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## **Prefabricated orality and the translation of Spanish and Catalan approximators into English in a TV series**

### **Oralidad prefabricada y la traducción al inglés de aproximadores españoles y catalanes en una serie televisiva**

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**Abstract:** Discourse markers have been studied in translation studies in the variety known as *prefabricated orality*, present in audiovisual products in which spontaneous orality is feigned through a priori script writing. These particles are made explicit or implied when transferring from one language to another. In the present work, I delve into the translation of four discourse markers: *como* and *com*, from Spanish and Catalan, respectively, and their variants *como que* and *com que*, categorized as approximators. The corpus used is a TV series based on improvisation, so the present article challenges the adequacy of the label of *prefabricated orality* considering the lack of a script and the performative factor of language. The analysis is divided into the classification of the textual and pragmatic values of the markers in the source languages and their translation in the English subtitling. The results align with past studies in which the preference seems to be for the omission of markers, regardless of their contribution to the discourse, with the losses that this entails. Beyond this, it has been found that other factors, such as co-occurrence with other markers or the marker's position, seem relevant in their translation, so a syntactic analysis of translation techniques is proposed.

**Keywords:** Audiovisual translation, Prefabricated orality, Subtitling, Discourse markers, Approximator

**Resumen:** Los marcadores del discurso se han estudiado desde el ámbito traductológico en la variedad llamada oralidad prefabricada, aquella presente en producciones audiovisuales en las que se finge oralidad espontánea a través de la escritura previa de un guion. En el proceso de trasvase de una lengua a otra se opta por la explicitación o la implicación de estas partículas. En el presente trabajo, se ahonda en la traducción de cuatro marcadores discursivos: *como* y *com*, del español y del catalán, respectivamente, y sus

variantes *como que* y *com que*, los cuales se categorizan como aproximadores. El corpus usado es una serie basada en la improvisación, por lo que en el artículo se cuestiona la adecuación de la etiqueta de oralidad prefabricada teniendo en cuenta la falta de guion y el factor performativo sobre el lenguaje. El análisis se divide en la clasificación de los valores textuales y pragmáticos de los marcadores en el discurso original y en su traducción en la subtitulación al inglés. Los resultados están en consonancia con estudios pasados en los que la preferencia parece ser la omisión de los marcadores, independientemente de su aportación al discurso, con las pérdidas que ello acarrea. Más allá de esto, se ha encontrado que otros factores, como coocurrencia con otros marcadores o la posición del marcador, parecen ser relevantes en su traducción, por lo que se propone un análisis sintáctico de las técnicas de traducción.

**Palabras clave:** Traducción audiovisual, Oralidad prefabricada, Subtitulación, Marcadores del discurso, Aproximadores

#### INTRODUCTION

*Prefabricated orality* or *pretended orality* is described as a linguistic variety, present in audiovisual products, that is “written to be spoken as if not written” (Gregory and Carroll, 1978, p. 42). Television and film scripts are crafted to sound as natural as possible when said out loud by the actors and actresses. To achieve this goal, scriptwriters use “types of linguistic expression very similar to those typical of speech” (Biber and Conrad, 2019, p. 303), such as fillers, specific intonation patterns, slang, colloquial expressions, or special sociolects. From a linguistically analytical point of view, studying manifestations of this prefabricated orality, *finjierte Mündlichkeit* (Goetsch, 1985) or *oralidad fingida* (Chaume, 2004) contributes in the understanding of the techniques employed by scriptwriters in creating a fake, informal text, and the similarity between a possible spontaneous oral discourse, such as colloquial conversations. Numerous researchers have accounted for this from a global point of view (Giralt Latorre, 1994; Flores Acuña, 2014; Méndez Orense and Pérez Béjar, 2022) or applied to language teaching (Fung and Carter, 2007; Soler Pardo, 2017), amongst others.

More remarkably, studies on prefabricated orality have been more fruitful when approached from translation studies. Due to the awareness that underlies the creation of colloquialized scripts, translation scholars have been interested in analysing the transfer from one language to another to explore possible cross-linguistic equivalences and check whether the objective of producing “a similar effect on the target culture audience as the source text produced on the source audience” is met (Chaume, 2004, p. 844). These audiovisual translation analyses may focus on dubbing (Agost, 1997; Chaume

2001; Baños Piñero, 2004; Leal Abad, 2011; Rossi, 2011) or subtitling (Chen, 1996; Mattsson, 2006). They may concentrate on a specific part of language, such as the transference of humour and its relation to cultural constraints (Arampatzis, 2011; Martínez Sierra, 2016) or sociolects (Igareda & Aperribay, 2012). Within these, numerous investigations address the translation of discourse markers (DMs) in audiovisual products (Cuenca, 2006; Matamala, 2009; Mattsson, 2009). In line with that research, the present paper analyses the transfer of the discourse markers *como* from Peninsular Spanish and *com* from Catalan and their variants *como que* and *com que*, respectively, in a television series to its translation into English subtitling.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: firstly, there is a theoretical review of the study of discourse markers in audiovisual translation, followed by a summary of the productive research on the particles *como* and *como que* across different Spanish varieties. Since their equivalents in Catalan, *com* and *com que* have not been studied before, it is impossible to devote a discourse-pragmatic theory section to it. However, a short paragraph on their grammatical description and some theorization on the possible origins of *com* (*que*) as DMs are provided. After this, the series used for the corpus, *Autodefensa* (2022), will be described, and the appropriateness of the label “prefabricated orality” will be reconsidered given the show’s high level of improvisation. Once all the theoretical foundations have been established, the analysis of the English translations of these markers will be shown based on their previously analysed pragmatic values (Server, in press). Finally, the main conclusions of this work will be drawn, and future avenues of study will be proposed.

#### 1. DISCOURSE MARKERS AND TRANSLATION

Discourse markers are a highly debated category within linguistics as they can be defined based on various starting points, such as pragmatics, semantics, syntax, or discourse studies. Quite early on, Levinson described DMs as words and phrases that “indicate the relationship between an utterance and prior discourse” (1983, pp. 87-88). Thus, from the very beginning, there is an interest in highlighting the operability of DMs in discursive relations between two elements. The earliest, most detailed study of DMs comes from Schiffrin (1987) in her publication on the theoretical status of this category. In general terms, Schiffrin characterizes DMs as being syntactically independent of their sentence, presenting a specific prosodic realization, and being able to operate on different discourse levels, among others (1987). Later on, Fischer postulates that DMs have “structuring functions with respect to local and global content and structure of discourse” (2000, p. 20). From an interactional point of view, DMs are used “to express speaker stance; to guide utterance interpretation; and to structure discourse”

(Pichler, 2013, p. 4), so attention must be paid to the specific context in which they are employed to unpack their contribution. Moreover, DMs are extremely language-dependent, and even if situations of linguistic transfer occur (Flores Ferrán, 2014; Andersen, 2014; Kern, 2020), each marker must be studied in its context and its language. It is, therefore, of interest to translation studies to explore how meanings and functions can be carried over from one language to another.

There is a great deal of research that addresses the translation of DMs from one language to another. As mentioned above, it is crucial to consider the context in which a discourse marker is inserted to know what contributes to the discourse's procedural content. Beyond a possible semantic equivalence, due to the discursive and interactional role played by these kinds of words, their translation must reflect and maintain the functional equivalence between the source and target languages. This is not an easy task since and, as Aijmer *et al.* (2006) point out, one must go beyond a pre-established equivalence and “choose a correspondence for a linguistic element in a particular context” (p. 11). It is necessary to delve into the particularities of the original text, understand its meaning and, from there, find an equivalence that works in the target linguistic variety and in that specific context. As Solsona Martínez emphasizes, one must “adopt a functional correspondence, [starting from the] semantic equivalence, distinguishing the core meaning [and] the pragmatic [contextual] values” of the discourse marker in question (2016, p. 111). Despite their difficulty, analyses of the translation of DMs in the audiovisual are fruitful. They can illustrate the processes of creating pretended orality, the pragmatics of the languages involved, translation strategies, and possible cross-linguistic bridges.

Such research has focused on dubbing and subtitling in the languages of interest in this article, Spanish and Catalan, into English and vice versa. In the first group, there are numerous published works on the transfer from English into Spanish (Romero-Fresco, 2012; Baños, 2014; Calvo Rigual, 2015) or from Spanish into English, as in the present research (Wang, 2013; Peromingo, 2014). Research of this nature on Catalan is scarcer due to the more limited production in the language. However, some remarkable publications, such as Dolç and Santamaria (1998), include DMs in their comprehensive analysis of pretended orality in dubbing Catalan into English in several television series. Cuenca (2006), on the other hand, focuses on the analysis of pragmatic and translation errors in the dubbing of *Four weddings and a funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994). Finally, Matalama (2007) studies the functions of the interjection *oh* in English comedies and its translation into Catalan dubbing.

In this paper, I focus on the translation of discourse markers *como (que)* in Peninsular Spanish and *com (que)* in Catalan in their adaptation into English subtitling. I have chosen to focus on this modality because the series *Autodefensa* (2022), the corpus, is not dubbed into any language. In this way, this publication also contributes to the bibliography on translation in these language pairs and, by taking Catalan as the source language, I contribute further to the scarce body of research in that language. A more detailed account of the research so-far on these particles follows.

## 2. COMO (QUE) AND COM (QUE)

The marker *como* has gone through a historical process of grammaticalization, starting its prepositional origins, its progress into a conjunction and an adverb into its discursive and pragmatic realm (D'Arcy, 2017; Aguilar Durán, 2019), a process similar to *like* in English (Kern, 2017). In this evolution, the core meaning of *como* and its variant *como que* has become that of approximation or loose interpretation (Fuller, 2003). Speakers employ these markers to distance themselves from the truth conditions of what they are saying, excusing themselves from the responsibility for what is being said. Thus, this meaning operates on a semantic, not a pragmatic, level. Through their repeated use, *como* and *como que* have acquired new meanings closer to pragmatics, most notably that of attenuator. When this marker is used, the speaker seeks to take distance from what is said with the specific goal of protecting oneself since the utterance “[could] generate conflict or disagreement with the interlocutor” (Aguilar Durán, 2019, p. 26). Therefore, due to the underlying approximative meaning of *como*, this DM takes on different values in context regarding its contribution, which will change depending on the communicative situation (Rivas, 2016). It is necessary to delve into the complexities of its contextualized uses to determine its exact function and how to transfer it into the target language.

Besides attenuation, previous authors have pointed out many other discourse values for *como* and *como que*, which coincide across Spanish varieties. As for *como*, Jørgensen (2011) points to intensification, filling, or introducing direct discourse as their central values in young speakers from Madrid. In Chilean Spanish, also amongst young people, Mondaca (2019) finds that these markers fulfill functions of numerical approximation, exemplification, direct discourse introduction, or filler. Given the predominance of attenuation, some researchers have proposed several sub-functions of this value in the discourse: self-protection, prevention, and image repair (Mondaca, 2019; Repede, 2020). These meanings also have been mentioned in the literature of the English discourse marker *like*, which may also serve as an approximative or hedge, quotative, a focus particle, or an exemplifier (Fuller, 2003; Miller, 2009). This interlinguistic equivalence will be

relevant in the analysis section when exploring the translation between these languages.

Regarding *como que*, some studies have explored its functioning as a variant of *como*, with the *que* element “not contribut[ing] anything either syntactically or semantically to the whole sequence” (Camacho, 2011, p. 8). Despite this initial hypothesis, recent, more detailed studies reveal certain differences in their uses. Mondaca (2019) finds that Chilean women employ *como que* in an attenuating way more than men and, at the same time, people of the younger demographic group use this variant more. Aguilar Durán (2020) finds that *como que* can function as a casual conjunctive locution, but *como* no.

The Spanish forms *como (que)* have a rich body of research from a discursive-pragmatic perspective. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for the Catalan *com* and its possible variant *com que*. The present study is the first to look at these items pragmatically. In the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* dictionary, *com* is categorized as a conjunction, which may be followed by *que*, and it denotes cause. Despite having the same form, *com que* does not indicate approximation or attenuation but causality.

Com que estic cansada, me'n vaig a jeure

Since I am tired, I am going to lay down

Com és tan tard, ens n'anem

Since it is so late, we are leaving

This same dictionary indicates that *com* functions as an adverb when it refers to how something is done or that something is done similarly. It is this fourth meaning of *com* that seems most relevant here. As with Spanish, the approximator pragmatic meaning of *com* in interaction seems to stem from its contrastive, semantic meaning.

No sé com fer-ho

I don't know how to do it

És blanca com la neu

She is as white as snow

At this stage, it is speculative to affirm where the meaning(s) of *com (que)* found in this research stem from, i.e., their approximative and attenuating values. It is hard to affirm that they come purely from their evolutionary patterns, similar to their Spanish counterparts. *Com* contains an approximative value within the syntax-semantic realm, although it does not

include *que*. Speakers could have independently mirrored the syntactic pattern of *com que* into the pragmatic functions of *com*. There is also the possibility of *com (que)* discursively coming from languages in contact, which has been observed in English-Spanish contact and DMs transmissions elsewhere (Torres, 2002; Flores-Ferrán, 2014). Other research shows semantic extensions from Spanish-Catalan regarding their DMs (Payrató, 1988; González, 1998; Server Benetó, 2024). Since Spanish *como (que)* is very productive in informal speech, it may be that Catalan speakers have adapted the pragmatic uses of the Spanish forms into the repertoire in the form of *com (que)*. Determining the exact origins of *com (que)* in Catalan as a DM is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on its current uses in a particular type of interaction. Further research into its evolution is encouraged for future investigations.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS

The corpus of study is the series *Autodefensa* (2022), which premiered in 2022 and was created and written by Berta Prieto, Belén Barenys, who are also part of the cast, and Miguel Ángel Blanca, who directs it. There is a total of 10 episodes distributed in two seasons. *Autodefensa* features Berta and Belén, two young Catalan women in their early twenties who live irreverently and freely. The series shows their daily life, dominated by partying, drugs, and, at times, quasi-philosophical reflections. However, it also discusses social issues, such as anxiety, sexuality, and abuse within the audiovisual industry. Each episode, of short duration, revolves around one of these themes, and the formal approach (visuals, mise-en-scène, lighting, etc.) aims to be as natural as possible. On most occasions, the camera seems to be just another element of the interaction, distancing the viewer from a more theatrical conception of what they see. Spanish and Catalan are used throughout the show, even though there is more discourse on the former. The spoken parts of the show and the subtitling were transcribed and later aligned to match their equivalences. Afterward, an analysis of the original values of the markers was carried out, followed by a quantification of their translations as they related to their contextual meanings.

There is a compelling reason for the interest in using *Autodefensa* (2022) as a corpus, which lies in the absence of a formal script in most episodes. Instead, the cast were given a general topic as a starting point and then they were recorded talking about it. There was a prefabricated theme and plot, but no memorized or preestablished script. The interactions are natural insofar as they occur spontaneously and without prior planning. Therefore, their uses of *como (que)* and *com (que)* may be closer to what they would use in their day-to-day life. The naturalization of their interactions and the correlation with the presence of the markers is related to the absence of

scripting, which is demonstrated when attention is paid to the two episodes which are more prepared, both in season 2. In episode 6, the characters emulate pseudo-feminist speeches of hatred towards men in which they repeat arguments and phrases already established in public discourse. Episode 8 tackles abuse in the industry, and we hear two planned voice-overs, an address to the camera by the main actresses, a conversation between them and a conversation between Berta, Belén and a director who wants to take advantage of them. Not coincidentally, the examples of *como* (*que*) and *com* (*que*) have been found in these conversations, not in the other more planned discourses. The importance of the level of planning is thus seen in the relationship between the presence or absence of these colloquial discourse markers.

The absence of a script in most of the episodes hinders the use of the label of prefabricated orality, since there is nothing written down prior to its performance. However, it cannot be ignored that there is a performative factor in what is said: the interactions that take place in *Autodefensa* (2022), however naturalized and spontaneous they may be, still only exist for an audience to hear, and thus are not completely 'natural'. This goal may affect in the realistic portrayal of certain speech features and could derive in an exaggeration of the use of certain sociolectal traits, like the markers under study. Such effect should be acknowledged and taken into consideration when exploring audiovisual productions which are highly improvised. Despite this, the fact that there is no pre-set script and that the series relies so much on the improvisation of its cast means that the results of this analysis can define on more colloquial and natural uses of the discourse markers studied.

#### 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In total, 10 episodes (162 minutes) have been used as a corpus, which rendered the analysis of the translation of 161 tokens of these DMs. Among them, 89.5% were extracted from the first season and 10.5% from the second one, shown in totality in Table 1. This numeric difference supports the previous hypothesis that more preparation in the script leads to a bigger absence of informal language markers. In the context of *Autodefensa* (2022), this quantification also shows that Season 1 is not scripted, contrasting with Season 2, which is more scripted and thus includes fewer DMs. This preliminary quantitative approach also indicates that, for each language, the preferred form is the simpler one: *como* for Spanish (86 tokens out of 108) and *com* for Catalan (42 tokens out of 53). This preference for the simple form had already been attested in previous studies looking at this phenomenon in Spanish (Camacho, 2011). Table 1 also shows the pragmatic meaning(s) of the corpus. All labels have been taken from previous studies mentioned above (Jørgensen, 2011; Mondaca, 2019; Repede, 2020), except for the value of



‘explicative’. This pragmatic function has been found elsewhere for other informal DMs in Peninsular Spanish (Jørgensen and Martínez López, 2007), and it provides space for the speaker to consider what they are about to say, to formulate their speech better or to summarize what has been said. The most prominent in the corpus is attenuation, followed by approximation, for both languages. This result also aligns with previous studies that focused on these items for Spanish, mentioned in section 2.

Value	Como	Como que	Com	Com que	Total
approximator	18	3	10	4	35
attenuator	45	14	17	5	81
numeric approximator	2				2
direct speech	5		2	2	9
explicative	5	4	8		17
filler	11	1	5		17
	<b>86</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>161</b>

**Table 1. Analyzed forms in Spanish and Catalan and their meanings in the discourse**

Source. Elaborated by the author

When translating, several options exist to address the transference from the source language to the target language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Molina & Hurtado, 2002). Table 2 shows the options that the translators of *Autodefensa (2022)* have chosen. The preferred translation technique in the English subtitling of these DMs in *Autodefensa (2022)* was their omission 1 (54.4%). The second preferred technique was its literal (or quasi-literal) translation into English via *like* (28%). There is one outlier for the literal translation technique: *as if* (for the Catalan simple form *com*). In the next section, this context is specified. However, it should be pointed out here that the context in which the translation of *as if* occurs is when *com* is followed by the conditional *si*. This makes the rendering of *com (si)* as *as if* also a literal translation (0.8%).

Form	Literal translation ( <i>like</i> )	Omission	Literal translation ( <i>as if</i> )	Total
<i>Como</i>	18	68		86
<i>Como que</i>	5	17		22

<i>Com</i>	10	31	1	<b>42</b>
<i>Com que</i>	2	9		<b>11</b>
	<b>35</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>161</b>

**Table 2. Quantification of the translation techniques depending on the marker**

Source. Elaborated by the author

In sum, while there are 161 markers in the original corpus, there are only 37 in its English subtitles, which goes in line with previous findings in the translation of DMs across other language pairs in which there also was a preference for omission (Denturck, 2012; Calvo Rigual, 2015; Solsona Martínez, 2016; Cuenca, 2022). One of the goals of this paper is to explore whether these choices are due to the nature of the original DMs and their values. For this purpose, the following sections will look into the translations of each marker (*como*, *como que*, *com*, and *com que*) depending on their meaning in the original text, spoken Spanish and Catalan in *Autodefensa* (2022).

#### 4.1. *Como*

As noted above, 86 forms of *como* have been found in the corpus of *Autodefensa* in Spanish. Of these, 21% have been literally translated as *like* (n=18), whereas 79% have been omitted (n=68). Table 3 shows the correlation between the meaning of *como* in context and its translation. As expected, omission is the preferred technique in the English translation of this marker, regardless of its value in the discourse.

<b>Como</b>	<b>Literal (<i>like</i>)</b>	<b>Omission</b>	<b>Total</b>
approximator	3	15	<b>18</b>
attenuator	12	33	<b>45</b>
numeric approximator		2	<b>2</b>
direct speech	1	4	<b>5</b>
explicative	1	4	<b>5</b>
filler	1	10	<b>11</b>
	<b>18</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>86</b>

**Table 3. Meanings and translations of *como* in the corpus**

Source. Elaborated by the author

On some occasions, there has been a concatenation of two or more *como* in the speakers' discourse, which has led to the omission of one and the translation of the other. In the analysis, the first appearance of the marker has been classified as a filler, as it expresses hesitation, and the second (or third) as its contextual value. In the case of *como*, *this has occurred in three occasions*, exemplified below. In two of them, (1) and (2), the marker works as an attenuator, and in the other, as an approximator in (3). Coincidentally, the first two examples, the attenuators, are translated as *like*. Thus, there is a correlation between this type of repetition and the choice to translate the marker.

- (1) y chao **o sea** es **como** es **como** ir a Misa tía como que ya sabes lo que va a pasar  
and ciao it's like going to Mass you know what's going to happen
- (2) la luna ki por ejemplo una tía muy humilde **como** muy **como** muy no sé **como** muy directa impresiona bastante su discurso  
luna ki for example very humble girl like very direct the way she speaks it's impressive
- (3) como un poco de borrón y cuenta nueva **como como** sentir que empezamos desde el principio otra a vez  
like sort of turning over a new leaf you know? to feel we're starting all over again

In addition to this repetition of *como*, it is also relevant to highlight its concatenation with the Spanish discourse marker *o sea*, which may operate as an explanatory reformulator, an attenuator or as an expletive particle (López Serena and Borreguero Zuloaga, 2010; Pons, 2016; Costa Otero, 2021). In the *Autodefensa* (2022) corpus, there are a total of 8 occasions in which *o sea* directly precedes *como*. Among these, the marker studied here is acting as an attenuator in 4, a filler in 1, an approximator in 1, and an explicative in 2. In turn, both *o sea* and *como* have been omitted on 3 occasions, while in the remaining 5 either one of them has been translated as *like*. In these cases, it is difficult to know which of the two is translated and which is omitted. There seems to be no homogenous correlation between the value of *como* and its absence or presence in the English subtitling as it correlates to *o sea*. A closer analysis reveals that their translation varies depending on the context, and omission or literal translation is seen in similar contexts together with *o sea*.

- (4) a mí por ejemplo si fuera un concepto me encantaría como ser un feto sabes? **o sea como**<sub>[explicative]</sub> un feto pero que no ha nacido y está ahí  
for example, if I was a concept, I'd love to be a fetus, you know? like a fetus but it hasn't been born it's just there
- (5) episodios de ansiedad últimamente he tenido mm bastantes **o sea como**<sub>[explicative]</sub> para lo que soy yo que generalmente no tenía  
anxiety attacks well recently I've had quite a few for me someone who doesn't usually get them
- (6) ay tía de verdad **o sea como**<sub>[attenuation]</sub> entiendo que a veces la verdad duele sabes?  
I mean seriously I get it the truth hurts sometimes
- (7) tía no sé después hubo un momento como que ya **o sea como**<sub>[attenuation]</sub> cuando ya nos empezamos como a enrollar un poco y tal  
I don't know then there was a moment when like when we started to get into it a bit I felt like...

#### 4.2. Como que

In the case of *como que*, no instance has been found in the original corpus in which it acts as a numerical approximator or as an introducer of direct speech. Instead, its functions are attenuation, approximation, explanatory and filler, numerically in that order. Perhaps this is one difference between the simpler form and the compound form for Peninsular Spanish. Moreover, as expected, the most frequently used translation technique for this marker was also its omission (77.3%), as opposed to its literal equivalent *like* (22.7%).

<b>Como que</b>	<b>Literal (<i>like</i>)</b>	<b>Omission</b>	<b>Total</b>
approximator	1	2	<b>3</b>
attenuator	2	12	<b>14</b>
explicative	1	3	<b>4</b>
filler		1	<b>1</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>

**Table 4. Meanings and translations of como que in the corpus**  
Source. Elaborated by the author

In addition to its literal translation as *like*, it is worth paying attention to a specific context in which the translation technique seems to vary: when *como* is preceded by the verb *ser* (to be). In total, there are 6 contexts in which this occurs. Among these, *como que* has been translated along the verb in 4 occasions, as *it's like*. In the other 2, it has been omitted. The rest of the 16 occurrences of *como que* are not preceded by this verb. After analyzing these cases, there seems to be no correlation between the translation of the DM as a whole according to the value it has in the original text. Despite this inconsistency, it could be argued that the presence of the verb *ser* guides the translation, in most cases, to *it's like*. It preserves the original meaning better, as it integrates its preface. The following examples show two cases of *como que* preceded by the verb to be. In (8) (9), *como que* functions as an attenuator (8) (9), and in (10) (11) as explicative. In (8) and (10), the DMs has been translated but in (9) and (11) it has not. This reinforces the idea that the literal translation or omission, in here, does not seem motivated by the original pragmatic function but perhaps by other issues.

(8) a lo mejor la peña tonta **es como que**<sub>[attenuation]</sub> disfruta mucho más el sexo no?

maybe dumb people are like they enjoy sex a lot more no?

(9) o sea como un feto pero que no ha nacido y está ahí porque **es como que**<sub>[attenuation]</sub> nadie te ha visto y nadie te conoce

like a fetus but it hasn't been born it's just there because no one has seen you and no one knows you

(10) y **es como que**<sub>[explicative]</sub> o sea desde que me levanto hasta que me acuesto

it's like, from when I get up until I go to bed

(11) porque la fase rem y la muerte **es como que**<sub>[explicative]</sub> cuando tú estás durmiendo

REM sleep and death when you're sleeping

#### 4.3. *Com*

The results of the translation of *com* show once again the preference for the omission of the marker (74%), regardless of the function it acquires in discourse, as was the case with its Spanish equivalent *como*. The second option is to translate it literally as *like* (24%) and, uniquely, *as if* (2%), shown in (12). In this case, the speaker is tracing an approximation between what was said before and what follows the marker. Since it occurs next to the

conditional *si*, it has been translated as *if*. It is still a literal translation, a “dictionary-like correspondence” (Cuenca, 2022, p. 219).

(12) ell ha començat com a moure'm molt heavy **com si** el seu braç fos la varita màgica

he started to shake me really hard as if his arm was the magic wand

<b>Com</b>	<b>Literal (<i>like</i>)</b>	<b>Literal (<i>as if</i>)</b>	<b>Omission</b>	<b>Total</b>
approximator	2	1	7	<b>10</b>
attenuator	4		13	<b>17</b>
direct speech	1		1	<b>2</b>
explicative	1		7	<b>8</b>
filler	2		3	<b>5</b>
	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>42</b>

**Table 5. Meanings and translations of com in the corpus**

Source. Elaborated by the author

In a more detailed analysis of *com*, attention has also been paid to the possible co-occurrences of this same marker. Only one occasion has been detected, below in (13). As with *como*, in this case, the first *com*, classified as a filler marker, was not translated, and the second, which functions as an approximator, was translated as *like*. When there is a repetition of the marker, it is generally preferred to translate the second one. The first DMs in these cases does not contribute *at all* to the pragmatic meaning of what is said (it does to the interaction, but not to its meaning), so it seems the translator(s) have opted for reflecting only the value of the second form.

(13) serà **com com** una festa saps?

like a party you know?

When *com* functions as a filler, and it is by itself (not in co-occurrence), it is generally omitted: *com* has only been translated into *like* in this function when it was preceded by *o sigui*, the Catalan literal equivalence for the previously mentioned *o sea*. Contrary to what happened with *como*, the presence of Catalan *o sigui* clearly indicates the presence of *like* in the subtitling, as shown in the following examples. The translation of *com* into *like* does not seem to be influenced by the marker's final position, as seen in the difference between (14), (15), and (16).

(14) era un senyor un senyor com 50 i pico anys molt majo o sigui saps  
**com**

it was a man 50-something really nice

(15) i com tenir les experiències més heavies saps? no sé **com**

and have the most out-there experiences I don't know

(16) jo en eixe moment m'he asustat molt heavy però molt heavy **o sigui com**

at that moment I had a massive scare a massive one it was like

(17) i aleshores ja com m'ha agafat **com** dels canells m'ha posat així

and then it was like he got hold of my wrists and put me like this

Despite this similarity with *como*, only one occasion has been found in which *com* was preceded by the verb *ser* in the construction *és com* (with the verb to be). On those cases, the sum of the verb and the DM has been translated as *it's like*, as was the case with its Spanish equivalent. The absence of further co-occurrences of this construction makes it difficult to draw further conclusions about preferences.

(18) perquè **és com** el teu last show

because it's like your last show

#### 4.4. *Com que*

Lastly, the Catalan marker *com que* has the most minor occurrences in the corpus, in parallel to its Spanish counterpart, as the simple forms without the conjunction seem to be the most productive. *Com que* acquires only three values in the corpus, shown in Table 6. These are literally translated as *like* 18% of the time and omitted the remaining 82%. For the values of approximation and introduction of previous discourse there are no translations as *like*, which further denotes the predilection for the implicitness of the marker. It is noteworthy that the only times *like* was chosen (literally translated) was when *com que* had an attenuative value, consequently maintaining the original meaning in the translation, which did not seem relevant for the previous DMs.

<b><i>Com que</i></b>	<b>Literal (<i>like</i>)</b>	<b>Omission</b>	<b>Total</b>
approximator		4	<b>4</b>
attenuator	2	5	<b>5</b>

direct speech		2	2
	2	9	11

**Table 6. Meanings and translations of com que in the corpus**

Source. Elaborated by the author

The two occasions in which *com que* has been translated as *like* were when it was preceded by the verb *ser*, in the construction *és com que*. A possible predilection for this construction was suggested with *como*, but it was not relevant with the other markers. In the case of *com que*, it has been translated as *és com que* in 100% of the cases in which it is preceded by *és*, both of which present an attenuating function. In both contexts, the speaker is talking about herself in a moment of vulnerability with her friends and partner. Therefore, it seems relevant for the interpersonal context that the translation is included.

(19) però tinc molt clar com que no vull que m'ho tanquin saps? **és com que** no has existit saps?

but one thing I know is, I don't them to close it down. It's like you never existed you know?

(20) o sigui **és com que** de vegades perquè em venen de gust de veritat o simplement com perquè vull ser la més loca

I mean it's like sometimes I really want to or just because I want to be the craziest one

#### CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to analyze how the approximation markers *como* and *com* and their possible variants *como que* and *com que*. While *como* and *como que* are in Spanish, *com* and *com que* are Catalan forms. The article explored their translations into English in the subtitling of an improvised TV series, *Autodefensa* (2022). Beyond the theory of prefabricated orality, the corpus used is a hybrid between a scripted audiovisual production and a spontaneous colloquial conversation: the conversations analyzed are not planned, like an informal dialogue, but they do have an audience and a performative factor. This particular idiosyncrasy made the corpus a great locus for the study of markers and their translation. The results point to two relevant aspects: firstly, there is a clear difference in the presence of DMs between those episodes that are more scripted, in which almost none appear, and those in which there is no script at all, with a high presence of these particles. Secondly, the values that these DMs have in discourse are equal to those obtained in previous research based on less mediated corpora (i.e. informal, private conversations, sociolinguistic interviews). Therefore, *Autodefensa*



(2022) and other improvisation-based productions are valuable research corpora, and their theorization and analysis can help understand linguistic phenomena.

Despite the relevant theorization, however, the weight of this piece was placed on the translation of the markers, on the techniques used by the translator(s). In line with previous studies on DMs in audiovisual translation, the preference was for the complete omission of the markers in 77.1% of cases, compared to 21.7% for their literal translation as *like*. A residual 1.2% was found for another option of a literal translation, as *if*, explained above, due to the syntactic restraints of the source discourse. The other main objective was to explore the possible correlation between one technique and the original value of the marker in the Spanish and Catalan corpus, given the importance of contextualized translation. The quantitative results show that there does not seem to be a correlation between the translation of the DMs and the function they had in the original text. However, more detailed studies, perhaps focusing on each technique, are warranted to determine if these choices are solemnly due to subtitling space, other syntactic contexts that could have been overlooked, or other motivations.

A bit of that approach has been explored in the analysis section of this paper. A closer look at the specific contexts of each marker reveals other correlations between the original text and the translation, some of which are loosely based on original values. When the markers are anteceded by the verb *ser* (to be) in its present form, they are usually translated almost unilaterally into the expression *it's like*, regardless of whether they are the simple form *como* or the compound *com que*. Moreover, when the markers *como* and *com* are in co-occurrence with one another, the former is a filler and the latter acquires its actual source function. In their translation, this is reflected by the omission of one of the markers and the translation as *like* of the other one. In the case of *como*, its translation into *like* coincides with the attenuating value. Finally, the anteposition of *o sea* in Spanish and *o sigui* in Catalan on the DMs under study results, on most occasions, in the translation of the marker *como* and *com*, respectively, although it must be recognized that it is unlikely to really know which of the two markers is the one that is actually translated.

In sum, the results of this research are in line with previous studies on *como* and *como que* across varieties and contexts, as similar meanings have been found between *Autodefensa* (2022) and other corpora used. Besides, it seems that both *com* and *com que*, these unexplored forms, take on the same uses and meanings as their Spanish counterparts. Regarding their translation, similar conclusions have also been reached to previous studies in which DMs seemed to be either translated literally (*like*, *it's like*, *as if*) or, for the most part,

omitted. Since original values do not seem to be a predictor of translation, future studies could delve into syntax and its textual contexts, as initiated here, to explore their possible relevance in the translation of approximators in an improvisation-based audiovisual production.

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