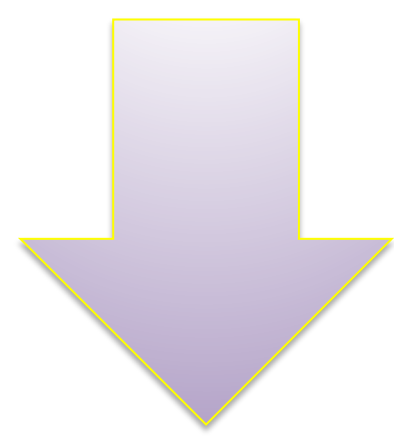


The Audio Description of Humour in English and Italian

Starting assumptions:

- By 2050 nearly one in five persons in developed countries will have some sort of diminished (visual) ability or disability (cf. Ellis 2016: 41; Fernández Torné 2016: 20-21; Arma 2011: 98-103).
- Audio Description (AD) aims to cater to the needs of the blind, people who may be temporarily visually impaired or whose sight may be in decline (cf. Benecke 2004: 78, Díaz Cintas 2008: 8, Maszerowska et al. 2014: 2).
- Question: **What, when, how and how much** should be described? (Vercauteren 2007: 142–147).
- It is less expensive to create new AD content than translate it (López-Vera's (2006: 156).
- The AD of humour is often impeded by **time and space constraints** (Martínez-Sierra 2009, 2010).



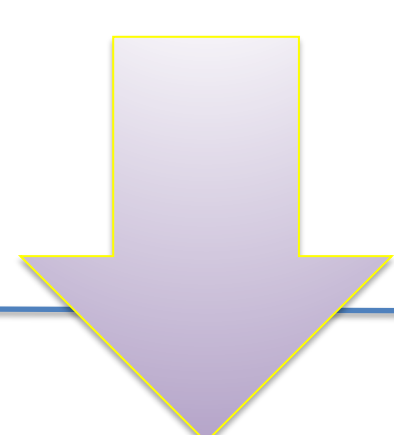
Research Questions:

- **When, how and how much** humour should be described?
- Do **time and space** really constraint the AD of humour?
- Can **comparative analyses** reveal significant differences in **the way** humour is audio described in different languages and cultures?

The Case Study

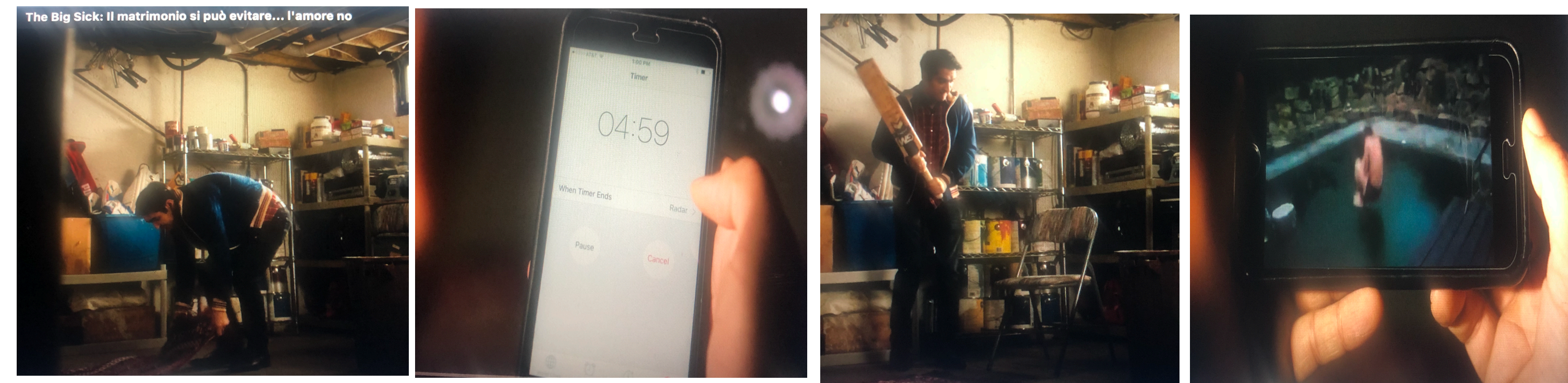


English AD (Blind Mice Mega Mall) vs.
Italian AD (Senza Barriere)



Preliminary findings:

- ❖ **The English AD: 2,965 words in total.**
- ❖ **The Italian AD: 1,295 words in total.**
- ❖ **Foreign words in the Italian AD script are reported as they are pronounced, probably to ease "speakability" and "performability" (Pavesi and Perego 2006: 108) during recording.**



Scene description	English AD	Italian AD
Kumail is in the basement	In a basement, Kumail unrolls a small rug and then sits in a folding chair beside it. He sets a time run for five minutes	Kumail, sceso in cantina, stende per terra il tappeto da preghiera, si accomoda su una sedia e cerca un videogioco sul palmare [Kumail, after going to the basement, lays a prayer rug on the floor, sits in a chair and looks for a video game on his PDA]
Picking up a cricket bat, he poses	Later Kumail watches a video of a man jumping into a frozen pool	Poi prende una mazza da cricket e mima alcuni colpi [He then picks up a cricket bat and mimes a few hits]
The video Kumail watches is onscreen; the person shooting the video is heard laughing offscreen	A message on the phone reads "timer done"	Gioca ancora un po' col telefono e dopo raccoglie il tappeto [He plays a bit more with his phone and then picks up the rug]



Scene description	English AD	Italian AD
It is night time and Emily is awake and moving around Kumail's apartment. Emily looks around Kumail's bedroom for something. She starts putting her clothes on. Kumail wakes up	At Kumail's, Emily lies awake in bed. Now she hurries in the living room and passes Chris who sleeps on the couch. Emily walks into another room. She re-enters Kumail's room and looks around. He wakes up. He looks at the clock	E' [sic.] notte. Emily scende dal letto che divide con Kumail, esce dalla camera e va in bagno. [It's nighttime. Emily gets out of the bed that she shares with Kumail and goes to the bathroom]. Torna, poco dopo, e cerca le proprie cose [She comes back shortly after and looks for her things]. Kumail si sveglia [Kumail wakes up]
Kumail questions her behaviour and she finally admits: Emily: I have to take a shit, ok? I have to take a huge fucking dookie (...) (Kumail starts laughing). Emily: Please stop laughing! Please, please. Kumail: Okay, I have an idea	Kumail stares at her.	
Kumail: Hey. How are you? Emily: I do NOT wanna talk about it	Later, Kumail sits outside Emily's building. She comes outside and sits beside him on the front steps, avoiding his gaze.	
	Noticing his smile, she rolls her eyes.	



Scene description	English AD	Italian subtitles
At Kumail's parents' house	At Kumail's parents' house	
Sumera: It's getting late, I should go (She moves to get up, but Sharmeen and Azmat stop her)	Subtitles appear. I just faked that call. Did you call him?	Ho solo fatto finta. Tu l'hai chiamato [I was just pretending. Did you call him?]
Azmat: No, I think I should call him up, I'll just call him up. (Into phone) Hello, Kumi-beta? What do you mean, who is calling? This is your father. Ok, ok. (He hangs up the phone) He will be here any moment. (To Naveed in Urdu) I just faked that call. Did you call him?	A hundred times. No response	Un centinaio di volte. Non risponde [A hundred times. He doesn't answer]
Naveed: (in Urdu) A hundred times. No response	I can understand what you're saying	Capisco benissimo quello che dite [I can understand what you're saying]
Sumera: I think I should make something clear. (In Urdu) I can understand what you're saying	I thought you said you'd never been to Pakistan	Hai detto che non sei mai andata in Pakistan [I thought you said you'd never been to Pakistan]
Fatima: (in Urdu) I thought you said you'd never been to Pakistan	I said I've never been there, but we speak it at home	È vero, ma a casa parliamo urdu [It's true, but we speak Urdu at home]
Sumera: (in Urdu) I said I've never been there, but we speak it at home	For someone who's never been to Pakistan you speak Urdu very well	Per essere una che non è mai stata in Pakistan, lo parli benissimo [For someone who's never been to Pakistan you speak it very well]
Azmat: (laughs, then in Urdu) For someone who's never been to Pakistan you speak Urdu very well	Thanks	Grazie [Thanks]
Sumera: (in Urdu) Thanks		

Conclusions:

- **What** to AD? The English AD tends to describe more actions and facial expression to convey the character's feelings than the Italian AD.
- **When and how** to AD? Timely AD is paramount when humour is involved. The English AD of humour seems to have served this purpose better.
- **How much** to AD? Time and space constraints may not always be the reason why some parts are not described (self-censorship?)
- The English AD includes **audio subtitling** and the Italian AD does not. In such cases, the humour of a given scene is mostly lost (example 1 and 3).
- Different languages and cultures could **learn a great deal from one another** regarding AD in general and the AD of humour in particular.