A CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF FREEDOM WRITERS: DUBBING EMOTIONAL UPHEAVALS FROM US ENGLISH(ES) INTO ITALIAN

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Abstract

Within the field of English for Psychological Studies, expressive writing is a very common practice. Following Smyth and Pennebaker (2008), there is reason to believe that when people transform their feelings and thoughts about personally upsetting experiences into language, their physical and mental health often improves. In this paper, the screenplay of *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese 2007) is analysed, a film about a young teacher thrown into a class of at-risk students during the Los Angeles riots of 1992. The name comes from the fact the students are given diaries in which to write whatever they want, which can be private or read by the teacher. They write about their family situations, their feelings, and their being at-risk teens, while experiencing cultural, ethnic and racial tensions. For the lexical analysis of the screenplay, I have relied on the perspective proposed by Pennebaker and Chung (2007), based on four categories: "negative-emotion words", "positive-emotion words", "causal words", and "insight words". This study is also cross-cultural, as the Italian dubbing (by Valerio Piccolo under the direction of Valeria Nardini, only for home video) is compared to the source screenplay, characterized by diatopic and diastratic variations of American English. In particular, the students speak a socially marked variety of US English, an idiolect which is rich in features denoting in-group identity, often combined with low social status, such as slang words (generally associated with an urban street culture), cursing and taboo words. As will be shown, the Italian dubbed version is a more standardized and socially flattened text, characterized by more neutral colloquial markers.

1. Introduction: expressive writing and its position within English for Psychological Studies

Within the field of English for Psychological Studies, the practice and analysis of expressive writing is a very common issue, as transposing emotional upheavals into language not only improves physical and mental health, but also leads to a conscientious use of language skills. The significance of being able to translate emotions into words has been highlighted by numerous studies since the publication of Freud's psychoanalytic theory (see Solano 2007: 9-10), but the ones that interest us most, for the purpose of this paper, are those about the so-called "Expressive Writing Paradigm" (Pennebaker and Beall 1986) developed primarily by Professor J. Pennebaker in the late 1980s.

Pennebaker began his research with an interest in the impact of traumatic experiences on physical and mental health. He had the impression that expressing feelings and thoughts about a traumatic event in words enabled people to avoid or improve issues concerning mental and physical health. Since his initial experiments, this paradigm has been utilized in many studies that have confirmed Pennebaker's original findings, thus supporting a key principle of health psychology which holds that there is an important connection between emotions, physical and/or mental health, and behavioural changes. For instance, Pennebaker's writing paradigm has been applied to school performance, with students reporting improvements in grades following a writing experience.

This is what is shown in the film *Freedom Writers,* released in 2006, written and directed by Richard LaGravenese, and based on the book *The Freedom Writers Diary* (1999) by The Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell. The film tells the real-life story of a novice teacher, Erin Gruwell, a white, educated female who is given the task of teaching first year students at Woodrow Wilson High School, in Long Beach, Los Angeles, in 1994 [1]. The school was previously a high-achievement school, but a system of Voluntary Integration led to 75% of high achievers transferring elsewhere. The students now comprise a variety of ethnic groups considered as unteachable by the Government; racial tensions are high, set against the backdrop of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, during which minority communities were outraged following the police acquittal after the beating of Rodney King [2].

The film characters are portrayed in negative stereotypes; racist, violent, uneducated, involved in guns, gangs and drugs. To gain an insight into her students' lives and thoughts, and probably believing that expressive writing might help them change their mindsets and their lifestyles, the English teacher Erin Gruwell practised a variant of the aforementioned "Expressive writing paradigm", issuing her students with diaries and encouraging them to record their daily thoughts, feelings and experiences.

2. Method

Through a quantitative as well as qualitative descriptive method, based on the lexical analysis of the screenplay by Richard LaGravenese, five extracts will be taken into consideration on a double level, regarding both the content of expressive writing and the cultural transference from the screenplay (our source text, ST) into the dubbed Italian version (our target text, TT).

For the lexical analysis of the screenplay, I have relied on the perspective proposed by Pennebaker and Chung (2007) who developed a computer programme called LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count), which is a transparent text analysis programme

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[1] In 1998, after teaching for only four years, Gruwell left Wilson High School and became a Distinguished Teacher in Residence at California State University, Long Beach. Gruwell later went on to start the Freedom Writers Foundation, which aspires to spread the Freedom Writers method across the country.

[2] Rodney Glen King (April 2, 1965 - June 17, 2012) was an American construction worker turned writer and activist after surviving an act of police brutality by the Los Angeles Police Department. The four officers were tried on charges of use of excessive force; three were acquitted, the jury failed to reach a verdict on one charge for the fourth. Within hours of the acquittals, the 1992 Los Angeles riots started, sparked by outrage among African Americans over the verdicts and longstanding social issues.

that counts words in psychologically meaningful categories, such as negative or positive emotion words, causal words or insight words [3]. The way that the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count programme works is fairly simple. Basically, it reads a given text and counts the percentage of words that reflect different emotions, thinking styles, social concerns, and even parts of speech. Because LIWC was developed by researchers with interests in social, clinical, health, and cognitive psychology, the language categories were created in order to capture people's social and psychological states.

The LIWC programme includes a text analysis module along with a group of built-in dictionaries. The text analysis module compares each word in the text against a user-defined dictionary. As described below, the dictionary identifies which words are associated with which psychologically-relevant categories. After the processing module has read and accounted for all words in a given text, it calculates the percentage of total words that match each of the dictionary categories. For example, if LIWC analysed a speech consisting of 2,000 words and compared them to the built-in LIWC 2015 dictionary, it might find that there were 150 pronouns and 84 positive emotion words used. It would convert these numbers to percentages, 7.5% pronouns and 4.2% positive emotion words.

This software is very useful for text analysis, but the study of word use as a reflection of psychological state is in its earliest stages. LIWC has one main weakness: it ignores figurative language and contexts, such as sarcasm, irony and idioms (Newman *et al.* 2003: 672; Hauch *et al.* 2014: 330), thus leading to miscoding. This is the reason why I have also manually explored the underlying meaning of some expressions, as used by students in their journal entries, and compared the film script to the Italian dubbed version.

As will be shown, the students/writers use a socially marked variety of US English, an idiolect which is rich in features denoting in-group identity, often combined with low social status, such as slang words (generally associated with an urban street culture), cursing and taboo words, whereas the Italian dubbed version is a more standardized and socially flattened text, characterized by more neutral colloquial markers.

3. Results

The degree to which the students/writers express emotion, how they express emotion, and the valence of that emotion can tell us how they are experiencing the world. As we know, people react in radically different ways to traumatic or important events; how they react may say a lot about how they cope with the event and the extent to which the event plays a role in the future, as people's emotional response is at the heart of reacting and coping with events.

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[3] The LIWC software programme uses an internal dictionary of 4,500 words to classify words found in text files into over 70 categories. The categories include general descriptors (e.g. word count, words per sentence), linguistic components (e.g. adverbs, conjunctions), psychological processes (e.g. social and cognitive processes), and non-psychological processes (e.g. work). After processing the text files, the LIWC programme creates an output file containing variables that reflect each LIWC category as a percentage of total word count. For example, if a transcript received a score of 10.2 on the adverbs LIWC category, this would indicate that 10.2% of the total number of words classified in the transcript were adverbs.

3.1. *Quantitative analysis*

What follows is the quantitative analysis (using the LIWC programme) of the extracts chosen for our corpus. The data analysis expresses clearly our characters' emotional upheavals.

The traditional LIWC dimension reflects the percentage of total words within the text provided. The Summary Variables are research-based composites that have been converted to 100-point scales where 0 = very low along the dimension and 100 = very high.

Analytic refers to analytical or formal thinking.

Clout singles out writing that is authoritative, confident, and exhibits leadership.

Authenticity refers to writing that is personal and honest.

Emotional tone is scored so that higher numbers are more positive and upbeat and lower numbers are more negative.

Text 1 (243 words, personal writing)

Clive was my boy. He had my back plenty of times. Me and him was like one fist. One army. I sat there till the police came. But when they come, all they see is a dead body, a gun and a nigga. They took me to juvenile hall. First night was the scariest. Inmates banging on the walls, throwing up their gang signs, yelling out who they were, where they're from. I cried my first night. Can't never let nobody know that I spent the next few years in and out of cells. Every day I'd worry, "When will I be free?"
Every time I jump somebody in and make someone a part of our gang, it's another baptism. They give us their life, we give them a new one. I've lost many friends who have died in an undeclared war. To the soldiers and me, it's all worth it. Risk your life dodging bullets, pulling triggers. It's all worth it.
My moms kicked me out when I got jumped into the gang life. But I'd like her to see me graduate. I'd like to be 18.
Ms. G sent our letters all the way to Amsterdam to Miep Gies, herself. When Ms. G made up her mind about something, there was no stopping her, man, for real. And after we raised the money to bring her to Long Beach, there she was. But, damn, I didn't expect her to be so small.

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING
I-words (I, Me, My)	8.2	8.70
Social words	16.0	8.69
Positive emotions	0.4	2.57
Negative emotions	3.3	2.12
Cognitive processes	8.2	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES		
Analytic	31.0	44.88
Clout	70.3	37.02
Authenticity	70.2	76.01
Emotional tone	1.9	38.60

Table 1. Text 1

Text 2 (458 words, personal writing)

In America, a girl can be crowned a princess for her beauty and her grace. But an Aztec princess is chosen for her blood... ...to fight for her people, as Papi and his father fought against those who say we are less than they are, who say we are not equal in beauty and in blessings. It was the first day of school, and I was waiting for my father to take me to the bus. And I saw the war for the first time. They took my father for retaliation. He was innocent, but they took him, because he was respected by my people. They called my people a gang because we fight for our America. When I got my initiation into the gang life I became third generation. They beat you so you won't break. They are my family.

In Long Beach, it all comes down to what you look like. If you're Latino or Asian or black, you could get blasted any time you walk out your door. We fight each other for territory. We kill each other over race, pride and respect. We fight for what is ours. They think they're winning by jumping me now, but soon they're all going down. War has been declared.

If it was up to me I wouldn't even be in school. My probation officer threatened me. Telling me it was either school or boot camp. Dumbass! He thinks that the problem. Going on in Long Beach aren't going to touch me at Wilson. My PO doesn't understand that schools are like the city and the city is just like a prison, all of them divided into separate sections, depending on tribes. There's Little Cambodia. The Ghetto. Wonder Bread Land. And us, South of the Border or Little Tijuana. That's just the way it is, and everyone knows it. But soon enough, you have little wannabes trying to hit you up at school, demanding respect they haven't earned. It looks like this, one tribe drifting quietly to another's territory without respect, as if to claim what isn't theirs. An outsider looking in would never see it, but we could feel it. Something was coming.

Paco was scared. In the car, he said, "You can't go against your own people, your own blood." The same word my father used so many times. Only I saw Paco. The others were turned away. So when the police questioned me, I knew I had to protect him.

I don't even know how this war started. It's just two sides that tripped each other way back. Who cares about the history behind it? I am my father's daughter, and when they call me to testify, I will protect my own, no matter what.

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING
I-words (I, Me, My)	6.6	8.70
Social words	17.0	8.69
Positive emotions	2.6	2.57
Negative emotions	2.8	2.12
Cognitive processes	12.4	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES		
Analytic	27.1	44.88
Clout	74.4	37.02
Authenticity	79.7	76.01
Emotional tone	22.4	38.60

Table 2. Text 2

Text 3 (226 words, personal writing)

My brother taught me what the life is for a young black man. Pimp, deal, whatever. Learn what colors to wear. Gang banners. You can sell to one corner, but you can't sell another. Learn to be quiet. The wrong word can get you popped.
At the beginning of the tour, they give you a card with a child's picture on it. You could find out who they were and what camp they were sent to. And at the end of the tour, you could find out if they survived. I got a little girl from Italy.
She lost her whole family at the camps. She came to this country with 5 $ in her pocket and a newborn baby. I'll never forget these people. I can't believe Ms. G did all of this for us.
Ms. G made us read Twelve Angry Men. It's all about how this one juror helped to turn the hearts of 11 jurors. It made me feel hopeful. At 2:00 today, my brother was given a verdict on his own trial. No O.J. Dream Team, just a court appointed attorney who probably thought his ass was guilty. And I realized Twelve Angry Men was just a book and nothing more. My brother got 15 years to life. Justice don't mean the bad guy goes to jail. It just means somebody pays for the crime.

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING
I-words (I, Me, My)	3.9	8.70
Social words	16.5	8.69
Positive emotions	0.4	2.57
Negative emotions	2.6	2.12
Cognitive processes	11.3	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES		
Analytic	67.1	44.88
Clout	87	37.02
Authenticity	16.5	76.01
Emotional tone	4.2	38.60

Table 3. Text 3

Text 4 (46 words, personal writing)

At 16, I've seen more dead bodies than a mortician. Every time I step out my door I face the risk of being shot. To the rest of the world it's just another dead body on a street corner. They don't know that he was my friend.

Text 5 (266 words, personal writing)

This summer was the worst summer in my short 14 years of life. "It all started with a phone call. "My mother was crying and begging, "asking for more time as if she were gasping for her last breath of air. "She held me as tight as she could and cried. "Her tears hit my shirt like bullets and told me we were being evicted. "She kept apologizing to me. I thought, 'I have no home. "'I should have asked for something less expensive at Christmas. ' "On the morning of the eviction, a hard knock on the door woke me up. "The sheriff was there to do his job. "I looked up at the sky, waiting for something to happen. "My mother has no family to lean on,

no money coming in. "Why bother coming to school or getting good grades if I'm homeless? "The bus stops in front of the school. I feel like throwing up. "I'm wearing clothes from last year, some old shoes and no new haircut. "I kept thinking I'd get laughed at. "Instead, I'm greeted by a couple of friends "who were in my English class last year. "And it hits me, Mrs. Gruwell, "my crazy English teacher from last year, "is the only person that made me think of hope. "Talking with friends about last year's English and our trips, "I began to feel better. "I receive my schedule and the first teacher is Mrs. Gruwell in Room 203. "I walk into the room and feel as though "all the problems in life are not so important anymore. "I am home."

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING
I-words (I, Me, My)	10.6	8.70
Social words	6.4	8.69
Positive emotions	0.0	2.57
Negative emotions	2.1	2.12
Cognitive processes	6.4	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES		
Analytic	76.0	44.88
Clout	19.7	37.02
Authenticity	96.5	76.01
Emotional tone	4.4	38.60

Table 4. Text 4

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING
I-words (I, Me, My)	10.1	8.70
Social words	9.4	8.69
Positive emotions	1.9	2.57
Negative emotions	2.6	2.12
Cognitive processes	8.6	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES		
Analytic	70.1	44.88
Clout	34.0	37.02
Authenticity	90.4	76.01
Emotional tone	15.3	38.60

Table 5. Text 5

A few comments on the extracts above will follow.

As Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) write, the language of lower-status individuals (our students) is mostly self-focused and tentative, as opposed to higher-status individuals who speak more often and freely make statements that involve others.

- Pronoun use is very important in showing the quality of a close relationship, because it shows how individuals refer to each other. People who are experiencing physical or emotional pain tend to concentrate their attention on themselves and subsequently use more first-person singular pronouns ("I"). Surprisingly, first-person plural ("we") has not been found to be related to higher relationship quality, instead use of second person ("you") is more important in predicting lower-quality relationships.

- The use of causal words (e.g. *because*, *effect*, *hence*) and insight words (e.g. *think*, *know*, *consider*), two subcategories of cognitive mechanisms, in describing a past event can suggest the active process of reappraisal. In a reanalysis of six expressive writing studies, Pennebaker, Mayne, and Francis (1997) found that increasing use of causal and insight words led to greater health improvements.

- Sex differences in language use show that women's speech is richer in social words whilst men use more complex language. A meta-analysis of the texts from many studies shows that the biggest language differences between males and females lie in the complexity of the language used and the degree of social references (Newman *et al.* 2008). Males made greater use of long words, articles, and prepositions. Females made greater use of social words, and pronouns, including first-person singular and third-person pronouns, both singular and plural. There was also a frequent use of swearwords, feeling words and present tense verbs. The fact that there are predictable differences in the language used by the two sexes makes it possible to predict the sex of the user without prior knowledge.

- Social and emotional language has also differed with respect to extraversion; people who scored high on extraversion used more social words, more positive emotion, and fewer negative emotion words.

- Depressed and suicidal individuals have shown they were more self-focused, expressed more negative emotion and sometimes used more death-related words.

Let us now take into consideration just Text 1, both in English and in Italian, as a sample of comparative quantitative categorization. We do not know which words (from our extracts) have been placed in each of the psychologically meaningful categories shown below.

What we do know is that the English script is much more personal, as there are many more I-words (*my*, *me*, *I*). Nonetheless, this could be explained by the fact that the subject in English is almost always explicit, whereas in Italian this is not so.

The data referring to positive emotions, as was foreseeable, are very low, whereas those referring to negative emotions are higher than the average in the English script and, interestingly, equal to zero in the Italian. This probably shows the software indifference to negative connotations in figurative language. As for emotional tone, we know that higher numbers are more positive (as in the Italian dubbing), whereas lower numbers are more negative (as is the case of the English script).

To conclude, we are undoubtedly standing on the threshold of a new era of language analysis. However, from a cross-cultural perspective, we have deemed it necessary not to limit our results to the categorization of emotional upheavals in the film script, but

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	YOUR DATA *English script*	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING English	YOUR DATA *Italian dubbing*	AVERAGE FOR PERSONAL WRITING Italian
I-words (I, Me, My)	8.2	8.70	0.6	8.70
Social words	16.0	8.69	2.8	8.69
Positive emotions	0.4	2.57	1.1	2.57
Negative emotions	3.3	2.12	0.0	2.12
Cognitive processes	8.2	12.52	0.0	12.52
SUMMARY VARIABLES				
Analytic	31.0	44.88	93.9	44.88
Clout	70.3	37.02	56.6	37.02
Authenticity	70.2	76.01	1.0	76.01
Emotional tone	1.9	38.60	46.2	38.60

Table 6. Text 1 as a sample of comparative quantitative categorization

also to consider what the underlying meaning of some expressions are, as well as which linguistic strategies have been used to convey the characters' feelings in a different context of culture.

4. The underlying meaning of journal entries and the cross-cultural transferability of language [4]

This case study shows that meaning is not something 'carried' by a language, but something 'negotiated' between viewers from their own contexts of cultures. Each audience is hence bound to receive a text according to their own expectations; this is why any translation has to be considered as a form of "manipulation" (Hermans 1985), "mediation" (Katan 1999, 2009) or "refraction" (Lefevere 1982/2004) between two different linguacultures (Agar 1994). In the light of these concerns, before analysing dialogues, some general considerations on the non-standard American English spoken by most of the characters are in order. The students speak a socially marked variety of US English, an idiolect which is rich in features denoting in-group identity, often combined with low social status, such as slang words (generally associated with an urban street culture), cursing and taboo words. On the contrary, the Italian dubbed version is a more standardized and socially flattened text, characterized by a more neutral language. Inspired by the teacher's words, each student began to keep his or her own anonymous diary, and after a period of time, they gave Erin Gruwell permission to read their entries. Erin was then guided to focus on their emotions and realized that some of them had experienced very traumatic events in their lives, and had recorded tormenting stories of drug use, or struggles with physical and mental abuse.

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[4] This section follows on previous research conducted on the film dubbing: see Leotta (2018).

For example, a young Cambodian girl, Sindy, who used to be withdrawn, isolated, and insecure, is a noteworthy character. She relates how she left Cambodia as a refugee, and that her family was separated as a result of war. She was forced to move to the United States as an immigrant and was completely overwhelmed by that experience. She could not understand how Cambodians who had escaped the war were then warring again, this time with Hispanics. It is clear that this young girl was experiencing 'Culture Shock', which is defined as "the emotional and physiological reaction of high activation that is brought about by sudden immersion in a new and different culture" (Barna 1976, quoted in Bennett 1998). She was actively experiencing acculturation and having difficulties with it.

Within the limits of this paper, only the five extracts analysed quantitatively will be taken into consideration.

To address the issue of the cross-cultural transferability of language, two perspectives will be used as models: Kwieciński's (2001) and Díaz Cintas and Remael's (2007). The former (2001: 157) proposed a taxonomy based on four procedures: "Exoticising procedure", "Rich explicatory procedure", "Recognised exoticisation", and "Assimilative procedure". Six years later, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) proposed a more clear-cut set of strategies based on Díaz Cintas (2003) and Santamaria Guinot (2001), namely 'loan', 'calque', 'explicitation', 'substitution', 'transposition', 'lexical recreation', 'compensation', 'omission', and 'addition'. This taxonomy of strategies for the translation of culture-bound terms in AVT, conceived for subtitling in particular, has been adjusted to dubbing and used as a basis for this analysis. These two classifications have the merit of being both detailed and agile enough to serve as valid tools for analysis.

Within the limits of this paper, we are obviously not concerned with the social and individual problems that the film tackles, but only with the role that language plays in portraying the characters and their milieu.

For instance, an African-American student, Marcus, confided that he had witnessed his childhood friend accidentally shooting himself, but he was the one to be accused and incarcerated in a juvenile institution. The effect of his negative experience was that the young man had become outwardly aggressive and confrontational. His diary allowed him to express his feeling through poetry and hip-hop, revealing a sensitive, caring nature. This behaviour is usually typified as 'face-saving'; a concept devised by Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) where 'face' is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself". His aggression was a way of 'face saving', of not wanting others to see his true personality.

4.1. *Translations*
Let us now take translated versions into consideration.

Translations

Text 1

Clive era il mio <u>amico</u>*. Mi aveva coperto un sacco di volte. Eravamo come una* <u>mano</u> *sola, io e lui, un esercito. Rimasi lì finché arrivò la polizia, ma quando* <u>arrivarono videro</u> *soltanto un cadavere, una pistola e un negro. Mi portarono al carcere minorile. La prima notte fu la più brutta. Detenuti che picchiavano sulle pareti,* <u>che indicavano a quale gang appartenevano,</u>

che urlavano chi erano e da dove <u>venivano</u>. Ho pianto la prima notte. Non l'ha mai saputo nessuno. Gli anni dopo non facevo che entrare e uscire dal carcere. Ogni giorno mi domandavo: "Quando sarò libero?"
Ogni volta che <u>picchio</u> qualcuno per farlo entrare nella nostra gang è come un battesimo. Ti danno la loro vita, noi gliene diamo una nuova. Molti miei amici sono morti per una guerra non dichiarata. Io e i soldati pensiamo che ne vale la pena. Rischiare la vita, scansare proiettili, premere grilletti. Ne vale la pena. Mia <u>madre</u> mi ha cacciato di casa quando <u>sono entrato</u> in una gang, ma vorrei che mi vedesse diplomato. <u>Voglio</u> arrivare a diciott'anni.
<u>Gruwell</u> ha mandato le nostre lettere ad Amsterdam a Miep Gies in persona. Quando la Gruwell si <u>mette</u> in testa una cosa non <u>c'è</u> modo di fermarla, giuro. Poi abbiamo trovato i soldi per farla venire a Long Beach ed eccola qua. Cavolo, però, non me l'aspettavo così bassa[5]*!*

Commentary

From a lexical point of view,
- "boy" has been translated by *amico*. Actually, "boy" is informal. This level of informality is now lost;
- "like one fist" is a case of lexical recreation, which, nonetheless, gives the idea of feeling close to one another. In Italian, this simile is conveyed by a sort of calque, as there is no equivalent in the target language;
- "throwing up their gang signs" refers to gestures made with one's hands to signify what gang you are from. Gang signs can even get you killed if you make them in the wrong part of a town/city. Here again, there is a cultural gap, as in Italian this would not make sense, so explicitation was necessary;
- a "jump" is a one-sided fight, which is translated by *picchiare* (to beat). This can be considered a calque, as it is a sort of literal translation of a concept which is typical of urban street culture;
- the noun "moms" is the expression of a low social status, as the standard American English is "mom". Even this feature is lost in translation.
From a grammatical point of view,
- the verbs "come" and "see", as well as "be" are used in the base form; a case of double negative is worth noticing (*can't…nobody*). All this is typical of street language varieties. In the Italian dubbing these sociocultural references are lost, in favour of a heightening of the linguistic register;
- "I'd like" is translated by *Voglio* (I want), which gives more emphasis to the character's resolution;
- the verbs "made up" and "was" are also translated by the present tense. Here again, the use of the present tense conveys the idea of a concept that is always true.

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[5] Clive was my <u>friend</u>. He had covered for me loads of times. We were <u>like one hand</u>, me and him, an army. I stayed there until the police arrived, but when they <u>arrived</u>, they <u>saw</u> only a corpse, a gun and a nigger. They took me to the juvenile detention centre. The first night was the worst. Inmates beating on the walls, <u>identifying the gang they belonged to,</u> screaming who they were and where they <u>came</u> from. I cried the first night. No one ever knew about it. In the following years, I did nothing but go in and out of prison. Every day I wondered, "When will I be free?" Every time I beat someone to let him into our gang it's like a baptism. They give you their life, we give them a new one. Many friends of mine died for an undeclared war. The soldiers and I think it's worth it. Risking your life, dodging bullets, pulling triggers. It's worth it. My mum threw me out of the house when <u>I joined</u> a gang, but I would like her to see me graduate. I <u>want</u> to reach 18. <u>Gruwell</u> sent our letters to Amsterdam, to Miep Gies in person. When Ms. Gruwell <u>makes up</u> her mind about something, <u>there's</u> no stopping her, I swear. Then we found the money to get her to come to Long Beach and here she is. Damn, but, I didn't expect her to be so short!

Another diary entry is that of Eva, a Hispanic girl who is also the film narrator. The following extracts reflect that she learned the concept of being racist. She had witnessed one of her gang members commit murder and was encouraged to blame it on an African-American boy who was also there at the scene, rather than tell the truth. She was told to protect "her own" and to blame the rival gang. After all, this is what had happened to her father, and it was time for her to win a victory. At first, Eva was willing to do this, but as time went on, her writing experience caused an internal conflict, until she realized that blaming someone else was not "the right thing" to do.

Text 2

In America, una ragazza può essere incoronata principessa per la sua bellezza e la sua grazia, ma una principessa azteca viene scelta per il sangue…di combattere per il suo popolo, così come papà e suo padre hanno combattuto contro chi dice che siamo inferiori a loro, che non siamo uguali quanto a bellezza e a doni ricevuti dal cielo.

Era il mio primo giorno di scuola e stavo aspettando che mio padre mi accompagnasse alla fermata dell'autobus. Quel giorno ho visto la guerra per la prima volta. Hanno preso mio padre per ritorsione. Non era colpevole, ma l'hanno preso perché era rispettato dalla mia gente. Siamo definiti una gang perché combattiamo per la nostra America. Io faccio parte della terza generazione che partecipa alla vita di una gang. Ti picchiano così non ti spezzerai. Sono loro la mia famiglia.

A Long Beach l'unica cosa che conta è il tuo aspetto. Se sei latino-americano, se sei asiatico o nero rischi che ti sparino ogni volta che esci di casa. Combattiamo gli uni contro gli altri per il territorio, ci uccidiamo per motivi di razza, orgoglio e di rispetto, combattiamo per quello che è nostro. Credono di vincere perché mi riempiono di calci e pugni, ma tra un po' faranno tutti una brutta fine. È stata dichiarata guerra.

Se fosse per me, non ci andrei proprio a scuola. Il mio assistente sociale mi ha minacciata. Ha detto: "O la scuola, o il riformatorio!" Che idiota! Lui pensa che i problemi di Long Beach non mi tocchino se sono alla Wilson. Il mio assistente non capisce che le scuole sono come la città e la città non è altro che una galera. Sono tutti divisi in zone separate, a seconda della tribù. C'è la piccola Cambogia, il ghetto nero, il paese dei latticini, e noi, a sud del confine, la piccola Tijuana. Così stanno le cose, lo sanno tutti. Però poi ci sono i ragazzini che si atteggiano pretendendo un rispetto che non si sono guadagnati. Praticamente succede così: una tribù sconfina silenziosa in un altro territorio senza rispetto, quasi rivendicando quello che non le spetta. Uno che guarda da fuori non potrebbe mai accorgersene, ma noi lo sentiamo. Stava per succedere qualcosa.

Paco aveva paura. In macchina ha detto: "Non ti puoi mettere contro la tua gente, è il sangue del tuo sangue". Le stesse parole che aveva usato tante volte mio padre! Solo io avevo visto Paco, gli altri erano di spalle e quando la polizia mi ha interrogata sapevo che avrei dovuto proteggerlo.

Non so neanche com'è cominciata questa guerra. So che due bande si sono scontrate un sacco di tempo fa. Chi se ne frega della storia che c'è dietro? Sono la figlia di mio padre e quando mi chiameranno a testimoniare proteggerò la mia gente, a qualsiasi costo [6].

[6] In America, a girl can be crowned princess for her beauty and grace, but an Aztec princess is chosen for her blood... to fight for her people, just as dad and his father fought against those who say that we are inferior to them, that we are not equal in beauty and gifts received from heaven. It was my first day of school and I was waiting for my dad to walk me to the bus stop. That day I saw war for the first time. They took my father for retaliation. He wasn't guilty, but they took him because he was respected by my people. We're called a gang because we fight for

Commentary

From a lexical point of view,
- the Italian dubbing is more explicit (to the bus > *alla fermata dell'autobus*; + addition of *quel giorno*);
- he was innocent > *Non era colpevole*. The Italian dubbing is milder as an expression;
- "initiation" is translated by the explicitation *che partecipa alla vita di*;
- the verb "jumping" is impossible to translate literally, as the use of this verb is socially marked in US English and it has no equivalent in Italian; thus, an addition is necessary;
- the Ghetto > *Il ghetto nero*. Following Kwiecinski (2001), this is a case of assimilative procedure, as an equivalent expression is used even if the meaning is not exactly the same. Soon afterwards, instead, a case of recognized exoticization is found in "Wonder bread land", which is translated by *Il Paese dei latticini*;
- the adverb *praticamente* is added in the following sentence, to explain clearly the meaning of what is expressed by the sentence;
- finally, the verb "tripped" is a US slang word which is flattened by the Italian *scontrate* (fought).

Another film character writing a diary entry was Andre: at the beginning of the story, before starting his 'writing journey', he was very aggressive, and had his own concept of 'justice'. In one scene, he was shown selling drugs in order to make a living.

He even had trouble trusting figures in authority, which was shown when he asked Gruwell why she deserved his trust. At one point in the film, Andre began to doubt himself and gave himself a failing grade. Gruwell confronted him on this and told him that she believed in him and that he could do much better. Realizing that she cared, Andre was able to become a better student and person.

Text 3

Mio fratello mi ha insegnato cos'è la vita per un ragazzo nero. Fa' quello che devi fare, il pappa, lo spacciatore, quello che vuoi. Impara i colori delle gang, i confini delle gang. Quello

our America. I'm part of the third generation that takes part in the life of a gang. They beat you so you won't break. They are my family! In Long Beach, all that matters is how you look. If you're Latin American, if you're Asian or black, you risk getting shot every time you leave the house. We fight each other over territory, we kill each other over race, pride and respect, we fight for what's ours. They believe they will win because they kick and punch me, but soon they will all end badly. War has been declared. If it were up to me, I wouldn't go to school at all. My social worker threatened me. He said, "Either school or reformatory!" What an idiot! He thinks problems in Long Beach don't affect me if I'm at Wilson's. My assistant doesn't understand that schools are like the city and the city is nothing but a jail. They are all divided into separate areas, depending on the tribe. There's Little Cambodia, the black ghetto, the Dairy Country, and us, to the south of the border, Little Tijuana. That's the way it is, everybody knows. But then there are the kids who pose as people who demand respect that they didn't earn. Basically, it happens like this: a tribe quietly invades another territory without respect, almost demanding what is not due to them. Someone looking from the outside would never notice, but we feel it. Something was going to happen. Paco was afraid. In the car, he said: "You can't go against your people, it's your blood". The same words that my father had used so many times! Only I had seen Paco, the others had their back turned, and when the Police questioned me, I knew I should have protected him. I don't even know how this war started. I know that two gangs fought a long time ago. Who cares about the story that lies behind? I'm my father's daughter and when they call me to testify, I will protect my people, at all costs.

che puoi <u>dire</u> a un angolo non lo puoi dire all'altro. Impara a stare zitto. Una parola sbagliata e sei <u>morto.</u>
All'inizio della visita ti danno una tessera con la foto di un bambino. C'è scritto chi era e a quale campo era stato assegnato. Alla fine della visita ti dicono se è sopravvissuto. A me è capitata una ragazzina italiana.
Ha perso la famiglia nei campi di concentramento. E' venuta in questo Paese con 5 dollari in tasca e un bimbo appena nato. Non dimenticherò mai queste persone. E' incredibile. <u>La Gruwell</u> ha fatto tutto questo per noi.
La Gruwell ci ha fatto leggere "La parola ai giurati". Parla di un giurato che è rivolto al cuore degli altri 11. Mi ha fatto sperare! Alle due di oggi c'è stata la sentenza del processo di mio fratello. Niente celebrità come <u>Dow Jey</u>, solo un avvocato d'ufficio che pensava <u>che fosse</u> colpevole, e ho capito che "La parola ai giurati" era solo un libro. Niente di più. Mio fratello ha preso 15 anni! Giustizia non vuol dire che i cattivi vanno in galera, vuol dire solo che qualcuno deve pagare [7].

Commentary

- "Learn what colors to wear" does not make sense in Italian, thus an addition is needed, which enables the Italian audience to understand which "colors" we are referring to;
- further on, "gang banners" is translated by *I confini delle gang* (gang borders), which is totally different. This is a case of substitution, probably due to technical constraints, or perhaps because the concept of gangs waving banners is strange to Italian culture. The Italian dubbing, in this diary, is rich in cases of substitution and deviations, such as sell > *dire* (to say). In this case, the reference to selling drugs is lost in translation, in favour of a heightening of the linguistic register. The same is true for "popped"> *morto* (dead);
- another cultural reference is Ms. G > *la Gruwell*. In students' idiolect, teachers can be called by their initial letters, in Italian culture this practice does not exist, not even in low social status classes;
- the "Dream Team" refers to the team of trial lawyers that represented O.J. Simpson in his 1995 trial for the murder of his former wife. According to Kwiecinski's model (2001), this is an example of assimilative procedure (an equivalent phrase is used, even if the Italian translation is meaningless). This case of substitution (following Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007), probably due to technical constraints, conveys a foreignizing effect;
- his ass was guilty > *che fosse colpevole*. In urban street culture, cursing and taboo words are very common. This reference is lost in Italian dubbing.

Another film character worth noticing is Jamal. At the beginning of the film, Jamal believed that school was a waste of time, and is seen fighting with Andre. One of his classmates drew a racist picture of him as a cruel joke. He had a tough life. After

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[7] My brother taught me what life is like for a black boy. Do what you have to do, pimp, pusher, whatever you want. Learn the <u>gang colours,</u> the <u>gang borders</u>. What you can <u>say</u> at one corner, you can't say at the other. Learn to shut up. One wrong word and you are <u>dead.</u> At the beginning of the tour you are given a card with the photo of a child. It says who he/she was and what camp he/she was assigned to. At the end of the tour they tell you if he/she survived. I got an Italian girl. She lost her family in the concentration camps. She came to this country with <u>5</u> dollars in her pocket and a newborn baby. I'll never forget these people! It's incredible. <u>Ms Gruwell</u> did all this for us. Ms Gruwell let us read "Twelve Angry Men". It is about a juror who addressed the hearts of the other 11. It gave me hope! At two o'clock today, my brother's trial sentence was passed. No celebrities such as <u>Dow Jey,</u> just a public defender who thought <u>he was</u> guilty, and I understood that "Twelve Angry Men" was just a book. Nothing more. My brother got 15 years! Justice does not mean that the bad guys go to jail, it just means that someone has to pay.

his father left him at a young age, Jamal was solely responsible for taking care of his mother. Even though his mother could not look at him without seeing her ex-husband, Jamal still loved her immensely, and ended up selling drugs to take care of her. With the support of Gruwell, Jamal became more responsible for his actions and gave up selling drugs.

Text 4

A 16 anni ho visto più cadaveri di uno delle pompe funebri. Ogni volta che esco di casa rischio di <u>prendere una pallottola</u>. Per il mondo esterno, è solo un altro cadavere all'angolo della strada. <u>Loro </u>non sanno che era mio amico [8].

Commentary

- Being shot > *prendere una pallottola* (get a bullet). It is more explicit and probably less direct as an expression. Later in the text, the translation they > *loro* is a literal translation or calque, but it gives a foreignizing effect as it does not refer to anyone in particular, whereas in the source text the reference is clear to the members of a fighting gang.

The results of the students' experiences were the foundation of a life-changing, spiritually enriching 'journey' that began with a symbolic "toast for change" and is still ongoing. During the toast, a student (Miguel) reads his diary entry, as reported below.

Text 5

L'estate è stata la peggiore estate nella mia breve vita di quattordicenne. È cominciato tutto con una telefonata. Mia madre piangeva, implorava, continuava a chiedere tempo, come se stesse aspirando l'ultima boccata d'aria, mi teneva stretto più che poteva e piangeva. Le sue lacrime mi colpivano come pallottole, diceva che ci avevano dato lo sfratto, continuava a chiedermi di perdonarla. "Non abbiamo una casa", ho pensato. Avrei dovuto chiedere un regalo meno costoso a Natale. La mattina dello sfratto mi sono svegliato ché <u>bussavano</u> alla porta. Era lo sceriffo che era venuto a fare il suo lavoro. Ho alzato lo sguardo al cielo, aspettando che succedesse qualcosa. Mia madre non ha una famiglia su cui contare, nessuna entrata economica. A che serve venire a scuola e prendere buoni voti se non ho una casa? L'autobus ferma davanti la scuola, sento che sto per vomitare. Ho addosso i vestiti dello scorso anno, un paio di scarpe vecchie, non ho i capelli tagliati. Penso che mi rideranno dietro e invece mi vengono incontro due amici che erano <u>al corso</u> con me <u>e allora penso che la Signora Gruwell,</u> la mia pazza <u>insegnante</u> dello scorso anno, è l'unica persona che mi ha fatto pensare alla speranza. Parlo con gli amici delle lezioni dell'anno scorso e delle nostre gite e mi comincio a sentire meglio. Mi consegnano l'orario di lezione e la prima insegnante è la signora Gruwell, aula 203. Allora entro nella stanza e mi sembra che tutti i problemi della mia vita non siano più tanto importanti. Sono a casa [9].

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[8] At 16 I have seen more corpses than an undertaker. Every time I leave home, I risk <u>getting a bullet.</u> To the outside world, it's just another corpse at the street corner. <u>They</u> don't know he was my friend.

[9] The summer was the worst summer in my short life as a 14-year-old. It all started with a phone call. My mother cried, begged, kept asking for time, as if she were sucking up the last breath of air, holding me as tight as she could, and cried. Her tears hit me like bullets, she said we had been evicted, she kept on asking me to forgive her. "We have no home", I thought. I should have asked for a cheaper Christmas present. On the morning of the eviction, I woke up when someone was

Commentary

- A hard knock on the door > *bussavano*. As is evident, the omission of the adjective "hard" conveys less violence to the scene;
- English class > *al corso* (at the course). Here, another cultural reference is impossible to translate, thus leading to a case of omission. In fact, English in the US is the main subject in school, as is Italian in Italy, so translating *classe di Inglese* in Italian would be a different concept, as English is studied as a foreign language and the teacher has not the same leading role as the teacher of Italian. The same is true in the case of "English teacher" > *insegnante* (teacher);
- in addition, the word "crazy" (currently coded by the LIWC as an anger word) has been miscoded as well as the meaning and intent of the utterance "my crazy English teacher", which is actually a compliment that has no equivalent in Italian;
- "it hits me" is another expression denoting street culture. The Italian "allora penso" is well translated but does not convey the same low social reference. Soon afterwards, instead, he calls the teacher "Mrs. Gruwell", being the only student in class who calls her by her full name to convey the maximum of respect for her.

To conclude, the film title *Freedom Writers* is very appropriate, because it introduces students who were unable to express their feelings and emotions previously and who wanted to free themselves, and, through their diaries, had the courage to fight their fears and neglected feelings [10].

To validate Pennebaker's hypothesis on expressive writing, the film ends with a note that Gruwell successfully brought many of her students to graduation and college.

4.2. *Theoretical discussion on the Italian dubbed version*
Non-standard language varieties pose serious problems in cultural transition. In the extracts taken into consideration, as in the whole film script, we have noticed how culture-specific expressions and the idiolect spoken by the low social status film characters often display forms that rarely have equivalents (i.e. forms that are comparable in meaning and scope) in a different language.

In our case study, from a cross-cultural perspective, it was probably difficult for the translator to find in Italian culture parallel situations to the complicated reality of gang life and racial tensions of Los Angeles in the 1990s. Similarly, from a cross-linguistic perspective, finding similar modes of expression was unlikely to have been an easy task; this explains the 'flattening' effect due to the use of more neutral colloquial markers. This is especially the case of slang vocabulary, which is typical of a restricted speech

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knocking at the door. It was the sheriff who had come to do his job. I looked up at the sky, waiting for something to happen. My mother hasn't any family to count on, nor income. What's the point of coming to school and getting good grades if I haven't got a house? The bus stops in front of the school, I feel I am about to throw up. I am wearing clothes from last year, a pair of old shoes, and no haircut. I think they will laugh at me, and instead, two friends who were at the course with me, come towards me and then I think Mrs Gruwell, my crazy teacher from last year, is the only person who made me think of hope. I talk to my friends about last year's lessons and about our trips and I start feeling better. They give me the timetable and the first teacher is Mrs. Gruwell, room 203. Then I enter the room and it seems to me that all the problems in my life are no longer so important. I am at home.

[10] The group name Freedom Writers is also in honour of Freedom Riders like Jim Zwerg who rode buses to challenge the limits of intolerance.

community. However, as shown in detail above, some strategies can be recognized to compensate for cultural or linguistic gaps, i.e. explicitation, lexical recreation, addition, assimilation, substitution, omission, to name but a few (following Kwieciński's (2001) and Díaz Cintas and Remael's (2007) models).

Another element we have taken into consideration in explaining linguistic phenomena in the transition between source and target texts is the fact that the translation of a film script entails technical constraints connected with the dubbing process, e.g. labial movements and synchrony with the images in the film, which inevitably leads to certain 'losses' in connotation.

Following Bertuccelli Papi and Lenci (2007), lexicon is a complex dynamic system, and the translation strategies used are the result of choices along a hierarchical scale of naturalness/markedness. It is along this scale that the translator has achieved the goal of giving voice to the sadness, anger, frustration and initial sense of impotence of the film characters.

5. Discussion

According to Jedlowski (2000: 194 my translation), "we are a narrating species". This is probably due to the fact that telling or writing one's experiences forces people to re-evaluate their life circumstances (Pennebaker and Chung 2007). Furthermore, writing one's experiences is significant because the "mere act of writing demands a certain degree of structure, as well as the basic labelling or acknowledging of their emotions" (*ibid*.: 279), which puts in motion different cognitive changes that result in alteration of unhealthy behaviours and improvements in people's health. Even if there is still not a comprehensive theory that can explain why this happens, it is important to consider the multiple positive effects that the expressive writing procedure has on people in the act of writing, which adds to the fact that readers/viewers can empathize with the pain, loss and happy moments of the writers.

By giving structure to an emotional experience (telling a story), by writing it as if it were a story that the person is telling, it is more likely that the individual will benefit from it, instead of writing it in a disorganized way. This happens because "the degree to which individuals are able to cognitively organize the event into a coherent narrative is a marker that the event has achieved knowledge status" (*ibid*.: 277), so by analysing the language used in this kind of expressive writing programme, we can now understand to what degree the writers have come to accept their emotions.

After analysing all these aspects, we can go back to the question we previously asked: "Why does expressive writing work?". As already said, it is not possible to give a final answer, but it can definitely be used as a life-course correction because it gives us the chance to detach ourselves from what we are feeling, to take a step back and re-evaluate our lives, it forces us to consider our emotions more closely, and it changes the way we think about past experiences. All these changes cause social and emotional upheavals that ultimately translate into cognitive changes. This is possible because people do not just write and move on with their lives, but in the following days and weeks, they keep thinking about the writing sessions and what feelings they experienced, thus activating various social and psychological processes. As regards my corpus, the writing practice strengthened the Freedom Writers so that their voices can now be heard. This leads

us to believe that change is possible, and a difference can be brought about in troubled people through the power of words.

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