss the multi-layered collaboration occurring among students, students and teachers, and among instructors in the context of an advanced Italian course at the college level. We specifically showcase the project-based learning activity *Ma chi parla?* (Who is Talking?), during which students generated the audiovisual translation from English to Italian of film and television show excerpts. We argue that, in its implementation in Fall 2018 at our institution, *Ma chi parla?* fostered creativity, engagement, and pluralism thanks to its collaborative structure, in addition to establishing a decentralized co-laboratory of cultural experiences. The article also frames *Ma chi parla?* as a starting point to reflect on audiovisual translation, in particular dubbing, as a long-standing tradition in Italy, to illuminate its history, to question its cultural effects, and to problematize its pedagogical applications.

Keywords: Collaboration; Creativity; Foreign Language Pedagogy; Dubbing; Project-Based Learning

Introduction

This article presents collaboration as a crucial feature in the production of screen narratives as well as a fundamental practice in foreign language pedagogy. We showcase and analyse the project-based learning (PBL) activity *Ma chi parla?* (Who is Talking?), which involved the

audiovisual translation (AVT) of film and television show excerpts in an advanced Italian language and culture course in Fall 2018.[1]

Ma chi parla? was the result of the fruitful combination between AVT as a pedagogical activity in the foreign language classroom, the cultural practices of dubbing and subtitling in Italy, PBL methodology, collaborative pedagogy, and creativity, thus offering the opportunity to discuss filmmaking and pedagogy as spaces of shared dialogue. The classroom converted into a decentralized co-laboratory of cultural experiences springing from the engagement and pluralism of instructors and students alike. In particular, creativity arose throughout the different stages of the PBL and from collaboration occurring at different levels: among students, among students and instructors, but also among instructors within and outside the classroom. Finally, *Ma chi parla?* was a starting point to re-think dubbing as a deeply rooted tradition in Italy, unpack its history, and problematize its cultural effects and pedagogical applications. We present these reflections as we discuss the possible shortcomings of our first application, and different venues for future extensions and variations.

Project-Based Learning: Creativity and Collaboration

PBL is a pedagogical method that is generally favoured by teachers for fostering students' diverse skills while addressing real-life situations in a collaborative setting.[2] In PBL activities, students engage in a long-term and multi-stage course assignment; in our case, they produced the dubbing and subtitling of a film or television show clip. While the importance of collaboration in

[1] Author1 was the instructor in the course, while Author2 joined the class as a guest co-instructor.

[2] See for example Stephanie Bell, 'Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future', *The Clearing House* 83 (2010), 39-43, (pp. 39, 41): "Learners pursue knowledge by asking questions that have piqued their natural curiosity. [...] The active learning process of PBL takes students' various learning styles and preferences into account." As this article highlights, PBL activities may be attempted at all ages and levels of education.

PBL has already been stressed by scholars, *Ma chi parla?* allows us to underscore how collaboration can enhance creativity inside and outside the classroom.[3]

Our understanding of creativity in the foreign language classroom is not much linked to the production of "creative" (i.e., literary) texts but rather to the emphasis on a creative *process* or approach to the language via PBL, through which students use their linguistic ability to come up with the solution to a problem, while also establishing a fruitful dialogue with their classmates and instructors. In these terms, our theoretical backdrop resonates with the reflections of Rodney H. Jones on the creative nature of language itself, in that language allows us to "do things in the world; to solve problems, to form and maintain social relationships, to get what we want, and to avoid getting what we don't want."[4] Following Jones' understanding of creativity, language learners participate in the creative process since, like any language users, "they are able to exploit language's inherent capacity for creative action."[5] Emphasizing the inherent creative dimension of language, we also put the relational dimension of creativity in the foreground, which provides a theoretical foundation to collaboration in our experience of PBL.[6]

By introducing our PBL activity *Ma chi parla?*, we argue that PBL is particularly versatile in fostering creativity through its emphasis on collaboration, practicality, and the creative process, rather than focusing or privileging an exclusive creative outcome. A PBL

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[3] "The focal point of the learning process moves from the teacher to the learners, from working alone to working in groups." Iosif Fragoulis and Iakovos Tsiplakides, 'Project-Based Learning in the Teaching of English as A Foreign Language in Greek Primary Schools: From Theory to Practice', *English Language Teaching* 2 (2009), 113–119 (p. 114). For a recent summary of definitions and approaches to collaboration in pedagogy, see Beathe Liebech-Lien and Ela Sjølie, 'Teachers' Conceptions and Uses of Student Collaboration in the Classroom', *Educational Research* (2020), 1–17 https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1839354 [accessed 13 November 2020].

[4] Jones, Rodney H. and Jack C. Richards, "Creativity and Language Teaching", *Creativity in Language Teaching: Perspectives from Research and Practice*, ed. by Rodney H. Jones and Jack C. Richards (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 8.

[5] Jones and Richards, p. 8.

[6] The scholarship on creativity has often blurred the boundaries between creativity and collaborative learning, as clarified in Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, "Theoretical and pedagogical perspectives on orchestrating creativity and collaborative learning" in *Educational Research Review* 6 (2011), 169-184 (p. 171-172).

activity is meant to stimulate the students' ability to address and solve real-life problems in collaboration with their peers. Thus, in our case, not only did students learn the fundamental skills of productive communication and teamwork in Italian, but they also negotiated strategies to collectively solve the problem of producing AVT in the context of Italian culture. Moreover, PBL facilitates the emphasis on creative processes rather than outcomes since it is a long-term, multi-stage assignment. The length of our assignment, six weeks, granted continuity in learning throughout the term and facilitated building relations. Finally, while the instructor(s) may never cease to provide guidance and feedback, a PBL activity is student-driven and develops according to the students' questions and preferences. For this reason, PBL allows teachers to strike a balance between class structuring, monitoring, and supporting on the one hand, and spontaneity, flexibility, and freedom on the other hand. This balance is at the core of creative teaching.[7]

AVT in the Classroom

Our PBL activity *Ma chi parla?* features reverse dubbing and reverse intralingual subtitling, since students were offered a contextualized communicative situation in English, which they were asked to render in Italian.[8] We nestled *Ma chi parla?* in an advanced course of Italian language and culture designed to strengthen students' speaking and writing skills by having them pay attention to grammar and the acquisition of new vocabulary.[9] Scholarship in foreign

[7] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 174.

[8] Dubbing is a revoicing translation task, along with audio description and voice over. Either by substituting the original spoken audio, or adding spoken descriptive or narrative sounds, the original purpose of all revoicing translation tasks is to make an audiovisual product accessible to those who otherwise would not be able to understand it. See Jennifer Lertola and Cristina Mariotti, 'Reverse Dubbing and Subtitling: Raising Pragmatic Awareness in Italian English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners', *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 28 (2017), 104. AVT includes revoicing as well as subtitling. The latter may be a written translation (interlingual subtitling) or a condensed transcription of the spoken language (intralingual subtitling). Both dubbing and subtitling may be standard (when the foreign language is translated into the users' first language) or reverse (a translation from first to foreign language).

[9] The course was the third quarter in the two-year sequence in Italian offered at our institution. Class met four days a week for fifty-minute-long meetings and was entirely in Italian. Students had a textbook on which they could rely

language pedagogy has remarked that, in all of its forms, "dubbing has proven to be an effective didactic tool inasmuch as it provides students with an opportunity to speak and improve their intonation, pronunciation and general fluency."[10] Moreover, the PBL on *doppiaggio* (dubbing) and *sottotitolaggio* (subtitling) fit the thematic profile of the course, which paid particular attention to cinema and its connections with other media, such as comics. Thus, the PBL contributed to provide students with a multifaceted look on the cinematic industry and related forms of visual storytelling. Finally, by becoming *doppiatrici* and *doppiatori* (dubbers), students could enhance their intercultural competence. More specifically, they were invited to think critically about the processes of cultural export and the role of translation into Italian in the context of the reception of foreign cultural products in Italy.

Working on reverse translation was also particularly helpful to enhance students' motivation and encourage a creative use of the language in the reflective stages of our PBL. The scholarship on AVT has underlined the benefits of dubbing and subtitling exercises in the classroom by conducting quantitative or qualitative assessment of students' performance and impressions.[11] Moreover, it has been stressed how dubbing exercises featuring reverse translation

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for grammar review. Since *Ma chi parla?* was just one of the several assessment tools employed, only a few class meetings were dedicated to it and part of the work was completed at home.

[10] Anastasia Beltramello, 'Exploring the Combination of Subtitling and Revoicing Tasks: A Proposal for Maximising Learning Opportunities in the Italian Language Classroom', *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 8 (2019), 93-109 (p. 93). See also Jennifer Lertola, *Audiovisual Translation in the Foreign Language Classroom: Applications in the Teaching of English and Other Foreign Languages.* (Voillans: Research-publishing.net, 2019); Serena Bianco, "Imparare a tradurre il cinema: appunti per una didattica dell'italiano LS basata su un modello di integrazione delle quattro abilità linguistiche", *Natura Società Letteratura. Atti del XXII Congresso dell'Adi – Associazione degli Italianisti*, ed. by A. Campana and F. Giusti (Rome: Adi editore, 2018); Noa Talaván and Avila-Cabrera, José. "First insights into the combination of dubbing and subtitling as L2 didactic tools." Yves Gambier, Annamaria Caimi and Cristina Mariotti (eds) (2015). In *Subtitles and Language Learning*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2015, 149-172; Talaván, Noa and Rodríguez-Arancón, Pilar (2014); Martine Danaan, "Dubbing projects for the language learner: a framework for integrating audiovisual translation into task-based instruction" in *Computer Assisted Language Learning* Vol. 23, No. 5, December 2010, 441–456.

[11] Scholars that conducted quantitative research commented, for example, on using subtitles as a task to improve oral comprehension in a multimedia environment. Noa Tavalàn, "Subtitling as a task and subtitles as support: pedagogical applications" *New Insights into Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. by Jorge Díaz Cintas, Anna Matamala and Josélia Neves (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), p. 295. More recently, a study on dubbing reports that, at the end of the project "students felt significantly better, more comfortable, relaxed,

can be especially instructive when it comes to fostering pragmatic competence, the knowledge of the acts and functions of speech.[12] Working on dubbing in reverse translation cements pragmatical competence thanks to the constant interactions and negotiations needed to carry out the activity. While we did not compare data nor did we submit a survey to assess the activity, final course evaluations showed a significant and overall appreciation for the creativity of the assignments proposed in the course. Students also often expressed their enthusiasm undertaking the dubbing assignment in class and during office hours.

Ultimately, we found that the choice of reverse translation particularly benefitted students during the reflective stages of PBL. The centrality of reflection in our pedagogical method resonates with Maria Pilar Pastor's approach to metacognitive reflection on reverse translation from Italian to Spanish.[13] In particular, our students had the chance to reflect upon the linguistic choices they had made in their dubbed version of the clip, along with more general reflections on dubbing as a profession and the cultural implications of their linguistic choices. *Ma chi parla?* led students to reflect on the cultural and linguistic adjustments that inform the perception of US culture abroad. At the same time, this activity urged students to reflect upon their own experiences far from home, both past and future, and to become more aware of their own cultural identity. Therefore, not only did students become better Italian speakers by experimenting with *doppiaggio* and *sottotitolaggio* in a PBL activity, but they also found an enriching opportunity to foster their cultural awareness and see themselves as citizens of the world.

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confident and decided when expressing orally." Alicia Sànchez-Requena, "Audiovisual Translation in Teaching Foreign Languages: Contributions of Dubbing to Develop Fluency and Pronunciation in Spontaneous Conversations", *Porta Linguarum* 26 (2016): 17.

[12] Jennifer Lertola and Cristina Mariotti. "Reverse Dubbing and Subtitling: Raising Pragmatic Awareness in Italian English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners." *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 28 (July 2017), 103-121, (p. 105).

[13] Maria Pilar Pastor, "Traducción inversa (italiano-español) y reflexión metalingüística: instrumentos y procesos cognitivos", *inTRAlinea Special Issue: Le ragioni del tradurre*. 2019, p. 1.

Phases of the PBL

Ma chi parla? developed over the course of six weeks in a class with six students and it followed the four main phases of a PBL activity. The different phases of a PBL activity start with students working in groups, identifying an inquiry or issue (speculation phase), and pursuing the needed research to tackle it (design phase). Then, each group works on its outcome or product while the students practice skills specific to the course (implementation phase). Finally, the groups share their results with their peers and all participants reflect on the experience (evaluation phase).

The speculation phase set the stage; it served to stimulate interest and guide students towards their film or television clip choice. It included several activities to be completed in class during the assignment's first week: an introduction to the history of dubbing in Italy; a speaking task in the form of a debate; a listening task with Italian revoicings from US films and actors, in which students guessed the film's title and actor's name; and a reading and writing task aimed at practicing literal and parodical translation by playing with idiomatic expressions.[14] In this phase, we also introduced a video editing software students could use to complete their dubbing.[15]

At the end of the first week, the design or second phase began: each group researched and chose a three-minute-long scene from a non-Italian film or television show. We asked students to select an audiovisual text that they knew well and with which they had a strong cultural, linguistic, or sentimental connection. Students then presented their choices to the class, including

[14] Some of the debate questions were: 'guardi i film in inglese?' (Do you watch films in English?), 'preferisci i sottotitoli oppure i film doppiati?' (Do you prefer subtitles or dubbed films?), 'pensi che il doppiaggio sia difficile?' (Do you think the work of a dubber is hard?), 'ti piacerebbe essere un doppiatore?' (Would you like to be a dubber?), 'la tua traduzione sarà più creativa o più letterale?' ('will your translation be more creative or more literal?').

[15] We proposed our students use VideoPad. We chose it because it is a free video editing software that works both on Windows and Mac computers. One of our student groups, however, used iMovie to complete their AVT. We wish to thank here, Name for their technical assistance.

a note on the nature of their translation and whether it would be literal or creative, how, and why. In this instance, we provided feedback, especially about feasibility and appropriateness.

Third, there was the four-week-long implementation phase: students captioned their chosen clip and performed a reverse translation to Italian. They could practice writing in the indirect speech form, by transcribing the dialogue, as well as creative writing, by making the dialogue itself. This written script would be what they record during the dubbing session and what they would add as subtitles. In this phase, we provided grammatical written feedback. This was also where students had the opportunity to be linguistically creative: they could introduce parody or irony by conflicting their translation content with the images, or they could venture into different regional accents as explained below.

Finally, the sixth week was the evaluation phase: students uploaded their dubbed videos on the class website and in class, they critically presented their project highlighting successes and challenges. At home, they recorded a self-reflection video on their experience as *doppiatrici* and *doppiatori* of a non-Italian film or television clip of their choice.[16]

Multi-layered Collaboration

We entitled our activity *Ma chi parla?* to recall how Italians would initiate a conversation on the phone, similarly to the English "Hello?," in order to stress the project's dialogical aspect as well as to underline the vocal duplicity of a dubbed video, since dubbing inherently questions the convergence of voice and speaker. We thought that the emphasis on conversation in the activity's title would well represent the fruitful collaboration that we hoped students would

[16] While all class meetings occurred in person, the course also had two online platforms: the university's learning management system Moodle and a separate private website hosted by Wixsite, where all audiovisual inputs were uploaded by students.

experience throughout the different PBL phases. In fact, during *Ma chi parla?*, collaboration went beyond the classroom. The enactment of collaboration was specifically fourfold, involving students, students and instructors, co-instructors, and instructors across disciplines.

Collaboration at the student level created opportunities for creativity, while also allowing students to express their diverse points of view and adapt the Italian language to their own interests. *Ma chi parla?* urged students to negotiate their perspectives on a film by agreeing on the choice of which film to use and the specific scene to dub. Our students decided to create AVTs of a scene from Quentin Tarantino's 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*, a clip from the US sitcom *Friends*, and a scene from the 2004 comedy by Jess Shaffer, *Eurotrip*. These choices show a preference for US and Italian-American culture, but in virtue of being the students' own selections, they contribute to the intercultural exchange at the centre of *Ma chi parla?*.

Another important goal in the design and the implementation phases was for the students to agree on which strategies to employ in the translation. A first example comes from the student pair who worked on *Pulp Fiction* and adapted the original script to a very similar script in Italian. While closely following the original, however, the two students included their own experience in substantial ways. First, in Tarantino's scene, the character Vince says to his dining mate Mia 'I heard you did a pilot', which our students dubbed as 'Hai fatto un doppiaggio?' (Did you have a dubbing gig?). Second, the iconic diegetic and Anglophone music in this scene became a classic Italian tune independently chosen by the students. Third, while speaking in Italian, the couple has a French-inspired and Milanese accent, respectively. The Milanese accent resulted from the study-abroad experience in Milan of one of the students; the French-inspired accent was chosen by the second student as a cross-language challenge mixing the two romance languages that the

student was currently studying. In short, this student pair had a textual approach to AVT, as we may also infer from one of their reflections recorded on video at the end of *Ma chi parla?*:

> [Fare] un doppiaggio persuasivo è molto difficile specialmente perché ogni lingua ha un ritmo e una cadenza propri […]. Credo che [quello del doppiatore] è un mestiere un po' poetico, essere la voce dietro lo schermo, essere una voce disincarnata. (It is very difficult to dub in a persuasive way, especially because each language has its own rhythm and inflection [...]. I believe that the job of a dubber is a poetic profession: being the voice behind the scenes, a disembodied voice.)

The student making this statement was a Comparative Literature major and their comments clearly show how their literary interests resonated with the dubbing project.

A second example coming from the *Eurotrip* dubbing indicates a more holistic take on *doppiaggio*. One of the two students involved in this project came from a study-abroad experience in Florence, completed just before the beginning of the course. By then, soccer had become a central part of the student's understanding and reception of Italy and Italian culture. It was with no surprise that the student convinced their classmate, also passionate about sports, to work on a film scene from *Eurotrip* featuring soccer hooligans. In the sequence, two college students from Ohio enter a bar, which turns out to be full of intimidating Manchester United fans. Once the fans inquire on their whereabouts, the students pretend to be fans of the same team and make up a song to enchant them. Our students' AVT re-localized the soccer team to Italy, and the English hooligans became fans of the soccer team AS Roma (Fig. 1 and 2).

The approach to dubbing in this project was linguistic, technical, and professional: our students performed a Roman accent and used regionalisms (such as *mò*) to interpret the hooligans; they included written indications of diegetic sounds in the subtitles, where they also used capitalization for different voice volumes (see Fig. 1). What is more, they re-created and recorded with extreme precision some of the additional sounds, such as clapping and the chafing

of clothes. By behaving as voice actors and sound technicians, they approached the PBL activity to enhance not only their Italian, but also their professionalizing skills such as audio recording. The student who first came up with the idea of working on soccer commented:

> la mia esperienza con il doppiaggio non solo era una voce fuori campo [*sic*] ma anche la creazione dell'ambiente che si sarebbe sentito in un bar […]. [Alla] fine, mi sono [reso] conto che la nostra scena non doveva essere identica all'originale […]. Il nostro lavoro, il prodotto finale, semplicemente era la nostra interpretazione della scena originale. (My experience with dubbing not only implied being a voice over [*sic*], but also creating the environment that one would have heard in a bar [...] Eventually, I realized our scene did not have to be identical to the original […] Our work, the final product, was simply our own interpretation of the original scene.)

This comment shows how students were receptive to the creative opportunities that the PBL activity opened for them. Moreover, by collaborating on a common interest such as soccer, the students were able to share with their classmates what impressed them most about Italy: soccer, but also the variety of accents in the Italian language.

Collaboration between students and instructors was necessary to coordinate the different phases of *Ma chi parla?* and to offer resources that would help students finalize their projects. Not only did we introduce a software that students could use to include new audio files to the videoclip of their choice; we also helped them work on accents and dialect patterns, which they hoped to integrate into their dubbing exercise. As teachers, we saw ourselves as collaborators or orchestrators of the students' learning experience. In the words of Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen: "the teacher's role is not only that of facilitator, but also fellow collaborator, joining the students in collaboration processes. This means that teachers as real-time orchestrators should focus on enhancing collaboration processes, including channelling and

focusing learning processes… instead of providing correct answers."[17] We assisted students by drawing on our knowledge as instructors, mentoring and monitoring but not limiting the students' agency.

We practiced collaboration by also activating a network that could help the students have access to additional sources. In the case of *Eurotrip*, for example, we had the assistance of native speakers from Rome. A Professor of Italian in the US that grew up in Rome kindly gave us their input while we assisted the students with the writing of the script, reporting typical Roman expressions or oral contractions. Later, when students were ready to practice dubbing, a friend of ours living in Rome registered audio files pronouncing the same script with their Roman accent.[18] We forwarded the audio files to the students so that they could use them as a model for their dubbing performance. The audio files were particularly useful to students who were also excited to see such a plurality of subjects involved. Therefore, they engaged in their project with even stronger motivation. Indeed, on their part, the students had also recruited occasional collaborators, roommates or friends living on campus, to reproduce the clapping and cheering of a crowd, and other sounds from the original soundscape.

Another significant layer of collaboration that generated the *Ma chi parla?* activity and continued throughout its subsequent phases has been the collaboration between the two authors of this article. As Ph.D. Candidates and Teaching Fellows, we often brainstormed pedagogical practices on an informal basis. The advanced Italian course that Author1 taught in Fall 2018, while Author2 was completing their doctoral dissertation, offered us a new, and more formal, venue for discussion and collaboration. Author1 invited Author2 to join them as a guest co-instructor, and our collaboration took the form of occasional co-teaching in the classroom, where

[17] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 175.
[18] We take the opportunity to thank our friend, NAME, in Rome.

the students acknowledged the presence of two instructors, as well as regular meetings outside the class. Before the start of the quarter, we consulted with the Director of Language Program at our institution on the feasibility of the project; in the first few weeks of the term, we tailored the guidelines of the PBL assignment to the specific needs of *Ma chi parla?*.[19]

Our co-participation significantly enriched the course. Not only did we divide up preparation, feedback, and grading labour, thus easing our individual workload, but our constant conversations also streamlined the process, and helped us anticipate possible problems, questions, and errors. In addition, with two instructors in the class rather than one, we decentralized the traditional classroom authoritative system on several levels, balancing the student-instructor ratio and exposing our students to two different Italian accents as well as two separate insights on the *doppiaggio* practice in Italy.[20] Last but not least, once *Ma chi parla?* was over, we carried this communal experience on our individual career paths in different universities across the United States.[21]

The fourth level of collaboration has been among instructors teaching different foreign languages. In June 2019, we attended a workshop on the principles of project-based learning in the foreign language classroom, where we met a Lecturer in the Asian Languages and Cultures Department at our institution, who also utilize dubbing to incorporate project-based learning in their Chinese classes. A major difference between our approach and our colleague's, was that the latter asked their students to use fully authentic material in Chinese for their dubbing, i.e., material produced in China by Chinese native speakers. Our colleague guided their students

[19] While project-based learning is regularly integrated in intermediate and advanced Italian classes at our institution, the novelty of our approach was to dedicate the PBL to dubbing and subtitling.
[20] We are both Italian native speakers, growing up in different regions in the South and North of Italy. We also differ in age for a few years and our educational backgrounds are similar but do not completely overlap.
[21] Author1 continued to participate in workshops on PBL at our institution and joined a cohort of innovative pedagogy fellows in 2019. Author2 presented the project-based learning activity at a different R1 institution in the US in February 2020.

through the different phases of their PBL, which included the annotation, translation, and dubbing from Chinese to English. A second difference was that our colleague engaged the students throughout ten full weeks (corresponding to the total length of the course), whereas in our case, the ten weeks were partially dedicated to our course's remaining assignments and to our own preparation for the PBL. Despite these differences, we were able to create professional bridges. Our collaboration with other instructors also *de facto* addressed the need to create and support "a collaborative and confidential atmosphere between teachers in educational organisations," in addition to triggering reflections for further implementations.[22]

Reflections

Time and logistic limitations made it impossible for us to repeat the activity *Ma chi parla?* with different students at the same institution, which would have helped collect a broader corpus of data and advance more extensive hypotheses on the outcomes of the project. Nevertheless, our joint experience with *Ma chi parla?* was fruitful enough to spring a wide range of considerations touching not only on the shortcomings of our first implementation, but also on the possibilities for improvement, and variation.

Our choice of reverse translation came with the idea of allowing students to personalize the class' content and providing them with opportunities for reflection on dubbing as a profession and an intercultural practice. We recognize, however, the advantages of opting for direct (Italian-to-English) or intralingual (Italian-to-Italian) translation, where students work on fully authentic material that was not originally tailored for classroom use and is rich in idioms. Students may thus recognize linguistic phenomena and enhance their socio-linguistic

[22] Raija Hämäläinena and Katja Vähäsantanen, p. 176.

competence.[23] Proceeding in the opposite direction, i.e., with a dubbing exercise from English to Italian, required an imaginative effort on our students' part, since they drew on their personal experiences and the resources we made available as instructors. While students were overall very excited about their projects, the references to Italian culture were not equally distributed among the different AVT projects. In fact, we did not clarify a method of assessment for the integration of cultural elements, and therefore did not take into consideration these nuances upon grading. We look forward to engaging with direct and intralingual dubbing/subtitling in our future courses to further weigh the differences among these translation practices.

In *Ma chi parla?,* our approach to dubbing was hybrid and flexible, and included not only presenting dubbing as an intercultural, creative, and professional practice, but also allowing students the freedom to choose among cinema and television, and to personalize their AVT.[24] The hybridity of our approach favoured students by allowing them to choose the level of complexity of their dialogues and the videoclips they found more compelling for their projects. This was particularly helpful given the different levels of proficiency in the class and the students' diverse backgrounds. Moreover, not all students were equally at ease with the dubbing and subtitling technology; we could argue, indeed, that students who were more at ease with the technology also approached the translation assignment more creatively.[25]

While the flexibility of our approach had clear advantages on account of students' diversity and wide range of linguistic and technological skills, we recognize that a more tailored

[23] Anastasia Beltramello, 'Exploring the Combination of Subtitling and Revoicing Tasks: A Proposal for Maximising Learning Opportunities in the Italian Language Classroom', *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 8 (2019), 94.

[24] On the specificity of television shows and the different relationship established with the audience compared to cinema, see Daria Motta, "Il doppiaggio televisivo come strumento didattico per l'insegnamento dell'italiano LS. Dall'adattamento culturale dei testi alla didattica della fraseologia" *Italiano LinguaDue* 1 (2017), 70-82 (pp. 72-73).

[25] In this regard, we agree that at least one student group in the class would have largely benefitted from having more time at their disposal to complete their activity, and that one possible solution could be to extend the timeline proposed to all students.

and consistent approach to dubbing could benefit the entire course hosting *Ma chi parla?*. Maintaining a general approach to AVT served the purpose of introducing students to dubbing as a multifaceted intercultural practice; yet the professional and intercultural dimensions of dubbing in Italy deserve to be discussed more in depth with students. This could lead to 1) a more thorough investigation of the Italian tradition of dubbing in an historical framework, and its cultural and linguistic repercussions; 2) a discussion on the evolution of dubbing as a professional practice, with the emergence of unofficial and parodic versions on the internet and social media; 3) a critical reflection on dubbing as an intercultural practice, with the potential of renovating and decolonizing the Italian studies curriculum. In the next paragraphs we expand on these three avenues and provide brief examples.

1) As for a more historically grounded approach to dubbing, it is worth recalling that dubbing, as a post-production technique, started in the early 1930s in the United States with the goal of simplifying film exports and their distribution in non-Anglophone countries. In Italy in the same years, there was a concurrent interest in dubbing following the pressure of the Fascist regime, whose tight control over the media would allow officials to manipulate and neutralize unwanted elements in the original version of foreign films.[26] Further, dubbing "made foreign movies accessible to wider audiences, counteracting the high levels of illiteracy that characterized certain contexts (e.g. Italy) and ensuring larger profits."[27] Since the royal decree of 1933 that made it mandatory for the dubbing process to be carried out within the Italian national borders, *doppiaggio* has become a trademark of foreign cinema in Italy.[28] Likewise, the dubbing

[26] Perego and Pacinotti, pp. 40-41.
[27] Perego and Pacinotti, p. 41.
[28] Angela Sileo, 'Dubbing or Simil Sync? A Study on Reception in Italy', in *Reception Studies and Adaptation: A Focus on Italy*, ed. by Giulia Magazzù, Valentina Rossi, and Angela Sileo (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), pp. 171-190 (p. 174).

of non-foreign films has a long tradition in Italy. Among the causing factors, we recall the cheaper costs of recording audio in post-production rather than in sync; the difficulties of working with a multinational film crew, which was a common practice especially in the decades after World War II; and the preference for experienced actors to dub debuting performers.[29] Since its inception in the 1950s, Italian television has been subjected to a similar multi-layered mediation process, since the majority of television shows that are produced outside of Italy is dubbed when broadcasted across the country.

When discussing dubbing, the cultural capital of the *doppiatori*, translators, technicians, and distributors involved in the industry should not be underestimated.[30] On the one hand, being a *doppiatrice* or *doppiatore* is still a highly regarded and profitable profession.[31] On the other hand, the financial investments performed in the domestication of films and television shows deeply shape the country's cinematic environment by affecting linguistic choices such as the translation of film titles.[32] On this note, the Italian language is ripe with interferences resulting from the influence of televised and filmic Italian over the Italian-speaking population. Often called with the pejorative term *doppiaggese*, this variant of Italian is "caratterizzata da appiattimento delle differenze linguistiche, ridondanza e preferenza per elementi esogeni al posto

[29] To give an example, in Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945), Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi dub themselves, but Carla Rovere, who plays the role of Pina's sister, Lauretta, is dubbed by Rosetta Calavetta (who will later become the official dubber of Marilyn Monroe). Austrian Harry Feist, who plays the role of Fritz Bergman, is dubbed by Giulio Panicali. See Massimo Giraldi, Enrico Lancia, and Fabio Melelli. *Il doppiaggio nel cinema italiano* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 2010), p. 26.

[30] Luca Barra, "Mediating satire. Italian adaptation and dubbing of US sitcoms," in *The Power of Satire*, ed. by Marijke Meijer Drees and Sonja de Leeuw (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), pp. 71-80, (p. 74).

[31] Roderick Conway Morris, "When in Rome, Don't Trust Actors' Voices," *The New York Times* (1992) https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/18/style/IHT-when-in-rome-dont-trust-actors-voices.html [accessed 13 November 2020]

[32] Chiara Bucaria, "Between marketing and cultural adaptation. The case of comedy film titles in Italy," *Humour Translation in the Age of Multimedia*, ed. by Margherita Dore (London: Routledge, 2020), 94-115 (p. 110).

di equivalenti italiani."[33] *Doppiaggese* results from a variety of causes (such as the synchronization process, poor working conditions, and human errors) and its creation may be traced directly back to the needs of the film and TV distribution industry.[34]

Unearthing the implications of *doppiaggio* would provide a space for reflection and discussion on history and language with exercises preceding the reverse AVT practice. In-class discussion based on academic and journalistic publications on the topic would first prepare students, who could then watch film and television clips in the original and in their Italian version. With the instructor's guidance, they could contrast and compare the two texts' languages and cultural references.[35] In order to foster language production and creative collaboration, students in groups could also translate the titles of non-Italian films, next to discussing the implications of the titles' existing translations.

2) A professional approach to dubbing would also consider the most recent evolution of revoicing practices, and the increased accessibility of dubbing and subtitling technology, which likely already informs students' own experience with revoicing practices in the classroom. While domestication is still very commonly used to mediate the import of foreign cultural products in Italy through dubbing, we may be going towards a broader acceptance of subtitling of foreign audiovisual products, and an unofficial, plural access to dubbing and subtitling on the internet and social media. As already noted by Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti:

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[33] "[It is] characterized by a flattening of linguistic differences, redundance, and a preference for exogenous elements, taking the place on the equivalent in Italian." Angela Sileo, "Il doppiaggio: interferenze linguistiche sulla soglia tra inglese e italiano," *Altre modernità* 1 (2015), 56-69 (p. 59). According to some scholars, however, Italian dubbing has reached high linguistic levels in recent years, liberating itself from the *doppiaggese*'s issues. See Daria Motta, p. 74.

[34] As a matter of fact, a very limited number of adaptors works on the totality of dubbed products and is thus responsible for the largest share of language to which the Italian public is exposed every day. Angela Sileo, pp. 58-59.

[35] Examples of well suited videoclips abound. One for all comes from the animated television series, *The Simpsons*, where groundskeeper Willy is a Scott dubbed into a Sardinian. See Chiara Ferrari, "Dubbing The Simpsons: Or how groundskeeper Willie lost his kilt in Sardinia", *Journal of Film and Video* 61.2 (2009): 19-37.

> In the past few years, an increased consumption of multimodal products worldwide has led to faster distribution, with shorter waiting times between the release of the original production and its translated versions, and more exposure to different translation modalities. This is particularly true of predominantly dubbing countries, where (younger) viewers are getting increasingly open and accustomed to subtitling as a way of gaining quicker access to multimodal products available on the Internet or on streaming distributors like Netflix.[36]

The structural changes affecting the film and television industry point toward subtitling as a modality preferred to dubbing and a larger corpus of available material to watch. This is particularly true for younger generations of viewers.

Moreover, as internet access, social media and phone application usage, software creation, and artificial intelligence experiments increase, the dividing lines between official and unofficial dubbing and subtitling are more and more indistinct. Also referred to as fandubbing/subtitling or cyberdubbing/subtitling, unofficial dubbing and subtitling are multifaceted practices. They entail revoicing and captioning of products before their official release, proposing new translations parodying the official ones or satirical dubs of interviews by entertainers and politicians, and employing dubbing and subtitling as activism aimed at raising politically founded concerns.[37] They may be performed by professional *doppiatori* as well as amateurs, such as the Italian YouTube and television personality, Fabio Celenza.[38] Unofficial AVT has been changing the relationship between the identity of those who are completing it and the translated product (moving from a centralized industry to a plurality of subjects),

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[36] Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti, 'Audiovisual translation through the ages', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. Łukasz Bogucki and Mikołaj Deckert (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 33-56 (p. 41).

[37] On the specific case of fan-dabbing in Italy see Gabriele Spina Alì, "A Bay of Pigs crisis in southern Europe? Fan-dubbing and parody in the Italian peninsula", *European Intellectual Property Review.* 37, n. 12 (2015): 756-764.

[38] Celenza has a YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/c/FabioCelenza/featured) and is often invited on Italian television programmes, such as *Propaganda Live* on the La7 channel.

decentralizing the translation's sources and the languages available for translation, questioning the quality standards of a dubbed film or television show, and cultivating on and off-line communities.[39] In the past decade, phone applications and artificial intelligence have also offered different types of AVT and are undoubtedly posing new ethical and regulatory challenges.[40] Even internet memes, namely, humorous images or videos combined with a written text, may be considered examples of AVTs in the digital age. Since they are sites of constant and endless remaking, instructors have started using them in foreign-language courses to enhance storytelling, writing, and cultural skills.[41]

Ma chi parla? has the potential to question the practice of dubbing as an established profession with certain standards. Already in 2018, we encouraged a decentralized and non-binary approach to AVT, allowing students who identify as women to dub male actors, in ways that are closer to unofficial dubbing and subtitling. We deem imperative that existing realities in the AVT world are brought into the classroom, not only as fodder for discussion on cultural practices but also to bridge in-class dubbing and subtitling and the outside world. Conversations could take place on the students' own familiarity with unofficial AVT and a self-reflection on the choices made for the dubbing could follow. In addition to having an activity that may professionalize in full, since it would present all options, showcasing unofficial AVT would open a creative and less forbidding space.

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[39] For analysis of the array of terminology and theoretical approaches to AVT, see Frederic Chaume, "Is audiovisual translation putting the concept of translation up against the ropes?", *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 30 (2018): 84-104. For the term "cyberdubbing" and for an analysis of official vs unofficial dubbing practices, see Rocìo Baños, "Fandubbing", *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*, ed. by Ł. Bogucki and M. Deckert (Palgrave: 2020), pp. 209-226.

[40] See for example TikTok, Dubsmash, MadLipz, MyLingo, and DeepDub. On the future challenges that new technologies impose on the *doppiaggio* industry see https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/doppiatori-addio-l-attore-originale-parla-lingue-diverse-grazie-all-ai-AD45uULB, last accessed June 11, 2021.

[41] For an example from an Italian-language course, which also stresses the importance of creativity in the Italian language classroom, see Elena Emma Sottilotta and Danila Cannamela, "Six memos for teaching Italian as a foreign language: Creativity, storytelling, and visual imagination in the language classroom," *EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages* 6 (1) (2019).

3) Lastly, as an intercultural practice, *Ma chi parla?* has the wherewithal to critically interrogate film and television show reception and distribution, joining the efforts to decolonize the Italian curriculum, and film/media studies more broadly. Dubbing is an enduring cultural practice heavily contributing to the univocal ways in which foreign films and television shows are received and integrated in Italian culture. When foreign products are released exclusively or predominantly in their dubbed version in Italy, the collective imagination and frame of reference surrounding them are inevitably affected. Thus, the lack of "neutrality" in dubbing pointed out by Luca Barra extends well beyond the linguistic features of *doppiaggese*.[42] When we introduced *doppiaggio* during the PBL activity, the example we provided to encapsulate the cultural system activated through dubbing was a clip from Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind*, or *Via col vento* in Italian.[43] We pointed out the extent at which dubbing influenced the reception of the film in Italy. Because of *doppiaggio*, the actress (Vivien Leigh), her character Scarlet O'Hara (presented to the Italian audience as Rossella O'Hara) and the *doppiatrice* Lydia Simoneschi are one and the same entity to the Italian viewer. *Via col vento,* and in particular the first Italian dubbing of the film released in 1949, has been watched by generations of Italians both on the big screen and on television. The filter that the Italian language establishes acoustically and visually—since all the English texts on screen are replaced by Italian translations—contributes to turn the Italian-dubbed film into a new cultural object almost separate from the original.

[42] Barra, p. 72.

[43] *Gone with the Wind* is the screen adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's homonymous 1936 novel. The film was awarded the 1940 Best Picture Oscar, in addition to other eight Academy Awards. Considering inflation, the film is still acknowledged as the highest grossing film of all times. Jacqueline Steward, 'Why we can't turn away from 'Gone with the Wind'', *CNN* (2020) https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/12/opinions/gone-with-the-wind-illuminates-white-supremacy-stewart/index.html [accessed 10 November 2020]. *Gone with the Wind* has been repeatedly contested for its nostalgic portrayal of the ante-bellum US South and as a film that is refusing to acknowledge the horrors of slavery and offering a problematic depiction of Black people. As Jacqueline Steward points out, the film's cultural significance has not diminished with time, precisely for the influence that *Gone with the Wind*, along with other classic Hollywood films, has had on the popular perception of history, both in the United States and worldwide.

As an example of how to approach dubbing through a decolonializing lens, we wish to indicate a few important aspects of the *Gone with the Wind* dubbing that may be addressed both in the classroom and in scholarship with the goal of problematizing the Italian studies canon and mainstream culture. It is historically significant that the 1949 Italian dubbed version (directed by Franco Schirato) survived a 1977 new *doppiaggio* by Roberto De Leonardis, where dialogues were updated in ways that could be more faithful to the original—for example, maintaining proper names in English—while also attempting to attenuate verbal racism.[44] The enduring success of the 1949 dubbed version has made it so that the excerpts of dialogue such as 'Francamente me ne infischio' (which translates Rhett Butler's line 'Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn') stand as iconic citations in Italian popular culture, up to today.[45] We would also argue that the 1949 version translates the racism of the original in ways that resonate with the racism targeting Black subjects in Italy at that time and beyond, so that the alleged cultural authenticity of the US film, and its Italianization through AVT found in racism a common ground. Finally, the verbal patterns of the 1949 version—with Black characters using verbs in the infinite mode, and white characters addressing others with the formal 'voi' in intimate conversations—are also reminiscent of the 1937 Mondadori translation in Italian of Margaret Mitchell's novel, therefore positing the question of a Fascist legacy in the dubbing itself.[46]

While a deeper dive into *Gone with the Wind* is beyond the scope of this article, this example shows our activity's potential to uncover the enduring cultural relevance of *doppiaggio*

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[44] See Nunziante Valoroso, 'Review: *Via col vento* (*Gone with the Wind*, 1939)', in *Asinc: Rivista in rete in italiano e in inglese di critica del doppiaggio*, http://www.asinc.it/rec_dtt_00.asp?Id=210 [accessed 13 November 2020] and Maria Elena Daverio, 'Nove statuette per un longseller', *Q.b. online* https://www.fondazionemondadori.it/rivista/margaret-mitchell/nove-statuette-per-un-longseller/ [accessed 13 November 2020].

[45] De Leonardis' 1977 version, instead, has a moderate 'francamente, mia cara, non me ne importa niente.' See Daverio.

[46] Daverio.

and why we find it important to address it in foreign language classes in order to create an equalized space for reflection and discussion on colonizing cultural practices.[47] Specifically, the history of *Via col vento* on the one hand and popular dubs by the YouTuber Celenza, who uses Southern dialects for his dubbing, on the other, would open the door for a conversation on Italian regionalism and language-based discrimination. Once students propose dubbing and subtitling that employ Italian variants, as they did in our case with Milanese and Roman accents, a post-activity reflection could highlight the stereotyping often sitting at the core of screen narratives and facilitate a dialogue among students on their own linguistic choices and understanding of the cultures of Italy.

Conclusions

In this article we presented and analysed *Ma chi parla?*, a project-based learning activity engaging students of an advanced Italian class in reverse dubbing and subtitling. We argue that collaboration was essential in fostering creativity during the implementation of the assignment and that multiple subjects were involved in a collaborative and creative experience including both students and instructors.

We clarified the theoretical background of our activity by emphasizing the importance of creativity in language and clarifying how the relational dimension of creative language exchange finds in collaboration the most promising pedagogical settings. The validity of our activity from a pedagogical perspective is also supported by the abundant scholarship on AVT in the foreign language classroom, and reverse translation more specifically, where students' fluency, programmatic awareness, and intercultural competence appear to benefit from this method.

[47] For the analysis of official dubbing in Italian and the idea to compare these texts with alternative versions created by students see Daria Motta, p. 74.

While we recognized collaboration as the engine of our successful activity, we also took the opportunity to reflect on its shortcomings and possible improvements, extensions, or variations. We emphasized the hybridity of our approach and how it advantaged a diverse student population. Yet, we also acknowledged that a more tailored and nuanced approach to the professional, linguistic, and intercultural implications of Italian dubbing promises to be extremely relevant. In particular, variations of the project could go in the direction of engaging students more rigorously in the history of dubbing from its specific political connotations during Fascism until the most recent unofficial (but still, potentially professional) forms of fundubbing on the internet and social media. Moreover, students can participate in a critical reflection on dubbing and its role in promoting cultural discrimination, especially in relation to accents and other stereotypical representations.

Overall, *Ma chi parla?* was not only a successful experience of collaboration inside and outside the classroom, but also the springboard toward an enriching investigation of dubbing and subtitling's potential in the classroom. Collaborating creatively, and creating collaboratively, thus became synonymic expressions of shared processing and meaningful language exchange benefitting students and instructors alike. We look forward to implementing *Ma chi parla?* and its variations in our future classes and hope that these reflections inspire new forms of creative collaboration among colleagues.

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Figures

Figure 1: Still shot from the *Eurotrip* dubbing project, which was uploaded on the class website.

The subtitles show how students adopted the Roman dialect in their project.

Figure 2. Still shot from the *Eurotrip* dubbing project, which was uploaded on the class website. The subtitles show how students translated the original film lines using cultural references that are meaningful both from a US and an Italian perspective.