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ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆ
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
ИМЕНИ В. БРЮСОВА
BRUSOV STATE UNIVERSITY**

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TRANSLATION OF HUMOR IN SUBTITLING. A CASE STUDY OF THE
ARMENIAN FILM “LOST AND FOUND IN ARMENIA”

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Keywords: *humour, subtitling, intralingual and interlingual subtitling, spatial and temporal considerations, strategy*

The article touches upon the translation peculiarities of humor into Armenian and the ways of their preservation in English through the use of translation strategies. A contemporary Armenian movie “Lost and Found in Armenia” is selected to give the general insight of the transfer of Armenian humor in subtitling. As a result of the study, we can state that from a semantic point of view, the translator was able to convey the meaning, often through partial or complete loss of humor. Deviations were mainly associated with interjections, which were omitted in the English translation. In all the extracted examples, interjections and sound effects, partially providing the humor of the episodes, were omitted. However, their restoration did not create an additional technical obstacle, since it corresponded to the spatial and temporal standards of subtitling.

Film is a textual unit built up of a complex set of various sign systems. It is a combination of linguistic features, images, and sound effects that are used to reify the director’s vision, intentions, their artistic acting and so on. According to Yu. Lotman, “film is the synthesis of two historical trends - image and word units.” (Лотман 1973: 50) Diaz-Cintas and Remael think that “Films are texts of greater semantic complexity in which different sign systems co-operate to create a coherent story”, seen and heard as such by viewers. (Diaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 45).

As a textual unit, the message of a film is only properly conveyed when all these sign systems are perceived as a whole. Being an essential and inseparable part of every culture, humour is often successful in serving its purpose in only the source languoculture due to the distinctness of inherent cultural elements. As K. Spanakaki claims, “Humor has various levels of applicability that are partly universal, cultural and linguistic, or individual” (Spanakaki 2007). We often come across cultural humour in films that are

expressed via two channels: image and language. Therefore, equivalent transfer is possible only through the combination of these two.

In translation, cultural humour itself can cause a number of challenges and sometimes even the cultural knowledge can be insufficient in adequately rendering the message. At first sight, the availability of images can support the translator in rendering the humour. However, when it is viewed within the scope of audiovisual translation - subtitling, where footnotes are out of discussion and spatial and temporal considerations are essential, a number of challenges emerge. J. Pedersen suggests that in case of specific cultural nuances, one procedure that the translator can apply is providing a brief explanation in brackets (Pedersen 2010: 70). This option can be deemed rather ineffective since the perception of humour is achieved both through the image and verbal expression, and additional information can create difficulties for the audience.

Generally, subtitling is considered the simultaneous presentation of translated materials on the screen. Many audiovisual translation theorists (Diaz-Cintas, Gambier, Gottlieb) differentiate between two main groups- intralingual (within the same language) and interlingual (between two languages) subtitling (Gambier 2014: 49). Within the scope of this article, only interlingual subtitles are taken under the analytical spotlight as it involves two different languages.

As for the spatial and temporal criteria of subtitling, both audiovisual theorists (Diaz-Cintas, Remaael) and different media services (BBC, NETFLIX) suggest almost identical considerations and criteria. For English subtitles, the number of characters should not exceed 37 spread out in maximum two lines. For the subtitling to be considered professional, subtitles must appear in two lines at a time. From a temporal perspective, subtitles can appear no less than one second and no longer than six seconds after the utterance. It should be noted that all the above-mentioned criteria are conventional, given the type of the film and the content subtitled. However, one of the most important criteria is the coherence and synchronization of the subtitle text with the rhythm of the speech without creating extra difficulties for the viewers.

To deal with such translation challenges, different strategies and methods are applied, among which the following strategies proposed by Diaz-Cintas and Remaael are deemed the most appropriate due to their compliance with the material under study.

- **Addition,**
- **Lexical recreation,**
- **Loan,**

- *Calque or literal translation,*
- *Transposition,*
- *Compensation,*
- *Omission,*
- *Explicitation* (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 202-207).

The contemporary Armenian comedy film “Lost and Found in Armenia” was selected to give an insight into the transfer of Armenian humour in subtitling. The examples extracted from the film will give us the opportunity to analyse and single out the extent of productivity in preserving the humour in subtitling as well as linguistic, spatial and temporal considerations of subtitling. The film talks about an American tourist who accidentally appears in a small village in Armenia. Due to the existing language barrier, he is accused of being a spy. The film is rich not only in cultural humour and irony but also culture-bound words and expressions. No information is available about the translator/subtitler.

<i>Armenian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Suggested Translation</i>
-Լսի՛, տղես Բելառուսաստան ա ապրում, հըը կապնվի էլի հետը ազիզ ջան: - Բայց դուք իրա էլեկտրոնային փոստի հասցեն գիտե՞ք: - Փոշտի՛, էլեկտրական փո՛շտ: Չէ՛, տան հեռախոսի համարը գիտեմ: (0:08:35-0:08:49)	- Oh, my son is in Belarus , Can you connect with him? - Do you know his email address? - Address? Email address? No. I know his home phone number.	- Oh, my son is in BelaRussia . Can you contact him, sweetie? - Do you know his electronic mail address? - Address? Electrical address? No, I have his phone number.

The above-mentioned example is the depiction of life in an Armenian village. The dialogue occurs between one of the residents of the village and a young girl who spent her childhood and school years in the village and moved to the city to receive higher education. Upon learning about the multiple functions of a laptop computer, an old village woman asks her conversation partner: “**Լսի՛, տղես Բելառուսաստան ա ապրում, հըը կապնվի էլի հետը ազիզ ջան**”, which was rendered into English as “**Oh, my son is in Belarus, Can you connect with him?**” Instead of the official country name Belarus, the old woman uses “**Belarussia**” in Armenian, which is essential for rendering the cultural humour given the woman’s associations and beliefs.

Growing up in the former USSR, the woman still considers the Post-Soviet countries to be Russia. Given the fact that Belarus has close political, economic and cultural relations with Russia and that the woman's son has migrated to Belarus to find a job, the names of the two countries are blended for expressing humour. The official name is used in English, failing to convey the humour and the old woman's reality and perceptions. For transferring extralinguistic features and cultural humour, the two country names, blended in one with capital letters "**BelaRussia**", can be considered more expedient. The proposed option is understandable among the target viewers and will not create any humoristic ambiguities. In this example, two strategies - **loan** and **lexical recreation** - are applied, as on the one hand, the exact word units are rendered into English, and on the other hand, a new word is created.

In the same example, we also come across the collocations "**էլեկտրոնային փոստի հասցե**" and "**էլեկտրական փոշի**". Taking into account the woman's level of education, lack of access to technology, she tries to find correlations by drawing comparisons with the terms that she is familiar with. The Armenian word "**փոշի**" in colloquial language stands for a *post office*. In English, the translator has used the expression "**email address**" both for the student's explanation and the grandmother's response, thus, compromising the humorous effect. By using the official name of the tool "**electronic mail**" in the first interlocutor's speech and humorous "**electrical mail**" in the woman's response, the cultural humour can somehow be rendered and give the complete picture of the woman's associations. Here, the full name of the electronic tool is restored, however, it should be noted that for this particular case, we have an established equivalent translation and none of the above-mentioned strategies have been applied.

The duration of the above-mentioned passage is 14 seconds in length and the number of characters does not exceed 37. Thus, the technical considerations of the passage do not create any obstacles for an equivalent translation and both the timing and the number of characters correspond to the general criteria of subtitling.

<i>Armenian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Suggested Translation</i>
Հա, իս, արա ես քեզ որ ասում եմ էսօր էդ նշանակում ա վաղը կամ մյուս օրը, հա՛: Չհասկացա, արա նենց չանես՝ քչեմ հասնեմ ըտեղ, ա՛յ տղա: (0:09:15-0:09:48)	I said “today”, not tomorrow or the day after. What! Don’t make me come over there. That’s right.	Hey, douchebag, when I tell you today I mean today, not tomorrow or the day after. Don’t make me drive over there.

In this passage, a mother is waiting for her daughter to return from the city. The son of the mayor’s village, who is in love with the girl, appears out of the blue all dressed up with the posture of a tough guy to impress the girl’s mother. In this scene, the humour is expressed both on linguistic and extralinguistic levels. On a visual level, however, the humour is expressed by means of a red “Niva” car with the word *BOSS* engraved on the number plate, *narrow front shoes*, as well as *rabiz music* which complete the image of the mayor’s son. On a linguistic level, humour is expressed through intonation and interjections that are an essential component of the Armenian language system, thus, conveying the humoristic punchline of the passage. For the sake of preserving humour, we suggest to restore the specific Armenian interjections in English. In particular, rendering the national exclamatory interjection “*արա*” is essential. Since in English, the word has been **omitted**, the passage can be restored with the help of the interjection “*Hey*”. However, it should be noted that the expression is accompanied by other exclamatory language units that is “*Հա, իս, արա*”, which adds a rather offensive connotation to the passage. The expression “*Hey, douchebag*” has been suggested instead as an example of the strategy of **explicitation**, to transfer both the offensive, insulting illocution and the humour wrapped around the “*kyartu*”¹ character.

The intercultural humour is expressed here through sound effects as well. The latter is, of course, not portrayed on the screen, but its restoration does not contradict to any of technical criteria of subtitling mentioned above. For this reason, an annotation with the text › *Desert sun* › should be added to the screen to provide synchronization and the complete picture of the

¹ One of the most popular subcultures in Armenia, the bearers of which usually wear dark, mostly sport or classic clothes and listen to low-quality music. Most of them are male. The Kyartus have traditional-conservative mentality, are against cultural, ideological-sexual diversity.

character. It should also be noted that both the temporal and spatial considerations have been preserved and that the subtitles correspond to the customary standards.

Armenian	English Translation	Suggested Translation
Լավ, լրջանք, օբյեկտը գալիս ա, ախպեր: Ի, արա Բլդո՛, իջցրա էդ ժուռնալը, արա, իա: (0:10:26- 0:10:37)	Alright, business time . Buldo, put it away.	Ok, gettin' serious . Dude here she is. What the... Hey, Bldo, put that shit away.

We have come across another example of humour expressed through interjections and intonation. Being extremely dumb, this friend of the mayor's son is looking through the “*Playboy*” magazine and the viewer has a clear visual reference as to what is taking place in the scene. However, in English, the word “*magazine*” is expressed by the pronoun “*it*”. In order to equivalently render the humour and the offensive tone of the interlocutor, the expression “*that shit*” can be used instead. Given the fact that the interjection “*ի/իս*” used to convey anger and disappointment is used both in the beginning and at the end of his speech, the elliptical construction “*what the...*” is important for preserving the original tone and intentions. In this particular example, two strategies- **addition** and **substitution** have been applied.

The passage that comes afterwards intends to convey humour both on linguistic and extralinguistic levels. The latter is expressed through a *pocket comb* and the posture of the mayor's son. On a linguistic level, however, the translation fails to convey the original humour. In Armenian, there is an expression “*Լավ, լրջանք, օբյեկտը գալիս ա, ախպեր*”, where the standard word “*լրջանալ*” is used colloquially, typically by “masculine men”, while the word “*օբյեկտ*” in the given context adds social prominence to the character, implying that the mayor's son is involved in some sort of secret mission. The expression is rendered into English by means of the expression “*Alright, business time*” which transfers neither the original humour, nor the general meaning of the usage. By means of **transposition** and by restoring the **omitted** word units, we suggest using the eye dialect “*gettin' serious*” slang word for “*լրջանալ*”. For the ironically used word “*օբյեկտ*”, “*there she is*” can be used, which, however, does not fully shelter the implicit meaning of the original Armenian expression, while the colloquial

word “*ախպեր*” can easily be rendered with the help of the colloquial target equivalent “*dude*”.

Since the passage is moderate in length and contains pauses, the temporal and spatial criteria of subtitling can be easily maintained. However, at 10:21 of the film, one of the interlocutors is trying to get the attention of his friend through an interjection. For the coherence and synchronization of the passage, the sound effect should be restored with the target language equivalent [pst...pst...]. At 10:41, the rabiz music continues for a considerable period of time and should be reflected on the screen as well. Therefore, the [Rabiz song: *Desert sun*] song title is suggested.

<i>Armenian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Suggested Translation</i>
Աչքիս, էս տրուսիկավորը՝ շառ ա: (0:38:09-0:38:13)	I really think this guy is trouble.	This panty-guy is sort of a bummer.

The para-sailing trip brings the tourist to a small village in Armenia, leaving the character only in his underwear. Uncertain of what to do and unable to find out information about the intruder’s true identity, the villagers take him for a spy. In the above-mentioned conversation, one of the villagers uses the phrase “*Աչքիս, էս տրուսիկավորը՝ շառ ա*”. Even though the translator has succeeded in transferring the contextual meaning of the passage by means of “*I really think this guy is trouble*”, he/she failed in preserving the humour contained in the original passage and the entire film. Using the strategy of **transposition**, the option “*This panty-guy is sort of a bummer*” can better express both the contextual meaning and humour.

From a subtitling point of view, the subtitles contain 35 characters in one line and can appear on the screen for 4 seconds which complies with the spatial and temporal criteria.

<i>Armenian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Suggested Translation</i>
- Hello. - Հելոն թաղի քեզ... Մի գնա... էդ ու՛ր ես գնում... Շան ծեծ եմ տալու քեզ, այլանդակի մեկը, տղամարդ չե՛ս, էդ ու՛ր ես	- Hello. - Hello, thief! Where are you going? I’m going to beat you like a dog. Be a man,	- Hello - Shove your hello up your ass! Where are you going? I’ll beat you like a dog. You, perv! Be a

փախչում, այ բո՛ւժ: (0:58:44-0:58:57)	stop running, you bum.	man, stop running, you, bum!
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In this scene, the American tourist, trying to hide away from the villagers to protect himself from any uncalled-for trouble, finds himself in someone’s garden. Noticing the trespasser, the landowner starts swearing and cursing at him. The surprised American tourist uses the word “*hello*” which does not make any sense to the village woman, instead she swears “*Հելո թաղի քեզ...*” by personizing the word “*hello*” and using it as a proper noun, thus, expressing the humour of the scene. In English, the translator has **omitted** part of the expression and rendered the passage with “*Hello, thief!*” which diminishes the humour and does not fully transfer the style and meaning. It should be noted that the humour is expressed at extralinguistic level, too, and the actions in the given scene provide part of the cultural humour. However, with the help of **substitution** strategy, for more accurate translation “**Shove your hello up your ass!**” can be used as it transfers both the woman’s intentions, her swearing and humour.

The passage also contains cultural elements which are more or less accurately transferred into the target language. In case of the expression “*շան ծեծ եմ փալու*”, the translator has used “*I’m going to beat you like a dog*” which accurately renders the meaning and corresponds to the actions of the character. However, the expression “*այլանդակի մեկը*”, which shows the character’s anger, is **omitted**. Given the fact that by restoring the expression the number of characters will not exceed the spatial criterion of the subtitling, the expression can be easily rendered as “*You, perv!*” through the use of **transposition** strategy.

The modified version corresponds to the temporal and spatial criteria of the subtitling, as the scene lasts 14 seconds and the speech contains long pauses. The humour is expressed at visual level which makes the perception more complete. However, for a coherent and synchronized transfer, the interjections should be rendered on the screen as well. Therefore, the **omitted** interjections expressing pain “*ouch*” should be added.

<i>Armenian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Suggested Translation</i>
- Անի ջան, անգլերեն ն’ոց ա պատերազմ: - War. - Ի՞նչ: Ո՞ն: - Ոռ չէ, Ուոր:	- Ani, how do you say war in English? - What? Ass? - Not ass, war. - Bill, you’re a great	- Ani jan, how’d you say war in English? -War. -Whore? - Not whore, war.

<p>- Բիլ ջան, դու լավ տղա ես, բայց ձեր լեզուն բանի պետք չի: Ինչ ասում է:</p> <p>- Կենացդ արարես...</p> <p>- Արա, պատերազմի անունն էլ ոռ ըլնի:</p> <p>- Իա՛, Մացա՛կ:</p> <p>- Չնայած, չնայած, որ խորանում ենք չէ՞... շատ ոռի բան ա: (1:32:21-1:32:52)</p>	<p>guy, but your language doesn't make any sense.</p> <p>Can you believe that?</p> <p>- Cheers to you.</p> <p>- Imagine the word for war is ass.</p> <p>- But, if you really think about it, it's an asinine thing.</p>	<p>- Bill, you're a man, but your language sucks!</p> <p>Can you believe it?</p> <p>- Cheers!</p> <p>- Can you imagine, they call it a whore.</p> <p>- If you dig deeper, war is a real whore.</p>
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Speaking of war and its consequences, in the above-mentioned dialogue, the senior member of the village community tries to understand the English equivalent of the Armenian word “պատերազմ”. He is immediately surprised and amused as the English word “**war**” sounds a lot like the Armenian vulgar word that stands for “*հեղույք*” (*ass*), the option that corresponds to the choice of the translator. Taking into account that the vulgarism used in Armenian and the English words are homophones, our decision was to use similarly sounding words in English. Therefore, for the sake of preserving the inherent humour and making the passage enjoyable for the target language viewers, the words “**war**” and “**whore**” have been applied, by substituting **transposition** strategy with **lexical recreation**. After pondering and trying to understand why Americans would use such a word for “պատերազմ”, the villager uses a humorous expression “*ոռի բան ա*”, which means an *icky, unpleasant situation*. Again, with the help of the strategy of **Transposition**, the translator has used the word “*asinine*” to describe the source situation and managed to transfer the general meaning, however, the cultural humour has not been preserved. Staying true to our choice and for the sake of preserving the joke, the phrase “**war is a real whore**” option has been suggested, again through the use of **Lexical recreation** strategy.

In the preceding passage the sentence “*...ձեր լեզուն բանի պետք չի*” was transferred into English “*...your language doesn't make any sense*”, which accurately renders the meaning, but neither the tone, nor the style. Since the Armenian expression belongs to the colloquial style, through the use of **transposition** strategy, “*... your language sucks*” more accurately describes the situation.

Taking into account that the proposed option is more economical and the total duration of the dialogue- 31 seconds, the restoration of the **omitted** expressions are obligatory for the synchronization and coherence of the passage, as well as for the complete transfer of the humour. It should also be noted that intralingual subtitles are not expressed on the screen which is not acceptable as it can create extra difficulties for deaf people or the ones who want to learn the language.

The analysis of the above-mentioned examples revealed that the humour used in the extracted dialogues was expressed not only on a linguistic level, but on an extralinguistic level as well. In the majority of cases, the humour was expressed through interjections, culture-bound words and expressions, as well as through visual referencing. In the existing translation of the script, all the interjections were omitted and the transfer was made with a significant loss of stylistic coloring and the humour itself. To accurately render the humour, nine strategies, proposed by Diaz-Cintas and Remael were used, among which, transposition proves to be the most frequently applied strategy both by the film translator and us. In one example, we have an official equivalent, which is not included in the 9 strategies. In two cases, the lexical recreation strategy was applied as new word units with partially homophonous were applied for the sake of rendering the humour. From the technical point of view, there was no case where spatial and temporal considerations caused challenges for the adequate transfer of the humour. Given the fact that the humour was expressed also through sound effects, the restoration of the latter is essential for the complete transfer of humour and stylistic coloring.

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ՆԱՐԻՆԵ ԳԻՇՅԱՆ - ՀՈՒՄՈՐԻ ԹԱՐԳՄԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ «ԿՈՐԱԾ - ՄՈԼՈՐՎԱԾ ԵՆ ԿՐԱԿՈՍՅԱՆՈՒՄ» ՖԻԼՄԻ ԵՆԹԱԳՐԵՐԻ ՕՐԻՆԱԿՈՎ

Հիմնաբառեր՝ միջտեքստային հումոր, ներլեզվային և միջլեզվային ենթագրեր, տարածական և ժամանակային չափանիշներ, ռազմավարություն

Հոդվածի նպատակն է դիտարկել հումորի թարգմանական առանձնահատկությունները հայերենում և դրանց պահպանման եղանակներն անգլերենում: Հոդվածում զուգադրվել են հայկական «Կորած-մոլորվածը Հայաստանում» ֆիլմից և համարժեք անգլերեն ենթագրային թարգմանությունից ընտրված հումոր պարունակող դրվագներ: Դիտարկվել են հումորի պահպանման դժվարությունները՝ համապատասխան թարգմանական ռազմավարությունների կիրառմամբ, ինչպես նաև անգլերեն ենթագրերի համապատասխանությունը հաստատված չափանիշներին: Ուսումնասիրության արդյունքում կարող ենք փաստել, որ իմաստային տեսանկյունից թարգմանչին հաջողվել է հումոր պարունակող հատվածների իմաստները փոխանցել թիրախ լեզու՝ հաճախ հումորի մասնակի կամ ամբողջական կորստի միջոցով: Բերված բոլոր օրինակներում սղվել են ձայնարկությունները և ձայնային էֆեկտները, որոնք մասնակիորեն ապահովում են դրվագների հումորը: Վերջիններիս վերականգնումը որևէ հավելյալ տեխնիկական խոչընդոտ չի ստեղծում, քանի որ համապատասխանում է ենթագրերի տարածական և ժամանակային չափանիշներին:

**НАРИНЕ ГИШЯН - ПЕРЕВОД ЮМОРА В СУБТИТРАХ. НА ПРИМЕРЕ
АРМЯНСКОГО ФИЛЬМА “ПОТЕРЯННЫЙ И НАЙДЕННЫЙ В АРМЕНИИ”**

Ключевые слова: интертекстуальный юмор, внутриязыковые и межъязыковые субтитры, пространственные и временные параметры, стратегия

Данная статья посвящена изучению особенностей перевода юмора посредством субтитрования на армянском и стратегии их сохранения на английском. В статье сравниваются примеры юмора из армянского фильма “Потерянный и найденный в Армении” и их английский перевод с субтитрами. В результате исследования можно отметить, что с семантической точки зрения переводчик сумел передать смысл, часто путем частичной или полной потери юмора. На семантическом уровне отклонения в основном связаны с междометиями, которые были опущены в английском переводе. Во всех приведенных примерах междометия и звуковые эффекты, которые частично обеспечивают юмор эпизодов, были опущены, однако, их восстановление не создает дополнительного технического препятствия, так как соответствует пространственным и временным стандартам субтитров.

Ներկայացվել է՝ 10.03.2021

Գրախոսվել է՝ 10.03.2021

**Երաշխավորվել է ԲՊՀ Անգլերենի հաղորդակցման և թարգմանության
ամբիոնի կողմից՝ 10.03.2021**