

A Discourse Analysis of the Translation of Humor From English to Arabic in American Sitcoms: A Case Study of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*

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Abstract—This paper describes the translatability of humor from English into Arabic. The study aims to evaluate the translation of verbally expressed humor—specifically universal, cultural, and linguistic humor—from English into Arabic in subtitling, with a particular focus on sitcoms, which serve as a rich source of humor. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, utilizing a comparative analysis of the script of *Halloween* (Season 1, Episode 6) from the American sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* (ST) and its Arabic subtitle translation (TT). Translation quality is assessed using House's (1997) model of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA). The analysis consists of three parts. First, it examines the ST and TT in terms of register and genre to identify covert errors. Second, it analyzes the translation of humor to identify overt errors. Third, it explores the application of covert and overt translation strategies. The findings reveal significant mismatches in the Arabic subtitle translation at the levels of field, tenor, and mode. These mismatches include lexical issues, such as translating informal terms into formal equivalents; cultural discrepancies, such as the literal translation of culture-specific references; and linguistic issues, such as the loss of humor and character dynamics. Moreover, the study identifies 22 overt errors, categorized as Not Translated, Slight Change in Meaning, Significant Change in Meaning, and Creative Translation. The results indicate that translators predominantly employed overt translation when rendering cultural and linguistic humor while covert translation was primarily used for universal humor. These findings have pedagogical implications for professional Arab subtitlers and translation students.

Index Terms—Audiovisual translation, humour translation, translation quality assessment, Arabic, meaning

I. INTRODUCTION

Television and movies are among the most popular forms of entertainment worldwide (Brown, 2018). Audiovisual translation (AVT) has made foreign films, series, and documentaries more accessible, enabling audiences to connect with these forms of media (Al-Abbas & Haider, 2021). AVT, which includes dubbing, voice-over, and subtitling (Pedersen, 2011), has witnessed significant advancements, particularly in subtitling (Munday, 2016). This field has grown rapidly, driven by digitalization and technological advancements. Although AVT research began in 1932 (Franco & Orero, 2005), it was not until the 1980s that it was integrated into Translation Studies as a distinct area of inquiry (Orero, 2009).

AVT has become a pivotal translational activity, reaching vast audiences through television and various platforms. It now surpasses other forms of translation in exposure. It facilitates cross-cultural transmission of diverse media, including films, documentaries, and news (Cintas, 2004). The rise of AVT as a scholarly field is attributed to the growing production of audiovisual content and the proliferation of social media and streaming platforms (Zanotti, 2022).

AVT methods, primarily subtitling and dubbing, enhance media accessibility for diverse audiences. Dubbing replaces the original soundtrack with one in the target language (Cintas, 2009), while subtitling presents written translations synchronized with the original dialogue (Gottlieb, 2004). In the Arab world, subtitling is a vital and widely used form of AVT (Slamia, 2015). However, it poses technical, cultural, and linguistic challenges, necessitating thorough quality assessments (Khalaf, 2016; Al-Shareef & Ashuja'a, 2024).

One prominent cultural challenge in AVT is humor, which demands careful handling due to its deep roots in cultural and linguistic contexts (Asimakoulas, 2004). Translating humor in subtitles is especially complex because it involves additional challenges beyond those in written text translation (Alharthi, 2016). Conveying meaning accurately in

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interlinguistic and intercultural exchanges remains a key challenge in subtitling (Rejeibi, 2023).

AVT research has addressed topics such as humor, taboo words, and cultural references, primarily in European countries (Valdeón, 2022). These studies often focus on languages with similar cultural contexts. However, translating between Arabic and English presents unique challenges due to substantial cultural differences and the Arab world's limited familiarity with English culture further complicates the translation process. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What mismatches may occur in the register aspects?
2. How do translators apply covert and overt translation strategies in humor subtitling?

Research on translating or subtitling humor from English to Arabic remains limited (Rejeibi, 2023; Ajabbad, 2019). Most existing studies focus on challenges and strategies for translating verbally expressed humor (VEH). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, few have explored translation quality assessment (TQA) of VEH using discourse and register approaches in the subtitling domain. Discourse analysis examines sentences and discourse within broader social and cultural contexts. By analyzing metafunctions and register variables—field, tenor, and mode—translators can achieve greater alignment between source and target texts. Comparative analysis ensures the translation meets the target audience's needs, thereby improving quality (Ignacio et al., 2022).

This study addresses the gap in Arabic humor subtitling research by evaluating the quality of Arabic subtitles for VEH in Brooklyn Nine-Nine (Season 1, Episode 6), a humor-rich episode. It employs House's (1997) revised TQA model, which compares Arabic subtitles with the original English script. House's model examines two key functions: the ideational function, which relates to content and meaning, and the interpersonal function, which addresses tone, style, and audience engagement. Since humor relies on both its ideational content and interpersonal delivery, this model provides a comprehensive framework for subtitling analysis.

The findings of this study hold significant value for professional Arab subtitlers and translation students. By applying House's model, they can gain a deeper understanding of verbal humor's broader context and acquire systematic tools for evaluating and producing high-quality Arabic translations of VEH.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous scholars (e.g., Attardo, 2002; Delabastita, 2004; Asimakoulas, 2004; Zabalbeascoa, 2005; Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007; Vandaele, 2010) have investigated the complexities of translating and subtitling humor. Key challenges include cultural differences, linguistic disparities, and achieving equivalent humorous effects in the target text (Alharthi, 2016). However, most research focuses on subtitling between European languages with similar cultural contexts (Ajabbad, 2019), limiting its applicability to subtitling between linguistically and culturally distant languages, such as Arabic and English. The lack of widely shared cultural references in Arabic, unlike in European languages, adds further challenges to the translation process (Alharthi, 2016).

Studies on subtitling humor from English to Arabic remain limited (Rejeibi, 2023; Ajabbad, 2019). Among the notable contributions:

Alnusairat and Jaganathan (2022) analyzed humor translation strategies in *Friends*. They found universal jokes easily transferable, whereas linguistic and cultural jokes posed significant challenges. Formal translation was the most commonly employed strategy, followed by functional translation when direct equivalence was unachievable. The study emphasized that translating cultural jokes required aligning humor with the visual setting and domesticating content for the target audience.

Debbas and Haider (2020) examined cultural constraints in subtitling *Family Guy* into Arabic, categorizing them into three main areas: religious remarks, humor involving proper nouns, and taboo content. For religious remarks, strategies included scene deletion, word omission, and justified omissions. Humor was handled by retaining the original text, either as is, with added guidance, or with detailed explanations. Taboo content was addressed through euphemistic expressions and word omission. The study emphasized the strong influence of cultural and ideological values on translation decisions.

Yahiaoui et al. (2020) examined the dubbing and subtitling of satire in *The Simpsons*. Their analysis revealed that subtitling predominantly employed literal translation strategies (79%), whereas dubbing utilized equivalent-effect strategies (58%), which proved more effective in preserving satirical elements. Dubbing's superior cultural adaptation was attributed to its use of Egyptian vernacular Arabic and its ability to fully replace the original audio track, whereas subtitling relied on Modern Standard Arabic.

A. House's (1997) Translation Quality Assessment Model

Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model was first introduced in 1977 and later revised in 1997 to address criticisms and integrate additional theoretical perspectives (Munday et al., 2022). The revised model is grounded in discourse analysis and draws from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, the Prague School, speech act theory, pragmatics, and other frameworks (House, 2015). House (2015) introduced a model that focuses on contextual and textual analysis, emphasizing the connection between linguistic features and communicative functions. In her recent book, House (2015) expands the model incorporates additional elements, such as contrastive pragmatics, cultural filtering, cognitive aspects, and corpus studies, while maintaining its foundation in equivalence theory.

A key feature of House's 1997 model is its incorporation of Halliday's register analysis, comprising three components: Field, Tenor, and Mode. Field refers to the topic or subject matter of the text, focusing on its content and the specificity of lexical choices. It differentiates between specialized, general, and popular language, depending on the audience and purpose (House, 2015). Tenor examines the relationship between the addresser (writer or speaker) and the addressee (reader or listener), considering factors such as social power, social distance, and emotional charge. This component also accounts for the producer's temporal, geographic, and social background, as well as their stance toward the content. Additionally, it captures the text's style, ranging from formal to informal, reflecting the social attitude conveyed (House, 2015). Mode relates to the channel of communication, distinguishing between spoken and written texts, which may be "simple" (e.g., written to be read) or "complex" (e.g., written to be spoken as if not written). It also evaluates the degree of participation between writer and reader, ranging from monologic to interactive texts (House, 2015).

Complementing Register, Genre connects the text to its macro-context, encompassing the broader cultural and linguistic framework within which it is embedded (House, 2015). It identifies the text's role and function within the larger social and cultural community, such as categorizing it as a speech, academic article, news report, or novel. Genre reflects the shared conventions, norms, and expectations of the linguistic and cultural community, shaping the form and content of the text.

In Translation Quality Assessment (TQA), profiles of both the source text (ST) and target text (TT) are created as a benchmark for measuring translation quality. These profiles allow for the comparison of the function of both texts, ensuring that the TT matches the communicative purpose of the ST. Any mismatch along the dimensions of these profiles is considered an error. According to House (1997), errors are categorized into two types: covert errors, which occur when there is a subtle mismatch between the ST and TT that may not be immediately noticeable but still affects the quality of the translation, and overt errors, which are more apparent and result from a mismatch in the denotative meaning of elements in the ST and TT or from divergence from the target language's grammatical or stylistic norms. These categories help to identify where a translation fails to preserve the meaning or function of the original text, whether in subtle ways or through more obvious mistakes. Moreover, according to Munday, Pinto, and Blakesley (2022), House's model follows a systematic analytical process. It begins with creating a profile of the source text's Register, followed by examining how Genre is expressed through the Register components. These analyses combine to establish the functional statement of the source text, encompassing both its ideational content (informational meaning) and interpersonal function (the sender-receiver relationship). The same analytical procedure is then applied to the translated text. A comparative analysis of the ST and TT profiles is conducted to identify discrepancies or errors, categorized into two main types:

1. Covert errors: These involve mismatches in Register and Genre dimensions.
2. Overt errors: These include incorrect meaning transfers from the ST and violations of the target language's grammatical or stylistic rules.

Based on this comprehensive analysis, a quality assessment statement is formulated. Finally, the translation is categorized as either overt or covert, reflecting the translator's approach.

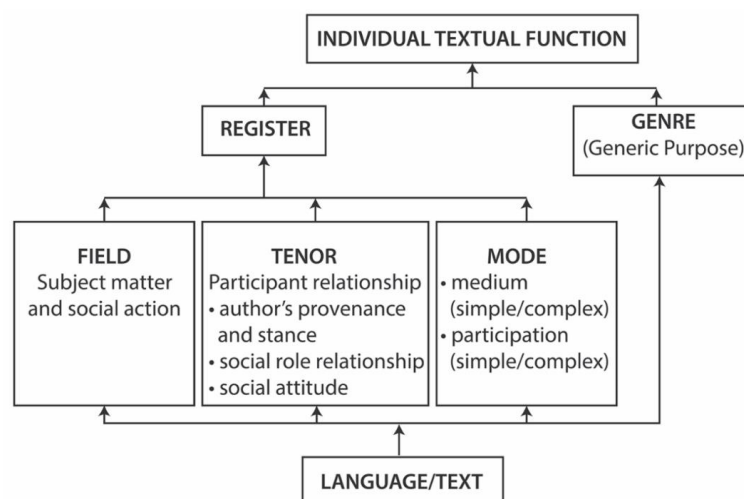


Figure 1. A Scheme for Analyzing and Comparing Original and Translated Text (House, 2015)

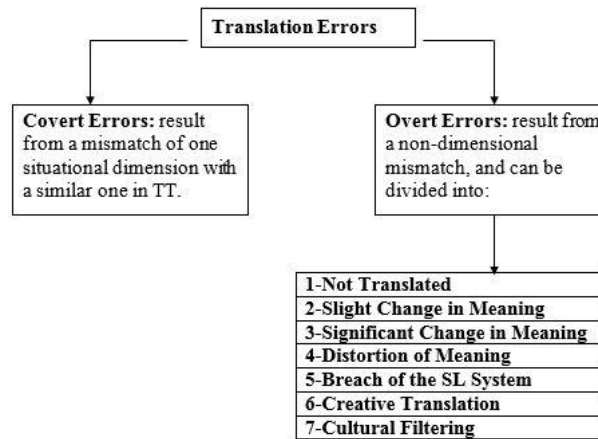


Figure 2. Covert and Overt Errors (Esmail & Jaza'ei, 2015)

B. Overt Translation and Covert Translation

House (1977) introduced a fundamental classification of translation into two main types: overt and covert. “An overt translation is one in which the addressees of the translation text are quite ‘overtly’ not directly addressed” (House, 2015, p. 54). In other words, it is a type of translation where the audience is clearly aware that the text is a translation and not an original work. It does not attempt to address the target audience directly or adapt fully to their cultural context. Instead, it retains the source text’s cultural and linguistic identity, emphasizing its origin and making the translated nature explicit.

In contrast, a covert translation “is a translation which enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture” (House, 1977, p. 66). It is a translation that feels so natural in the target culture that it is perceived as an original text rather than a translation. This type of translation eliminates markers of foreignness, enabling the text to blend seamlessly with the target culture’s language and norms. The purpose of a covert translation is “to reproduce in the target text the function the original has in its frame and discourse world” (House, 2015, p. 67). Achieving this requires more than word-for-word translation; the text must be adapted to fulfill the same function, convey the same meaning, and produce the same effect in the target culture as in the source culture. In essence, covert translation aims to make the text feel as though it were originally created in the target language and culture, preserving its intended effect.

To achieve this, the translator must address cultural differences by applying what House (2015) describes as a “cultural filter.” This filter helps bridge the gap between the source and target texts by adapting the content to align with the target audience’s norms and expectations. By interpreting the source text from the perspective of the target culture (House, 2015), the translator ensures that the translation is both natural and culturally appropriate while preserving its original meaning and purpose.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze humor in the episode script (ST) and its Arabic translation (TT). Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to translation studies, as they allow for the exploration of linguistic and cultural nuances that are not easily quantified. Bryman (2008a) emphasizes that qualitative research prioritizes words over numbers, while Bricki and Green (2007) highlight its ability to generate textual data and provide insights into social phenomena—both of which are crucial for analyzing humor, a complex social and linguistic phenomenon. Hammersley (2013) further underscores the effectiveness of qualitative methods in examining unstructured data, such as textual excerpts and subtitles. This approach facilitates a nuanced analysis of register, genre, and cultural context, enabling the identification of errors and strategies employed in humor translation. By adopting this methodology, the study offers a comprehensive and contextually informed examination of humor subtitling in Brooklyn Nine-Nine.

B. Data Collection

Data for this study were collected by downloading relevant materials. According to Saldanha and O’Brien (2013), “one might wish to randomly select sentences from a large corpus of text, or it may be more appropriate to select coherent passages of text, or text that demonstrates specific linguistic features” (p. 105). Therefore, the researchers selected specific linguistic features, namely humor. The original episode was viewed on Netflix, and its script was downloaded from Brooklyn Nine-Nine Fandom (https://brooklyn99.fandom.com/wiki/Halloween_Transcripts). The corresponding Arabic subtitles were retrieved from Netflix (<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80004166?trackId=14170286>), selected for its widespread popularity. To analyze

verbally expressed humor, the episode was watched with careful attention to the humorous elements in the source text (ST) and their translations in the target text (TT). The script served as both a reference and a comprehension aid for dialogue analysis, while the downloaded materials were cross-referenced with Netflix subtitles to ensure accuracy.

C. Data Sampling

Sixty jokes were selected from the dataset based on their translation challenges and representation of the identified humor categories. These samples ranged from single words to phrases, chunks of text, or fixed expressions. The jokes were classified according to Schmitz's (2002) typology: Universal Humor, Cultural Humor, and Linguistic Humor.

D. Methods for Analysis

After identifying and classifying the humor in the English script, corresponding translations in the subtitles were located using two methods. First, the timestamps in the subtitle file were utilized to quickly find translations when the timing of a joke was known. Second, when timestamps were insufficient, the anticipated translation of the joke was manually entered into the "Find" function in Microsoft Word to search the subtitle text for a match. Both methods facilitated the identification and analysis of the translations effectively.

E. Study Corpus

House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model is applied to the script of 'Halloween' (Season 1, Episode 6) of the American sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* which is available on Netflix. The full English script and its Arabic subtitle translation are analyzed to identify covert errors. Furthermore, verbally expressed humor in the English script and its Arabic subtitle translation will be examined to identify overt errors and analyze how both covert and overt translation strategies are employed by translators in rendering verbally expressed humor.

F. Procedures

1. The first step involves analyzing the source text (episode script) and viewing the episode video to identify and document instances of verbally expressed humor, with a specific focus on universal, cultural, and linguistic humor.
2. Next, the target text (Arabic subtitle translation) is analyzed to identify instances of translated verbally expressed humor.
3. A profile of the source text register is created, followed by an analysis of how genre is conveyed through the components of the register.
4. The functional statement of the source text is established, encompassing both its ideational content (informational meaning) and its interpersonal function (the relationship between sender and receiver).
5. The same analytical procedures (Steps 3 and 4) are subsequently applied to the translated text.
6. A comparative analysis of the source text (ST) and target text (TT) profiles is conducted to evaluate the quality of the translation and to identify discrepancies or errors, which are categorized into two primary types: covert errors and overt errors.
7. Finally, the translation is classified as either overt or covert based on the approach adopted by the translator.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Covert Errors

(a). Source Text Profile:

Field

The "Halloween" episode takes place in the 99th precinct on Halloween night. Jake bets Captain Holt that he can steal his Medal of Valor by midnight, leading to a series of escalating pranks and schemes. Meanwhile, Amy and Charles handle a drug case, with Amy struggling with her dislike of Halloween, while Terry tries to uncover Rosa's secret, adding intrigue. The humor stems from slapstick, witty dialogue, and situational comedy, emphasizing character quirks. The language mixes Halloween themes and police jargon, creating humorous contrasts, while the informal tone boosts relatability. By intertwining American Halloween traditions with police work, the episode juxtaposes professional seriousness with holiday absurdity, creating a distinctive comedic experience.

Tenor

Author's temporal, geographical and social provenance:

The text demonstrates characteristics of contemporary, standard American English, featuring informal dialogue typical of modern U.S. sitcoms.

Author's Personal (Emotional and Intellectual) Stance:

The characters and the precinct are portrayed in a humorous and playful manner during Halloween. Relationships and dynamics are portrayed through competitive, comedic scenarios. The writer highlights the precinct's intricate operations by exploring complex relationships and workplace interactions, skillfully integrating diverse comedic elements to enhance the portrayal.

Social Role Relationships:

The relationship between the addresser and addressees is symmetrical. The writer uses humor to depict the characters and precinct during Halloween in a playful, engaging way, ensuring the audience easily understands and enjoys the humorous portrayal of their interactions.

Social Attitude:

The text adopts a mainly informal social attitude, evident in its casual expressions and colloquial dialogue. Characters use everyday language, slang, and pop culture references, reinforcing this tone. However, formal elements occasionally surface, particularly in Holt's speech, generating humorous contrasts with the prevailing informality.

Mode

Medium:

The medium of the text is complex, as it is written to be spoken by the characters of the TV series in a manner that feels unwritten. It simulates the natural and spontaneous language typical of daily workplace interactions and social situations, ensuring it sounds authentic when spoken aloud.

Participation:

Participation is complex, primarily consisting of interwoven dialogues among multiple characters, with minimal use of narrative flashbacks.

Genre

This text belongs to the situational comedy genre, specifically the subgenre of workplace comedy.

Statement of Function

The Halloween episode includes both ideational and interpersonal functions. Its ideational function explores workplace dynamics and the complex authority-subordinate relationships within a police precinct on Halloween, using a strategic game involving competition, teamwork, and trust. This is achieved through structured plot points, coherent themes, and character interactions that reflect hierarchical and relational complexities.

Although the ideational function is clearly expressed throughout the text, it is much less prominent than the interpersonal function. On Field, the story humorously explores workplace relationships, momentarily setting aside professional hierarchies for comedic effect. It also touches on themes of personal growth and teamwork through schemes and collaboration. On Tenor, the writer emphasizes the interpersonal function through banter, recurring jokes, and playful subversions of authority, reflecting an intention for the audience to engage with character dynamics rather than focus on police work. The use of humor and informal dialogue enhances accessibility and reinforces the interpersonal dimension. On Mode, the text is specifically written to be spoken by the characters, as if not originally written, and is characterized by engaging, context-dependent, and concrete language typical of sitcoms. It aims to be clear, relatable, and accessible, marked by informality and spontaneous conversational flow. This interaction connects to the interpersonal dimension, evoking emotional responses from the audience. Sitcoms as a genre rely heavily on the interpersonal component, emphasizing character relationships and interactions to generate humor, which remains central to their appeal. These shows often center on conflicts between characters within consistent settings, such as homes, workplaces, or communities, leading to humorous situations. The resolution of these conflicts provides the narrative structure for each episode, culminating in a satisfying conclusion. This effect is further reinforced by the workplace setting in the "Halloween" episode, which enables the writer to transform serious contexts—such as police work—into a comedic backdrop for character relationships, thereby enhancing both humor and entertainment value.

(b). *Target Text Profile:*

Field

The subject matter of the target text is the situational comedy episode "Halloween" from Brooklyn Nine-Nine. The episode is set in the 99th precinct during Halloween and revolves around a humorous competition between Jake Peralta and Captain Holt. Parallel storylines include Amy and Charles working on a drug case while Amy deals with her dislike of Halloween, and Terry uncovering Rosa's secret. The language uniquely blends Halloween-themed terminology with police jargon. However, Halloween costumes featuring cultural references, Halloween-specific terms, and police jargon were either left untranslated or rendered literally, often in a formal tone that diminishes the original's playful or culturally nuanced effect.

Tenor

Author's temporal, geographical and social provenance:

The Arabic text reflects characteristics of Modern Standard Arabic, with a formal tone that contrasts with the informal dialogue typical of the original English sitcom.

Author's Personal (Emotional and Intellectual) Stance:

The Arabic text adopts a neutral and formal stance, adhering more closely to the linguistic and cultural conventions of Modern Standard Arabic, in contrast to the playful and emotionally charged tone of the original. The humor, which is rooted in the informal and spontaneous interactions between the characters, is often diminished—and at times entirely lost—when casual banter is formalized and character-specific speech patterns are standardized.

Social Role Relationships:

The social role relationship between the addresser (the translator) and the addressees (the audience) in the Arabic translation is asymmetrical. The translator employed a strategy that retains references to U.S. culture, which ultimately diminishes the humorous effect in the translation. These references are integral to the original text, acting as cohesive

devices that generate humor and foster a sense of connection and shared understanding between the writer and the audience. This connection, often referred to as "complicity," establishes a social relationship based on equality. However, as observed in the target text, the translators' strategy diminishes this complicity, preventing the target audience from fully accessing the humor due to a lack of cultural familiarity.

Social Attitude:

The social attitude of the Arabic translation is predominantly formal, as reflected in the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which lends a more neutral tone to the dialogue.

Mode

On Mode, the target text (TT) is characterized as complex, similar to the original, in terms of medium. This complexity stems from the dual nature of subtitles: they are written text designed to be read by viewers on screen, while simultaneously representing spoken dialogue from a TV show. Participation is complex, primarily involving interconnected exchanges between multiple characters, with few instances of narrative flashbacks.

Genre

The target text genre is a situational comedy.

Statement of Function

In the translation, the ideational component, which focuses on conveying the content, meaning, and information of the text, remains largely intact. The storyline, main ideas, and key details are effectively communicated in the Arabic subtitles, ensuring that the audience understands the overall narrative. However, the interpersonal functional component, which reflects the tone, style, and relationships between the addresser and the addressees, is notably affected. The playful and informal tone of the original, essential for humor and character dynamics, is often replaced with a more formal style in the translation.

(c). Source Text Profile and Target Text Profile Comparison and Quality Assessment

After analyzing both the source text (ST) and target text (TT), mismatches were identified in the dimensions of FIELD, TENOR, and MODE. In the FIELD dimension, Halloween costumes with cultural references, Halloween-related terms, and police jargon were either left untranslated or translated literally, often adopting a formal tone.

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF FIELD MISMATCHES

Source Text	Target Text	Back Translation
Some guy dressed as the royal baby punched him and took his wallet.	رجل يرتدي ملابس طفل ملكي لكمه وأخذ محفظته.	A man wearing royal baby clothes punched him and took his wallet.
Boyle, you're already in costume as, uh, Joy Behar ?	"بويل"، أنت ترتدي زيّك التنكري لتوك على أنك "جوي بهار"؟	"Boyle," you are wearing your costume now as " Joy Behar "?
Hey, sweet Batali costume, dude.	أنت، زيّ تنكري جميل لـ"باتالي"، يا صاحبي.	You, a beautiful costume for " Batali ," my friend.
I passed a slutty tree on the way here.	مررت بشجرة مومس في طريقي إلى هنا.	I passed by a prostitute tree on my way here.
The busiest and spookiest night of the year.	أكثر الليالي شعلاً والأكثر إخافة طوال السنة.	The busiest nights and most frightening throughout the year.
These perps are so stupid.	هؤلاء المجرمون غاية في الغباء.	These criminals are extremely stupid.
Tipster said there'll be a huge amount of drug activity.	قال مقدم المعلومة بأن هناك كمّاً هائلاً من عمليات بيع المخدرات.	The information provider said that there is a huge amount of drug sales.
Sorry, Sarge . Ugh, Halloween is the worst.	أسفة يا "سارج"، الـ"هالوين" هو الأسوأ.	Sorry, " Sarge ." "Halloween" is the worst.

The target audience's ability to understand these elements depends largely on shared cultural knowledge. As demonstrated in Table 1, many references—and their intended humor—are lost in translation. For example, cultural references such as Joy Behar and "Batali" are unfamiliar to most Arabic-speaking audiences. Additionally, police jargon becomes more formal: "perps" (slang for perpetrators) is translated as "المجرمون" (criminals), "tipster" as "مقدم المعلومة" (information provider), and "Sarge" as "سارج," losing its casual and familiar tone. Such shifts detract from the original text's informal workplace atmosphere.

Halloween-related terminology undergoes significant shifts as well. For example, "spookiest" is rendered as "أكثر إخافة" (most frightening), losing its playful connotation. Likewise, "slutty tree," a humorous reference to provocative Halloween costumes, becomes "شجرة مومس" (prostitute tree), adopting a stark and less humorous tone. The lack of cultural context necessary to grasp the humor further exacerbates this loss. By either retaining references (e.g., "Joy Behar") or translating them literally (e.g., "royal baby" as "طفل ملكي"), the translators maintain textual authenticity but limit access to the humor inherent in the source culture, especially in Halloween-related and police jargon. While these mismatches affect the FIELD dimension and diminish humor, the narrative structure and character relationships remain largely intact.

On Tenor, mismatches primarily result from the loss of spontaneity and informality inherent in natural speech. This is particularly evident as the writer humorously portrays the precinct during Halloween, focusing on workplace dynamics and character relationships. Humor, rooted in the characters' informal and spontaneous interactions, is often diluted—or

even lost—when casual banter is formalized and character-specific speech patterns are standardized. Consequently, this results in a significant reduction in the comedic effect.

TABLE 2
EXAMPLES OF TENOR MISMATCHES

Source Text	Target Text	Back translation
You have to publicly state that I'm an amazing Detective- slash -genius.	عليك أن تقول علناً بأنني محقق مدهش وعبقري.	You have to say publicly that I am an amazing detective and genius.
I'm just sick of losing to Holt.	لقد سئمت من الخسارة أمام "هولت".	I have become tired of losing to "Holt."
Well, ring it up, nerds . I just arrested my first Halloween idiot of the season.	حسناً، أيها الأغبياء، صَفِّقُوا لي. قبضت لتوي على أول مغفل للـ"هالوين" لهذا الموسم.	Well, stupid ones, clap for me . I have just arrested the first Halloween fool of this season
It was at that point that I bumped into a girl dressed as a sexy robot, and we got our flirt on... hard .	في تلك المرحلة التقيت بفتاة ارتدت زي ريبوت منير، وبدأنا بالتغزل ببعضنا بشكل جامح.	At that stage I met a girl who wore a sexy robot costume, and we began flirting with each other in a wild manner .

Translation greatly impacts the humorous depiction of relationships and interactions among precinct members, which are central to the show's comedy. These interactions lose their dynamism and humor, taking on a formal tone that makes the workplace feels conventional rather than the lively, close-knit setting of the original.

For instance, translating Jake's casual "slash" as the formal "و" ("and") eliminates the humor in forcing the stoic Captain Holt to use informal language after losing a bet. Similarly, translating "sick of" as "tired of" diminishes Jake's playful, childish tone, while "ring it up, nerds" is rendered as a formal command, losing its casual, playful essence. Additionally, "we got our flirt on... hard" is translated as a conventional description, stripping Jake's storytelling of its informal charm. These changes significantly detract from the original humor.

By retaining U.S. cultural references, the translation weakens the humor, as these references depend on shared cultural knowledge to establish a connection between the writer and the audience. This sense of shared understanding and familiarity is lost in translation, making it harder for the target audience to connect with the humor.

Preserving universal humor offsets some of these losses, maintaining elements of comedy and character dynamics, as shown in Table 3. Nevertheless, these changes shift the writer's stance, the social relationship with the audience, and the conveyed attitude.

TABLE 3
EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVELY CONVEYED UNIVERSAL HUMOR

Source Text	Target Text	Back translation
We got egged. Some of the shell got in my contacts and my hair and my mouth and my bra.	تمرّضنا للضرب بالبيض. بعض قشر البيض دخل في عدسات عيني وشعري وفي وحشالة صدري.	We were hit with eggs. Some of the eggshells got in my eye lenses, my hair, my mouth, and my bra.
Amy paid me 50 bucks to trade places with her.	دفعت لي "أيمي" 50 دولاراً لتبادل الأماكن معها.	Amy paid me 50 dollars to trade places with her.
I was thinking I had better core strength. I got winded, like, ten feet up.	كنت أفكر بأنني أملك قوة جذع أفضل. إنقطع نفسي على إرتفاع 3 أمتار.	I was thinking I had better core strength. I got out of breath at 3 meters.
For too long, we've been put down, ridiculed, made to wear ties! But no more! For today, we defeat him!	لمدة طويلة جداً، حط من قدرنا، وتم التهكم بنا، أجبرنا على ارتداء ربطات العنق! ولكن ليس بعد الآن! اليوم، نقوم بهزمه!	For too long, we've been belittled and ridiculed. He forced us to wear ties! But not anymore! Today, we're defeating him!

Additionally, the social attitude of the Arabic translation is predominantly formal, using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in contrast to the original's informal tone.

On Mode, the primary mismatch is textual, resulting from the omission of interjections and the reduction of repeated phrases due to subtitle space limitations. Such omissions disrupt the dialogue's natural flow and character speech patterns, both of which are crucial for humor and comedic timing. As a result, the humor's effect is diminished.

On Genre, the target text preserves the original sitcom format, maintaining a domestic setting where conflicts are resolved by the episode's end. While the genre's primary aim—entertainment through humor—is maintained, certain comedic elements are weakened, as highlighted in the analysis of other dimensions.

Statement of Quality

A comparative analysis of the source text (ST) and target text (TT) highlights notable patterns of mismatches. On FIELD, mismatches occur due to the formalization of Halloween-related terminology, the retention of untranslated cultural references, and the standardization of police jargon. Such mismatches hinder the ideational component's ability to accurately convey the casual workplace environment and the cultural context of American Halloween traditions. On TENOR, which exhibits the most significant mismatches, particularly in social role relationships, where informal workplace interactions are formalized; social attitudes, where casual banter is standardized; and the writer's stance, where playful and humorous commentary is neutralized. These changes significantly affect the interpersonal component by diminishing the humor derived from workplace relationships and character dynamics. On MODE, minor mismatches

occur in the medium due to the omission of interjections and the compression of repeated words and phrases, both constrained by subtitle space limitations. This pattern of mismatches indicates that while the ideational component remains largely preserved, the interpersonal functional component is significantly impacted. This is most evident in the text's diminished capacity to convey humor through informal workplace interactions and cultural references. The translators' approach of retaining cultural references while formalizing the language represents an attempt to balance authenticity and accessibility. However, this strategy ultimately reduces the comedic effect. Nevertheless, the effective conveyance of universal humor offsets those losses, maintaining the text's overall entertainment value.

B. Identifying Overt Errors Through Content Analysis of the Translation

The researchers identified 60 instances of verbally expressed humor in the episode. Upon analysis of the translation, 22 errors were identified, categorized into four types: Not Translated, Slight Change in Meaning, Significant Change in Meaning, and Creative Translation.

(a). Not Translated

Example 1: (00:11:29)

Original:

"Get in the bag, you damn bird. Eat the bread. Eat the bread! I gotcha! I gotcha!"

Translation:

أدخل إلى الكيس أيها الطائر اللعين. لتأكل الخبز! أمسكت بك!

Discussion: The repetition of "Eat the bread" and "I gotcha!" is not rendered in the Arabic translation. The omission of these repetitions is likely due to subtitle space constraints.

Example 2: (00:20:58)

Original:

"Jake Peralta is an amazing detective-slash-genius"

Translation:

"جيك بيرالتا" محقق مدهش وعبقري.

Discussion: The original English phrase uses "slash" to casually combine two descriptors. In the Arabic translation, this verbal stylization is omitted and replaced by the conjunction "و" (and), which neutralizes the informal tone of the original.

(b). Slight Change in Meaning

Example 1: (00:03:07)

Original:

"The busiest and spookiest night of the year."

Translation:

أكثر الليالي شغلاً والأكثر إخافة طوال السنة.

Discussion: In English, "spooky" conveys a playful kind of scariness associated with Halloween traditions. The Arabic translation, "إخافة" (frightening/scary), while general, lacks the Halloween-specific nuance of "spooky." Moreover, "إخافة" suggests a more serious tone, contrasting with the lightheartedness of the original term.

Example 2: (00:00:31)

Original:

"You are dummy Chuck Norris?"

Translation:

أنت "تشك نوريس" زائد الوزن.

Discussion: The English word "dummy" is colloquial, describing someone as overweight, short, and unattractive. The Arabic translation, "زائد الوزن" (overweight), is more straightforward and lacks the colloquial nuance of "dummy," reflecting the absence of a direct equivalent in Arabic that conveys all the connotations of the original.

(c). Significant Change in Meaning

Example 1: (00:02:03)

Original:

"Well, ring it up, nerds. I just arrested my first Halloween idiot of the season."

Translation:

حسناً، أيها الأغبياء، صفقوا لي. قبضت لتوي على أول مغفل للـ"هالوين" لهذا الموسم.

Discussion: The translation of "ring it up" as "صفقوا لي" (clap for me) significantly alters the meaning, changing both the linguistic humor and Jake's playful character. The original idiom, typically used in retail to mean "record" or "count," humorously applies a retail phrase to police work. The Arabic translation, however, shifts the meaning to a request for applause, losing the wordplay and subtly altering Jake's portrayal from making a witty remark to seeking recognition.

Example 2: (00:02:14)

Original:

" I'm sure you'll get out on 'a peel."

Translation:

أنا متأكد بأنك سوف تخرج بالإستئناف .

Discussion: The English text employs a pun on "appeal" (a legal term) and "a peel" (banana peel), linking the legal concept to the criminal's banana costume. The Arabic translation, "الإستئناف" (appeal), captures only the legal meaning, failing to retain the pun and its humorous effect.

(d). Creative Translation

Example 1: (00:00:47)

Original:

"Is he also a homeless troll doll?"

Translation:

هل هو أيضاً الدمية ذات الشعر الكثيف والمتشردة؟

Discussion: The culturally specific "homeless troll doll" is translated as "الدمية ذات الشعر الكثيف والمتشردة" (the homeless doll with thick hair). The translators creatively used linguistic equivalents to maintain the American context while ensuring accessibility for Arab audiences.

Example 2: (00:04:46)

Original:

"Dina Lohan. I'm wearing her face lotion."

Translation:

" دينا لوهان". إني أضع مرهم الوجه الذي يحمل اسمها.

Discussion: The English phrase "her face lotion" is concise and ambiguous about Dina Lohan's connection to the product. The Arabic translation, "مرهم الوجه الذي يحمل اسمها" (the face cream that bears her name), removes the ambiguity and adds specificity that is not present in the original.

C. The Application of Covert and Overt Translation

This section examines the application of covert and overt translation strategies in rendering verbally expressed humor.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLES OF COVERT AND OVERT TRANSLATION

Source Text	Target Text	Back Translation
You are <u>dumpy</u> Chuck Norris?	أنت "تشك نوريس" زائد الوزن.	You are <u>overweight</u> "Chuck Norris."
He is obviously <u>Miranda from Sex and the City.</u>	ومن الواضح أنه "ميراندا" من مسلسل الجنس والمدينة.	And it's obvious that he's " <u>Miranda</u> from the series <u>Sex and the City.</u> "
You probably read a <u>Maya Angelou poem</u> at your graduation and cried.	لا بد أنك قرأت شعر "مايا أنجيلو" في يوم تخرُجك وبكيت.	You must have read " <u>Maya Angelou</u> " poetry on your graduation day and cried.
Here's the first set of <u>royal babies</u> I rounded up.	هذه أول مجموعة من الأطفال الملكيين الذين قمت بجمعهم.	This is the first group of <u>royal babies</u> that I have gathered.
I'm sure you'll get out on " <u>a peel.</u> "	أنا متأكد بأنك سوف تخرج بالإستئناف.	I'm sure you will get out on <u>appeal.</u>
Well, <u>ring it up</u> , nerds. I just arrested my first Halloween idiot of the season.	حسناً، أيها الأغبياء، صفقوا لي. قبضت لتوي على أول مغفل للـ"هالوين" لهذا الموسم.	Well, stupid ones, <u>clap for me.</u> I have just arrested the first Halloween fool of this season
I can't tell if that's <u>hot</u> or not. Not <u>hot</u> . Eggshell in my bra is not <u>hot</u> .	لا أستطيع أن أعرف إن كان هذا مثيراً. ليس مثيراً. قشر البيض في حمالة صدري ليس مثيراً.	I can't tell if this is <u>sexy</u> . It's not <u>sexy</u> . Eggshells in my bra aren't <u>sexy</u> .
I'm <u>backing it up.</u>	أرجع بمؤخرتي.	I'm <u>moving backwards</u> with my <u>backside.</u>
You're literally <u>making paper airplanes out of police reports</u> right now.	أنت بالفعل تصنعين طائرات ورقية باستخدام تقارير الشرطة.	You're actually <u>making paper planes</u> using <u>police reports.</u>
I'm <u>gonna go cry.</u>	سأذهب للبكاء.	I am <u>going to cry.</u>
You <u>have beautiful eyes</u>	إن لك عينا جميلتان.	You <u>have beautiful eyes.</u>

The analysis of the Arabic subtitle translations reveals that translators employ both overt and covert translation strategies, depending on the type of humor. Each type follows distinct patterns: cultural humor consistently receives overt translation, linguistic humor tends toward overt translation with some variability, and universal humor is primarily rendered through covert translation.

For cultural humor, overt translation preserves American references. For instance, "Chuck Norris" is transliterated as تشك نوريس, and "dumpy" is translated as زائد الوزن (overweight). Similarly, "Miranda from Sex and the City" is translated overtly: her name is transliterated as ميراندا, the show's title is directly translated as الجنس والمدينة, and the word مسلسل (series) is added for context. "Maya Angelou's poem" is rendered as شعر "مايا أنجيلو" (Maya Angelou's poetry), maintaining the cultural reference through transliteration. Even culturally specific concepts, such as "royal babies," are

translated directly as *الأطفال الملكيين*, retaining the Western reference. These choices prioritize cultural authenticity over accessibility.

In linguistic humor, overt translation predominates, particularly in handling puns and wordplay. For example, the phrase "get out on 'a peel'" is translated as *بالإستئناف* (on appeal), losing the banana-related pun. Similarly, "ring it up" is translated as *صَفِّقُوا لِي* (clap for me), omitting the retail reference. The word "hot" is rendered as *مثيراً* (sexy), overlooking its possible temperature-related meaning. These examples illustrate how translators prioritize clarity and fundamental meaning over the recreation of complex wordplay.

In contrast, universal humor is typically translated covertly, adapting the content to natural Arabic expression while preserving its comedic effect. For instance, "I'm backing it up" is translated as *أرجع بمؤخرتي*, maintaining the casual tone. Similarly, workplace humor, "making paper airplanes out of police reports" is translated as *أنت بالفعل تصنعين طائرات ورقية باستخدام تقارير الشرطة*, preserving the contrast and humor. Emotional humor, such as "I'm gonna go cry," is rendered as *حسناً جداً. سأذهب للبكاء جميلتان*, keeping the humor intact. Compliments like "You have beautiful eyes" is translated as *إن لك عينا*, with added emphasis that feels authentic to Arabic speakers. These examples demonstrate how covert translation effectively adapts universal humor into Arabic while maintaining its intent.

V. CONCLUSION

This study, based on House's (1997) TQA model, identifies significant covert and overt errors in the Arabic translation of the "Halloween" episode of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. Covert errors are observed at the levels of FIELD, TENOR, and MODE. On FIELD, Halloween-specific terminology, police jargon, and cultural references are often formalized, transliterated, or translated literally, diminishing the humorous and culturally nuanced tone of the original text. On TENOR, the formalization of character-specific speech patterns and the weakened portrayal of casual workplace interactions reduce the interpersonal dynamics and humor. On MODE, omissions of repetitions and interjections disrupt the natural flow of dialogue and comedic timing.

Overt errors are categorized into four main types: Not Translated, which sometimes result in a loss of humor and rhythm; Slight Change in Meaning, which alter tone and cultural context; Significant Change in Meaning, which fail to convey layered humor and intent; and Creative Translation, which, while enhancing accessibility, occasionally shift the tone or humor. These errors highlight the challenges inherent in translating humor and cultural nuances, significantly affecting the accessibility and comedic effect of source text for Arabic audiences.

The findings further reveal that translators employ both overt and covert strategies depending on the type of humor. Covert translation is primarily used for universal humor, ensuring a natural flow in Arabic. However, overt translation predominates, particularly in rendering cultural and linguistic humor. This pattern is evident in the consistent transliteration of American names and cultural references, the direct translation of institutional terms, and the literal handling of wordplay—even at the expense of humor. The findings align with House's (1997) theory of overt translation, as the translator aims to preserve elements of the source culture while ensuring comprehension for the target audience. However, while this approach retains the original context, it often diminishes the comedic effect and meaning, particularly for culture-specific humor.

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