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THE ADAPTATION OF HUMOR IN FILM AUDIOVISUAL WORKS

Audiovisual translation (AVT) plays a significant role in the global distribution of films and TV series, enabling communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Audiovisual Translation is an "umbrella term" for media, multimedia, and screen translation, involving the complex transfer of verbal components within a polysemiotic environment where they interact with visual and acoustic codes (López González, 2017, 280). This multimodal nature makes AVT particularly complex, especially when it comes to translating humor. Humor is often culturally bound and relies on linguistic features such as wordplay, as well as on contextual and visual elements. For this reason, it becomes one of the most difficult aspects to render in another language. The objective of this study is to investigate how humor is adapted in films and TV series and what strategies are used to preserve its communicative and entertaining effect.

In AVT, translators apply a variety of strategies to deal with humor, depending on its type and context. Literal translation may be used when humor is universal and does not depend on culture-specific elements. Literal Translation: Generally, only effective when the humor is universal. It carries a significant risk of weakening or "killing" the joke if the linguistic or cultural contexts do not align (Bucaria, 2017, 436). A more effective approach is localization, which involves adapting the joke to the cultural background of the target audience. Localization (Cultural Adaptation): A central

strategy where source-culture referents (e.g., local brands or celebrities) are replaced with recognizable target-culture equivalents to maintain cognitive accessibility (López González, 2017, 289-290). In addition, translators may use compensation by introducing humor in another part of the dialogue, omission when a joke cannot be translated, or paraphrasing to simplify complex expressions. Each of these strategies aims to preserve the humorous effect rather than the exact wording.

The translation of humor involves several significant challenges. One of the most problematic elements is wordplay. Puns and Wordplay: Based on linguistic ambiguity (homophony, polysemy), these are often linguistically untranslatable because they require a perfect coincidence of meanings in both languages (Erol, 2026, 90). Furthermore, idioms and slang are deeply rooted in a particular culture and often lack direct equivalents, which forces translators to search for functional counterparts. Cultural references, such as mentions of local traditions or public figures, may also create barriers for understanding and require adaptation. Another important issue is taboo humor, which can be subject to censorship or modification depending on the norms of the target culture. Finally, technical constraints, such as time limits in subtitling or lip synchronization in dubbing, can affect the rhythm and timing of jokes, reducing their effectiveness.

Practical examples demonstrate how humor is adapted in AVT. Functional Neologisms: In the film *Amélie*, a French pun on *mère/mer* (mother/sea) was lost in literal translation but successfully adapted in English through the neologism "Mum-ephant" to preserve the comedic comparison. This case shows that creative solutions can compensate for linguistic differences and help maintain the humorous effect. By comparing the original and translated versions, it becomes clear that preserving the function of humor is often more important than maintaining its form.

In audiovisual translation, the translator performs a complex and creative role. Translator as Co-author: Especially in animation, the translator acts as a creative agent who manipulates the text to preserve its pragmatic impact for a new audience (López

González, 2017, 280, 289). This means that the translator is not only transferring meaning but also recreating the intended effect of humor. A balance must be achieved between accuracy and entertainment, as overly literal translations may fail to produce the desired response, while excessive adaptation may distort the original meaning.

Recent research highlights the growing importance of audience reception studies in the field of humorous AVT. Empirical studies have shown that viewers often prefer adapted jokes that feel natural in their language over faithful but confusing literal translations (Bucaria, 2017, 440). Furthermore, the rise of streaming platforms has increased the demand for high-quality subtitling and dubbing, pushing translators to develop more creative and context-sensitive solutions. Some scholars argue that humor translation should prioritize the "functional equivalence" of emotional impact rather than semantic accuracy (Erol, 2026, 95). This perspective aligns with the broader trend in translation studies that views the translator as an active co-creator of meaning rather than a passive conduit. Future research should explore how artificial intelligence tools can assist - but not replace - human translators in preserving the nuances of humorous dialogue across different languages and cultures.

In conclusion, the translation of humor in AVT is a challenging process that requires both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Due to the differences between languages and cultures, complete equivalence is rarely possible. Therefore, the main goal of the translator is to preserve the audience's reaction and ensure that the humor remains effective. Adaptation, rather than literal translation, proves to be the most important strategy in overcoming these challenges and achieving successful communication in audiovisual media.

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