

## Representations of masculine speech in the Japanese dub of the movie *Call Me by Your Name: Virtual spaces and bodies of otherness*

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### Abstract

This case study analyses adult male language in the Japanese-language version of the American movie *Call Me by Your Name* (2017). Building upon audiovisual translation and recent Japanese sociolinguistic studies, this article intends to highlight the gap between the non-native actors' language and the actual speech of Japanese speakers, as well as the hypermasculinization of fictional speech aimed at indexing a *hard masculinity* model through the so-called phenomenon of *transduction*. By intertwining the analysis of the Japanese male markers in dubbed texts with the phonetic analysis of the original voices and Japanese voice actors, this study testifies to a different orientation in the Japanese dialogues compared to those in English and highlights the exploitation of the speakers' bodies which become themselves vehicles to portray certain ideologies of masculinity. In particular, it reveals a clear polarization between *hard* and *soft masculinity* mediated by a set of metapragmatic stereotypes that inherit, in turn, a homonormativity vision which is directly borrowed from the imagery of different gender relationships in Japan.

### Keywords

Gender ideologies, audiovisual translation, inter-indexical relationships, masculine identity construction, bodies of otherness

## 1. Introduction

This study aims to analyze male adult speech in the context of audiovisual translation from English to Japanese with a focus on interlingual dubbing and subtitling. Specifically, the object of analysis is Luca Guadagnino's feature film *Call Me by Your Name* (2017) in its Japanese-distributed version (*Kimi no namae de boku o yonde*). Just as illustrated in Miyazaki's studies (2023), today's virtual spaces represent *social contexts* where every speech style is subject to dynamic interpretations that can not only convey metapragmatic gender-related stereotypes but also influence end viewer's unconscious sociolinguistic imaginary through the widespread contact of audiovisual artifacts in global society, known as *indexical bleaching* (Nakamura, 2020a; Squires 2014). Even in the context of contemporary Japanese audiovisual distribution, this risk materializes through two processes that are inherent in the practice of audiovisual interlingual mediation: the strategy of *transduction*, as well as the exploitation of so-called *bodies of otherness* (Inoue, 2003). Specifically, *transduction* refers to a relation in which a certain indexical order from a source language is transposed *tout court* into the target language through some relevant equivalences: in her studies, Inoue has shown how this practice can be exploited to suggest the presumed membership of certain virtual speakers to specific identities, classes or social groups. From a translation oriented perspective, this process is also related to the so-called *adequation*<sup>1</sup> strategy mentioned by Nakamura (2013, 2016, 2020b, 2022, 2023) which is made possible, in turn, by the iconic exploitation of the bodies of foreign actors and actresses (*bodies of otherness*) on which new voices and dialogues are mounted through dubbing and subtitling, effectively transforming them into potential vehicles of ideological manipulation (Díaz Cintas, 2012; Zabalbeascoa, 2012).

As already suggested by studies conducted in the field of audiovisual translation with a special focus on gender (De Marco, 2006, 2009, 2016; Konstantinovskaia, 2020; Ranzato, 2012; Vitucci, 2020, 2023), those on Japanese gender translation (Hiramoto, 2009; Kobayashi, 2024; Länsisalmi, 2019; Saito, 2018; Nakamura, 2020a, 2022, 2023; Ohara, 2019; SturtzSreetharan, 2006, 2009, 2017), role language (Johnstone, 2017; Kinsui, 2003, 2007, 2017; Kotlarczyk, 2021; Yasui, 2024), and language ideologies (Duranti, 2021; Irvine & Gal, 2000, 2019; Spitzmüller, 2022), the representation of certain *genderlects* in the media not only exerts a profound influence on the perception of masculine and feminine speech by various reference audiences, but it can also stimulate forms of juxtaposition between this and certain gender ideologies. Besides, as Balirano (2014, 2015) also suggests, since language plays a fundamental role in simultaneously (re)producing both social exclusion and inclusion, one needs to deepen the link between the use of audiovisual texts and the ways in which they shape meanings and identities both from a sociological and a translational perspective. On the other hand, as recent sociolinguistic studies suggest (Iwata, Shigemitsu, & Murata, 2022; Miyazaki, 2023; Okamoto & Shibamoto-Smith, 2004; Sanada, 2020; Yamashita, 2022), Japan is undergoing a progressive dissolution of the boundaries between male and female speech, which runs counter to the gendered language one finds nowadays in most Japanese dubbing of foreign actors. In particular, what contemporary audiovisual products seem to reflect in male speech seems to corroborate a kind of collective imaginary in which Japanese hegemonic masculinity partly inherits the characteristics of the Japanese *salaryman* of the second half of the twentieth century, that is, of an identity constructed in response to certain sociocultural, economic and political conditions (Dasgupta, 2013, p. 7). On the other hand, it is insightful to note how the model of homonormativity often proposed in translation, often traces from a linguistic-

<sup>1</sup> "One example of adequation is the process in which a speech style ideologically linked to a culturally recognized subject position in the target language is applied to the speech of a non-native speaker, adequating the indexical distinction of the original speech to that of the target language" (Nakamura, 2016, p. 3).

aesthetic point of view the ideal of the so-called *ikanimokei*, that is, that of a *hard masculinity* that takes its direct cue from a model derived, in turn, from the dominant heterosexual imaginary (Baudinette, 2021, pp. 206-211). In our view, this kind of translation attitude (i.e. the attempt to polarize a *hard masculinity vs. soft masculinity*) can be related to the linguistic bias produced by language ideologies that Heinrich (2012) already highlighted in his studies:

Ideologies give rise to the existence of a binary opposition, whereby the self and the familiar are assigned a positive value, while the other and the new are seen as negative. Deviance to and criticism on standing ideology is part of the negative pole (Heinrich, 2012, p. 174)

Since the analysis of audiovisual texts can prove extremely useful in tracing certain ideological sub-texts which are instrumental to the subjugation of some of the social actors at play (which means that language itself is not the final object of ideology, but rather the discourses in which it is organized), this study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) How does the Japanese translation of the two characters' speech differ from each other?
- (2) How do their Japanese translations differ from the original English?
- (3) Which type of masculinity do they refer to when they produce Japanese texts?

## 2. Dataset and methodology

The dataset of this study is based on dubbed and subtitled texts in Japanese and English<sup>2</sup> of the movie *Call Me by Your Name*<sup>3</sup> (Japanese title: *Kimi no namae de boku o yonde*, 2017), directed by Luca Guadagnino and based on a novel written by André Aciman. The movie is set in the summer of 1983 and tells the story of Elio Perlman, a 17-year-old French-Italian Jewish boy living with his parents in rural northern Italy, and Oliver, a 24-year-old Jewish-American graduate student who has come to Italy to help Elio's father with his research. Despite their age difference, a passion soon ignites between the two that leads them to discover both the nature of desire and the pain that inevitably accompanies separation.

From a textual perspective, this study focuses on three dialogues featuring Oliver (Elio's lover and co-protagonist) and Elio (the young protagonist), considering the different indexes of their speech<sup>4</sup>. The selection of male speakers takes the length of the speech within each analysed scene into account, and every scene has been inserted in its entirety so as to not limit the analysis to short portions of speech. Due to spatial limitations, the investigation is restricted to the morphological-lexical aspects of the speech with the aim of (1) describing the most salient characteristics of the Japanese speech of each speaker with a specific focus on sentence-final particles (henceforth, SFP. In particular, *-da*, *-nda*, *-nanda*, *-ka*, *-na*, *-darō*), personal pronouns and relative possessive adjectives (*kimi*, *anata*, *boku*, *ore*, *kimi[no]*, *anata[no]*, *boku[no]*, *ore[no]*), and verbal morphology (imperative forms vs. polite requests); (2) including both dubbing and subtitling in the analysis<sup>5</sup>; (3) comparing the Japanese texts with the original dialogues in English; (4) comparing two male characters in the scenes (Oliver, Elio). Through these four objectives, the study intends to highlight indexical relations that arise in the speech of the two male characters and detect eventual ideological positioning in the two target texts (dubbing and subtitles).

<sup>2</sup> The source text is in English with some occasional forays into French and Italian.

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth, CBYN.

<sup>4</sup> In particular: spatial-temporal locus of the communicative context, personal characteristics of the speaker, social identity, linguistic acts, social activities, affective and epistemic stances.

<sup>5</sup> The comparison between dubbing and subtitling can be insightful for understanding the quantitative incidence of MM in both texts, but it is also useful for intercepting possible temporal relationships between them. In Vitucci (2024) one notes, for example, how subtitles can inherit stylistic choices not only from earlier subtitles, but also from dubbing itself by imitating its translation choices.

### 3. Translation analysis of the scenes

This section presents a qualitative analysis of the translations into Japanese of three scenes extrapolated from CBYN with a particular focus on utterances from Oliver confronting Elio. The reason for selecting the two male protagonists is to highlight, on a linguistic and gender identity level, the kind of masculinities as well as the kind of relationship that arise between the two men in the Japanese texts. In order to keep the investigation as objective as possible, the female characters were left aside, since, in addition to playing a secondary role within the narrative (the main focus of the narrative develops around the romantic relationship between the two men), the quantity of intersexual dialogue is also scarce (i.e. Elio vs. female character; Oliver vs. female character). To ensure maximum data transparency, the tables show the original text in English together with Japanese dubbing and subtitling transcribed through the Hepburn method. Each scene review is divided into three parts: scene setting, extra and paraverbal analysis, linguistic and identity-related analysis. For each of the three scenes, the two speakers interact with each other and the topic of their exchanges revolves around their romantic relationship.

#### 3.1. Elio's declaration to Oliver

	ENG DUBB-SUB	JAP DUBB	JAP SUBS
1	O: I never even heard / <sup>6</sup> of the Battle of Piave.	O: Piābegawa no tatakai ka.	O: Piābegawa no tatakai wa / hatsumimi da
2	E: Battle of Piave was one of the most / lethal battles of World War 1.	E: Daiichiji taisen de mo tokuni hisanna tatakai.	E: Daiichiji de / mottomo hisanna tatakai no hitotsu
3	E: Hundred and seventy thousand / people died.	E: 17mannin ga shinda.	E: 17mannin ga shinda
4	O: Is there anything you don't know?	O: Kimi ga shiranai koto wa aru?	O: Kimi ga shiranai koto wa aru?
5	E: I know nothing, Oliver.	E: Boku wa nanimo shiranai.	E: Nanimo shiranai yo
6	O: Well, you seem to know / more than anybody else around here.	O: Kono hen ja, dareyori monoshiri da.	O: Dareyorimo chishiki ga aru
7	E: Well, if you only knew how little / I know about the things that matter.	E: Daijina koto wa nanimo shiranai yo.	E: Daijina koto wa shiranai nda
8	O: What things that matter?	O: Daijina koto tte nanda?	O: Daijina koto tte?
9	E: You know what things.	E: Wakatteru kuseni.	E: Wakatteru darō
10	O: Why are you telling me this?	O: Dōshite boku ni iu?	O: Naze boku ni iu?
11	E: 'Cause I thought you should know.	E: Shiru beki dakara.	E: Shiru beki da to omou kara
12	O: Because you thought I should know?	O: Boku ga shiru beki da tte imi ka?	O: Boku ga shiru beki da to omou?
13	E: 'Cause I wanted you to know?	E: Shitte hoshii kara.	E: Shitte hoshii kara
14	E: Because I wanted you to know.	E: Anata ni shitte hoshii kara.	E: Shitte hoshii kara
15	E: Because I wanted you to know.	E: Anata ni shitte hoshii.	E: Shitte hoshii kara
16	E: Because I wanted you to know.	E: Shitte hoshii kara.	E: Shitte hoshii kara...
17	E: Because there's no one else / I can say this to but you.	E: Hoka no darenimo konna hanashi dekinai kara.	E: Anata ni shika hanasenai kara
18	O: Are you saying / what I think you're saying?	O: Tsumari sō iu koto?	O: Boku ga omou koto to onaji?
19	O: Don't go anywhere. Stay right here.	O: Mattero. Soko de.	O: Mattero. Dokohemo iku na.

<sup>6</sup> The slash symbol indicates the partition of the lines in the original subtitles.

20	E: You know I'm not going anywhere.	E: Ah, dokonimo ikanai	E: Dokohemo ikanai
21	O: They mixed up all of my pages.	O: Genkō no junban ga gucha gucha ni natteru. Zenbu uchinaoshi da.	O: Genkō no junban ga kurutteru/ Uchinaosanaito
22	O: I'm gonna have to / retype this whole thing.	-	-
23	O: I'm not gonna have anything to work on / this afternoon.	O: Gogo ga tsubureru okage de shigoto ga ichinichi okureru.	O: Kore de shigoto ga / ichinichi okurete shimau
24	O: This is gonna set me back a whole day.	-	-
25	O: Damn it.	-	O: Maitta na
26	E: Shouldn't have said anything.	E: Iwanakya yokatta.	E: Iwanakereba yokatta
27	O: Just pretend you never did.	O: Iwanakatta to omoe.	O: Itte nai
28	E: Does that mean we're on speaking terms / but not really?	E: Hanasu yōna aidagara janai kara.	E: Hanasanakatta furi o suru?
29	O: It means we can't talk / about those kinds of things.	O: Sō iu hanashi wa subeki janai kara.	O: Sō iu hanashi wa subeki denai wakatta ne?
30	O: Okay?	O: Ii ne?	-
31	O: We just can't.	O: Dame nanda.	O: Dame nanda

**Table 1.** Scene 1 (min. 47:55 - 50:50)

(a) Setting. The scene takes place in the main square of the town where Elio lives. While commenting on a monument dedicated to the fallen soldiers of World War I, Elio takes the opportunity to declare himself to Oliver, who is bewildered by the young man's unexpected revelation.

(b) Extra and paraverbal elements. In this scene, Elio wears a white T-shirt and shorts, while Oliver has a light green short-sleeved shirt and shorts. Both arrive in the square on bicycles. On a paraverbal level, the rhythm of the dialogue is marked by well-defined turns with a measured speed of speech. They both speak in a moderate tone of voice, and the pace of the lines tends to slow down further in the second half of the scene, coinciding with Elio's declaration to Oliver and Oliver's warning to Elio. Vocally, a qualitative difference between the original voices of Oliver and Elio and those of the Japanese dubbing actors are noticeable in this scene: in English, Oliver's voice is warm but mid/high pitched, while Elio's, despite his younger age, is still warm and not very ringing. In contrast, in the Japanese version Oliver is characterized by extremely baritone tones (certainly that of an adult male voice actor) that go better with his character's image of the 'mature' man. Elio, however, has a higher, squeakier voice that more easily matches the image of the 17-year-old teenager.

(c) Linguistic analysis and identity-related analysis. The dialogue between Oliver and Elio is set within a symmetrical and informal framework (they speak to each other in the *futsūgo* informal register). This is significant from a translation point of view because the register indexicalizes a relationship of psychological closeness that, as will be seen later, is nothing more than a prelude to a romantic relationship between the two. Although more recurrent in the dubbing than in the subtitling, the most significant male markers (MM) in Oliver's speech include: the final copula *-da*, with variations in explanatory mode (*-nda*, *-nanda*), the insertion of the interrogative SFP *-ka*, the insertion of the informal pragmatic SFP *-na* (instead of *-ne*), the first person singular pronoun *boku*, the second person singular pronoun *kimi*, the use of the imperative affirmative verbal form (*Mattero!* → BT. *Wait!*; *Iwanakatta to omoe!* → BT. *Pretend you never did!*), and its negative form (*Iku na!* → BT. *Don't go!*). For his part, despite the fact that at the diaphasic level Elio resorts to the same informal register as Oliver, in this scene his speech style is characterized by an extremely sparse amount of MM. Notable among

them is the only interrogative copula (-*darō*) and its variation in explanatory mode (-*nda*). In terms of percentages, the occurrences of the aforementioned MM<sup>7</sup> are distributed as follows between the two characters in the two Japanese translations: 85,7% in Oliver's dubbing and 71,4% in subtitling, 7,1% in Elio's dubbing and 14,2% in subtitling. This confirms, at least in Oliver's lines, a generic tendency for dubbing to insert more gender markers compared to interlingual subtitling (Vitucci, 2023).

Besides creating a sense of complicity with his interlocutor (Elio), the MM in Oliver's Japanese speech serve the purpose of portraying him as a mature and very determined man (unsurprisingly, at the end of the scene he himself will be the one to beg Elio not to mention his feelings again); on the other hand, the fact that Elio almost never uses MM can be linked both to his age and to his role within the relationship with Oliver (he appears indeed more fragile and disoriented toward his own feelings). On the contrary, in the English version Oliver appears more oriented towards 'listening' in a more equal relational mode, almost as if he wants to approach Elio as a peer. By contrast, in the Japanese passage, thanks to the insertion of the MM and a more set voice, Oliver seems to leverage his 'manliness', thus completely altering the perception of the second target audience. In our opinion, such choices support an erotic subtext where masculinity is synonymous with 'seduction' and 'dominance' over the counterpart. In this regard, the argument for an inter-indexical relationship through *transduction* is also supported in this scene (Inoue, 2003: 328), since it confirms certain metapragmatic stereotypes aimed at juxtaposing Oliver's speech style with that of other male *virtual speakers* that are traceable in various Japanese media (Suzuki, 2020). In particular, his speech style and the MM in his lines index a type of masculinity that imposes itself on its counterpart through the categories of social class (i.e., well-behaved, highly educated, cosmopolitan) and the stereotype of male seduction (sexually active, dominant), reinforcing domestic ideologies concerning the ideal of sexually active and dominant men and, therefore, of an assumed *hard masculinity* linked to his role as the active lover, which is directly borrowed from the imagery of different gender relationships in Japan (Baudinette, 2021). The next scene features the same speakers in a love scene, offering further perspectives on the subject.

### 3.2. Love scene

	ENG DUBB-SUB	JAP DUBB	JAP SUBS
1	E: I like what you've done with the place.	E: Oribā no ie tte kanji.	E: Ii kanji dane
2	E: It's nice.	E: Ii ne.	E: Suteki dayo
3	O: You okay?	O: Daijōbu?	O: Daijōbuka?
4	E: Me okay.	E: Dōka daijōbu.	E: Boku wa heiki da
5	O: Can I kiss you?	O: Kisu shite ii?	O: Kisu shitemo?
5b	E: Yes, please.	E: Uhm, shite.	E: Onegai
6	O: What are you doing?	O: Nani shiteru nda?	O: Nani shiteru?
7	E: Nothing.	E: Betsuni.	E: Nanimo
8	O: Does this make you happy?	O: Hontōni ii noka?	O: Hontōni nozonderu?
9	O: You're not gonna get / a nosebleed on me, are you?	O: Boku ni hanaji o tarasu na yo.	O: Hanaji o dasuna yo
10	E: I'm not gonna get...	E: Tarasu wake nai darō!	E: Mochiron da
11	O: Off, off, off, off, off.	O: Nuge, nuge, nuge, nuge, nuge!	O: Nugisutero
12	O: Yeah. Just pull it.	O: Hippatte!	O: Hippatte
13	O: Or I'll pull it.	O: Jibun de nugu.	O: Jibun de yaru

<sup>7</sup> Oliver's MM/ Oliver's total lines + Elio's MM/ Elio's total lines.

14	E: Oliver.	E: Oribā.	E: Oribā
15	O: Call me by your name, / and I'll call you by mine.	O: Kimi no namae de boku o yonde / Boku no namae de kimi o yobu	O: Kimi no namae de boku o yonde / Boku no namae de kimi o yobu
16	E: Elio.	E: Erio.	E: Erio
17	O: Oliver.	O: Oribā.	O: Oribā
18	E: Elio.	E: Erio.	E: Erio
19	O: Oliver.	O: Oribā.	O: Oribā
20	E: Elio.	E: Erio.	E: Erio
21	E: Did we make noise?	E: Oto hibiita kana?	E: Oto o tateta kana
22	O: Nothing to worry about.	O: Shinpai suru koto nai.	O: Shinpai suruna
23	E: I don't know. / Mafalda always looks for signs.	E: Demo Mafaruda wa itsudatte mezatoi shi.	E: Mafaruda wa nandemo kizuku
24	O: Well, she's not gonna find any.	O: Nanimo wakaranai sa.	O: Konseki wa nanimo nai
25	E: You wore that shirt / the first day you were here.	E: Tsuita hi ni kiteta shatsu dayone?	E: Tōchaku shita hi ni kiteta shatsu
26	E: Will you give it to me when you go?	E: Kaeru toki kurenai?	E: Tatsu hi ni moraeru?
27	E: Let's go swimming.	E: Oyogi ni ikō.	E: Oyogi ni ikō

**Table 2.** Scene 2 (min. 1:21:40 - 1:28:40)

(a) Setting. The scene takes place in Oliver's room at midnight where Elio and Oliver have been secretly meeting. The scene plays a central role in the plot because in addition to revealing the feelings of both protagonists, it sets the stage for the first sexual encounter between the two.

(b) Extra and paraverbal elements. In this scene Oliver wears a green linen shirt and beige pants, while Elio wears a white T-shirt and jeans. On a paraverbal level, the rhythm of the dialogue is marked by well-defined turns with a measured speed of speech. Oliver speaks very quietly in a low tone of voice, while Elio, despite his low tone of voice, tends to speed up his lines toward the end of the scene. Vocally, in the context of this scene, the gap between the Japanese dubbed voices and the original ones is again accentuated as the extremely low tone of voice of the original scene prompts Oliver's voice actor to emphasize the low register of his voice.

(c) Linguistic analysis and identity-related analysis. As seen in Table 2, the Japanese dialogue between Elio and Oliver develops within a horizontal perimeter due to their use of the *futsūgo* informal register. In this case, the level of symmetry of the exchange is justified by the sentimental relationship between the two men that places them on the same psychological and emotional level. In fact, the sentence uttered by Oliver in line 15 (*Call me by your name and I'll call you by mine*) represents the highest point of union between the two in the entire movie. As in the previous scene, the linguistic analysis of Oliver's speech reveals a higher frequency of MM in the dubbing than in the subtitling which, for the most part, reiterates stylistic solutions that are quite similar in diagenetic terms. These include the final copula *-da*, with variations in explanatory mode (*-nda*), the insertion of the interrogative SFP *-ka*, the SFP *-sa*, the first person singular pronoun *boku*, the second person singular pronoun *kimi*, the use of the imperative affirmative verbal form (*Nuge!* → BT. *Take It off!*; *Nugisutero!* → BT. *Take It off!*), and its negative form (*Tarasu na!* → BT. *Don't droop!*). From an indexical point of view, just as in the first scene, the use of the pronoun *boku* by Oliver links to a less pronounced masculinity as indicated in Miyazaki's studies (2023); at the same time, the presence of the SFP *-sa* in his speech seems to confirm a trend toward a *cool* translation in line with the image of foreign actors' speech in Japan (Nakamura, 2020b). As far as Elio is concerned, in this scene his speech style is characterized once again by an almost total absence of MM: it is only notable

in the reiteration of the copula (*da*) in line 10. In terms of percentage, it is insightful to note how the occurrences of the aforementioned MM almost confirm the trend of the first scene: 107% in Oliver’s dubbing and 69% in subtitling, while one finds only 6% in Elio’s dubbing and 13% in subtitling.

Besides creating a sense of complicity with his interlocutor (Elio), the MM in Oliver’s Japanese speech in this scene serve the purpose of portraying him as the more active participant of the two lovers, relegating Elio to a less assertive position. In contrast, in the English version Oliver relates more equally with Elio: this is evident both at the beginning of the scene when he asks him if he is alright (*You okay?*), if he can kiss him (*Can I kiss you?*), and at the end when he comforts him in a moment of despondency (*Nothing to worry about*). On a polysemiotic level, it almost seems as if the two voices become so confused that they resemble each other, while in the Japanese version Oliver seems to be linguistically preponderant on the counterpart and overly masculinized. According to Van Dijk (2008), it is precisely thanks to these possible subtexts that some mental models crystallize and are reinforced among the spectators. These models are suggested not only by the actors on screen but also by the underlying narration levels that can escape the attention of the audience. This happens because, as stated by Messerli (2019), some translation genres - such as interlinguistic subtitling and dubbing - act as textual agents on behalf of internal narration entities, including the characters on the screen, the script, and the directors. In this case, such mediation causes Oliver’s iconic body to be ‘filled in’ and ‘repositioned’ through the new Japanese soundtrack confirming to both the exploitation of the so-called *bodies of otherness* postulated by Inoue (2003), and to the reiteration of an *adequation* strategy such as that proposed by Nakamura (2016, 2020b). In fact, the assignment of a hypermasculinized genderlect to Oliver reinforces the image of a ‘powerful’ and ‘assertive’ man, in which the idea of ‘dominance’ seems to almost prevail over the romanticism of the original scene. This image can be also traced through the use of his *casual* register which is completely absent in the intentions of the English prototext.

### 3.3. Elio’s meets Oliver in town

	ENG DUBB-SUB	JAP DUBB	JAP SUBS
1	E: Oliver.	E: Oribā.	E: Oribā
2	O: You’re not sick of me yet?	O: Kirai ni natte nai?	O: Mada boku ga iya janai?
3	E: No, I just.../ I just wanted to be with you.	E: Ah, masaka...Isshoni itai kara	E: Masaka isshoni itakute
4	E: I’ll...I’m gonna...I’ll go.	E: Yappari...	E: Demo...
4b		E. Ii ya...kaeru ne.	E. Mō kaeru yo
5	O: Do you know how happy I am / that we slept together?	O: Kinō wa hitotsu ni narete shiawase datta.	O: Boku ga doredake shiawaseka wakarū?
6	E: I don’t know.	E: Sō nano?	E: Wakaranai
7	O: Of course, you don’t know.	O: Wakatte nai.	O: Sō dayone
8	O: I don’t want you to regret anything.	O: Erio, nanimo kuyande hoshiku nai.	O: Nanimo kōkai shite hoshikunai
9	O: And I hate the thought that maybe / I may have messed you up or...	O: Kimi no koto o kurushimasetaka to omou to tsurasugiru.	O: Kimi o kurushimasetaka to omoitakunai
10	O: I don’t want either of us / to pay for this,	O: Dochiramo gisei ni naru beki janai.	O: Daremo warukunai
11	O: one way or another.	-	-
11b	E: No, I...	E: Sonna...Anō...Kinō no koto wa...	E: Boku wa...



12	E: It's not like / I'm gonna tell anyone.	E: Dareka ni iu tsumori wa nai.	E: Darenimo iu tsumori wa nai shi
13	E: You're not gonna be, like, / getting in trouble.	E: Meiwaku wa kakenai kara sa.	E: Meiwaku wa kakenai yo
14	O: That's not what I'm talking about.	O: Sonna kotto itte nai.	O: Sonna koto janai
15	E: Are you happy I came here?	E: Boku ga kite ureshii?	E: Boku ga kite ureshii?
16	O: I would kiss you if I could.	O: Dekiru nara kisu shitai gurai.	O: Kisu shitai hodo da

**Table 3.** Scene 3 (min. 1:32:20 - 1:33:40)

(a) Setting. The scene takes place near a newsstand near the main square of the town where Elio lives. After their first night of physical intimacy, Elio seems confused but Oliver lets him know that he is happy with what happened between them.

(b) Extra and paraverbal elements. Oliver wears a blue T-shirt and yellow shorts, while Elio wears a red and blue striped T-shirt and shorts. On a paraverbal level, although the pace of the English dialogue is slightly faster than in previous scenes, turns of phrase remain well-paced, even with some rephrasing by Elio. The tempo of the Japanese dubbing differs – unlike Elio, Oliver seems to express himself at a slower speed with more paced lines, especially at the beginning of the scene where his dubbing appears more preordained and syntactically concise.

(c) Linguistic and identity-related analysis. As one can observe in Table 3, the Japanese dialogue between Oliver and Elio maintains a horizontal perimeter due to their use of the *futsūgo* informal register that indexicalizes the intimate relationship between the two speakers. A decrease in MM is noticeable from the previous scenes, although the lower number of lines means that the rate of occurrence is not significantly reduced. As seen previously, MM percentages appear higher in Oliver's speech than in Elio's, even though subtitling reverses the previous trend of dubbing in Oliver's speech. Among the most significant MM in Oliver's speech are the past tense copula *-datta* and the second person singular pronoun *kimi*, while Elio resorts to the first person singular pronoun *boku* and the SFP *-sa*. It is also interesting to observe the presence of the interrogative SFP *-nano*, which is often traced in the sphere of the so-called *women's language*. Such use could support a passive interpretation of Elio's role within the relationship, since in the subtitle the young man perfectly treads the English line without any semantic adaptation (*Wakaranai* → BT. *I don't know*). The percentages of occurrences of the aforementioned MM are distributed as follows in the characters' speech: 25 % in Oliver's dubbing and 37,5% in subtitling, 22% in Elio's dubbing and 22% in subtitling.

As in the previous scene, there is a different attitude between the English and Japanese versions. Starting from the first lines in English, it is possible to observe how Oliver openly and horizontally confronts Elio, both through a direct question in line 2 (*You're not sick of me yet?*) and an equally direct comment that expresses his feelings toward the young man without any qualms in line 5 (*Do you know how happy I am / that we slept together?*). It is also worth noting the circular manner in which Oliver comforts Elio by telling him that he does not want to cause him problems in any way in lines 8 and 9 (*I don't want you to regret anything. And I hate the thought that maybe / I may have messed you up or...*). He remains allusive, hesitant, and less direct compared to his interlocutor. This attitude on Oliver's part shows a clear inclination toward 'confrontation' and 'respect' which positions the relationship between the two speakers within the framework of an almost 'equal' relationship. The Japanese dubbing contrasts this. On a polysemiotic level, an analysis of Oliver's speech rhythm, low tone of voice, and pauses reveals a trend of hypermasculinization of his character, especially in the vocal management, which appears very low, strangely calm, rhythmically cadenced and, therefore, 'unidirectional' and 'confident'. In this regard, one can again detect an inter-indexical relationship that juxtaposes

Oliver's vocal portrayal with an idea of masculinity related to his role as a more mature man and, therefore, as the real 'leader' in the romantic relationship, supporting once again an erotic subtext where his masculinity is synonymous with 'dominance'. For this very reason, despite having a less intense exchange in terms of length, Elio also appears more submissive in Japanese, whereas in English he gives the impression of greater self-determination and confidence. For example, in line 6, Elio responds in English with a declarative phrase (*I don't know*), while in Japanese he responds with a counterclaim characterized by an SFP typical of feminine speech (*Sō nano? → BT: Really?*).

#### 4. Discussions and perspectives

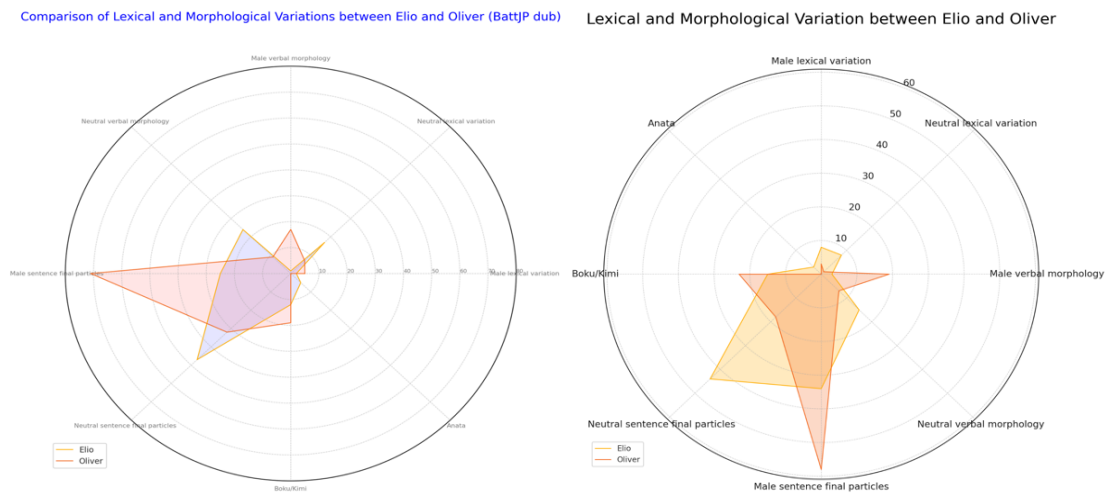
In a recent study, Nakamura recalls some of Bakhtin's positions about interlinguistic translation:

Translation actively promotes identity construction by inter-relating the distinctions in gender, ethnicity, class, and age of the source language to those of the target language. The identity constructed by translation is not reducible to identities in the source or target text. It is different from the identity of the original text because no two languages provide linguistic resources sufficient to create exactly the same identity category. It is also different from the identity the same target text would construct without being a translation, because in translation the non-native voice and body of the original text interfere with the translated identity, making it highly polyphonic and polysemious (Nakamura, 2016, p. 1).

Similarly, as introduced at the beginning of this study, other research conducted in the field of audiovisual translation with a special focus on gender and language ideologies (De Marco, 2006, 2009, 2016; Konstantinovskaia, 2020; Ranzato, 2012; Vitucci, 2020, 2023) have highlighted both the role of translation as a crucial instrument for the re-definition of non-compliant identities and the risk of developing stereotypes that encourage more or less patent forms of social exclusion. The quotation above evokes the idea that the iconic bodies of actors and actresses can be linguistically emptied to make room for a 'new' vocal and, therefore, social identity which is certainly not new. On the other hand, it is surprising that there is still a certain stubbornness to reiterate certain ideological practices within Japanese audiovisual translation<sup>8</sup>. In response to this case study's first two questions (How does the Japanese translation of the two characters' speech differ from each other? How do their Japanese translations differ from the original English?), the linguistic and phonetic data collected shows that the hypermasculinization of Oliver's character seems to be embedded within a social image anchored in the past where the stereotype of an 'active' role of men seems to be linked to certain characteristics 'inherent' in the very essence of masculinity. Not surprisingly, the Japanese dialogists tend to stage his masculinity as a tendentially 'normative' one (it must not be forgotten that Oliver will return to the safe haven of a heterosexual relationship at the end of the story) while, on the contrary, this cannot be said for Elio, who is represented in translation through a register that is more hybrid and marked phonetically by higher frequencies than the English original. Such an image and the permanence of certain metapragmatic stereotypes is due to a cultural ideology mediated by clear historical-political instances which began to spread in Japan as early as the late nineteenth century (Yukawa & Saito, 2004; Nohara, 2018; Nakamura, 2018, 2010, 2021,

<sup>8</sup> Part of this attitude can also be traced in the tendency to resort to *role language* (*yakuwarigo*), which Kinsui defines as those speech patterns (combinations of vocabulary, syntax, voice, peculiarities, set phrases) strongly associated with the speaker's character image (such as gender, age, generation, occupation, social class, regional origin, nationality, race) found especially in works of fiction (Kinsui, 2003).

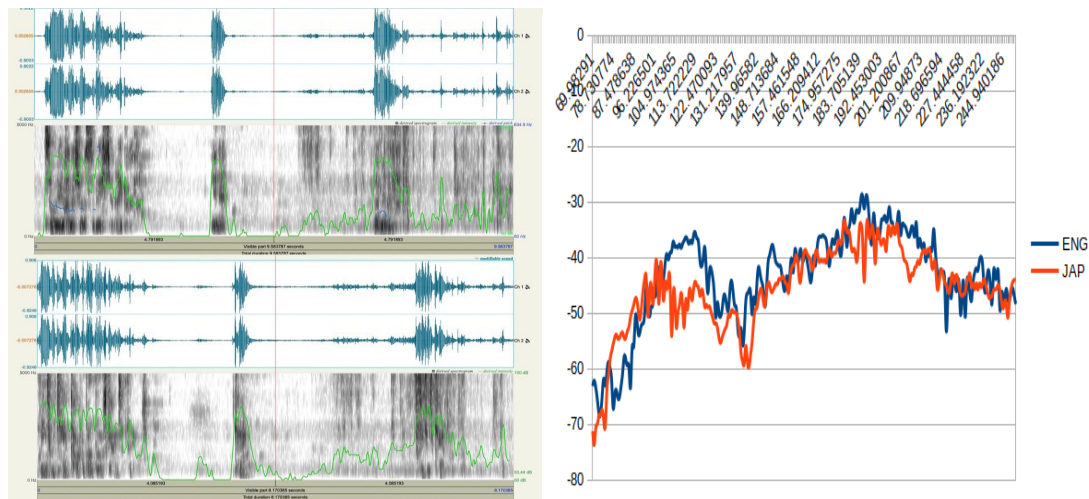
2024) and still enduring in the audiovisual realm (SturtzSreetharan, 2017)<sup>9</sup>. As is also evident from the dubbing of this movie, Elio’s speech seems to reveal a ‘weaker’ identity that activates two different language profiles between him and Oliver (Figure 1).



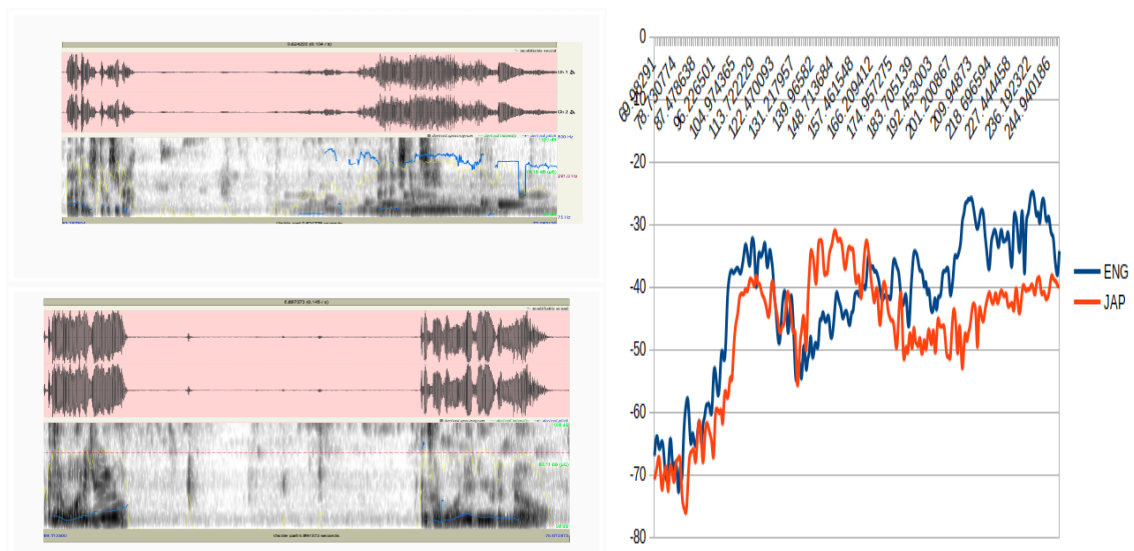
**Figure 1.** Linguistic comparison based on the occurrence of all linguistic tokens in dubbing (left) and subtitling (right) between Elio and Oliver. (source: author)

In considering the third question (Which type of *masculinity* do translators refer to when they produce their Japanese texts?), from a vocal point of view, the dubbing of the characters analysed gives us two profiles of adult (foreign) males who rely, once again, on a diagenetic polarisation which is anchored to a societal vision that does not take ongoing social evolutions into account (Miyazaki, 2023; SturtzSreetharan, 2006, 2009). From a strictly polysemiotic perspective, it is insightful to juxtapose the phonetic alteration of the two actors in the Japanese version (see Figures 2, 3) from which one notes that Oliver’s voice tends toward the masculine spectrum in both languages, even though in Japanese it is accentuated in the low range (90-157 hertz), which is typically associated with masculine frequencies (Figure 2). In contrast, Elio’s most represented frequencies range between 130 and 180 hertz in English (middle/androgynous frequencies), and 180 hertz onward in Japanese (high frequencies/typically more feminine and more pronounced) (Figure 3).

<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, this kind of ideological positioning, although analysed in the context of a homosexual fictional representation, also has an indirect impact on the ‘ideal’ representation of women, who are often represented linguistically through the stereotypical idiolect of *womens’ language* (Inoue, 2003; Konstantinovskaia, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Vocal comparison between Oliver’s voice in English (bottom) and Japanese (up). Lines 29-30, Scene 1. (source: author)



**Figure 3.** Vocal comparison between Elio’s voice in English (bottom) and Japanese (up). Lines 14-15, Scene 1. (source: author)

Undoubtedly, the most interesting phonetic profile analysed in this study is that of Oliver, whose dubbed voice presents a qualitative discrepancy compared to the original English voice, where the actor has a warm, but still youthful voice. The Japanese version, which is characterised by extremely low frequencies, makes him appear older than his age, concealing the intrinsic aim of making him more ‘seductive’ and in line with the image of a well-behaved, highly educated, and cosmopolitan white man. As already mentioned, such choices are aimed at supporting an erotic subtext where this type of masculinity is synonymous with ‘seduction’ and ‘dominance’ over the counterpart with the ill-concealed aim of staging a romantic relationship where he is depicted as the ‘leader’ and representative of a *hard masculinity* that almost becomes the symbol of a supposed homonormativity. Moreover, there is an inter-indexical relationship that juxtaposes MM in Oliver’s speech with an idea of masculinity linked to his active lover’s role which is directly borrowed from the imagery of different gender relationships in Japan. In Elio’s case, however, despite the qualitative differences between the original voice and the dubbed voice, there is an extremely low percentage of MM in his speech, which is accompanied

by a use of a more hybrid lexicon in gender terms (think of the first-person pronoun *boku*), the SFP *-da*, and a few timid forays into female speech (the SFP *-nano*). This demonstrates that Japanese dialogists wanted to portray him as a character who is 'weaker' in relational terms and, therefore, more representative of a *soft masculinity*, which, however, seems to be characterized negatively than the polarity expressed by Oliver.

As can be seen from the aforementioned analysis, such an operation is achievable through the concatenation of two essential steps occurring during the translation process, namely: the strategy of *transduction* with the production of the inherent inter-indexical relationships and linguistic *adequation*, as well as the exploitation of so-called *bodies of otherness*. As illustrated by this study, the hiatus produced between body and voice of foreign actors/actresses in the context of fictional dialogues often represents the ideal perimeter to propose a 'normative speech style' toward which to strive (Nakamura, 2013; Vitucci, 2023), since fictional speech often becomes a disembodied language marked by enormous ideological work that erases all traces of mediations by political and historical forces and their agents (Inoue, 2003, p. 316). When it comes to ideologies of communication, it is relevant to note, for example, how Oliver and Elio's bodies were dubbed by local actors with vocal textures different from the originals and then mounted on foreign bodies in order to re-enact them in a new gender ideological perspective for which language is the main vehicle (Johnstone, 2017). Once again, therefore, we can see that foreign actors on stage become the vehicle for a reinforcement of those metapragmatic stereotypes that are intended to suggest both a certain image of adult men, but also a precise social system in which to insert them. From a translation perspective, it is clear that the texts produced for CBYN reflect cultural choices that arose from the personal beliefs of unknown dialogists and subtitlers (Ide, Sunakawa, & Yamaguchi, 2019). In fact, as already illustrated by recent Japanese sociolinguistic research, diagenetic variation in Japan has revealed a progressive dissolution of the boundaries between male and female speech (Miyazaki, 2023; Okamoto & Shibamoto-Smith, 2004; Sanada, 2020; Yamashita, 2022), which runs counter to the gendered language we find in the dubbing of foreign actors. As expressed by Squires (2014), from a translation and sociolinguistic perspective, this ideological operation relies on the potential of the so-called *indexical bleaching* phenomenon which is deeply connected to the high rate of pervasiveness of audiovisual texts in their target societies (which means that metapragmatic stereotypes are actually reinforced through dubs and subtitles).

In conclusion, the masculine imaginary evoked by the two *virtual speakers* presented here is stimulated by the recourse to a type of ideological recomposition of speech that allows the indexicalisation of ideologized Japanese masculinities projected onto American actors characterised by metapragmatic stereotypes such as those of dominance, virility, and imposition, in the case of Oliver, and of submission and weakness in the case of Elio. These concepts clearly emerge from the translation and phonetic dataset, which testifies to a different orientation in the Japanese dialogues compared to those in English. Moreover, this polarisation is reinforced by the exploitation of the speakers' bodies which become themselves vehicles to portray certain ideologies of masculinity. However, since virtual spaces are indeed social contexts where speech styles are subject to dynamic social formations (Miyazaki, 2023), it remains to be examined whether this type of positioning will still be present in other Japanese audiovisual artefacts, and how exposure to this type of fictional speech can influence the unconscious imaginary of masculinities within Japanese society.

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