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Investigating reporting signals in the *Harry Potter* saga and its Italian translation

Abstract inglese

This contribution aims explore verbs introducing direct speech (“reporting signals”, Thompson 1994), which are often employed in fiction to introduce turns at speech. When they are used in this function, they condense very crucial diegetic information on the characters involved.

Following in the footsteps of several works that have compared these verbs in English and Italian, the current aim is to further enquire into the role of *inquirts* in the *Harry Potter* saga and its Italian translations. The first purpose is to ascertain which reporting verbs English relies on in a genre that aims at entertaining by creating strong, impactful characters, and with which frequency and patterns. The second is to verify whether in the Italian translations these aspects have been dealt with in depth and in a similar fashion.

Abstract italiano

Questo contributo si propone di esplorare i verbi che introducono il discorso diretto (“reporting signals”, Thompson 1994), che sono spesso impiegati nella narrativa per introdurre i turni dei personaggi. Quando vengono utilizzati con questa funzione, condensano informazioni diegetiche cruciali sui personaggi.

Sulla scorta di diversi lavori che hanno confrontato questi verbi in inglese e italiano, l’obiettivo attuale è quello di indagare ulteriormente sul ruolo degli *inquirts* nella saga di *Harry Potter* e nelle sue traduzioni italiane. Il primo scopo è accertare quali siano i verbi di dire più utilizzati in inglese in un genere che mira a intrattenere creando caratteri forti e di impatto, e con quali caratteristiche. Il secondo è verificare se nelle traduzioni italiane questi aspetti sono stati trattati in modo approfondito e simile.

Keywords: *verbs of saying*, direct speech, characterisation, translation, Harry Potter

Parole chiave: *verba dicendi*, discorso diretto, caratterizzazione, traduzione, Harry Potter

1. Introduction

The instruments exploited by different languages to represent reality have been the object of much discussion. In particular, discrepancies between languages have been highlighted for semantic fields such as motion verbs (Talmy 1985; 1991) or, more specifically, manner of motion verbs, which have been thoroughly investigated by Slobin (1997; 2003). In a nutshell, languages can be divided into two groups, verb-framed languages (V-languages) and satellite-framed languages (S-languages): the former group comprises those in which movement is codified in the verb, whereas the latter need to employ a preposition. English and Italian are respectively a V- and an S- language: *The baby crawled into the kitchen* vs. *Il bambino entrò nella cucina strisciando*.

More interesting, though, is the way in which the manner of action is represented. Still referring to Slobin's work, a distinction is drawn between languages that, like English, encode this type of information in the verb, *crawled* in the example above, and those that, like Italian, need to be encoded by means of an optional item, either a non-finite clause or an adverbial, *entrò ... strisciando*.

This contribution aims to further explore verbs introducing direct speech, and manner of speaking verbs in particular, which are often employed in fiction to introduce turns at speech. When they are used in this function, they become, to borrow Eco's words, "turn ancillaries", i.e. instructions on how the utterance that follows needs to be performed and understood. Consequently, they condense very crucial diegetic information on the characters involved (Bray 2014; Ruano San Segundo 2016; 2017)

After pinpointing that S-verbs like English "have a larger and more diverse lexicon of manner verbs in comparison with V-verbs" (Slobin 1997: 458), Slobin has shown that only half of English manner verbs are translated with Spanish manner verbs (1996), the rest being either left out or neutralised. Studies that have considered both English and Italian have reached controversial conclusions, which seem to depend on the composition of the corpus analysed (Bruti 2003; 2004; Rojo & Javier Valenzuela 2001; Grollero 2013; Mastrofini 2013; Sandford *et al.* 2016). On the basis of these premises, the current aim is to further enquire into the role of *inquirts* in the *Harry Potter* saga and its Italian translations. The novels in the series, all about the adventures of a young wizard overcoming dangerous obstacles to defeat the Dark wizard who killed his parents, have been an international success, with the last volume selling more than 12 million copies. Novelist J. K. Rowling crafted a magic world where characters are effectively depicted by exploiting narration and dialogue alike. The first purpose is to ascertain which reporting verbs English relies on in a genre that aims at entertaining by creating strong, impactful characters, and with which frequency and patterns. The second is to verify whether in the Italian translations – which, given the enormous success of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, have recently been revised by Salani – these aspects have been dealt with in depth and in a similar fashion.

2. Reporting signals

In this contribution I will limit myself to analysing “reporting signals”¹ that introduce direct speech, with a special focus on manner of speaking verbs. These *inquirts* allow narrators to perform various functions at the same time: they help to construct the plot of the novel and to delineate some aspects of the characters’ personalities, by differentiating between their voices. So, for example, if an author says “X said angrily” or “X blurted out”, s/he gives the readers an account of the actual words which were spoken, but also a clue as to how they were uttered (Ruano San Segundo 2016; 2017), and, in some cases, how the text could be read aloud for children.

These reporting forms may appear before, after, and in the middle of a quote (cf. Banfield 1982; Zwicky 1971), although an analysis of *Little Women* showed that more than 70% of the total appear after the direct quote (Bruti 2004: 176). In a conversational novel such as this, I expected manner of speaking verbs to occur rather frequently, as a characterising device, but the analysis revealed that the verb *to say* (although variously complemented) outnumbered significantly more specific *verba dicendi*. The same stylistic function of characterisation is thus undertaken by the collocates of *say*.

The subclass of verbs of saying has been described and categorised from different perspectives. After Zwicky’s pioneering paper (1978), in which the morphosyntactic properties of this class were defined, others followed in the same vein, although the interest shifted to semantics properties, as in Mufwene (1978) and Levin (1993), who enlarged the original set put forward by Zwicky. Research was then developed by Fillmore, with mainly lexicographic purposes, especially on motion verbs, within his frame semantics model (Baker *et al.* 1998; Fillmore & Atkins 1992; 1994). Urban and Ruppenhofer (2001) apply the model to manner of speech verbs, whereas the majority of the studies that follow are still focused on verbs of motion. Thompson’s survey (1994), which lies at the intersection of lexicographic and didactic studies, contains perhaps one of the most detailed accounts of verbs of reporting. Slobin (1996), following in Fillmore’s footsteps and integrating Talmy’s insights (1991), analysed verbs on the basis of different language typologies, i.e. verb-framed or satellite-framed. Other studies have followed in this tradition, delving into the syntax-semantics

¹ The part of the report which tells you that this is a report, for example. A reporting verb such as ‘say’. In some cases punctuation marks such as inverted commas may act as “reporting signals” (Thompson 1994: vii).

interface of manner of speech verbs, mainly Grollero (2013), Mastrofini (2013), Vergaro *et al.* (2013), Sanford *et al.* (2016), Sanford (2017).

Some works began to adopt a contrastive perspective, such as Snell-Hornby's (1983) and Rojo and Valenzuela (2001). The former focuses on English and German and provides a detailed verb description by resorting to ample contrastive analysis, whereas the latter applies Slobin's analysis of verbs of saying to English texts and their Spanish translation. Quite interestingly, Rojo and Valenzuela found that Spanish translators were often inclined to add information, replacing generic English verbs with more specific Spanish ones.

Finally, within a stylistics framework (cf., *inter alia*, Bray 2014 and Mahlberg 2013), Ruano San Segundo (2016; 2017) illustrates the role of reporting verbs in the creation of fictional personalities in literary texts, by resorting to the taxonomy of speech verbs developed by Caldas-Coulthard (1987).

Among the studies cited above, the most detailed accounts for describing verbs of saying are offered by Thompson (1994) and Sanford *et al.* (2016). In the former they are divided into two main groups, verbs showing the speaker's purpose and verbs showing the manner of speaking. Verbs in this latter category are further distinguished on the basis of five parameters, i.e. speed, volume, general behaviour, animal sounds (sometimes metaphorically extended to human beings) and various aspects of a speaker's mood. The verbs that show the manner of speaking describe the quality of speech. Verbs describing general behaviour are not strictly verbs of speaking, as they can indicate nonverbal communication, even though they are often deployed to introduce direct speech (e.g. *beam, frown, gape, gawk*). Verbs describing animal sounds can be metaphorically extended to introduce the speech of human beings, a tendency which is particularly palpable in fiction, especially if destined for younger readers (see 4 below).

The study by Sanford *et al.* (2016: 145) considers two major categories, physical-auditory and semantic-pragmatic traits: "the physical auditory components include pitch, volume, speed, and rhythm; the semantic-pragmatic components include directionality, persistence, formality, speaker's attitude, speaker's intention, and effect on the hearer". The outcome is a very useful and complete chart with 186 entries categorised according to the ten features specified above, whose definitions have been verified with two native speakers of English (American and British) and put to the test with surveys conducted by interviewing speakers.

3. Methodology

For the purposes of this contribution, I first collected the digitised version of all the *Harry Potter* novels in English and in Italian to be fed into software WordSmith Tools 7 (Scott 2016) for automatic investigation. The English novels were collected in a single text file (.txt), the HP_Eng corpus, for the first part of the research.

In studies on *verba dicendi*, different research methodologies have been used. I will rapidly go through them to explain which research method I decided to follow. Grollero (2013: 105) followed Thompson's classification (1994) and analysed manually tokens in four novels in their digital version, both originals and translations, whereas Rojo and Valenzuela analysed four English contemporary novels and their translations into Spanish by extracting randomly "100 verbs of saying from each novel and their corresponding translations into Spanish. The verbs were selected randomly: one page was chosen at random and all the verbs of saying were noted down up to a hundred" (2001:469). Mastrofini (2013: 136-137) collected a corpus of four English contemporary novels and their translations into Italian and specifically searched for a list of 176 manner of speaking verbs, which had been singled out by Vergaro *et al.* 2013 and later employed in other studies (e.g. Sanford *et al.* 2016 in which a fine-grained description of these verbs and their components was carried out by drawing examples from the COCA).

Ruano San Segundo (2017), who was not interested in translating reporting verbs but in exploring their functions in fiction, resorted instead to Caldas-Coulthard's (1987) taxonomy, in which verbs of speech are classified according to the "reporter's level of interference on the words being reported" (2017:110). He then ran a search with WordSmith Tools in a digitised version of the text he intended to analyse, looking for regular verbs in the past by means of the suffix *-ed* after an inverted comma (e.g. a quote) in several combinations (with the reporting signal before or after the quote) and adding some specific searches to include irregular verbs of saying (e.g. *say*).

As a first step in my investigation, I ascertained the presence of reporting verbs among the keywords of the HP_Eng corpus, by contrasting it with a reference corpus, the BNC written version. Secondly, to circumscribe the investigation, I decided to take advantage of the wildcard searches used by Ruano San Segundo in a similar investigation of reporting in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*. I opted for this method for two main reasons: searching the corpus for the list of verbs of reporting used by Mastrofini (2013) still left me with many tokens of these verbs that were not reporting signals introducing speech and needed to be excluded manually; secondly, there are, occasionally, verbs that are not in themselves verbs of reporting but introduce direct speech: they may describe some of the circumstances of the situation of utterance, such as the speaker's attitude, their kinesic behaviour, etc.

The following is one such case: “Oh... well...” she shrugged. “I think they think I’m a bit odd, you know. Some people call me Loony Lovegood, actually.”

4. An analysis: from quantitative to qualitative remarks

4.1

My analysis moves from some quantitative remarks on the English novels to more qualitative remarks, taking into account a limited sample from one of the English novels and its Italian translation.

As a first step in the analysis, I created a list of keywords² for the HP_Eng corpus, contrasting it with the BNC written corpus. Apart from very predictable results, such as the three main protagonists’ names as the first three items in rank (*Harry*, *Ron* and *Hermione* respectively), interestingly, among lexical verbs, after two elements belonging to the lemma LOOK (*looked* and *looking*), a verb related to sight, *staring*, and the verb *know*, the fifth in rank is *whispered*, with 448 tokens. The second speech verb to appear is *muttered*, 161th in rank with 331 tokens. This indicates special attention being paid to the quality of direct speech, to the circumstances of enunciation and the attitudes of speech participants.

To delve more deeply into reporting signals, I searched the HP_Eng corpus for regular verbs in the past by means of the suffix *-ed* after an inverted comma in several combinations (with the reporting signal before or after the quote; cf. table 1). The first query produced 831 tokens, of which 769 are reporting signals (some results had to be excluded as irrelevant, i.e. the proper noun *Fred*, or adjectives like *unexpected*). The second and the third, with ” followed by *he/she* and a regular verb in the past, were also manually checked, as the instances in which other verbs occurred are very numerous. In this case, I retained speech verbs only, even though general behaviour verbs can in some cases contribute to a precise description of the speech event.

Table 1.

² Keywords are words whose frequency is exceptionally high in comparison with some norm, usually a reference corpus.

Overall, as can be seen from table 2 below, *ask* and *add* are the first two verbs in rank. They are classified respectively as a structuring and discourse signalling verb by Caldas-Coulthard (1987: 155 and 163). This means that they contribute to the architecture of embedded speech within the narrative world. The other three verbs, instead, *shout*, *whisper* and *mutter* are all descriptive verbs (or manner of speaking verbs, cf. Thompson 1994) which specify the parameter of volume. None of the first five verbs provides information concerning the other components that have been singled out as relevant in the group of verbs of speech: pitch, directionality, persistence, formality, speaker's attitude, speaker's intention, effect on the hearer (see Sandford 2017: 235).

Table 2.

To obtain a more complete picture of the role of reporting in the corpus, I also checked instances of the main verb of reporting, *say*, in its various combinations (Ruano San Segundo 2017: 114), with the following results: *said* appears 4,378 times, " *he said* 440 and " *she said* 259, for a total of 5,077 tokens. This means that *say* is roughly 4 times as frequent as more specific reporting verbs.

In order to evaluate the contribution of reporting verbs to implicit characterisation, drawing on Culpeper's influential model (2001: 172)³, it is essential to identify associations between reporting verbs and characters. To this purpose, I have selected two characters, one appearing more in the first novels, the other featuring from the fifth onwards, to evaluate which specific reporting verbs are employed to introduce their speech: Uncle Vernon, Harry's nasty (and reluctant) legal guardian, and professor Dolores Umbridge, at first professor of Defence against the Dark Arts and later Headmistress at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and High Inquisitor. While Uncle Vernon (https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Vernon_Dursley) openly shows that he dislikes Harry and treats him badly, Umbridge, with her mellifluous voice and condescending ways, is often cruel and vicious in inflicting punishments against students, Harry in particular (https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Dolores_Umbridge). For both characters 36 tokens of reporting verbs other than *say* are employed, whose breakdown in percentage can be seen in chart 1. Uncle Vernon's speech is qualified as negative and critical, given that the majority of verbs used describe either unpleasant and aggressive animal sounds, e.g. *bark*, *bellow*, *croak*, *growl*, *grunt*, *roar*, or speech that betrays a negative disposition, e.g. *mutter*, *snarl*, *sneer*, or even loud and aggressive behaviour, e.g.

³ In Culpeper's model explicit characterisation cues coincide with self- or other presentation, whereas implicit characterisation cues are textual elements that indirectly contribute to sketching characters as they convey "character information which has to be derived by inference" (Culpeper 2001: 172).

shout and *yell*. The only neutral or positive verbs are *ask*, *chuckle*, *glared*, *repeat*, *suggest*, or even verbs that do not describe the qualities of his speech, e.g. *seize* and *wait*, verbs that are used to describe physical actions performed while talking.

Professor Umbridge's turns can instead be grouped into two main categories: on the one hand verbs that either neutrally describe her turns (*ask*, *enquire*, *demand*) and specify how discourse progresses (*continue*, *repeat*, *talk over*), on the other ones that are descriptive, defining her voice qualities along the parameters of volume and pitch (*breathe*, *cry*, *mutter*, *scream*, *shriek*, *shout*, *trill*). There is one verb of general behaviour, *simper*, that fits the overall picture quite well, alluding to her deceitful nature. Her prying disposition, partly to be ascribed to her role as High Inquisitor and partly to her true nature, stands out very clearly, together with her voice qualities. High-volume and high-pitch tones are more abundant than low ones (only *breathe* and *mutter*) and provide hints of her power-hungry and ruthless strategies.

Chart 1.

4.2

I decided to investigate translating strategies for reporting signals by analysing their tokens in the second chapter ("Aunt Marge's Big Mistake") of the third novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and its Italian translation. In this chapter Harry is at the Dursleys, waiting to go back to Hogwarts. Uncle Vernon's sister, Marge, is about to arrive for a weekly visit and Harry is ordered to behave well, which he agrees to in exchange for permission to visit the village of Hogsmeade. At last, however, when Aunt Marge makes offensive remarks about his father, Harry can no longer restrain himself and accidentally uses his magic to inflate her. Harry runs away, fearing he will be punished for using magic outside school.

I have also decided to take into account *say*, as it is necessary to evaluate what happens in translation: there might in fact be cases where specific verbs of saying are replaced with more generic ones, but the reverse might also occur. The verb *say* has 37 tokens, of which 12 have no form of complementation. The remaining ones offer additional information in -ing clauses, manner adjuncts, noun and prepositional phrases, temporal and relative clauses. Of these 12 instances, in the Italian translation 9 are rendered with *dire* alone, but in 3 cases *say* has been turned into more specific verbs, *chiedere*, *rispondere* and *profferire*. The first two better specify how the turn fits the verbal exchange, but the third, applying to Aunt Marge, is crucial in qualifying her speech:

1a. “I still don’t like your tone, boy,” she *said*. “If you can speak of your beating in that casual way, they clearly aren’t hitting you enough.

1b. “il tuo tono continua a non piacermi, ragazzo” *profferì*. “Se usi quel tono svagato per parlare delle frustate che prendi, è chiaro che non te ne danno abbastanza.

In choosing *profferire* the translator emphasizes Aunt Marge’s bad temper and offers the reader some hints as to how the utterance might be expressed, with rage and arrogance, thus contributing to the psychological description of the character in that precise moment of the story.

The majority of accompanying forms of *say* are non-finite clauses that illustrate actions carried out while speaking: the same structure, a gerund in Italian, is retained 9 times out of 10. The exception is *say* followed by an -ing clause introducing a mental action, which undergoes an explicitation:

2a. “Well,” *said* Harry *choosing his words carefully*.

2b. “Be’ ” *spiegò* Harry *scegliendo con cura le parole*.

The second most frequent collocates of *say* are manner adjuncts, which either refer to some acoustic properties of the utterance (cf. 3), or describe the speakers’ emotional attitude (cf. 4). The former function is particularly important in underlining changes in temper and behaviour. In 2 instances the combination *say* + manner adjunct is retained in Italian, but in the remaining 4 more specific verbs have been chosen (the case in 4).

3a. “Hedwig,” he *said gloomily*, “you’re going to have to clear off for a week.”

3b. “Edvige” *disse in tono sconsolato* “devi sparire per una settimana.”

4a. “All right,” *said* Harry *bitterly*, “if she does when she’s talking to me.”

4b. “Lo farò” *ribatté* Harry *aspramente*, “se lei lo fa con me”.

As can be seen, in 4 the Italian verb *ribattere*, together with the manner adverb, suggests the supragemental traits of Harry’s utterance and qualifies the exchange as an intense discussion in which Harry holds his ground.

In translating the combination of *say* and relative and temporal clauses, 3 and 2 respectively, temporal clauses follow exactly the same pattern, whereas with relative clauses in 2 cases more descriptive verbs are chosen, *rispondere* and *esclamare*.

5a. “They didn’t die in a car crash!” *said* Harry, *who found himself on his feet*.

5b. “Non sono morti in un incidente!” *esclamò Harry scattando in piedi.*

In 5b the translator has evidently interpreted the original, putting the verbal and nonverbal information together: Harry’s sudden movement certainly must betray his indignation on hearing lies concerning his parent’s death. Hence the choice of *esclamare*, which, together with the gerund that replaces the relative clause, gives an idea of his sudden reaction and upset mood.

In the 4 tokens of *say* followed by a prepositional or noun phrase, only in one is *say* replaced by *riprendere*, confirming a tendency to avoid repetition of the superordinate verb of reporting and at the same time of better defining the turn.

Turning now to specific reporting verbs, in the chapter under investigation there are 37 reporting signals, as can be seen in table 4 below, of which 17 tokens are accompanied by forms of complementation. In what follows, I describe the strategies that have been used in translation and attempt to draw some generalisations.

Table 3.

There are 3 tokens of verbs of saying replaced by the more generic *dire*, but only 2 of them can be considered neutralisations (exx. 6 and 7), because in the others (8 and 9) there are additions that integrate the semantic features inscribed in the original in the reporting verbs.

6a. Uncle Vernon drained his teacup, glanced at this watch and *added*, “I’d better be off in a minute, Petunia, Marge’s train gets in at ten.”

6b. Zio Vernon finì il suo tè, guardò l’orologio e *disse*: “Esco tra un minuto, Petunia, il treno di Marge arriva alle dieci”.

7a. “Do something about your hair!” Aunt Petunia *snapped* as he reached the hall.

7b. “E fai qualcosa a quei capelli!” gli *disse* mentre Harry si avviava verso l’ingresso.

8a. “Just a small one, then” *chuckled*. “A bit more than that... and a bit more... that’s the boy.”

8b. “Ma sì, appena appena” *disse ridacchiando*. “Un po’ di questo, un po’ di quello... come il ragazzo”.

9a. “No, Vernon,” *hiccoughed* Aunt Marge, holding up a hand, her tiny bloodshot eyes fixed on Harry’s.

9b. “No, Vernon” *disse* zia Marge. *Le era venuto il singhiozzo*. Tese una mano per interrompere il fratello, gli occhietti iniettati di sangue fissi su Harry.

Example 6b shows consistent translating strategies throughout the turn, as all verbs are replaced with generic solutions: *drained*, *glanced* and *added* become *finire*, *guardare* and *dire*. In 7b, instead, the choice has even heavier repercussions, as only the imperative is preserved, but there are no indications of how the turn is uttered. *Snap* suggests that the utterance is pronounced annoyingly, bitterly, or impatiently, and this is lost in Italian. The same cannot be said for 8 and 9, where Italian cannot count on single lexemes to convey the same idea as in the original: as for 8, there is no verb to indicate that one speaks and laughs at the same time, whereas the verb *singhiozzare* exists in Italian, but it is much more frequently employed with the meaning ‘to sob desperately’, so a periphrasis is needed (9b).

As can be seen in table 3 above, six reporting verbs, *snarl*, *snap*, *yell*, *bellow*, *boom* and *add* are translated with more than one form in Italian, as the choice is shaped by the context and the character. For example, *snarl*, which is one of the most frequent with 3 tokens and always applies to Uncle Vernon, is rendered either with *sibilare* (twice) or *ringhiare*. *Snarl* is a verb reproducing an animal sound, but implies a loud volume, the speaker’s anger, and his/her intention to warn the addressee (Mastrofini 2013: 147), whereas *sibilare*, apart from requiring a low volume and a peculiar pitch, is more vague in terms of speaker’s attitude and intended effects on the addressee. In the original, *hiss* is used once, in association with Aunt Petunia (reporting signals for her include *snap* and *squeal*), whereas the majority of specific reporting signals that are employed to describe Uncle Vernon’s speech contain features of loudness and anger.

A comparison of reporting signals for Uncle Vernon and Aunt Marge is in chart 2 below. *Snarl* is only used to introduce Uncle Vernon’s speech, as well as *bellow*, *blurt out*, *sneer*, *snort*, *spit*, which characterise him as rough, loud, and impatient (*bellow* refers particularly to how loud the speaker talks; *blurt out* and *spit* to the speed of utterance; *sneer* to the speaker’s facial expression and *snort* reproduces an animal sound; see below). Brother and sister seem to share, at least in part, the group of verbs denoting animal sounds: *bark*, *grunt*, *growl* and *roar*: *bark*, *growl* and *roar* are used for both, *grunt* only for Marge. Interestingly, Aunt Petunia’s speech, which, expectedly, is limited given the personalities of her two partners, is carefully sketched by means of two verbs sharing low volume and pitch, *hiss* and *squeal*. Differently from her brother Vernon’s, Aunt Marge’s speech is depicted with contrasting features, for example, *bark*, *grunt* and *shout*, merging the roughness of animal sounds with loudness, but also *chuckle*, *hiccough*, *scream*, which are characterised by nervousness, fear and uneasiness.

Finally, *pat* and *sneer* are not in themselves verbs of speech, but are used to describe direct speech. Specifically, by describing the act of patting someone on the hand, a special focus is placed on the speaker’s (i.e. Aunt Marge’s) condescending attitude, which is reflected in speech (including paralinguistic traits) as well as in her general behaviour (e.g. gestures, body movements, gaze, etc.).

Sneer describes a scornful expression on the speaker's face, hinting at possible vocal realisations. In translation *sneer* (ex. 10), although not rendered with *dire*, represents a case of neutralisation, as Uncle Vernon's contemptuous attitude is totally disregarded.

10a. "And why should I do that?" sneered Uncle Vernon.

10b. "E perché dovrei?" chiese zio Vernon.

Chart 2.

5. Conclusions

The first part of the analysis, on the HP_Eng corpus, highlighted that the most frequent verbs introducing direct speech, apart from *say*, are *ask* and *add*, which perform respectively a structuring and discourse signalling function (Caldas-Coulthard 1987). They help readers better contextualise turns at talk within the narrative world. The other three most frequent verbs, *shout*, *whisper* and *mutter*, are all manner of speech verbs, specifying the parameter of volume.

To investigate the contribution of reporting signal to characterisation, I searched the corpus for reporting signals in relation to two characters, Uncle Vernon and Professor Umbridge. In both cases a vast array (36 verbs of report other than *say*) are used and regularities in the associations of verbs and characters seem to play a relevant role. Uncle Vernon's speech is depicted through a majority of verbs describing animal sounds or verbs with negative connotations, with only a few neutral structuring verbs. Conversely, Professor Umbridge's turns reflect her double nature and are introduced either by neutral or discourse-signalling verbs, or by descriptive verbs, defining her voice qualities especially along the parameters of volume and pitch (see chart 1).

The more qualitative analysis on the second chapter of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and its Italian translation aimed at disclosing translating strategies. Of the 37 reporting signals (including *pat* and *sneer*) used in this chapter, 35 have been rendered with specific reporting verbs other than *say*. There are two instances of generalisation with *dire*, exx. 6 and 7, and one with *chiedere*, ex. 10. Sometimes the translator has chosen descriptive verbs of speech that downgrade the strength of the speech act, for example both *boom* and *shout* are rendered as *esclamare*.

Examining reporting signals with *say* was useful in detecting possible variations on the part of the translator (see exx. 1-3), who, in fact, sometimes employed structuring or discourse-signalling verbs (Caldas-Coulthard 1987) to replace *say*, partly to avoid repetition, which is still felt to be undesirable in written texts in Italian, partly to better clarify the dynamics of the exchange (using *chiedere* or *riprendere*). This happened in 10 cases out of 25 to obtain both precision and variation.

Overall, therefore, the differences in translation do not seem to depend on systemic differences between English and Italian (also observed by Mastrofini 2013), as in Italian too a good number of verbs encoding manner have been used. Quite often, not only neutral structuring verbs such as *say*, *tell*, *ask*, *reply* are followed by forms of complementation that enrich their meaning, but this also happens for manner of speech verbs. This choice, as can be seen from table 3 above, is closely mirrored in Italian too. This testifies to special attention being paid in describing the speech event and situation both in the original and in translation.

A certain tendency towards less emphasis and more restrained tones has been detected, together with a less evident stylistic association of specific verbs with specific characters in translation. For example *snarl*, *snap* and *yell*, which are exclusively used to introduce Uncle Vernon's speech, are rendered with a selection of different verbs, weakening the association between verb and character and making the representation of his personality slightly less defined.

Hopefully this preliminary research will be expanded by creating a parallel corpus with the English texts and their Italian translations, to better integrate quantitative and qualitative results and further investigate translating strategies.

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Search string	Tokens
" -ed	831 > 765
" he -ed	500 > 316
" she -ed	227 > 141
	TOT. 1232

Table 1. Reporting signals (other than *say*)

" -ed		" he -ed		" she -ed		overall	
ask	131	add	41	add	29	ask	185
shout	61	ask	38	ask	16	shout	83
whisper	48	shout	22	whisper	12	whisper	78
snap	35	mutter	19	snap	6	add	70
cry	30	whisper	18	repeat/shriek	5	mutter	44

Table 2. The five most frequent reporting verbs for the three queries

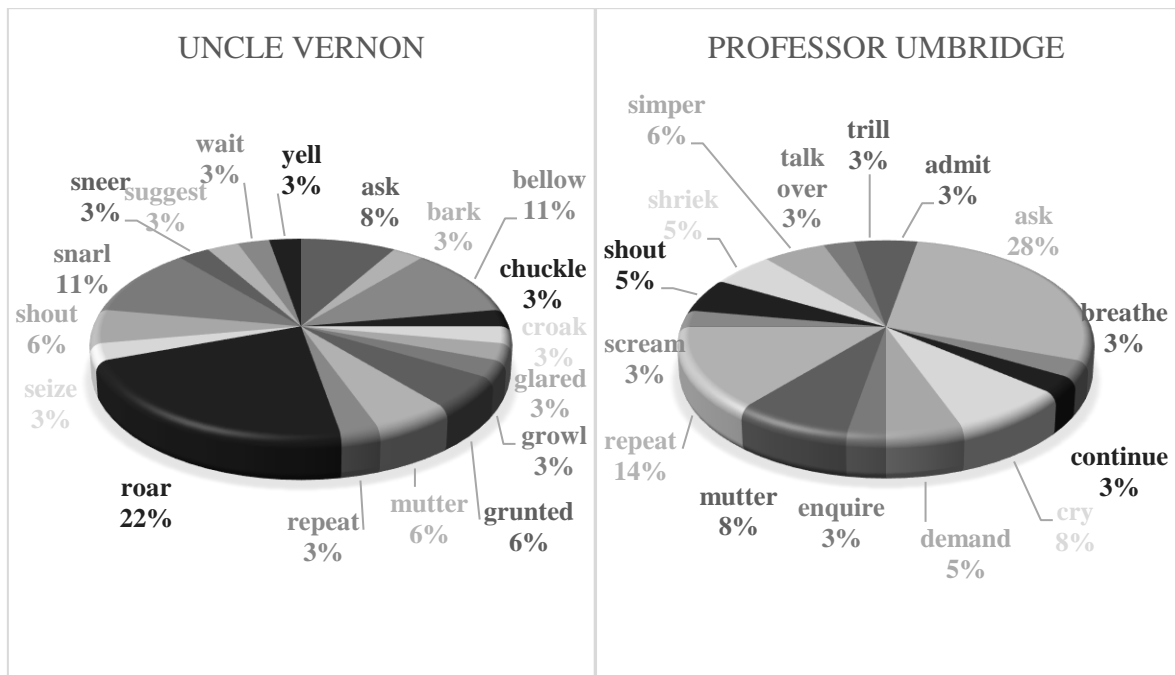


Chart 1. Reporting signals introducing Uncle Vernon's and Professor Umbridge's speech

	ST (reporting verbs plus forms of complementation)	TT (translation of reporting verb plus form of complementation)
<i>add</i>	2 --	1 dire 1 aggiungere

<i>ask</i>	1	--	1 chiedere	
<i>bark</i>	3	1 -- 1 + prep. phrase 1 + -ing clause	3 abbaiare	2 -- 1 + gerund
<i>bellow</i>	2	--	1 muggire 1 strillare	
<i>blurt out</i>	1	--	1 esclamare	
<i>boom</i>	2	--	1 esclamare 1 tuonare	
<i>chuckle</i>	1	--	1 dire	+ gerund <i>ridacchiando</i>
<i>go on</i>	2	1 + adv. 1+ -ing clause	2 riprendere	1+ adv. 1 + gerund
<i>growl</i>	2	--	2 ringhiare	
<i>grunt</i>	1	--	1 grugnire	
<i>hiccough</i>	1	+ -ing clause	1 dire	+ two clauses: <i>Le era venuto il singhiozzo. Tese una mano per interrompere il fratello.</i>
<i>hiss</i>	1	+ prep. phrase	1 sibilare	+ prep. phrase
<i>pat</i>	1	+ dir. object + prep. phrase	1 battere	+ dir. object + prep. phrase
<i>roar</i>	2	--	2 ruggire	
<i>scream</i>	1	+ -ing clause	1 strillare	+ adj.
<i>shout</i>	1	+ -ing clause	1 esclamare	+ gerund
<i>snap</i>	3	1 -- 1 + adverb 1 + -ing clause	1 dire 1 esclamare 1 scattare	-- + adv. + gerund
<i>snarl</i>	3	1 + temporal clause 1 -- 1 + prep. phrase	1 ringhiare 2 sibilare	-- -- + prep. phrase
<i>sneer</i>	1	--	1 chiedere	
<i>snort</i>	1	+ -ing clause	1 bofonchiare	+ gerund
<i>spat</i>	1	--	1 ribattere	
<i>squeal</i>	1	--	1 squittire	
<i>yell</i>	3	1 -- 1 + temporal clause 1 + relative clause	1 esclamare 1 gridare 1 strillare	-- + temporal clause + relative clause

Table 3. Reporting signals in ch. 2 of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and its Italian translation

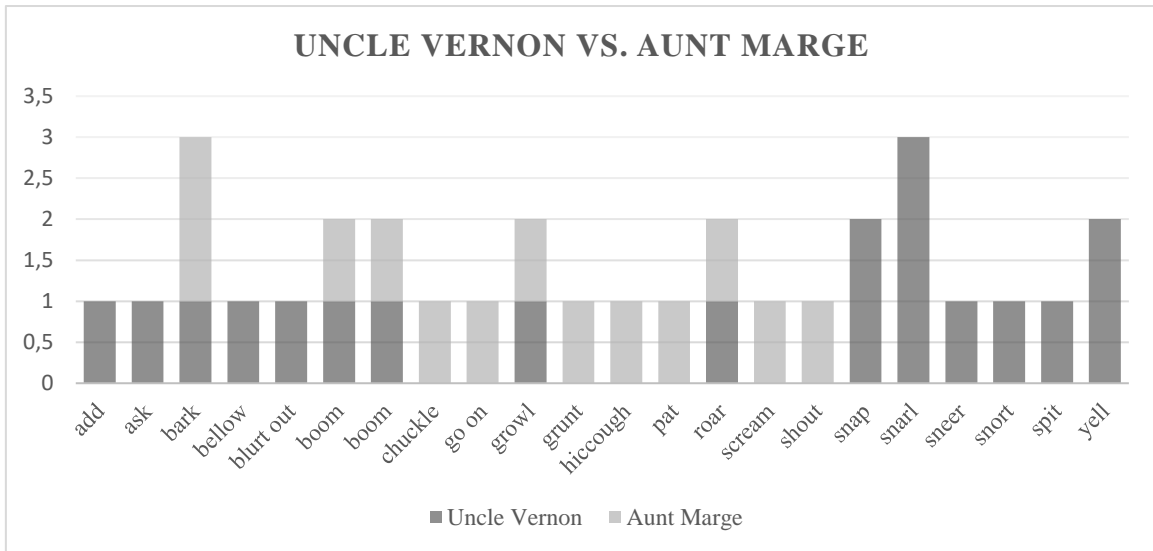


Chart 2. A comparison of reporting signals (other than with *say*) introducing Uncle Vernon's and Aunt Marge's speech