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Verbal humor and its audiovisual translation into German in contemporary Mexican series and films

Original title:

La traducción audiovisual del humor verbal al alemán.

Series y películas mexicanas contemporáneas

Abstract: This PhD dissertation studies the subtitling and dubbing of verbal humor into German in two of the most-watched Mexican films of the past decade – “No se aceptan devoluciones” (2013) and “Nosotros los Nobles” (2013) – as well as the first non-English Netflix series, “Club de Cuervos” (2015). To do so, the author examined the audiovisual material as well as dubbing scripts and English subtitles that served as pivot subtitles. The 7-hour corpus, with 163 humor segments, was analyzed by means of MAXQDA, focusing on social, cultural, and linguistic themes. Surveys and interviews with subtitlers provided additional insights into humor translation. One of the key findings is that the transfer of humor suffered more losses in subtitling than in dubbing. The elements that were affected most were linguistic and paralinguistic ones, related to the humorous use of fictional orality, register, dialect, sociolect, pronunciation, and accent. Additionally, it was found that indirect translation had a negative impact on the translation of humor because the English pivot subtitles used a more formal register than the original. Furthermore, findings indicate that the successful transfer of cultural references is mainly due to the low presence of local and regional references and the high presence of transcultural references, confirming a trend of homogenization and globalization of the comedy genre at the international level. In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by examining in more detail the effect of pivot subtitling and machine translation on the translation of comedy genre productions.



Keywords: Humor translation, audiovisual translation, pivot subtitling, Spanish-German translation

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Liliana Camacho González is a research associate at the Institute for Translation Studies and Specialized Communication at the University of Hildesheim. She studied Communication Sciences at the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac (Guadalajara, Mexico) and is a graduate of the binational Master's program in German as a Foreign Language: Intercultural Studies in German Language, Literature, and Culture at the Herder Institute of the University of Leipzig and the Universidad de Guadalajara. She earned her doctorate at the University of Hildesheim with a dissertation on "German Subtitling of Verbal Humor in Contemporary Mexican Films and Television Series." She is also a freelance translator and is a sworn interpreter and authorized translator for Spanish in the Hanover Regional Court. For the Mexican publisher Siglo XXI, she translated the fifth volume of "Kosmos" (2023) by Alexander von Humboldt.