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Reading between the lines, seeing beyond the images: an empirical study on the comprehension of implicit film dialogue meaning across cultures

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Exploring the synergies between audiovisual translation, cognitive (experimental) pragmatics and film studies, the present article proposes a novel approach to the empirical investigation of audience reception. The proposed methodology is applied to a study on the comprehension of implicatures by British and Greek viewers in the two Bridget Jones films *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004) and their subtitled versions. Inter alia, it is demonstrated that implicatures whose understanding presupposes familiarity with specific aspects of the British culture presented the Greek audience with substantial difficulties. Overall, experimental data analysis shows that source and target viewers did not always understand implicatures in the way the filmmakers would like them to and/or the analyst had predicted. This finding highlights the subjectivity and creativity of audience response and, therefore, the need regularly to corroborate research hypotheses through studies of actual audiences.

Keywords: audience reception; film studies; implicature; pragmatics; relevance theory; subtitling; audiovisual translation

1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is currently developing at truly remarkable speed. This rapid expansion is evident both at a professional and an academic level. The technological advances of the digital age have had an enormous impact on AVT practice as well as on the way audiences consume audiovisual products such as films (Díaz-Cintas 2005). At the same time, the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a boom in academic courses training audiovisual translators and in research devoted to AVT (Orero 2004).

Despite the growing number of studies on the increasingly diverse range of AVT modes, certain aspects of the field have hardly attracted any attention over the years. A relatively under-researched area in AVT is the pragmatics of film dialogue. Although translation and interpreting activities have proved a rich source of data for pragmatic research, with an entire special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* (Mey 2006) dedicated to this field, there is comparatively little data on the way pragmatic meaning is relayed in the different modes of AVT.¹ To the best of my knowledge, not a single study has so far addressed the phenomenon of implicature, despite its importance within pragmatic enquiry and the fact that its use and interpretation can be significantly culture-bound.

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Emerging whenever communicators mean more than, or something (entirely) different from, what they actually utter (Levinson 1983, 97), implicatures are prevalent not only in spontaneous interpersonal communication but also in film dialogue (Desilla 2012). Since the end of the ‘silent era’, there has been a sentiment among film writers and critics alike that dialogue is maximally effective when indirect and subtle, partly owing to the great expressive powers of the moving image (Kozloff 2000, 4–28). As manifestations of linguistic indirectness, implicatures are particularly celebrated in the genre of romantic comedy, where dialogue often creates emotion and humour through what is only intimated but left unsaid (Kozloff 2000, 191–200; Mernit 2001, 198). This, in combination with the fact that subtitling allows for an opportunity to ‘tamper’ with the implicatures intended by the filmmakers (for instance by spelling them out in the target text) makes implicatures in subtitled romantic comedies particularly worthy of investigation.

In my own research (Desilla 2009, 2012), I have attempted to address the scarcity of studies on implicature in multimodal, intercultural communication by shedding light upon the construal, cross-cultural relay and comprehension of implicatures as carried out by filmmakers (i.e. scriptwriters and directors), subtitlers and audiences respectively. Adapting concepts from Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1995) in order to cater for the semiotic complexity of film communication, I have proposed the following definition of implicature:

Implicature in film can be defined as any assumption intended by the filmmakers which is implicitly and non-conventionally² communicated in the film dialogue. Audiences can infer the intended implicatures via the selection and the joint processing of the most relevant elements from their *cognitive environment*. The cognitive environment potentially includes information entertained by the viewers themselves as well as information conveyed (perceived or inferred) by the various semiotic resources deployed in the film being viewed. The former may consist, inter alia, of encyclopedic and sociocultural knowledge, as well as personal experience. The latter may be retrieved via the components of the *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing and soundtrack. In the case of subtitled films, the cognitive environment of the target audience obviously includes the subtitles which are added onto the visual image. The appropriate selection and exploitation of some of the aforementioned elements comprising the cognitive environment actually forms the particular *context* for the recovery of *implicated conclusions*. The utterance(s) that trigger the implicature(s) are intended by the filmmakers to evoke a specific context: background knowledge will be triggered in the form of *implicated premises* while the information readily conveyed via the film’s image and sound will be selected as *immediate contextual premises*. (Desilla 2012, 34)

I have also designed a methodological apparatus for the investigation of implicature in subtitled film which comprises three stages: multimodal transcription, pragmatic analysis and empirical testing of implicature comprehension by actual source and target audiences (Desilla 2009). Focusing on this final stage, the present article proposes a methodology for investigating the comprehension of implicit film dialogue meaning across cultures. In complementing pragmatic analysis with empirical evidence, the experimental component of the research is also an attempt to develop the area of reception studies in AVT, something that scholars have been recommending for over a decade (e.g. Kovacic 1995; Díaz-Cintas 2004; Gambier 2006) but to little avail: although the ultimate aim of subtitles is meant to be the maximum comprehension and enjoyment of the audiovisual product, and the importance of audience design in subtitling is frequently highlighted (e.g. Agost 1999; Mayoral 2001; Díaz-Cintas 2001; Bartina 2004), studies on the way target audiences perceive and understand subtitled films still remain rather scarce.³

The methodology proposed here is then applied to a case study designed to test the comprehension of implicatures identified in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) (BJ1) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004)⁴ (BJ2) by a sample of British and Greek viewers (identified respectively as Source Audience (SA) and Target Audience (TA)). In particular, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent can the British and Greek audiences understand the implicatures that the filmmakers intended to communicate?
- (2) To what extent is the Greek audience's comprehension of implicatures similar to that of the British viewers?
- (3) What is the contribution of non-verbal semiotic resources to implicature comprehension by the two audiences?

Question 1 examines the SA and TA's degree of success in recovering the implicatures that the filmmakers intended the film dialogue to evoke. At the same time, it will become evident to what extent the analyst's (and, where applicable, the filmmakers') hypotheses pertaining to the understanding of implicit meaning by the two audiences are empirically verified.

Question 2 investigates similarities and differences in the way the British and Greek participants understand the implicatures present in the two romantic comedies. It is predicted that a considerable divergence between the source and target audience's interpretations may well arise whenever the comprehension of a given utterance (including, of course, the recovery of any implicatures) crucially presupposes familiarity with specific aspects of the source culture (SC). More specifically, the majority of the Greek viewers are expected to face significant difficulties in understanding these utterances.

Finally, **Question 3** seeks to ascertain the extent to which the salient non-verbal cinematic signifiers which have been found to partake in implicature construal are in fact processed by the two audiences in the pursuit of implicature recovery. It is hypothesised that visual and acoustic information can facilitate comprehension, particularly in cases where the audience's cognitive environment lacks the background information required for working out the intended implicatures.

Section 2 below presents the rationale underlying the design of the experimental study and offers a detailed description of the proposed methodology. In **Section 3**, the focus is on the discussion of experimental data: through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of audience responses, this section examines whether and to what extent the British and Greek viewers were able to understand implicatures that are highly specific to the SC. Finally, the 'Conclusions' section will provide a summary of the main findings and an overview of the potential implications of the present study.

2. Methodology

2.1. *Going empirical: the importance of audience research*

The mechanisms and dynamics of verbal communication have attracted the attention of various disciplines over the centuries. How hearers make sense of what speakers tell them by relying on linguistic knowledge and context⁵ has been investigated primarily by pragmatics and psycholinguistics. Each of these fields has developed from a different conceptual programme and relies on a modus operandi of its own; on the one hand, pragmatics originates in philosophy of language and linguistics and has given rise to

various theories grounded partly in intuitions as to how utterances are interpreted and partly on observations of communication (Sperber and Noveck 2004). Psycholinguistics, on the other hand, has borrowed the empirical methods of psychology, and thus the research conducted by psycholinguists is experimental at its core (Sperber and Noveck 2004).

With the exception of Gibbs' (e.g. Gibbs 1986; Gibbs and O'Brien 1991) work, which has consistently pursued the experimental testing of pragmatic hypotheses for more than 20 years, the fields of pragmatics and psycholinguistics have only recently begun to join forces and explore their potential synergies. Recent attempts to test pragmatic theories using experimental psychological methods have given birth to the promising field of experimental pragmatics (Gibbs 2004, 68; Sperber and Noveck 2004). This interaction can be very beneficial for pragmatics, for whilst psycholinguists have tended to evaluate their insights into linguistic phenomena on the basis of experimental evidence, pragmaticists have traditionally opted to rely mainly on their own intuitions about how an artificial or naturally occurring utterance would be/is presumably interpreted (Sperber and Noveck 2004). Within experimental pragmatics, though, experiments are used together with observations and/or intuitions in order to test pragmatic hypotheses (Sperber and Noveck 2004).

Within pragmatics, a substantial number of studies have been carried out on metaphor, irony and scalar implicatures.⁶ Yet, experimental work on what Grice (1975) calls conversational implicatures or what Sperber and Wilson (1995) call implicated premises and implicated conclusions⁷ is extremely scarce. Furthermore, there is no experimental study which sets out to ascertain exclusively how implicatures are cross-culturally understood in AVT. To the best of my knowledge, Leppihalme (1997) and Hill (2006) are the only scholars who have conducted relevant audience research in translation studies. Within the strand of Relevance Theory scholarship, Hill (2006) seeks to establish whether target-readerships of Bible translations can access the implicated premises evoked by the source text as well as the implicated conclusions these lead to. Leppihalme's (1997) investigation of the responses of Finnish readers to allusions in fictional and journalistic texts translated from English can be regarded as a second exception to the general lack of studies on implicature comprehension within the field.

As mentioned in the introduction, the methodological apparatus for the investigation of implicature in subtitled film proposed in Desilla (2009) is adjusted to the semiotic complexity of films and comprises three stages: multimodal transcription, pragmatic analysis and empirical testing of implicature comprehension by actual SAs and TAs. Multimodal transcription (Baldry and Thibault 2006) was selected as a means of identifying the contribution of verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources to the construal of implicatures and the creation of overall meaning by the filmmakers. A multimodal transcription was produced for each instance of implicature identified in BJ1 and BJ2. Each of these transcriptions was then complemented by an analysis of the comprehension procedure that the recovery of the implicature would seem to call for. The latter explains the cognitive tasks that the SAs and TAs *presumably* carry out in retrieving the communicated meaning, and implicatures in particular, as per Wilson and Sperber (2004): source text and target text are examined in terms of their immediate contextual premises, explicatures, implicated premises and implicated conclusions. However cautiously produced and presented, this analysis remains hypothetical as it is based on the analyst's, and, where available, the filmmakers' own intuitions. In film studies terms, the pragmatic analysis is primarily intended to reflect the *preferred interpretation* of the dialogue, namely how the filmmakers intend the audience to understand the utterance and, in

particular, the evoked implicatures (Desilla 2012, 39). Studying the Director's Commentary on the two romantic comedies, offered as part of the special features in the two DVDs, has been fairly elucidating in this respect.⁸ Although the Director's Commentary, if used sensibly, can boost the reliability of the intuitive pragmatic analysis by verifying or falsifying some of the analyst's hypotheses regarding the filmmakers' communicative intentions, the ensuing account of how a given audience manages to access assumptions that can be culture-specific and work out the implicated conclusions arising from the activation of the former is perforce highly speculative: it is a unique set of predictions that require some empirical corroboration. The experimental study I discuss below represents the final stage of this methodology and was specifically designed to probe implicature comprehension by a sample of source and target viewers, while also testing the extent to which the intuitive pragmatic analysis carried out before represents a realistic account of implicature understanding by SA and TA.

The crucial role that audience research can play in the study of implicit meaning is also evident if we consider the complexity of the concept of implicature per se. As a manifestation of language indirectness, implicature entails the risk of misunderstanding; sometimes meaning can be too oblique to be recovered at all (Weizman 1989, 73; cf. Dascal 1983). Furthermore, a single utterance may elicit a range of different implicatures. Still, according to Wilson and Sperber (2004, 613–14) there should be only a single relevant interpretation in a specific communicative situation: if a communicator wishes his/her utterance to be readily understood, he/she should try to produce it in such a way as to ensure that the first interpretation to satisfy the addressee's expectations of relevance is the actually intended interpretation (Wilson and Sperber 2004, 614). Nevertheless, audiences may reject or altogether fail to recognise the preferred readings that filmmakers attempt to anchor (Wharton and Grant 2005, 40). Watching a film is both a shared and a personal experience. As Phillips (2000, 53) explains, although 'the vast majority of an audience will respond fairly uniformly to a film in terms of laughing in the same places and gasping with horror in the same places (...) as individuals we will always make personal the film experience' and, thus, several private meanings are bound to emerge, which are largely outside the filmmakers' control. Indeed, from a cultural studies perspective, it seems almost certain that individual viewers will read films in different ways based on their life experiences, age, sociocultural background, gender and so on (Stafford 2007). Therefore,

it is possible that some viewers will recover the intended implicated conclusions, but through selecting a context more or less different than the one intended; equally plausible is the scenario whereby the choice of an intended context proves detrimental for the comprehension of the implicated conclusion(s) and, possibly, the utterance as a whole. (Desilla 2012, 34)

This further necessitates the empirical testing of implicature comprehension.

To conclude this section, I would like to underscore that the experimental study presented in this article is not intended to test the validity of Relevance Theory as a pragmatic theory, that is, to confirm or refute the hypotheses it makes for human communication and cognition. Relevance Theory has been selected as a means of approaching implicatures, mainly because it offers a consistent and schematic way of analysing utterance meaning, as well as a useful categorisation of implicatures into implicated premises and implicated conclusions. The concept of implicated premise, in particular, acquires a very interesting dimension when applied to film communication, as it can flexibly include knowledge available from previous films and triggered by means of intertextuality (Desilla 2012). Furthermore, the definition of the cognitive environment

can be effectively adapted to the specifics of subtitled films. In what follows I use these notions as the basic tools for a systematic investigation of implicature in AVT, but will not put them to the test as such. As previously mentioned, the experiments will rather seek to verify or falsify the content of the immediate contextual premises, implicated premises, explicatures, and implicated conclusions as envisaged by the analyst, and, where applicable, the filmmakers, in each instance.

2.2. Operationalising utterance comprehension

As shown in [section 2.1](#), implicature recovery always goes hand-in-hand with utterance interpretation. In relevance-theoretic terms, constructing appropriate hypotheses about the intended implicated premises and conclusions of an utterance are two of the sub-tasks that the addressee undertakes as part of the overall comprehension procedure (Wilson and Sperber 2004, 615). Thus, the experimental study presented here is essentially designed to probe utterance comprehension, which features as the measured variable.

In an attempt to operationalise⁹ utterance comprehension for the purposes of the present research agenda, optimum utterance comprehension is defined as the inference of the intended explicature(s) and the accessing of all the intended implicatures, including implicated premises as well as implicated conclusions. In other words, the viewer has fully understood an utterance only when he or she has successfully grasped both explicit and implicit content. Utterance comprehension is treated here not as unidimensional/simple but as a multidimensional/composite variable. In this light, inability to work out the implicated conclusion(s) of an utterance does not necessarily mean that the viewer has failed in all the tasks of the comprehension procedure.

Borrowing terminology from experimental psychology, it can be said that utterance comprehension is a ‘continuous’ rather than a ‘discreet’ variable (Field and Hole 2006, 9–10). Put differently, the degree of comprehension of a given utterance can be best conceptualised in terms of relative positioning along a continuum – with optimum and substantially flawed utterance comprehension at its poles – and should be measured accordingly. The data elicitation method used in the present study is that of questionnaires, and, thus, the answers given by the British and Greek participants to the comprehension-testing questions constitute raw qualitative data. In order to gain clearer insights into the phenomenon of utterance comprehension and to be able to test specific predictions, such qualitative data need to be quantified. To this end, a scale¹⁰ was devised for evaluating participants’ responses and participants were assigned an individual score for their level of comprehension of each of the utterances triggering implicatures in the films under analysis.

For obvious reasons, instances where all the implicatures of the original utterance have been spelt out in the subtitles or where the subtitler has greatly interfered with the meaning of the original were excluded from the experimental study. Consequently, the 44 instances of implicature used in the study are cases of either zero or partial implicature explication in the target text.

2.3. Method

This section outlines the execution of the experimental study, providing the reader with information on participants, questionnaire design and the experimental procedure.

2.3.1. *Participants*

Two groups of participants are used, namely the SA and the TA. The SA consists of native speakers of British English while the TA is formed by native speakers of Greek. The rationale for relying only on British speakers of English as SA members – instead of speakers of English in general – is based on the premise that the former can achieve a more thorough understanding of the two films, since both are for the most part set in Britain and are partly British productions.

Each audience group comprises nine female participants, their age ranging from 18 to 52. The call for participants requested that they meet four criteria: they should be female, between 18 and 55 years old, native speakers of British English and, ideally, they should not have previously seen BJ1 or BJ2. Admittedly, this final criterion, set for the sake of maximum empirical validity and reliability, considerably confined the pool of potentially eligible volunteers, given the great popularity enjoyed by the two Bridget Jones films in the United Kingdom (UK). Therefore, a small amount of flexibility was allowed with respect to BJ1. The participants' lack of previous exposure specifically to BJ2, on the other hand, was considered essential because certain implicatures in the sequel are resolved as the film dialogue progresses and the plot unravels. In terms of age and gender, the participants are fairly representative of the type of audience that the genre of romantic comedy appeals to. According to the audience profile for BJ2 provided by Cinema and Audio-Visual Industry Audience Research (CAVIAR),¹¹ the split between British female and male viewers in 2004 was 68%:32%, while 53% of the audience was aged 35 and over (Stafford 2007, 45). Male viewers were excluded from both groups in the experimental study for the sake of uniformity, while the average age is 28.3 years for both audiences.¹² With respect to the film familiarity requirement, it was ensured that the number of participants who had previously seen BJ1 was the same in both SA and TA: out of the nine participants that comprised each audience-group, two¹³ reported that they had seen BJ1, with the viewing taking place at least one year prior to the experiments.

An additional consideration had to be made which pertains to the TA's competence in English. In an empirical study on the reception of humour in subtitled films by Fuentes-Luque (2003) care was taken to ensure that the Spanish participants selected to view the subtitled version of *Duck Soup* (1933) did not speak any English. As Fuentes-Luque (2003, 296) explains, this decision was made in order 'to avoid any potential linguistic pollution from the background original soundtrack'. The aim of the present project is to investigate to what extent and how target viewers understand the implicatures intended by the film creators via the perception, and most probably the processing, of both the English dialogue and the Greek subtitles. It was therefore decided that TA members should hold the Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)¹⁴ or an equivalent qualification. After all, selecting participants with some competence in English would also turn the experiment into a more faithful simulation of what happens in reality. Nowadays, in many subtitled countries including Greece, the overwhelming majority of target viewers understands at least some English and, more often than not, subtitles cease to act as substitutes of the original dialogue and become a supplementary aid during the film reception process (Gottlieb 2005). According to Karamitroglou (1999), two-thirds of 15–28 year-old Greeks held the Cambridge FCE at the end of the last century, and the percentage is very likely to be higher nowadays.

2.3.2. *Questionnaires*

Questionnaires were used as the basic information gathering tool in this experiment. Two pamphlets, one per film, were administered to the participants. Each contained

questionnaires for every instance of implicature included in the experimental study. In terms of content, the questionnaires used with TA participants are virtually identical to those administered to their SA counterparts: they are close translations of the questions and statements included in the English questionnaires, except for the odd reformulation intended to accommodate the specific wording of the Greek subtitles.

One of the top priorities in designing the questionnaires was to encourage participants to volunteer as much unprompted input as possible. Thus, care was taken not to guide the participants' interpretation of fictional events in a specific direction. To this end, open-ended questions were used throughout (cf. Hill 2006). As Coolican (2004, 171) points out, open-ended questions have several advantages over closed questions (e.g. those involving multiple choice):

- they deliver fuller, richer information;
- the respondent is not frustrated by the constraint imposed with a fixed-choice answer;
- the questioning is more realistic; we rarely have simply 'to agree or disagree', or say 'how strongly', without giving our reasons.

Since the experimental study aims to ascertain whether participants can access the implicatures intended by the film creators and establish the premises on which they (fail to) do so, it would be inappropriate to present them with a ready-made list of possible interpretations for them to choose from. Additionally, in questionnaires based on a multiple-choice format there is always the possibility for participants to choose their answer randomly. It should be stressed that this study is not only interested in the end product, i.e. understanding the implicature (or otherwise), but also in the rationale underlying the recovery of that implicature, a cognitive process which may well differ from participant to participant. Given their capacity to yield insights into the respondent's individual rationale for the recovery of implicatures, the use of open-ended questions was a *sine qua non* for the success of the present study.

Furthermore, the questionnaires were carefully designed in order to fulfil the requirements of validity and reliability, namely to measure what they are intended to measure and to do so consistently (cf. Coolican 2004, 172). As Hill (2006, 195) points out, when investigating implicatures one should ask 'why' and 'how' questions in addition to 'who', 'what', 'when' questions. The latter are typically asked to check for explicatures, although sometimes they can reveal implicatures as well. Overall, an attempt was made to avoid suggestive questions and other potentially leading framing strategies.

2.3.3. Procedure

A total of four sessions took place between January and March 2008; separate sessions were conducted with the SA and TA as well as for each film. For both audiences, the lagging time between the showings of BJ1 and BJ2 ranged from seven to ten days. The experimental procedure can be divided into three phases, namely briefing, actual experimentation and debriefing.

At the beginning of the first session, participants were briefed on the overarching goal of the experiment. They were informed that they would be taking part in a study on how viewers understand certain aspects of films through their perception of fictional dialogue, visual information and non-verbal soundtrack. The specific aim of the experiment, i.e. to

test for the comprehension of implicit meaning, was not revealed at this stage to avoid distorting the input from potentially overly zealous participants.

At the beginning of the main experimental phase, the questionnaires (in the form of pamphlets bearing the unique code of each participant) were administered. Subsequently, participants and experimenter watched the film from beginning to end. During the showing, the experimenter paused the film at predetermined points. Every time the film was paused participants were required to answer a set of questions corresponding to the section they had just viewed (i.e. for BJ1_1, BJ1_2 and so on). They were given five minutes to answer each set before resuming the film viewing.

The end of the second session (the showing of BJ2) was the end of the participants' involvement in the study. In the debriefing that took place at that point, the participants were informed of the precise aim of the experiments.

2.3.4. Data processing

The responses that the participants gave during the experimental phase are raw, qualitative data. As such, they shed considerable light upon the individual interpretation of the utterances under investigation while simultaneously revealing similarities and differences both within a single audience and across the two audience groups. Equally importantly, they can help the analyst establish the extent to which the pragmatic analysis previously carried out on a hypothetical basis actually represents a realistic account of implicature comprehension by British and Greek audiences. However, for all these insights to be gained it is necessary to quantify the SA's and TA's respective degrees of success in understanding the intended explicature(s) and implicatures.

As mentioned in [section 2.2](#), comprehension is treated here as a continuous variable. Accordingly, it was decided that it would be best measured by means of a scale with 'no understanding' or 'complete misunderstanding' and 'optimum' or 'thorough understanding' as its poles. The participants' responses were evaluated on the basis of such a purpose-built scale, resembling those used to assess students' reading comprehension skills. This scale is reproduced in [Table 1](#) below.

In accordance with the view of comprehension as a continuous variable, no points were awarded when there was no answer or for blatantly wrong responses; some points were awarded for responses indicating superficial/partial understanding, while a higher score was given to responses reflecting a more thorough comprehension of the film

Table 1. Scale for measuring utterance comprehension.

Score	Description
0	No answer/completely inaccurate or irrelevant answer.
1	Obscure, inconclusive evidence of accessing the intended explicature and/or implicature(s).
2	Either understanding the single intended explicature or understanding one out of the two intended explicatures. Accessing only the intended implicated premise(s) associated with the explicature. Either failing to access any other implicatures or accessing unintended implicatures.
3	Understanding all the intended explicatures. Either accessing some of the intended implicatures (premises and conclusions) or accessing all the intended implicatures (premises and conclusions) plus unintended ones.
4	Understanding all the intended explicatures. Accessing all the intended implicated premises and all the implicated conclusions.

dialogue (cf. Hill 2006, 63). Each participant was assigned an individual score reflecting his or her level of comprehension of each instance of implicature. The application of the scale during the data analysis stage was on the whole smooth. The middle ground between scores 1 and 2 as well as 3 and 4 can be regarded as the only ‘grey areas’, necessitating a closer examination of some responses. Eventually, what determined the score was mainly the clarity and completeness of the answers. For instance, participants who received a score of 4 usually provided a more sophisticated and detailed rationale than those who were granted a score of 3 for the same set of questions. In fact, it was often the case that participants showed evidence of successful implicature recovery but failed to provide any justification for their inferences, despite being specifically requested to do so. The dividing line between the lower score band (0–2) and the higher one (3–4), on the other hand, was sufficiently clear and effectively distinguished flawed or rudimentary understanding (lower score band) from successful understanding of an utterance, including its implicatures (higher score band).

Basic data management was performed using the statistics software SPSS® 16.0. The participants’ individual scores per instance of implicature were entered in order to obtain descriptive statistics of their performance and, in particular, the arithmetic mean, i.e. the average comprehension score, of the SA and TA for each utterance. Conducting statistical significance tests was deemed unnecessary for a number of reasons: on the one hand, the present study was based on a relatively small pool of participants and involved the processing of a limited volume of scores. On the other hand, the strength of this study is first and foremost to be found in its qualitative insights, with the quantitative component mainly facilitating the comparison between the performance of the two audiences as well as the identification of those implicatures that proved most challenging for each group.

3. Data analysis

Two key elements of the data analysis concern the British and Greek audiences’ ability to access implicated premises specific to the SC and their ability to work out the implicated conclusions that are contingent on the activation of those premises. From a Relevance Theory perspective, in order for a Greek viewer to understand these implicatures, it is essential that his/her cognitive environment encompass relevant knowledge of the British culture; additionally, such knowledge must be activated when appropriate. Therefore, SC-specific implicatures are assumed to be more difficult for the TA to access than the other instances of implicature identified in the two films.

SC-specific implicated premises and conclusions are triggered by what translation studies scholars have called culture-specific items (Newmark 1988; Ramière 2006) or, more recently, extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs) (Pedersen 2005). Although various classifications of ECRs have been proposed (e.g. Nedergaard-Larsen 1993; Ramière 2004), it is agreed that ECRs generally encompass geographic, ethnographic and sociopolitical references. In the present paper, allusions are treated as one sub-type of ECRs, following Leppihalme (1997) and Pedersen (2005).

It can be claimed that the communication of SC-specific implicatures to the TA without any form of contextual adjustment entails high risk, as, by definition, their understanding presupposes familiarity with specific aspects of the SC. When the cognitive environment of viewers of translated films lacks the requisite SC-specific information, the intended implicatures are by default non-evocable in their totality; the viewers may fail to

access any implicatures or even access unintended implicatures. In either case, the filmmakers' communicative intentions cannot be thoroughly appreciated.

On this basis, it was assumed that the understanding of SC-specific implicatures would, in general terms, present the Greek viewers with difficulties. Two overall hypotheses underlay the experimental testing of the comprehension of utterances evoking SC-specific implicatures:

- (a) The average comprehension score (\bar{x})¹⁵ for the TA would always be low,¹⁶ i.e. less than 2.5, which is the value designated as the threshold separating adequate implicature understanding from non-understanding and misunderstanding on the scale from 0 to 4.
- (b) The SA would face no serious problems. Their average score would be above 2.5 and, in any case, higher than that of the TA.

As evident in Table 2, which shows the average comprehension score of each audience per instance of SC-specific implicature, hypotheses (a) and (b) were both verified to a very large extent.

In what follows, the primary focus of the analysis will be on cases where the comprehension of SC-specific implicatures proved particularly arduous for the Greek audience, often resulting in the drawing of unintended inferences (BJ1_22, BJ2_11 and BJ2_27). BJ2_28, where, as anticipated, the TA achieved the second best comprehension score in this category, is also discussed. The analysis of these specific cases will also shed light upon some rather unexpected, and very interesting, low comprehension scores among the SA.

Table 2. Source audience (SA) and target audience's (TAs) average comprehension score per instance of SC-specific implicature.

Instance of implicature ¹	SA average score (\bar{x})	TA average score (\bar{x})
BJ1_5	2.2	0.8
BJ1_7	2.6	2.2
BJ1_18b	2.0	0.2
BJ1_20	2.6	1.1
BJ1_22a	2.8	1.3
BJ1_22b	1.0	0.1
BJ1_23	3.3	1.7
BJ1_26	2.7	1.4
BJ2_2	3.7	1.6
BJ2_11	3.7	1.0
BJ2_17	2.9	2.2
BJ2_20	3.1	3.2
BJ2_22	2.7	1.6
BJ2_27	2.8	0.9
BJ2_28	3.6	2.6
BJ2_29	3.6	1.9
BJ2_30	2.7	2.3

Note: ¹Throughout the chapter, references to specific instances of implicature are made using the same codes assigned to them in the original data set.

3.1. Indirect references to the British political and legal systems

The lowest score for the TA was observed in BJ1_22, where implicatures are intimately linked with humour and eroticism. The *mise en scène* clearly indicates that this is a sexual aftermath scene: Bridget and Daniel are in their hotel room, lying in bed half-covered with a sheet, their faces flushed. The director refers to this scene as ‘the anal sex scene’, although the two lovers are not explicitly shown to engage in sexual intercourse (Maguire 2001). The audience can infer that the couple has engaged in anal sex by accessing a series of implicated premises evoked by the playful, witty dialogue that follows. The fact that Daniel faces Bridget’s back in the opening of this scene can be regarded as a visual hint but it is not sufficient in itself to yield this conclusion (Desilla 2012). Bridget breaks the silence by saying: ‘The thing you just did is actually illegal in several countries’ (BJ2_22a¹⁷). Daniel replies that this is the reason why he is ‘so happy to be living in Britain today’. As I noted elsewhere (Desilla 2012, 47), ‘this adjacency pair is presumably intended to activate in the mind of the audience knowledge relating to the legality of anal sex in Britain as opposed to other countries’. Shortly after, Bridget’s utterance ‘I can’t understand why the Prime Minister doesn’t mention it more in his speeches’ (BJ2_22b) seems to refer to the then Prime Minister Tony Blair’s strong support of the rights of homosexuals and/or to the bill passed under his administration reducing the age of consent for anal intercourse (Desilla 2012, 47). These implicated premises are likely to consolidate the inference that Bridget and Daniel have actually engaged in anal sex. In the subsequent shots additional hints pointing towards this interpretation can be found in the visuals and soundtrack: Bridget asks Daniel ‘Do you love me?’ to which he piquantly responds ‘Shut up, or I’ll do it again’; the threat is then executed, with him saying ‘and over you go’. As Bridget turns around giggling, the camera slowly exits the room through the bedroom window accompanied by a surging emotional score. As Maguire (2001) remarks, ‘Daniel seduces her with laughter’, often using humour as a buffer for his commitment phobia, and this scene is an excellent case in point.

The dialogue in this scene has been rendered almost verbatim in the Greek subtitles. As predicted, the Greek viewers were nonplussed by Bridget’s reference to the Prime Minister, as indicated by their average comprehension score for BJ1_22b ($\bar{x} \approx 0.1$). In response to the question ‘Which Prime Minister does Bridget refer to in relation to the “illegal thing”?’ the majority of the TA declared complete ignorance, apart from TA3,¹⁸ who stated that the referent is the British Prime Minister, and TA9, who thought that it was Winston Churchill (though she offered no rationale for this inference). Not only did the TA lack the background knowledge related to Tony Blair’s politics with respect to homosexuals, but they were also unable to access the implicated premises (namely the legality of anal sex in Britain as opposed to other countries), which are specific to the legal system evoked by Bridget and Daniel’s dialogue. Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority failed to construct an appropriate hypothesis for the explicature of Bridget’s utterance in BJ1_22a ($\bar{x} \approx 1.3$); only TA8 and TA9 worked out that Bridget and Mark specifically engaged in anal sex in this scene. While TA9 did not explain how she reached this conclusion, TA8 mentioned that Daniel told Bridget to ‘turn around and bite something’.¹⁹ In the dialogue, Daniel does indeed say ‘And over you go’, as well as ‘I’m going to give you something to bite on’. In other words, unable to recover the intended implicated premise, this particular viewer processed relevant immediate contextual premises available via the film’s verbal soundtrack, particularly Daniel’s titillating comments, in order to understand Bridget’s utterance. From a film language perspective, the responses of TA1 and TA4 are also significant. These two participants stated that the

'illegal' act carried out by Daniel and Bridget in this scene is swearing – without, however, justifying this deduction. In all probability, the explanation for this interpretation resides in the shots immediately preceding the scene in the hotel bedroom: there, Bridget and Daniel are shown in two separate boats on a nearby lake, having fun, yelling and swearing. It should be noted that the musical score accompanying the lake scene flows over the hotel bedroom scene for a few seconds. When the music ends, Bridget says to Daniel 'The thing you just did is actually illegal in several countries'. Since this utterance triggered no other relevant assumptions in their mind, TA1 and TA4 appear to have concluded that Bridget refers to Daniel's swearing during the lake scene. This assumption was presumably encouraged by the non-diegetic music that bridges the two scenes. As Dix (2008, 88) observes, in fact, music can 'provide continuity across (...) disparate shots and thereby (...) distract from the artifice of the editing process'.

As far as the SA is concerned (BJ1_22a: $\bar{x} \approx 2.8$), four out of nine participants replied with some certainty that the protagonists had anal sex. However, SA2 and SA8 referred vaguely to sex and unmarried sex respectively, while SA6 stated that Daniel received oral sex from Bridget. Perhaps more surprisingly, the SA ($\bar{x} \approx 1$) also failed to capture the implicated premises related to Tony Blair in BJ1_22b. Nearly half of the viewers were unable to provide any answer while SA7 and SA9 thought that the referent was generally the British Prime Minister. Although SA2, SA6 and SA8 stated that Bridget refers specifically to Tony Blair, there is no clear evidence of them reaching the intended implicatures. This finding could be explained if we take into account that the experiments took place in 2008, i.e. seven years after the theatrical release of the film; presumably, viewers of BJ1 in 2001 would have had a much easier task deciphering the intended implicatures due to the topicality of the issue touched upon in this scene.

The activation of unintended contextual assumptions can cause serious complications in utterance comprehension. BJ2_11 is a good case in point: here Bridget has a serious hair problem a few hours before the Law Council dinner to which she is meant to accompany her lawyer boyfriend, Mark. Her friend Shazzer suggests that Bridget should wear a wig, saying 'Lawyers love wigs'. In the subtitles the utterance is rendered as 'Lawyers like wigs', thus retaining the ECR. Unless they are familiar with this aspect of British culture, target viewers will not have access to the relevant implicated premise, since in Greece barristers do not wear wigs in court. Thus, it was highly anticipated that they would have difficulties in establishing the intended connection. Indeed, in the response of one Greek viewer there is evidence of a serious misunderstanding of Shazzer's utterance, probably due to the activation of unintended context: asked why Shazzer says that lawyers love wigs, TA2 thought she probably meant that 'they are kinky and that this may "turn Mark on", since he's a lawyer, too'. For this participant the lexical item 'wig' appears to carry sexual connotations, thoroughly unintended in the present context. Overall, the poor average score ($\bar{x} = 1$) reflects the fact that most Greek viewers were unable to establish the relevant link between lawyers and wigs (or any link, for that matter). Only TA5 and TA7 demonstrated acquaintance with this peculiar element of the British legal system. What came as a surprise, however, was that a considerable portion of the Greek audience thought that Shazzer's suggestion of wearing a wig to the Law Council Dinner was actually viable. Such an interpretation clashes with the TA's overall perception of Bridget's comment as flippant and/or a bad idea. This dissimilarity might pertain to the different degree of accessibility of the SC-specific implicature to the two audiences. The evidence shows that implicature comprehension by the British audience ($\bar{x} \approx 3.7$) was not hampered, thus confirming the analyst's expectations.

BJ2_28 is based on the same ECR as BJ2_11, namely the tradition of barristers wearing wigs in British courts. However, the cultural reference is handled differently in each case by the subtitle. In this scene fragment, Daniel and Mark confront each other. In a firm tone, Mark asks questions about Bridget, which Daniel tries to evade. Annoyed by Mark's persistence, Daniel eventually says, in a heavily ironic tone: 'What do you mean you're only going to ask me one more time? You haven't got your wig on now, dear'. While saying this, he makes mocking grimaces and movements. Obviously, he is implying that Mark is not in court at that point in time. However, this strong implicated conclusion, when processed together with appropriate implicated premises, gives rise to an additional set of implicatures: namely that Mark has no right to interrogate Daniel, does not have the upper hand in this conversation, and so on. The term of address 'dear', used by Daniel, highlights his derisive attitude towards Mark. Possibly in an attempt to make the original more accessible to the Greek viewers, Daniel's utterance has been translated as 'You are not in court now, dear':²⁰ the strong implicated conclusion of the original dialogue now features as the subtitle's explicature. In turn, this explicature yields additional implicatures identical to those of the source text. The subtitle has opted for partial explication (Desilla 2009) by removing the ECR per se, thus automatically reducing the two layers of implicature in the source text to one.

Overall, the Greek viewers adequately worked out the implicated premises and some of the implicated conclusions that this rendering is intended to communicate. Most participants identified at least one similarity between the way Mark treats Daniel in this scene and the way he, as a lawyer, would treat a witness or a defendant in court. In the viewers' own words, Mark 'brings an indictment' to Daniel (TA2), his way 'is somewhat pressing' (TA3), 'his look is authoritative' (TA7), and so on. Clear evidence that the implicated premise (Mark is a lawyer) actually formed part of the selected context, however, can only be found in the answer of one participant (TA2). On a related matter, the target viewers failed clearly to address exactly what the Greek subtitle means, with the exception of TA5. The rather modest score ($\bar{x} \approx 2.6$) is related to these two weaknesses in the Greek audience's comprehension of this particular instance. Nonetheless, such a score indicates a fairly sound basic understanding of Daniel's utterance if compared with the score achieved for BJ2_11 ($\bar{x} = 1$). The reaction of the SA to the new version of the wig-related ECR, on the other hand, was roughly the same as in BJ2_11. The British viewers ($\bar{x} \approx 3.6$) were overall able to access the relevant implicated premises and strong implicated conclusions in BJ2_28. Their responses were much more straightforward and thorough than those of the TA, particularly as far as Daniel's ultimate communicative intention in this excerpt is concerned. For instance, according to SA1, Daniel wants 'to show that he is under no obligation to answer Marks [sic] questions as he is not under oath'.

3.2. Capturing allusions: a 'culture bump' or one of the joys of film?

Like all ECRs, allusions are crucially dependent on familiarity in order to evoke meaning. In the light of Gutt (1990), Leppihalme (1997, 8) stresses that a shared cognitive environment between the communicator and receiver(s) is a prerequisite for the latter to be capable of drawing the intended inferences.

In our case, an allusion to *Pride and Prejudice* (Langton 1995) in BJ2_27 proved unfamiliar to the Greek viewers ($\bar{x} \approx 0.9$), thus confirming both the director's and the analyst's intuitions. More specifically, Bridget alludes to the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (Kidron 2004). At this point in the film, Bridget has already separated from

Mark and is fantasising about him returning to her: ‘And he will run to my door, fall to his knees, possibly wearing a wet white shirt, and beg me to come back’. This image of Mark is specifically intended to remind the audience of the 1990s TV adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel, where in one memorable scene Mr. Darcy, played by Colin Firth, comes out of a pond wearing a wet white shirt. The ‘pond scene’ became famous among female viewers, turning Colin Firth into a romantic/sexual icon (Maguire 2001). The filmmakers of BJ2 are obviously playing with the audience here, as in the film Colin Firth is the actor who plays Mark (whose surname is, significantly, also Darcy). In fact, the whole plot of BJ1 was derived from *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen 2001) and the role of Mark Darcy was actually written around Colin Firth, precisely because he had played Mr Darcy in the TV adaptation (Fielding 2001; Maguire 2001). As Kidron (2004) remarks in the Director’s Commentary, ‘maybe international audiences don’t know, but British audiences are so aware of Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy’. The background knowledge envisaged by the director for British viewers endows Bridget’s utterance with a rich pay-off in terms of contextual effects, since the SA’s familiarity with the TV adaptation should lead them to uncover some interesting implicatures in what she says. Greek viewers, however, are not expected to have access to the implicated premises pertinent to the ‘pond scene’. Nevertheless, they can be assumed to be capable of recovering the implicated conclusions, at least to a large extent (i.e. that Bridget has idealised Mark as a sexy, romantic hero; that she is romantic/naïve etc.). These conclusions, in fact, can be reached by processing relevant contextual assumptions other than those related to the intertextual reference to *Pride and Prejudice* (Langton 1995): for instance that fictional romantic heroes typically run to their beloved’s door and fall to their knees, and/or that the image of a man wearing a wet white shirt generally carries sexual overtones.

As the director suspected, the TA failed to recognise the allusion, which was literally translated in the subtitles. When asked whether the image of Mark ‘wearing a wet white shirt’ reminds them of anything similar they may have seen in the past on TV/film, the majority of the Greek viewers replied negatively. By contrast, Bridget’s utterance evoked the intended implicated premises for most British viewers ($\bar{x} \approx 2.8$): five out of nine mentioned the ‘pond scene’ in *Pride and Prejudice*. This result was anticipated both by Kidron (2004) and the analyst.

What makes the experimental data for BJ2_27 quite special is the ‘creative touch’ (Leppihalme 1997, 144) that a small number of viewers displayed in their interpretations. Consider the following responses:

- SA1:** [It] probably [reminds me of] a typical hero image, though a specific example doesn’t spring to mind. Possibly the ‘Milk Tray Man’ who delivers chocolates to his lover, but I don’t remember if he ever wore a wet white shirt.
- TA5:** It reminds me of *9 ½ Weeks*. But a wet white shirt is generally sexy.
- TA7:** It reminds me of Sakis Rouvas in a music video. Because something like this is sexy.
- TA8:** Nothing in particular. Just guys running back to the woman of their life. Classic American crap, basically.

The ‘Milk Tray Man’ mentioned in the answer of SA1 was the protagonist of one of the most iconic advertising campaigns for Cadbury’s chocolates, which ran on British television for more than 30 years. He was a tough action man who would defy death to deliver a box of Milk Tray chocolates to his beloved. Sakis Rouvas, mentioned by TA7, is a famous Greek singer; he has been a pop idol since the early 1990s and has often appeared

both on stage and in music videos wearing a white unbuttoned shirt, causing a frenzy among his thousands of female fans. TA5, on the other hand, probably refers to the white shirt worn by Elizabeth (Kim Basinger) during one of her erotic encounters with John (Mickey Rourke) in *Nine ½ Weeks* (1986). Last but not least, the answer given by TA8 is particularly noteworthy as it offers evidence of what Hall (1980), in his audience reception model, calls an ‘oppositional response’: the viewer recognises the general idea of idealised/romanticised love promoted in this scene but succinctly rejects it.

What the four responses above foreground is the viewers’ active participation in the meaning-making process, despite their inferences substantially deviating from those of the British audience (cf. Leppihalme 1997, 144). Interestingly, although the answers of SA1, TA5 and TA7 seem at first glance to deviate from the preferred interpretation, it cannot be categorically claimed that they undermine the filmmakers’ overall communicative intentions in this scene fragment. Quite the contrary: they suggest that the viewers managed to capture, at least partially, the connotations of romance and/or sensuality that Bridget’s utterance is intended to convey. In fact, when commenting on what this scene says about Bridget’s character and the way she views Mark, SA1 remarked that Bridget thinks of Mark as ‘her “hero”, “Mr Right” and “Prince Charming”’. All those ideals that girls dream they will end up with’. Similarly, according to TA2, Bridget ‘sees Mark as something ideal – a romantic true love’, while in the eyes of TA5 she ‘is a daydreamer’. Overall, a larger number of participants among the British audience associated the utterance with the image of an idealised Mark and a fairy-tale romance. It is also important to observe that SA7 and SA9, who missed the allusion to *Pride and Prejudice*, still inferred that Bridget views Mark as ‘sexy, appealing’ and ‘quite hot’, presumably relying on the sensuality that the image of a man wearing a wet white shirt (stereo-)typically exudes.

The analysis of BJ1_27 illustrates a recurrent finding in the experimental data set, namely that a failure to understand the allusions intended by the filmmakers does not always prove (completely) detrimental to film comprehension and, presumably, viewer enjoyment. Although the low TA average comprehension scores in instances involving allusions to British or American films, TV programmes and literature²¹ corroborate Leppihalme’s (1997, 133) claim that ‘minimum change (literal) translation of unfamiliar allusions may well be culture bumps²² for receivers who do not share the cultural background of the primary (SL) audience’, Greek viewers were often able to understand the main idea/effect/tone that the filmmakers wished to communicate by accessing unintended but somehow related context with the help of a scene’s visuals, music and/or of context. The pleasure of involvement in meaning-making that allusions afford to audiences has been frequently underscored by film studies scholars (e.g. Kozloff 2000, 178; Stafford 2007, 84), and the evidence in the present study certainly confirms the viewers’ active involvement in such processes.

4. Conclusions

The experimental study presented here investigated implicature comprehension by a sample of British and Greek viewers in the two *Bridget Jones* romantic comedies. With respect to the recognition of the filmmakers’ communicative intentions, the qualitative analysis of the participants’ responses has clearly shown that viewers did not always understand implicatures in the way the filmmakers intended them to. Sometimes they accessed unintended implicatures or failed to make any sense of implicit content. There was also one case where a viewer reached the preferred interpretation but clearly distanced herself from it.

Differences were observed not only across, but, interestingly, also within the two audience groups. The findings discussed above seem to confirm the prevalent view in film studies that there is no uniform audience response to film: some audience members may adopt the preferred or dominant reading, while others may respond to film more idiosyncratically (Hall 1980; Phillips 2000).

One of the primary goals of the experiments conducted with SA and TA was to ascertain whether the intuitive pragmatic analysis undertaken beforehand for each instance represented a realistic account of implicature comprehension by the two groups. Although the results of the empirical study falsified some of the analyst's assumptions, in most cases the pragmatic analysis of implicatures was shown to have yielded reliable predictions. In the case of SC-specific implicatures preserved intact in the target text, in particular, the analyst's hypothesis that the average comprehension score of the TA would indicate non-understanding or a considerable degree of misunderstanding was wholly verified. As shown, utterances whose comprehension crucially depends on implicated premises that are highly specific to aspects of the British culture, such as politics and television programmes, presented the Greek audience with substantial difficulties. Because their cognitive environment lacked the relevant background knowledge, TA members often accessed unintended implicated premises in an attempt to interpret the utterance. The present results thus confirm Leppihalme's (1997) empirical findings according to which allusions to the SC when translated literally tend to constitute 'culture bumps' for target audiences. A comparison of the average scores of the two audiences revealed that, in the overwhelming majority of these instances, utterance comprehension and implicature recovery were significantly smoother for the British participants. Nevertheless, my expectation that the British viewers would not encounter major problems in accessing the intended context, was proven wrong on a few occasions, which indicates that allusions and other ECRs can be lost not only in translation but also in monolingual communication.

The results of the present empirical study are necessarily limited, due to the small sample size and, to some extent, also to the fact that all the participants were women. It is therefore essential that the findings about the understanding of implicature by the British and Greek participants discussed above are interpreted with caution, as they may not be transferrable to their respective wider populations. Additionally, one should of course remember that, because of the artificiality of their setting, experiments can never be absolutely representative of the way viewers behave in a natural environment (Stafford 2007, 131). Viewers are largely unaware of the remarkable array of psychological processes taking place with lightning speed while they are watching a film. They do not press 'pause' every now and again to reflect on how they managed to make sense of what they just saw. And even if they do, taking advantage of the greater freedom to move back and forth between scenes offered by digital technology, they would not normally be asked to rationalise their inferences on paper.

In spite of these limitations, the experiments have effectively complemented my intuitive pragmatic analysis, ultimately enabling me to produce a more reliable snapshot of how source and target viewers deal with implicature comprehension in film. The fact that the participants' responses did at times challenge the robustness of the hypothetical comprehension procedure underscores the need to combine intuitive pragmatic analysis with experimental data – even more so when studying intercultural communication. As Hill (2006, 101) aptly observes, 'cognition is too complex for someone outside the target group to predict the contextual assumptions that will be evoked by a text with certainty'. On the basis of my own experience while conducting the analysis, I would add that it is often difficult to make accurate and comprehensive predictions even for an analyst belonging to the target culture. Researchers should not categorically take for granted that audiences will (or will not) be able to access certain elements of contextual information (Hill 2006).

Apart from its implications for intercultural/experimental pragmatics, and, potentially, film studies, the present study aims to make a contribution to the field of AVT by proposing a methodology for the investigation of implicatures which incorporates experimental testing of implicature comprehension, thus addressing the scarcity of reception studies in the field. This methodology can of course be used to test implicature comprehension in other film genres and language combinations. With very minor adjustments, it can also cater for implicatures in the context of dubbed film. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the study as a whole represents a step towards enhancing our understanding of the way in which target audiences comprehend film dialogue in comparison to source audiences. Ultimately, it is hoped that the findings I have discussed will highlight the need to refine the way AVT scholarship tends to portray target viewers – namely as mostly passive receivers who are either assumed to completely surrender to the story-telling machine and adopt the preferred ('correct') interpretation, or are automatically deemed to fail to make sense of the film dialogue because of the presence of impenetrable ECRs. Many of the participants' responses I have examined clearly demonstrate that viewers (including members of a target audience) are active meaning-makers who draw inferences by creatively combining visual and acoustic information, as well as by linking what they perceive to previous experience. The result of this active engagement is that they often manage to understand the film-makers' communicative intentions, even if only in part and definitely against the odds.

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Notes

1. Kovacic (1994), Herbst (1987), Hatim and Mason (1997), Pedersen (2008), Desilla (2009, 2012) and Yuan (2012) are among the limited number of studies addressing pragmatic aspects of AVT.
2. Implicatures as defined here fall under what Blum-Kulka (1989, 68) labels 'non-conventional indirectness'.
3. Attempts to address this research gap include Fuentes-Luque's (2003) empirical approach to reception of humour in the Spanish version of Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* (McCarey 1933); Cavaliere's (2008) research on the perception of cultural specificities in the subtitled version of the soap opera *Un posto al sole* (Bowen and Ventriglia 1996–present); and, more recently, Schauffler's (2012) study on the comprehension of humour in *Wallace and Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death* (Park 2008) by German viewers, as well as Yuan's (2012) investigation of audience response to politeness representations in Chinese–English subtitling.
4. Henceforth referred to as BJ1 and BJ2 respectively.
5. *Context* is used here in its broader sense and as conceptualised in Relevance Theory, i.e. not as merely restricted to the immediate socio-physical situation and co-text in which the utterance is produced but, rather, as potentially encompassing a whole range of assumptions that the hearer entertains about the world, such as encyclopaedic information, cultural assumptions, memories, beliefs about the speaker and so on (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 16–17).
6. Scalar implicatures are treated by Levinson (2000) as instances of what Grice (1975) calls Generalised Conversational Implicatures (GCIs).
7. Implicated conclusions are deduced from the context and the explicature (i.e. the explicit meaning) of the utterance processed together, while implicated premises are retrieved from the addressee's background knowledge and/or memory (Sperber and Wilson 1995).

8. A similar approach was followed by Piazza (2010) in her stylistic multimodal study of self narrative in Antonioni's *When Love Fails* (1953).
9. In research, psychological constructs need to be 'operationalised' (Coolican 2004, 31). In other words, it is necessary to define carefully the variable and specify exactly how it is going to be measured (31).
10. The scale is described in 2.3.4.
11. In the UK, film audience research is conducted by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) under the heading of CAVIAR for the Cinema Advertising Association (CAA) (Stafford 2007, 137).
12. The youngest participants in the SA and TA were 18 and 21 years-old respectively. Their oldest counterparts in the SA and TA were 47 and 52 years of age.
13. In the data analysis (sections 3.1 and 3.2) these participants are referred to as SA6, SA9, TA7 and T8.
14. The Cambridge FCE corresponds to level B2 of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. At the B2 level typical users are expected, inter alia, to understand English in TV programmes at least to an adequate degree (<https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/exams/CEFR/B2>).
15. The symbol \bar{x} stands for the arithmetic mean of all the British or Greek viewers' comprehension scores for the utterance in question. The arithmetic mean is thus a way of calculating the average comprehension score for each audience. The symbol \approx is used as all the scores provided in this section have been rounded up to one decimal place.
16. BJ2_20 and BJ2_28 were identified as potential exceptions to this assumption, as some contextual adjustment had taken place; the subtitler opted for partial explicitation (more precisely, for the removal of the ECRs involved), while preserving some of the implicitness of the original. BJ2_28 is analysed in detail below.
17. In the questionnaires administered to SA and TA, dedicated questions were used to test the understanding of Bridget's utterances, hence the two separate codes, namely BJ1_22a and BJ1_22b.
18. As all participants have been anonymised, they are referred to by means of a code consisting of the prefix 'SA' or 'TA' and a number assigned to the participant within her audience group.
19. All the TA's responses quoted in sections 3.1 and 3.2 are my literal translations of their responses in Greek.
20. This is a back-translation of the Greek subtitles.
21. Apart from BJ2_27, these instances also include BJ1_7, BJ1_18b, BJ1_5, BJ1_20, BJ2_1, BJ2_2, BJ2_29 and BJ2_29, the scores of which appear in Table 2. For an analysis of the allusions present in BJ1_20 and BJ2_1, see Desilla (2012, 42–44).
22. The metaphor of 'culture bumps' refers to 'renderings that are puzzling or impenetrable' for the target audience (Leppihalme 1997, 197).

Notes on contributor

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