THE TRANSLATION OF LEGAL REFERENCES IN THE ITALIAN DUBBING OF A US TV SERIES
A corpus-based analysis

ANNALISA SANDRELLI
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI INTERNAZIONALI DI ROMA

Abstract – Legal drama series contribute to the popularisation of legal discourse and legal concepts: however, as they are entertainment products, they also simplify complex constructs for the sake of plot comprehension. When such products are translated for foreign audiences, a further layer of complexity is added onto them. Legal references in audiovisual products are notoriously challenging to translate, especially when the legal traditions of the source and target cultures are different. This paper investigates the translation strategies employed in the Italian dubbing of *The Good Wife*, a very popular legal drama from the US, to convey the legal references in the dialogues to Italian viewers. The data used in the analysis come from the DubTalk corpus, compiled at Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma-UNINT. A theoretical framework was developed to classify the legal references in the original English dialogues and the related translation strategies in the Italian dubbed version; moreover, interviews were conducted with four professionals involved in the Italian dubbing of the series, with the aim of achieving a better comprehension of the process. The analysis shows that the most frequent translation strategies in our corpus are the use of functional equivalents, periphrases and calques; thus, while the key principle driving the Italian dubbed version may be said to be domestication, frequent legal terms and fixed formulae were translated via calques and standardised translations which viewers have come to expect in translated legal dramas. This balanced mixture of domesticating and foreignising strategies facilitates comprehension whilst at the same time reminding the audience of the foreign origin of the series, to ensure maximum enjoyment.

Keywords: dubbing; legal references; corpus; translation strategies; functional equivalence.

1. Introduction

The label *legal translation* indicates "[…] a type of translational activity involving special language use, that is, language for special purpose (LSP) in the context of law, or language for legal purpose (LLP)" (Cao 2007, p. 8). The range of legal texts that get translated is very wide: Šarčević (1997, p.

11) suggests three categories, i.e. primarily prescriptive texts (normative), descriptive-prescriptive texts (judicial decisions and legal instruments), and primarily descriptive texts (scholarly works). The prescriptive nature of some texts is what makes them binding for the recipients: therefore, the well-known classification by Sabatini (1990, in Megale 2008, p. 84), which distinguishes between highly binding texts (scientific, normative and technical-operational), average binding texts (expository and informative) and partially binding texts (expressive), can be fruitfully combined with the previous one to expand it. Thus, this paper moves from the premise that legal dramas may be described as expressive-informative texts, i.e. although their primary function is entertainment, by depicting (more or less realistic) representations of professional interactions in the legal sphere involving lawyers, clients, judges, police officers, forensic experts, and so on, they also contribute to informing the audience about the laws and the legal system of the country where the story is set.

This paper focuses on TV dramas, as serialisation plays a key role in the popularisation of legal discourse and the dissemination of legal concepts:

> […] legal dramas can be considered a valid example of a means of popularization: they represent a genre specifically created to be shown to mass media for the purposes of entertainment, and for an informative and educational one. (Laudisio 2016, p. 103)

The object of this paper is to discuss the key issues involved in the dubbing of legal dramas and then to focus on the Italian dubbing of *The Good Wife*, a very popular American legal series. More specifically, the aim of this study is to identify the most frequent translation strategies used in a small corpus of episodes to convey the source language (henceforth, SL) legal references to the target language (henceforth, TL) viewers of the dubbed version. The legal references in the corpus were classified according to their cultural specificity; then, the translation strategies used in the Italian version were categorised according to a dedicated taxonomy. In addition, it was decided to complement the analysis with interviews with four professionals who worked on the Italian version of *The Good Wife* for years (the series translator, two dialogue adapters and a dubbing director), in order to gain insights into the translation process behind the TL choices.

After an overview of the main features of legal dramas in Section 2, our methodology and data set are described in Section 3; then, the results of our analysis are presented in Section 4 and our conclusions in Section 5.

2. Translating legal dramas: an overview

In legal translation of any kind "[...] the legal status and communicative purposes in the SL texts are not automatically transferred or carried over to the TL texts. They can be different" (Cao 2007, p. 10). In the functionalist approach to translation (Reiss, Vermeer, in Nord 1997), if the TL text has the same *skopos*, the translator's aim must be to achieve equivalent effect (instrumental translation); if the *skopos* is different, the aim is to achieve adequacy in accordance with the translation brief (documentary translation). As legal dramas are entertainment products, the skopos of their translation (via either dubbing or subtitling) is the same as the skopos of the original version, i.e. to entertain the audience. The problem is that source and target language audiences do not share the same cultural background. As legal dramas are steeped in the legal culture of the country of origin, they are notoriously complex to translate, especially when the legal traditions of the SL and TL countries are relatively distant. This section provides a brief overview of the key features of this genre and of the related translation challenges.

The United States have a long history of producing TV legal dramas, starting in the 1950s with series like *Perry Mason* and leading up to the "quality TV" legal series of the last twenty years (Villez 2010, p. 25). Legal dramas potentially present viewers with any area of the law (public, private, commercial, criminal, international, and so on), depending on the setting and focus of the series and on the storyline of each episode. Serialisation implies a degree of repetition, with recurring characters and settings; repeated exposure to legal settings enables the audience to acquire some legal knowledge.

> The recurring schema of regular programs allows viewers to grasp essential information more rapidly. [...]. The stability of the context in a legal series, like *Perry Mason*, for example, allows for the acquisition of criteria on courtroom procedure (what is the order of questioning), on the professions (who does what), on courtroom setup (where do the parties sit) and so on. (Villez 2010, p. 5)

Like all audiovisual products, legal dramas are carefully scripted, so neither plot nor dialogue are, strictly speaking, authentic. However, as the aim is to provide a realistic representation of law and the justice system on the screen, scriptwriters usually rely on the advice of legal experts. The latter check whether the plot is legally sound and whether the dialogues are convincing representations of interactions in the legal sphere, including both instances of

symmetrical interactions between peers (members of the legal community) and asymmetrical interactions between legal professionals and their clients.[1] In other words, legal TV series portray both expert-expert institutional encounters and expert-non-expert interactions:

> The type of communication taking place in legal and medical dramas often involves an exchange between the characters who are professionals and experts in their discipline and lay people, such as their customers and patients […] Moreover, the authors of specialised dramas (just as all TV scriptwriters) have to bear in mind what their target is: a general, non-expert audience. This means that legal or medical dramas have to be shaped in such a way as to represent a 'good compromise' between specialised contents and a simplified form of communication, which has to entertain and at the same time raise feelings of identification in the audience. (Laudisio 2016, p. 101)

In recent years, the fact that lawyers have joined the teams of scriptwriters of legal series has enriched the quality of the shows (Villez 2010, p. 69). Of course, the dialogues are characterised by the presence of legal language; more specifically, legal terminology "[…] is the most visible and striking linguistic feature of legal language as a technical language" (Cao 2007, p. 20). A number of recurring features have been identified in the vocabulary of legal English, which are related to the historical stratification of the language: the presence of Latinisms, terms of French/Norman origin, archaisms, redundancy (doublets and triplets), euphemisms and contemporary colloquialisms (Álcaraz, Hughes 2002, pp. 4-14). Thus, fixed formulae are frequent in the dialogues of legal series, as well as terms referring to institutions, procedures, professional roles and, of course, crimes. Scriptwriters try to strike a balance between accuracy and accessibility, i.e. they tend to simplify complex constructs for the sake of plot comprehension by the audience and employ specific writing techniques to ensure that the meaning of complex terms is explained by the characters themselves. Indeed, Laudisio (2015) has shown that in specialised TV series (medical and legal ones) repetitions, definitions and explanations are frequent, and that such mechanisms help the audience understand technical concepts and terms. Villez (2010, p. 72) notes:

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[1] The main difference between the two is that in asymmetrical interactions participants have different degrees of power and control, including the right to take and hold the floor. In institutional encounters such as those that take place in legal settings, legal professionals play specialised roles, have specific knowledge of the topics under discussion and have more interactional power than ordinary people (i.e. clients, witnesses, defendants, and so on). See Orletti (2000) for an in-depth discussion of the notions of symmetry and asymmetry in interaction.

> If a term is too technical, the writers arrange discussions so that the term is reused in different conversations or situations, giving the audience several opportunities to hear and associate the legal vocabulary to narrative events. [...] The fictional client immediately repeats the term questioningly, which allows the fictional lawyer to take it up again, repeat it a third time and explain it.

Thanks to such techniques, the long and consolidated legal drama tradition from the US has contributed to spreading knowledge about many technical terms (Grasso, Penati 2016, p. 210).

The main sources of difficulty in the translation of legal dramas stem from the differences between the two legal systems, the two languages and the two cultures, because, unlike other types of technical language, legal language is not universal: "Law and legal language are system-bound, that is, they reflect the history, evolution and culture of a specific legal system" (Cao 2007, p. 23). In other words, it is in the nature of legal dramas to have a strong connection with the legal culture of the country where they are made: a US legal drama such as *Suits* (Aaron Korsh, 2011-2019) differs enormously from a British one such as *Silk* (Peter Moffat, 2011-2014) in terms of plot, characterisation and language, because the legal setting is completely different. This accounts for "[...] the high occurrence of Culture-Specific References connected to legal discourse, which also come to be a central and constitutive element of this genre [...]" (Laudisio 2017, p. 137).

In addition, it is important to remember that audiovisual translators work on polysemiotic texts (i.e. products that communicate via the combination of dialogues and images) and that translation problems may affect the dialogues or may be related to visual information too (signs, documents, gestures, and so on). This has a bearing on the choice of translation strategy, as the presence of visual information may facilitate or hinder translation, depending on the scene in question (Chaume 2012, pp. 100-119). In addition, in the dubbing of audiovisual products there are specific technical constraints related to the need for synchronisation between the images and the TL dialogues which replace the original ones. For example, if the word *subpoena* (a US court order requiring someone to testify) is used by a character shown in a close-up shot, the TL version needs to match the original actor's lip movements, whereas if the character's face is not clearly visible or he/she is off-camera, there is a wider range of translation choices available to the translator. Moreover, when analysing dubbed products, it is important to take into account the characteristics of the dubbing process itself, as the translator is not the only TL text producer. Dubbing is a collective effort that sees the involvement of several professionals. The translation produced by the series translator(s) is a draft that is later modified by the dialogue adapter(s) to meet synchronisation requirements; when the dubbing actors work in the recording studio under the

Lingue e Linguaggi

guidance of the dubbing director, further changes may be introduced to improve the delivery of the TL lines. Therefore, when researching dubbing, it is interesting to discuss the reasons behind certain translation choices with those who were involved in the dubbing process of a film or TV series (if at all possible).

Most of the legal dramas that are internationally popular today come from the US, a country whose legal system belongs to the common law family: this makes many legal references difficult to translate into Italian, as Italy has a civil law system. As Laudisio (2017, p. 131) points out:

> When the text to be translated is permeated with references to the procedures, terminology and professional culture of a specific country and is an integral part of a multimodal product including audiovisual elements, as in the case of legal drama, then the translator is faced with even more difficult challenges.

The translator must find ways to bridge cultural gaps and place the TL viewers on a level footing with the original audience, which usually implies the adoption of specific translation strategies. In one of the earliest studies on the translation of legal language in American courtroom dramas dubbed into Italian, Giordano and Giorgio Marrano (1994) noted two different types of issues: references to the SL legal system and the presence of fixed formulae, such as those used in court hearings. One of the most frequent translation strategies identified in their corpus of legal films was the literal translation of the source culture reference, such as *gran giurì* for *grand jury*; they also found that a similar approach was taken in the translation of fixed formulae, which in their corpus were always translated as literally as possible. When there was no Italian equivalent for an American legal term but its meaning was essential for plot comprehension, the Italian dubbed versions tried to explain it; one of their examples is the rendition of *he was a probation officer* as "si occupava di libertà vigilata" (Giordano, Giorgio Marrano 1994, p. 116).

The literal translation approach appears to be frequent in other dubbing countries too. Indeed, Villez notes that many Europeans are more exposed to dubbed TV dramas than original language ones and that an unwanted outcome of the literal translation approach is that "[...] the country in which the story takes place is not always clear to the television public in Europe [...]" (Villez 2010, p. 73). He then adds that frequently "[…] the French, when finding themselves in court, address their judges as *Votre Honneur*. This new cultural habit […] is emblematic of a less innocent confusion between the American and French legal systems" (Villez 2010, p. 1). Bollettieri Bosinelli (2002, p. 81) notes something similar in Italy, where in real court hearings some citizens expect to hear the well-known (translated) formulae they have heard in dubbed products, such as "Vostro Onore", [...], "obiezione accolta", "obiezione respinta" (*objection sustained*, *objection overruled*)".

Laudisio (2017) analysed a corpus of episodes from three US legal dramas (*The Good Wife*, *Suits* and *Boston Legal*) and focused on the translation of culture-specific references (some of them of a legal nature) in the Italian subtitles produced by a community of non-professional subtitlers (fansubbers). He found a prevalence of substitutions by means of a target culture reference, but also loans and calques for references with no direct equivalent in Italian, and generalisations and explicitations for terms whose meaning was key to plot comprehension. Interestingly, he also found a high number of "standardised" translations of legal references, i.e. translations which have become established and familiar to TL viewers through repeated use over the years, such as "sentito dire" for *hearsay* and "segreto professionale" for *attorney-client privilege*.

To sum up, the dubbing of legal dramas presents significant challenges related to the nature of the materials to be translated and to the technical constraints of the technique. The available studies have shown that a literal approach tends to be used in the translation of fixed formulae and that other legal references that are key for plot comprehension tend to be explained or replaced by TL equivalents. Our study tried to investigate the dubbing of *The Good Wife* as systematically as possible, in order to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data about translation strategies. Section 3 presents the methodology and materials used in the present study.

3. Methodology and corpus data

As was highlighted in Section 2, when translating legal TV series for dubbing, each legal reference must be analysed very carefully in the audiovisual context (scene) in which it occurs in order to select the most suitable translation strategy. Our study aimed to identify all the legal references present in a small corpus of episodes of *The Good Wife* and then to investigate their TL translations in the Italian dubbed version. Sub-section 3.1 illustrates our methodology and Sub-section 3.2 presents the data used in the study.

3.1 Methodology

Firstly, a literature review was carried out to select the theoretical tools for the identification of legal references in our data. Ranzato's classification of cultural elements in audiovisual products (Ranzato 2010, 2016) can be

usefully applied to the legal references found in TV dramas.[2] After carrying out an extensive review of taxonomies, Ranzato (2016, p. 66) proposes the following classification:

1. Source culture references
2. Intercultural references
3. Third-culture references
4. Target culture references

Source culture references may further be classified as either monocultural or microcultural references (Pedersen 2005). Monocultural references can be assumed to be shared by the whole source culture, such as the underlined items in Example 1, from the US series *Boston Legal*, centred around the professional lives of the lawyers working for the (fictional) Crane, Poole & Schmidt law firm in Boston.

ALAN SHORE	Your Honor, we have something called the equal protection clause, we have something called the 14th Amendment.

Example 1
Monocultural references (*Boston Legal*, S1 E1).[3]

Microcultural references are specific to a sub-set of the source culture, such as a region or a given speech community. For example, in Episode 1 of Series 2 of *Shetland*, a police drama set in the eponymous Scottish archipelago, a murder investigation sees the involvement of the *procurator fiscal*, i.e. a Scottish public prosecutor; Scotland's Prosecution Service is called the *Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service*, shortened into *Fiscal Office* in Example 2. These two items can be considered microcultural references, because they are likely to be unknown to many viewers who live in other parts of the UK and, even more so, to those in other countries.

COURT CLERK	And here to address us on a matter that concerns us all is our Procurator Fiscal, Rhona Kelly.
RHONA KELLY	Good morning. First of all, I'd like to say it's a real pleasure to be invited here today to update you on certain changes in procedure in the Fiscal Office.

Example 2
Microcultural references (*Shetland*, S2 E1).

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[2] In this paper, reference is made only to real-world references (or *realia*; see Vlahov, Florin 1969 in Ranzato 2010) and not to intertextual references (although the latter may also be found in legal dramas).

[3] S1 E1 means Season 1, Episode 1. Unless otherwise specified, all the examples in Sections 3 and 4 are mine.

Generally speaking, the more culture-specific a reference, the harder it is to find a degree of correspondence between source and target culture. By contrast, intercultural (or transcultural; Pedersen 2005) references are easier to transpose by their very nature, because they are shared by several cultures. In an episode of *The Good Wife*, the Lockart-Gardner law firm is involved in an arbitration hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, an independent institution that deals with disputes in sport and is well-known internationally (Example 3). Intercultural references of this kind usually remain untranslated or have an official translation in the TL (in this case, "Tribunale arbitrale dello sport" or "TAS").

ELSBETH TASCIONI	CAS Court of Arbitration for Sports. Tell Will that the CAS doesn't run like an American court, okay? It has a whole set of rules based on Swiss law.

Example 3
Intercultural references (*The Good Wife*, S4 E12).

Third-culture references are related to a culture that is neither the source nor the target culture; their translation depends on the relationship between the third culture in question and the other two. For example, a reference to the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (the federal and national police service of Canada) in a US series is likely to be relatively familiar to American viewers, but less so to Italian viewers.

Finally, the SL dialogues may include references to the target culture (in our case, Italian): it is important to check that they are factually correct and that any explanations in the SL dialogues are not redundant for TL viewers (if they are, part of the TL dialogue may need to be re-written). In the English-language documentary film *Amanda Knox* (Rod Blackhurst and Brian McGinn, 2016) on the Meredith Kercher murder case, the Italian prosecutor assigned to the case is shown with a caption that says *lead prosecutor*. In the Italian version the caption reads "Sostituto Procuratore Generale"; clearly, the translator checked the official name of his post in the Public Prosecution Office in Perugia.

After classifying the legal references in the SL materials, a taxonomy of translation strategies was needed to analyse their translations in the TL dubbed dialogues. To this end, an overview of relevant literature on legal translation (Cao 2007; Megale 2008; Šarčević 1997) and audiovisual translation (Ranzato 2010, 2016) was carried out. Our starting point was Ranzato's list of strategies for the translation of cultural references (2016, pp. 83-84):

1. Official translation
2. Calque
3. Explicitation

4. Generalisation by hypernym

5. Concretisation by hyponym

6. Substitution

7. Lexical recreation

8. Compensation

9. Elimination

10. Creative addition

This classification was adapted to fit the translation of legal cultural references in dubbing, thanks to insights from the literature on legal translation. In particular, Cao (2007, p. 55) points out that in order to translate a legal term from one language to another, it is necessary to analyse the linguistic, referential and conceptual dimensions associated to that term.

> There are two major scenarios in translation here: firstly, when there are no existing equivalent concepts and words in the TL, that is, they are linguistically and conceptually absent, new words must be created or new meanings introduced; and secondly, when there are existing words in the TL that are linguistic equivalent to the SL, these words in the two languages may only carry partially equivalent meanings in law or sometimes may not be functionally equivalent in law at all.

In the first scenario, several translation strategies may be employed to introduce a new term in the TL; in the second scenario, when similar terms in the two languages do exist, their relationship may be one of near equivalence, partial equivalence or non-equivalence (Šarčević 1997, pp. 237-239).

The taxonomy presented in Table 1 summarises the above considerations and arranges translation strategies for legal references in audiovisuals in relation to their foreignising (source-text oriented) or domesticating (target-text oriented) effects (Venuti 2008, pp. 1-34).

Source-text oriented (foreignisation)	Target-text oriented (domestication)

Calque (formal equivalence)	Functional equivalence
	    a) Near equivalence
	    b) Partial equivalence

Loan	Periphrasis
	    a) Explicitation
	    b) Hypernym/ hyponym

Neologism	Omission
Substitution (with a more familiar SL element)	Compensation (in another part of TL dialogue)

Table 1
Taxonomy of translation strategies.

A typical foreignising strategy is the calque, which is a literal translation that provides formal equivalence between the SL and TL terms. For example, translating *US Department of Justice* as "Dipartimento di giustizia" does not attempt to convey the function of the American institution, but merely tells the TL audience that there is a body in the US with a similar-sounding name. A domesticating translation of the same item would be "Ministero della Giustizia", the TL functional equivalent, namely "the concept or institution in the target legal system that has the same function as the concept concerned in the source legal system" (Šarčević 1997, p. 235). Clearly, in trying to establish equivalence, it is important to take into account both the original text type and the function of the translation; Sacco (1994, p. 490) highlights that in the Italian translation of an American crime novel it is perfectly acceptable to render *attorney* as "pubblico ministero" or *executor* as "esecutore testamentario", but that these solutions would be inadequate in a legal document. In addition, the degree of functional equivalence may vary from almost complete to partial. For example, the sentence *the statute of limitations has expired* was rendered as "il reato è andato in prescrizione" in our corpus (*The Good Wife*, E9 S3); although the two legal concepts of *statute of limitations* and "prescrizione" only partially overlap (as the criteria for determining the maximum time for initiating legal proceedings vary widely in different legal systems), the Italian sentence gives viewers at least a rough idea of what is being discussed.

When a concise and efficient solution to a specific translation difficulty in a given scene cannot be found, the element in question may be omitted (omission) and/or reinserted later on in the TL dialogue (compensation). Clearly, domesticating strategies tend to transform the SL term into something more familiar and easier to understand for TL viewers. The easiest way to do this is to use a periphrasis, i.e. a definition or explanation of the SL concept, provided there is sufficient time for an elaborated TL expression; the choice of this strategy is sometimes facilitated by the presence of an explanation in the original version, as the SL audience may be just as unfamiliar with the legal term in question as the TL audience (see Section 2). If there are technical constraints (for example in close-up scenes), the use of a loanword is another possibility; of course, this has a foreignising effect and reminds the audience that they are, in fact, watching a foreign product. Both periphrases and loanwords were used in the Italian dubbing of the film *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987), in which two stockbrokers become involved in an insider trading scandal; the Italian dubbed version used both the original English term and an Italian periphrasis ("*speculazione con informazioni*

riservate") in different scenes.[4] Finally, another foreignising strategy is the creation of a TL neologism, often used when there is a neologism in the SL text too.

To sum up, "[T]the final choice of one or another technique will depend on the particular source text, the translation's brief, the translation *skopos*, and the target language norms" (Chaume 2012, p. 146). In addition, the choice of the most suitable translation strategy depends on the role played by each legal reference in the specific audiovisual context in which it occurs. Therefore, an effective translation of a legal drama will include a mixture of domesticating strategies (to facilitate comprehension) and of source-text oriented strategies (to retain the "exotic" flavour of the original).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the dubbing process and of the translation strategies adopted to convey the legal references in the SL series, the analysis of our data was complemented with interviews with the series translator (T), the dialogue adapter who worked on the first three seasons (DA1), the dialogue adapter who worked on Seasons 4, 5 and 6 (DA2) and the dubbing director (DD) who worked on Seasons 3, 4, 5 and 6. The interviews took place via individual phone calls between the end of January and the beginning of February 2015. The four interviews were semi-structured on the basis of an outline that was sent to the interviewees a few days in advance (to think about their answers or to go back to their translation/adaptation files and refresh their memory). There were a few introductory questions on their professional experiences in the dubbing industry, followed by some questions on the dubbing of *The Good Wife* and specific questions on a number of TL items identified in our analysis. After obtaining the interviewees' written permission, the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.2 Data set

The data analysed in this paper come from the *DubTalk* corpus, a collection of films and TV series whose original language dialogues and translated (dubbed or subtitled) versions have been transcribed according to specific conventions.[5] The resulting corpus includes TV series and films belonging to several genres, including sit-coms, costume dramas, dramedies and legal dramas. The transcription work was carried out with the help of our MA Interpreting and Translation students in their projects for the "Film Language

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[4] The crime "*abuso di informazioni privilegiate*" was first introduced in Italy by Law 157 of 17 May 1991, and was then further specified in Legislative Decree 58 of 24 February 1998.
[5] For more details about the project and the corpus see: http://dubtalk.unint.eu

Lingue e Linguaggi

and Audiovisual Translation" module and in their audiovisual translation dissertations.

Although the legal sub-section of the DubTalk corpus also includes other well-known legal dramas such as *Boston Legal* and *How to Get Away with Murder*, by far the most popular choice among students was, unsurprisingly, *The Good Wife* (Robert King, Michelle King, 2009-2016). Indeed, *The Good Wife* is the most successful legal drama of recent years and has actually been credited with reviving the genre, thanks to its high quality (Grasso, Penati 2016, p. 212). It revolves around the private and professional life of Alicia Florrick, married to Peter Florrick, Cook County State's Attorney; when her husband is hit by a sex scandal and ends up in prison, Alicia is forced to go back to working as a lawyer after many years spent looking after her family. The basic storyline was inspired by a real-life event, i.e. the sex scandal involving the governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer, in 2008.

The series is characterised by fast-paced SL dialogues and fast editing; moreover, the language used in the dialogues features a mixture of "legalese" (in the work-related scenes) and every-day language (in all the scenes centred around the main characters' private lives). In her work for the prestigious Lockart-Gardner law firm, Alicia gets involved in both criminal and civil cases and the episodes present a very wide range of complex legal cases. The SL dialogues contain fixed formulae and stereotyped legal language, but also colloquial language and references to US current affairs, political figures, traditions, and so on. In this sense, this popular series is extremely interesting from a translational point of view.

There are currently 20 fully transcribed episodes of *The Good Wife* in the *DubTalk* corpus, with the original English dialogues and matching Italian dubbed dialogues. A comprehensive analysis of the legal references in these episodes is planned in the near future, but for reasons of space the data presented here are a subset of the corpus developed for a case-study in an MA dissertation (Pieracci 2014-2015). Eight episodes were selected because they focus on special legal cases; they introduce viewers to alternative dispute resolution methods (ADR, including arbitration and mediation), to military courts, to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, to cases of contact between different jurisdictions (UK-US) and even to a mock trial organised in a Law School. Such settings have seldom (if ever) been considered in previous studies on dubbing and were therefore singled out for the present paper. The selected materials are as follows (Table 2):

Lingue e Linguaggi

EPISODE TITLE	SEASON, EPISODE	DURATION (MIN.)	SL WORDS	TL WORDS
Heart-La vita in un attimo	S1 E17	44:09	4,539	4,120
Double Jeopardy-Doppia Condanna	S2 E2	43:16	5,257	4,844
The Death Zone-La zona della morte	S3 E2	41:42	5,964	5,518
Get a room-Le colpe, il prezzo	S3 E3	41:17	6,065	5,709
Whiskey Tango Foxtrot-Caprio Espiatorio	S3 E9	40:50	5,680	5,113
Blue Ribbon Panel-La casa del passato	S3 E19	41:50	5,938	5,175
Je ne sais what?-Lezioni di francese	S4 E12	41: 26	6,021	5,655
Red team, Blue team-Squadra blu, squadra rossa	S4 E14	42:00	6,037	5,592
TOTAL		5h 33min 30 sec	45,501	41,726

Table 2
Data from *The Good Wife* used in the study.

It must be stressed that the transcripts in the corpus are not merely the original and translated scripts of each episode; they are the verbatim records of the actual dialogue lines delivered by actors. The dialogues of a film or TV series usually differ from the original script, because lines may be improvised, changed or omitted during film shooting and whole scenes or individual lines may be cut or moved during film editing (in the post-production stage). Therefore, all the above data were produced by manually transcribing the episodes.

Before analysing the data in more detail in the next section, it is worth highlighting a few aspects of the translation and adaptation process that have emerged from the interviews (DA1 2015, DA2 2015, DD 2015 and T 2015).[6] Firstly, it is important to stress that the Italian dubbed version is the end product of a collective effort in a lengthy process and that the TL solutions analysed and commented in Section 4 were produced under time pressure. The translator had about 3 days to produce the draft translation of each episode and remarked that he tends to work on several series at the same time. The dialogue adapters had about a week to make the dialogues suitable for the dubbing studio, i.e. to adapt the lines to synchronisation requirements and to make them easier to deliver for the actors. The dubbing director did not specify the time available for the dubbing sessions, but stated that,

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[6] DA1 (2015), Interview with the dialogue adapter of *The Good Wife* (seasons 1, 2, 3), personal communication, February 2015. DA2 (2015), Interview with the dialogue adapter of *The Good Wife* (seasons 4, 5 and 6), personal communication, February 2015. DD (2015), Interview with the dubbing director of *The Good Wife*, personal communication, January 2015. T (2015), Interview with the translator of *The Good Wife*, personal communication, February 2015.

although the pace has definitely increased over the last few years, in the case of *The Good Wife* the deadlines were reasonable.

As the data in Table 2 show, the Italian dialogues are characterised by a lower number of words in all the episodes: this is somewhat counter-intuitive, since the Italian adaptation of an English script tends to be longer and more linguistically complex (Alfieri, Bonomi 2012, p. 114). In this case, the American actors' high speaking speed and the fast editing of the scenes was the main reason quoted by the Italian dialogue adapters (DA1 2015 and DA2 2015) to explain the reduction: as the average Italian sentence is actually longer than the original, some parts of the dialogue had to be cut in the adaptation process, because the Italian dubbing actors could not physically fit the same amount of information in the time available for the delivery of their lines.

As regards the translation process itself, the translator (T 2015) pointed out that the SL dialogue lists provided by production companies vary widely in terms of quality and that there are often factual mistakes in them; therefore, before the actual translation can begin, it is necessary to check the transcripts against the video and correct any errors to avoid reproducing them in the TL text. In order to facilitate this process, many translators use the subtitles produced by fansubbers (if available) as a potential source of information for tricky items; however, as they are produced by non-professional translators, there can be errors in them too, so they cannot be taken at face value. In relation to the specific challenges posed by legal terms, the translator of *The Good Wife* explained that he consulted legal dictionaries (but did not find them particularly useful) and looked up on the Internet any references he did not understand. His solutions were then checked for inconsistencies or inaccuracies by a lawyer during the adaptation phase and also by another lawyer consulted by the dubbing director.[7] Finally, RAI (the Italian state broadcaster) also had a lawyer to check the work and advise on specific items, such as English loanwords. This process was followed for the dubbing of the first few seasons, while in later ones it was felt that everyone involved had developed sufficient familiarity with the series and its terminological problems. Finally, one of the adapters (DA2 2015) remarked that she developed her own glossary of translation solutions and that she always consulted the other adapter(s) when more people were working on the same season, to ensure terminological consistency. The latter aspect is especially important when working on specialised series, as there are always frequent terms and expressions whose translations must be preserved from one season to another.

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[7] No information is available on the origin and specialisations of the above-mentioned lawyers; therefore, it is impossible to say whether they are Italian lawyers working in international settings or American lawyers working in Italy.

After this brief overview of our methodology and data, it is time to illustrate the main results of our analysis.

4. Analysis of dubbing strategies

As mentioned in Section 3, the first step in our analysis consisted in classifying all the cultural elements in the corpus and then identifying those of a legal nature. The data in Table 3 show that, predictably, the vast majority of references in the corpus are related to US culture, but there are also some third-culture ones that are related to the United Kingdom.

REFERENCES	OCCURRENCES
SL culture-specific terms (US)	203
Intercultural references	3
Third-culture references (UK)	10
TOTAL	216

Table 3
Cultural references in corpus data.

Out of a total of 216 cultural references, 156 were of a legal nature. The 50 non-legal references concerned US current affairs, American history, politics, newspapers, sports, music, and so on; although it was certainly interesting to see how they were rendered in the Italian dubbed version, they are not included in the present analysis.

The translations of the SL legal references were analysed by applying the taxonomy of translation strategies presented in Table 2, to check their respective frequency. Table 4 presents the breakdown of results both in terms of raw frequency and in percentage.

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES	OCCURRENCES	PERCENTAGE
functional equivalence	71	45.5%
periphrasis	44	28.2%
formal equivalence	26	16.8%
neologism	8	5.1%
omission	4	2.5%
loan	2	1.2%
substitution	1	0.6%
TOTAL	156	100

Table 4
Translation strategies for legal references

Lingue e
Linguaggi

Overall, the prevalent translation approach was domestication, with functional equivalence and periphrasis being the two most frequent strategies used in our corpus. What follows is a more in-depth look at our results.

The most commonly used strategy was the use of a functional equivalent, with 71 cases (45.5%). This strategy was chosen to transpose all the references to legal roles in civil and criminal trials; for example, the term *plaintiff* was translated in different ways in different episodes, depending on the context. In in an episode focused around a libel suit, *plaintiff* was translated as "ricorrente", the near equivalent in an Italian civil court. In another episode dealing with a health insurance company refusing to provide coverage to the plaintiff for a special type of surgery, the term is translated as "richiedente", a term used in Italian administrative courts (partial equivalence). Finally, *plaintiff* was translated as "querelante" (generally used in Italian criminal trials) in an episode focused on a civil lawsuit linked to a criminal case; this solution works well from the point of view of lip-synch requirements, as Example 4 shows. Will Gardner, one of the partners in the Lockart-Gardner law firm, delivers the following line in a close-up shot and the initial phonemes in the word *plaintiff* give his mouth a shape that is highly compatible with the Italian word "querelante".

WILL	Yes. Represent that <u>plaintiff</u>. We'll represent Thief. The Thief CEO wants to see how the case goes before he pulls the trigger on a real trial.	Sì. Voi rappresenterete il <u>querelante</u>, noi la Thief. Vogliono verificare la strategia prima di imbarcarsi in un vero processo.

Example 4
S4 E14.

In other cases, in the absence of technical constraints it was possible for the Italian translators to opt for the standard TL terms used in arbitration proceedings and criminal hearings, respectively. Thus, in an episode taking place at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (a female) *defendant* became "convenuta" (the term used in Italian arbitration procedures), but in another episode dealing with a criminal case the translator correctly opted for "imputato". Likewise, although the criminal trials depicted in *The Good Wife* take place according to the adversarial system, key terms such as *prosecution* and *State's Attorney* were replaced by the terms used in the Italian legal system, namely "Accusa" (when referring to public prosecution during the trial) and "Procura" (when referring to the institution). Moreover, in order to make it clear that the story takes place in the US and not in Italy, the full name of the prosecution office in the series, *State's Attorney Office*, was translated as "Procura di Stato", a term modelled on the Italian "Procura della

Repubblica" to establish functional equivalence (other options found in the dialogues include "Procura" and the personified "Procuratore di Stato").

Another interesting case is the wide range of terms used in the SL dialogues to refer to lawyers, which were almost all translated as "avvocato". Table 5 includes all the occurrences of the SL terms found in the corpus (in all the 8 episodes under study) and their TL translations.

SL TERM	OCCURRENCES	TL TERM
Counselor	2	Avvocato
Attorney	14	Avvocato
Lawyer	45	Avvocato
Barrister	4	3 Avvocato Ø[8]
Solicitor	3	Procuratore

Table 5
Terms designating lawyers.

Although there are significant differences in the work of an American lawyer and that of an Italian "avvocato", there is certainly a relationship of near equivalence between the two terms. The word *counselor*, used in court as an appellative, was also translated as "avvocato", because in Italian there is no separate word. *Attorney* implies that the person in question is an American lawyer, whereas the terms *barrister* and *solicitor* designate two different types of lawyers in the UK. Indeed, this difference plays a key role in one episode centred around a libel case tried in an English court via videoconference link; participants included a UK judge (in his court in England), a solicitor and two attorneys (in a conference room at Alicia's law firm). Here it was very difficult to convey the contrast between American and British legal terminology to Italian viewers, as is evident in Example 5. The fact that the terms *barrister* and *solicitor* designate professionals with a different training background and different roles (with barristers generally representing clients in court and solicitors usually working in an office carrying out behind-the-scenes duties) does not emerge clearly in the TL version.

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[8] The symbol Ø indicates the absence of a TL translation; in this case the fourth occurrence of the word "barrister" was omitted in the Italian dubbed version.

ALICIA	Okay. Um, so you are the <u>barrister</u> that Danny hired. Is that correct?	Ah, capisco. E quindi è a Lei che Danny ha affidato il <u>patrocinio legale</u>? Dico bene?
MR BRANNON (laughs nervously)	Actually, no. The <u>solicitor</u>. Not as posh as a barrister, but we try harder. Sorry, I'm a bit punchy. Just, uh, first trip to the States. You know, just off the plane Where are the Olsen twins?	Veramente sono <u>procuratore</u>. Gli avvocati sono di lusso, ma noi ci impegniamo di più. Scusi era una battuta. Vede… è il mio primo viaggio qui, sono appena arrivato. Dove sono le gemelle Olsen?

Example 5
S3 E2.

Barrister was translated via a periphrasis ("è a Lei che Danny ha affidato il patrocinio legale", which roughly translates as "the person entrusted with legal representation"), the second most frequent strategy in the corpus; in Mr Brannon's line, *solicitor* was translated as "procuratore", which is ambiguous because it can also refer to public prosecution.

Another example of a periphrasis (via a hypernym) can be seen below, where the *blue ribbon panel* mentioned by Diane Lockart (a partner in the legal firm where Alicia works) is generalised as "commissione di esperti": it is a committee of independent experts who are appointed to investigate a controversy (in our episode, a police shooting) and there is no equivalent in Italian.

DIANE	I just got a call asking me to sit on a <u>blue ribbon panel,</u> and, uh, as you can see, I'm, uh, fairly busy. It's a routine civilian review of an IPRA, Independent Police Review Authority. It's a police shooting. They asked for a replacement, and I suggested you.	Mi hanno appena chiesto di partecipare a una <u>commissione di esperti</u> e… come vedi, ho piuttosto da fare. Si tratta di una revisione senza complicazioni su un caso disciplinare del corpo di polizia: eccesso di difesa. Mi hanno chiesto una sostituta e ho suggerito te.

Example 6
S3 E19.

Moving on to the third most frequent strategy, formal equivalence, it must be noted that it may result in the creation of new meanings for existing TL words. An example is the literal translation of the term *motion*, translated as "mozione" six times (and only twice as "istanza", the nearest equivalent in the Italian system). This has become the standard translation of the term in legal dramas and is therefore familiar to Italian viewers, who are probably unaware that the Italian word "mozione" comes from parliamentary terminology and is not used in court. Clearly, this calque was motivated by lip-synch requirements. The same strategy was applied to the translation of

Lingue e Linguaggi

the appellative *Your Honor*, which over the years has created the expression "Vostro Onore" (see Section 2).

| MR HARPER | Uh, Your Honor, we're asking for a delay of eight hours. Our lead attorney was caught unaware by this <u>emergency motion</u>. | Ah, Vostro Onore, noi chiediamo un rinvio di otto ore. Il nostro avvocato non si aspettava questa … <u>mozione d'urgenza</u>. |

Example 7
S1 E17.

A much less frequent strategy was the invention of a neologism (eight cases). In American law firms, equity partners are the highest-ranking lawyers who co-own the firm and share the profits. In Italy, lawyers may work as sole proprietors or in association with other lawyers, but there is no exact equivalent of the American term: thus, "socio partecipato" in Example 8 is a neologism.

| DAVID LEE | So, the partners had a change of heart. If you still want to be an <u>equity partner</u>, we want you. | Allora: i soci hanno avuto un ripensamento, se vuoi ancora diventare <u>socio partecipato</u>, sei dei nostri. |

Example 8.
S4 E14.

There were only four cases of omission in the corpus. Example 9 shows that this strategy is useful to shorten the TL translation and ensure isochrony; at the same time, it can be safely adopted when the context makes the meaning of the reference clear. Here, the TL viewers know that the people on the claimant's witness list are being examined, and there is no need to repeat *claimant*:

| MR BRANNON | Your Lordship, given the circumstances, we ask that Miss Cox be removed from the <u>claimant's</u> witness list. | Vostra Eccellenza, date le circostanze chiediamo di escludere la signora Cox dalla lista dei testimoni. |

Example 9
S3 E2.

Loans were very infrequent in the corpus (only two cases). As one of the dialogue adapters pointed out in her interview (DA1), the public broadcaster has the final say on the presence of English words in the dialogue; when it is felt that comprehension may be hampered, an Italian TL solution is found. Here is an example involving an acronym that is probably obscure to SL viewers too: therefore, it is spelt out by lawyer Will Gardner and then

explained by private investigator Kalinda. There is no need to think of a creative solution in Italian, since the translation of Kalinda's line is sufficient to ensure comprehension.

WILL	It's an acronym. <u>PAM. Policy application management</u>.	È un acronimo. <u>P.A.M. Policy Application Management</u>.
KALINDA	It's an off-site group of Life State employees who look for application mistakes, but only after expensive claims were filed.	Topi della Life State che cercavano errori nelle polizze e che venivano utilizzati in caso di richieste di indennizzi ingenti.

Example 10
S1 E17.

Finally, only one case of substitution was found, in which a SL reference was replaced with another one that is more familiar to the TL audience. In the extract below, the term *bond court* was replaced by "udienza per la cauzione", which is actually the translation of *bond hearing*. In the US, a release from pre-trial detention is possible by requesting a bond hearing in court, in which the judge sets a bail amount to be deposited to the court (if the accused cannot afford to pay, a bail agent can post the bond amount for them, for a fee). This mechanism does not exist in the Italian legal system.

ALICIA	Your Honor, we request that you allow Ms Tascioni to be taken to <u>bond court</u> currently in session down the hall.	Chiediamo che autorizzi la signora Tascioni a essere portata <u>all'udienza per la cauzione</u> nell'altra aula.

Example 11
S4 E12.

To conclude the analysis, it is useful to have a look at the translation of fixed formulae, which play such a key role in legal dramas; they include appellatives to address the various parties in a trial, phrases that judges use to open, direct and close proceedings, formulae used by lawyers to interrupt or contradict the other party, and so on. In dubbed legal dramas their translation is usually as literal as possible (formal equivalence) for two main reasons: firstly, there are often lip-synch constraints, as courtroom scenes are usually the key ones in each episode, with frequent close-ups on the faces of lawyers, judges, defendants and victims; secondly, in many cases there is no actual equivalent in Italian, as the legal procedure is different (see Section 2). For example, in American criminal trials viewers always see a jury made up of lay people who issue a verdict, while in Italy lay people sit on a jury only in specific cases (very serious crimes tried in the Corte d'Assise) and the jury also includes judges. The exchange between judge and jury at the end of an

American trial (*Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict?*, followed by the answer) has no equivalent in the Italian system. Similarly, Laudisio (2015, p. 192) notes that in the Italian legal system the seriousness of a murder is not classified by degree as it is in the American system: yet, the translation of *first-degree murder* "[...] will be *omicidio di primo grado* in 100% of the cases, simply because this is the formula which is generally accepted by an Italian [...] audience who is watching a US legal drama".

A similar example in our corpus is *objection/* "obiezione", often accompanied by *Your Honor/* "Vostro Onore", a fabrication of Italian dubbing: in Italian courts, a lawyer would say something along the lines of "voglio sollevare un'eccezione, signor giudice". Of course, the fact that the audience heas a different expression in legal dramas is justified by the setting: viewers know that the story is set in a different country and therefore expect an American lawyer to address the judge using a different phrase. In our corpus the term *objection* was found 28 times and was often accompanied by a specification, as can be seen in Table 6.

SL EXPRESSION	TL EXPRESSION
Objection on ground of relevance.	Obiezioni per motivi di pertinenza.
Objection. It's not within her expertise.	Obiezione, non rientra nelle sue competenze.
Objection, relevance.	Obiezione, irrilevante.
Objection! Badgering the witness.	Obiezione. Tormenta la teste.
Objection, Your Honor. Mr Agos is not on the defense witness list.	Obiezione, il signor Agos non è nella lista dei testimoni della difesa.
Objection, beyond the expertise.	Obiezione, va oltre le sue competenze.
Objection, Your Honor, calls for speculation.	Obiezione, Vostro Onore, sono supposizioni.
Objection, Your Honor. Vague.	Obiezione, Vostro Onore, poco chiaro.
Objection. Counselor is testifying.	Obiezione. L'avvocato sta testimoniando.
Objection, Your Honor. Prejudicial.	Obiezione, pregiudizievole.

Table 6
Occurrences of "objection" and related TL translations in the corpus.

All the above formulae were translated as literally as possible. The judge's decision on an objection, i.e. either *sustained* (i.e. accepted) or *overruled* (denied), was also translated via a collocation common to all courtroom dramas, namely "obiezione accolta" and "obiezione respinta" (see Section 2).

Another typical fixed formula found in the corpus is the oath-taking. It is interesting to note that the Italian translation is literal up to the direct reference to God, which in the TL version always becomes an imperative ("Dica 'lo giuro'"). The religious reference was probably felt to be controversial or a little strange when the TL translation was first devised, so the above version has now become an established stock phrase.

CLERK (voice)	Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, <u>so help you God</u>?	Capitano Gauthier, giura di dire la verità, tutta la verità, nient'altro che la verità? <u>Dica "lo giuro"</u>.

Example 12
S2 E2.

Other examples of fixed formulae found in the corpus include the phrase used by lawyers when they have finished examining a witness or defendant (*no further questions/* "non ho altre domande") and the one used by the jury foreperson at the end of a trial (*we find the defendant guilty-not guilty/* "noi dichiariamo l'imputato colpevole-non colpevole"). Audiovisual translators have very little leeway when dealing with such items, as decades of watching dubbed legal dramas have transformed certain TL expressions into standardised translations typical of the genre.

5. Conclusions

The analysis conducted on our corpus has highlighted a few interesting patterns. Firstly (and predictably), the majority of legal references were related to the US legal system and culture, with a few references to a third culture (the United Kingdom) and a few transnational references that were related to specific storylines. As the US and Italy have very different legal traditions, this posed significant challenges to the translators and dubbing adapters; however, the long tradition of broadcasting American legal films and TV series in Italy facilitated their task, to an extent, thanks to the existence of a few standardised translations for frequent SL terms and fixed legal formulae.

The most frequently employed translation strategies were the use of a functional equivalent, followed by a descriptive translation (periphrasis) and the use of a formal equivalent (a calque); all the other strategies, including neologisms, loans and substitutions, were used very sparingly. This confirms that, overall, the driving principle behind the Italian dubbed version is domestication in order to facilitate comprehension for the TL audience and (hopefully) ensure maximum enjoyment. However, there was also a significant presence of calques (formal equivalence), which have a foreignising effect and remind the audience of the origin of the series. This was confirmed in the interviews: DA2 explained that the overarching goal is always to ensure plot comprehension, whilst at the same time staying true to the spirit of the original series. However, given the cultural differences between the US and Italy and the mismatch between the legal systems of the two countries, it may be necessary to create a neologism to transpose certain

SL legal terms, thus making up a TL term that sounds legally plausible to the Italian audience.

The analysis has shown that the TL dubbed version of *The Good Wife* contributes to the Italian audience's familiarisation with American legal culture. However, the extent to which dubbed products actually allow access to the US legal system needs to be investigated much more thoroughly via focused reception studies. Indeed, the present study was entirely based on an analysis of the end-product, but did not include any evaluation of audience reception. During the collection of the legal corpus for *DubTalk*, a small-scale pilot study (Sandrelli 2015) was carried out on 46 university students who were shown 4 sequences from the Italian dubbed version of *The Good Wife*; they were required to rate their comprehension of each clip and to explain a number of culture-specific items, including some legal references. The study found that the students frequently overestimated their comprehension of the scenes and that several US legal references were, in fact, misunderstood. This seems to indicate that larger, more robust studies of this kind are required on a much wider cross-section of the TL audience to investigate to what extent miscomprehension of culture-specific items can be caused by TL translation choices. Such studies would contribute to identifying critical issues in translation and, hopefully, to improving translation practices, thus ensuring that dubbed legal dramas provide not only entertainment but also better awareness of the source culture.

Bionote: Annalisa Sandrelli is a Lecturer in English in the Faculty of Interpreting and Translation at UNINT and taught at the universities of Hull, Bologna at Forlì and Trieste. She teaches Dialogue Interpreting and Interlingual Respeaking on the MA in Interpreting and Translation; Subtitling and Audiodescription on the MA in Audiovisual and Multimedia Translation and Adaptation for Subtitling and Dubbing. Her research interests include Computer Assisted Interpreter Training (CAIT), corpus-based Interpreting Studies, Audiovisual Translation, Legal Interpreting/Translation and Legal English. She has participated in several international and national research projects, including three EU-funded projects on legal interpreting and translation (*Building Mutual Trust*, *Qualitas*, *Understanding Justice*) and EPIC (*European Parliament Interpreting Corpus*). She coordinated the *DubTalk* and *TVTalk* projects on dubbing and subtitling and coordinates the English unit of the *Eurolect Observatory*. She is International Co-investigator on the ESRC-funded *SMART* project and is also coordinating the *¡Sub! Localisation workflows that work* project (UNINT-Roehampton).

Author's address: Annalisa.Sandrelli@unint.eu

Lingue e Linguaggi

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