



Universidad
Zaragoza

Trabajo Fin de Grado

The translation of humor in the audiovisual
medium: the case of *Brooklyn 99*

Autora

Marta Cilleros Benedí

Directora

Dr. Noelia Marqués Cobeta

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras / Grado en Estudios Ingleses
Curso 2020/2021

Abstract

Sitcoms are made to be funny in their original language, but most of those TV shows are translated into different languages. Translating humor presents itself a challenge that translators must work on to adapt the content to the target language. This dissertation aims to locate the reasons why humor is created and analyze the strategies used to overcome the difficulties of translating it from English to Spanish in both the dubbed and subtitled versions of the first season of *Brooklyn 99* (2013-). This paper gives a brief introduction to the dubbing tradition in Spain, to sitcoms, and to the mechanisms of humor. Then, the importance of audiovisual translation is presented, and the conventions of dubbing and subtitling are introduced, together with the complexity of translating humorous instances. Next, the corpus and the methodology for the analysis are addressed. The analysis consists of commenting some chosen fragments from *Brooklyn 99* in which all the mechanisms introduced above are taken into consideration.

Keywords: American sitcom, audiovisual translation, humor, cultural references, wordplay.

Resumen

Las *sitcom* o comedias de situación están creadas para ser graciosas en su idioma original, pero muchas de estas series se traducen a distintos idiomas. Traducir humor es un reto en el que los traductores tienen que trabajar para adaptar el contenido al idioma meta. El objetivo de esta disertación es analizar las razones por las que se produce el humor y las estrategias utilizadas para superar las dificultades que presenta su traducción del inglés al español en ambas versiones, doblada y subtitulada, de la

primera temporada de *Brooklyn 99* (2013-). Como introducción, se hablará sobre la tradición del doblaje en España, las *sitcoms* y los mecanismos que crean humor. Después, se presentará la importancia de la traducción audiovisual y se introducirán las convenciones del doblaje y subtitulado junto con la complejidad de traducir humor en este medio. A continuación, se introducirán el corpus y la metodología para el análisis. Este último consiste en comentar fragmentos seleccionados de la serie *Brooklyn 99* teniendo en cuenta los mecanismos anteriormente explicados.

Palabras clave: sitcom, traducción audiovisual, humor, referencias culturales, juego de palabras.

Table of contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. Introduction	5
2. Audiovisual translation	6
2.1. Dubbing	8
2.2. Subtitling	9
2.3. The translation of humor in audiovisual translation	10
3. Corpus and contextualization	13
4. Analysis of <i>Brooklyn 99</i> fragments	14
5. Conclusion	28
References	30

1. Introduction

Spain has a tradition of offering multimedia content dubbed into Spanish. At first, dubbing translation was used by totalitarian regimes to cut and change the parts of audiovisual media, especially from American films, that presented a threat to their nationalist identity and ideology. By this time, the dubbed versions were manipulated and turned into domesticated products to show the adequate scenes and values according to the Government to the Spanish audience. Fortunately, this is no longer at use and dubbing is needed for completely different reasons such as entertainment or education. Nowadays, globalization and the Internet have made the audiovisual medium more available than ever, and, although the dubbing tradition is still preserved (almost all the non-Spanish content broadcasted on television is dubbed), there is gradually more content available in its original version and with subtitles in different languages. The boom of streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO or Amazon Prime has only boosted this demand.

One of the most difficult, as well as interesting, challenges a translator is confronted with while working is translating humor. This is difficult to define, as it is intrinsic to human nature and depends on a variety of factors such as culture, wordplay, and shared knowledge, among others. Humor is very often used in audiovisual genres such as comedy films and sitcoms, that is, situational comedies. Both genres have a high rate of popularity on television, especially the latter. This is the reason why this dissertation will analyze the mechanisms used in the translation of humor in some fragments of the American sitcom *Brooklyn 99*.

Sitcoms have always been one of the most popularly acclaimed formats for the short screen in the United States, and the influence it has had in the production of series around the globe is undeniable. By definition, a sitcom is a TV show composed of half-hour episodes wherein the characters are involved in a comical or humorous situation (Pérez & González, 2009). According to Pérez and González (2009), sitcoms have usually short and closed or conclusive episodes, they usually evolve around the life of two or three main characters who are most of the time stereotyped, they are normally recorded indoors in a studio with a live audience —although some sitcoms insert prerecorded laughter instead— and they are characterized by short, witty, elaborated dialogues and visual gags. The acceptance and reputation of sitcoms are the consequence of its prime-time frames and the groups of people they are addressed to, especially young people and women.

Before the analysis, the reader will be provided with some background information about audiovisual translation, the most distinctive elements of dubbing and subtitling, and the difficulties of translating humor in an audiovisual format, as image, audio and text must coexist and make sense as a whole. An introduction to *Brooklyn 99* and the analysis of the chosen fragments from the show will follow this theoretical framework.

2. Audiovisual translation

In the short history of the audiovisual medium, audiovisual translation has had to overcome some prejudices to be regarded as a specialty within the translation realm. Zabalbeascoa (2013) presents the notion that, for some people, audiovisual translation shows similar problems to general translation, having conceptual tools and advisedly

following its theoretical frames and strategies. Following this line, audiovisual translation may be chosen to validate Toury's norm theories or the duality between domestication and foreignization proposed by Venturi, both from 1995. However, this perspective has become old-fashioned and outdated. Zabalbeascoa (2013) would argue that there is a need to distinguish audiovisual translation as another type of translation, as it has its own distinctive problems and difficulties, and it questions the traditional concepts of a more generic translation. Moreover, there is a need to bear in mind that the audiovisual medium is booming. Therefore, more research is being needed in this field, together with a better communication between both perspectives: the new theories of audiovisual translation and the general translation or traductology.

The needs for this kind of translation varies. Of course, audiovisual translation belongs to the audiovisual medium. There is a tendency to associate it with entertaining purposes (series, films, videogames, etc.), nonetheless, Zabalbeascoa (2013) states that there is also an educational need that can be satisfied. The boast of this medium does not seek for the underestimation of the written medium, but to complement it. That is why, although the audiovisual text is hard to define and its notion is fragmented due to the poor coordination of the studies of the field, its capacity to communicate is prioritized in the teaching area (Zabalbeascoa, 2013).

The audiovisual medium counts with two different codes, image and sound, that have been put together by a director (Cintas & Remael, 2007), and that present different modes within this field. The most important and well-known ones are dubbing and subtitling, and, since this dissertation will compare both Spanish dubbed

and subtitled versions from the American TV Show *Brooklyn 99* (2013), those are the ones that will be approached. Anyhow, according to Bartolomé and Cabrera (2005), more types of AVT (Audiovisual Translation) are also widely used for different kind of purposes, such as voice-over, surtitling or interpreting.

The role of audiovisual translators is complex, as stated before, because they must mediate among cultures to make the message of a target language come across. Pettit (2009:44) suggests that the audiovisual translator “deals with a complex semiotic text, a film or television programme, which is composed of signs [...], all of which combine to form a network of codes, creating the message to be received by the viewer.” In AVT, the importance of the image is evident, as it transmits information that words sometimes cannot express; an image is worth more than a thousand words. The visual medium can support the verbal message or contradict it to cause humor, for instance (Pettit, 2009).

Below in this dissertation, the modalities of dubbing and subtitling will be shortly introduced alongside with a brief introduction to humor in audiovisual translation. Later, different extracts from *Brooklyn 99* will be compared and analyzed in both their Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions.

2.1. Dubbing

The origins of dubbing can be found in the 1920s, together with the emergence of sound cinema. In a dubbed version, the main goal is “to ensure that the dubbed dialogues feel as authentic as possible, yet the image betrays specific features of the source culture” (Pettit, 2009:44). According to Bartolomé & Cabrera (2005:93),

“dubbing does not only involve the translation and the later synchronization, but the dubbing actors and actresses’ performances as well”.

In order to naturalize the target text in the dubbed version, there are different types of adjustments to consider: isochrony, lip or phonetic synchrony, and kinetic synchrony (Chaume, 2005). As this author explains, the kinetic synchrony deals with the corporal movement that can be accompanied by words or not. Body movements are rooted in a specific culture, so the dubbing translator should take this into consideration. Isochrony deals with vocal articulation, so the translator must make an effort for the length of the translation to match the duration of the dialogue onscreen. The most useful techniques to achieve so are amplification and reduction, pertinently. Last but not least, lip synchrony can be defined as the articulatory movements of the mouth. Here, the different takes (close-ups, long shots, etc.) are an important factor to match the translation, looking out for open vowels, and bilabial and dental consonants of the characters onscreen (Chaume, 2005). Those three adjustments, according to this author, allow for a “reality effect” together with a dubbing actors’ interpretation that is in between the overacting and the underacting (2005).

2.2. Subtitling

Subtitling has been widely studied in audiovisual translation. In a subtitled version, the audience has access to both the original soundtrack and the written text, hence “two linguistic systems operate simultaneously” (Pettit, 2009:44). Cintas & Remael (2007:8) define subtitling as

a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavors to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the

discursive elements that appear in the image [...] and the information that is contained on the soundtrack [...].”

Bartolomé & Cabrera summarize it as “the linguistic practice that shows a written text on screen purporting to convey the dialogues, the iconic elements or other material on the soundtrack such as songs” (Cintas 2003:32, as cited in Bartolomé & Cabrera 2005:94). There can be different modalities withing subtitling, like intra subtitling, live subtitling or subtitling for the deaf or hard of hearing.

The main handicaps that subtitling encounters are the limitations of time and space. According to Cintas and Remael (2007), subtitles will have between 32 and 41 characters per line, 2 lines maximum, and there must not be more than 17 characters per second (CPS). In addition, the issue of synchrony must be considered, especially when dealing with translation. According to Cintas and Remael (2007:9), “subtitles (also) entail a change of mode from oral to written and resort frequently to the omission of lexical items from the original”, and that is why Veiga (2009) pinpoints the fact that the target text usually does not have as many words as the original one. Furthermore, when taking humor into account, “most of the times, subtitled humour is rendered in far few words, thus giving the audience a sense of loss in translation” (Veiga, 2009:164). For some scholars, this fact justifies the “constrained” nature of translation for subtitling.

2.3. The translation of humor in audiovisual translation

As Martinez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017) point out, translating humor is a challenge and has its own difficulties to overcome given the complex nature of this matter. Humor plays with factors like ideology, psychology, social relationships, education,

semiotics, and culture, among other elements, and can rely on wordplay, wit, and intention (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017); therefore, it seems impossible to find a proper and holistic definition for it. In addition to all that, according to Carra (2009:134), a total and perfect equivalence “is not possible, since not only linguistic factors are involved in the text.”

Nonetheless, there are some scholars that have attempted to create a humor theory and have put their focus on humor in AVT. Veiga (2009:159) claims that there are three general families within theories of humor: the cognitive, which deals with “incongruity or contrast issues”; the social, focused on “phenomena like hostility, aggression, superiority, triumph, derision and paragement”; and the psychoanalytical dimension, which is concerned with “release, sublimation, liberation and economy problems”. What is more, she pinpoints the fact that, as humor is such an interdisciplinary subject, its translation in AVT needs an interdisciplinary approach “to understand how humorous stimuli/ effects in a source language (SL) and culture may or may not produce the same or similar stimuli [...] on the target audience” (Veiga, 2009:160).

Martinez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017:14) explain that humor translation has been avoided as a field of study and it has been difficult to keep track of academic works because “its interdisciplinary nature” and “the diversity of case studies and the way humour is made visible within them.” What they make clear is that humor is not just merely verbal, but it is accompanied by the “audiovisual, multimodal and semiotically holistic theory of humour and its translation” (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017:15).

Moreover, humor is not always related to laughter, and it is neither a linear nor a clear field to discuss (Veiga, 2009:161). Although laughter can be one of the consequences of a humorous act, it is not the ultimate goal; therefore, humor should not be described according to its possible effects (Defays, 1996:6; as cited in Veiga, 2009:162). What is more, humor is limited by each person's amusements and perceptions, which opens the debate on whether humor is a subjective and relative concept. Veiga (2009) and Chiaro (1992) both share an agreement on the latter statement, giving the analogy that both laughter and language are "human universals", although universal topics may have variations from one culture to another and this may lead to cultural incomprehension (Veiga, 2009:163). Carra (2009:134) also has a similar perspective, as she explains that "the perception of humour varies depending on every culture, person and situation." That is why translating humor can become such a complex matter, and the reason why adaptation, explication and equivalence might be some of the most used strategies of translation used in the translation of humor in AVT (Veiga, 2009).

What it is undeniable is that for the understanding of humor, more than just a good understanding of the grammar is required. Humor needs to be interpreted so that it can be translated. In AVT, this can stem from language (like wordplay, pronunciation, irony), from cultural references or from the visual medium. According to Veiga (2009:167), the translator needs "linguistic, communicative (pragmatic) and technical" competences plus "the audiovisual humour translation competence", but at the end, humor relies on a person's sensibility too. Reasons for the creation of humor can also be found in the flouting or violation of Grice's maxims (1975), or in Sperber &

Wilson's relevance theory (1986), but, although worth mentioning, those theories will not be discussed in this dissertation.

3. Corpus and contextualization

Brooklyn 99 is a US sitcom created by Dan Goor and Michael Scour in 2014, and that will end with its eighth and last season in 2022. This TV show was produced by Fox, but they cancelled it after the third season. Nonetheless, NBC rescued it and produced the last three seasons (Wikipedia, 2021). Moreover, it is now available on Netflix, which has increased its popularity.

The main plot revolves around Jacob (Jake) Peralta (Andy Samberg) and his coworkers and friends of the police precinct 99 in Brooklyn. Each of them has totally different personalities, which most of the time is a source of humor, and each one embodies a character type, although they are not flat characters at all. The main characters are Jake Peralta, who is the intelligent but childish detective that always seeks for the common good, and Amy Santiago (Melissa Fumero) who is the super-organized, obsessive, competitive woman that is a people pleaser, especially with her superiors. Detective Rosa Díaz (Stephanie Beatriz) is physically intimidating, she always wears black, but she is very loyal and helpful, and Charles Boyle (Joe Lo Truglio) is, although short and not very strong, very intelligent and Jake's best friend in and out of the precinct. The authority figures are sergeant Terry Jeffords (Terry Crews), a man that physically looks terrifying, but who is in fact sweet and a risk-avoider, and captain Raymond Holt (Andre Braugher), who is excessively formal and never smiles, but who takes good care of his squad and helps them whenever he is needed. Furthermore, he

is black and homosexual, which contributes to the representation and standardization of minorities onscreen having a major role.

This show parodies typical police or crime TV shows, and at the same time it gives visibility and criticizes current relevant social issues such as racism, misogyny, sexism, and the representation of the LGBT community. These matters are addressed in a witty and humorous way, keeping up with its time.

For the analysis below, each scene will be first contextualized and later commented on. Humorous elements will be looked upon in the source text, and its translation will be observed in both the dubbed and subtitled Spanish versions in order to see how those elements have been translated and which strategies has the translator followed. In addition, those observations will be linked to the theoretical frame elaborated in the previous pages.

4. Analysis of *Brooklyn 99* fragments

In this analysis, what it is said in the original version will be compared with the two Spanish versions, dubbed and subtitled, available on the streaming platform Netflix. All the fragments analyzed below belong to the first season of the show.

Example 1

In episode number 7 (“48 hours”), detective Jake Peralta arrests a suspect without having enough evidences, and he has only 48 hours by law to collect them or make the perp confess. This is the very first scene of this episode, where Jake enters captain Holt’s office to present the principal subject of the robbery he is investigating.

Episode 7 “48 hours.” 00:01		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
Jake: Hey, cap’n, got a second?	Jake: Hola, capi. ¿Tiene un segundo?	Jake: Capi, ¿tiene un segundo?
Holt: It’s “captain.”	Holt: Llámame jefe.	Holt: Es capitán.
Jake: What did I say?	Jake: ¿Y qué he dicho?	Jake: ¿Qué he dicho?
Holt: “Cap’n,” like Cap’n Crunch.	Holt: Capi, como el Capitán América.	Holt: Capi, como el de los cereales.
Jake: All right, but to be fair, Cap’n Crunch was a war hero and the primary male role model in my house growing up, so... Anyways, Cap-tain, you know that jewelry store robbery down by Grand Army Plaza? I know who did it. Dustin Whitman.	Jake: Vale, pero el Capitán América fue un héroe de guerra y el principal modelo masculino de mi casa en mi infancia, así que... En fin, querido jefe, ¿sabe el robo de la joyería de Grand Army Plaza? Sé quién fue. Dustin Whitman.	Jake: Vale, pero ese capi era héroe de guerra. Y el principal modelo masculino a seguir en mi casa. Bueno, capitán, ¿recuerda el robo a la joyería en Grand Army Plaza? Sé quién fue. Dustin Whitman.

One of the humorous elements in this dialogue is the register used by both characters. Captain Holt is Jake’s boss, and the way Jake approaches him with such a colloquial style might appear unprofessional and childish —he addresses his superior officer with “hey”, shortens the word “captain” to “cap’n,” and omits part of the question “(do you) got a second?” as it is usually done in non-formal registers. This first sentence has been translated almost equally in both Spanish versions, with the exception that, in

the subtitled version, “hey” has been omitted. This omission, as Cintas & Remael (2007) explain, is part of the conventions of synchrony in subtitling. “Cap’n” has been well translated into “capi”, the Spanish shortened version of “capitán”. In both translations, Jake addresses Holt as *usted*, which contrasts heavily with the colloquial register just mentioned.

However, there are some disparities that can be found in both Spanish versions. The first one is translating Holt’s first sentence into “llámame jefe” in the dubbed version. It somehow breaks the rhythm of the scene because it does not sound entirely natural. On the other hand, the subtitled version has stuck to the wordplay between “capi” and “capitán”, which is more coherent with the whole scene. The next Holt’s intervention’s translation is also interesting because of the cultural references chosen. In the dubbed version, he alleges Captain America, a Marvel superhero that is widely known around the world. This translation matches the “capi” translation, as he is addressed that way in Spanish. The dubbing translator has made sure that the reference is understandable for the Spanish-speaking audience, as humour a cultural and personal question, as Carra (2009) comments. In contrast, the subtitling translator has opted for a more literal approach and has kept the original reference to Cap’n Crunch, a typical US cereal brand which cannot be easily found in Spanish supermarkets. Therefore, this reference may not be understood by part of the Spanish speaking population, but it correlates with Holt’s personality in the sense that he is fond of making old-fashioned comments and references; Captain America is a more up to date one. Here, the translators had to recontextualise, which consists of “abandoning the literal, propositional or locutionary level, while maintaining the

illocutionary act [...] as far as possible and focusing strongly on the perlocutionary effect (Hickey, 1998; as cited in Veiga, 2009:166).

Another humorous element is Jake's answer to this cultural reference. Both Captain America and Cap'n Crunch happen to be war heroes, so the translation does not deviate from the original text. Here, Jake brings to the forefront his "daddy issues," meaning that he did not have a fatherly role model to follow when he was a kid and he clings to whoever seems to have some authority over him. In his childhood, it was Cap'n Crunch, now it is Captain Holt. By opening up this way and for no apparent reason to his superior officer, he creates an awkward situation that he resolves by saying "so... anyways." This has been translated in the dubbed version similarly to the original text, "así que... en fin." However, in the subtitled version, the first part has been omitted and the second part has been translated into "bueno," which is typically used in Spain to change the subject while speaking. This omission responds to the synchrony of subtitling and the omission of lexical items that Cintas and Remael (2007) pointed out.

The last humorous element in this dialogue is "Cap-tain", and it is also important to take the image into consideration. Jake, while saying that, makes a gesture to show Holt that he is adding the last syllable to the word and is not saying "cap'n" again. In the Spanish dubbed version, the original wordplay is lost to stay coherent with Holt's first intervention. Yet, the subtitled version has kept the original wordplay, also coherently with the first intervention of the Captain.

Example 2

In episode number 8 (“Old School”), an old, famous research investigator and writer comes to the precinct and Jake gets obsessed with getting to like him. To do so, he pushes himself to act and work “old-school like.” To Jake’s disappointment, the truth is that this writer only wants to get him drunk and obtain dirty information about the precinct and Captain Holt so that he can write about it and increase his popularity again.

In this scene, Charles and Terry are making Rosa try on some outfits for a trial where she has to give her testimony as the detective in charge. While trying one of them, she says the following:

Episode 8 “Old School.” 9:33		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
I look like Arsenio	Parezco Michael Jackson	Estoy ridícula

This would be a great example of the translation of a cultural reference. Arsenio Hall is a famous American actor and comedian who even hosted his own show during the 1990s. He is also known for his eccentric looks. However, in Spain he is not a well-known figure. That is why the dubbing translator has opted for changing the reference and name Michael Jackson instead, who is worldwide famous and recognized by everyone, whatever the class, race, or age range they belong to. He is also remembered for his extravagant outfits and behavior, which fits in the custom Rosa is wearing in this scene. Veiga (2009) already talked about the issue that some humorous stimuli in the source text cannot be understood in the target language, therefore this

change of cultural reference was a good choice. The relation that the audience can make between the visual element of Rosa’s red suit and the spoken reference –together with her angry tone– creates humor.

On the other hand, the subtitling translator has opted for the omission of the cultural reference, probably for the sake of simplicity and economy of language, which is one of the aims in subtitling (Veiga, 2009), or for subtitling synchrony (Cintas & Remael, 2007). Here, the translator has focused on Rosa’s attitude rather than on the reference she is making. In contrast, this translation fits the isochrony of the original version, which differs from the dubbed one that has more syllables. This example shows how humor is not only based on grammar and wordplay but requires a broader knowledge regarding different competences, in this case music and popular culture.

Example 3

This next extract belongs to the same episode as Example 2. Here, Jake is suffering a bad hangover, but he still has work to do. When he finds a lead in the case he is working in with Amy, he says the following:

Episode 8 “Old School.” 12:00		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
Let’s aspirin up and roll out	Una aspirina y al lío	Me tomo una aspirina y vamos allá

This example shows a good instance of wordplay. This type of humor, in contrast with the aforementioned examples, is rooted on grammar, more specifically the invention of a new verb. The verb “aspirin up” does not exist, but it is created in the moment meaning that Jake will take a pill to lessen his hungover and get better to keep on working. In addition, roll out is normally used when one wakes up out of bed, so he is trying to brighten up and find the strength to get up of his seat. Consequently, humor here does not stem from a cultural reference or mispronunciations but rather from a play with grammar.

Wordplay may appear as a challenge for the translator. In this case, amusingly, the dubbed version is shorter than the subtitled one. For the dubbed version, the translator has opted for a shorter approach to match the isochrony or lip synchrony (Chaume, 2005), and to simplify the sentence by omitting the verb (“me tomo”). The omission of the wordplay has been compensated with the colloquial form “al lío”, which is one of the strategies that Veiga (2009) mentions in her article. On the other hand, the subtitling translator has opted for a longer version and has not omitted anything. Anyhow, both translations lose the original wordplay in order to favor a more literal approach to get the message across.

Example 4

Jake and Amy made a bet: the one that solves more crimes and arrests more perps in a year, wins. Everybody, characters and audience, know about this bet because it is mentioned from the very first episode, becoming a recurrent theme along the first season. If Amy wins, she will get Jake’s car, and if Jake wins, he will take Amy on the

worst date ever. Episode 13 (“The Bet”) is the resolution to this bet, where Jake wins in the last minute.

Episode 13 “The Bet.” 2:20		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
<p>Charles: That car is your superpower. Thor would never wage his hammer.</p> <p>Neil P. H. would never weight his showing skill.</p>	<p>Charles: Ese coche es tu superpoder. Thor nunca apostaría su martillo, Neil P. H. nunca apostaría su maestría escénica.</p>	<p>Charles: Ese coche es tu superpoder. Thor nunca apostaría el martillo, Neil Patrick Harris no apostaría sus dotes teatrales.</p>

In this flashback to where the bet started, Charles tries to dissuade Jake from betting his car giving different examples. Those can be taken as cultural references. The first one, Thor, is widely recognizable, not just because of the Nordic mythology but because of the Marvel superhero, interpreted onscreen by Chris Hemsworth. Neil P. H., however, may be more difficult a reference to grasp if one is not familiarized with American celebrities’ names. He is an American actor, singer, and comedian, well-known for playing Barney Stinson on *How I Met Your Mother* and Count Olaf in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, among others. Boyle mentions him because Neil is known for his comedy roles on television and his dramatic and musical stage roles in Broadway. However, this person may not be the best one Charles can compare Jake with, and that is where humor is created: nobody in the room gets the reference, and besides, the showing skills are not something tangible like a hammer or a car that you can easily identify with or ligate to a person or, even less, wage.

Charles talks about Thor and Neil P. H. as his role models, as if they were superheroes, and positions Jake at their level. As all superheroes shall have a recognizable item, like Thor's hammer or, apparently, Neil P. H.'s showing skills, Jake's item is his car. The visual element makes Boyle's statement comical because of the contrast between Charles' confidence on his comparisons and the room full of people looking at him, all confused, which reinforces Martinez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa's (2017) view on the multimodality of humor.

Regarding translation, there are three main issues to comment on. The first one is the change from the dubbed "su martillo" to the subtitled "el martillo". It is true that in Spanish, possessives are used less frequently than articles, so it could be the reason why the subtitling translator has chosen "el". Nonetheless, in this case the possessive would be acceptable too, as the hammer is something that belongs to Thor, and it is a part of his character. Secondly, the subtitle translator has chosen to explain to whom the letters "P. H." refers to, making it easier for the Spanish audience to understand the reference. This is a good approach to this particular cultural reference, because in the dubbed version it might get lost. In addition, there is a clear difference between "maestría escénica" and "dotes teatrales". Both could be equivalents to "showing skill", however, "dotes teatrales" may be too concrete, as it seems to focus just on the skills you need to act in a theatre, not the general skills an actor may show. Besides, Boyle seems to be talking about Neil's skills in general terms, so "maestría escénica" would be a more accurate translation in this case.

Example 5

In the same episode as in Example 4, in the moment where Jake has already won the bet, there is a take of Jake's car with a poster in which the following can be easily read:

Episode 13 "The Bet." 8:10		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
Just lost a bet	¡Apuesta recién perdida!	¡Apuesta recién perdida!

After winning the bet, Jake prepares a horrible date to Amy so that she feels ashamed. Deep inside, he does that because he likes Amy. In this scene, Jake has attached a poster to his car where it can be read "just lost a bet." This way, he is making a parody of the "just married" motto that a lot of people place on their cars when they just get married and want everybody to know. This would be another example of wordplay, as he is playing with the conventions of a wedding celebration with completely different purposes.

Both Spanish versions have been translated the same way, reproducing the "¡recién casados!" parallelism. This proves that literal translation can sometimes be effective regarding wordplay, and that recontextualization is not always necessary. This scene is funny because of the visual element of the messy car with the poster hanging, which once more reinforces the multimodality of humor in the audiovisual (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa, 2017).

Example 6

In episode 21 (“Unsolvable”), Jake is going through a bad streak at work because he cannot solve cases. That is why he tries to find the most difficult case there is in order to solve it and break this chain of bad luck. He gets obsessed with the case and stops trusting his resources, like the lie detector. That is why in this scene, he is trying this machine to prove that it does not work and that he was right about his dead-end lead.

Episode 21 “Unsolvable.” 15:32		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
Jake: I'm telling you this machine is broken. Ask me a question.	Jake: Se lo aseguro, la máquina está estropeada. Hágame una pregunta.	Jake: Te digo que está roto. Hazme una pregunta.
Terry: Is Jay-Z really your favorite artist?	Terry: ¿Jay-Z es tu artista favorito?	Terry: ¿Jay-Z es tu artista preferido?
Jake: Yes, obviously.	Jake: Sí, por supuesto.	Jake: Sí, evidentemente.
Officer with lie detector: Lie.	Policía con el detector: Miente.	Policía con el detector: Mentira.
Jake: [scoffs] See? It's busted.	Jake: ¡Está estropeada!	Jake: ¿Ves? Roto.
Terry: Is it? Or is your favorite artist really Taylor swift?	Terry: ¿Lo está? ¿O tu artista favorito es Taylor Swift?	Terry: ¿Sí? ¿O tu artista preferida es Taylor Swift?
Jake: [scoffs] No.	Jake: No.	Jake: No.
Officer with lie detector: Lie.	Policía con el detector: Miente.	Policía con el detector: Mentira.
Jake: All right, fine. She is. [quietly] She makes me feel things.	Jake: Está bien, lo es. (bajito) Me hace sentir cosas.	Jake: Vale, bien, lo es. Despierta cosas en mí.

Terry: She makes all of us feel things!	Terry: ¡A todo el mundo le hace sentir cosas!	Terry: ¡Despierta cosas en todos!
---	---	-----------------------------------

The first distinctive feature that can be found in this extract is the change of register from one translation to another. In Spanish a distinction is made between *tú* and *usted* depending on the register used or the person addressed. As a sergeant is a superior position in the police rank than a detective, Jake addresses Terry by *usted* in the dubbed Spanish version (“hágame una pregunta”). However, this does not happen in the subtitled version (“hazme una pregunta”). Reasons may be that Jake and Terry are already friends and the *usted* formula is way too formal for that kind of relationship. Moreover, this kind of dialogue could not be considered formal whatsoever because of the kind of language and content they use.

Humor in this extract steams from different points. Firstly, because of the cultural references to Jay-Z and Taylor Swift. Unlike the example from “Old School”, those two celebrities are popular worldwide, so there is no need for the translator to find any equivalent. It is also funny because it plays with gender roles and the idea of masculinity. Jake states that his favorite artist is Jay-Z, an influential rapper and businessman, because this would mean that he has ambition and that he is “a real man”, that is what he is supposed to like. However, Taylor Swift is a young woman, and, although very successful too, she sings about her own experiences in life and love, she is the typical artist that girls love. Those two artists represent masculinity and femininity in this context, and when Jake and Terry both admit they like Taylor, this predetermined idea is somehow broken. In addition, the visual images boost the

humorous element in this scene through the changes in the tone and intonation of voices or the last exclamation of Terry, making it obvious that liking Taylor Swift is universal and that there is no shame in it.

This dialogue can also have a sexual approach that is compelling to comment. When Jake talks about “feeling things”, he can be referring to an emotional element or to a sexual desire, and Terry’s response only enhances this other dimension: if one does not get emotional, one gets sexual. Furthermore, due to patriarchal and sexist ideals, it seems like men want to be the one that desire, not the one that is desirable: Jay-Z is the womanizer and Taylor Swift is the prize, the one that falls in love and gets her heart broken. Hence, the reversal of those standards triggers the humorous element at the same time it criticizes it.

Example 7

Little after this dialogue, there is another humorous cultural reference:

Episode 21 “Unsolvable.” 16:04		
English version (original)	Dubbed version	Subtitled version
<p>Jake: Because a real man doesn't run from a challenge. I mean, do they run from the bulls in Pamplona?</p> <p>Terry: Yeah. That's the whole point of it.</p> <p>Jake: Seriously? That seems</p>	<p>Jake: Porque un hombre de verdad no huye ante un reto. ¿Acaso huyen de los toros de Pamplona?</p> <p>Terry: Sí. Consiste en eso.</p> <p>Jake: ¿En serio? Qué cobardes.</p>	<p>Jake: Un hombre no huye de un reto. ¿Huyen de los toros en Pamplona?</p> <p>Terry: Sí. De eso se trata.</p> <p>Jake: ¿En serio? Qué lamentable.</p>

lame.		
-------	--	--

The main festivity in Pamplona, San Fermín, celebrated the 7th of July, consists in running in front of bulls across the city until they arrive to the bullfighting arena. In Spain it is one of the most well-known festivities; it is even broadcasted on TV. The fact that Jake uses this reference to make the point that one should not give up despite the challenges to overcome in the process is humorous. In this scene he is trying to convince Terry that he is still involved in the unsolvable case, that he is not giving up, but he gets this reference wrong and his whole argument falls apart.

Again, the visual element plays an important role on the creation of humor in this scene. Terry seems to be annoyed because he feels Jake is wasting his time on a case with no solution, and the sarcastic tone of voice that he uses when he answers is a source of humor.

Regarding translation, there are some differences between the dubbed and the subtitled version. The first relevant part of discourse to mention is Terry's intervention. When he says "that's the whole point of it," it means that the main objective of San Fermín is to run away from the bulls so that you do not get caught. It is a challenge, and they literally run from it. Both Spanish translations, although different, convey the same meaning, despite the fact that the subtitled approach seems to be more extended and broadly used. As for Jake's answer, both Spanish versions seem to differ from the original text. While the original text tries to convey that San Fermín is boring or not attractive anymore, both translated versions change to more negative connotations with "cobardes" or "lamentable" meaning that people who run there are

cowards. As Spanish people are supposed to be the target audience, those translations may not be the most adequate, as they can put the audience against the main protagonist, that, although immature, is very likeable.

5. Conclusion

To give a conclusion to this dissertation, it can be stated that translating humor from an audiovisual text is by no means an easy task. The main objective is that the target text is as valuable as the original one and that the result should be as less artificial as possible, but when it comes to humor, the translator can either stay loyal to the text or deviate from it to achieve a similar humorous effect on the target version. In the case of *Brooklyn 99*, the translators, both of the dubbed and the subtitled versions, have proven to be familiar not only with the source culture —the American culture— but also with the target culture —the Spanish one. From what it has been analyzed in this sitcom, several of the humorous instances stem from cultural references and wordplay, accompanied by the visual element which has also a relevant function in the creation of the subject matter. To overcome the challenge of translating humor, strategies such as adaptation and equivalence have been key for the message to come across and to create a new text that is similarly funny and content related.

Moreover, translators must also consider the conventions attached to each of the modalities of ATV, in this case dubbing or subtitling, when they translate. For subtitled texts, Cintas & Remael (2007) point out that subtitles should be short, and they must fit into the space provided by the pertinent technical programs. This is the reason why one of the major differences is the usually shorter length of the subtitled versions compared to the dubbed ones. For dubbed texts, Chaume (2005) and

Bartolomé & Cabrera (2005) provide some interesting insights on the matter, for instance the kinds of synchronization and characterization that are needed, and the urge to team up with the dubbing actor or actress, as he or she gives voice and personality to the characters in the target version.

The Spanish translations of the examples provided deal not only with the conventions mentioned above, but also with the difficulties that translating humor carries. That is why in the analysis, the three versions (English, Spanish dubbed and Spanish subtitled) have been compared based on the theoretical framework and the shared knowledge of both the American and the Spanish cultures. To sum up, this dissertation has proven that, although difficult, the task of translating humor is not impossible, and that cultural references and wordplay in English, if well understood, can be reflected into Spanish and keep most of the time the humorous element that make *Brooklyn 99* a sitcom.

References

- Bartolomé, A. I., & Cabrera, G. M. (2005). New Trends in Audiovisual Translation: The Latest Challenging Modes. *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 31, 89-104.
- Carra, N. J. (2009). Translating Humour: The Dubbing of "Bridget Jones's Diary" into Spanish. *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, 133-141.
- Chaume, F. (2005). Estrategias y técnicas de traducción para el ajuste o adaptación en el doblaje. *Trasvases culturales.: literatura, cine, traducción*, 145-153.
- Cintas, J. D., & Remael, A. (2007). *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*. New York: Routledge.
- Pérez, M. G., & González, P. D. (2009). La influencia de la sitcom americana en la producción de comedias televisivas en España. El caso de "Friends" y "7 vidas". *Ámbitos*, 83-97.
- Martínez Sierra, J. J., & Zabalbeascoa, P. (2017). "Humour as a Symptom of Research Trends in Translation Studies." In: Martínez Suerra, Juan juosé & Patrick Zabalbeascoa Terran (eds.). *MONTI 9. The Translation of Humour*, 9-27.
- Pettit, Z. (2009). Conecting Cultures: Cultural Transfer in Subtitling and Dubbing. *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, 44-57.
- Veiga, M. J. (2009). The Translation of Audiovisual Humour in Just a Few Words. *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, 158-175.
- Wikipedia. (2021, April 21). Retrieved from Brooklyn Nine-Nine: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_Nine-Nine#:~:text=The%20series%20revolves%20around%20Jake,Raymond%20Holt%20\(Andre%20Braugher\).&text=On%20May%2010%2C%202018%2C%20Fox,th e%20series%20after%20five%20seasons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_Nine-Nine#:~:text=The%20series%20revolves%20around%20Jake,Raymond%20Holt%20(Andre%20Braugher).&text=On%20May%2010%2C%202018%2C%20Fox,th e%20series%20after%20five%20seasons).
- Zabalbeascoa, P. (2013). Teorías de la traducción audiovisual: un viaje de ida y vuelta para progresar. *Reflexiones sobre la traducción audiovisual. Tres espectros, tres momentos*, 187-200.