

Chapter 4

Bend It like Beckham

Italian Title:	<i>Sognando Beckham</i>
Director:	Gurinder Chadha
Actors:	Anupam Kher; Parminder Nagra; Keira Knightley
Country:	United Kingdom
Year:	2002
Length	107 minutes

Jessminder is an Indian girl that lives in London and has a passion for football. In fact, she hopes to play like her idol, David Beckham, but she has to struggle against her parents, since according to their socio-cultural customs, women are supposed to make different choices, from education to the selection of the man to marry. By focusing on Jess's relationships with her friends and family, namely the two worlds the girl belongs to, the film exploits humorous discourse to deal with important issues, such as cross-cultural contacts and personal growth. A case in point is the following sarcastic comment on Western girls made by Jess's mother, who claims that it is no longer possible to distinguish them from boys by looking at their haircuts:

- (1) MRS BAHMRA: "Sometimes these English girls have such short hair... You just can't tell."

By means of the humorous lines above, the woman is actually communicating the different cultural customs and social codification of gender differences, one of the crucial issues of the film.

4.1 Linguistic Dimensions of the Movie

The linguistic features of the utterances in *Bend It like Beckham* contribute to the description of the outcome of the contact between the several cultural and social models presented in the movie. By means of language, it is possible to draw conclusions about the different attitudes and behaviours that are activated in relation to the types of participants and communicative situations. When people of different ages interact, the language is more formal and respectful of the social roles. As identified in another selected movie, *Brick Lane* (Chapter 6), two main linguistic dimensions co-exist: one represented by Standard English, and another represented by an Indian variation of English. The second dimension is integrated by the inclusion of expressions from the Indian linguacultural background, whose adoption is

nonetheless limited to specific acts, such as greetings, or interlocutors, when talking to elderly people.

When Jess and her sister meet their cousin Tony and his mother, for example, both girls open the conversation by using the woman's native language, adding foreign terms like "*Massi*", which denotes the aunt, and which is modified by the inclusion of "*ji*", a form that shows respect towards the interlocutors (00:05:29 – 00:05:36; 00:05:40 – 00:05:42):

(2) PINKY: "Yes, *Massi ji*. Mum's making samosas."

(3) PINKY: "Aw, thank you, *Massi ji*."

When different social relationships exist, Indian greetings and typical expressions are not adopted, as exemplified by the following dialogue between Pinky and her friends, when she is doing some shopping before her engagement party with Teetu:

(4) PINKY'S FRIEND: "Hi, Pinks! Are you all right? What are you doin' here? You haven't left everything to the last minute, have you?"

PINKY: "Yeah. One more day of freedom! Where did you get your contacts?"

PINKY'S FRIEND: "Like 'em? Just thought they went with my hair, innit?"

If the three extracts above are compared, one may realise that (2) and (3) come from a dialogue with an elderly person, which is hence characterised by a more correct structure and polite form of the utterances. The fact that the girl answers the woman's questions exemplifies the latter's high status and denotes a more asymmetrical relationship, even though participants share similar linguacultural contexts. It is therefore possible to say that Pinky's eliciting moves could be relabelled as supporting ones, which tend to confirm the woman's higher status. On the other hand, extract (4) contains fake eliciting moves, for the questions only aim at hiding the speakers' vanity and real illocutionary force, consisting in getting more information about the clothes and contact lenses.

Another instance of actualisation of the social relationships by means of conversation structures can be considered the following extract (5), which again shows the integration between English language and foreign terms, when Jess and her mother are discussing about football:

(5) JESS: "Anyway, I'm not playing with boys any more."

MRS BAHMRA: "Good! *Gaal Kathum*, end of matter!"

JESS: “I’m joining a girls’ team. They want me to play in proper matches. The coach said I could go far.”

MRS BAHMRA: “Go far? Go far? To where? Jessie, we let you play all you wanted when you were young. You’ve played enough.”

Also in (5) above it is possible to note that the characters resort to a variety of English that is integrated by typical expressions and sentences, like *Gaal Kathum*, which is eventually retextualised as “end of matter”. Such retextualisation may function an explanation of the meaning to both Mrs Bahmra’s daughter and the audience of the movie, in order to make the script more accessible to them.

4.2 Conversation Analysis

One of the most evident conflicts in the film is the one between Jess’s wishes and her mother’s will, since the latter does not accept that her daughter wants to play football. When considering again extract (5), Jess resorts to an informing move, to communicate that she has finally changed her mind to do something else, which her mother will hopefully support. Since Mrs Bahmra does not want her daughter to play football, she initially accepts and supports the decision. Yet, when Jess communicates her actual intent, she develops and explains her initial statement by means of informing and commenting moves. In the next turn, Mrs Bahmra reacts by using three eliciting moves followed by the informing and acknowledging ones, in order to prevail over her daughter and confirm her higher status, due to the cultural codification of the parents’ role. Similar structures in this sense will be identified in *Brick Lane* as well (see Section 6.2 below), even though the leading role will apparently pass to the father, Chanu.

The family relationships are differently characterised according to the cultural contexts, as exemplified when comparing dialogues (5) and (6). In the interaction below, Jules—one of Jess’s English friends—is talking to her mother, with different attitudes and features (00:15:19 – 00:15:29):

(6) JULES’S MOTHER: “I’m just saying—I saw that Kevin last night in the High Street with a blonde girl and it didn’t look like they were talking about the “Match of the Bleedin’ Day” either!”

JULES: “Kevin can shag whoever he bloody wants!”

Also Jules’s mother takes the floor to prevail in the exchange above, as illustrated by the challenging moves, and it is possible to realise that her intention is more explicitly pursued if compared to Jess’s mother, who uses fake eliciting moves in (5). In fact, though Mrs Bahmra asks how far and where her daughter is supposed to go, she does not really want to know the answers; the questions just represent a reaction to her daughter’s decision. As for (6), from a more detailed perspective, after Jules’s mother informs her daughter about Kevin, the girl actually faces the woman—since she does not like Kevin—and comments on the news by means of a challenging move with a more trivial lexis if compared to Jess’s utterances.

Finally, in order to characterise non-native participants, rather than focusing on the lexical and syntactic features of the utterances, the film leverages to the multimodal construction, particularly to the acoustic dimension, since some speakers have different accents that distinguish them from the native ones.

4.3 Target Script Analysis

The Italian dubbing translation of *Bend It like Beckham* is affected by some typical issues of this audiovisual translation mode, from the need to cope with the presence of a different level of multiculturalism in Italy (also in relation to the year of production and translation of the film), to the respect for the culture-bound view of family relationships, to the rendering of cultural terms. As for the family dynamics, consider the following extracts (7) and (8); in (7), Pinky is telling Mrs Bahmra what she thinks about one of her friends, who will wear the same pink dress at the speaker’s engagement party (00:02:25 – 00:02:27):

(7)	English script	Italian script
	PINKY: “I’m tellin’ you, Mum, that girl is a first-class bitch!”	“No, no! Ma io l’ho capita benissimo: dammi retta, quella stronza l’ha fatta apposta!”

Even though Pinky’s vulgar lexis is preserved and adapted for target receivers, it is important to realise that, from a verbal perspective, the reference to her mother is omitted in the Italian version. Since the girl is accompanied by Mrs Bahmra and Jess, it is not possible to understand to whom the girl is talking. A similar softening of the vulgar language is adopted in (8), which is the Italian translation of dialogue (6) above:

(8)	English script	Italian script
	JULES’S MOTHER: “I’m just saying—I saw that Kevin last	“Dico soltanto che ho visto Kevin ieri sera

<p>night in the High Street with a blonde girl and it didn't look like they were talking about the "Match of the Bleedin' Day" either!"</p> <p>JULES: "Kevin can shag whoever he bloody wants!"</p>	<p>che passeggiava con una bella bionda. E non aveva l'aria di parlare della partita di domenica scorsa, chiaro?"</p> <p>"Kevin può andarsene in giro con tutte le bionde che vuole!"</p>
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Both the woman's and the girl's lines are modified in the target script, which results less vulgar, perhaps to deal with the functional and socio-cultural dimensions and expectations of the Italian audience. This leads to the production of a type of language that would be more appropriate and acceptable to the Italian receivers.

As for the cultural notions, two examples are finally examined: one concerning a part of the history of Indian culture, and one connected to the opposition between different socio-cultural backgrounds. In the course of a football game, Jess is offended by a player of the opposite team. As the following exclamation (9) reveals, the insult draws upon the historical contrast between Indians and Pakistanis, but such historic reference is not rendered for the Italian viewers (01:03:34):

<p>(9)</p> <p>PLAYER: "Piss off, Paki!"</p>	<p>English script</p> <p>Italian script</p> <p>"Vaffanculo, brutta Hindi!"</p>
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It is not easy to decide whether the modification in the Italian script is connected to a mistranslation, or to a lack of knowledge of specific historical and cultural backgrounds that are nonetheless included in the construction of film dialogues (cf. Sections 1.3 and 2.2.1 above). Furthermore, the feature of *Bend It like Beckham* consisting in adding foreign expressions to the dialogues is reflected also by the inclusion of "gora" and "gori", which are used to refer to white people in disparaging ways, but which are not preserved in the Italian version:

<p>(10)</p> <p>JESS'S DAD:</p>	<p>English script</p> <p>"[...] the bloody goras in their clubhouses made fun of my turban and sent me off packing!"</p>	<p>Italian script</p> <p>"[...] i maledetti bianchi dei circoli sportivi mi sfottevano per il mio turbante. E mi cacciarono</p>
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via.”

- (11)
- | | English script | Italian script |
|-------|---------------------------------|--|
| GIRL: | “Hey, who’s that watching her?” | “Ehi, chi è la bionda che la sta guardando?” |

In both (10) and (11), the terms “*goras*” and “*gori*” are neutralised as “*bianchi*” or “*bionda*”. This exemplifies that the audiovisual translations stem from “entextualization” (cf. Urban 1996; Guido 2008) processes according to which the original discourse is interpreted and reconstructed for a different linguacultural background, in order to meet the translators’ expectations in terms of audience’s reception and culture-bound accessibility and acceptability of the locutionary and illocutionary levels. In fact, even though it is true that both translations preserve the connotative semantic dimensions of the original version, it is also true that their neutralisation reflects the omission of the Indian characterisations of the dialogues for the Italian receivers and eventually provides a script that is not completely equivalent from a pragmalinguistic perspective.