

The Toning Down of Swear Words in *Orange Is the New Black*

A quantitative and descriptive analysis of the strategies used to translate the word *fuck* and its variants in the French dubbed version of the first season of *Orange Is the New Black (OITNB)*

■ Introduction

The starting point of this thesis is the research and the studies carried out by Italian and Spanish scholars, such as Beseghi (2016), Bucaria (2007), Ranzato (2009) or Santaemilia (2008). Bucaria (2007) suggests that 'the massive importation of audiovisual products, mainly from English speaking countries', has encouraged contemporary and probably subtler forms of text manipulation. This poster describes the methodology used to categorise the translation strategies adopted for the transposition of the word *fuck* and its variants in the first season of *OITNB*. It includes a graphic that presents the first results of this analysis, and it presents the solution considered to overcome the limitations observed.

■ Methodology and material

The methodology used to carry out this quantitative and descriptive analysis of the strategies used to render the word *fuck* (and its variants) in the French dubbed version (FDV) of the first season of *OITNB* is threefold:

■ The collection of data

Throughout the first season of *OITNB*, the *f-word* and its variants are uttered 430 times.

■ Use of the back-translation method (BT) to categorise the translation strategies

Professional translators have used four different strategies to render the word *fuck* and its variants:

- **Complete omission:** the swear word has been completely deleted or substituted with a total or quite neutral comment.

OV No! Don't you go! Don't you fucking leave me!
FDV *Non, s'il-te-plaît, t'en vas pas! J't'en supplie, ne me laisse pas.*
BT [No, please, don't go away! I beg you, please don't leave me.]

- **Weakening:** the swear word has been rendered with a diluted harmless equivalent.

OV Find the fucking screwdriver!
FDV *Faut r'trouver ce fichu tournevis!*
BT [We gotta find that damn screwdriver!]

- **Close rendering:** the swear word has been translated literally.

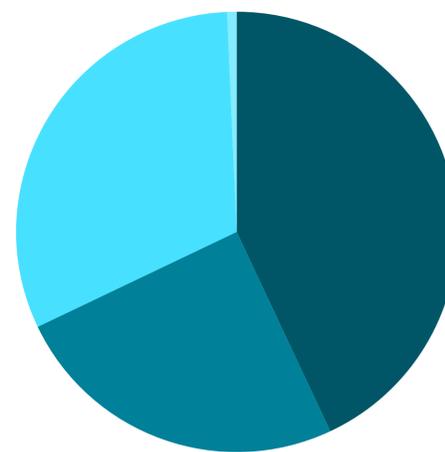
OV What's your name? What's your fucking name?
FDV *C'est quoi, ton nom? C'est quoi ton putain d'nom?*
BT [What's your name? What's your fucking name?]

- **Increased effect:** the swear word has been translated by a stronger one or a swear word has been introduced where the OV did not contain any.

OV Larry, I could smash her in the face.
FDV *J'ai vraiment été à deux doigts d'lui péter sa putain d'gueule.*
BT [I was really close to kick her fucking ass.]

■ Quantitative analysis of the translation strategies

Strategies used to translate the word *fuck* and its variants in the first season of *OITNB*



■ Omission ■ Weakening
■ Close rendering ■ Increased effect

■ Preliminary results and limitations

This quantitative analysis shows that the French translators have opted for a complete omission or a weakening strategy to translate 292 of the occurrences (67.9%), which highlights the toning down of the word *fuck* and its variants in the FDV of the first season of *OITNB*.

The next step will consist in using a Likert-type scale to limit the subjectivity involved in the categorisation of the translation strategies presented on this poster. French-speaking viewers will be asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive the language used in several lines of the FDV as offensive language by means of a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all offensive") to 4 ("very offensive").

■ Conclusion

In spite of the necessity to refine them, those preliminary results suggest that further research into the preferred strategies used to translate swear words in *OITNB* could enable to highlight certain forms of censorship or self-censorship.

