



Universidad
Zaragoza

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Black humour and audiovisual translation:
The case of *The Office* and its subtitled version to Spanish.

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Curso 2022/2023

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ABSTRACT

Sitcoms are one of the most popular types of TV shows because of its unique humor and the effect that it has on the audience. Due to its popularity and success sitcoms are often translated to different languages which presents a challenge to the audiovisual translator. This dissertation aims to analyze humor in depth and the strategies used to adapt it in the subtitled version of several scenes of the series *The Office*. In this paper we will give first a brief piece of the origins and history of the discipline of audiovisual translation. Then, we will introduce the importance of subtitling together with its conventions and the complexity of the translation of humor and some significant theories of different scholars regarding the topic. Next, the analysis of the scenes (twelve in total) will consist of analyzing mistakes in the translation to Spanish, considering the strategies used and adding an alternative version of the translation. At the same time, in some cases, we will be commenting on cultural American references and its impact on the target language.

With this analysis we will try to conclude if, in spite of the fact that the translator's work is difficult, sometimes and thanks to the adequate strategies, it is possible to reach better solutions.

RESUMEN

Las comedias de situación son uno de los tipos de programas de televisión más populares por su humor único y el efecto que producen en la audiencia. Debido a su popularidad y éxito, las sitcoms suelen traducirse a diferentes idiomas, lo que supone un reto para el traductor audiovisual. Esta tesis pretende analizar en profundidad el humor y las estrategias utilizadas para adaptarlo en la versión subtitulada de varias escenas de la serie *The Office*. En este trabajo, primero haremos una breve introducción de los orígenes y la historia de la disciplina de la traducción audiovisual. A continuación, introduciremos la

importancia de la subtitulación junto con sus convenciones y la complejidad de la traducción del humor y algunas teorías significativas de diferentes estudiosos sobre el tema. A continuación, el análisis de las escenas (doce en total) consistirá en analizar los errores en la traducción al español, considerando las estrategias utilizadas y añadiremos una versión alternativa de traducción. Así mismo, en algunos casos, comentaremos las referencias culturales estadounidenses y su repercusión en la lengua meta.

Con este análisis intentaremos concluir si, a pesar de que el trabajo del traductor es difícil, a veces y gracias a las estrategias adecuadas, es posible llegar a mejores soluciones.

1. Introduction

1.1 Justification of the text

The work of the audiovisual translator involves some difficulties since it is not always possible to adapt the Source Language (SL) of the series or movie to the Target Language (TL) as much as possible. One example of such difficulties is translating humor. Humor can vary in intensity or can even be lost depending on the language in which it is being used and translated. In comedy series or sitcoms, the humor use is designed to be funny in its original language, but these series are usually translated into more languages due to their popularity. Translating this humor is a challenge for the translator as adjusting it can be a complicated task.

Thus, the aim of this final dissertation is to analyze several translation aspects in the American comedy series "The Office" in its dubbed version into Spanish, focusing mainly on linguistic humorous elements (especially black humor) and references to American culture. The purpose of the dissertation is to compare the humor and cultural references of the original version (OV) of the scenes selected with the equivalence chosen by the Spanish translator and the problems that this may entail. To do so, we will analyze the translation strategies followed to adapt the jokes or puns to a different language and a different audience than the American one. We will see if the humorous charge has been maintained or not. In addition, we will provide alternative translations, as far as possible, in those cases in which the humorous charge has been diminished or completely lost when the text is transferred to the TL.

We have chosen the series *The Office*, in its American version, as the object of analysis of this work because it has a very interesting type of humor when it comes to analyze it from the translation point of view, the majority of it is black humor. This type of humor is a very complex one in fact, since it incorporates in its jokes many subjects that are

either taboo or very offensive, which should not be funny for this very reason, but nevertheless, they are. The series is characterized by these racist jokes, due to the large number of characters of different races and cultures in the office, as well as misogynist and sexist jokes due to the personality of certain characters such as Michael Scott or Dwight. In addition to this characteristic humor, the series mentions on many occasions very popular elements of the general American culture and of the time in which the series was filmed (2005-2013). These socio-cultural references are also significant from a translation point of view, since unless the audience has a significant knowledge of American culture these are very difficult to understand, as well as to find an alternative adapted to the target audience.

1.2. Summary of the series

The Office is a sitcom television series in the form of a mockumentary that presents the everyday lives of the office employees at the fictional branch of paper Dunder Mifflin Paper Company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. This is not the original series as it is based on a previous BBC series of the same name. This first version only had one season that went from 2001 to 2003, created by Ricky Gervais, which will later appear in the seventh season, and Stephen Merchant. The series was adapted for the American television by Greg Daniels, a very influential American screenwriter, television producer and director; some of his works include several writings for *The Simpsons* and co-creating another very popular sitcom, similar in form to *The Office*, *Parks and Recreation*. As the sitcom is made in the form of a mockumentary, the series is filmed in a single-camera setup and without a laugh track which stimulates the appearance of an actual documentary and at the same time increases the humorous charge in certain moments because of the awkward silence and discomfort that it produces. The series has originally nine seasons and 201 episodes in total.

1.3 Character's summary

Michael Scott

The characters of the series are very peculiar and special in its own way which makes the audience connect with them and submerge in their lives as they grow and evolve as the seasons progress. The lead character is Michael Scott, interpreted by Steve Carell, the manager of the Scranton Branch. Michael appears from the first season to the seventh season.

He is characterized by being a very immature person, insecure in many ways, extroverted and very funny or at least he tries. He does not match with the typical view we have of a manager, being bossy, severe and serious, Michael Scott is the total opposite of this. Besides, he feels uncomfortable making decisions, so he gets other people in the office to make decisions for him. Moreover, he is characterized by being very passionate about meetings in the conference room. There, he discusses all kinds of “business-related” topics and tries to turn it into a joke which sometimes can lead to confrontation with some of the employees as some of them see as a priority productivity in the workplace rather than joking around all day.

It is worth mentioning that most part of the humor and jokes come from Michael. He is very versatile in his jokes, as he is constantly making offensive and inappropriate comments, many of them racist, homophobic, or sexist, not that he does it on purpose but because of his ignorance and his need to always make people laugh.

Dwight Schrute

Another significant character of the series is as we have mentioned, Dwight. Dwight is one of Michael's favorite employees, although many times seems the complete opposite, Michael is very fond of Dwight. Dwight is one of the top salesman of the office. He is

very submissive to Michael to the point that he is even a bit toady, as he expects to become a regional manager himself. He is characterized as a non-very social person, pragmatic and in constant rivalry with his desk colleague Jim Halpert. He is also a beet farmer and has German ascendance which contributes to this view of him as strange and peculiar. He is the assistant to the regional manager, which usually gives him the wrong impression that he has more power than he actually has, which portrays him as cocky. Despite all of this, in my opinion Dwight is very charming because of his naïve and innocent character.

Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly

Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly are two interrelated characters that are key in *The Office's* substories. Jim Halpert is another of the top salesman in the office along with Dwight. He is mainly a joker, always trying to annoy Dwight at the most unbelievable levels. He is also very clever, kind and very confident when it comes to work. He has a very intimate relationship with Pam, the office's receptionist, they are very close from the very first episode of the series and their relationship evolves drastically as the series continue. Pam Beesly is the receptionist and a kind of assistant to Michael, not because that is part of her job but because she sometimes is forced to take care of Michael, which results in developing also a very close friendship with him, for instance she is one of the few people that support Michael when he decides to set up his own company: *Michael Scott's Paper Company*. She also becomes eventually part of the sales team and the office administrator. She is a very sweet woman, kind and funny like Jim, patient, timid and artistic. At the beginning of the series, she is engaged to Roy, a worker of the warehouse. She has been engaged for 3 years and it seems like their wedding is not going to occur anytime soon. This is when the relationship between her and Jim grows, Jim eventually confessing his love for her, however she rejects him because she does not want to admit that she loves him too. This is why she seems to be a person that does not stand up for herself, but it is

shown that she is not very happy with her personality and we see how she grows out of this as the series advance.

Ryan Howard

Ryan is a character that goes through several different positions in the company. He first starts as a temporary employee until he is promoted as Vice President of Sales. He is also convicted of fraud for misleading the shareholders of Dunder Mifflin and he gets fired. Nevertheless, when Michael sets up his paper company he gets hired and eventually comes back to Dunder Mifflin when they decide to buy Michael's company and rehire Pam, Michael and Ryan into the company. He is a very narcissist person, a compulsive liar, and a freeloader.

Phyllis Vance

Phyllis is another salesman in the office. She is a calm and kind woman, sort of a mom-like character and she loves to gossip and all girly things. Something significant about her character is the rivalry that she has with her colleague Angela. They are both part of the Party Planning Committee, they have a very different personality, so they usually disagree with each other, that is when Phyllis brings out her revengeful side.

Stanley Hudson

He is yet another salesman of the office. He is characterized for being grumpy, he does not like to be messed up with. He usually disagrees with Michael as he does not respect him as a boss. He is also the target of many of Michael's jokes, as he is one of the few people of color in the office and many of Michael's jokes or comments are racist.

Kevin Malone

Kevin is part of the accounting team. He is portrayed as one of the dumbest workers in the office, although he considers himself a genius in many instances in the series. He is also sort of childish, the rest of the workers do not take him seriously.

Oscar Martinez

He is another people of color in the office as his parents are from Cuba. He is part of the accounting team also. He is characterized by being very cultivated, he is even portrayed as a know-it-all sometimes, he is calm and very practical in decision making. As Stanley he is usually the target of Michael's jokes, not only of racist ones but also of homophobic, as he is also gay.

Angela Martin

She is heading of accounting department and also of the Party Planning Committee. She is very uptight, severe, closeminded, and judgmental with everybody. She is obsessed with cats, and she is tremendously religious. She also dates secretly Dwight for most part of the series.

Kelly Kapoor

Kelly is responsible for Customer Service. She is very girly, nosy, immature, and manipulative. She is obsessed with having a boyfriend and getting married like a princess. Despite this, she is also very clever and knows how to make everything go her way. She is also target of many racist jokes because of her Indian ascendance.

Creed Bratton

Creed may be the strangest character in the series. Nobody knows how many years he has been in the company and what he really does there. He is very mysterious, awkward and he is always involved in something illegal.

Meredith Palmer

She is in charge of purchase department. She is shown as a mess, she is spontaneous, loves to party and shameless. She is also an alcoholic and this affects her work.

Toby Flenderson

Toby work as human resources representative. He is not very integrated in the office's crew because he is seen as part of corporate, especially by Michael who clearly hates him because of this. He is extremely calm, introverted and passive.

Andy Bernard

He is transferred from Stanford branch to Scranton. At the beginning of the series he is portrayed as a cocky, insecure, he is obsessed with his university Cornell, and he has anger issues. He eventually becomes the regional manager, substituting Michael when he leaves but his poor leadership skills lead him to fail as manager.

2. Audiovisual translation: Definition and brief history

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is a specialized modality of translation which deals with the transfer of a multimedia text into another language. It includes any form of visual content including films, TV series, videogames etc. (*Multimedia translation* 2022) In AVT it is important to consider the cultural aspects of both texts and audio when translating it, as it has to be maintained the same tone and interpretation of the OV in the TL. This means that the job of the translator is incredibly complex as she/he has to be well informed not only about the grammar and vocabulary of a language, its colloquialisms, slang etc both of the OV and the TL.

Despite being a significant practice that can be traced back to the origins of cinema, AVT was a relatively unknown field of research until recently. It had an early start in the 50s and early 60s, but it was in the 20th century when a remarkable boom of research appears pointing to scholars like Diaz Cintas (2009). The first paper ever written on subtitling goes back to 1957, in France, it is Lak's *Le sous-litrage de films*. It provides a complete overview of the technique of subtitling. However, as it was published anonymously its distribution was quite limited and not very popular so only a few people had the opportunity to read it (Diaz Cintas, 2009). In the 60s and 70s, most of the works written focused primarily on the figure of the audiovisual translator, the different translation stages, the differences concerning subtitling and dubbing and how the audiences were experiencing the subtitling phenomenon (Diaz Cintas, 2009).

This brief history concludes what we have mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, that audiovisual translation is a relatively new concept in the field of translation and that it has had an evolving theoretical purpose. Zabalbeascoa (2013) argues that this evolution

had two phases. The first one being led by the proposal of Mayoral and Kelly (1988), both influential figures in the translation world, who established the notion of “constrained translation” which would encompass translation cases involving the difficulties posed to the translator i.e. whether to translate literally or freely and which would also have certain features that would further complicate the translator’s task. These characteristics were understood to accompany the words in the OV in a synchronized way in the TL or at least parallel, with a spatio-temporal distribution fixed in the ST, to which the translator would have to subordinate himself and his translation to. Constrained translation, then, was a concept that should serve to raise and understand the specific problem of the translation of graphic novels and cartoons (comics and caricatures), song lyrics (to be sung with the same music most of the times), and above all, dubbing and subtitling in cinema and television, where the words came from a script and had to be synchronized with a moving image and sound effects (Zabalbelascoa, 2013)

The second phase within audiovisual translation studies would be those centered in disseminating the specific problems of audiovisual translation as a whole and of each modality in particular. That is, the secrets of dubbing and subtitling are revealed, both professional and technical (Zabalbelascoa, 2013) With this, between the late 90s and early 2000s several works are published that describe for instance the process of translation for dubbing and its phases, and the technical devices used in it. This was a dissemination work to make it visible in the academic world. Academics argue that there is a need to make a distinction within this dynamic as the “typical translation issues” are not remotely related to the problems in audiovisual translation. According to the experts, it is necessary to focus only on phenomena specific to audiovisual field, which are not found elsewhere i.e. of a filmic-semiotic type, detailing the relation between words and the image, or even of a technical type such as listing the varieties of subtitles (Zabalbelascoa, 2013)

2.1. Subtitling

According to Cintas & Remael (2007:8), subtitling can be defined as a translation practice proper of audiovisual translation that consists of presenting a text on the lower part of a screen that recount the original dialogue of the speakers of the audiovisual piece used. They must appear synchronized with the image and the dialogue, providing an adequate account of the SL dialogue, also subtitles must not contradict what the characters are doing and saying on the screen.

There are some inconveniences when working with subtitles which are concerning to limitations of space and time (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007). That is, for instance, that the text must be accommodated to the width of the screen in order to fit them and to be read properly. In addition to this, subtitles have certain rules to be followed in terms of characters per line CPL (between 32 and 41), characters per second CPS (no more than 17 characters) and the lines in each subtitle (no more than 2 lines) which sometimes difficult its production. Furthermore, along with this, as subtitles entail a change from oral form to written form they usually resort to the omission of lexical items from the original (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007).

For this several limitations and inconveniences, audiovisual translation falls short-for many experts of being a case of proper translation. It is preferred to be referred as an adaptation rather than a translation itself, which may be one of the many reasons why this practice has been overlooked until recent years (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007)

2.2. Translation of humor

It is said that the distinguishing and outstanding feature that differentiate the human species is the possession of language, but for others it is the possession of humor. Although many species have some type of natural language and even humor of sorts, the human species is the only one that can translate this set of signs into another together with instances of humor (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017). However, this task is always a challenge, as it is a widespread belief that an “ideal” translation is theoretically impossible to accomplish, and even more impossible when translating humor (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017). This is because humor is engaged in many different factors like ideology, psychology, literature, history, social relations, education culture, aesthetics and semiotics (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017); thus not only linguistic factors are involved in text. Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017) establish the need to add audiovisual, multimodal, multicultural diversity and multilingual perspectives to revise what there is of great value in well-tested insights into oral and written humor.

Several theories of humor have been developed over the years in an attempt to explore its linguistic, semiotic, cognitive and social phenomenon from different standpoints. This academic interest in the topic of humor has resulted in the creation of its own research field called Humor Studies. Although there is still struggle among the scholars to provide an immovable and unified definition of humor (Dore, 2021). Carra (2009:133) argues that to a humorous act to be successful depends on the existence of shared knowledge between the sender and the receiver, and that the perception of the quality of the translation depends on the attitude of the reader or viewer. When translating humorous situations, it is necessary to consider the existence of wordplay, puns, and cultural references in the ST as it may not have an exact equivalent in the target language and culture. The perception of humor varies immensely between cultures, people, and the situation. If this

takes place in communication settings within the same culture it is fair to say that these factors will also appear with separate cultures.

Moreover, Veiga (2009, p.160) points out that “like other language composites, humor is a living organism, constantly absorbing new formulas and evolving through time” which results in a very complicated issue that is the attempt to define humor. She does not propose a definition but a set of hypotheses on how we can perceive humor and also help understand the complexities inherent to AVT. The first hypotheses explain that “humor and laughter are not always correlated”, as laughter is not always considered an exclusive result of a humorous stimulus (Veiga 2009, p.160). In fact, she points out that the fact that laughter is considered the ultimate goal of humor is a fallacy. The second hypotheses establish that “humor is a subjective and relative concept” (Veiga 2009, p.163). It is obvious that people would react in a different manner than other to the same humorous act, and that that fact leads to “consider linguistic humor a universal relative concept” (Veiga 2009, p.163) Moreover, Veiga (2009, p.163) argues that “culture-specific topics inherent to verbal humor show more difficulty in crossing language and culture boundaries, even within the confines of Western culture”, and that even within the same culture humor is up to diverse roles of perception and reaction to it.

We can conclude then, that “humor differs from individual to individual, from context to context and from one culture to another” (Veiga 2009, p.163), however humorous cases can be translated using substitutions and adaptations, taking into consideration both the linguistic, nonlinguistic, and technical constraints involved. (Veiga 2009, p.163).

3. Analysis of the fragments

For the analysis below, each scene will be contextualized in the chapter that it belongs to and then will be commented. The elements to be commented will be humorous elements in the ST and their correspondent translation in Spanish in order to see how they have been translated, if they have been translated accordingly to his version in the TL or not and which strategies have been followed to translate those elements and the type of translation problems that she/he may have encounter. In addition to this, in some cases there will be commented cultural references of the American cultural references that are key to understand the humorous element of the scene.

SCENE 1. Season 1, episode 2 “Diversity day” 5:37-5:47

Michael: We don't we just defer to Mr, um— Mr. Brown: Mr. Brown. Michael: Ah! Oh, all right. Okay, first test. I will not call you that. Mr. Brown: Well, it's my name. It's not a test, okay? Um, so, looking through the cards, I've noticed that many of you wrote down the same incident, which is ironic, because it's the exact incident I was brought in here to respond to.	Michael: Vale, ¿qué tal si dejamos...al muchacho? Mr. Brown: Sr. Brown Michael: Ah, claro. Vale, entendido. No debo decirte “muchacho”. Mr. Brown: No me gusta la sorna, ¿de acuerdo? Bien, en las tarjetas he visto que muchos os referís al mismo incidente, y es curioso porque por ese incidente es por lo que me pidieron que viniera aquí.
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This scene belongs to the very first official episode of *The Office*. In the episode we can already intuit the type of humor that we are going to get in the series, the title “Diversity day” says it all. Here, Mr. Brown, from corporate, is sent to the office to give a seminar concerning racial diversity in the workplace and the ignorance around it. In this scene, we will be commenting on two elements in the scene.

First, we would like to comment on the translation of “Mr. brown” into “muchacho” in Spanish. The strategy followed here can be considered a total free translation which results in a complete loss of the humor charge in Spanish. In English, the humorous

element lays on the fact that the person giving the speech is black and he is called Mr. Brown, brown resembling black. Here, Michael when asking for his name interprets this as a joke or a test because it may be offensive for him to call him black directly. This in Spanish with the translation loses coherence as Mr. Brown has not been translated, if you are not an English speaker or know the language the joke loses its humorous charge.

The second element we would like to comment is the translation of “well, it’s my name, it is not a test okay?” to “no me gusta la sorna ¿de acuerdo?”. This sentence is connected to what is being said previously with the translation of the name. Again, in Spanish makes no sense it has been reinterpreted but the humorous charge has been completely lost in the translation process.

Here we would like to offer an alternative translation:

<p>Michael: We don’t we just defer to Mr, um— Mr. Brown: Mr. Brown. Michael: Ah! Oh, all right. Okay, first test. I will not call you that. Mr. Brown: Well, it’s my name. It’s not a test, okay? Um, so, looking through the cards, I’ve noticed that many of you wrote down the same incident, which is ironic, because it’s the exact incident I was brought in here to respond to.</p>	<p>Michael: Vale, ¿qué tal si nos referimos al Sr..? Mr. Brown: Sr. Negrin Michael: Ah, claro. Vale, primera prueba. Descuida, que no te llamaré eso. Mr. Brown: Es mi nombre. No es una prueba ¿de acuerdo? Bien, en las tarjetas he visto que muchos os referís al mismo incidente, y es curioso porque por ese incidente es por lo que me pidieron que viniera aquí.</p>
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We have chosen to use an extreme case of modulation in order to change the surname “brown” into something similar in Spanish without following the literal translation. We have chosen the surname “Negrin” as its meaning can resemble the one in English. In Spain it is not as common to have a surname as “Marron”, the literal translation, rather than “Negrin”. With this proposal the whole dialogue makes more sense and the

element of the whole conversation being a test for Michael makes much more sense now and it is more loyal to the OV.

SCENE 2. Season 1, episode 2 “Diversity day” 16:33-16:35

Michael: Come on, Olympics of suffering right, here: Slavery vs. the Holocaust.	Michael: Venga, quiero ver las olimpiadas del sufrimiento: La esclavitud frente al holocausto
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This scene belongs to the same chapter as the previous scene, now Michael is giving his own seminar concerning diversity as he sees it. He has arranged version of the popular board game *Hedbanz*¹ with different “races”. Here, we have Pam and Stanley talking Pam being “Jewish” and Stanley “Black”. They are talking in order to figure out which race they are and Michael intervenes with the sentence “Slavery vs. the Holocaust”.

The translation is adequate as it is literal and there is no complication with it. However, we would like to comment on the cultural reference of the scene regarding two of the most relevant historical events both in the U.S culture and history and world history.

Slavery in the Us comprised the enslavement primarily of African and African

American people, it was a legal institution from its founding in 1776 until 1865, and it was predominant in the South of the country. A slaved person was treated as a property which could be bought and sold. Its role in the United States Constitution was a very contentious and relevant issue in its drafting, although the word “slavery” was never mentioned in it (*Slavery in the United States* 2023). Then the other historical event mentioned is the Holocaust. The Holocaust was a massive genocide of European Jewish during the World War II. Germany under the Nazi regime murdered among six million

¹ Hedbanz: interactive boardgame where the players try to guess the card placed on their head by asking yes-no questions (*Spin master* 2023)

Jewish people, around two thirds of Europe’s Jewish population (*The Holocaust* 2023).

This joke in the episode denotes the black humorous character of the whole series.

SCENE 3. Season 1, episode 2 “Diversity day” 17:20-17:26

Michael: You’ll notice I didn’t have anybody Arab. I thought that would be too explosive. Uh, no pun intended. But I just thought “Too soon for Arabs”	Michael: Habréis visto que a nadie le tocó ser árabe, me pareció demasiado explosivo, y no va con segundas. Pensé que era pronto para los árabes, quizá el año que viene, les toca a ellos mover ficha.
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This scene belongs to the end of the episode, Michael is doing a sort of recap of his approach to the diversity day. In this case, there has been an amplification in Spanish “quizá el año que viene, les toca a ellos mover ficha”.

This refers to a very relevant historical fact of the U.S history, in this case to the 11S terrorist attack. They were a total of four suicide attacks towards the twin towers by the Islamic extremist terrorist network Al Qaeda in 2001. The reference of Michael must be with the aftermath of the attacks. As a result of the attacks, the government initiated a witch hunt towards the Afghan people and their country to destroy Al Qaeda because of all the pain that they have caused the country and their citizens.

SCENE 4. Season 2, episode 2 “Sexual Harassment” 3:26-3:31

Packer: And then, suddenly, for no reason, this <u>bimbo</u> blows the whistle on the whole thing <u>just to be a bitch</u>	Packer: Y de pronto un día, sin motive aparente, la <u>gilipollas</u> se lo cuenta a todo el mundo <u>simplemente para darle a él por el culo</u>
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In this episode we are introduced to Todd Packer, a friend of Michael and a worker in the company from another division who comes to visit the office. He is one of the most sexist characters and not in a funny way. Here we would like to comment on the

translation of “bimbo” to “gilipollas” in Spanish. The term bimbo is a slang term to refer to a conventionally attractive, naïve and unintelligent woman. The translator has followed the strategy of adaptation, as there is not a full equivalent term in Spanish to describe a bimbo, “gilipollas” in this case could work out as it also has the sense of unintelligent or stupid.

Moreover, it is worth to mention the translation of “just to be a bitch” to “simplemente para darle a el por el culo”. In this case, the translator has used an equivalence strategy. Bitch has been decided not to be translated, we suppose because the literal translation that would be “simplemente por ser una zorra” does not reflect the sense of the sentence that is to screw someone. It could have also been translated as “solo para fastidiarle” but in the TL it has been included the offensive language element (para darle por el culo) which seems necessary for a proper translation.

SCENE 4. Season 2, episode 2 “Sexual Harassment” 6:28- 6:52

<p>Michael: A guy goes to a five dollar <u>lady of the night</u>. And he gets <u>crabs</u>. So the next day, he goes back to complain. And the woman says, ‘hey it was only five dollars. What did you expect <u>lobster</u>? This is what’s at stake</p>	<p>Michael: // Un tipo, le paga un servicio de cinco dólares a una <u>pilingui</u>, y coge unos <u>hongos</u>. Así que, a la semana siguiente, el tipo va a protestar. Y la pilingui le dice: Tio solo te costó cinco dólares ¿acaso esperabas <u>boletus</u>? Eso es lo que les disgusta</p>
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This scene belongs to the same episode, Michael is in one of his in-between interventions in the chapters and he is telling a joke. We would like to comment on two issues of the joke. First the translation of “lady of the night” to “pilingui”. The translator in this case has used an adaptation of the same euphemism in English and in Spanish. Here, we can see how important it is to translate certain elements of the original text considering all the dialogue. Choosing to translate this English euphemism with another one in the TL gives coherence to the translation of the joke as a whole.

Then the translation of “crabs”, which is an English euphemism again, in this case referring to a fungus infection has not been literally translated as its equivalent to Spanish that would be “ladillas”. But it has been used a modulation, translating it to “hongos” in order to maintain the humorous charge and the sense of the joke.

SCENE 5. Season 4, episode 1 “Charity race” 7:00-7:06

<p>Angela: Can you do me a little favor? Go to my place at lunch and give Sprinkles her medicine? Dwight: Sure Angela: I have to visit the <u>alky</u></p>	<p>Angela: ¿Me puedes hacer un favor? ¿Ir a mi casa y darle la medicina a Manchitas? Dwight: Claro. Angela: Tengo que ir a ver a Melopea</p>
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In this scene, Angela and Dwight are talking about Dwight helping to feed Angela’s cat because previously in the episode, Meredith has been run by Michael and she is in the hospital because she has her pelvis broken and Angela is coming to visit her.

Here we would like to comment on the translation of the expression “alkie” into “melopea”. According to Collins Dictionary, *Alky* is a colloquial expression in order to refer to an alcoholic. We already know that she is referring to Meredith as she is a character depicted in previous seasons that she has a problem with alcohol. The translator has translated this slang expression into *melopea* in Spanish, which according to Real Academia Española (2014) stands for drunkenness. It is not a literal translation; the translator has chosen to use a modulation. In my opinion this is not a great translation as we do not think that *melopea* reflects the sense of the colloquial word in English, it would have been better to also choose a colloquial equivalent to it in Spanish. Here is a proposal of an alternative translation:

<p>Angela: Can you do me a little favor? Go to my place at lunch and give Sprinkles her medicine? Dwight: Sure</p>	<p>Angela: ¿Me puedes hacer un favor? ¿Ir a mi casa y darle la medicina a Manchitas? Dwight: Claro. Angela: Tengo que ir a ver a <u>la beoda</u></p>
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In this case we have chosen to translate the colloquial expression “alky” making a modulation in the TL to “beoda”. This seems to suit better the meaning of the expression in the OL as *melopea* stands for the state of drunkenness and not as an adjective for the drunk person.

SCENE 6. Season, 4, episode 1 “Charity race” 20:04-20:12

Kevin: I thought they’d be good together, <u>like PB and J: Pam Beasley and Jim</u>	Kevin: Para mí, harían buena pareja, <u>en plan PB y J: Pam Beasley y Jim</u>
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In this scene, Kevin is talking about Pam and Jim because he suspects they are together now and they are hiding it. I would like to comment on the phrase “like PB and J: Pam Beasley and Jim”. Here Kevin is referring clearly to Peanut Butter and Jam, a combination that in the US is considered even a symbol of the country.

Being a cultural reference, trying to translate this can be very tough, as it refers to Pam and Jim and their initials you cannot really change them. In this case, we think it is impossible to give an alternative translation as in Spanish speaking countries there is not such an iconic combination that stands with the initials PB and J.

There is an alternative version: we have chosen to do a free translation of the initials, changing it instead to a popular combination in Spanish culture.

Kevin: I thought they’d be good together, <u>like PB and J: Pam Beasley and Jim</u>	Kevin: Para mí, harían buena pareja, <u>en Pan y Jamón: Pam y Jim</u>
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SCENE 7. Season 4, episode 2 “Infinity Project” 6:09-6:20

Michael: He’s back, and he’s got a beard. He’s got facial hair. Look at you, all grown up and no place to go. Hello Mr. “Sonny Crocket”. I’m “Tubbs”.	Michael: ¡Ha vuelto! Y lleva barba. Tiene vello facial. Fijaos en él, está hecho todo un hombrecito. Hola Sr. “Sonny Crocket”. Yo soy “Tubbs”.
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In this scene Michael is referring to Ryan, as he is now part of corporate and he is ruling the Scranton branch, and he is coming to visit in order to show a new project for the company. As Michael mentions, Ryan has now a beard, and he looks more mature and grown in comparison with the view we had of him as the temp. The element it is worth commenting in this scene is the phrase Hello Mr. “Sonny Crocket”. I’m “Tubbs”.

There is no problem with the translation as it is literal and has sense. We would like to comment on the cultural reference to Sonny Crockett and Tubbs from the Tv Series Miami Vice, *Corrupción en Miami* in Spanish. Miami Vice was an American crime drama tv series from the 80s and 90s. The characters of the series mentioned are the two protagonist, Don Johnson as James “Sonny” Crockett and Michael Thomas as Ricardo “Rico” Tubbs, which are two Metro-Dade Police Department detectives working in the undercover division in Miami (Miami vice 2023). It was a very influential series during all the 80s decade and part of the 90s (Miami vice 2023). This cultural reference in this case can be understood in a wide variety of countries and languages as the series was originally American it was also transmitted in Spain and in South America.

SCENE 8. Season 4, episode 2 “Infinity Project” 28:18- 28:31

<p>Ryan: Next night I’m out at a bar, 2:00 AM. I figure I’ll get a sandwich. ‘Cause you can get a sandwich any time of the night. I run into Vince Vaughn. Kevin: No way. Ryan: Literally Andy: Dude, you are <u>so money</u>. <u>But you don’t even know it. But you do.</u></p>	<p>Ryan: Y a la noche siguiente, me voy a un bar, a las dos de la mañana, me apetecía un bocata y ahí nunca cierran... y me encuentro a Vince Vaughn. Kevin: ¡No jorobes! Ryan: Verídico. Andy: Tío, <u>molás mogollón</u>, <u>no sabes cuánto</u>; eres un flipe .</p>
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This scene belongs to the same episode as the previous one, Ryan is now keeping up with the workers of the office, in this case with Kevin and Andy. Kevin and Andy clearly idolize him because he is seen as a winner because he has achieved so much in

little time. Here, we would like to comment on the sentence of Andy, especially the expression “you are so money”. This type of set phrase ‘to be’ plus a ‘noun’ that resembles a concept is very common in English, but in Spanish there is no equivalence to this. Here, the translator has chosen to use a modulation of the expression and translate it as “molas mogollón”. In my opinion, it is not adequate at all, although the expression “You are so money” implies that he is cool, but it is more relevant that he is cool because he has now more money.

Moreover, in my opinion the free translation of “but you do” as “eres un flipe” is also not adequate, although we think that the translator chose to do it to add this sense of Ryan being cooler “flipe” to compensate for the previous phrase in which it was not so clear.

Here is an alternative version of the translation:

Andy: <u>Dude, you are so money. But you don't even know it. But you do.</u>	Andy: <u>Tío, estás forrado, no sabes cuánto, pero en verdad si.</u>
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There has been a modulation of the expression “you are so money”, meaning that you are rich and cool, to an equivalent to Spanish which is the expression “estar forrado”

SCENE 9. Season 4, episode 5 “Local Advertising” 00:30-00:60

<p>Andy: Best ad ever? “Gimme a break, Gimme a break. Break me off a piece of that...” I am totally blanking. What is the thing? Jim: Nobody tell him! Andy: What? No, Why? Jim: You got it. You are so close. Andy: “Break me off a piece of that Duh-duh-duh” “Applesauce” Jim: Break me off a piece of that applesauce. I don't think.. Andy: “Piece of that Chrysler car” Jim: No. Andy: “Football cream” Michael: Okay. It's football cream. It's football cream.</p>	<p>Andy: ¿El mejor anuncio de la historia? “Déjame ir. Déjame llegar. Hasta que consiga... Me he quedado en blanco. ¿Cómo seguía? Jim: ¡Que nadie se lo diga! Andy: ¿Cómo? No. ¿Por qué? Jim: Si ya casi lo tienes, inténtalo. Andy: “Déjame ir. Déjame llegar hasta...tarará.” “Salsa de manzana” Jim: “¿Déjame llegar hasta salsa de manzana?”. Creo que no. Andy: “Hasta ese deportivo Chrysler” Jim: No. Andy: “Hasta esa crema pastelera” Michael: Vale. Es crema pastelera. Es crema pastelera.</p>
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This scene belongs to the episode in which the office is going to create and add for the company, there are brainstorming ideas of how the add can be possibly done and Andy intervenes remembering a popular add in the U.S. This translation in Spanish, although it is not a bad translation, as it is simple and literal; it is not understood among the Spanish audience. The add itself is a KitKat add very popular in the U.S from the late 90s (the missing word that Andy is thinking about is “Kit Kat bar”)

Here we would like to offer an alternative translation choosing popular Spanish brands, it is a total free translation as there is not an equivalent version in the TL similar to the text in the OL:

<p>Andy: Best ad ever? “Gimme a break, Gimme a break. Break me off a piece of that...” I am totally blanking. What is the thing? Jim: Nobody tell him! Andy: What? No, Why? Jim: You got it. You are so close. Andy: “Break me off a piece of that Duh-duh-duh” “Applesauce” Jim: Break me off a piece of that applesauce. I don’t think.. Andy: “Piece of that Chrysler car” Jim: No. Andy: “Football cream” Michael: Okay. It’s football cream. It’s football cream.</p>	<p>Andy: ¿El mejor anuncio de la historia? “Uh Ih Uh ha ha pim pam toma... Me he quedado en blanco. ¿Cómo seguía? Jim: ¡Que nadie se lo diga! Andy: ¿Cómo? No. ¿Por qué? Jim: Si ya casi lo tienes, inténtalo. Andy: “Uh Ih Uh ha ha pim pam toma ...tarará.” “Aspitos” Jim: “Uh Ih Uh ha ha pim pam toma aspitos” Creo que no. Andy: “Pim pam toma phoskitos” Jim: No. Andy: “Toma conguitos” Michael: Vale. Es conguitos. Es conguitos.</p>
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SCENE 10. Season 5, episode 23 “Michael Scott Paper Company” 00:00-00:25

Michael: “It’ s Britney, Bitch.	Michael: “Esto es Britney, Pollos”
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This scene belongs to the last episodes of season 5, Michael has left Dunder Mifflin and he is trying to build his own brand Michael Scott’s Paper Company. He has rent a room in the office’s building to use them as his own office.

First, we would like to comment on the huge cultural reference of the sentence itself. This is an iconic line from the popular song “Gimme More” from the American artist Britney Spears, a very influential worldwide known artist. The translator in this case has chosen to omit the swear word *bitch* and translate it as *pollos*. In our opinion it is totally inadequate as the two words have nothing to do with each other, the translator has not even followed a strategy to translate it.

Here is an alternative version of the scene:

Michael: “It’ s Britney, Bitch.	Michael: He vuelto, zorras
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In this version we have followed an extreme case of modulation. We have decided to eliminate Britney as, even though Britney Spears was very influential in Spain, we think that not everybody will understand this pop culture reference. We have chosen to emphasize the fact that Michael is coming back to the office but with his own company maintaining the humorous charge.

SCENE 11. Season 5, episode 23 “Michael Scott Paper Company” 9:20-9:25

Michael: P is being a giant B	Michael: P está en plan B
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This scene belongs to the same episode as the previous one, in this case Michael is in his new “office” with Pam and Ryan, who are the only two employees that have supported him in this new project. In this instance, Michael is talking to his mother about Pam and Ryan who are arguing. In the original version is completely understood that when Michael refers to Pam as a “giant B” the b stands for *bitch*. In Spanish, as the translator has chosen to use a literal translation of the sentence, it loses all the humorous charge and it does not make sense at all, as the b in Spanish does not stand for any curse word.

In this case we would propose an alternative for the translation of this sentence in order to be understood in the Spanish audience:

Michael: Pam is being a giant B	Michael: Pam está siendo una pedazo de Z
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We have decided to use an equivalence of the sentence, in this case the Z stands for “zorra”, which means the same as “bitch” in English. With this alternative translation the same sense of insulting Pam is maintained, and the Spanish audience can understand the joke.

SCENE 12. Season 8, episode 2 “The incentive” 3:20-3:50

<p>Phyllis: Andy don’t make us sell that stupid thing. Andy: What do you think C-Span? Oscar: C-Span? Yeah, Cocker Spaniel, Spaniel because you are Spanish and Cocker because you are...</p>	<p>Phyllis: Andy, no nos hagas vender ese chirimbolo. Andy: ¿Qué te parece Coc Span? Oscar: ¿Coc Span? Andy: Glandel Spaniel, Spaniel porque eres hispano y gladel porque eres...</p>
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This scene belongs to one of the latest seasons, in which Andy is now the manager of the Scranton Branch which has now been bought by another company, *Sabre*, a printer company. Andy is asking for an opinion on what tie he should wear to meet with the boss of the company, and he asks Oscar.

We would like to comment on two main elements of this dialogue. First, the translation of “stupid thing” to “chirimbolo” in the TL. According to the Real Academia Española chirimbolo stands for “Objeto de forma extraña que no se sabe cómo nombrar”. It is not an appropriate equivalence because it does not have the same connotation as “stupid thing” and also because the term is not very common in Spanish to use.

Instead, we would like to offer an alternative using a transposition, with this version the sense of it being “stupid” is maintained and it is more loyal to the SL:

Phyllis: Andy don't make us sell that stupid thing.	Phyllis: Andy, no nos hagas vender esa estupidez.
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The second issue we would like to comment on is Andy's joke. The problem with this joke is that, in our opinion is already risky to do in English, which translating it into Spanish gets even more tough. Andy refers to Oscar as C- Span, Cocker Spaniel (a dog breed), because as he points out he is Spaniard and Cocker because, as cocker is derived from *cock* a slang word to refer to a penis; and Oscar is gay. With this translation, the humorous charge is completely lost, the Spanish audience may understand the dog breed but when Andy explains the joke "Glandel Spaniel, Spaniel porque eres hispano y gladel porque eres..." the translator introduces this "glandel" which is new and does not make any sense with what it has been previously mentioned.

In this case, we offer an alternative translation: We have chosen to maintain the abbreviation of "C-span" in order to be able to introduce a new word that would stand for the C. We have maintained "Spaniel" because it makes sense as Oscar is *latino*. However, we have substituted "glandel", as it has not been mentioned previously, to introduce a free translation "come...", which stands for "comepollas". It is a slang word to refer to homosexual people in an offensive way.

Phyllis: Andy don't make us sell that stupid thing. Andy: What do you think C-Span? Oscar: C-Span? Yeah, Cocker Spaniel, Spaniel because you are Spanish and Cocker because you are...	Phyllis: Andy, no nos hagas vender ese chirimbolo. Andy: ¿Qué te parece C Span? Oscar: ¿C Span? Andy: Si, ya sabes C Spaniel, Spaniel porque eres hispano y la C por come...
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CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude with this dissertation that the translator's labor, when translating any type of humor, is a tough task. It can be even more difficult when it comes to translating an audiovisual text. The audiovisual translator's labor is key for the target audience to understand, as similarly as the original text, the piece of humor that is being shown on the screen.

It is no secret that *The Office* has been a tremendously successful series, first in the U.S, and then around the world because of its unique mockumentary format, its captivating characters and their stories. In this dissertation, *The Office* has proven to be an excellent piece for analysis in terms of the translation of its black humor and American cultural references.

We have not analyzed by far the whole series as it is a long series with a wide number of episodes and even wider range of jokes. The number of examples we have collected do not reflect the reality of the translation of the series as a whole. Nonetheless, in this dissertation we have seen some instances in which the translation of the scenes has been less than satisfactory. Either because of a poor knowledge of Spanish culture or because there has been no intention to adapt certain American cultural reference for the target audience to understand, or because the strategies used have not been the correct ones. In these cases, we have analyzed them in depth. We have watched the scene and located the main error that would make the humorous charge to diminish or even disappear completely. In each of the scenes we have provided an explanation of the piece of text that had not been properly converted and then provided an alternative version of our own that would maintain the humor in the target language plus an explanation of the strategies used in it.

Summing up, with this dissertation, we have proven that, although it may be tough, it is not impossible to translate humor coming from different cultures with different types of humor maintaining the humorous charge to a greater or lesser extent; we only have to choose the correct tools and strategies necessary.

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