

Translating the Discourse Marker Combination *okay then* from English into Italian: Evidence from the American TV Series *Fargo*

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Abstract

This article analyses the occurrences of the discourse marker combination *okay then* and their respective interactional functions as found in the first three seasons available to date of the award-winning American TV series *Fargo*, which premiered in 2014 and is still ongoing. In addition, the translation strategies adopted to render the various functions of *okay then* in the Italian dubbed version are commented on in order to verify the extent to which they reflect the original. As far as the methodology is concerned, all instances of *okay then* were initially retrieved by means of a corpus-based analysis of the script; subsequently, each scene containing the discourse marker combination considered was viewed in the original version so as to detect both co-textual and contextual cues which could explain its functions; finally, the selected scenes were watched in the dubbed version with a view to determining how *okay then* was translated into Italian. Given the fundamental role played by discourse markers and, as a consequence, by discourse marker combinations in spoken communication, the examination of their use in a specific audiovisual genre, such as that of TV series, appeared worthwhile. It is hoped that the analysis carried out could also show how the study of discourse marker combinations in audiovisual translation might be relevant for pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics and linguistics in general.

Key-words: discourse marker combination (DMC), interactional function, formulaicity, audiovisual translation (AVT), translational routine.

1. Introduction

As Fraser (2013: 321) points out, “whereas there has been a great deal of research on individual discourse markers, or groups of them, almost nothing has been done on their combinations”. Moreover, Bazzanella and Morra (2000: 156) maintain that “DMs, though an apparently peripheral phenomenon, constitute a crucial and

stimulating area for translation theory”. In this respect, it is worth considering that, while studies on single discourse markers (DMs) in both audiovisual language (Taylor 2004; Quaglio 2009: 79ff, 94ff; Forchini 2010; Espunya 2012) and audiovisual translation (Chaume 2004; Cuenca 2006; Bruti and Pavesi 2008; Baños-Piñero and Chaume 2009; Romero Fresco 2009; Freddi 2011; González 2012; Freddi and Malagori 2014) do exist, to the author’s knowledge, until now there has been no linguistic investigation focusing specifically on discourse marker combinations (DMCs) in original and dubbed audiovisual dialogues.

Inspired by the above claims, this article aims to analyse the various choices made in audiovisual translation (AVT) practice when rendering the English DMC *okay then* and its associated functions in the Italian dubbed version of the TV series *Fargo*. Dubbing was the preferred translation technique to discuss because it recreates most scrupulously the interactional patterns of the original dialogues (Pérez González 2009: 18), thus capturing their essence and accurately reflecting their goals.

Section 2 introduces the notion of DMCs and describes them by elaborating on their nomenclature, features and multiplicity of functions in speech. Section 3 is specifically devoted to the contextualisation of the TV series *Fargo* and outlines its eccentric use of language; indeed, by virtue of its linguistic idiosyncrasies and its success among critics – as attested by numerous accolades, including *Golden Globe Awards* and *Emmy Awards* – the choice of *Fargo* as the source of this investigation seemed apt. In Section 4, attention is paid to the methodology adopted for the retrieval of *okay then* in the English original version (OV) of the TV series and the identification of the translation equivalents present in the Italian dubbed version (DV). Section 5 addresses quantitative aspects by comparing *Fargo*’s data with the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (Davies 2008-2020): such comparison is meant to prove that *okay then* is much more frequently employed in the TV series *Fargo* than in other American-made audiovisual products and spoken American English. Intended to justify how *okay then* deserves full DMC membership, Section 6 focuses on how both contextual and contextual surroundings contribute to determining the various interactional functions performed by *okay then* in the OV. In Section 7, the full spectrum of translation choices made in the DV is

covered and discussed, hence assessing whether the Italian dubbing replicates the various functions of *okay then* and determining to what extent it reflects the original.

As shown by previous studies (Pavesi, Formentelli, Ghia 2014: 7-8; Guillot and Pavesi 2019: 497-499), the investigation of linguistic phenomena present in AVT can have implications for both pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics. Consequently, the analysis of the DMC *okay then* across English and Italian could shed light on the pragmatic differences between the two languages under scrutiny.

2. Discourse marker combinations: definition and classification

Beside “combinations” (Fraser 2013: 318; Furkó 2020: 54), co-occurrences of DMs have also been labelled as “sequencing” (Koops and Lohmann 2013: 110) and “patterning” (Tagliamonte 2016: 106). Despite the diverse labels employed to denote DMCs, there seems to be general agreement among scholars on the fact that they should comply, at least operationally, with the following parameters, devised by Koops and Lohmann (2013: 112-114):

- i) DMCs are non-obligatory from a syntactic perspective, which implies that, if the entire DMC or just one DM within the DMC is omitted, the utterance where they appear is still to be considered well-formed;
- ii) the DMs belonging to a DMC must be prosodically integrated, which attests to the fact that they are meant to be uttered jointly;
- iii) a DMC tends to appear in utterance-initial position.

From a functional-syntactic perspective, DMCs are divided into “chains” and “clusters” (Bazzanella 2006: 455; Furkó 2020: 230): a chain is a sequence of DMs where each of them carries out the same task, most likely working as a filler; a cluster is a combination in which each DM performs a different function.

Finally, the ability of single DMs to display multiple functions – often simultaneously – seems to be an inherent property also reflected in DMCs (Pinto and Vigil 2020: 2). In Andersen’s (2001: 64) words, “[m]arkers are not only multifunctional in the sense that they can

serve different pragmatic functions in different contexts, but they are also multifunctional by virtue of displaying several pragmatic features at the same time". In this regard, according to Bazzanella (2006: 456), attention must be paid to both the "paradigmatic" and the "syntagmatic" aspects: the former concept refers to the ability of a single DM to carry out distinct functions in different contexts; the latter implies that various functions are performed by the same DM across a given text.

3. Source of data: the TV series *Fargo*

Despite the idiosyncratic but equally conscious repetition of *okay then* throughout the series, by which even the least attentive audience would be struck, *Fargo* may be seen as a fictional representation of reality, namely a multimodal text carefully constructed in order to simulate spontaneous conversation. In addition, the choice of *Fargo* as the source of this linguistic enquiry is motivated by the fact that, at first sight, *okay then* seems to serve a multiplicity of functions within the series' dialogues.

Broadcast by the American pay television channel FX, the TV series *Fargo* comprises three seasons (2014, 2015, 2017) of 10 episodes per season, hence 30 episodes overall; each episode lasts about 50 minutes for a total viewing time of approximately 25 hours. Mostly written and directed by Noah Hawley and produced by Joel and Ethan Coen, it is a black comedy/crime drama/*noir* which follows an anthology format. Therefore, although there is a minor temporal overlap, each season is set in a separate time interval, narrates an independent story and introduces new characters. To a certain extent, all seasons are influenced by or contain references to various films by the Coen brothers, first and foremost the homonymous *Fargo*, originally released in 1996¹. Indeed, as attested by Grossman (2017: 194, 199), "[p]urporting to be an American-Norwegian melting pot, [...] [t]he FX *Fargo* series reimagines not just the dialogue and dialect of *Fargo* but also, within wintry Minnesota and North and South Dakotan landscapes, the tone and characters of the film".

¹ However, no occurrence of *okay then* was found in the script of the movie *Fargo*, a fact which makes it a peculiarity of the TV series.

The first season takes place in 2006 between the towns of Bemidji (MN) and Duluth (MN). A prequel to the events depicted in the first season, the second season is set in 1979 in Luverne (MN), Fargo (ND) and Sioux Falls (SD). The plot of the third season mostly unfolds between 2010 and 2011 in the towns of St. Cloud (MN), Eden Valley (MN) and Eden Prairie (MN). The fourth season, originally scheduled to debut on April 19th, 2020, was postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and only premiered on September 27th, 2020; this season, which is still underway, will consist of 11 episodes set in 1950 in Kansas City (MO).

In order to interpret the linguistic nuances of the TV series, where language becomes almost an independent protagonist in itself, the understanding of the temporal and geographical setting is paramount: the former confirms that the audience is exposed to contemporary American English, contained in a time span that ranges from the late 1970s to the early 2010s; the latter implies that a particular diatopic variety of spoken American English, namely Minnesotan accent, softly mocked and stereotyped, is exploited in the dialogues. This is further confirmed by Hanks (2014: 100), who argues that the diegesis of both the movie and the TV series is characterised by “an expletive-ridden noir narrative of spiralling violence pitched against a background of anachronistic decency, spoken in the charmingly odd Minnesota dialect, a quasi-Scandinavian lilt punctuated with gollys and you-betchas, and set in a blank, icebound landscape”.

4. Methodology: detecting the DMC *okay then*

The methodology adopted to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from the TV series *Fargo* is tripartite: it begins with a corpus-based analysis of the English OV script², it proceeds through the examination of the played dialogues and it concludes with the study of the Italian DV. The corpus-based investigation of the original script is intended to highlight all the occurrences of *okay then*, select only DMC instances and identify the scenes where they appear; thanks to the contextual cues provided by watching the

² The full script was freely available online at *Springfield! Springfield!* until early 2020 – unfortunately, the website is now offline.

relevant scenes, the functions performed by *okay then* in English are established; listening to the dubbed dialogues is expected to shed light on the translation equivalents employed in Italian.

First of all, the scripts of the first three seasons were turned into plain text and all instances of *okay then* were retrieved³. Regardless of the script's orthographic output, where *okay* and *then* are separated by a comma in most cases, the form *okay then*, without the comma, is used throughout this article. Even though the comma in grammatical punctuation typically establishes intonation-group boundaries (Baron 2001: 58), its presence between *okay* and *then* in the OV script does not jeopardise prosodic integration. Indeed, by listening to the OV dialogues, it is apparent that the comma does not mark a pause in spoken intonation, at least when *okay* and *then* blend into one DMC.

The OV corpus, totalling 113,248 words, includes 40 hits of *okay then* in its different punctuation and spelling variants, i.e., with or without a comma between *okay* and *then* and with or without capitalisation of the initial grapheme – <O> vs. <o>: 35 with comma and 5 without comma⁴. However, only 35 occurrences were considered for analysis – more precisely, 6 in season 1, 20 in season 2 and 9 in season 3. In fact, five occurrences of *okay then* were excluded for the following reasons: due to a flashback in the plot, the three instances uttered at minutes 27:58, 27:59 and 28:00 of episode 2x01 are repeated within the same episode, at minutes 40:31, 40:32 and 40:33 respectively⁵; two are not instances of DMC use, as shown in examples 1 and 2.

³ Checking the OV script against the actual dialogues revealed that the two were very close one to the other.

⁴ In the OV script *okay* is never spelled as *O.K.* or *OK*.

⁵ All examples reported in the article are arranged as follows: the first line in each example specifies the season and episode number, including its title in both English and Italian, from which the scene (or scene extract) is taken; the second line adds key contextual cues, useful in interpreting the functions of *okay then*, whose occurrences are always in bold type; the DVD time code, i.e., the exact moment within the OV episode in which *okay then* is audible, is specified in the first column, next to each occurrence; the second column indicates the name of the characters involved in the interaction; the third and the fourth columns respectively report the English OV dialogues and the Italian DV dialogues.

1)

1X04

Eating the Blame – Le piaghe della Bibbia

On a frozen pond

Lester Nygaard *I didn't kill him. Non l'ho ucciso.*

Mr. Numbers *Yes, you did. Sì, sei stato tu.*

Lester Nygaard *No, I didn't. Non è vero.*

36:30

Mr. Numbers ***Okay, then*** *who was it?* ***Okay, allora*** *chi è stato?*

Lester Nygaard *The man. È stato quell'uomo.*

In example 1, *okay* and *then* do not belong to the same intonation phrase; in addition, the lexical content of *then*, meaning 'so', remains intact.

2)

2X10

Palindrome – Palindromo

At State trooper
Lou Solverson's
house

State trooper *Look who I found!* *Guardate chi c'è!*

Molly Solverson *Poppa!* *Nonno!*

	Betsy Solverson	<i>Careful, care-ful now. Give your poppa some room.</i>	<i>Piano, piano adesso. Non stringere troppo il nonno, okay?</i>
	Sheriff Larsson	Hank <i>No, no. This is just the medicine I need.</i>	<i>No, no, no. Questa è la medicina che mi serve.</i>
41:40	Betsy Solverson	<i>Well, you okay, then? You need to lie down?</i>	<i>Beh, stai bene allora? Ti vuoi sdraiare?</i>
	State trooper Lou Solverson	<i>Nah. No.</i>	<i>No.</i>

In example 2, *okay* and *then* are not prosodically integrated; moreover, *okay*, meaning ‘fine’, is to be interpreted literally.

Conversely, as for the Italian DV, manual transcription of all the dialogue extracts containing instances of the DMC under analysis was necessary. The corpus-based methodology proved useful in quantifying the number of occurrences of *okay then* in the OV and also made their retrieval more feasible in the DV; in other words, once a specific occurrence of the DMC was detected in the OV corpus, it was then much less time consuming to select the exact time code in the DVD sets or the streamed versions⁶.

From a qualitative perspective, the relevant scenes including *okay then* were watched in both the OV and the DV. First of all, the viewing of each scene was of paramount importance for determining whether *okay* and *then* belong to the same intonation phrase, a decisive factor in establishing their role as a proper DMC (see, by contrast, examples 1 and 2). The viewing process also proved beneficial to contextualising all occurrences of *okay then* and interpreting their attendant functions. On this matter, “pragmatic

⁶ The DVD sets were exploited only as far as the English OV is concerned; as for the Italian DV, the three complete seasons have been available on Amazon-owned Prime Video Italia since September 9th, 2020.

compositionality” (Bazzanella & Morra 2000: 156), defined by Bazzanella (2006: 458) as “the co-occurrence of cotextually (textual, paralinguistic, and gestural) and contextually (sociolinguistic, pragmatic, emotive) relevant parameters”, was taken into account. For instance, with special reference to the sociolinguistic variable of sex, there is a rather equal distribution of *okay then* between men and women in the series: male characters use it 19 times out of 35, i.e., 54%, whereas female characters employ it 16 times, i.e., 46%.

5. Overuse of *okay then* in the TV series *Fargo*

Since *Fargo* is an American production, it seemed sensible to compare the quantitative data extracted from the OV script of the TV series with the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) in order to demonstrate the strong presence of the DMC *okay then* in the series itself. Comprising data collected from 1990 to 2019, the COCA contains more than one billion words, exactly 1,002,889,754, and is proportionally divided into eight sub-corpora by genre, i.e., spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic, web (general), web (blogs) and TV/movies. As both DMs and DMCs are typical of speech, *okay then* was searched for only in the TV/movies sub-corpus, including 129,293,467 words, and the spoken sub-corpus, comprising 127,396,932 words.

All spelling and punctuation variants were taken into account, i.e., *okay then*, *okay, then*, *OK then*, *OK, then*, *O.K. then* and *O.K., then*; when *Then* appeared with capital initial <T> and was preceded by a full stop, it was not considered for analysis as the strong pause marked by the punctuation mark signals that *okay* and *then* belong to two separate intonation phrases. Additionally, in order to make the two sets of data comparable, both DMC and non-DMC instances of *okay then* were considered as it would not have been feasible to manually check the several instances of *okay then* retrieved from the TV/movies sub-corpus of the COCA. Although frequency counts processed in this way might be slightly biased, the fact that *okay* and *then* are either separated by a space or a comma would ensure that, in the majority of cases, they belong to the same intonation phrase and are therefore likely to be operating together as a DMC. In fact, similarly to what has been observed in *Fargo*’s OV script (see Section 4), the comma itself often seems to be a mere

transcriptional convention which does not necessarily mark a pause in actual speech.

As regards the OV script, in order to achieve methodological coherence, 37 occurrences of *okay then* instead of 35 were counted, namely all 40 occurrences, including both DMC and non-DMC uses, from which the three repetitions were subtracted (see Section 4). Results are displayed in Table 1 below: the first column lists all spelling and punctuation variants of the DMC under scrutiny; the second, third and fourth columns include both raw data (hits) and frequencies per million words (pmw) respectively in the *COCA* TV/movies sub-corpus, the *COCA* spoken sub-corpus and *Fargo*'s OV corpus.

TABLE 1

Frequency comparison of *okay then* in the *COCA* and the TV series *Fargo*

variants (spelling and punctuation)	<i>COCA</i> (TV/movies) 129,293,467 words		<i>COCA</i> (spoken) 127,396,932 words		<i>Fargo</i> (series 1-3) 113,248 words	
	hits (raw)	frequency (pmw)	hits (raw)	frequency (pmw)	hits (raw)	frequency (pmw)
<i>okay then</i>	271	2.10	4	0.03	5	44.15
<i>okay, then</i>	1,255	9.71	42	0.33	32	282.56
<i>OK then</i>	56	0.43	19	0.15	0	
<i>OK, then</i>	272	2.10	117	0.92	0	
<i>O.K. then</i>	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>O.K., then</i>	6	0.05	0	0	0	
total	1,860	14.39	182	1.43	37	326.71

By considering normalised frequencies, *okay then* is more than two hundred times more frequent in *Fargo* than in the *COCA* spoken sub-corpus, which includes transcripts of unscripted conversation from different TV and radio programs; however, the DMC also recurs more than twenty times more often than in the *COCA* TV/movies sub-corpus, which comprises transcripts of TV speeches, movie scripts and subtitles⁷. Therefore, these

⁷ However, such discrepancy may be somewhat distorted since pragmatic elements

figures attest to the indisputable overuse of *okay then* in the TV series *Fargo*. Furthermore, *COCA* data also reveal that *okay then* is about ten times more frequent in the television and cinematic genre compared to spoken American English in general, thus not only showing that AV dialogues tend to mimic spontaneous conversation (Freddi and Malagori 2014: 192; Pavesi 2018: 12-13) but also implying that they exaggerate some features of actual spoken language.

6. Status and functions of *okay then* in the English OV

Although *okay* and *then* can obviously stand alone as independent DMs, the sequence *okay then* in *Fargo*'s script seems to satisfy most if not all the necessary prerequisites in order to be classified as a fully-fledged two-word DMC:

- i) in 20 cases out of 35, i.e., 57%, *okay then* is non-obligatory from a syntactic and semantic viewpoint; however, in as many as 15 cases, i.e., 43%, the DMC is the only element uttered by the speaker and, as a consequence, cannot be considered optional;
- ii) within the DMC, the DMs *okay* and *then* are always prosodically integrated;
- iii) except for three cases out of 35, i.e., 9%, in which *okay then* is placed in utterance-final position, in 32 cases, i.e., 91%, the DMC appears at the beginning of the utterance;
- iv) the DMC consists of a non-occasional and systematically ordered sequence of DMs – their inversion, i.e., *then okay*, not being present in the OV script;
- v) the DMs appearing in the DMC behave as a chain when they display one and the same function in a certain context; conversely, DMs are to be interpreted as a cluster when they serve multiple functions either within the same context or across contexts;
- vi) the DMC displays both paradigmatic and syntagmatic functions.

often tend to be eliminated from subtitles. In fact, due to space limitations, a lower use of both DMs and DMCs would be expected therein.

In greater detail, the focus of this analysis is on “interpersonal” (Brinton 1996: 38) or “interactional” (Bazzanella and Morra 2000: 151) functions, which comprise the following⁸: turn-taking, turn-yielding, interrupting, filler, backchannel, attention-getting, confirming attention, phatic, hedge or booster, requesting comprehension, confirming comprehension or requesting clarification, requesting agreement or confirmation, showing agreement or confirmation, showing disagreement.

Considering its paradigmatic aspect (see Section 2), the DMC *okay then* has only one function at a time in 20 cases out of 35, i.e., 57%: it is used four times for confirming comprehension, twice for showing agreement, once as an attention-getting device, and once for confirming attention. In the remaining eight cases in which *okay then* is monofunctional, it operates as a phatic device which represents a farewell or a response to a farewell – a demonstration of how “contagious verbal tics replace genuine human communication”, rendering “the vernacular of *Fargo* [...] a kind of speech that [...] ends up mocking and erasing itself” (Brottman 2003: 86, 88)⁹.

As for its syntagmatic aspect (see Section 2), *okay then* displays more than one function simultaneously in 15 instances, i.e., 43%: it is employed four times for confirming comprehension and showing agreement, twice as a turn-taking and an attention-getting device, twice as a turn-taker and for confirming comprehension, twice for confirming comprehension and (antiphrastically) showing disagreement, once for interrupting and confirming comprehension, once as a backchannel and for confirming comprehension, and once as a filler and a backchannel. In the remaining two cases, *okay then* is exploited both as a stand-alone filler and for confirming comprehension, as illustrated in examples 3 and 4.

⁸ The inventory of functions presented is slightly simplified and re-elaborated in form, though not in substance, if compared to Bazzanella’s (2006: 457) list.

⁹ Although Brottman’s (2003) observations are made with reference to the movie *Fargo*, they are undoubtedly extendable also to the TV series (see Section 3).

5)

2x01 *Waiting for Dutch – Aspettando Dutch*

At Bud's Meats
(butcher's)

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 27:35 | Ed Blumquist | <i>Okay, then.</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> |
| 27:36 | Bud Jongerlen,
butcher | <i>Okay, then.</i> (2 sec.)
<i>Noreen?</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> (2
sec.) <i>Noreen?</i> |
| | Noreen Vanderslice,
cashier | <i>Mhm.</i> | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| | Bud Jongerlen,
butcher | <i>Ed's leaving.</i> | <i>Ed se ne va.</i> |
| 27:43 | Noreen Vanderslice,
cashier | <i>Okay, then.</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> |
| | Bud Jongerlen,
butcher | <i>Oh, hey, you may as
well take these with
you. Boolie Hen-
dricks paid but never
picked them up.</i> | <i>Oh, hey, tanto vale
che le prenda tu.
Boolie Hendricks le
ha pagate ma non le
ha mai prese.</i> |
| | Ed Blumquist | <i>Chops.</i> | <i>Braciole.</i> |
| | Bud Jongerlen,
butcher | <i>Mhm, wasted meat's
a crime. Or it should
be.</i> | <i>Mhm, sprecare la
carne è un crimine.
O dovrebbe esserlo.</i> |
| 27:58 | Ed Blumquist | <i>Okay, then.</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> |
| 27:59 | Bud Jongerlen,
butcher | <i>Okay, then.</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> |
| 28:00 | Noreen Vanderslice,
cashier | <i>Okay, then.</i> | <i>Okay, allora.</i> |
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At 27:35 *okay then* works only as an attention-getting device; at 27:36 it is used for confirming attention; at 27:43 it is employed both as a backchannel and for confirming comprehension; at 27:58 it shows agreement on the part of the interlocutor; at 27:59 and 28:00 it operates phatically by rendering a farewell.

7. Translations of *okay then* in the Italian DV

The analysis of the translation practices followed in order to render the DMC instances of *okay then* in the Italian dubbing of *Fargo* is aimed at verifying “if audiovisual translations keep or do not keep the source text discourse markers, and maintain the semantic and pragmatic values of the original text” (Chaume 2004: 854). The parameters adopted to weigh whether the DV adheres to or diverges from the pragmatic nuances of *okay then* present in the OV are based on Freddi and Malagori’s (2014: 205), which comprise “dictionary equivalent”, that is the word-for-word literal translation of a lemma in a particular sense as provided in bilingual dictionaries, “pragmatic equivalent” and “translation by omission”. Creative rewordings are also considered.

Although the transcriptions of the DV dialogues contained in the examples mirror the orthographic practices followed in the OV script, the Italian translation equivalents of *okay then*, e.g., *okay allora*, *bene allora*, are written without any punctuation mark in the body text. This decision was made because, on acoustic grounds, translation equivalents functioning as DMCs are prosodically integrated also in Italian, thus conforming to the way in which *okay then* itself is rendered throughout this article (see Section 4). On the one hand, this choice is justified by the fact that the DV script is not available; on the other hand, Italian subtitles, which could have aided the transcription process, were in fact of little avail as they diverge considerably from the dubbed dialogues.

7.1. Literal equivalents

In as many as 24 occurrences out of 35, i.e., 69%, *okay then* is literally translated by means of the dictionary equivalent *okay allora* in Italian (see, for instance, examples 3 to 5). This practice allows the DV to preserve the same functions of the DMCs present in the OV;

in other words, the distinctive semantic vagueness with which the multifunctional DMC *okay then* is used in English is rendered by the pragmatic ambiguity of *okay allora* in Italian. In line with Coulmas (1979: 242), who holds that “putting the descriptive meaning of a formula in the garment of another language only very rarely yields an equivalent and well-formed expression of that language”, the literal translation of the DMC is supposedly the most effortless and least time-consuming solution in rendering such vagueness.

Likewise, apropos of the translation of audiovisual products, “[p]ragmatic phenomena are particularly likely to be subject to literal or semi-literal translations because their meaning tends to be both elusive and culturally embedded [...]” (Pavesi 2018: 15). However, although at times it may sound awkward to an Italian audience and it is also unjustified on lip-synching grounds, the apparently unnatural translational routine *okay allora* in the DV seems altogether acceptable. Whether or not it is a conscious translation choice, the reiteration of *okay allora* manages to keep the same formulae characterising the style of the OV. Motivated by various factors, “formulaicity”, which implies the “reliance on recurrent patterns, key words and repetitions”, is “a universal feature of language in audiovisual (AV) dialogue” (Pavesi 2018: 12). As a plausible direct consequence of formulaicity in AV dialogues, translators may indeed resort to “translational routines”, namely “recurrent solutions to translation problems which tend to become overextended” (Pavesi 2008: 94).

Moreover, it is remarkable that *okay allora* is always retained when the DMC works as a farewell (see, for instance, the two occurrences at minutes 27:59 and 28:00 in example 5). This repetitive and literal rendering of *okay then* makes the paradoxical style of *Fargo*’s language reach its climax even in the DV, as epitomised by the notorious exchange at the butcher’s Bud’s Meats (see example 5).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the translation of *okay then* into *okay allora* only occurs in seasons 2 and 3 – never in season 1, a fact which attests to “translator variability” (Freddi and Malagori 2014: 205) and may be explained by considering the different teams of translators, dialogue writers and dubbing directors assigned to the adaptation of each season. In fact, *Fargo* was adapted for Italian audiences by *Pumais Due* in Rome: the translators were Matilde D’Agostino and Laura Fedeli; the Italian dialogues were written

by Fiamma Izzo and Annunziata Di Somma; the dubbing directors were Stefano Benassi and Francesco Venditti for season 1, Francesco Venditti and Giuppy Izzo for season 2, and Stefano Benassi and Giuppy Izzo for season 3.

The other literal equivalent employed in the DV is *bene allora*, which occurs only twice, i.e., 5.5% (see examples 6 and 7).

6)

1x04 *Eating the Blame – Le piaghe della Bibbia*

Over the phone

Police deputy Molly Solverson	<i>Uh, I'll be there just as soon as I...</i>	<i>Ah, sarò lì appena possibile...</i>
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15:56 Police officer Gus Grimley	<i>Okay, then...</i> <i>I'll tell the Lieutenant to wait for you.</i>	<i>Bene, allora...</i> <i>Dirò al tenente di aspettarti.</i>
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As shown in example 6, *bene allora* works as an interrupting device and also confirms comprehension, exactly as its English counterpart *okay then* does.

7)

2x07 *Did you do this? No, you did it! – Sei stato tu? No, tu!*

At the police station – interrogation room

Police chief Gibson	<i>Without being simplistic, this thing's over when you say it's over.</i>	<i>Senza voler semplificare, questa storia finirà quando lo dirà lei.</i>
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	Floyd Gerhardt	No. <i>They won't stop.</i> My boys. <i>They've</i> <i>lost too much.</i> <i>They're too proud.</i>	No. <i>Non si ferme-</i> <i>ranno. I miei figli.</i> <i>Hanno perso troppo.</i> <i>Sono orgogliosi.</i>
12:51	Sheriff Hank Larsson	Well, <i>okay, then.</i> <i>How about you help</i> <i>us out?</i>	Va <i>bene. Allora</i> <i>per-</i> <i>ché non ci aiuta lei?</i>

In example 7, *okay then* is preceded by *well* in the OV, thus generating a three-word DMC which is used for confirming comprehension. The co-occurrence of *well* and *okay then* in the OV influences the translation choice made. The DMC *well okay then* is split into two separate intonation phrases in the DV, namely *va bene* and *allora* – marked by the presence of the full stop in the transcription. Apparently, the pursual of this strategy is made possible by the fact that *allora* is uttered by Sheriff Hank Larsson when he is off-screen: whereas *va bene* renders *well okay* in the DV, *allora*, which signals the beginning of the following utterance by the same speaker, functions as a standard adverb, meaning ‘in that case’.

7.2. Pragmatic equivalents

It is important to emphasise that, within the Italian DV, in 4 instances out of 35, i.e., 11%, *okay then* is translated by means of different pragmatic equivalents, hence confirming the “indeterminacy of translation” (Bazzanella and Morra 2000: 153), as illustrated in examples 8 to 11.

8)

1x02 *The Rooster Prince – Il principe galletto*

At Lou's Coffee
Shop (diner)

	Police chief Bill Oswalt	<i>Yeab, so that's my decision. Take care.</i>	<i>Sì, questa è la mia decisione. Stammi bene.</i>
45:02	Police deputy Molly Solverson	<i>Well... (12 sec.) Okay, then.</i>	<i>Ah... (12 sec.) E va bene.</i>

In example 8, where *okay then* is used both for confirming comprehension and antiphrastically showing disagreement, it is translated by means of the three-word pragmatic equivalent *e va bene*.

In examples 9 to 11, whereas *okay* is maintained, an interjection replaces *then*.

9)

1906 *Buridan's Ass – L'asino di Buridano*

At Phoenix Farms
(supermarket)

Police officer Gus Grimley	<i>Is there a manager or someone we can talk to?</i>	<i>C'è il direttore o qualcuno con cui possiamo parlare?</i>
Kelly, cashier	<i>Not sure anybody's in yet. Dave, any- body in the offices yet?</i>	<i>Non so se c'è già qualcuno. Dave, c'è già qualcuno in ufficio?</i>
Dave, cashier	<i>Let me check.</i>	<i>Controllo.</i>

	Dave, cashier [over speaker]	<i>Mr. Cosmopolis to Customer Service.</i>	<i>Il Signor Cosmopolis all'assistenza clienti.</i>
		<i>Mr. Cosmopolis to Customer Service.</i>	<i>Cosmopolis all'assistenza.</i>
19:22	Police deputy Molly Solverson	(17 sec.) <i>Okay, then. Uh... I'm gonna leave my card.</i>	(17 sec.) <i>Okay, beh. Eh... Le lascio il mio biglietto.</i>

10)

3x01	<i>The Law of Vacant Places – La legge dei posti vacanti</i>		
	At Emmit Stussy's house		
	Buck Olander	<i>It was last year for Pete's sake. I met him at the Shriner's.</i>	<i>È stato l'anno scorso, santo cielo. L'ho conosciuto allo Shriner's.</i>
07:46	Emmit Stussy	<i>Sure, okay then. Everything went great when we met with the broker, Mr. Ehrmantraut.</i>	<i>Certo, okay, eh... È andata bene quando abbiamo incontrato il mediatore, il signor Ehrmantraut.</i>

11)

3x09	<i>Aporia – Aporia</i>		
	At the police station – interrogation room		

	Police chief Gloria Burgle	<i>There's three St. Cloud metros near your office. Why come all the way down here?</i>	<i>Ci sono tre centrali di polizia vicino al suo ufficio. Perché è venuto qui?</i>
	Emmit Stussy	<i>You gave me your card.</i>	<i>Mi ha dato il suo biglietto.</i>
02:59	Police chief Gloria Burgle	<i>Okay, then.</i> <i>Well, I got a lot of questions, but I guess, maybe, you should just start.</i>	<i>Oh, okay.</i> <i>Bene, devo farle molte domande ma immagina sia meglio che cominci lei.</i>

In example 9, the interjection *beh* coherently follows *okay*, thus generating *okay beh*, a turn-taking and attention-getting DMC; also in example 10 *eh* comes after *okay* in order to form the DMC *okay eh*, which is used for confirming comprehension; in example 11, *oh* precedes *okay* instead of following it, hence forming *oh okay*, which signals that the DMC confirms comprehension and shows agreement.

7.3. Partial omissions

Although the sequence *okay then* is never completely omitted in the DV, in three cases, i.e., 9%, *then* is deleted whereas *okay*, which “signals a refocusing on a part of the topic at hand” (Fraser 1988: 28), is maintained, as illustrated in examples 12 to 14.

12)

1x09 *A Fox, a Rabbit, and a Cabbage – Una volpe, un coniglio e un
cavolo*

Over police radio

	Police officer Gus Grimley	<i>Yeah, so you should probably check in on them. They seemed real eager to talk to you.</i>	<i>Sì, è meglio che vai a controllare. Avevano urgenza di parlarti.</i>
30:05	Police deputy Molly Solverson	Okay, then, <i>will do.</i>	Okay, <i>vado.</i>

In example 12, both the DMC in the OV and the DM in the DV confirm comprehension and show agreement.

13)

1x09	<i>A Fox, a Rabbit, and a Cabbage – Una volpe, un coniglio e un cavolo</i>		
	At Lester Nygaard's new house – during questioning		
	Linda Park, fiancée	<i>I tend to get my way.</i>	<i>Ottengo sempre ciò che voglio.</i>
	Lester Nygaard	<i>Oh, boy, does she.</i>	<i>Oh, altroché!</i>
29:08	Police deputy Molly Solverson	Okay, then. <i>Well, uh, thank you for your time, Mr. Nygaard. Missus.</i>	Okay. <i>Bene, grazie per la disponibilità, Signor Nygaard. Signora.</i>

In example 13, *okay then* in the OV and *okay* in the DV are used as turn-taking devices and for confirming comprehension.

14)

3x01 *The Law of Vacant Places – La legge dei posti vacanti*At Emmit Stussy's
houseEmmit Stussy *It's a lot of money.* *Sono un sacco di soldi.*Sy Feltz *A heck of a lot.* *Un mucchio di soldi.*Emmit Stussy *And it's just sitting there on the books which...* *Ed è lì che aspetta quindi...*Sy Feltz *Can't have that.* *Non può essere.*08:18 Emmit Stussy (7 sec.) ***Okay then*** (7 sec.) ***Okay***, *molto well, thanks for coming in.* *bene, grazie di essere venuto.*

In example 14, *okay then* is followed by *well* in the OV. The concomitance of *okay then* and *well*, uttered in the same intonation phrase, affects the translation (see example 7). The three-word DMC *okay then well* is divided into two separate DMs in the DV, namely *okay* and *molto bene*, where *molto* substitutes *then* syntactically though not semantically. Despite the partial omission of *then*, this strategy manages to reinforce both the turn-taking and attention-getting functions of the DMC detected in the OV.

7.4. Rewordings

It is appropriate to talk about divergent rewordings, which exploit neither literal nor pragmatic equivalents, only in two circumstances, i.e., 5.5%: *salutamela allora* (example 15) and *okay caro* (example 16).

15)

1X01 *The Crocodile's Dilemma – Il dilemma del cocodrillo*At Lester Nygaard's
housePolice chief Vern
Thurman*Is Pearl home?**Pearl è in casa?*

Lester Nygaard

*Uh, no, no. She's at
my brother's.**Ah, no, no. È da
mio fratello.*

51:30

Police chief Vern
Thurman*Okay, then.**Salutamela allora.*

As displayed in example 15, *okay then* is used for confirming comprehension in the OV; however, whereas *then* is translated with the literal equivalent *allora*, *okay* is rendered by means of a verb phrase, namely an imperative, which performs a directive illocutionary act and replaces the DMC function present in the OV¹⁰.

16)

2X01 *Waiting for Dutch – Aspettando Dutch*At Ed Blumquist's
house

Peggy Blumquist

*Well, start again, I'm
saying.**Io dico che possia-
mo ricominciare.*

Ed Blumquist

*I don't wanna.**Io non voglio.*

¹⁰ "Directives [...] are attempts [...] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (Searle 1975: 355).

40:39	Peggy Blumquist	<p><i>Okay, then...</i> <i>Then, hon, look at me. If we're gonna get clear of this, then we're gonna have to clean it up. Pretend it didn't happen.</i></p>	<p><i>Okay, caro...</i> <i>Però, caro, eh... Se guardami, eh... Se vogliamo uscirne puliti, dobbiamo ripulire tutto. Fare finta che non sia mai accaduto.</i></p>
		<p><i>'Cause if this comes out... If this... Then all the things you want, that we want, that's over. I go to jail, and maybe you also. And then there's no shop and no family. No kids.</i></p>	<p><i>Perché se questa storia viene fuori... Se questo... Allora tutte le cose che vuoi, che vogliamo, saranno finite. Io andrò in prigione, magari anche tu. E allora niente macelleria, niente famiglia... e niente figli.</i></p>

In example 16, the DMC *okay then* in the OV and the DM *okay* in the DV confirm comprehension and, at the same time, ironically show disagreement. In the DV, *okay* is kept as a DM *per se* while *then* is rendered with *caro*, an informal term of address – a form of endearment referred to Ed Blumquist by his wife Peggy – which partly hedges the DMC function of *okay then* as found in the OV.

8. Conclusion

After confirming the DMC status of *okay then*, the quantitative data presented show that it is overused in the TV series *Fargo* if compared to other American-made audiovisual genres and especially to spoken American English. From a qualitative perspective, the discussion of the data gathered proves that *okay then* is multifunctional both within and across contexts, to the

point that, due to its intrinsic pragmatic blurriness, it can be defined as an all-purpose DMC.

From a translational perspective, the analysis suggests that literal equivalents, mainly the maintenance of the Anglicism *okay* and the use of *allora* for *then*, are the most frequent solutions. If, on the one hand, *okay then* in the OV can be viewed as an example of formulaicity, on the other hand, the widespread presence of *okay allora* in the DV is undoubtedly an instance of routine translation. However, a selection of other pragmatic equivalents, labelled “pragmatic calques” by Pavese (2018: 15), and some inventive rewordings were also employed. All in all, the above-mentioned translation strategies seem capable of conveying some, if not all, of the interpersonal functions that regulate interactions between characters in the OV dialogues. Translation by omission is not the preferred choice.

When dealing with DMCs as well as DMs, ubiquitous in cinematic dialogue, the translator should obviously conform with the context to ideally maintain in the DV the disparate functional shades present in the OV – a crucial factor in assessing the pragmatic quality of the translation and achieving the same impact on the audience. With special reference to the Italian DV of the TV series *Fargo*, the interactional functions at play in the English OV are not at all concealed; on the contrary, the same pragmatic effects are satisfactorily recreated in the Italian dubbing thanks to the translation tendencies attested.

Among other findings, this investigation reveals that since English – mostly American English – is nowadays considered the carrier of socio-pragmatic templates *par excellence* (Mišić Ilić 2017: 112), the DM *okay*, as part of the English DMC *okay then*, is often transferred – in 31 cases out of 35, i.e., 89% – in the Italian DV as an Anglicism. More exactly, *okay* is a “pragmatic Anglicism”, that is a lexical item borrowed from English because of its intrinsic pragmatic salience even though other semantic equivalents already exist in the recipient language (Furiassi 2018: 112).

Widely recognised as the most frequent non-adapted Anglicism in both spoken Italian (Pulcini and Damascelli 2005: 231) and Italian dubbed dialogues (Minutella 2018: 202), *okay* – mainly within the sequence *okay allora* – is employed extensively in *Fargo*’s DV. The reiteration of *okay*, which only rarely is substituted by other equivalents in the Italian dubbing, conforms to the repetitive style of

the original and adequately renders the polyvalent pragmatic nature of its English homonym. On a final note and on the basis of the present analysis, the vocabulary of audiovisual Italian appears highly permeable to “Anglicization” (Pulcini, Furiassi, Rodríguez González 2012: 1) or “Anglification” (Gottlieb 2004: 219) presumably because of the present preponderance of American cultural products on the Italian market, of which the TV series *Fargo* is just but one of many.

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