

“Soprano-Speak” in the French Dubbed Translation of *The Sopranos*

Clare Healy

Independent scholar, IRELAND

chealy7@tcd.ie

ABSTRACT

One of the defining elements of *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) is the distinctive language variety used by its characters. This article investigates the manifold changes that the variety undergoes in the French dubbed translation of the series. Non-standard language and profanity are found to be less frequent in the French version. The show’s lexicon of Italian loanwords and derivations is all but eliminated and largely supplanted by French terms, thus conforming to Venuti’s (1995) concept of domestication. Finally, the deliberate use of metaphorical language, which is integral to the series’ themes of cultural insularity and *omertà*, is minimized in the translation. The paper concludes by arguing that this bias towards standardizing and clarifying the dialogue precludes the French audience from experiencing one of the series’ greatest strengths: its ambiguity.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation; cultural transfer; domestication; levelling; explicitation