

Humour in Translation From English Into Arabic: Subtitles of the Comedy Sitcom *Friends*

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Abstract—This study aims to investigate the translation methods and strategies used in the Arabic subtitling of English sitcoms. The study's corpus was chosen from the popular TV show *Friends*. In the U.S. English version, humorous instances are discovered, identified, and divided into three categories according to Debra and Raphaelson-West's (1989) humour taxonomy. The eight strategies for translating cultural jokes outlined by Tomaszewicz (1993) and cited in Díaz-Cintas (2009), were adopted for the framework of the study to analyse the strategies applied in rendering humorous expressions in Arabic subtitling for English sitcoms. The findings revealed that universal jokes are easily transferred into different languages; however, linguistic and cultural jokes are difficult to translate due to language and cultural differences. Based on this study's findings, formal translation was found to be the most utilized strategy in subtitling from English into Arabic. Besides formal translation, a functional strategy was also used in many cases. This study also implies that to successfully translate cultural jokes, it is preferable to develop humour in accordance with the visual setting of the film and then domesticate the translation.

Index Terms—audio-visual translation, humour translation, subtitling, Arabic, formal translation

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of films imbued with various types of humour reflects the existence of a well-established history for humorous humour in North American and British cinema. Such films range from studio comedies and Warner Bros productions to the works of directors such as Mike Celestino, David Crane, Marta Kauffman and Kevin S. Bright, to name but a few. Moreover, the rising prevalence of humour in contemporary television shows, mostly from the United States, is unlikely to have missed the observation of the seasoned television watcher. Even the most sacred institutions and beliefs of society are often insulted by outrageous humour. Typical examples include sitcoms such as *Friends* and *Family Guy*, as well as several Western movies, television programmes, and films.

Whether the popularity of a genre of comedy can be attributed to long-standing cultural norms is unknown. However, some inclinations and a more recently developed commercial trend in Anglo-American culture have aimed, for example, to revitalise traditional TV and film comedy through the shock value of taboo humour and an increased tolerance for humour in addressing sensitive issues in the form of sexual, religious and cultural jokes. This scenario begs the question of how this traditionally unsettling and perhaps more sophisticated kind of humour travels outside national borders (Bucaria, 2008), specifically to Arab countries, which have strong cultural links to the Islamic sharia. This is very sensitive as Islamic and Western cultures differ vastly in reality and, thus, do not share the same system of values. Furthermore, the rising popularity of this kind of humour in U.S. culture begs the question of whether the success of such cinema in the Arab world a matter of taste is solely or whether the way in which these audio-visual texts are adapted for Arab consumers plays a role in their success. Given the lack of academic study on taboo humour outside of literature, the topic at issue seems to be of special interest to the fields of cultural and translation studies, given what has already been discussed.

The issue of the translation of humour and audio-visual humour has been addressed with increasing interest over the last few years by researchers such as Dore (2008), Chiaro and Norrick (2009). However, the dynamics at play in the translation of comedy which contains potentially distressing or sensitive issues, as well as obvious implications for censorship and manipulation, are widely undefined. To fill some of these gaps, the current study examines how the cinematic genre of humour spreads cross-culturally through a specific mode of audio-visual translation, namely subtitling. This study specifically investigates the mechanisms involved in subtitling humour in translations from English to Arabic, as demonstrated in the English- and Arabic-language versions of the American sitcom *Friends*. The amusing content of the series was examined in terms of factors on which individual sequences are built, primarily the non-verbal and verbal components, to identify some of the fundamental processes of the taboo humour genre.

II. THE STUDY

The study is based on the premise that humour in general and as a film genre, in particular, is more common and valued in U.S. culture than in Arabic culture for a variety of complex, cultural and probably theological reasons. Using specific types of sexual and religious jokes that may be familiar and acceptable to a Western audience but not to an Arabic one is, among other things, very sensitive in this regard. Islamic and Western cultures have different cultural norms and values, and thus do not live under the same system of values (Thawabteh, 2017, p.558). This is evidenced by the relatively higher number of literary works and film comedies that feature humorous aspects that have been created by the British and American film industries. Consequently, the significance of humour as a cultural phenomenon should not cause us to overlook the probable relationship between the appreciation of taboo humour and a person's sense of humour (entertainment function).

Some concerns surrounding the way that humour is presented in audio-visual products appear to be of special importance in the fields of both intercultural and translation studies in the case of comedies. What is the best way to portray humour in audio-visual products? Is it feasible that one modality outweighs the others (for example, nonverbal humour versus verbal humour)? When this type of humour is based on verbal elements, will it be represented in the translated version? Will there be any manipulation or censorship because of the possibly unsettling nature of this type of humour in the target culture?

This study aims to investigate some of the issues highlighted in the preceding paragraph by sampling different episodes from the American sitcom *Friends* and the Arabic subtitles that were produced for this series. The analysis involved the two following parallel processes:

- a) a comparative analysis of the Arabic subtitled versions to assess whether and how examples of humour with a verbal component had been transposed into the translated text;
- b) an analysis of the English transcripts from the series to identify and quantify the different kinds of taboo humour (e.g., verbal vs. non-verbal).

Due to space constraints, the results of the second portion of the study, namely the translation of amusing cases in the sample, will be summarised in this paper. Throughout this study, each section will provide additional insight into the meaning of humour. Aspects of communication include the amount of time and effort that an audience requires to process the content. The fact that the study of humorous language is as critical as any other linguistic or cultural element must be highlighted because culture is best understood through these elements.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Subtitling

Subtitling is the process of conveying the translation of audio-visual items' source dialogues in written form, which is usually displayed as text at the bottom of a screen. Two types of subtitles exist: intralingual subtitling, which occurs within the same language and is typically used for deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals; and interlingual subtitling, which is the translation of conversations from one language to another. "Subtitling entails showing written text, usually at the bottom of the screen, offering an account of the actors' dialogue and other linguistic elements that constitute part of the visual picture (letters, graffiti and captions) or of the music (songs)", according to Díaz-Cintas (2003, p.195).

Arabic countries use subtitles frequently. Subtitling, in comparison to dubbing, has more advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of subtitling is that audiences do not miss the movies' original soundtrack. Furthermore, subtitling is significantly less expensive as it takes much less time and work to accomplish. Moreover, it may also be used as a language learning tool. However, several limitations are involved in using the subtitling strategy. First, each dialogue has a limit on the number of characters that can be displayed on the screen. Cintas and Remael (2007, p.63) suggested a line length of 37 characters. Karamitroglou (2007) stated that the average reading speed of subtitles is 150–180 words per minute, which translates to roughly 2.5–3 words per second. Because a whole subtitled sentence on-screen is typically 14–16 words long, it must stay on the screen for at least 5.5 seconds for viewers to be able to read it (p.85). Furthermore, viewers can be distracted by subtitles since they must focus on both the written text and the on-screen images. Spatiotemporal constraints, on the one hand, and the tendency for translations to be longer than the original text, on the other hand, have created numerous challenges in subtitling, which has left subtitlers with no choice but to shorten the text to fit the screen.

B. The Operational Definition of Humour Translation

One of the most noticeable elements of studying taboo humour is the absence of a univocal definition for this term, as well as the fact that attempts to define this term in literature have focused more on what humour is not rather than what it is. Humour is a fascinating component of every language because it exposes social, cultural and political realities pleasantly and subtly (Bucaria, 2008). Despite the widespread use of humour in our daily lives, establishing an exact definition of humour is difficult, and many researchers have disagreed on how to define it (Attardo, 1994, p.3).

Humour is described as anything that makes people laugh or at least smile, such as jokes, satire, or hilarious stories. The *Longman Dictionary* defines humour in two ways: "1) the ability or tendency to think things are funny, as well as hilarious things you say that show this ability; 2) the quality in anything that makes it funny and makes people laugh" (2005, p.796). Various theories describing humour have been proposed by scholars. For instance, Vandaele (2002)

argued that humour can be defined by two broad concepts: incongruity and superiority. The former is concerned with the amusing effect of departing from regular cognitive schemes, such as flouting basic formal language standards, whereas the latter is concerned with the effect of humour (p.156). In other words, according to the incongruity theory, humour occurs when there is a contradiction between what is spoken and what the addressee expects to hear, which often results in laughter. Scholars have used superiority theory to describes situations in which people laugh at others for their lack of education or other perceived flaws

Some scholars have offered a variety of classifications for comedy, including Zabalbeascoa's (2012) classification, which was proposed from the standpoint of translators. Taxonomy is used to form international jokes, national-culture-institutions jokes, national-sense-of-humour jokes, language-dependent jokes, visual jokes and complex jokes (p.251–254). Debra and Raphaelson-West (1989) proposed another taxonomy which separates jokes into three categories, which were used in the analysis of the film under consideration in this paper: 1) linguistic jokes (puns fall into this category since they make use of imprecise words that can have multiple meanings), 2) cultural jokes (this type of joke might be ethnic in nature, refer to a specific culture or understood only by people from that culture) and 3) universal jokes (these are jokes that are universally understood) (p.130). These researchers also stated that the easiest aspect of comedy translation is dealing with universal jokes (p.130), which is studied in detail later in this paper. Another challenging area in humour translation is wordplay or puns, which other scholars have extensively discussed (see Delabastita, 1996, p. 128).

C. Humour Translation Strategies

Just as culture operates largely through translational activity in other types of translations, culture also operates largely through translational activity in the subtitling of movies, not only linguistic differences. Variations in culture can be more difficult for a subtitler to deal with than differences in linguistic structure. This study investigates cultural untranslatability, particularly when dealing with humorous terms and expressions, by using actual translations between English as a *lingua franca* and a religiously oriented language like Arabic. The linguistic disparities between the languages complicate humour translation. This encompasses lexical, grammatical, expressive and wordplay differences. In a hilarious text, lexical errors, invention, ambiguity and wordplay are frequently used to create humour by breaking the expected rules. Because they express more than one meaning in the source language, these wordplays resist translation. Therefore, translators often have trouble finding an equivalent that performs the same function in the target language. Consequently, literal translations in this scenario corrupt the meaning of the translation, and even substitution results in grammatical and semantic changes. These are genuine obstacles for translators, who are continually compelled to employ their ingenuity while translating humorous texts. Scholars have recommended many ways for enhancing the translation of humour. Leppihalme (2011), for instance, presented nine strategies for translating allusions, whereas Delabastita (1996) proposed eight strategies for pun translation, and Mateo (1995) developed thirteen strategies for translating irony.

Each culture's perspectives on the world have been influenced by cultural diversity and specific traditions. They build reality in different ways, and, as a result, they have varied perspectives of the world's myriad concepts. Some elements, for example, might be regarded as amusing in one culture but offensive in another. Sexual jokes are common in U.S. culture and are widely found in situational comedies. However, in Arabic culture, such jokes not only do not reflect humour but are also regarded as taboos and are frequently omitted in translations since most of the Arab world is closely linked to the Islamic teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

Cultural jokes accurately depict specific traditions, behaviours and beliefs, which is why exact equivalents do not exist in many cases. Culture-bound jokes might include references to well-known figures from a particular culture. Furthermore, cultural jokes can be translated in a variety of ways by substituting a comparable joke in the target text, generating a new joke in the target text based on the context or eliminating the joke (Debra & Raphaelson-West, 1989, p.130). As previously stated, translators' hands are tied when it comes to making fresh jokes because viewers have access to both sounds and visuals in audio-visual translation and, more specifically, subtitling. Scholars have proposed many translation strategies for cultural jokes. For example, Tomaszewicz (1993, cited in Diaz-Cintas, 2009), provided a discussion of strategies in the operation of film subtitling. The strategies are 1) omission; 2) literal translation; 3) borrowing; 4) equivalence; 5) adaptation; 6) the replacement of the cultural term with a deictic, particularly when supported by an on-screen gesture or visual clue; 7) generalisation; and 8) explication (p. 45).

D. Functional Equivalence

Shuttleworth (1997) described functional meaning as "a term used to indicate to the type of equivalence reflected in a TT that strives to adjust the original's function to meet the specific context in and for which it was produced." Similarly (p.62), according to House (1977), a translated text "should not only match its ST in function, but also employ equivalent situation-dimensional procedures to attain that function." If TT is to be functionally equal to ST, there must be a high level of matching between ST and TT in the dimensions that are particularly important to the text in question (p.103). Due to the language and cultural disparities between ST and TT, functional equivalence seems to be a decisive strategy for translating humour in audiovisual texts.

E. The Skopos Theory

Vermeer (1978), who developed another ground-breaking approach to translation theory around the same time as Holmes, laid the foundations of ST as a field and is often credited with considerably contributing to the “cultural turn” paradigm. The skopos theory is a branch of translation theory that states that “the skopos of a translation is... the objective or purpose, established by the commission and, if required, changed by the translator” (Vermeer, 1978/2000, p.230). Translation, in Vermeer's opinion, is an action, and every action should have a purpose. Translating is a process that theoretically seeks to “optimally” convey a message to people from different cultures. It is more necessary to make oneself understood than to “faithfully duplicate another text intended for other recipients” (Vermeer, 1998, p. 43). In light of this theory, the concept of a faithful translation of a specific ST, which is a relatively popular choice among translators, has been challenged and denied. A faithful translation of a source text might lead to an unfaithful target text—that is, one that misses the point. Such a translation does not faithfully represent the source text’s meaning (from the translator's perspective), nor is it suitable to the target text’s skopos, (p. 44). The following are the basic rules of this theory:

- 1) a *translatum* (or TT) is determined by its skopos;
- 2) a TT offers information to a target culture;
- 3) a TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way;
- 4) a TT must be internally coherent;
- 5) a TT must coherently represent the ST.

These five rules are listed in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule overarching them all (Munday, 2008, p.119).

Translators use any strategy that is compatible with their situation to transfer the translation's objective and replicate the ST in the target language, as inspired by the skopos theory. In the case of humour in audio-visual translation, translators are free to use any method and make any relevant decisions, such as substituting humour with equivalent humour in a TT or even creating new humour in accordance with the context, as long as the translation transfers humorous expressions (image and sound).

IV. METHOD

A. Corpus

The popular series *Friends*, which is a North American TV comedy programme, was chosen as the corpus of this study as it is considered a masterpiece in world comedy due to its enormous success both within and without the boundaries of North American society and English-speaking countries. Hence, it is an excellent candidate for investigating the process of humour creation in audio-visual settings and, more importantly, its translation. The programme was purchased, translated and broadcast in many countries all over the world, including the Arab world. The series was created by Marta Kauffman and David Crane and comprises ten seasons in total. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) broadcast it weekly in the United States from 1994 to 2004. This study will use the first season due to its remarkable worldwide success and (some of) the academic research it has inspired.

B. Methodology

This study aims to examine translation strategies used in the Arabic subtitling of the U.S. comedy series *Friends*. Humorous instances were found and identified in English and were categorised into three groups according to Debra and Raphaelson-West's (1989) categorisations of humour. The groups are linguistic jokes, cultural jokes and universal jokes. Next, the eight strategies for the translation of cultural jokes that were proposed by Tomaszewicz (1993, cited in Diaz-Cintas, 2009) were implemented to analyse the strategies employed in rendering the humorous English expressions in Arabic subtitling. This was accomplished by comparing every English sentence with its Arabic subtitled equivalent. Several methodologies were used to analyse the series. The English-dubbed version was first written so that humorous expressions might be identified. The Arabic-subtitled version was then transcribed. Later, an Arabic subtitle comparable to the extracted English humorous expressions was written. By comparing the English sentences and Arabic subtitles, the strategies employed in translation were outlined using the study's instrument. For each strategy, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and sum were also provided.

V. FINDINGS

In the original English version of the sitcom's first season, I identified a total of 136 examples of hilarious expressions. Using Debra and Raphaelson-West's taxonomy (1989), I divided these expressions into three groups. The frequency of each category is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THE FREQUENCY OF HUMOROUS EXPRESSIONS IN THE CASE STUDY

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Linguistic jokes	41	30.1%
Cultural jokes	42	30.9%
Universal jokes	53	39%
Total	136	100%

Since this study aims to investigate the strategies used to translate English comedy sitcoms into Arabic subtitling, I divided the examples into six categories based on their translation success, which is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
THE FREQUENCY OF HUMOROUS EXPRESSIONS REGARDING THEIR SUCCESS IN TRANSLATION

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Successful transfer of linguistic jokes	29	70.7%
Unsuccessful transfer of linguistic jokes	12	29.3%
Successful transfer of cultural jokes	28	63.6%
Unsuccessful transfer of cultural jokes	14	36.4%
Successful transfer of universal jokes	51	96.2%
Unsuccessful transfer of universal jokes	2	3.8%
Total	136	100%

I also sought to shed insight on the micro-strategies that were used to translate humorous expressions from English comedy sitcoms into Arabic subtitles. As a result, I evaluated each category's translation micro-strategies, which are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
THE FREQUENCY OF MICRO-STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN EACH CATEGORY

Category		Formal (literal)	Functional (equivalence)	Omission
Successful transfer of linguistic jokes		21	7	0
Unsuccessful transfer of linguistic jokes		6	5	1
Successful transfer of cultural jokes		21	7	0
Unsuccessful transfer of cultural jokes		8	6	1
Successful transfer of universal jokes		51	0	0
Unsuccessful transfer of universal jokes		1	0	1

The analysis of some of the examples of humorous expressions in each category is illustrated below:

A. Successful Translations of Linguistic Jokes

Example 1:

Phoebe: You guys, you know what I just realised?

"Joker" is a "poker" with a "J".

Coincident?

Chandler: Hey, That's "joincident" with a "C".

فيبي: اتعرفون ماذا اكتشفت؟

إن كلمة جوكر منشقة من بوكر ولكنها تبدأ بحرف الـ "جيه"

أهي صدفة؟

تشاندلر : إنها كلمة "جدفة" ولكن بحرف الصاد

In this example, Phoebe speaks to her friends while they are playing poker. She notes the similarities between the words "joker" and "poker" and wonders if this is a matter of coincidence. Then Chandler, who is playing against her in the poker game and is on his way to losing the game, replies with irony that "joincident" is "coincident" with the letter "j". Although the intention could not be clearly defined, the translator was still able to transfer the humour. The literal translation seemed to be an appropriate choice that the translator made in this case.

Example 2:

Ross asks Phoebe a question while they are playing with a crossword puzzle: Heating device?

Phoebe: Radiator.

Ross: Five letters,

Phoebe: Rdtor.

روس : جهاز تدفئة

فيبي : المشعاع

روس : من خمسة حروف

فيبي : المشع

Ross shares his crossword puzzle with Phoebe and asks her about a word for "a heating device". Phoebe answers with the word "radiator". When Ross says that the word has to consist of five alphabets, she quickly answers "rdtor". The equivalent word for "radiator" in the Arabic language is "المشعاع". When Ross asks Phoebe for five letters, the subtitler omitted some letters to convey the same sense of humour. Thus, the creation of an equivalent meaning and its entertainment function could create the same effects between the SL and TL.

Example 3:

Chandler: I can't believe you would actually say that. I would much rather be Mr Peanut than Mr Salty.

Joey: No way! Mr Salty is a sailor, all right, he's got to be, like, the toughest snack there is.

Ross: I don't know, you don't wanna mess with corn nuts. They're craaazy!

تشاندلر : لا اصدق انك تقول ذلك

أفضل ان أكون السيد " فول سوداني " على ان أكون السيد "مالح"
جوي: مستحيل. السيد "مالح" بحار . أتفهم؟
لا بد انه اقوى وجبة خفيفة على الاطلاق
روس : لست متأكدا فأنت لا تريد ان تعبت مع جوزة الذرة انها مجنونة

Suffice to say, Ross' punchline is based on a pun that indirectly refers to Mr Peanut. Indeed, Ross makes use of the conversation's major issue to make an intended horizontally synonymous pun at the character-character level. His joke makes fun of both Mr Peanut and Joey, who likes Mr Peanut, by using the word "crazy" with the idiomatic meaning of "nut" (which can also be used to mean "crazy"). The translator translated the word literally, but the entertainment function was converted too.

Example 4:

Monica: Phoebe?

Phoebe: What?

Monica: Do you have a plan?

Phoebe: I don't even have a "pla".

مونیکا : فيبي

فيبي: ماذا

مونیکا : هل لديك خطة ؟

فيبي : ليس لدي حتى نصف خطة

While the three girls are thinking of their futures and how important having a plan in life is, Monica asks Phoebe if she has a plan, to which Phoebe humorously replies that she does not even have a "pla". In the Arabic subtitle, the idea is mostly converted functionally since the translator translated Phoebe's into "نصف خطة".

Example 5:

Jack Geller (Ross and Monica's father): I read about these women trying to have it all, and I thank God that our little Harmonica doesn't seem to have the problem.

جاك غيلر : أقرأ مقالات عن نساء يحاولن الحصول على كل شيء واشكر الله ان صغيرتنا هارمونیکا لا تواجه هذه المشكلة

In this example, where Ross and Monica's parents are having dinner with them, Jack Geller remarks about the ambitions of young women in the US and states that he is glad that his "little Harmonica" (Monica) does not have the same problem. The intended meaning is that Monica is not ambitious at all. The translated text is literal, and the effect is mostly the same.

B. Unsuccessful Translations of Linguistic Jokes

Example :6

Chandler: It doesn't matter. I just don't want to be one of those guys that's in his office until twelve o'clock at night worrying about the WENUS. [Everyone looks at him in confusion.]

Rachel: ... the WENUS?

Chandler: Weekly Estimated Net Usage Systems. A processing term.

Rachel [sarcastic]: Oh. That WENUS.

تشاندر : هذا لا يهم .انا فقط لا اريد ان أكون مثل هؤلاء الشبان الذيب يبقون في مكاتبهم حتى منتصف الليل يقلقون على ال"م.ض.ش"

رايشتل : ال "م.ض.ش"

تشاندر : ميزانية ضرائب الشركة. إنه مصطلح نستخدمه في المعلوماتية.

رايشتل : تقصد ال "م.ض.ش".

Chandler uses a term in the ST that contains what could be considered a vertically paronymous pun based on the made-up acronym "WENUS" and the word "penis". The scriptwriters employed the Latin suffix "-us" to make the fictional term appear more formal and scientific. However, it does not affect pronunciation because the vowels in the last syllable of "WENUS" and "penis" are both pronounced as /ə/. Because it is developed over several turns, this pun, like the last one, can be considered interactive and dynamic. Furthermore, it is unintended on a character-by-character basis. Chandler demonstrates his disappointment in his first scene by assuming his friends know what "WENUS" means. However, everybody seems confused, and after Rachel's interrogative turn, Chandler explains that the word "WENUS" is an acronym that stands for a processing term his company uses. The translator tried to render the meaning directly regardless of the puns in the example, so they converted "WENUS" into "م.ض.ش", which has no intended meaning in the Arabic language.

Example :7

Ross to Chandler: That's one way to resolve this. Since you saw her boobies, I think you gonna have to show her your pee-pee.

Chandler: You know, I don't see that happening.

Rachel: Come on, he's right, tit for tat.

Chandler: I'm not showing you my tat.

روس : بما إنك رأيت نهديها

أعتقد ان عليك ان تريها عضوك

تشاندر : أعلم لا أعتقد ان هذا سيحدث

ريتشل: هيا. معه حق لا تحصل على شيء الا مقابل شيء اخر

تشاندلر : حسنا لا أريك الشيء الآخر

In this example, Ross is talking to Chandler, saying that he must show Rachel his penis after seeing her breasts. This example features two linguistic jokes (“boobies” and “pee-pee”). Chandler replies, “I’m not showing you my tat”, when Rachel says, “tit for tat”. The translator was not only unsuccessful in translating both linguistic jokes into the TT but also translated them literally without any sense of humour. Thus, Arab viewers will likely not understand this joke.

Example :

All: Hey, Joey. Hi. Hey, buddy.

Monica: Hey, Joey, what would you do if you were omnipotent?

Joey: Probably kill myself!

Monica: Excuse me?

Joey: Hey, if Little Joey's dead, then I got no reason to live!

Ross: Joey, uh—OMnipotent.

Joey: You are? Ross, I'm sorry.

مونیکا : جوي ماذا ستفعل اذا كنت كلي الحركة

جوي : ربما اقتل نفسي

مونیکا: عذرا

جوي : اذا أصبحت عاجزا جنسيا لا يوجد لدي سبب لأعيشه

روس : اوه جوي . كلي القدرة

جوي : انت كذلك ؟

The conversational exchange in the English ST takes full advantage of the phonetic resemblance between “omnipotent”, “impotent” and “I'm impotent” in connected speech, which results in a vertical homophonous pun. Joey initially misinterprets Monica's statement, mistaking “omnipotent” for “impotent”. He goes on to say that his existence is dependent on his sexual activity. When Ross realises Joey's mistake, he enunciates the word “omnipotent” more precisely to clear up the misunderstanding. The translator attempted to figure this out for the TT, but there is no funny equivalent pun related to this in Arabic.

Example :9

Phoebe: The ugly naked guy... is having Thanksgiving dinner with Ugly Naked Gal.

فبيبي: الرجل القبيح العاري يحتفل بعيد الشكر مع امرأة قبيحة عارية

In this example, when the friends are gathered by Monica's apartment window, Phoebe points out the neighbour across the street, the ugly naked guy, having dinner with a woman. She funnily uses the term “gal” rather than “girl” or “woman” to use the same intonation as “guy”. However, the translator translated this dialogue formally and lost the original effect.

C. Successful Translations of Cultural Jokes

Example:10

Rachel: I realised how much Barry looks like Mr Potato.

عندها اكتشفت وجه الشبه الكبيرين بين باري والسيد رأس البطاطا

Rachel explains why she broke up with Barry and states that he resembles a popular children's toy. The funny part is Barry's resemblance to Mr Potato, which is also a programme over there. Although Arab viewers may be unfamiliar with this toy, the translation is funny in the TT.

Example :11

Chandler: Can I just say one thing?

Rachel: What, what?

Chandler: That's a relatively open weave and can still see your nippular area...

Rachel: Ugh!

تشاندلر : هل لي أقول شيئا واحدا فقط؟

ريتشيل : ماذا ماذا ؟

تشاندلر : ان خياطة هذا النسيج ليست متماسكة وما زلت استطيع رؤية منطقة حلمات الثديين.

Chandler accidentally sees Rachel in a bath towel, and Rachel becomes furious because of this. This cultural joke does not relate to the matter of privacy in the target culture as it is conservatively and religiously linked primarily with Islam (violating another's privacy is considered taboo in Islamic society). Despite that, the translator rendered the message and the effects literally.

D. Unsuccessful Translations of Cultural Jokes

Example 12

Chandler: I think for us... kissing is pretty much... like an opening act... I mean it's [a] stand-up comedian you have to sit through before Pink Floyd comes out.

التقبيل اشبه بالافتتاح. اتقهمين

مثل الممثل الهزلي الذي يجب ان تشاهده قبل ان يظهر فريق بينك فلويد على المسرح

The friends are sitting in Central Perk and comparing what women and men like in relationships. The girls say that kissing is very important and is as important as any part of the relationship. Chandler compares kissing to waiting

through an opening act for the English band Pink Floyd. The translator translated this dialogue literally even though some Arab viewers might be unfamiliar with Pink Floyd.

Example 13

Phoebe: See. He gave up something, but then he got those magic beans, and then he woke up and there was this big plant... outside of his window full of possibilities and stuff.

Rachel: I've got the magic beans.

فيبي : هناك رجل بم يحصل على شيء وانتهى به الامر بحصوله على الفاصوليا السحرية وعندما استيقظ وجد هناك شجرة كبيرة ملئية بالامنيات والاشياء

ريشيل : لقد حصلت على الفاصوليا السحرية

In this example, Rachel is losing hope in her future, so Phoebe tells her the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* to inspire her. Afterwards, Rachel receives a call from Paolo and states that she has got the magic beans. In Arabic culture, there are no stories about magic beans, and Arab viewers will likely be unfamiliar with this expression. However, there is an equivalent of the magic beans in the target culture: "مصباح علاء الدين" or *misbah Alaaaldien (Aladdin and the Magic Lamp)*.

Example 14

Chandler: How's going on in financial services?

Lol: It's like Mardi Gras, without paper maché heads.

تشاندلر : كيف تجري الأمور في قسم الخدمات المالية

وكأنه ثلاثاء المدفع من دون رؤوس الأوراق المعجزة

Loll (an employee who works in the same company as Chandler) uses a cultural expression when Chandler asks him about financial services. He compares working in financial services to Mardi Gras, which is a carnival celebration that begins on a Tuesday or after the Christian feast of Epiphany and culminates the day before Ash Wednesday. The translator translated this line literally into "الثلاثاء المدفع من دون رؤوس الأوراق المعجزة" without any consideration for Arab viewers. Thus, the subtitled version is unclear in the context of the target culture and to the target audience.

Example 15

Rachel: I mean, God, by my sixth date with Paolo, I mean, he had already named both my breasts.

ريتشيل: أعني في موعدا السادس كان باولو قد اطلع اسما على مفاتي.

In this scenario, Rachel explains that Paolo had named both of her breasts by their sixth date. The term "breast" is taboo in Arabic culture and language. Therefore, its use might shock the audience and be unacceptable if translated exactly. However, if the word renders its functionality, then the entertainment function will be lost. In this instance, the translator kept the target culture and audience in mind and chose the term "مفاتي", which is far from the intended meaning.

Example 16

Monica to Chandler: Don't you have to pee?

Chandler: That's why I'm dancing.

مونيك: الا تريد أن تقضي حاجتك؟

تشاندلر: لهذا السبب انا ارقص

Chandler is waiting for a call and needs to use the restroom, but he could not go in case his call comes in, so he starts to dance around. The term "to pee" is taboo, much like the language used in Example 15, so the translator rendered it generally as "تقضي حاجتك". Even the expression "قضاء الحاجة" in the Arabic language has two meanings: "to pee" or "to poop". This might create ambiguity for the target viewers, so the humorous situation might not be conveyed.

Example 17

Joey: So back to your place—uh-uh... You think maybe... heh-heh?

Ross: Ahem, well, I don't know "heh-heh". I'm hoping "heh-heh".

إذا عندما تعود الى منزلك هل تفكر ربما ...

لا اعرف. أمل ذلك

Joey wants to know if Ross will have sex with the girls he was hanging out with, and he uses "heh-heh" and "uh-uh" to allude to this. The translator omitted these key words, so the translated subtitles likely do not have the same impact as the original dialogue.

E. Successful Translations of Universal Jokes in English Subtitling of the Case Study

Example 18

Monica and her friends talk about their roommates.

Joey, thinking he is going to be Monica's roommate: This guy says "hello", I want to kill myself.

مرحبا . ارجب بقتل نفسي

In this situation, Joey's statement is unexpected and somewhat illogical. Therefore, the translator subtitled it formally to convey the same impact that the original dialogue has.

Example 19

Joey to Ross: And you never knew she was a lesbian?

Chandler: Sometimes, I wish I was a lesbian.

Did I say that out loud?

جوي: أتمنى تعرف قط انها مثلية
تشاندرلر: أحيانا أتمنى لو كنت مثلية
هل قلت ذلك بصوت عال

The friends are in Central Perk, talking about Ross' ex-wife being a lesbian, and Chandler absently says that he sometimes wishes he could be one too. Once he realises what he has said, he expresses his shock and embarrassment. The message is conveyed in the Arabic subtitles as well.

Example 20

Phoebe: You know, it is even worse when you have twins.

Rachel: You are a twin?

Phoebe: Oh, yeah, we don't speak.

She's like this high-powered and driven career type.

Chandler: What does she do?

Phoebe: She's a waitress.

فيبي: الأمر أسوأ عندما تكونين توأماً.

ريشيل: انتي توأم.

فيبي: نعم لا نكلم بعضنا بعضاً

فهي امرأة ذات سلطة وهي تحب عملها كثيراً

تشاندرلر: ما هو عملها؟

فيبي: انها نادلة.

In the ST, Phoebe creates a misunderstanding when she says that her twin is a high-powered and driven career type. Chandler asks what Phoebe's twin does for work, implying that he assumes she must be someone powerful, such as a senator. However, Phoebe states that her twin is a waitress, which is both unexpected and hilarious.

F. Unsuccessful Translations of Universal Jokes

Example 21

Rachel: I am gonna look like a big marshmallow Peep.

سأبدو كقطعة كبيرة من حلوى الخبثي

When Rachel and Ross go to the laundry room, Rachel does her laundry by herself for the first time. However, she forgets to separate one of her colourful pieces of clothing from the white ones, so all her clothing turns pink. She is furious and says that she will look like a marshmallow if she wears any of the dyed clothing. "Marshmallow" is not a familiar term in the Arabic language, so this universal joke was not successfully translated.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the strategies utilised in subtitling English comedy films into Arabic. A brief overview of audio-visual translation and its categories was presented to undertake the investigation. Scholars' suggestions for the definition of humour, classifications and translation strategies were also provided. The following are the key tools used in this study to create humour in an English sitcom:

1) Irony involves something that is completely different from reality; Irony can be used to make fun of or tease someone else (see Example 6).

2) Puns involve wordplay that suggests two or more meanings or the meaning of another word that sounds similar (see Example 3).

3) Sexual references are often used to create humour (see Examples 7, 8, 11 and 15).

4) Wordplay, which is used to create humour, is often featured in *Friends* (see Examples 1 and 2).

5) Exaggeration refers to the way that a speaker overstates the features, defects or strangeness of someone or something else. For instance, when Joey asks Chandler to help him out, Chandler informs Joey that he owes him 17 million dollars.

6) Ice-breaking involves saying something that is irrelevant to the current context to avoid silence. For example, when the friends are sitting in Central Perk and have nothing to say, Phoebe says to her friends, "Can you see me operating a drill press?"

According to my findings, universal jokes can be simply translated into other languages. Due to the differences between the two languages and cultures, linguistic and cultural jokes resist translation. The most widely utilised strategies in subtitling comedy sitcoms from English to Arabic are functional and formal translation. Out of the 136 humorous expressions that I extracted from the case study, I found that a formal translation strategy was used in 108 items, a functional strategy was used in a total of 25 items, and an omission strategy was utilised in only 3 items.

The key principle behind the high usage of formal translation strategies (almost 80%) in this case study is twofold: first, the frequent references to ideological, linguistic and cultural elements made it difficult to convey humour in many cases; second, the translators' recklessness, whether intentional or unintentional, may have complicated the translation process. The use of idioms, colloquial terms, wordplay and proverbs are some practical and useful strategies that can be used to translate humour. Except for a few cases, no examples of these could be found in the *Friends* subtitles. In most circumstances, the Arab translators adopted formal translation, which was simplest but, at some points, detracted from

the humour of an episode. As a result of viewers' unfamiliarity with the source culture, cultural differences presented a major challenge in transferring humour. Domesticating the target language by inventing new hilarious terms based on the context (image and sound) would be the best strategy to use in such cases.

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