

Book Review

Gian Luigi De Rosa, Francesca Bianchi, Antonella De Laurentiis, and Elisa Perego (eds.). 2014. *Translating humor in audiovisual texts*. Bern: Peter Lang. 533 pp, ISBN 978-3-0343-1555-5

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Gian Luigi De Rosa, Francesca Bianchi, Antonella De Laurentiis, and Elisa Perego have edited a varied collection of 22 studies focusing on how humor is translated in audiovisual texts. Their aim is to present an overview of research into this area of humor translation with a particular focus on television, cinema, and videogames. The volume opens with a Foreword, Preface and an *Introducción* which all serve to introduce the book's three main themes: humor, translation, and audiovisuals.

In her Foreword, Elisa Perego briefly outlines the book's rationale and contents. She summarizes the main strategies and preferences in the translation of humor identified by the case-studies, ending with a positive acknowledgement of the translators' creative problem-solving skills despite the constraints placed on their work. Delia Chiaro's preface is a concise but thorough review of how humor travels across countries and cultures, a process enhanced by the power of new digital and technological media. Chiaro stresses the need to focus attention on how humor is used not only in/by the traditional audiovisual modes but also first and foremost in the new media.

The *Introducción* by Patrick Zabalbeascoa deals with the combination of languages as a humor mechanism and as a problem for audiovisual translation. The author presents thirteen variables implicated in the translation of humor, two case-studies, and makes a commendable attempt to categorize all the possible linguistic combinations and translation strategies to render a third language. However, his overuse of equations and acronyms does not make for easy reading.

The volume's first major section is on "Humour and Cartoons" and offers six contributions which provide a contrastive analysis of the original and the dubbed and/or the subtitled version of four animations: *Shrek*, *Rio*, *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* and *Wreck-it-Ralph*. The first two chapters, by Judit Mudriczki and Vincenza Minutella, respectively, discuss the translated versions of the *Shrek* films and detail the translation choices made in their dubbing and subtitling. Both Mudriczki and Minutella discuss examples of linguistic and culture-specific elements, analyzing them in terms of the translators' chosen strategies. The third and fourth contributions both discuss how

sociolinguistic variation is adapted in Italian and Brazilian renderings of *Rio*. Silvia Bruti focuses on its simulation in the Italian dubbed version and Gian Luigi De Rosa describes the strategies used to translate and preserve its original variety in the Brazilian version. The two concluding chapters focus on the translation of wordplay as a source of humor. Alessandra Rollo gives an overview of humor studies that is not limited to verbal humor and provides a solid basis for her exploration of the translation strategies used to adapt humorous wordplay from French into Italian. Elena Manca and Daesy Aprile show what constraints affect the translation of humorous expressions and how they can be overcome.

The six studies of the second section, “Translating transcultural humor,” focus on the question of how successfully (or not) the humorous intent represented by the use of satire, multilingualism, culture-specific references, and different kinds of humor and linguistic varieties was reproduced in the target language versions. Brigid Maher’s chapter concludes that, albeit imperfectly, the final dubbed version of this film does allow the Italian audience to appreciate the film’s comedy. Giuseppe De Bonis then explores the role played by multilingualism in creating and conveying humor and the challenge it represents for audiovisual translators. The third chapter, by Lucia Ruiz Rosendo, presents data from a questionnaire that sampled three different audiences which, not surprisingly, corroborate her hypothesis that humor reception varies not only across cultures but also within the film’s original culture. Elisa Lupetti provides a contrastive analysis of the kinds of humor that characterize the French film *Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis* and their translation into Italian, and concludes that the constraints imposed by dubbing can make or break a foreign film – at least in the Italian market. Beatrice Garzelli’s case-study surveys the translation of Spanish film-maker Almodóvar’s humor into Italian and analyzes the Italian subtitles of three specific films, concluding that the universality of his message and style allows his films to transcend linguistic barriers. By adopting the contrastive analysis approach, Antonella De Laurentiis examines the humorous rendering of the Neapolitan dialect, and the stereotypes attached to it, in the dubbed Spanish version of the Italian film *Benvenuti al Sud*.

The third section, “Humour and dubbing,” deals with the adaptation of humor in dubbing, though two of its chapters are probably misplaced as they focus on subtitling respectively for the deaf and for the hard of hearing. Juan José Martínez Sierra analyses the Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions of *The Simpsons* and concludes that no significant differences emerge from either concerning their humorous elements. Giovanna Di Pietro provides a well-documented overview of how a punch-line is created and structured and a multi-modal analysis of word order, kinesic synchrony, and comic timing in the Italian

dubbing of the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. The third and fourth chapters are those that appear to be ill-positioned. Claudia Buffagni identifies the kinds of humor present in a German film and analyzes how they are translated in the German subtitles supplied for the hard-of-hearing. Valeria Rocco addresses the translation and reinvention of verbally expressed humor in the English and French subtitles of a Portuguese film and tries to prove that the levelling out of the film's original humorous intent in the subtitles is not inevitable. Laura A. Colaci's contribution examines how culture-bound terms identifiable in a German film are rendered in its Italian dubbed version. She shows how the translators' target audience-oriented dubbed text expresses the nuances and cultural specificity of the original.

The fourth section, "Humor and subtitling," has three contributions. Thorsten Schröter's chapter represents an attempt to use Grice's original four categories (quantity, quality, relation, and manner) plus a fifth (politeness) as tools for the analysis of subtitled humor. In a style reminiscent of Joycean stream of consciousness, and with virtually no bibliographic references and only a passing reference to translation, Marco Cipolloni presents an analysis of the ABBA songs featuring in the musical's cinematic version. Francesca Bianchi's chapter describes how cognitive processes fit into creativity and translation and what she defines as the Stable Hyper-Islands Procedure (SHIP), which is applied to the creative translation process of a sample of students' work on an animated film.

The two chapters of the last section, "Humor and videogames," are both based on Incongruity Theory. Ornella Lepre examines an under-researched area of humor translation studies and uses examples from popular videogames to highlight the fact that their humor is multidimensional and co-created via the players' interactions with the game itself. Pietro Luigi Iaia deals with the culture-bound transcreation processes involved in rendering diatopically and diastratically marked language into Italian.

Readers and researchers of humor and translation studies will welcome this collection as an interesting introduction to its specific field. It may also represent a starting point for others new to the subject, as it supplies a sound overview of the most popular theories and classifications so far available. However, although presenting a substantial and indeed sometimes repetitive array of case-studies on dubbing and subtitling various audiovisual products, the book makes no theoretical or methodological attempt to draw on other disciplines traditionally involved in humor studies. This means that anyone uninitiated in this area of research may fail to appreciate all the work so far accomplished. In fact, with very few exceptions (for example Buffagni, Rosendo and Bianchi, in the volume), the research methodology employed by the present authors is

limited to contrastive analyses of the dubbed and/or subtitled versions in a variety of languages of one or more audiovisual products. Hence, even though readers will obtain a general idea of how the main translation theories may be applied to humor in AVT, the book is flawed by omitting reference to a range of studies carried out using a wide array of methodologies resulting from the long-standing tradition of interdisciplinarity that characterizes humor studies.

From a more formal point of view, the rationale for grouping the chapters into the six sections should be presented more clearly for example in Perego's *Foreword*. After reading the whole book, one remains unclear whether a division based on translation modes or on audiovisual products is the method being applied by the editors. This reviewer's final reservation concerns the editing, given numerous typos, grammatical and syntactic irregularities, plus inconsistencies in formatting, that appear in every chapter – evidence of very superficial proofreading.

Nevertheless, with this edited collection De Rosa's team do show that Translation Studies as a field manifests a great and growing interest in the study of translating humor, and also demonstrate the current need to shift away from the well-researched paradigms borrowed from translation theory in order to import and adapt research methodologies from other disciplines. This would inject fresher blood into a field that is ripe for future innovative research.