Article

Audiovisual Translation, Multilingual Desire, and the Construction of the Intersectional Gay Male Body

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Abstract: This study focuses on the HBO series Looking, whose two seasons and film make up a critical telecinematic artifact that reveals how authorial vision integrates ideologies on class, race, and desire that are identifiable in visual modes and language use—particularly multilingual dialogues. The analysis begins with the assumption that Looking is a relevant case of complex television and centers on the narrative structure of the series and the way that language, translation, and visual semiotic resources interact in the construction of a gay Latino character in the source version of the series and two Spanish dubbed versions—one for Latin America and the other for Spain. The findings reveal that Looking, as a televsional and aesthetic artifact, proposes a post-gay discourse of homoerotic relationships while also constructing racialized objects of desire, particularly the Latinx (male) body. A comparative linguistic analysis shows that both the dubbed versions highlight the boundaries of the so-called globalized gay identity. The data gathered demonstrate that the representation of ethnic, racial, and erotic difference changes according to the language system used. Moreover, new interactions between dubbed dialogues and visual resources result in a greater degree of semiotic layering of ideological discourses throughout the series.

Keywords: multilingualism; queer translation; audiovisual translation; multimodality; HBO

1. Introduction: Contemporary Complex Telecinematic Fiction

The previously clear media boundaries between television and cinema have been blurred over the last two decades by innovations in digital screen technologies and the systems of content creation and production fueled by the emerging business models of global broadcasting, particularly streaming services (Comeford 2023). Current cable and streaming series have multimillion-dollar budgets allocated to sustaining their creative teams and production systems and to securing potential transmedia intellectual properties (Johnson 2021). Additionally, video-on-demand services have begun to mimic experimentation and innovation models related to the televisual poetics of “HBO and quality TV” (Cascajosa Virino 2009; Feuer 2007) by offering content produced by award-winning filmmakers and creative teams, whose audiovisual aesthetics have become critical assets in the context of more visually cultured audiences, streaming wars, and the pandemic (Idrovo 2021). As a result, coinages such as “cinematic television” and the adjective “telecinematic” are relevant concepts to describe screen products and production systems that incorporate complex narratives and other aesthetic components that, in the past, were considered exclusive to the film industry or were not part of the analysis of serialized television (Mittel 2015). Language and speech, two components of this rediscovered conceptual repertoire, are key semiotic resources deployed in television series since they do not only contribute to the construction of characters as narrative artifacts and fictional beings (Eder 2010), but they are also sources of information about language, ideology, and society (Queen 2015; Bednarek 2018). For these reasons, telecinematic discourse analysis (Roberta Piazza et al. 2011; Falbe 2014) and the stylistics of “pop cultural texts” (Werner and Schubert 2023) are important approaches for exploring quality TV shows that integrate (language)
superdiversity as part of their narratives, usually by depicting multilingual characters or representing subjectivities that do not conform to notions of sexual/racial/national/gender normativity.

This study originates at the intersection of multilingual telecinematic discourse, the multimodal representation of homoeroticism, and queer audiovisual translation. The case analyzed is the HBO show *Looking* (Lannan et al. 2014, 2015; Haigh 2016), particularly the representation of a Latino gay man (Richie Donado Ventura, portrayed by Raúl Castillo) as the object of desire of the main character (Patrick Murray, played by Jonathan Groff). The show was created by Michael Lannan—based on his short film *Lorimer* (Lannan 2009)—and directed by Andrew Haigh, the director of the critically acclaimed gay drama, *Weekend* (Haigh 2011), who had worked exclusively in film before *Looking*. The show builds on a cumulative narrative, long-term plotlines, and the authorial aesthetics of Haigh and Lannan as part of its serial meaning. Its visual and narrative resources were a departure from previous gay-themed series. This resulted in an early cancelation because of its low ratings and the lukewarm attitudes of television critics. Despite its short run—two seasons and a closing film—*Looking* has been analyzed from different formal approaches to its camera work (O’Sullivan 2017), lighting and color (Hargraves 2020), paratexts and music (Villanueva-Jordan 2021b), and general cinematography (Cortvriend 2018), as well as to its ideological themes and discourses around age (Goltz 2016), love and social relationships (Manganas 2015, 2017), and identity and gender politics (Keegan 2015; Manganas 2018).

This analytical approach toward *Looking* proves how the show became a case of “complex TV,” which Jason Mittel (2015) characterizes as a television series that demands intensified engagement from viewers “as their pleasures are embedded in a level of awareness that transcends the traditional focus on diegetic action that is typical of most popular narratives” (p. 47). The complexity of *Looking* functions by slowly giving viewers access to the diegesis while presenting visually spectacular frames and well-crafted scenes. Shows like this work toward a viewing reflexivity understood as “amateur narratology” or “forensic fandom” that “foreground[s] the skills of narrative comprehension and media literacy that most viewers have developed but rarely put to use beyond rudimentary means” (Mittel 2015, p. 54). In the field of translation studies, previous research has focused on describing the micro-textual characteristics of translated dialogues from HBO shows, such as the vulgar language in *The Wire* (Ortíz García 2021, 2022), fan translation strategies in *Game of Thrones* (Svelch 2013), and gayspeak in *Angels in America* and *Six Feet Under* (Ranzato 2012, 2015). HBO’s *Looking* has also been analyzed regarding the translation of cultural references in the Peninsular Spanish dubbed version of the show (Iglesias Urquizar 2021, 2022; Martínez Pleguezuelos 2018).

This study aims to add to the existing knowledge about the translation of “quality TV” shows by methodologically and analytically acknowledging the different communicative modes (including different language systems) used in constructing complex narrative textualities. Semiotic interaction is a fundamental assumption of audiovisual translation (AVT) studies, but it has not been part of the methods or analysis in the reviewed literature. Multilingualism and multimodality share a theoretical background in terms of how linguistic forms always carry political and sociohistorical associations (Lytra 2012). For audiovisual translation, this critical stance on languages and communicative modes allows, on the one hand, overcoming the ideal of the source text as a “pure,” unique, univocal, and monolingual entity, as post-positivist translation theorists tried to establish (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011; Robinson 2019). On the other hand, any instance of a critical analysis of (multilingual) telecinematic discourse begins with an acknowledgment that the representation of foreign or non-standard languages serves to construct and circulate language ideologies, stereotypes, or particular images associated with social groups, ethnic minorities, and foreign nationalities (Bednarek 2018). In the case of queer narratives and queer translation, analyzing how multilingualism and multimodality occur in the representation of non-normative sexualities can lead to insights about the global media circulation of language and desire and to building/testing theories about the interrelations...
of gender and audiovisual translation. Therefore, the predictability of categories such as “sexual references as taboo language” or “gayspeak” (Ranzato 2012; Ávila-Cabrera 2015) should be challenged to acknowledge how current telecinematic discourse in translation is representing gender and sexuality in an era of heightened language reflexivity (Blommaert and Rampton 2015).

2. Method Design

As previously mentioned, Looking is a case of complex television. For this reason, the method design consists of three approaches—narrative, multimodal, and comparative analysis—applied consecutively to two corpora: a main corpus and a multimodal bilingual corpus. The main corpus (84,660 tokens) was the object of narrative analysis. It consisted of the transcription of all dialogues from seasons 1 (8 episodes, 30 min each) and 2 (10 episodes, 30 min per episode) of Looking and Looking: The Movie (90 min). The principles underlying the narrative analysis used in this study derive from Barthes’ (1975) distinction between functions and actions as the basic categories for discovering the underlying system of meanings or the narrative itself. Despite the structuralist focus of the Barthesian narrative analysis, the concepts of functions and actions were applied inductively through the first stage of qualitative descriptive coding (Saldaña 2012; Creswell and Creswell 2018). As a result of the descriptive coding, the specific corpus consisted of 1282 segments of coded dialogues aligned with the corresponding translations transcribed from the Spanish versions dubbed for Latin America and Spain. The specific corpus was annotated considering semiotic interaction between relevant visual and auditory modes (Chaume 2004; Stöckl 2004) and according to the theoretical models for multimodal transcription developed by Baldry and Thibault (2006).

The inductive coding process led to 28 emergent categories for topics such as camp, sexuality, identity, class, race, age, health, love/family relationships, attitudes toward sex, and well-being/malaise. Of the total categories, five are relevant to this article (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories relevant to the construction of intersectional desire in Looking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Characters refer to the quality of their jobs (salary and status) and their need for or lack of money. They refer to their family history and highlight their social stratum or that of other characters (mentioning class differences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Characters talk about (their) physical appearance, the sexual spaces of the body, and body characteristics related to age, weight, and race. They refer to the body as an object of desire or pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Characters refer to sexual intercourse and sexual practices, such as anal, casual, group, and oral sex. They narrate or recount sexual experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Characters talk about sexual attraction (conscious sexual desire). They refer to their objects of desire (other characters and their bodies). They use (colloquial) expressions to describe the intensity or other qualities of said sexual attraction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Characters mention belonging to an ethnic/racial community, such as when speaking of the Latinx identity or using expressions in Spanish (as heritage speakers) to build the racial/ethnic otherness of the characters. They also use racist expressions or refer to interracial relationships as taboo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Looking as a Narrative: Overall Findings

Although the study’s methodological approach was qualitative, quantifying the coded segments (a total of 1282) allowed for more synthesized data sets for each category. Quantitative data also played a heuristic role in understanding the recurrence and concurrence of the categories. Recurrence refers to the number of appearances of a category or subcategory in the corpus, while concurrence has to do with the appearance of two or more categories simultaneously or close to each other in certain scenes or segments of characters’ dialogue.
Quantifying coded segments is a narrative analysis strategy that helps to show basic relationships between characters’ actions and other narrative events (Franzosi 2010). This use of quantitative data for qualitative analysis incorporates the methodological insights from Dana Frei’s study on the themes and ideological dimensions of two queer shows from the early 21st century: *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* (Frei 2012).

The data used for Figure 1 belong to the quantified sets of segments from the previous table (1). This figure shows the progression of the categories in Table 1 from the first series’ episodes to the movie; as can be seen, sex is the most prominent topic in the series. Sex is a category that articulates other categories related to sexuality, such as desire and the body. In other words, sex is an axial category, or the basis (the axis) for constructing more complex units of meaning (themes) from the dialogues. For example, the category of sex reached peaks in the second episode of the first season and the third episode of the second. These episodes depict sex scenes between the main character (Patrick) and one of his love interests (Richie, in the first season, and Kevin Matheson, in the second). In both episodes, sex concurs with the other prominent categories (desire and body), mainly in the dialogues of the same scene and as relevant topics are explored during the episode. In the case of the first season, the fifth episode starts with a sex scene. In contrast, the rest of the episode shows Richie and Patrick spending the day together touring San Francisco and talking about their sexuality (first encounters, preferred sexual roles, and family attitudes toward homosexuality).

![Figure 1. Progression of the categories based on the quantification of coded segments.](image)

From a qualitative perspective, the comprehensive analysis of the sexuality categories reveals that the narrative in *Looking* establishes a series of discourses around sexual identity and homoerotic desire that presuppose a specific stance toward gender positions (Villanueva-Jordán 2021a). Thus, gay identity is signified mainly through the sexual dimension of the characters (i.e., homoerotic desire indexes sexual identity) without resorting to notions of identity politics or the acknowledgment of an LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, gay subjectivity is represented as always incomplete and with tendencies toward anxiety due to the incompatibility between erotic desire and the gender structures related to conventional masculinity and family. This is further explained in Table 2. For example, the actions or events regarding the expression of homoerotic desire (second column) trigger the narrative events in the third column, “Malaise/Guilt.” In other words, Patrick’s gay identity—which is represented by his longing for his objects of desire—leads to narrative events of failure (from not having a stable relationship or dating a professional, middle-class, white man), or anxiety and shame (due to penetrative sex, family expectations, or an affair).
Table 2. Main narrative functions regarding Patrick and Richie’s relationship in *Looking*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Homoerotic Desire</th>
<th>Malaise/Guilt</th>
<th>Well-Being/Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick looks for casual sex. Patrick has a date with a doctor.</td>
<td>Patrick imagines his mother berating him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Patrick meets/dates Richie.</td>
<td>Patrick feels ashamed of dating Richie. Patrick discovers his shame of gay sex.</td>
<td>Patrick feels cared for and understood by Richie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick meets/befriends Kevin.</td>
<td>Patrick has sex with Kevin. Richie breaks up with Patrick.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Patrick has an affair with Kevin.</td>
<td>Patrick feels guilty/ashamed for being a secret. Patrick misses Richie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick moves in with Kevin.</td>
<td>Patrick feels insecure about having an open relationship. Patrick breaks up with Kevin.</td>
<td>(Time jump between season 2 finale and <em>Looking: The Movie</em>). Patrick moves to a different city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Movie</td>
<td>Patrick meets Richie again.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick says good-bye to Kevin. Patrick commits to a relationship with Richie.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all of the events in Table 2 show Patrick as having agency and occupying the position of the desiring character. In the first season, Richie is the object of desire and the character triggering Patrick’s anxiety and sense of failure. These events and actions sustain two general statements regarding the representation of embodied difference, particularly that of brown bodies in *Looking*:

- The stance of the white gay character determines the type of body that can be eroticized.
- Desire is marked by ethnic and class differences that give meaning to embodied differences.

These narrative conflicts are resolved by the end of *Looking: The Movie*. The film shows the affirmation of affective ties, signified by marriage events or interpersonal commitments; the representation of gay subjectivity is no longer marked by anxiety and is directly linked to well-being and a promise of love. Patrick’s story arc is fully developed by *Looking*’s finale; however, Richie’s “character stability” (Bednarek 2011) becomes a symptom of the ideological treatment of objectified difference. In the following sections, Richie’s salient features will be analyzed to understand how his construction as a narrative artifact depends on the semiotic interaction between language, corporality, and other cinematographic resources. The data gathered from the Spanish dubbed versions will also show how multilingualism and multimodality function as analytical perspectives to unveil new ideological stances when complex televisual products are translated.

4. Multilingualism and Semiotic Interaction in *Looking*

When applying the analytical framework for the translation of multilingual texts proposed by Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2011), it is apparent that the multilingualism in *Looking* is represented using English as the “main language” of the series and Spanish as the “secondary language”, which is used exclusively by Latinx characters. The label for the secondary language is L3, or “third language” (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011). As shown in Table 3, the classification of the languages of *Looking* also includes the target language, which in this case study includes the version dubbed for Latin America and the version dubbed for Spain. As the L3 coincided with the L2, the Spanish dialogues were also dubbed into Spanish. Therefore, the general strategy used in both dubbed versions was the “neutralization” (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011) of Spanish as the L3. In the dubbed versions, the L3 was made almost invisible, or was “unmarked” (De Higes-Andino et al. 2014).
Table 3. Language classification in *Looking*’s multilingual discourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Used</th>
<th>Language Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as the main language of <em>Looking</em></td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish as the secondary language of <em>Looking</em></td>
<td>L3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American (a) and Peninsular Spanish (b) as the dubbing target languages</td>
<td>L2a and L2b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Irene De Higes-Andino (2014b), the decisions to mark or not to mark multilingualism in audiovisual products are taken in the (post)production and distribution stages—for specific cost- and audience related reasons. Furthermore, the criteria for these decisions originate from formal/technical or linguistic constraints (Martí Ferriol 2010; De Higes-Andino 2014b). However, in order to analyze the dubbed versions of *Looking* as works of representation and not as cases of the AVT process, it was important to focus on how the decision not to mark the L3 contributed to the construction of Richie as a fictional heritage speaker of Spanish whose ethnic and racial characterization foreground his erotic capital and narrative function. Consequently, instead of approaching multilingualism in translation as a constraint, the following sections will focus on how the interaction of micro-textual features and other visual modes (particularly camera work and corporality) transform the character’s ideational components and, in turn, the ideological dimensions of the narrative in target versions of the series.

Richie makes his first appearance in episode 1 of *Looking*, when Patrick seems lost on a San Francisco public bus and Richie starts flirting with him. One of the most salient features of their first conversation is Richie’s marked English, which contrasts with Patrick’s native-speaker accent. This difference is further exploited when Richie invites Patrick to Esta Noche, the club where he will be working as the doorman; Richie’s way of pronouncing the name of the venue indicates that he is a character who also speaks Spanish, due to the “language-familiarity effect”—the identification of the subject as a first- or second-language speaker based on his voice and other related features (Perrachione 2018). Although “bilingual speaker” is a potential category for describing Richie’s characterization (his Spanish proficiency and language practices become more evident in *Looking*’s second season), Cashman and Trujillo (2018) argue that bilingualism is not a fit concept for labeling the complicated relationships between LGBTQ+ Latinx subjects and the Spanish language, which may include alienation from the language or specific motivations and contexts for its use. The concept of “heritage language speaker” is more useful because it includes bilingual competence, the sociopolitical connotations related to majority/minority languages, and the idea that heritage speakers have grown up in bicultural environments where their home language and the majority language were spoken (Silvini Montrul 2016). These conceptual components serve to analyze the interconnectedness of ethnic identity, language, and sexuality represented in *Looking*. Throughout the series, Richie’s utterances in Spanish occur in intimate/romantic contexts with Patrick or in conversations with his family members or other Latinx characters, for example, Agustín Lanuez—Patrick’s college best friend of Cuban descent. These actions and events reveal pragmatic reflexivity regarding the characterization of Richie and an attention to realism given in the construction of his story arc.

Richie’s voice is the first semiotic resource that can be analyzed using a comparative and multimodal approach. Voice is a material element that affords various communicative modes; however, selecting auditory modes depends on the researcher’s analytical approach and research objectives. Therefore, not all of the analytical dimensions used to analyze heritage language speakers—accent, intelligibility, identifiability, segmental/suprasegmental production, and phonemic contrast, among others (Chang 2021)—are relevant to this case study. Table 4 contains the descriptors used to analyze Richie’s voice in the source version (L1) and dubbed/target versions (L2a and L2b) of the series. Richie’s oral production in the source version has L3 phonological features—“interlanguage phonology” (Winke and Gass 2013). His English is accented, but his utterances are grammatically accurate, and his
production is fluent. Richie’s dialogues in the dubbed versions do not show interlanguage phonology. In terms of Charlotte Bosseaux’s (2015) study of dubbing as performance and characterization, both dubbing actors have clear voices, while Raúl Castillo’s voice is raspy, or rougher. Though it was not possible to perform an acoustic analysis of Castillo’s voice, Castillo speaks at a slow to moderate tempo. These dimensions of dubbing are not usually a matter of inquiry in AVT, as they are not part of the “translator’s task” or the operational stage of translation for dubbing (Chaume 2012). However, they are relevant when analyzing dubbed products as cultural artifacts where meaning–making processes depend on the textual and ideational functions of the interacting semiotic resources. Additionally, shifts in voice and performance as auditory modes influence the intersubjective function of a text as well as its representational and ideological dimensions (Bosseaux 2015; Pérez-González 2014).

Table 4. Descriptors of Richie’s voice and oral linguistic production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global segmental production</th>
<th>Richie’s Voice in L1 Actor: Raul Castillo</th>
<th>Richie’s Voice in L2a Actor: Carlos Hernández</th>
<th>Richie’s Voice in L2b Actor: Iván Jara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L3 phonological features in L1</td>
<td>No interlanguage phonology</td>
<td>No interlanguage phonology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice quality</td>
<td>Raspy (Deep voice)</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varying pitches</td>
<td>Varying pitches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a supporting character, Richie’s story arc develops in relation to Patrick’s actions or the events in which he takes part. Mobility—how Patrick, alone or in company with others, or because of other characters’ actions, moves around San Francisco or to other urban locations—is a narrative motif contributing to Patrick’s story arc. As part of these narrative displacements, Patrick is confronted with different visual and linguistic scenarios. Returning to Richie’s first appearance and indexicalization as a heritage speaker, Patrick visits the club where Richie works. This is the last scene of the series premiere (season 1, episode 1; 00:27:32) and is particularly potent because there are no dialogues. The final interaction between both characters is based on their gaze vectors. Patrick arrives at the venue’s entrance but is unsure about entering. He then sees Richie and stares at him. Richie is mimatized with the door frame, almost as a symbol of passage to a new or unknown place (Figure 2a). A complement to this image occurs in the fourth episode of season 1, when Patrick sees Richie from across the bar (called The Stud) and starts staring at him, though Richie does not look back. In this case, Richie appears at the center of the shot (lasting 9 s; 00:23:44–00:23:53), among other male bodies, but he is the focus of attention and Patrick’s desire (Figure 2b).

![Figure 2. Richie presented as a pure image—as a part of a frame (a) and as a framed object (b).](image)

These auditory and visual signs are in constant development as they follow and complement the narrative. The visual modes linked to Richie’s corporality (facial expressions,
body shape and disposition, general appearance, etc.) are stable since they depend on the materiality of the actor’s body. Nevertheless, these modes become denser in meaning based on the progressive unveiling of the character’s body according to the erotic themes of the narrative. How the cinematography works the intersubjective function of Richie’s body and its construction as a site of desire also suggests a colonial trope between white and brown bodies. As Hiram Pérez (2015) argues, normative and non-normative sexualities historically have romanticized travelling, exploration, and the “discovery” of the primitive—or the fantasies and fears about racial and sexual others (see Section 4). Along these lines, the narrative of Looking uses a cosmopolitan setting (San Francisco) to tell a story of gay modern identities and desires based on the American city’s real superdiversity. Patrick’s story arc is transformational because he is confronted with the “non-shared knowledge” (Blommaert and Rampton 2015) of Richie’s fictional past and ethnolinguistic representation. The intersubjective dynamics between Patrick and Richie represent colonial labor for a cosmopolitan desire, “a desire for the primitive, the exotic, the brown body” (Pérez 2015, p. 23).

Additionally, the differences between Raúl Castillo’s and the dubbing actors’ oral production and voices result in different communicative styles in the source and L2a and L2b dubbed versions. In the source version, for example, interlanguage interference marks Richie’s character through socially shared cultural codes signaling a Latino heritage background. This is not the case in the dubbed versions; that is, each dubbed version builds its own colonial and gendered narratives according to the micro-textual features used when translating Richie’s marked L1, as will be explained in the next section.

5. Cholo Boyfriend/Novio Panchito: Embodied Language Difference

Code-switching is the primary strategy used to mark Spanish as the L3 in Looking. A descriptive definition of codeswitching is “the use of overt material from single morphemes to entire sentences from Language (B) in Language (A) discourse” (Backus and Dorleijn 2009, p. 76). There are more particular classifications within the category of code-switching, e.g., code-mixing or “intrasentential code-switching,” as used in Beseghi’s (2019) study. However, the conceptual separability of other language alternations on grammatical bases is not relevant for analyzing telecinematic discourse in this study. This is because fictional multilingualism is a component of characterization and narrative rather than a semiotic system used by real or socio-historic subjects. Therefore, a critical approach to fictional code-switching is more useful for understanding how the markedness or suppression of the L3 contributes to “an image of monolingualism as normal, and to a misidentification of codeswitching (and multilingualism) as anomalous” (Hall and Nilep 2015, p. 612).

5.1. Metaphorical Switching

The concept of metaphorical switching underscores how language alternation does not depend on specific situations. However, it is instead used to create different layers of interpretation and activate intersubjective relationships within the same communicative event and context (Bailey 2007). For instance, in season 2, episode 5, the word gringo and the phrase puto gringo are used by one of Richie’s relatives. Richie introduces Patrick to his cousin, Ceci, while visiting his San Francisco East Bay home. Ceci repeatedly refers to Patrick as a gringo and thinks that “white guys are the worst. They walk around as if they own everything. I would never date a fucking gringo” (00:16:17). The word gringo and the phrase “white guy(s)” are stance markers because they convey negativity while emphasizing, by opposition, the positive values of Latinx people or of “those good Mexican guys” (humbleness, honesty, and sincere love). Code-switching in this narrative event positions Patrick as the other—an uncommon situation given his primary role. Additionally, Patrick’s monolingualism is portrayed as a disadvantage because he cannot effectively respond to Ceci’s words. Both dubbed versions maintain the word gringo in this conversation, but the unmarked use of Spanish erases the disidentification from English and a particular manner of Americanness (whiteness). The following set of examples (1) taken from this scene (season 2, episode 5; 00:12:35) show how the L2a version (dubbed for
Latin America) and the L2b version (for Spain) differ in integrating micro-textual features to compensate for the stylization of the Latinx characters.

The first column includes the dialogues of the source version, with the interlanguage phrases in italics. The second column shows the L2a version, which uses the same L3 dialogues in segments b, c, d, and e. However, segments a and f include colloquial variations related to Mexican Spanish (in italics) that reveal stylization features. This use of language varieties has already been explored and explained as strategies or translation shifts used to render L3-ness, in this case, in order to compensate for the loss of the characters’ marked styles (De Higes-Andino 2014a). The L2b version (third column) does not include these variation features. It seems that the translation uses standardized Spanish without vulgar or colloquial expressions. Of course, the scene’s context is the same in the three versions of Looking—the character’s actions and other visual resources still contribute to the scene and the episode’s narrative. Nonetheless, language stylization in the source version (and to some extent in the L2a dubbing) shows the permeability of languages and represents how language alternation fills expressive needs (Hall and Nilep 2015; Barnes 2012). Additionally, Richie and Ceci’s characters are further developed by showing how Latinx identity can be constituted locally via urban mobility and code-switching.

5.2. Intimacy and Affect

Richie’s code-switching is also used to create contexts of intimacy and to show affect. This happens with Patrick and his family members (as in the scene analyzed in the previous section). The moments of intimacy described here are not erotic but rather they represent several dimensions of the politics of care. For example, (2), Richie calls Patrick chiquito (season 1, episode 2; 00:14:35), which displays tenderness; The L2a version (for Latin America) uses the same word. The L2b version also uses a colloquial form of the word, but one that is more playful (with the diminutive -itín) and conveys familiarity or closeness between the characters. Another example (4) is that Richie calls Patrick “Pato,” which is a nickname for the name in Spanish Patricio and also means “duck.” Richie also uses “Pato” in the L2a version, but in the L2b version, the nickname is a truncated form of Patrick’s name (Pat). Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (2007) has explored the use of bird metaphors for homosexuality in Spanish and different parts of Latin America. Despite being a pejorative word for individuals who transgress sexual and gender normativity, Richie’s use of pato is ambivalent: it is a nickname that coincides with the word in Spanish while revealing the “translinguistic and transcultural coincidences (of) a fundamental connection between animals and the idea of queerness” (La Fountain-Stokes 2007, p. 196). This double interpretation can be exploited in the L2a version but not in the L2b version.

(2) Richie: Ay, chiquito. (L3) You’re a funny guy.
   Ay, chiquito. Qué simpático. (L2a)
   Ay, chiquitín. Qué gracioso. (L2b)

In examples (3) (season 1, episode 5; 00:19:14) and (4) (season 1, episode 6; 00:06:16), Richie’s code-switching serves as an ethno-semiotic resource for sharing more information about the character’s background. Patrick’s monolingualism (and ethnocentrism) is also foregrounded in these scenes, because he does not understand the cultural references and symbolic meanings attached to what Richie is sharing. He refers to his señora (4) and to his escapulario (5). In both examples, the Spanish units refer to the religious creed of the
Richie: Ay, Pato (L3). You worry about so much.
Patrick: You do not? ¿Tú no?
Richie: I worry about... getting a paycheck, paying my rent...
Patrick: Not the big stuff? ¿Por lo importante no?
Richie: That is what I got my señora (L3) for. Para eso tengo a mi señora. (L2a) Para eso tengo a mi señora. (L2b)

(4) Richie: I just wanted to, um... You see me wear my thing? Y quería que... ¿has visto lo que uso en mi cuello?
Richie: No, no mi collar. Mi escapulario. (L3)

5.3. Crossing

Crossing is a concept that is helpful for exploring the uses of language alternation as a means of cooperation, improvisation, conflict, and resistance. According to Rampton and Charalambous (2012, p. 483), “(i)n crossing, people foreground the socio-symbolic connotations/indexical values of particular linguistic forms, implying that they have special relevance to some aspect of interaction in the here-and-now.” In Looking, crossing is a narrative device that establishes hierarchies and divisions among Latinx characters; this can also be interpreted as a criticism of preconceived ideas about language as a community element. For example, (5), Richie is positioned as a racialized other by Agustín, Patrick’s best friend from college who is of Cuban descent. In season 1, episode 2, Agustín talks about Richie for the first time and calls him “cholo” (00:00:27), a word that in Chicano culture has race, class, and, probably, gender connotations. Agustín will later try to deny his classism by saying “I cannot be racist. I am Latino.”

(5) Agustín: Can you believe our little brother is getting himself a cholo (L3) boyfriend? ¿Puedes creer que nuestro hermanito se consiguió un novio cholo? (L2a)
¿Te lo puedes creer? Aquí el colega quiere echarse un novio Panchito. (L2b)

As in previous examples, the L2a version keeps the word used in the source version. The L2b version includes a different word: Panchito. Both words, cholo and Panchito, racialize Richie’s body while appealing to (neo)colonial imaginaries of social stratification based on the racist distribution of social identities and labor division in the past (Quijano 2000). The word cholo has different meanings in Chicano culture and in South American cultures. For example, in Peru, the concept of cholo changed during the first decades of the 20th century due to a neo-Indian project to resignify Andean masculinities and eradicate the inferiority complex (De La Cadena 2000). The cholo identity was also marked by the Andean immigration to Peruvian coastal cities, particularly Lima, and, consequently, the complex and symbolically violent dynamics of integration into urban spaces and the wider project of Peru as a nation (Vich 2003). In Chicano culture, the cholo identity can be associated with street socialization as a way of adjustment to urban societies; however, this adjustment was always characterized by marginalization and cultural ostracism from the mainstream, dominant society. “Cholo is a label that Americans and Mexican Americans have used to refer to the poorest of the poor, marginalized Mexican immigrants” (Vigil 2014, p. 57). The L2b version adapts or naturalizes the word into a colloquial word that is used in Peninsular Spanish Panchito (Panca)—a contemporary derogatory concept referring to members of the Latin American diaspora based in Spain. This word conveys a different otherness than
Language crossing occurs between Richie and Agustín when they meet for the first time (season 1, episode 6). Richie speaks to Agustín in Spanish, inferring that they share ethnic repertoires—probably because of Agustín’s corporeality. However, Agustín answers coldly and without looking at him; he disidentifies by answering in English despite Richie addressing him in Spanish on two occasions. Richie will confront Agustín later in the episode, after overhearing him telling Patrick that dating Richie was “community service.”

In the following example (6), Agustín switches codes when trying to calm Richie down (season 1, episode 6; 00:16:13). This language alternation is dissonant with Agustín’s previous dialogues and his decision not to speak in Spanish. Richie’s violent response marks Agustín’s code-switching as crossing because he considers it dishonest and illegitimate.

Both dubbed versions recreate the tone of Richie’s response but do not represent the specific functions of code-switching.

(6) Richie: Yo, man. What’s your fucking problem with me, dude? Why do not you just say it to my face?
Agustín: Dude... no, I am sorry. I did not mean any disrespect. En verdad, hermano, fue sin querer. (L3)
Richie: Now I am your fucking hermano. (L3)
Man, fuck you.

6. Final Remarks

This article has focused on the multimodal and multilingual dimensions of contemporary televisual narratives about queer desire. Taking *Looking* as a critical case, the analytical model designed for this study has revealed how complex telefiction products integrate representational devices and resources from different screen media. Among these resources, telecinematic discourse was crucial to exploring the construction of the characters in *Looking* and uncovering the structure and dynamics of its narrative. After analyzing the main corpus of telecinematic dialogues, one of the main findings was that the narrative of the series advances through ethnic, racial, and sexual/erotic themes. Thus, Richie is a salient supporting character because his story represents Latinx and Chicano subjectivities. Fictional multilingualism, particularly code-switching, was critical in complementing the visual construction of Richie’s corporeality as a site of homoerotic desire. Richie’s function as a narrative artifact effectively represents the colonial myth of the cosmopolitan and modern gay white subject. His erotic capital emerges from the intersection of race, class, language, and non-normative sexual discourses.

Regarding AVT, this study departs from the concept of restriction, constraint, or “constrained translation” by adopting a purposive analytical approach based on the semiotic interaction of language with other audiovisual modes. For this reason, the analytical framework was built on queer and critical theory on class, race, multilingualism, and gender. According to this critical framework, the analysis of the two dubbed versions of *Looking* (L2a for Latin America and L2b for Spain) began with the assumption that each target text would differ from the source text because of the semiotic interactions triggered by the change in language systems. In each of the two cases, the micro-textual analysis shows that the specific decisions to translate language alternations create different degrees of character stability: the dubbing for Latin America includes language variation to create a style for Latinx or Chicano characters, but the dubbing in Peninsular Spanish suppresses the markedness of the L3. Both translational methods (compensating for the L3 or not marking the L3) have specific effects according to the use of multilingualism in *Looking* (metaphorical code-switching, intimacy/affect, and crossing). Using translation as an analytical approach (mainly through comparative analysis) is also important for revealing how translation shifts, or micro-textual decisions, create new networks of meanings. This is clear from an analysis of how derogatory words for Mexican-American immigrants are...
updated in each dubbed version by using contemporary concepts that maintain racist connotations surviving from a colonial past.

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