



Facultad de Filosofía
y Letras
Universidad de Oviedo



**THE TRANSLATION OF HUMOUR
AND CULTURE-BOUND ELEMENTS
IN TWO POPULAR TELEVISION AMERICAN SITCOMS:
A CASE STUDY OF
MODERN FAMILY
AND
*HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER***

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

CURSO 2021/2022

Junio/Julio 2022

Autor: Ánzur Pablo Rodríguez Secades

Tutora: María Cristina Valdés Rodríguez

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION (AVT).....	2
2. 1. Dubbing and subtitling	5
2. 2. Translation strategies and translation techniques.....	11
3. THE TRANSLATION OF HUMOUR IN TWO AMERICAN SITCOMS	
3. 1. Humour translation.....	14
3. 2. Sitcoms	22
3. 3. <i>Modern Family</i>	24
3. 4. <i>How I Met Your Mother</i>	35
4. CONCLUSIONS	40
5. REFERENCES	43

1. Introduction

This dissertation is an analysis based on a parallel corpus with English as the source language (SL) and Spanish as the target language (TL). The present paper presents a case study of two popular American sitcoms, *Modern Family* (2009–2020) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2014), from a descriptive methodology which aims to document certain instances of humour translation. It seeks to analyse the translation techniques and strategies used in order to render humour in the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of the first season of each of these two American sitcoms.

The diverse and complex translation strategies and techniques undertaken by the audiovisual translators to convey humour is the main concern of this study which will be analysed in practical and theoretical terms in order to achieve a better and more profound understanding of how the transfer of humour across languages and cultures works. This case study consists of a thorough analysis and comparison of several meaningful fragments from the original versions of the aforementioned American sitcoms and their official dubbed versions into European Spanish with the aim of declaring whether their dubbing scripts preserve the intentions and effects of the original ones, especially concerning humorous effects. Consequently, this dissertation seeks to shed light on some of the most significant aspects that pose important challenges in humour translation, such as puns, wordplay, and culture-bound references used for comedic purposes. For the sake of clarity in this dissertation and in order to avoid confusion, I will be using the terms *punning* and *wordplay* interchangeably. Sitcoms are, above all, comedy shows whose primary task is to make the viewers laugh and audiovisual translators must always bear that in mind when producing a target text (TT) that preserves as much as possible the distinctive features of the source text (ST).

Considering that the translation of humour, especially whenever humour is based on specific culture-bound aspects which are not shared by the target culture, poses a significant translation challenge, we will be analysing in-depth the solutions adopted by the audiovisual translators in order to overcome these daunting hurdles. Nonetheless, humour as a translation problem is not the only focus of this case study but an element among other elements, such as the translation of non-American-English accents and the challenge of translating cultural and historical elements.

2. Audiovisual translation (AVT)

As a consequence of globalisation, the growing cultural exchange between societies, and the vast and ever-growing demand for multimedia materials, audiovisual translation has become a more and more necessary discipline. AVT is the widely accepted acronym for audiovisual translation. Likewise, the irruption of the Internet is one of the most relevant aspects that contributed to the success of AVT, a discipline that has never stopped growing since the 1990s when it started to gain popularity as one of the most vibrant, popular, and vigorous fields within Translation Studies (TS). As Díaz Cintas (2012) declared, “it is an irrefutable fact that there has been a tremendous quantitative boom in recent decades, both in the production of audiovisual translation (AVT) and in research into this field” (p. 280). AVT, which began as a minor subject, has gained momentum over the last decades and has nowadays become a global issue that is constantly developing and offering multiple research possibilities. In fact, it is “one of the most rapidly growing research areas in Translation Studies” (Jankowska, 2012, p. 425).

Considering the etymological meaning of its components, the term audiovisual translation can be defined as the transfer of meaning across languages, putting special emphasis on the created meaning through the interaction of what is heard and what is seen. Valdeón (2009) provides a compelling definition of the notion of audiovisual translation, which he describes as “an umbrella term for the transfer between languages applied to all audiovisual and multimedia material, that is, the approach is medium-based” (p. 196). Likewise, Gambier (2008) expands on the definition of AVT, highlighting its multisemiotic nature:

AVT is actually a multisemiotic blend of many different parts such as images, sounds, language (oral and written), colours, proxemics and gestures—all incorporated into various audiovisual codes to fulfil creative needs such as stage/screen adaptation, arrangement into sequences and shifts of focus, play of voices, lighting, scenery or narrative conventions. (p. 11)

Given that the audiovisual text is a “semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning” (Chaume, 2004a, p. 16), audiovisual translators must bear in mind its aforementioned multisemiotic nature and not overlook the significance of non-verbal elements (image, lighting, non-verbal communication) by focusing exclusively on the verbal component. Pettit (2004) expands on this idea, stating that “sounds, vocal intonation, visual signs, gestures, postures, editing techniques all combine to create a message for the viewer to interpret” (p. 26). From this statement we can draw the conclusion that what is said is merely one part of the message since not only image but also

soundtrack converge to create meaning in addition with the way it is said and visual and auditory markers form the whole message. For this reason, García-Escribano (2017) declares that “the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts represents a double-edged sword” (p. 238), since it is undeniable that the presence of image and sound constrains the translator’s agency. Moreover, Pettit (2004: 25) examines the complexity of the audiovisual text and its multi-semiotic nature. Moreover, she explores the interaction between its verbal and non-verbal image components. These non-verbal elements are essential to understanding the semantics of the sequence. It is common to notice how gesture often influences the translator’s decisions and rendition of the original. Additionally, she highlights the significant role of the audiovisual translator and recognises the screen ‘as a primary vehicle’ for the interaction between different peoples, cultures, and languages.

When audiovisual translators face a source text, they are often challenged by significant translation problems such as the speaker’s dialect, sociolect or idiolect, the use of humour or slang, which can be briefly defined as an informal language characterised by colloquial vocabulary and expressions spoken by a particular age group. Pettit (2004) highlights several elements that may affect the way in which the verbal content is perceived, such as tone of voice, intonation, and gestures, given that “films and television programmes imitate a certain kind of reality, projecting an image, a reflection of the way in which human beings communicate with each other and their world” (p. 34). These are merely some of the numerous reasons AVT must be considered a truly complex activity to deal with, as “there are far more translator-independent constraints in AVT than in literary translation” (Jankowska, 2012, p. 426). AVT content is translated into foreign languages, seeking to reach a wider audience and consequently increase its popularity, consumption, and, ultimately, economic revenue. This explains the complexity of the field and the vital role the audiovisual translator plays in this process. Audiovisual translators must be competent and imaginative, whilst at the same time being meticulous and cautious about leaving traces of their participation in the audiovisual product. Ideally, they must put all of their efforts into erasing all the verbal or non-verbal evidence that could possibly remind the foreign audience that they are consuming a translation rather than an original audiovisual product. In this vein, Tortoriello (2006) comments on the actual role of the translator, which in recent years “has increasingly come to be seen as a cultural mediator rather than a mere linguistic broker” (p. 55).

Likewise, Díaz Cintas (2012) points out this significant shift in the figure of the translator as a result of “migrating from a passive role as mere transmitters of information. (...) Translators are now considered to be active agents participating in the shaping of the ideological discourse of their culture” (p. 283). Throughout the years, translators’ role has been proven to be pivotal as they have become mediators between cultures who are expected to overcome any linguistic or cultural hurdles in order to create a final product which is intelligible to the target language and culture. In order to do so, they must approach the source text from diverse perspectives and select the appropriate strategies and techniques depending on their intentions and the effect on the target audience they aim to achieve, taking into account all the different procedures and parameters required in order to carry out a *good translation*.

Audiovisual translation, like any other type of translation, seeks to preserve the meaning and intent of the original source text. Nonetheless, audiovisual translators’ main concern must be to recreate the reaction the audience exposed to the original version had as similar as possible to that of the target audience. Television series’ main purpose is to entertain their audiences. Therefore, the actors perform a role and follow a defined set of norms and conventions. Their conversations are not natural or spontaneous as they follow a script. Audiovisual genres vary from one another and function in different ways, as Kovacic (1998) explains that “the genre partly determines the linguistic register to be used” (p. 127). When it comes to this particular case study, sitcoms are meant to make the audience laugh.

2.1. Dubbing and subtitling

Considering that I have previously defined and expanded on the concept of audiovisual translation (AVT) in this section, I will be commenting on the two most popular AVT modes, dubbing and subtitling. On the one hand, dubbing is an AVT mode which consists of replacing the original track of an audiovisual product containing the source language (SL) dialogues for another track on which translated dialogues in the target language (SL) are recorded. On the other hand, subtitling consists of introducing at the bottom of the screen a written translation of the dialogue of a foreign language audiovisual product. Chaume (2021) expands on some of the main features of the dubbing process, which is “in itself a domestication kind of translation, especially compared to subtitling” (p. 210).

Timing is everything both in subtitling and dubbing. Nonetheless, I will be paying special attention to the latter as it is the most important AVT mode for the present dissertation. For a successful dubbing, the translated version of the dialogue must take approximately the same time to be spoken as that in the original language. Therefore, the objective of dubbing is not only to translate the dialogue but also to have it match in timing with that of the original language. This process of adapting the target text to the duration of the characters’ utterances and pauses in the source language is known as isochrony and is “considered to be a cornerstone of dubbing” (Chaume, 2016, p. 2).

The dubbed or replicated voices must sound natural. They must “create the illusion that the actors are actually speaking the language of the target audience” (Denton & Chiampi, 2012, p. 404). If this is not achieved with efficiency, the target product will sound strange, exaggerated, and artificial. Consequently, the target viewer will be aware that the product s/he is being exposed to is a translation and not an original product. The translator’s creation must, as far as possible, give the illusion that an original product is being consumed. While in the subtitled version of an audiovisual product, it is made evident that it is a foreign audiovisual product since the original voices and dialogues can be heard, in its dubbed version, cultural visual elements are the ones responsible for displaying the *nationality* of the original product since all the characters speak the audience’s language. Relatedly, Heiss (2014) declares that “viewers used to film dubbing are usually willingly to accept this illusion, even though they are made thoroughly aware, both through various visual and textual messages, that a large proportion of the productions they see in the cinema and on television are of foreign origin” (p. 218).

Whitman-Linsen (1992) provides a thorough analysis of the dubbing process in Western European countries in which dubbing is the most popular type of audiovisual translation, such as France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, given that “dubbing and subtitling have not triggered in the same way in Europe” (Tveit, 2009, p. 85). Jankowska (2012) concludes in her exploration of a justification of this phenomenon that “foreign language acquisition is one of the most popular arguments brought out in the eternal discussion on the superiority of subtitling over dubbing” (p. 427). Additionally, not only social factors such as foreign language acquisition play a decisive role in this issue as the decision to select one method over the other is also strongly based on commercial and economic aspects due to the established preferences among viewers according to the tradition in each country in favour of one method or the other. There are numerous important aspects when it comes to the benefits and drawbacks of each of these two AVT modes. On the one hand, subtitling constitutes a major exposition to the foreign language and culture as it allows the target audience to listen to the original voices of the actors, and the characters’ performances can be appreciated more profoundly as a consequence. Moreover, it is cheaper than dubbing. However, it involves a significant modification from the oral medium to written speech, which affects the visual component negatively.

As a dubbing advocate, Paolinelli (2004: 176) provides a thorough compilation of the numerous and significant downsides of subtitling, which can be briefly summarised as: subtitling involves the reduction of the original text by 40–70%; it disfigures the image and draws considerable attention away from the visual content (viewers spend most of the time reading the subtitles). Consequently, they are distracted, which prevents any real involvement with the audiovisual product. On the other hand, the dubbing process creates a more credible final product since it can be directly understood by the target audience. Additionally, some cultural references and specific culture-bound aspects may be adapted or replaced in order to make them comprehensible and more accessible to the target audience.

Nonetheless, dubbing involves a considerable loss of authenticity given that a considerable part of a character's personality is his or her voice, which is inextricably linked to his or her gestures and facial expressions. Furthermore, shifts in stress and intonation are phonetic aspects that tend to be overlooked in the dubbing process. Consequently, dubbed audiovisual products are often devoid of the connotative richness of the original content. This may be extremely problematic as this subtle way of communication is likely to get lost in the dubbing process, and this may pose significant meaning and coherence issues.

It is fairly significant to note that, unlike subtitling, in the case of dubbing, there is no room for including additional explanations, comments, or footnotes. Although the economic profit almost always outweighs its costs, dubbing is a more expensive process which often requires alteration in order to achieve synchronisation. In fact, synchronisation, more specifically lip-synchronisation, is probably the most meaningful aspect of the dubbing process, as explained by Chaume (2004a):

As for the representation of phonetic articulation, the opening and closing of the mouths of the characters on screen mark the duration in time and the approximate number of syllables in the utterances of the target text. In other words, the translation of each utterance should fit into the time it takes the actor on screen to say his/her dialogue lines in the source language, from the moment the first mouth movement is seen, to the moment in which the mouth closes definitively. This is known by the term isochrony, or equivalent duration of the source text utterances and the utterances of the target text. (p. 21)

The different types of shots, especially close-up shots, are truly significant in the dubbing process as the audiovisual translator must create a target text which respects as much as possible the movement (opening and closing) of the lips of the character(s) on screen. Special attention must be paid to the open vowels and bilabial and plosive consonants to maintain the impression of verisimilitude, as the essence of dubbing, as we have previously mentioned, lies in producing a final audiovisual product which is believable to the target audience thanks to the illusion that the characters on screen speak the same language as the target viewer. For this reason, lip-synchronisation is intrinsic to dubbing and is often given priority within the professional field due to its major significance in the dubbing process, as Chaume (2004b) illustrates:

the professional dubbing world prioritizes synchronization above all else, and the quality of a translation is judged in terms of whether or not “it matches the lips“, in other words, whether the translation corresponds both to the screen characters’ movements of the lips (lip synchrony), and particularly to the duration of the screen character’s utterance, from the instant his or her mouth opens to speak to the instant it shuts (isochrony). (p. 36)

This highlights once again the audiovisual translator’s vital role, which does not only involve the translation of words but also the adaption of the dialogues to gestures and body movements (kinesic synchrony), and lip-movements of the characters, especially when it comes to phonetic synchrony, in order to avoid loss of realism and verisimilitude.

Chaume (2021: 215) summarises the comprehensive list of dubbing standards he provided in his previous academic article *Los estándares de calidad y recepción de la traducción audiovisual* (2006):

- ❖ good lip-sync ('good' depending on the degree of tolerance in each dubbing culture).
- ❖ credible spontaneous dialogues (but not too spontaneous, since while the language of dubbing pretends to be spontaneous, it is very normative indeed).
- ❖ coherent translation (coherent as a global text, that is, coherent from a linguistic point of view, but also coherent with visuals)
- ❖ equivalence to the source text.
- ❖ technical rigour, for example, avoiding noises in the recording, hearing clearly audible and distinct voices, etc.
- ❖ credible acting, i.e., neither overacting nor underacting. In this vein, Chaume (2021) states that "for many years, a good dubbing has been regarded as one in which the acting was neither monotonous nor too exaggerated" (p. 215).

Therefore, the dubbing actors also play a meaningful part in the dubbing process and in the creation of a high-quality final audiovisual product. For this particular reason, Chaume (2016) declares that "the dubbing actor should imitate the gestures of the screen actor in order to come as close as possible to the original as far as verbal mimicry is concerned" (p. 3) in order to preserve the illusion that the actors speak the language of the target audience. As a consequence of the semiotic nature of the audiovisual text (being presented through the acoustic and visual channels), the audiovisual translator is conditioned by the images on screen when dubbing any audiovisual content since these two channels must be synchronised given that this interaction creates meaning. Notwithstanding the constraints this synchronisation may pose, the intentions and effects of the source text must be transferred during the dubbing process.

However, the resultant translation is not a definitive version since the dubbing script is often ultimately manipulated by people who may not be experts in the source language and culture. Consequently, Chaume (2021) firmly believes that "the task of dialogue writing can be better done by the translators themselves [since] dialogue writers do not always master the source language and often manipulate the draft translation submitted" (p. 216). Moreover, he highlights the economic advantages of commissioning the translation and dialogue writing to just one person whilst also emphasising how "dubbing is ultimately a question of art and craft, which cannot be improved by anyone other than the professionals already involved in the industry" (p. 217).

Nonetheless, he concludes with a defeatist declaration that states that “the dubbing industry is a very conservative sector, and reluctant to change” (p. 215), indirectly suggesting that the sensible aforementioned proposals will never see the light of day. There are several factors that greatly influence the translators’ decision-making process, such as time pressure, length, deadlines, and their own degree of expertise. The dubbed versions of the two first seasons of *Modern Family* (2009–2010) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2006) are the result of a collaborative effort which involves a large number of audiovisual translators. For this reason, it is unlikely that the translation decisions have been affected by personal preferences or biased choices but rather the decisions of a group of professionals working together.

We need to pay special attention to the language of dubbing given that the linguistic features of the dubbing script are not the ones that characterise spontaneous oral conversations since it is a previously created text that follows a fixed order and therefore it is a “prefabricated and a false-spontaneous language; a planned written text that tries to emulate the spontaneity of the oral discourse” (Spiteri Maggiani, 2019, p. 35). Although this complex artificial language used in the dubbing process, also known as *dubbese*, has its own rules and conventions, it is significantly influenced by the target language policy and tradition. As Pavesi (2018) states, its “relative formality, lack of idiomaticity, repetitiveness and sociolinguistic under-characterisation” (p. 104) are some of the most representative features of this particular language.

Likewise, some of the most remarkable aspects that exemplify how this artificial language differs from that of spontaneous conversations are the lack of disfluencies when it comes to performance, such as hesitation pauses, filled pauses, or repeats. According to the categorisation of disfluency types created by Biber et al. (1999), hesitation pauses are a type of disfluency in which speakers make a pause when producing an utterance to think about what they want to say next (e.g., it is a...). Similarly, filled pauses are like hesitation pauses, but speakers use a hesitator (e.g., er, um) to fill the pause. Finally, repeats are another type of disfluency used similarly to filled pauses but, instead of using a hesitator to fill the pause, speakers repeat the last word they have said in order to think about what they want to say next (e.g., I want to...to...) (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1055—1064).

It is normal, even for native speakers of a language, to make minor disfluencies when producing an utterance; this is one of the most significant aspects that characterise real and spontaneous conversations:

One more unhinging peculiarity of spoken dialogue is precisely that: it is spoken and not written. More accurately, it is written to sound spoken. People pause, collect their thoughts, begin again, clear their throats, change paths halfway down the syntactical road. Such anacolutha, deemed bad style and poorly thought out in a written text, are exactly what make a spoken dialogue animated, credible, authentic and human. (Whitman-Linsen, 1992, p. 31—32)

Consequently, dubbed texts take an intermediate position between spoken and written language, and, as a result, they share characteristics of both oral and written communication. Finally, we need to draw special attention to how accents, dialects, sociolects, and idiolects are dealt with in the dubbing process. The most widespread convention is to dub these aspects into a standard variety, resulting in a neutralised target text. On the contrary, the characters' speech is sometimes made even more peculiar and funnier by reinforcing and even exaggerating some features. However, this decision is often problematic since they usually provide meaningful information about the characters' personalities, origins or behaviour. Likewise, dubbed audiovisual content usually falls short of reproducing the source text's informal register. For this reason, if a character's particular speech or nationality is significant for the plot of the audiovisual product, it is vital to indicate or verbalise it somehow.

2.2. Translation strategies and translation techniques

After having defined and analysed in depth the two most popular audiovisual modes, I will now be focusing on the different translation strategies and techniques translators use in order to produce high-quality audiovisual products. Professional translators tend to give prominence to the authority of the source text (SL-oriented approach) or to the needs of the target audience (TL-oriented approach). Venuti (1992) introduces a distinction between two opposite approaches to the translation of a given text. He proposes a source-oriented approach (foreignisation) and a target-oriented approach (domestication) and declares that through the latter approach, the target text (TT) is “made fluent, intelligible, and even familiar to the target-language reader” (p. 5). It is relevant to note Venuti’s defence and preference for foreignising over domesticating translation practices.

On the one hand, domestication, as opposed to foreignisation, is defined by Venuti (1995) as a strategy that produces a translation where source culture references are systematically replaced by target culture ones. When domesticating a translation, the translator chooses a natural and fluid style in the TL, leaving aside those stylistic traits that characterise the ST. It is a way of “bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). Nonetheless, “by smoothing out differences, by ‘normalising’ the cultural situation, we might no longer comprehend the origin of this all-too-familiar text” (Pavis, 1998, p. 37). On the other hand, foreignisation is a translation strategy whereby culturally marked elements from the source culture are kept in the target text, which results in a foreignising effect on the target audience as a consequence of retaining the cultural values of the ST. It is a way of “sending the reader abroad” (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). This approach has often been criticised due to the negative effect it may provoke in the target viewer as a result of the linguistic and cultural differences between the source and the target cultures. Shared background knowledge of the world plays a truly significant role here. In this vein, Pavis (1998) declares that excessive adherence to the source language (SL) would lead to the “risk of incomprehension or rejection on the part of the target culture [given that] by trying too hard to maintain the source language, we would end up making it unreadable” (p. 37). Rozhin (2000) favours this approach, declaring that such “risk is worth taking” (p. 139). In order to preserve the source text’s original effects and intentions and render them into the target text, translators should aim at an adaptation of the culture-bound terms rather than creating a word-for-word, or even sense-for-sense, equivalence. Otherwise, these culture-bound elements are likely to be unknown to the target audience.

In order to do so, translators must carry out a thorough analysis in order to opt for one of the two main translation strategies we have previously discussed, as well as decide which translation techniques they will use in the creation of a high-quality target text. Nonetheless, there is significant confusion regarding the concepts of translation strategies and translation techniques. For this reason, we need to shed light on these intricate notions. Delisle et al. (1999) clarify that in the academic field of translation, the term “strategy refers to the translators’ overall or global approach to a text, whereas technique or procedure refers to the specific approach to individual and smaller units of text” (p. 191). For his part, Venuti (2001), states that translation strategies “involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it” (p. 240). Molina and Hurtado’s (2002: 509-511) classification of translation techniques will be used in this case as it has proven to be truly useful:

- ❖ Adaptation: To replace a ST cultural element with one from the target culture.
- ❖ Amplification: To introduce details that are not formulated in the ST: information explicative paraphrasing.
- ❖ Borrowing: To take a word or expression straight from another language. It can be pure (without any change).
- ❖ Calque: Literal translation of a foreign word or phrase, it can be lexical or structural.
- ❖ Compensation: To introduce a ST element of information or stylistic effect in another place in the TT because it cannot be reflected in the same place as in the ST.
- ❖ Generalization: To use a more general or neutral term.
- ❖ Linguistic amplification: To add linguistic elements. This is often used in consecutive interpreting and dubbing.
- ❖ Linguistic compression: To synthesize linguistic elements in the TT. This is often used in simultaneous interpreting and in subtitling.
- ❖ Literal translation: To translate a word or an expression word for word.
- ❖ Modulation: To change the point of view, focus or cognitive category in relation to the ST; it can be lexical or structural.
- ❖ Particularization: To use a more precise or concrete term.
- ❖ Reduction: To suppress a ST information item in the TT.
- ❖ Substitution (linguistic, paralinguistic): To change linguistic elements for paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures) or vice versa.
- ❖ Transposition: To change a grammatical category.
- ❖ Variation: To change linguistic or paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures) that affect aspects of linguistic variation: changes of textual tone, style, social dialect, geographical dialect, etc.

Additionally, it is important to consider the taxonomy created by Delabastita (1996: 128) that classifies four different types of puns based on their characteristics:

- ❖ Homonymy, when words have “identical sounds and spelling.”
- ❖ Homophony, when words have “identical sounds but different spelling.”
- ❖ Homography, when words have “different sounds but identical spelling.”
- ❖ Paronymy, when “there are slight differences in both in sound and spelling.”

Moreover, I will be using Delabastita’s (1996: 134) typology for the translation of puns in my analysis of the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of the first season of *Modern Family* (2009–2010) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2006):

- ❖ Pun → Pun: The pun is translated into the target language with adjustments in terms of formal or semantic structure, or textual function.
- ❖ Pun → Non-pun: The pun is translated as a non-punning phrase that aims to retain one or both original meanings.
- ❖ Pun → Related rhetorical device: The pun is substituted by a related rhetorical device (allusion, parody, rhyme, paradox, etc.) in order to retain part of the original effect.
- ❖ Pun → Zero pun: The pun is omitted altogether.
- ❖ Pun ST = Pun TT: The original pun is reproduced in the TT in the source language.
- ❖ Non-pun → Pun: A completely new pun is added in the TT where there is none, in order to compensate for the previous loss of an original pun or for other reasons.
- ❖ Zero-pun → Pun: Completely new textual material is added to the TT and it contains punning. This is a compensatory device which, however, does not seem to have apparent precedents or any justification in the ST.

When it comes to the translation of puns in audiovisual products, I have also taken into consideration the following translation techniques:

- ❖ Equivalence: Replacing the ST pun with a TT pun that triggers the same humorous effect.
- ❖ Compensation: This strategy aims to retain the perlocutionary effect of the ST pun by adding extra stylistic features such as linguistic devices in the TT.
- ❖ Neutralisation: It entails omitting the ST pun but preserving the general meaning of the passage.
- ❖ Omission: The ST pun is entirely deleted, and the meaning of the passage is consequently manipulated.
- ❖ Substitution: To replace the ST pun with a related rhetorical device such as an idiom, a rhyme, a parody, etc.

3. The translation of humour in two American sitcoms

3.1. Humour translation

In this particular section, and after having introduced the features of AVT, its two most popular modes, and the different strategies and techniques used by translators, now I will focus on one of the most significant aspects of this dissertation, that is the translation of humour, a subject that has received great attention from different standpoints in the time span of the new millennium, which poses a significant challenge not only for dubbing but also for subtitling. The process of transferring humour across different cultures and languages is undeniably complex and one of the greatest and most daunting challenges translators may face. The significant challenge that the translation of humour poses has been highlighted by Chiaro (2008) with her declaration that “verbally expressed humour (VEH) travels badly” (p. 569).

As a consequence of the intense academic interest that emerged from the study of humour from numerous different standpoints, the research field of humour studies sprung up. Dore (2019: 1) expands on the sophistication of the creation of humour, declaring it as one of the most complex cognitive abilities of human beings due to its relative and idiosyncratic nature. Notwithstanding the creation of this research field, there is an ongoing debate among humour studies scholars concerning the formulation of a unified definition of humour. Despite the fact that the study of humour has been undertaken from diverse perspectives, no common ground seems to have been reached, and consequently, the answer to the question of what humour is remains unsolved. In fact, Attardo (1994: 3) suggests that finding a definition of humour is practically impossible, something that still seems to be true in this day and age.

The aforementioned lack of a terminological consensus poses a challenge to the definition of humour. In this vein, Attardo (1994: 4) declares that the definition of humour depends upon its purpose and the perlocutionary or intended effect it produces, which is often laughter. For his part, considering that humour is a human trait, Vandaele (2010) declares that “at a first glance, humour is easy to define. Humour is what causes amusement, mirth, a spontaneous smile and laughter” (p. 147). Considering that humour is a significant part of our linguistic exchanges, which is present in our daily lives but hardly noticed, Vandaele (2002) declares that “humour is used in everyday parlance to refer simultaneously to an effect and its (con)textual causes, an occurrence so normal(ized) that we don’t even notice it” (p. 153).

Relatedly, Spanakaki's (2007) interpretation of the concept of humour puts emphasis on culture, intercultural communication and audiovisual translation (AVT):

Humour is an essential part of everyday communication and an important component of innumerable literary works and films and of art in general. It is rooted in a specific cultural and linguistic context, but it is also an indispensable part of intercultural communication and mass entertainment. (p. 1)

Nonetheless, humour used in audiovisual texts is less spontaneous than humour used in an everyday social context, given that it is conditioned by a pre-established script. Additionally, Martínez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017: 16) point out the recent yet intense academic interest in the translation of humour in audiovisual texts, highlighting the fact that it was not considered a serious field of research until relatively recent times. Humour translation is a relevant object of research worthy of the academic attention and interest that it provokes among scholars.

Furthermore, a large portion of the aforementioned academic interest comes from the field of audiovisual translation (AVT). The translation of humour is a growing area of study that brings together diverse insights from translation studies and humour studies. Considering that humour is a truly complex and culturally embedded concept, it has often been labelled as an untranslatable subject. Nonetheless, Low (2011) considers that "claims that jokes are untranslatable have two main sources: either translators' incompetence (jokes are indeed lost but no serious effort has been made to find equally humorous substitutes) or a narrow notion of translation, combined with unrealistic standard of success" (p. 59). The feasibility of transferring humour across languages and cultures has been questioned throughout the years due to the complexity of the translation of wordplay and culture-bound references. Martínez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017) challenge the widespread belief that the translation of humour is theoretically impossible. Instead, they propose a less defeatist approach that suggests that although humour translation is often complex, challenging, and sometimes apparently impossible, it is indeed possible:

The challenge of translating humour lies in compounding all of the inescapable difficulties and demands that are characteristic of any translator's job plus having to take on the complex nature of humour, in its perception and in its (re)production. (p. 7)

Following this idea and denying the judgement that there are untranslatable elements or concepts, Hofstadter (1997) declares the following:

When something is said to be ‘untranslatable’, be skeptical. What this claim often means is that it would be impossible for a *dullard* to translate the work in question: that it takes some *thought* and *intelligence* to recreate it in another language. *In short, to translate something witty requires a witty translator.* (p. 394)

Furthermore, García-Escribano (2017) comments on the linguistic and culture-dependent translation challenge that Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) represents in subtitling and dubbing. Moreover, he highlights the significance of VEH when he states that it is “a fully valid theoretical subject within the framework of Translation Studies (TS)—and more specifically in Audiovisual Translation (AVT)—as well as in Humour Studies” (p. 221). For his part, Chiaro (2005) expands on this idea as follows:

[H]umour discourse, which is naturally impeded by linguistic and social barriers, actually succeeds in crossing frontiers. The translation of Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) concerns one of the most complex types of language to translate owing to the fact that it needs to come to terms with the very tenets of translation theory, those of equivalence and (un)translatability. (p. 135)

Attardo and Raskin (1991) first introduced the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), which is the main theory of humour on which Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) is grounded. GTVH was “the result of combining Raskin’s script-based semantic theory of humour and Attardo’s five-level model” (p. 329). Additionally, special attention must be paid to the aforementioned notion of equivalence, one of the most important concepts in Translation Studies (TS). We can affirm that two different things are equivalent when they have similar or identical effects. It is the state or condition of being equivalent, which Kenny (2009) defines as “the relationship between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) that allows the TT to be considered as a translation of the ST in the first place” (p. 96). This explains the vast significance of this concept when it comes to the transfer of a message from one language to another. In the case of conveying humour, translators must always bear the concept of equivalence in mind since only by doing so will the target audience experience the same or similar humorous effect as in the source text. It is pivotal to remember that translations are greatly influenced by the socio-cultural and historical contexts within which they are created and the translation norms and conceptions that such a context establishes.

As a consequence of the significance of context and culture in understanding any utterance, translation “involves much more than the mere linguistic transference of content from one language to another” (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017, p. 15). In the same line of thought, Delabastita (1996) declares that there is no “one-to-one equivalence between languages” (p. 133). In this vein, Low (2011) rejects the idea that translating is a mere verbal process which involves synonymy and transposition so that “translating a joke means creating an amusing target text (TT) that is *nearly identical* to the source text (ST)” (p. 60). On the contrary, he believes that “translatability does not require that the TT use the same linguistic structures, but merely that it delivers, broadly speaking the same joke” (Low, 2011, p. 60). Therefore, going beyond words and addressing the source text from a broad multiple approach is essential, as supported by Veiga (2009) when she declares that “an interdisciplinary approach is needed in order to understand how humorous stimuli/effects on the target audience” (p. 160). For this reason, failure to take the multimodal nature of AVT communication into account is likely to result in a lack of coherence and incongruence, thus inevitably affecting the target audience’s perception of the dubbed AVT product.

Therefore, under no circumstances should the analysis of audiovisual humorous content confine itself to the verbal component. It should also consider the extra-linguistic aspects that characterise the audiovisual text, given that visual elements play an important role in the creation of humorous effects. Moreover, these visual elements might be fairly useful not only for the translator but also for the target audience when it comes to the transfer of jokes across languages and cultures and their interpretation, respectively.

As we have previously stated, translation does not only consider words since it involves a variety of significant aspects that go beyond the text, such as cultural elements. Relatedly, Curcó (1995) declares that the humorous effect achieved through those utterances that are perceived as *funny* is “the outcome of a complex interaction of various factors” (p. 30). Interaction between cultures and cultural differences has been the object of study by professional translators and TS scholars for many decades now.

Consequently, it can be stated with conviction that a cultural approach to translation is strictly required for the translation of humour since it is deeply grounded in culture. As a consequence of linguistic, cultural, technical, and functional restrictions, VEH content poses a considerable challenge for audiovisual translators. Likewise, Chiaro (1992) comments on this significant problem and remarks that “jokes in which sociocultural references cross-cut play on language are the most difficult of all to render in another language” (p. 87).

For his part, Díaz Pérez (2017) points out the translator's aim "to try to recreate the cognitive effects intended by the source communicators with the lowest possible processing effort on the part of the target addressee" (p. 49.). Audiovisual translators must always bear in mind that it is pivotal to make sure that whenever a laugh is provoked and heard (by means of a *laugh track* or *canned laughter*) in the original version, there is a laugh present in the dubbed version. Relatedly, Proczkowska (2020) states that "sitcoms make use of canned laughter that is a clear indication of potentially humorous character of a given utterance/conversation. Omitting a joke and preserving the original laugh track sends a signal to the target viewers that the translation is not adequate" (p. 7). Therefore, translators sometimes delete the original laugh track since it may have a weird effect on the viewer of the dubbed version if the original humorous effect is omitted in the target text.

Zabalbeascoa (1993) provides a concluding statement that supports this line of thought when he declared that "what really matters is that the translator identif[ies] the type of joke that is being used and the decide which procedure will best retain the substance of the joke rather than the actual words of the joke" (p. 263). Similarly, Low (2011) puts emphasis on the fact that funniness is culture-dependent and it even varies with individuals, so it is hard to measure. Consequently, he suggests that, if possible, translators' initial intention should be to "translate humour well enough for it to be recognisable as humour and to have some chance of amusing people [rather than provide an] *equally funny* (joke) in the target language (TL)" (Low, 2011, p. 60). Considering that preserving the effect of the original dialogue in the foreign dubbed version is the audiovisual translator's chief concern, explaining culture-bound puns instead of substituting them with a joke that may produce an equivalent effect in the target audience should be avoided. In this vein, Whitman-Linsen (1992) declares that "in order to be faithful to the spirit, being unfaithful to the letter is often the best alternative" (p. 129) in his analysis of the translation of humour in American films. Given that we have repeatedly mentioned the concept of *cultural reference*, we will be following the definition provided by González-Davies and Scott-Tennett (2005), which states that a *cultural reference* can be defined as

[a]ny kind of expression (textual, verbal, non-verbal or audiovisual) denoting any material, ecological, social, religious, linguistic or emotional manifestation that can be attributed to a particular community (geographic, socio-economic, professional, linguistic, religious, bilingual, etc.) and would be admitted as a trait of that community by those who consider themselves members of it. (p. 166)

These cultural references that make one society different from another often give rise to translation problems since they may have a different value in the target culture or because they may not exist. Consequently, these translation challenges require a thorough decision-process by the translator, who is expected to apply certain translation strategies and techniques in order to preserve the effects and intentions of the source text. For this reason, it can be affirmed that translation involves cultural interpretation across languages. Intense research on the translation of humour shifts has been carried out in the new millennium, more specifically intense research carried out on humour-related issues and challenges. Relatedly, Vandaele (2010) declares that in translation “the relative or absolute untranslatability is generally related to cultural and linguistic aspects” (p. 149). Significant shifts from a literal translation are often required in order to preserve the original intentions and reproduce in the TT the intended cognitive effects of the ST. In this vein, Bassnett (2013: 32-33) provides a comprehensive and intuitive compilation of guidelines which is truly useful for the translation of humorous elements across languages and cultures within the AVT content. According to her, when confronted by any kind of cultural reference or culture-bound element that poses a significant challenge, the translator must:

- ❖ Accept the untranslatability of the SL phrase in the TL on the linguistic level.
- ❖ Accept the lack of a similar cultural convention in the TL.
- ❖ Consider the range of TL phrases available, having regard to the presentation of class, status, age, sex of the speaker, his relationship to the listeners and the context of the meeting in the SL.
- ❖ Consider the significance of the phrase in its particular context.
- ❖ Replace in the TL the invariant code of the SL phrase in its two referential systems (the particular system of the text and the system of the culture out of which the text has sprung). (Bassnett, 2013, p. 32—33)

Furthermore, López González (2017) highlights the pivotal role the concept of *shared knowledge* plays in the interpretation of utterances beyond words when she affirms that “certain kinds of humour require extra knowledge belonging to a community, nation or culture” (p. 282). In the same line of thought, Pettit (2004) comments on the knowledge audiovisual translators are expected to have since they need “a wide general knowledge and as the target public is diverse, some will be experts in the subject matter being treated” (p. 27). Therefore, background knowledge is often required to fully understand those humorous situations that are triggered by particular cultural aspects. Of course, not only the target viewer but also, and especially, translators, must have a vast knowledge of the source language’s history, culture, language, and conventions in order to provide *a good translation*.

Relatedly, Chiaro (1992) explains that not getting a joke is “due to a certain amount of unshared knowledge between sender and recipient” (p. 14), since understanding the language in which it has been uttered is not enough. For this particular reason, and in López González’s own words, whenever a “humorous situation is highly culture-specific its power to amuse often loses strength or even disappears beyond the culture of origin” (2017, p. 282). This idea is supported by Chiaro (2010), who declares that

[a]s it crosses geographic boundaries humour has to come to terms with linguistic and cultural elements, which are often only typical of the source culture from which it was produced thereby losing its power to amuse in the new location. (p. 1)

Translations that create confusing effects, omit the humorous references altogether, and do not render the perlocutionary effect of the source text are bad translations and should be avoided under all circumstances. American audiovisual products such as *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother*, the focus of study of this dissertation, are extremely popular worldwide due to the great significance of the US production market and its gigantic global influence. In the same line of thought, López González (2017) examines how the translation of humour depends on “the acceptance of foreign cultural references by the target culture” (p. 289) since these references can be easily assimilated by the target audience without the requirement of making a great effort, and consequently, the humorous effects of the source text are maintained in the translated target text straightforwardly.

As a consequence of decades of cultural influence through numerous different areas of entertainment, he suggests that “the Spanish audience has assimilated the American culture to the point that many intertextual references stop being an obstacle for the understanding of the hidden/ allusive joke” (López González, 2017, p. 302). Therefore, the audiovisual translator has to play the role of mediator between the source and target cultures since it may be the case that the target audience is familiar with some of these culture-bound elements, and consequently, they do not require any kind of adaptation or domestication; especially if we take into account the aforementioned influence of American culture on Western culture and the European market.

In relation to the figure of the audiovisual translator, Antonopoulou (2004) declares that [t]he translator of a humorous text (like the translator of a serious one) is implicitly engaged in a multi-factor cost/benefit analysis, which should yield the optimal strategy for the appreciation of a text's humour (unlike the translator of a serious text) by the target readership. In the process s/he has to take into account the differences between the expectations and the cognitive environments not only of ST and TT readers, but also of subsets within them (like the translator of a serious text). (p. 245—246)

For this reason, the translator must be familiar with both the source and target cultures in order to be aware of their conventions and cultural similarities and differences between them since they significantly affect the decision-making process of adapting and creating an equivalent effect in the TT or keeping the ST elements. However, the latter decision may result in a loss of the intended humorous effects, or it may even be offensive to the target audience. Consequently, in her article on the pragmatics of humorous interpretations, Curcó (1995: 27) suggests that translators should focus on the mental processes the target audience goes through during the interpretation of humour rather than on the structural features of the humorous text. Additionally, in the same academic article, she declares that the interpretation of humour chiefly “relies on the accessing of two contradictory propositional forms and the recognition of their incompatibility” (Curcó, 1995, p. 37). In the same line of thought, Ross (1998) states that

humour is created out of a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke. This accounts for the most obvious feature of much humour: an ambiguity, or double meaning which deliberately misleads the audience, followed by a punchline. (p. 7)

Finally, it is pivotal to focus on the aforementioned recognition of the incompatibility of two contradictory forms since it not only creates a humorous effect but also increases the self-esteem of the person who decodes the implied meaning and whose wittiness is consequently rewarded. This effort is expected to be made by the target audience; Vandaele (1999) supports this idea when he points out that “a great deal of humour involves problem-solving” (p. 241). Only by doing so will the target audience feel joy and cleverness as a result of getting the joke.

3.2. Sitcoms

For the correct understanding of the present paper, it is paramount to introduce a general overview of the concept of sitcom (situation comedy). Sitcoms are television comedy shows whose most distinctive features are the central fixed set of characters they are composed of and the ordinary yet comedic circumstances in which they are involved. In this vein, Heiss (2014) states about sitcoms that “the dialogues are extremely true to life and typical of the milieu that is represented” (p. 210). Sitcoms are characterised by having an informal register and several significant conversational features. As a subgenre of audiovisual entertainment content, their aim is to attract the audience’s attention through the recreation of amusing and relatable situations. Mintz (1985: 115) highlights the central role humour plays in sitcoms and mentions some of the most distinctive features of this genre of TV shows. He mentions the limited and fixed number of characters and scenarios, the finiteness and short duration of the episodes (they last approximately 20 minutes), and their recurrent circular nature (the episodes’ aim is to resolve a problem or difficult circumstance in order to restore the previous harmony and balance). Therefore, a happy ending is often expected at the end of each episode.

Furthermore, Proczkowska (2020: 1) expands on one of the distinctive features proposed by Mintz (1985: 115) and maintains that, given the fact that sitcoms do not feature a multitude of characters, scriptwriters make use of archetypes and characters speaking in a dialect, sociolect, or an idiolect. Humour can appear in many different and complex forms. One of the most widely used humorous effects in American sitcoms such as *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother* is the inclusion of different varieties of English. American sitcoms often introduce a foreigner (a non-American-English native speaker) among the recurring set of characters, not only for comedic purposes but also to reflect the diversity of American society. *How I Met Your Mother* is set in the multicultural city of New York City, a perfect example of the American melting pot¹ whilst *Modern Family* is set in suburban Los Angeles, one of the most multicultural cities in the world.²

¹ Definition of melting pot: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/melting%20pot>.

² Morfin, M. (2019, July 17). The 10 Most Multicultural Cities in the World. Culture Trip: Unique trips, with care for the world. <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/california/articles/the-10-most-multicultural-cities-in-the-world>.

Likewise, scriptwriters have a noticeable tendency to make these foreign characters seem rather exotic whilst, at the same time, they “often become an object of mockery” (Proczkowska, 2020, p. 2). Consequently, numerous jokes, puns, and hilarious situations are created at the expense of their accents, heritage, and behaviour. Heiss (2014) reassures the idea that “one cannot translate one dialect into another, because if this is attempted, cultural anchoring will suffer and the image will be belied” (p. 211). Nonetheless, if we approve the validity of this statement, what will happen to the audiovisual content in which characters with different ways of speaking appear? Are all of these characters condemned to speak in the same way? Following this idea, Heiss (2014) expresses the importance “not to unify the languages in cases of bilingualism and code switching with functional load, in the dubbed version, because otherwise important information about characters and social imbedding would be lost in the audience” (p. 211). Consequently, this justifies the necessity in dubbing to indicate a character’s nationality, ethnicity, or social status if his or her particular speech or nationality is relevant to the plot of the audiovisual product. Nonetheless, we must note once again that, unlike subtitling, in the case of dubbing, there is no room for including additional explanations, comments, or footnotes.

3.3. *Modern Family*

In this section of my dissertation, I will analyse in depth the cultural elements present in the first season of *Modern Family* (2009–2010). This contrastive analysis seeks to shed light on those culture-bound elements and cultural elements that pose significant challenges in humour translation. Moreover, I will pay special attention to the translation strategies and techniques used by the translators of this sitcom. As a consequence of the large amount of data available, I have decided to focus on the first season of the series. Likewise, space limitations prohibit a discussion of all the instances of cultural elements, wordplay, and puns. Hence, only a small number of examples will be discussed below.

Modern Family (2009–2020) is a highly successful American television series, created by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, that premiered on September 23, 2009 on the American network ABC. In Spain, it premiered on August 21, 2010, almost a year later, on Fox, a Spanish private TV channel. *Modern Family* has had enormous success both within and outside the boundaries of American society and English-speaking countries. This success is reflected in the large number of awards it has received over the years. Among which we can highlight the Emmy for the best comedy series, which it has won for five consecutive years (from 2010 to 2014). *Modern Family* comes under the classification of *mockumentary* (a blend of mock and documentary). It is a type of TV series made in a false documentary format, in which the characters speak directly to the camera on several occasions. This feature is frequently used to analyse and comment on certain events and issues, so the viewer is able to obtain additional knowledge of the characters' insights, opinions, and behaviour. Additionally, it is pivotal to note that unlike most sitcoms, in *Modern Family*, there is no laugh track or canned laughter. Instead, this sitcom relies on several close shots and other camera angles and techniques in order to indicate the presence of humorous elements such as jokes, puns, and wordplay.

This family sitcom revolves around the lives of Jay Pritchett and his family, which consists of his Colombian second wife, Gloria, their son Jon, and Manny, Gloria's son, and Jay's stepson. Additionally, Jay has two adult children: Claire, who is married to Phil; and Mitchell, who is homosexual and eventually gets married to his boyfriend, Cameron. Claire and Phil have three children: Luke, Haley, and Alexandra, while Mitchell and Cameron have adopted a Vietnamese girl named Lily.

All the aforementioned family members live in suburban Los Angeles. Dore (2019) defines *Modern Family* as “a telling example of the way comedy has been evolving to depict a multilingual and multicultural society such as that of North America” (p. 23). It certainly is an example of a modern family living in the 21st century. In this sense, *Modern Family* is inclusive, embraces diversity, and challenges certain sexual and ethnic stereotypes.

As a sitcom, its humour is linked to quotidian themes such as work, love, education, sex, etc., and the way its characters deal with the situations and problems they encounter. Each one of the main characters has their own way of producing humour. For example, Gloria’s humour mainly derives from her imperfect English, which is her second language, whilst Jay or Mitchell are often ironic or sarcastic. In this vein, Dore attributes most of the sitcom’s success and humour to “its characters’ playful use of language, cultural references, and the clash between North and South American societies, languages, and cultures” (2019, p. 23). This clash between cultural and linguistic differences is often exploited for humorous purposes, given that Jay often struggles to cope with Gloria’s Latin-American cultural background and the differences between South and North American traditions. Relatedly, Dore highlights this fact as one of the sitcom’s main themes, which is an attempt to show the multiculturalism of present American society. A society that is “continuously changing, incorporating people coming from many different cultural backgrounds” (2019, p. 24).

Example 1 - Episode 1 - Season 1 - *Pilot / Piloto*. [3’33” — 3’53”]. Pun → Non-pun.

Context: Cameron and Mitchell are on a plane on their way back home after adopting their daughter, a Vietnamese little girl named Lily. Mitchell tells Cameron that he feels that some people on the plane are uncomfortable with their presence as they are two male gay parents.

English version:

Female passenger: Honey, honey. Look at that baby with those cream puffs.

Mitchell: OK. Excuse me. This baby would have grown up in a crowded orphanage if it wasn’t for us cream puffs. And you know what? Note to all of you who judge. Hear this. Love knows no race, creed-

Cameron: Mitchell...

Mitchell: Or gender. And shame on you, you small-minded, ignorant few-

Cameron: Mitchell...

Mitchell: What?

Cameron: She’s got the cream puffs (the camera zooms in on Lily, who is holding a cake).

Spanish dubbed version:

Female passenger: Cariño, mira la bebé con esos buñuelitos.

Mitchell: Muy bien, disculpe, disculpe, pero este bebé se habría criado en un orfanato abarrotado, de no ser por nosotros, los buñuelos. Y para todos ustedes que nos juzgan, ¿saben qué?

Cameron: Mitchell...

Mitchell: El amor no entiende de razas, credos o sexo. Debería darles vergüenza, son unos pobres ignorantes que...

Cameron: Mitchell...

Mitchell: ¿Qué?

Cameron: Tiene los buñuelos...(the camera zooms in on Lily, who is holding a cake).

In this first example, we can notice a homonymous pun based on the term *cream puff*, which refers both to a small pastry filled with cream and to homosexual white men. Mitchell infers that the lady's comment refers to his sexuality. For this reason, he stands up and tells everyone that they are a gay couple who have adopted a baby and that they should not judge them. In this first example, the visual element is truly important. Considering that *buñuelito* or *buñuelo* does not mean homosexual in Spanish, the dubbed version does not reflect the same meaning.

Consequently, the double sense of the word with which the script plays is lost. This is a clear example of neutralisation, as the ST pun has been omitted and the humorous effect has been mostly lost, but the general meaning of the scene has been preserved. The translation technique used by the translators has been generalisation, as a more general and neutral term has been used.

Example 2 - Episode 1 - Season 1 - Pilot / Piloto. [5'13'' — 5'20'']. Pun → Non-pun.

Context: Phil is introducing himself as a modern father who dominates the jargon of mobile messages and brags about it.

English version:

Phil: I surf the web. I text. LOL...laugh out loud. OMG...oh, my god. WTF...why the face?

Spanish dubbed version:

Phil: Navego por Internet, escribo MMR, me muero de risa... ADM, ¡ay, Dios mío!. QMD, ¿qué me dices?

In this second example, the humour depends on Phil's wrong interpretation of the widely known acronym WTF (what the fuck) as *why the face*, which shockingly contradicts his previous statement that he is a cool and modern father. The translators have followed a domesticating strategy since the target audience probably would not have understood the sequence if the acronyms in English had been maintained. The Spanish version offers a series of mobile acronyms invented for this occasion, which may not be obvious to the viewer since they are not actually used by Spanish speakers. Therefore, the original version includes a humorous aspect that is not maintained in the Spanish version.

However, it is truly significant to consider that *Modern Family* premiered in 2010 in Spain, and at that time the influence of American internet culture was not as widespread worldwide as it is nowadays. For this reason, I believe that if the same translation were made at the present time, a foreignising strategy could be followed as the Spanish audience would understand those acronyms without problems if a borrowing technique were used.

Example 3 - Episode 1 - Season 1 - *Pilot / Piloto*. [10'43'' — 10'47'']. Culture-bound element.

Context: Hayley's new boyfriend, Dylan, arrives at the Dunphys' house, and both Phil and Claire attack him with all kinds of questions to learn more about their daughter's new boyfriend.

English version:

Claire: You still in high school?

Dylan: Yeah, I'm a senior.

Spanish dubbed version:

Claire: ¿Estás en el instituto?

Dylan: Sí, en último curso

This third example follows a domesticating strategy that produces a translation where the source culture elements are replaced by target culture ones. Moreover, it is a clear example of generalisation, since in Spanish there is no specific terminology to denote those students who are in their last academic year. This term is part of the American nomenclature to name those students who are in their last year of school, whilst the first-year student is called a freshman, the second a sophomore, and the third a junior.

Example 4 - Episode 1 - Season 1 - *Pilot / Piloto*. [18'35'' — 18'41'']. Pun → Non-pun.

Context: Cameron and Mitchell decide to invite the whole family over to celebrate the good news after they return from Vietnam.

English version:

Phil: Hi Gloria, how are you? What a beautiful dress!

Gloria: Thank you, Phil!

Phil: Oh, okay...(Phil touches Gloria's thigh).

Claire: Phil, she said *Phil* not feel!

Spanish dubbed version:

Phil: Hola Gloria, ¿cómo estás? ¡Qué vestido tan bonito!

Gloria: Ay, gracias Phil.

Phil: Sí, es muy bonito...(Phil touches Gloria's thigh).

Claire: ¡Quieto! Se mira pero no se toca, ¿vale?

In this example, Gloria's Colombian accent creates a misunderstanding. The original version creates a play on words because of the similarity between the pronunciation of *feel* and *Phil*, something that creates confusion in Phil, who thinks Gloria is telling him to touch his dress. Considering that this is not possible to translate into the Spanish version in the same way, the translator has cleverly chosen to omit it and add his own creation, which fits perfectly in the context in which it appears, taking advantage of the visual elements present in the passage.

It is important to note that this modification alters the perception of Phil's character by Spanish viewers, given that he touches the thigh of his now mother-in-law. It is undeniable that keeping the phonetic game in the dubbed version is not possible, but maybe the translators could have chosen to use some typical Colombian verb or phrase that could lead to misunderstanding.

Example 5 - Episode 2 - Season 1 - *The Bicycle Thief / El ladrón de bicis*. [02'25'' — 02'30'']. Culture-bound element.

Context: Luke wants a new bike since the one he has is his sister's and his father wants to buy him another one so other kids do not laugh at him. His grandfather sees him on that bike and mocks him.

English version:

Jay: Hey, nice bike, Sally.

Claire: Dad!

Jay: Come on. He looks like Little Bo Peep on that thing.

Spanish dubbed version:

Jay: ¡Eh! ¡Vaya bici guapa!

Claire: ¡Papá!

Jay: Venga ya, parece una Barbie con ese trasto.

Little Bo Peep is the protagonist of some well-known children's rhymes in the United States. However, in Spain, this doll is unknown to the target audience, so the translator has opted for a TT-strategy, modifying the American cultural element with another one better known in the target culture, as is the fashion doll Barbie. A domesticating strategy has been followed.

Example 6 - Episode 4 - Season 1 - *The Incident / El incidente*. [08'44'' — 08'52'']. Culture-bound element.

Context: Hayley wants to go to a concert, but her mother will not let her. She gets angry, and they start arguing. Hayley goes to her room angry, and Phil tries to console her.

English version:

Phil: Things with your mum got intense down there, uh? Like east coast-west coast, you feeling me?

Spanish dubbed version:

Phil: Vaya, las cosas con tu pretty madre se han puesto un poco feas antes, ¿eh? Es como norte y sur, ¿lo pillas?

In this example, Phil alludes to the magnitude of the fight that Haley and Claire had in a previous scene through the east coast-west coast contrast, which refers to the rivalry that took place in the hip hop scene during the 1990s between the rappers of the East Coast and the West Coast of the USA. This rivalry ended with the murder of two of its main figures, rappers The Notorious B.I.G., from the east coast, and Tupac Shakur, from the west coast. Considering that it is unlikely that the Spanish target audience is familiar with this American cultural and historical element, the translators have followed a domesticating strategy and have chosen to employ the north-south counterposition.

Example 7 - Episode 4 - Season 1 - *The Incident / El incidente*. [08'53'' — 08'56'']. Pun → Pun.

Context: Phil talks about his strategy to educate his children.

English version:

Phil: Act like a parent, talk like a peer. I call it *peeringting*.

Spanish dubbed version:

Phil: Actúa como padre, habla como un colega. Yo lo llamo ser *padrega*.

This is an example of how the dubbed version has managed to convey the same play on words that is observed in the original version, even though *peering* also plays with the phonetics of the word parenting and that has not been possible to preserve.

Example 8 - Episode 4 - Season 1 - *The Incident / El incidente*. [11'59'' — 12'04'']. Cultural reference.

Context: Jay's ex-wife, DeDe, explains to Haley what Claire was like as a teenager and tells her about one of the boyfriends she had when she was younger.

English version:

DeDe: Ricky was your mother's boyfriend, and he looked like Charles Manson.

Spanish dubbed version:

DeDe: Ricky era un novio de tu madre que se parecía a Jack el Destripador.

Charles Manson was the leader of the Manson family, a sect that committed various murders in Los Angeles during the 1960s. Although the figure of Charles Manson is known worldwide and the Spanish target audience is familiar with it to a certain extent, the translators have decided to introduce the reference to Jack the Ripper, an unidentified British serial killer who committed numerous murders in London in 1888, as they have surely considered that the latter is better known in the target culture.

Therefore, a domesticating strategy has been followed. However, the humorous effect of the original version is completely lost as it derives from the comparison of Claire's boyfriend with the dishevelled and dirty appearance characteristic of Charles Manson, a connotation that is not present in Jack the Ripper, whose appearance is unknown.

Example 9 - Episode 5 - Season 1 - *Coal Digger / La cazafortunas*. [01'50'' — 01'58'']. Culture-bound element.

Context: Cameron is a big football fan and there is a very important match that night, so he decides to dress Lilly as a referee for the big occasion.

English version:

Cameron: Daddy, we're scoring a touchdown.

Mitchell: Please, don't spike our baby. And why is she dressed like the Hamburglar?

Cameron: She's a referee.

Spanish dubbed version:

Cameron: ¡Papi!, hemos marcado un touchdown!

Mitchell: Por favor no la tires al suelo. ¿Por qué va vestida de presidiaria?

Cameron: Es el árbitro.

I will briefly comment on the title of this episode since it is relevant from a humour translation perspective. The pun is based on the idiomatic expression *to be a gold digger* (a person seeking a wealthy partner; this expression often refers to women rather than men), and *coal digger* has been translated as *cazafortunas*, the literal Spanish translation of *gold digger*.

On this occasion, the translator used two different strategies. On the one hand, touchdown is the main way of scoring points in American football, and, in this case, the translators have opted for the borrowing of this cultural element following a foreignising strategy. Although American football is not very common in Spain, the target audience is likely to know what a touchdown is, so a modification or adaptation is not needed. On the other hand, the Hamburglar is a well-known McDonald's character in the United States who appeared in McDonald's commercials during the 1970s. He is a close friend of Ronald McDonald, who wears a black-and-white hooped shirt and steals hamburgers. His name is a mixture of *burger* and *burglar*. For the translation of this cultural element, the translators have opted for a domesticating strategy of this culture-bound element through a general term.

Example 10 - Episode 5 - Season 1 - *Coal Digger / La cazafortunas*. [08'51'' — 09'09'']. Pun→Non-pun.

Context: Mitchell, Cameron, and Jay get together to watch an American football game.

English version:

Jay: Looks like I gotta watch the game with Dick Butkus.

Mitchell: Dad! Dad, come on. That's offensive.

Cameron: No, Mitchell, he's one of the greatest linebackers to ever play at Illinois, and one of my personal heroes.

Mitchell: And his name is *But-kiss*? And we're just choosing to... Okay, all right. Dad, I thought you were being homophobic. I'm sorry.

Spanish dubbed version:

Jay: Parece que voy a ver el partido con Dick Butkus.

Mitchell: ¡Papá! Vamos. Eso es ofensivo.

Cameron: No, Mitchell, ha sido uno de los mejores linebackers de Illinois y uno de mis héroes personales.

Mitchell: ¿Y se llama Butkus? Y hemos decidido... Vale. Papá, perdona, pensé que habías sido homófobo.

In this example, the humour comes from the fact that the player's surname *Butkus* is a homophone of *butt kiss*. They have an identical sound but different spelling. His first name, *Dick*, also creates a humorous effect as it is a homonym of the male genitalia. This creates a misunderstanding, and Mitchell, who is not an American football enthusiast, believes that his father is making fun of his husband and the fact that they are a gay couple.

Example 11 - Episode 14 - Season 1 - *Moon Landing / Alunizaje*. [12'14'' — 12'34'']. Cultural element.

Context: Alex and Luke are recycling all the bottles they see since they have been asked to do so at school. Their neighbours decide to give them all the bottles of alcohol they drank last night,

English version:

Alex: Check it out. The Aubreys had this huge party last night, and we got all these bottles to recycle.

Phil: Great.

Alex: What's Jägermeister?

Phil: Um, well, you know how in a fairy tale there's always a potion that makes the princess fall asleep, and then the guys start kissing her? Well, this is like that, except you don't wake up in a castle, you wake up in a frat house with a bad reputation.

Spanish dubbed version:

Alex: Alucina, los Aubrey dieron una superfiesta anoche y nos han dado todas estas botellas para reciclar

Phil: Guay

Alex: ¿Qué es la Grappa?

Phil: Pues, sabes que en los cuentos de hadas siempre hay una poción que hace que la princesa se duerma y el tío empiece a besarla? Pues esto es parecido pero no te despiertas en un castillo, te despiertas en un colegio mayor y con mala reputación.

Jägermeister is a herbal pomace from Germany, whilst Grappa is an Italian pomace brandy. In this example, translators have substituted the original reference with an element that, according to them, would not pose a challenge to the Spanish target audience. It is important to note that the popularity of Jägermeister in Spain has significantly increased over the last decade and probably in 2010, it was not as popular as Grappa, so this justifies the translators' decision. Nonetheless, I truly believe that maintaining the original cultural element would not have been a bad idea. Therefore, I propose the following translation: Alex: "¿Qué es el Jägermeister?"

Example 12 - Episode 18 - Season 1 - *Starry Night / Noche estrellada*. [20'48'' — 20'54'']. Culture-bound element.

Context: Hayley makes some cakes. Her parents taste them but are disgusted with the result and lie to her not to make her feel bad. They tell her to hurry and leave so they can puke in the bin.

English version:

Claire: You know what, sweetie? You're gonna be late for school. Just go. I'll bring 'em by later.

Hayley: Are you sure?

Phil: Yeah! Get out of here, Betty Crocker.

Spanish dubbed version:

Claire: No, ¿sabes qué? Vas a llegar tarde a clase. Tú vete y luego te las llevo yo.

Hayley: ¿Seguro?

Phil: Si, ¡vete ya cocinillas!

Betty Crocker is both a brand and a fictional character used in advertising food campaigns, which makes her perfectly recognisable to the American audience. However, because it is unfamiliar to the Spanish target audience, the translators opted for a domesticating strategy and substituted this proper name for a more general term.

As far as I am concerned, a possible solution, if we wanted to maintain the original effect and the use of a proper name as in the original version, would be to introduce a famous cook known in Spanish culture. For this reason, I believe that the following translation proposal would enhance the official European Spanish TV dubbed version: Phil: "Sí, ¡vete ya Arguiñano!" Karlos Arguiñano is a widely known Spanish chef and TV presenter.

3.4. *How I Met Your Mother*

In this section, I will analyse in depth the cultural elements, puns, and wordplay used for the creation of humorous effects present in the first season of *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2006). Additionally, I will pay special attention to the translation strategies and techniques used by the translators in order to render humour in the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of this sitcom. *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2014) is an American sitcom created by Craig Thomas and Carter Bays that premiered on September 19, 2005 on the American television broadcasting company CBS. In Spain, it premiered on November 21, 2006, almost a year later, on Fox, a Spanish private TV channel. As a consequence of the large amount of data available, I have decided to focus on the first season of the series. Likewise, space limitations prohibit a discussion of all the instances of cultural elements, wordplay, and puns. Hence, only a small number of examples will be discussed below.

How I Met Your Mother follows the adventures of Ted Mosby, the sitcom's main character, who recounts to his two children the numerous events and circumstances that led him to meet their mother, and his group of friends in New York City. This sitcom's story that goes into a flashback deals chiefly with Ted Mosby, who works as an architect, and his best friends, including Canadian news reporter Robin Scherbatsky, womaniser flirt Barney Stinson, and the couple formed by Lily Aldrin and Marshall Eriksen.

Example 1 - Episode 4 - Season 1 - *Return of the Shirt / El regreso de la camisa*. [08'10'' - 08'12''].

Pun→Pun.

Context: Barney tells Ted about his younger sister, who just got married.

English version:

Barney: You know what else? 'My younger sister just got married and I'm about to turn 30' sex.

Spanish dubbed version:

Barney: ¿Sabes? mi hermana pequeña acaba de casarse, y yo voy a cumplir treinta y sexo.

In this first example, we can observe that the humorous effect in the original version has been triggered by the phonetic similarity of *six* and *sex*, which are near homophones in English. As far as I am concerned, this is an example of pun→pun since the same humorous effect has been triggered in the dubbed version. However, it is important to highlight that it has been triggered to a lesser degree given that the phonetic similarity between *sexo* and *seis* is not as strong as it is between *sex* and *six*.

Example 2 - Episode 6 - Season 1 - *Slutty Pumpkin / La chica calabaza*. [09'50'' - 09'53'']

Pun → Related rhetorical device

Context: Barney is at a Halloween party and speaks to a girl who is dressed as a Hawaiian and who is wearing a lei, a Hawaiian flower necklace.

English version:

Barney: So, what does a fella have to do to get lei-ed around here?

Girl: Right. 'Cause I'm wearing a lei.

Spanish dubbed version:

Barney: ¿Bueno, qué hay que hacer en esta fiesta para comerse un rosco?

Girl: Claro, ¿te refieres al rosco de flores?

In the second example, we can notice that phonetic similarity between the lei and lay was not preserved in the dubbed version. Instead, the solution was to make a pun with the word *rosco*. Though it is not the typical form of a necklace, it was possible to reproduce the humorous effect of the original pun. Thus, in Spanish, the word *rosco* is repeated with different meanings: the literal meaning referring to the necklace, and the idiomatic meaning, which makes reference to having sex. The visual elements are especially important in this particular situation. This adaptation, which follows a domesticating strategy, has effectively reproduced the humorous effect of the original version.

Example 3 - Episode 6 - Season 1 - *Slutty Pumpkin / La chica calabaza*. [12'10'' - 12'12'']

Pun → Non-pun

Context: At a costume party, Barney is dressed as a devil, and he is talking to a girl dressed as an angel.

English version:

Barney: Thanks. I'm also a horny devil. (Barney points at the horns of his mask)

Spanish dubbed version:

Barney: Gracias, también soy un diablo salido. (Barney points at the horns of his mask)

In this third example, we can observe a clear example of neutralisation since the effects of the original pun do not appear in the dubbed version but the general meaning of the passage has been preserved. In this example, the visual elements play an important, as *horny* has two interpretations: having horns and having sexual desire. Likewise, *salido* may have a double

interpretation as well, if we consider that it makes reference to the fact that there are two salient pieces sticking out of Barney's head.

Example 4 - Episode 9 - Season 1 - *Belly Full of Turkey / Atracón de Pavo*. [01'32'' - 01'36'']. Pun→Pun.

Pun→Pun.

Context: Ted and Robin are talking about celebrating Thanksgiving, a national holiday celebrated on November 24, in the US, and on October 10, in Canada.

English version:

Robin: I'm Canadian, remember? We celebrate Thanksgiving in October.

Ted: Oh, right, I forgot you guys are weird. You pronounce the word *out* as *oat*.

Spanish dubbed version:

Robin: Soy canadiense, ¿recuerdas? Nosotros celebramos Acción de Gracias en octubre.

Ted: Aah, es verdad, lo había olvidado, sois muy raros. Tenéis una pronunciación muy extraña.

In this example, we can notice that the translators have decided to replace the specific original accent-related joke with a more general and neutralised utterance. Notwithstanding the fact that the reference to Canadian pronunciation has not been rendered, the mockery is still present in the Spanish dubbed version, and this dialogue preserves its comedic purpose.

Relatedly, Proczkowska (2020), in her analysis of the translatability of accent humour, focuses on the Canadian accent and how it is used as a source of humour by Robin, from Vancouver, Canada. She emphasises how language variation is a recurring theme in *How I Met Your Mother*, which has been introduced into the script for a particular comedic purpose. In fact, Canadian bilingualism and its characteristic accent (e.g., discourse marker *eh*) are a common mockery theme in the series.

Example 5 - Episode 10 - Season 1 - *The Pineapple Incident / El incidente de la piña*. [16'40'' - 16'42'']. Pun→Pun.

Context: Ted suggests going to karaoke. Later, he realises that he has no idea where the term *karaoke* comes from.

English version:

Ted: Why do they call it *karaoke*, anyhow? Was it invented by a woman named Carrie Okie?

Spanish dubbed version:

Ted: ¿Por qué lo llamarían *karaoke*? ¿Porque lo inventó una mujer llamada Carla Roberts?

This is a pun based on the phonetic similarity between the word *karaoke* and the invented proper noun *Carrie Okie*. Considering that this proper noun tries to reproduce the sonority of the word *karaoke* differently in English, an adaptation has been created to reproduce the humorous effect. Therefore, a different proper noun had to be included in the dubbed version as *karaoke* is pronounced in English and in Spanish differently. *Carla Roberts* was the invented proper noun chosen to substitute for the original one.

Nonetheless, I truly believe that this proper noun does not effectively reproduce the sonority of the word *karaoke*. For this reason, I suggest the following translation proposal, which, as far as I am concerned, reproduces it in a more successful way: Ted: ¿Por qué lo llamarían *karaoke*? ¿Porque lo inventó una mujer llamada Carla Ocre?

Example 6 - Episode 18 - Season 1 - *Nothing Good Happens After 2 A.M.* / *Nada bueno ocurre después de las 2 de la mañana.* [10'26'' - 10'28'']. Pun→Pun.

Context: Robin talks to Ted and proposes the idea of drinking wine.

English version:

Robin: Or we can just drink wine.

Ted: Wine not? The stupidest thing I've ever said.

Spanish dubbed version:

Robin: ¿O podemos beber vino?

Ted: Pues, divino. Es la tontería más grande que he dicho nunca.

In this example, Robin proposes to Ted the idea of drinking wine. Ted, who is secretly attracted to Robin, gets very nervous and comes up with the expression, *wine not?* This expression not only contains the word *wine* but is phonetically similar to the phrase, *why not?* The dubbed version shows the translators' creative ability, as they were able to come up with a phrase that demonstrates Ted's happiness at Robin's proposal and, at the same time, contains a reference to the alcoholic drink she wants to drink.

Example 7 - Episode 20 - Season 1 - *Best Prom Ever / Un baile inolvidable*. [06'16'' - 06'18''].

Pun → Related rhetorical device.

Context: Robin and Lily are getting ready for a dance and Barney wants to tell them that their dress code is very old-fashioned. Additionally, he states that young girls dress like strippers.

English version:

Barney: They all dress like strippers. It's go hoe or go home.

Spanish dubbed version:

Barney: Se visten como bailarinas de striptis. Si no exhibes, no existes.

In this case, the pun is based on the modification of the expression *go big or go home*, which means to go all the way and enjoy everything to the fullest. Barney changes the word *big* to the word *hoe*, a slang term that means prostitute in Spanish. The dubbed version displays an amplification translation technique of the word *stripper*, as it has been translated as *bailarinas de striptis* following a domesticating TT-oriented strategy.

The translators have cleverly adapted the aforementioned expression to the purpose of the scene, achieving the persistence of humour in the dubbed version while maintaining Barney's advice to dress in a provocative way.

4. Conclusions

In this final section, I will be summarising the main findings of my dissertation. The results of the analysis carried out in this paper show that the audiovisual translators responsible for the creation of the translated scripts for the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of the first season of *Modern Family* (2009–2010) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2006) have followed a domesticating strategy that produces an easily understandable translation for the Spanish target audience rather than a foreignising one that aims to be faithful to the source culture and language. Molina and Hurtado's (2002: 509-511) classification of translation techniques has been used in the analysis carried out, and it shows that adaptation, amplification, and generalisation have been the translation techniques most used by audiovisual translators in the creation of the Spanish dubbed versions of *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother*. Moreover, Delabastita's (1996: 134) typology for the translation of puns has also been used, and it shows that pun→pun, pun→non-pun, and pun→related rhetorical device are the most often employed solutions. Despite the fact that a large number of comic situations have undergone some kind of change as a result of the translation process in *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother*, this paper confirms the translatability of humour in audiovisual texts since, despite the loss of some elements and the modification of others, these two sitcoms are faithful to their purpose and fulfil their function, which is to make people laugh.

Additionally, the presented analysis has shown that not all instances of humour have been rendered in the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother* since some instances have been paraphrased in a neutral way or using a more general term. As a consequence, viewers of the dubbed versions of these two popular American sitcoms are sometimes deprived of the opportunity to laugh. Omission is the least desirable option in audiovisual translation, yet it may sometimes be an alternative. Choosing to omit or neutralise an original form of punning may also result in the text having less humorous potential. Considering that humour is essential to the success of a sitcom, audiovisual translators certainly must pay special attention to those linguistic elements that create and convey humour. Additionally, the present paper has demonstrated that audiovisual translators must bear in mind the multisemiotic nature of the audiovisual text and not overlook its significance given that the translation solutions they may offer will often be affected and conditioned by non-verbal elements such as image, lighting, and non-verbal communication which operate simultaneously in the production of meaning.

Moreover, this dissertation has highlighted the figure of the audiovisual translator as a cultural mediator between cultures who is expected to overcome any linguistic or cultural hurdles in order to create a high-quality audiovisual product that is intelligible and accessible to the target language and culture. Audiovisual translation, like any other type of translation, seeks to preserve the meaning and intent of the original source text. Nonetheless, audiovisual translators' main concern must be to recreate the reaction the audience exposed to the original version had as similar as possible to that of the target audience. When it comes to this particular case study, sitcoms are meant to make the audience laugh. The skillful use of ambiguity and polysemy, as well as the witty use of double meanings and several wordplays with sexual connotations, are some of the most significant sources of humour in *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother*.

It is important to highlight that the amount of puns and wordplay which have been omitted is surprisingly low which shows that the translators of both sitcoms have displayed creative solutions such as adaptation, generalisation, or substitution. *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother* are not easy sitcoms to translate due to the great amount of wordplay, puns, and culture-bound elements they present. More specifically, *Modern Family* is more difficult to translate than *How I Met Your Mother* since there is a considerable loss of potentially humorous elements based on the phenomenon of multilingualism as Gloria's first and second language coincide in the Spanish dubbed version.

Furthermore, it is paramount to mention that the first season of these two sitcoms premiered over ten years ago. For this reason, I believe that some culture-bound elements and references used for comedic purposes may have been translated following a domesticating strategy, given that a foreignising one may have been considered highly unfamiliar by the target audience at that time. Consequently, given that both the source and target cultures are Western cultures that share a significant amount of cultural knowledge, a considerable number of cultural references may not pose a significant translation challenge nowadays. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, some culture-bound elements such as the acronyms WTF, LOL, OMG, Jägermeister, strippers, and Charles Manson could be translated following a foreignising strategy, and they could be understood by the current Spanish audience without problems. Consequently, the original intended effect could be conveyed more easily, and by doing so, a final audiovisual product that sounds natural and credible to the target audience but is at the same time faithful to the original text would be created.

Finally, I believe it is necessary to acknowledge the hard work of the audiovisual translators responsible for the creation of the translated scripts for the official European Spanish TV dubbed version of the first season of *Modern Family* (2009–2010) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2006). Although I have mainly focused on the negative and improvable aspects of the Spanish dubbed version of these two sitcoms, both dubbing teams have created a comprehensible and professional translation, which has not prevented these two popular American sitcoms from enjoying much success in Spain, and as far as I am concerned, their translation is probably one of the reasons behind it.

5. References

- Antonopoulou, E. (2004). Humour Theory and Translation Research: Proper Names in Humorous Discourse. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 17(3), 219—255. Walter de Gruyter.
- Attardo, S., & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 4(3-4), 293—347. Walter de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.1991.4.3-4.293>.
- Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic Theories of Humour*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow: Longman.
- Bassnett, S. (2013). *Translation Studies* (4th ed.). London & New York: Routledge.
- Buijzen, M., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2004). Developing a Typology of Humour in Audiovisual Media. *Media Psychology*, 6(2), 147—167. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532785xmep0602_2.
- Chaume, F. (2004a). Film Studies and Translation Studies: Two Disciplines at Stake in Audiovisual Translation. *Meta: Translator's Journal*, 49(1), 12-24. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009016ar>.
- Chaume, F. (2004b). Synchronization in dubbing: A translational approach. In P. Orero (Ed.), *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*, 56 (pp. 35—52). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.56.07cha>.
- Chaume, F. (2006). Los estándares de calidad y recepción de la traducción audiovisual. *Puentes: Hacia nuevas investigaciones en la mediación intercultural*, 6, 5—12.
- Chaume, F. (2016). Dubbing a TV Drama Series. The case of The West Wing. in *TRAlinea Special Issue: A Text of Many Colours - translating the West Wing*. http://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/dubbing_a_tv_drama_series_the_case_of_the_west_wing.
- Chaume, F. (2021). Dubbing practices in Europe: localisation beats globalisation. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*, 6, 203—218. <https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v6i.188>.
- Chiaro, D. (1992). *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play* (1st ed.). London & New York: Routledge.
- Chiaro, D. (2005). Foreword. Verbally Expressed Humor and translation: An Overview of a Neglected Field. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 18(2), 135—145. Walter de Gruyter. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/humr.2005.18.2.135>.

- Chiaro, D. (2008). Verbally expressed humour and translation. In V. Raskin (Ed.), *Primer of Humor Research*, 8 (pp. 569—608). Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110198492>.
- Chiaro, D. (2010). Translating Humour in the Media. In D. Chiaro (Ed.), *Translation, Humour and the Media*, 2 (1st ed.). London and New York: Continuum.
- Curcó, C. (1995). Some observations on the pragmatics of humorous interpretations. A relevance-theoretic approach. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 7, 27—47.
- Delabastita, D. (1996). Introduction. In D. Delabastita (Ed.), *The Translator: Studies in Intercultural Communication. Special Issue: Wordplay and Translation*, 2(2) (pp. 127—139). London: Routledge.
- Delisle, J., Lee-Jahnke, H., & Cormier, M. C. (1999). *Terminologie de la traduction: Translation terminology. terminología de la traducción. terminologie der übersetzung, 1*. John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/fit.1>.
- Denton, J., & Chiampì, D. (2012). A New Development in Audiovisual Translation Studies: Focus in Target Audience Perception. *Lingue e letteratura d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, 1(1) pp. 399-422.
- Díaz Cintas, J. (2012). Clearing the Smoke to See the Screen: Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation. *Meta: Translator's Journal*, 57(2), 279-293.
- Díaz Pérez, F. J. (2017). The translation of humour based on culture bound terms in *Modern Family*. A cognitive-pragmatic approach. In J. J. Martínez Sierra & P. Zabalbeascoa (Eds.), *The Translation of Humour / La traducción del humor. MonTI*, 9 (pp. 49—75). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2017.9.2>.
- Dore, M. (2008). *The Audiovisual Translation of Humour: Dubbing the First Series of the TV Comedy Programme Friends into Italian* (unpublished PhD dissertation). Lancaster University, London.
- Dore, M. (2019). *Humour in Audiovisual Translation: Theories and Applications* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003001928>.
- Gambier, Y. (2008). Recent developments and challenges in audiovisual translation research. In C. Bucaria, C. Heiss & D. Chiaro (Eds.), *Between Text and Image: Updating research in screen translation* (1st ed., pp. 11—33). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.78.03gam>.
- García-Escribano, A. B. (2017). Subtitling audiovisual humour: The case of 'early Almodóvar' films during la movida in Spain (1980-1984). In J. J. Martínez Sierra & P. Zabalbeascoa (Eds.), *The Translation of Humour/ La traducción del humor. MonTI*, 9 (pp. 219—247). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2017.9.8>.

- González-Davies, M., & Scott-Tennett, C. (2005). A problem-solving and student-centred approach to the translation of cultural references. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 50(1), 160—179. <https://doi.org/10.7202/010666ar>.
- Heiss, C. (2014). Dubbing Multilingual Films: A New Challenge? *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 49(1), 208—220. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009035ar>.
- Hofstadter, D. R. (1997). *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (1st ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Jankowska, A. (2012). Audiovisual Translation in Close-up: Practical and Theoretical Approaches. In A. Serban, A. Matamala, & J. Lavour (Eds.), *Quaderns: revista de traducció*, 19 (pp. 425—429). Peter Lang.
- Kenny, D. (2009). Equivalence. In M. Baker & G. Saldanha (Eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2nd ed., pp. 96—99). Routledge.
- Kovacic, I. (1998). Language in the Media. A New Challenge for Translator Trainers. In Y. Gambier (Ed.), *Translating for the Media* (1st ed., pp. 123—129).
- Lloyd, C., & Levitan, S. (Executive Producers). (2009–2020). *Modern Family* [Television broadcast]. USA: 20th Century Fox Television.
- López González, R. C. (2017). Humorous elements and translation in animated feature films: DreamWorks (2001-2012). In J. J. Martínez Sierra & P. Zabalbeascoa (Eds.), *The Translation of Humour / La traducción del humor. MonTI*, 9 (pp. 279—305). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2017.9.10>.
- Low, P. A. (2011). Translating jokes and puns. *Perspectives*, 19(1), 59—70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2010.493219>.
- Martínez Sierra, J. J., & Zabalbeascoa, P. (2017). Humour as a Symptom of Research Trends in Translation Studies. In J. J. Martínez Sierra & P. Zabalbeascoa (Eds.), *The Translation of Humour / La traducción del humor, MonTI*, 9 (pp. 9—27). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2017.9.1>.
- Mintz, L. E. (1985). Situational Comedy. In B. G. Rose (Ed.), *TV Genres: A Handbook and Reference Guide* (pp. 105—129). Greenwood Press.
- Molina, L., & Hurtado Albir, A. (2002). Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 47(4), 498—512. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar>.
- Paolinelli, M. (2004). Nodes and Boundaries of Global Communications: Notes on the Translation and Dubbing of Audiovisuals. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 49(1), 172—181. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009032ar>.

- Pavesi, M. (2018). Reappraising verbal language in audiovisual translation. From description to application. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 1(1), 101—121. <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v1i1.47>.
- Pavis, P. (1989). Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and post-modern theatre. In H. Scolnicov & P. Holland (Eds.), *The Play Out of Context. Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture* (1st ed., pp. 25—44). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pettit, Z. (2004). The Audio-Visual Text: Subtitling and Dubbing Different Genres. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 49(1), 25—38. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009017ar>.
- Proczkowska, K. (2020). The translatability of accent humour: Canadian English in *How I Met Your Mother*. in TRAlinea. Special Issue: *The translation of Dialects in Multimedia IV*.
- Ross, A. (1998). *The Language of Humour* (1st ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203984567>.
- Spanakaki, K. (2007, April). Translating Humour for Subtitling. *Translation Journal*, 11(2). <https://translationjournal.net/journal/40humor.htm>.
- Spiteri Miggiani, G. (2019). *Dialogue Writing for Dubbing: An Insider's Perspective* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04966-9>.
- Thomas, C., & Bays, C. (Executive Producers). (2005–2014). *How I Met Your Mother* [Television broadcast]. USA: 20th Century Fox Television.
- Tortoriello, A. (2006). Funny and Educational across Cultures: Subtitling *Winnie The Pooh* into Italian. *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 6, 53—67.
- Tveit, J. (2009). Dubbing versus Subtitling: Old Battleground. In J. Díaz Cintas & G. Anderman (Eds.), *Audiovisual translation: Language Transfer on Screen* (pp. 85—97). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Valdeón, R. (2009). Topics in Audiovisual Translation. In P. Orero (Ed.), *Babel*, 55(2), (pp. 196—201). John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.55.2.10val>.
- Vandaele, J. (1999). Each Time We Laugh. Translated Humor in Screen Comedy. In J. Vandaele (Ed.), *Translation and the (Re)location of Meaning. Selected papers of the CETRA Research Seminars in Translation Studies 1994-1996* (pp. 237—272). Leuven: KUL Publications.
- Vandaele, J. (2002). Introduction (Re-)Constructing Humour: Meanings and Means. *The Translator*, 8(2), 149—172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2002.10799130>.
- Vandaele, J. (2010). Humour in Translation. In Y. Gambier & L. van Doorslaer (Eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies*, 1 (pp. 147—152). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/hts.1>.

- Veiga, M. J. (2009). The Translation of Audiovisual Humour in Just a Few Words. In J. Díaz Cintas (Ed.), *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 158—194). Multilingual Matters.
- Venuti, L. (1992). *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (1st ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429432385>.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1st ed.). London & New York: Routledge.
- Venuti, L. (2001). Strategies of Translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1st ed., pp. 240—244). London & New York: Routledge.
- Whitman-Linsen, C. (1992). *Through the Dubbing Glass*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.7.2.16rem>.
- Zabalbeascoa, P. (1993). *Developing Translation Studies to Better Account for Audiovisual Texts and Other New Forms of Text Production*. University of Lleida, PhD dissertation.