John Ferri

ITAL 1078

Fulbright Seminar in Audiovisual Translation

Dottoressa Di Giovanni

LA SQUADRA: PRIMA PUNTATA

Translation for Subtitling

Minutes Covered: 03:07 to 08:07

Link to YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnQZ5saCC-g&t=491s>

COMMENTARY:

The first episode of the first season of the well-known Italian police show, *La squadra,* is an interesting text to work with for translation and subtitling. As an action-focused show, there is a significant amount of fast dialogue and some minor use of typical law enforcement vocabulary and phrasing. This vocabulary and phrasing include words such as ‘agents’ and ‘(crime) scene,’ and phrases such as ‘proceed with caution’ and ‘nothing to see here.’ The show also makes an effort to build a believable atmosphere, showing a lively police station, featuring an elderly resident who is persistent about wanting to speak with the Deputy Chief of Police, and the family dining table of one of the police officers. These settings, and the verbal and non-verbal interactions that take place there between the individuals present in those scenes, help increase the amount and improve the quality of character development.

For the purpose of translation and subtitling work, the first episode of *La squadra* presents both an interesting opportunity and a welcome challenge. While there is little or no dialect used in this episode, the show does take place in Naples and some characters use a noticeable Neapolitan accent. This means that at times, a non-native speaker of Italian may need to pause, slow down, and return to certain sections of the episode in order to fully understand and capture the messages that the characters convey.

As with much translation work, especially for subtitling, it was necessary at a number of points throughout the episode to shorten and/or rephrase certain pieces of dialogue. Otherwise, the subtitles would become too long and potentially confusing at times, which would force a watcher of the show to read lengthy passages. A spectator who is forced to read lengthy passages in the subtitles would be unable to focus on watching the show itself and may miss some of the messages that the characters are communicating if he or she is unable to pause and rewind the video. While pausing may be an option for YouTube or other online digital videos, being required to pause periodically would be an uncomfortable annoyance, and such a need for pausing would present a major problem for television broadcasts, a format that makes pausing impossible.

As discussed in class, in assigned readings, and in other relevant books providing instructions on proper writing with which I have engaged, subtitling, and translation overall, often requires a straightforward and almost journalistic or telegraphic style of writing. As confirmed by translation practitioner and scholar Umberto Eco, the key points and main arguments of each piece must be clearly conveyed, but frequently, an effective translator must strike a balance between accurately and precisely communicating key messages from the original source text and re-writing the text in such a way that it comes across as fluid, fluent, easy to understand, and legible to a native speaker of the target translation language. As confirmed by Dr. Di Giovanni, Professor Lukasz Bogucki, and Umberto Eco, an effective translation must be written with an awareness of its context and the nature of its readership or viewership. Therefore, it must make use of the appropriate linguistic registers, sentence constructions, and vocabulary, so as to neither be too formal nor too colloquial or informal for the specific situation of the translation in question.

Throughout this translation and subtitling project, there are examples of choices that I made to ensure that the translation writing would be context-appropriate, fluid, fluent, easy to read without distracting from the show itself, and, above all else, clear and accurate. There were a number of times when I significantly shortened or rewrote pieces of dialogue in order to make them better fit a concise subtitle. During the family dining table scene, I performed a significant amount of this work of shortening and rewriting dialogue for subtitles.

For example, there is a point at approximately the 03:42 to 03:43 minutes mark when the police officer father’s phone rings, presumably with a call from someone at his workplace who would be offering or demanding a work assignment. His wife, the children’s mother, then says, approximately, “Do you really need to take that call? I thought that today was your day off!” However, this is said quickly, and it receives a quick response from the police officer husband and father. Therefore, the subtitle must conform to the tight time limits while remaining easy to read and understand. As a result, I chose to shorten this piece of dialogue significantly, so that the subtitle would only read “But it’s your day off!” I felt that this short message was clear enough and faithful enough to the original speech, because it communicates the frustration of the wife and mother. The rest of the context is provided visually and through sound, as it is clear that the man is hearing his ring-tone, receiving an incoming phone call, and reaching into his pocket to pick up the phone and respond to the call.

It becomes clear later in the scene, soon after that subtitle, as the man is taking the call, that this call is about a serious matter. By the end of the call, when he asks about the number of agents present at the crime scene and says to his family that there has been another robbery to which he must respond, viewers will have confirmation that he is a police officer leaving to perform his duty.

Another example of choices that I made for translation and subtitling is the subtitle “I’ll get a tardy slip. I can make an excuse,” at approximately the 03:36-03:39 minutes mark. This is a more concise and legible version of my original translation, which was “I will get them a pass for being late. If necessary, I can also make an excuse.” The key message is that the police office father will be taking his children to school at a point when they are likely to arrive slightly late, or ‘tardy’ in colloquial vocabulary, so he will take responsibility for acquiring a ‘tardy slip.’ ‘Tardy slip’ is a colloquial expression for a physical note or pass excusing a student’s late arrival. The father will obtain the note by providing a valid excuse as a reason for the tardiness, and presumably he would be communicating this information to the school’s main office.

Two other examples of concise subtitling are the subtitles “Como Sant’Andrea: a robbery at Via Vanella” at approximately the the 04:28-04:31 minutes mark, which is an abbreviated yet clear version of the original translation, “Como Sant’Andrea: There is a robbery in progress at the Via Vanella market,” and “Como Sant’Andrea 10, the robbers left in a red Fiat Uno” at approximately the 07:08 to 07:11 minutes mark, which is a slightly more concise version of the original translation “Como Sant’Andrea 10, the robbers are fleeing in a red Fiat Uno.” In the spoken dialogue, that message actually continues almost unbroken into the message contained in the next subtitle, when the police officer states that there is a badly injured civilian at the crime scene and he therefore requests an ambulance to come immediately.

References:

Bogucki, Lukasz. “The Constraint of Relevance in Subtitling.” Jostrans.org, The Journal of Specialized Translation, www.jostrans.org/issue01/art\_bogucki\_en.php.

Di Giovanni, Elena. “The Layers of Subtitling.” *Tandfonline.com*, Taylor and Francis Online, Taylor and Francis Group, Informa UK, 29 Apr. 2016, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311983.2016.1151193.

Eco, Umberto. “Saying Almost the Same Thing: Experiences in Translation.” University of Toronto Press, 2000.

TRANSLATION:

0,0:03:07.00,0:03:09.00 Hold on.

0,0:03:09.00,0:03:11.90 Which color do you like best?

0,0:03:12.00,0:03:14.35 I think I’d look good with red hair.

0,0:03:14.50,0:03:16.35 I was referring to myself, actually.

0,0:03:16.50,0:03:18.50 - Obviously! You’re too young!

0,0:03:18.50,0:03:21.94 You’re only 13. You shouldn't dye your hair.

0,0:03:21.95,0:03:26.10 - Hey! You’re the kid! – There's nothing wrong with being a kid.

0,0:03:26.10,0:03:29.10 Anyways, Carletto, Bianca is grown now.

0,0:03:29.10,0:03:32.00 Bianca, adults don’t stick their tongues out.

0,0:03:32.00,0:03:34.00 So, should I drive them to school today?

0,0:03:34.05,0:03:36.00 Yes, but you need to hurry. You’re late.

0,0:03:36.00,0:03:39.00 - I’ll get a tardy slip. I can make an excuse.

0,0:03:42.40,0:03:43.76 But it's your day off!

0,0:03:44.55,0:03:46.70 I should’ve turned it off.

0,0:03:47.00,0:03:53.00 Dad, which color do you like? - What? - Hair dyes.

0,0:03:52.97,0:03:56.50 -– What, she’s dying her hair? – No, they’re for me!

0,0:03:56.60,0:04:00.00 You’re beautiful as you are. I like blonde hair.

0,0:04:07.00,0:04:08.00 Yes?

0,0:04:10.35,0:04:11.35 - Yes.

0,0:04:13.80,0:04:16.05 How many agents are on the scene?

0,0:04:17.20,0:04:19.30 Got it. I’m heading over.

0,0:04:20.50,0:04:23.00 Another robbery.

0,0:04:21.95,0:04:23.50 – But Dad!

0,0:04:28.80,0:04:31.50 Como Sant’Andrea: a robbery at Via Vanella.

0,0:04:33.00,0:04:35.35 - Sant’Andrea 6, we’re approaching the scene.

0,0:04:35.80,0:04:38.36 Sant’Andrea 7. We got an anonymous tip.

0,0:04:38.38,0:04:40.60 The robbers don’t know they’ve been spotted.

0,0:04:40.62,0:04:43.00 Proceed with caution. We need to hang up.

0,0:04:44.02,0:04:47.02 Careful! At this time of day, it’s full of people.

0,0:04:47.50,0:04:49.90 I need to talk to whoever’s in charge here!

0,0:04:49.91,0:04:51.81 The Deputy Chief is unavailable.

0,0:04:51.82,0:04:55.07 But I need to talk to him!

0,0:05:04.00,0:05:06.00 I need all the available agents. Fast!

0,0:05:06.75,0:05:08.75 - Nannuzzo! – I need to speak with you!

0,0:05:09.45,0:05:11.45 Some other time, Ms. Angelini.

0,0:05:11.47,0:05:13.47 She’s always here!

0,0:05:13.49,0:05:15.49 - Let’s go!

0,0:05:20.35,0:05:21.35 Status, Calo’?

0,0:05:21.36,0:05:24.00 We have two cars heading there as we speak.

0,0:05:28.35,0:05:31.00 Close off the access at Via di Puglia.

0,0:05:36.48,0:05:38.48 Catch them by the highway!

0,0:05:38.49,0:05:40.40 Let’s go, Paolo! Go!

0,0:05:40.45,0:05:42.72 We’re coming from the other side.

0,0:05:45.75,0:05:47.75 – Listen up, you pieces of shit!

0,0:05:47.77,0:05:49.77 Come on! – Stay down!

0,0:05:51.81,0:05:53.81 We gotta go now!

0,0:06:07.45,0:06:08.45 Hold up!

0,0:06:14.70,0:06:15.50 – Is that them?

0,0:06:15.51,0:06:17.57 – Yes. Move in.

0,0:06:17.75,0:06:20.90 – Giacomo. Giacomo!

0,0:06:23.40,0:06:25.40 They saw us. Go! Go!

0,0:06:40.00,0:06:42.00 Get back! Behind the car!

0,0:06:42.50,0:06:43.50 - Go!

0,0:06:49.50,0:06:51.50 -Go, go, go!

0,0:06:55.00,0:06:56.00 Damn it!

0,0:07:03.00,0:07:05.00 Laura, find the boy.

0,0:07:08.00,0:07:11.00 Como Sant’Andrea 10, the robbers left in a red Fiat Uno.

0,0:07:11.10,0:07:15.61 One badly injured civilian. We need an ambulance. Now!

0,0:07:20.60,0:07:22.60 Ma’am, don’t move, please.

0,0:07:23.60,0:07:26.60 An ambulance is on the way.

0,0:07:27.70,0:07:29.70 Move away! Nothing to see here!

0,0:07:31.00,0:07:32.70 - Patrizio!

0,0:07:33.00,0:07:36.70 We found your son. He’s OK.

0,0:08:04.00,0:08:07.00 Damn it! Go, go, go!