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*The Simpsons: A Case of Evolution in Humour and
Audiovisual Translation*

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ABSTRACT

Audiovisual translation is present in on our everyday life, whenever we watch TV or consume any kind of visual product there has been a previous work which is barely noticed. Humour constitutes a great part of this field as is one of the main resources that a film or show uses to engage with the spectators. Both AVT and humour have evolved enormously throughout the years so, in this paper, we aim to shed some light into this fact by analysing one of the most watched TV shows, *The Simpsons*, both the original version and the Spanish one, to prove and explain why this evolution has occurred.

Keywords: The Simpsons, audiovisual translation, humour, translation evolution, dubbing

RESUMEN

La traducción audiovisual está presente en nuestro día a día, ya sea al ver la televisión o al consumir cualquier tipo de producto visual ha habido un trabajo previo que pasa desapercibido. El humor constituye una gran parte de este tema ya que es uno de los recursos principales que una película o serie utiliza para enganchar al espectador. Ambos la TAV y el humor han evolucionado enormemente durante los años pues, en este trabajo, vamos a tratar de arrojar luz a este asunto analizando una de las series de televisión más vistas, *Los Simpson*, tanto la versión original como la traducción al castellano, para demostrar y explicar el porqué de esta evolución.

Palabras clave: Los Simpson, traducción audiovisual, humor, evolución de la traducción, doblaje

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1. INTRODUCTION

The visual media has attracted a lot of attention in the last decades, many more films and series are being created and broadcasted daily with the help of online platforms such as YouTube or Netflix. This increase in offer demands more translators specialized in the audiovisual media, being Spain a main referent in the subject, as the major AVT tendency is dubbing.

Humour constitutes a great part of the translation research, as it is considered as one of the most difficult areas of expertise due to its subjectivity and high reliance in language features which are not equal to every language. No different, humour is very relevant in audiovisual translation, many shows and films effectivity rely solely in humour, so maintaining that comical value is key to achieve the popularity of the original audiovisual text.

Both humour and AVT have evolved a lot in the last years, with the globalization and the development of new technologies many spectators around the world have gained more cultural awareness, implying that more creative and complex jokes can be made, as well as new ways of translating those jokes.

In this paper, the evolution of both humour and audiovisual translation will be covered applying it to the famous American TV show *The Simpsons*, looking for evidence to show: the progress of humour during the series, the consequent evolution of translation, the types of translation techniques used in regard to the type of humour in the show and to prove the quality of the Spanish translation providing several worthy examples and statistics.

This work will provide both a theoretical and a practical insight about translating humour in audiovisual sources. To achieve this, sections 2 and 3 will cover basic theoretical information about audiovisual translation (specifically dubbing) and humour translation, with an approach to humour in dubbing. Section 4 will point out and comment about the different works regarding this question. Section 5 will explain how the corpus is going to be compiled and analysed, using different techniques proposed by experts in the field. Section 6 deals with the practical frame of this work, providing relevant statistics and examples to achieve a better vision of the tendencies and to help comprehend how both these areas had been evolving throughout the years, to look at this section, the corpus should be considered at any time, being necessary to read the results reflecting in the

corpus compiled. Lastly, section 7 will conclude and reflect on the results shown in order to answer the proposed questions.

2. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Audiovisual translation has come a long way, adapting foreign cultures to another one is very important, as it helps understand much more from an audiovisual source. In the first years of AVT, translation was much more difficult as the world was not as globalized as it is now, this means, that in the past, cultural references were much more difficult to understand, this was due to the long distances between countries or the radical change in culture. But nowadays, people recognize many different cultures, despite the distance. This has been achieved due to the globalization and the inclusion of the internet all around the world, and people can now consume non-adapted products as they fully comprehend the contents.

This has a clear impact in translation too, as now translations are much more flexible, and the translator role is to be imaginative on how to include those references into the target culture, having a wide range of options to choose from, knowing that the spectator would understand the texts anyways. If we speak about our topic, *The Simpsons* have evolved enormously in these 30 years, at the beginning, the translation tended to be literal, as the American culture was not so known in Spain, and many cultural references and jokes were omitted and missed, but within the years, the translator, Maria José Aguirre del Cárcer has evolved at the same time as the show, whose translations have improved up to a point where the translations are almost perfect, awarding her the best *The Simpsons translation in the world* by the Fox, but most importantly, she has achieved something bigger, having all the kids and parents in Spain watching the series at lunch time, making the show fun for children but also for adults, which is the peak of a humoristic translation.

First and foremost, we must state what audiovisual translation is considered to be. Agost provides us with a simple and wide definition: “type of specialized translation that deals with texts intended for cinema, television, video and multimedia products” (1999). AVT, previously named screen translation and also multimedia translation, is not merely that; these were not appropriate definitions as AVT does not only cover multimedia products or texts intended to a multimedia product, but also covers anything related to the visual field and it does not imply that the audio is always a requirement, i.e. comic books or graphic novels, which are also gathered in the boundaries of audiovisual translation.

So, for the case that occupies us, we should formulate our own definition of AVT, which is our conception of the topic, not intending to invalidate the rest of definitions.

‘Audiovisual translation is the type of translation which focuses on various fields amongst the visual and auditory channels, such as multimedia products. We must consider that AVT does not only focus on texts which have a combination of visuals and audio. In fact, audiovisual translation primarily focus on the visual aspect, audio comes after, that is why we should not only consider texts intended for cinema, series or theatres as the focus of the translation.

Audiovisual translation counts with many modes, each one specialized in the different texts which constitute the field, but only two are worth mentioning, which are dubbing and subtitling. Both are the most common forms of translating audiovisual texts, and their use is highly conditioned by the target culture, the funding and the preferences of the producers/directors. We will be focusing on dubbing, as it is the main mode used in Spain, and the one use to translate *The Simpson*.

2.1. DUBBING IN AVT

Agost defines dubbing as ‘complex process defined by the need to synchronize the voices of the dubbing artists and the images of the audiovisual text’ (1999), i.e. replacing an original soundtrack with another in the target language.

So, why dubbing and not subtitling? The answer lies in the customs of Spaniards, who prefer having full dubbed series rather than keeping the original soundtrack and adding subtitles, this is due to the nationalist past, where censorship was present, so audiovisual resources had to be fully dubbed in order to avoid controversial issues being shown to the public.

Aside from the cultural preferences, dubbing is most preferred as it can convey and transfer much more than subtitling does, due to its shorter nature, which may produce losses while translating some cultural aspects. The translator also has more freedom while transferring texts, as subtitles are very restrictive and have a set of maximum characters.

Although dubbing is more flexible, some rules must be followed to remain faithful to the original text. The most important aspect to consider is synchrony, which consists on matching the TL translation and the movements of the actors and ensuring that the

utterances and pauses match the ST. There are three types of synchronism: characterization, harmony between the voice of the actor who dubs and the aspect/posturing of the in-screen actor; content, coherence between the newer version and the film's plot; visual, harmony between the visible articulatory movements and the sounds heard (also called lip-sync) (Agost, 1999). While translating, it is fundamental to maintain isochrony, i.e. adjust the translation of each statement to the length of time the characters' mouths move on screen.

Translation oscillates between two poles: adequacy to the source text and acceptability within the target culture. In dubbing, a major benchmark is that the target language sounds realistic, credible and plausible, i.e. to not distract from the storyline (Pastor Ramos, 2019).

While most audiovisual sources share the same translation rules and processes, dubbing cartoons can vary a little, as their nature is less restrictive and more creative changes can be made.

2.1.1. DUBBING IN CARTOON SERIES

Cartoons are generally dubbed in all countries because they are generally planned for children who do not know how to read or have difficulties doing so. A distinction must be made in cartoons, those intended for children from those who expect an adult public. In the case of *The Simpsons*, the original version is intended to be a harsh critic towards society, but the Spanish version also catches the attention of the younger public.

Lip-sync and isochrony are not so relevant when translating cartoons, as it is less noticeable. This is also caused because cartoons are mainly produced for children, and maintaining a visual synchrony is not so important as translating accordingly to who the target public is. The length of the utterances is prioritized, and the lip/mouth movements come in second.

Cartoons broadcasted in television usually lack intertextuality marks, complex linguistic aspects or complicated user varieties as they are made to entertain. In the case that occupies us, it is the exact contrary, the show is full of intertextuality and double senses, which complicates the translator's work, rather than making it easier, which is

usually the case. In addition, the show has a marked humoristic and critical nature which increases the complications. This aspect is going to be discussed in the following chapter.

3. THE ROLE OF HUMOUR IN TRANSLATION

Defining what or what is not humour is a difficult task, as it involves numerous factors, most of them subjective ones. When trying to state what humour is, the Oxford dictionary provides us two definitions: “The quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature and speech” and “The ability to express humour or amuse other people”. These two definitions, although correct, only define humour as a quality in someone or something which is reflected in the speech or the written language, but humour does not only concern linguistic aspects (morphology, syntax and semantics) but also “suprasegmental features, language variation and the combination of verbal and nonverbal elements that were either eliminated by definition or swept under the carpet” (Zabalbeascoa 1996a). So, the visual humour relies on the linguistic knowledge of the spectator to connect the image and the language.

Zabalbeascoa also tries to define humour as “everything which belongs to human communication with the intention of producing laughter or smile (to be funny) in the addresses of the text. This relationship between humour and grace is one of cause-effect, although humour is not the only thing that can be funny” (2001).

It is also necessary to include Nash’s theory which relies on language as the mechanism that creates humour, which has three main referents (1985):

- a. A ‘genus’ or derivation, in culture, institutions, attitudes, beliefs; typical practices, characteristics, artefacts, etc.
- b. A characteristic design, presentation of verbal packaging, by virtue of which the humorous intention is indicated and recognized.
- c. A locus in language, some word or phrase that is indispensable to the joke: the point at which humour is held and discharged.

Although we do not believe that humour only relies in words, because when words fail to transmit humour, the visual elements help achieve this characteristic in communication.

As we are going to work with jokes a measure unit, it is convenient to define what a joke is: “Anything that is intended to produce a humorous effect, i.e. while humour is a matter of effect, it is not accurate to reduce it only to effect but also to a matter of intention, since, when a sender intends to send a message with humoristic intention, humour is present in the coding of the message” (Martínez Sierra, 2004). So, a bigger

value is given to the intention, as a joke will not be funny if we do not understand or enjoy it.

Translating humour is a very difficult task, as the humour of the original text should be maintained in the target text but translating an audiovisual text can prove a bigger of a challenge. The following section is going to deal with the translation of humour in audiovisual media, specifically in the case that attains us, dubbing.

3.1. HUMOUR IN DUBBING

As stated in the previous section, translating humour from an audiovisual source can be a challenging process, not only because of the subjectivity of the humour itself, but because humour is also paired with cultural references. “Humour is culturally specific, and this is a clear major obstacle in a successful translation” (Zabalbeascoa, 1996a).

“The particular sensibility of each group of people based on different historical, social, economic, and, in one-word, cultural experiences widen the gap that makes translation difficult” (Laurian, 1992). As many of the audiovisual texts come from different countries, especially from the United States, which has a very different culture than the Spanish one, dealing with these cultural references is one of the main goals of the translators, the gap needs to be narrowed so the spectator understands and enjoys the product as much, or even more than in the original version.

The problem that is encountered when translating humour is to make the audience laugh, “the complexity is even bigger in dubbing, since the audience is supposed to laugh in the same point as the laughter is expected in the original audience” (Zabalbeascoa, 1993).

The classification by Pascua and Rey-Jouvin (2010) helps us understand which are the different humoristic resources used in audiovisual texts, it is restricted to humour based on language and it is concerned with linguistic, personal and cultural references: **linguistic** (wordplay, jokes, idioms, loans, ambiguity and neologisms), **situational** (nonsense, craziness or ridiculousness), personal (nicknames, invented names or appearance) and **cultural** (values, political correctness or incorrectness, intertextuality or advertising language) references.

Although this classification includes many humorous resources, it only covers linguistic aspects of humour, and, as stated before, language is not the only variable in humour making. So, paralinguistic references should be included too, as a foreign accent, the intonation, an imitation, or the way someone speaks, for example, can produce laughter too.

Although existing a lot of theories regarding the translation of humour, it is finally a subjective type of translation, and it is the job of the translator to maintain the humour in a piece, even if it is not the same kind or level of humour. But keeping and transmitting it is a necessary requirement in dubbing and cannot be overlooked.

4. STATE OF THE ISSUE

The Simpsons is a worldwide broadcasted series, mostly known by the political, social and educative charge that it carries, analysing, criticizing and mocking the American society and these aspects. The show also conveys more specific aspects, such as literature or representations of famous films or other series, so intertextuality is present in almost every chapter.

Due to the number of topics the show covers, many studies have been made, rather focusing on its intertextuality or about the sociological aspect of the series. In the case in question, translation, a few works have been made by different experts and students in their final dissertations and PhDs, mostly.

The most remarkable is Martínez Sierra (2004), a PhD focused on the humoristic translation in *The Simpsons*, which gives insight about the different processes and theories used to translate the show, and an overview of the state and science of audiovisual translation. This PhD was tutored by Frederic Chaume, a renowned expert in the field.

There are some more cases in the form of final dissertations, such as the final paper by Martínez Montagut (2017) which is interesting, as it presents the differences in translation of peninsular Spanish and Mexican Spanish, providing insight about the different cultures and the way a translation is made.

Some articles have also been published on the same topic, as we have Lorenzo, Pereira & Xoubanova (2014), where an analysis of the humoristic translation is carried, based on the theories by Agost, Hatim, Mason and Zabalbeascoa, dividing the analysis into three categories based on the dimension, being pragmatic, semiotic and communicative. The work by Martínez Sierra (2016), based on his previously mentioned PhD and many other theorists such as Chiaro or Zabalbeascoa, illustrates how wordplay is used for humoristic purposes and how jokes are transferred from one language into another, focusing on the case of *The Simpsons*.

Having studied and analysed these works, a proper methodology can be formulated based in previous texts, which is presented in the next topic.

5. METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned, the methodology used in this research is a combination of previous works from theorists from the field, which have been used in previous texts too.

The methodology is a combination of two different classifications presented by Zabalbeascoa (2001) and Delabastita (1993).

The first one is a classification of jokes used in audiovisual texts. This classification is based on the cultural aspect of the jokes, which are classified in terms of country, i.e. if it is an international or national joke, etc. This classification is preferred as it fits perfectly with the series itself, as it heavily loaded with cultural references from the United States, which has a huge contrast from the European culture. The original version jokes are going to be classified following this method.

Types	Description
International	The source and the target have an equivalent due to their cultural similarity.
National/cultural/institutional	The cultural/institutional reference must be adapted, if not, the humoristic effect would be lost (e.g. The New York Times)
National	The humoristic effect relies in the boundaries of a country or community, i.e, stereotypes, for example.
Language-dependent	Depend on features of the language, such as polysemy, homophony or zeugmas.
Visual	Depend on what is seen on-screen,
Complex	Combines one or more of the previous types of jokes.

Table 1. Classification of jokes from the translator's perspective (Zabalbeascoa, 2001)

When classifying the translations done, Delabastita's theory (1993) excels, as it covers a wide range of options and analyses almost any case of translation that might or might not cause problems. In his work, Delabastita considers a pun as an exchangeable

unit, and an exchange is always produced, even if the result is the complete deletion of the pun, or the addition of a new one.

Technique	Description
PUN > PUN	An equivalent was found in the target language, whether it is or not the same pun.
PUN > NON-PUN	The wordplay is only maintained in the source text, losing the humorous element in the target text.
PUN > PUNOID	Compensatory translation as the translator could not find an adequate equivalent for the direct translation (addition of different wordplay, rhetorical devices, parallelisms or paradoxes).
DIRECT COPY	Leaving the wordplay in its source form.
TRANSFERENCE	Converting into the target language but leaving contents from the original text.
PUN > ZERO	Omitting the wordplay and the text where it is found.
NON-PUN > PUN	Creating a wordplay where there was not.
ZERO > PUN	Introducing a wordplay where in the source text was blank (compensatory technique used to balance for the omitted or lost in previous translations).

Table 2. Strategies for translating wordplay (Delabastita, 1993)

Although old, this table yet illustrates a useful and reliable guideline to deal with the translation of humour. This classification is not meant to be followed thoroughly, but to be used as help. Having said so, one of the aims of this paper is to give insight of the mental process followed by the translator while translating the series.

5.1. CORPUS COMPILATION

Having stated the methodology to follow, it is necessary to illustrate how, and which extracts are to be analysed, and the way they are gathered and chosen. As the work deals with the evolution of the translation, the extracts will be taken from the first, the fifteenth and the twenty-fifth, the original intention was to analyse the last season, which as of 2019 is the thirtieth season. An episode will be analysed from each season, to remain impartial about the choice of episode, the most watched episodes will be chosen according to the Nielsen ratings from Nielsen Media Research, i.e. “*Life on the Fast Lane*” for season 1, “*I, (Annoyed Grunt)- Bot*” for season 15 and “*Steal this Episode*” for season 25.

Table 3 illustrates how the extracts are going to be analysed and classified, giving extra information (the chapter, season, the context of the chapter or the specific moment of the extract, the character who spoke or a possible translation) rather than only displaying the segment and its equivalent in Spanish.

EXAMPLE TABLE	
Chapter information	
Context	
V.O. Segment	Translated segment
Joke type	Translation technique
Character (optional)	
Possible translation	

Table 3. Example card to analyze a segment.

After each table a commentary will be given explaining the translation process and the classification done, as well as any other relevant data that must be shared.

The corpus was compiled by first watching the episode on its original version, noting down those fragments that could be important, and then watching the same episode in its Spanish version and noting the equivalent fragment. A total of 63 entries form the corpus, and the results will be commented in a further chapter.

The following chapter will focus on the exclusive analysis of the important extracts and a commentary on the translation, with a possible own translation when necessary. It is necessary to read the analysis while looking at the corpus provided.

6. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF *THE SIMPSONS*

As stated before, the compiled corpus contains 63 extracts from the series. In figure 1 we can see the percentage of extracts from each season.

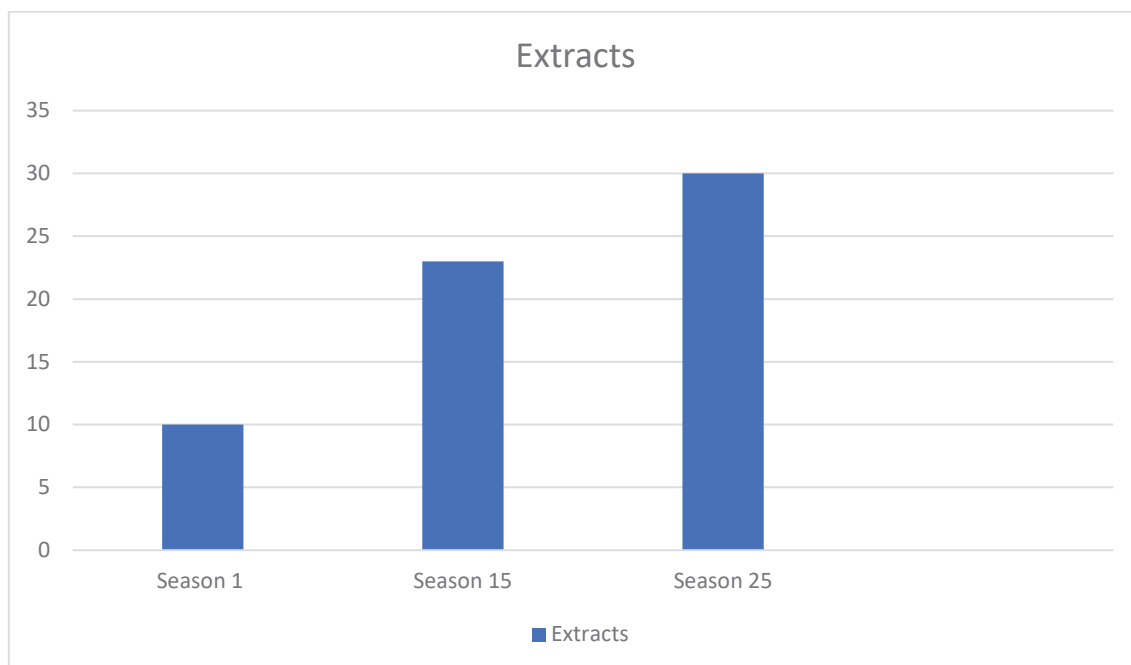


Figure 1. Table of extracts.

Although compiling these extracts is the result of a subjective choice, we can see that the humorous excerpts vary a lot from season to season, specially from the beginning of the series towards the end, having the twenty-fifth season triplicating the number of the first one. This shows that the number of humorous devices has increased during the years, in a progressive way, apart from the quality of the humour, which is difficult to evaluate. At a first glance, we can clearly observe that *The Simpsons* is an evolving series, at least, in what humour refers to.

First, we need to determine which types are more frequently used in the series, employing the previously detailed classification by Zabalbeascoa (2001).

Type		Percentage
International		33 (52,38%)
Cultural		3 (4,76%)
Institutional		2 (3,17%)
National		6 (9,52%)
Language-dependent		5 (7,93%)
Visual		3 (4,76%)
Complex 11 (17,46%)	Language-dependent/cultural	7 (63,63%)
	Language-dependent/international	3 (27,27%)
	International/visual	1 (9,09%)

Table 4. Percentage of jokes in the three analysed seasons.

Table 4 illustrates the percentage of each type of joke in all the analysed seasons. We observe that International jokes are the preference, as they constitute more than the 50% of the extracts. Many jokes are easily translated as they have a cultural equivalent, or because the cultures are similar to each other.

Complex jokes follow, but as they are complex, we need to divide them into the different jokes that conform them, out of the three combinations, language-dependent and cultural jokes stand out, being also the most used jokes after the Complex ones, as well as national jokes. This tells us that the humour of the series relies on cultural specific aspects such as bowling terms, or music-related, as well as being dependent of the language, as many jokes are humoristic due to the way language is used, either phonetically or creating new words based on existing ones. National jokes also are important, as America is populated by many different ethnic groups, such as Native Americans or Mexicans.

Unexpectedly, very few jokes are Visual, of course the visuals are very relevant in the humour of the series, but very few jokes completely rely on them; instead, the visuals are used just to reinforce the verbal jokes.

Finally, institutional jokes are niche, they are very rarely used, tied to specific situations, as those dealing with foreign representatives.

Overall, the jokes employed either have an equivalent or express the same in both cultures, or are related with language and the proper American culture.

Having stated and analysed the general data, we must see how the humour has evolved throughout the show.

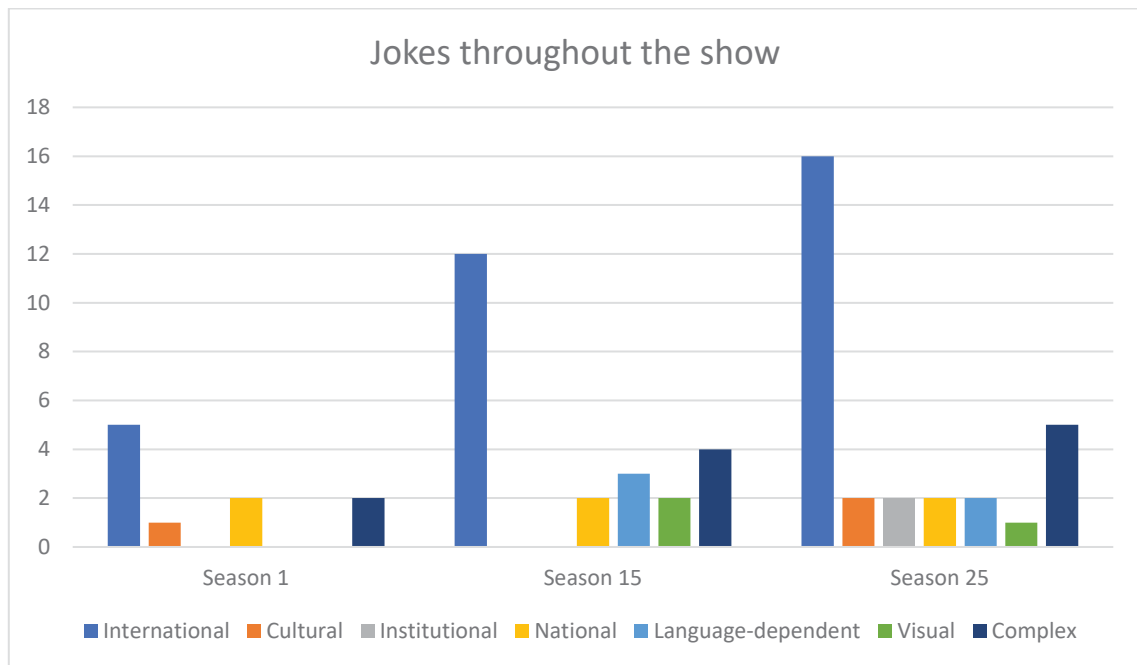


Figure 2. Jokes evolution throughout the show.

Figure 2 represents the evolution of jokes from the start to season 25, we can see what was previously mentioned, the number of jokes has increased substantially. At a first glance, International jokes remain on top for the three seasons. Complex jokes also increase, doubling the number in the latest seasons.

Some joke categories are introduced in more advanced seasons, it is the case of Institutional, Language-dependent and Visual jokes. There is a clear evolution in jokes, not only in the number, but also in the variety. Although International jokes remain the

most common, but many other varieties arise, which makes the humour evolve to a richer one.

One of the hypotheses that arise while analysing the data, is that the screenwriters might chose not to use some kind of jokes at the beginning of the series as they did not have any experience with the media and the public, and started using a wider variety of jokes as they became experienced with their own show and the spectators. Another possible explanation is that, taking into account the impact of globalization, screenwriters widened their joke types, as many of them can now be understood without being American, as if the spectators evolved with the series.

Introducing new jokes not only affects the humoristic output, it also affects the translation in two different ways. It makes the translation more complex, as the joke types are variated, and the translator requires more expertise and knowledge about the comical effect of them, but it also gives more options while translating, resulting in a diverse, rich and even funnier adaptation.

As the evolution of humour is already presented and analysed, we must do the same with the type of translation used, following the previously stated method, Delabastita's strategies for translating wordplay (1993).

Type	Percentage
PUN > PUN	39 (61,90%)
PUN > NON-PUN	9 (14,28%)
PUN > PUNOID	6 (9,52%)
DIRECT COPY	0 (0%)
TRANSFERENCE	6 (9,52%)
PUN > ZERO	0 (0%)
NON-PUN > PUN	2 (3,17%)
ZERO > PUN	1 (1,58%)

Table 5. Type of translation percentage in the three analysed seasons.

Table 5 shows that the vast majority of jokes (61,90%) have an equivalent in the target language, either being or not the same pun. Only a 14% of the jokes lose the humoristic aspect. Some jokes have to be changed as the translator could not find a suitable adaptation, creating a punoid, this is the case of a 9,52% of the jokes. Although no direct copies are found in the excerpts, there are some transferences (9,52%) as the

humoristic effect would be lost if using a direct translation. There are not any deleted jokes in the target version, but there is a small number of newly created jokes which did not exist in the original version, a 1,58%. Finally, there are some non-humoristic excerpts which became humoristic after the translation, it is the case of a 3,17%.

The data presented above shows that, overall, the translated version of the show delivers a great humoristic adaptation, with a small loss of its characteristic jokes and satire. Only a 14,28% of the excerpts lose the comical value, leaving us with an 85,72% of excerpts which maintained the humour, whether an equivalent was found, a new joke was created, or the original was modified to produce a humoristic effect.

The cases where the comical value was lost, are those related with culturally specific jokes or with language-dependent jokes, which are complex to translate as both languages differ a lot.

EXAMPLE 1	
Chapter information: Season 25, episode 9	
Context: Homer is at the cinema complaining about the advertisements.	
O.V. Segment: If I wanted to pay for commercials I can't skip, I'd sing up for Hulu Plus.	Translated segment: Si quisiera ver anuncios sin poder pasarlos, estaría viendo la tele en casa.
Joke type: Cultural	Translation technique: PUN>NON-PUN
Character (optional): Homer	
Possible translation: Si quisiera pagar por algo que no quiero ver, me habría suscrito a Netflix.	

Table 6. PUN > NON-PUN example (1) and possible translation.

Table 6 shows an example of a PUN > NON-PUN translation, where the joke had not the same impact as the original. The comical value in the O.V. version lies on *Hulu TV*, a broadcasting service, which maintains the advertisements even though a subscription is required. The joke is replaced as it is not a common service in Spain and

leaving it would result in confusion. As the translated segment lacks humour, a newer version has been proposed, in line with the original version, but replacing *Hulu* with *Netflix*, which is the most known broadcasting service. With this change, the essence of the joke is maintained, as well as the comical effect.

EXAMPLE 2	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart is trying to destroy his bike and throws it into the road, Doctor Hibbert runs over it.	
V.O. Segment: What the Halle Berry?	Translated segment: Halle Berry santísima.
Joke type: Complex (language-dependent/cultural)	Translation technique: PUN > NON-PUN
Character (optional): Doctor Hibbert	
Possible translation: ¿Pero que ha pachado?	

Table 7. PUN > NON-PUN example (2) and possible translation.

Table 7 illustrates another example of a PUN > NON-PUN translation. In this case, the joke was formed by playing with phonology, due to the similarities of *hell* and *Halle*, the expression *What the hell?* is transformed into an intertextual reference. The translated version maintains the reference, but the humour was lost, as there is not an equivalent wordplay. The possible change introduced is the result of creating a punoid, replacing the entire joke. This translation relies in a typical joke used by the Spanish comedian Joaquín Reyes, joke which is used a lot by him and in the Late-Night TV show *La Resistencia*¹. In this version, an intertextual reference is also used, and can be easier to be understood by the spectators, who may not know who Halle Berry is.

Both changes are intended for the actual year, without taking into account the year the episode was broadcasted. They also respect the length of the original extract, so they

¹ The decision of choosing this TV show is that, due to its format and its guests, it has gained a lot of popularity among young adults, sharing the same audience as *The Simpsons*, so it is probable that they understand the references from the show.

are easily synchronized with the image. Also, these changes are not intended to be better than the ones done by the show translator, they are just possible translations based on our culture nowadays.

After analysing the overall data, it is needed to evaluate the different translation strategies used in each season, in order to give insight into the pattern followed in each one and also to watch the evolution throughout the seasons.

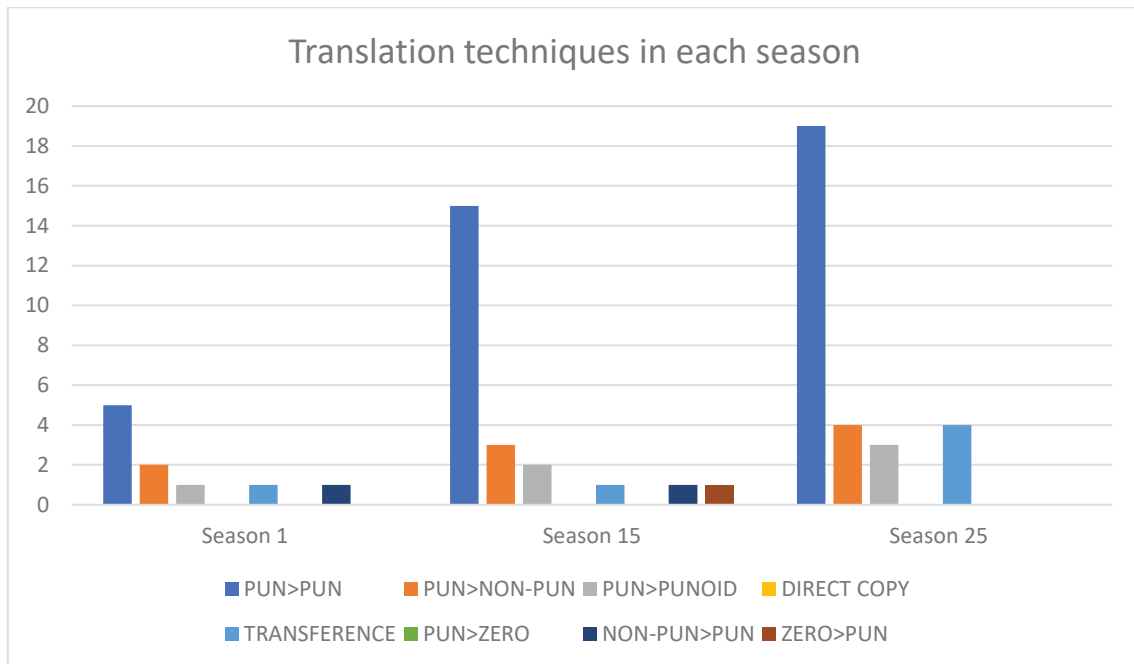


Figure 3. Translation strategies in each season.

Figure 3 provides the evolution of the translation techniques used. PUN>PUN translation grows exponentially as expected as many jokes obtained an equivalent though the years due to the globalization, as mentioned before. A notable increase can be seen transference, this is produced because spectators have become aware of many cultural-bound terms and leaving them untranslated does not produce strangeness, in this way, the comical value is not lost and produces laughter in both versions. The creation of punoids increases slightly, meaning that the translator has decided to maintain the comical value by changing the joke, in this case, the essence of the original joke is lost, but humour remains, which has more importance. PUN>NON-PUN cases increase slightly because the number of extracts increases in each season, but the number of instances is very low which, as mentioned before, makes the loss of humour a niche.

The creation of new humoristic cases (NON-PUN>PUN and ZERO>PUN) only occur in season 1 and 15, and totally disappear in season 25. In the first instances, the percentages of usage of them is very low, but they are yet used. This does not occur in the last season. The possible reasons behind the low number of humoristic additions may be:

- the script, its structure does not allow to add new jokes as there is no space;
- synchronization issues, as previously mentioned, synchronization is a very important part of dubbing, and enlarging phrases may difficult this;
- the company may limit the translator and making additions is not allowed;
- and the no need of compensatory translations as these two techniques are frequently used as compensatory methods. The number of successful translations is already very high, so there is no need for compensation.

EXAMPLE 3	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart's robot is fighting Frink's robot, and he is receiving a beating, the bell saves him.	
V.O. Segment: End of round one.	Translated segment: Fin del primer asalto, quedan 230 más.
Joke type: International	Translation technique: ZERO>PUN
Character (optional): Commentator	
Possible translation: No need for possible translation.	

Table 8. ZERO>PUN example.

Table 8 shows an example of a joke created where there was nothing. In this case, the translator opted for an exaggeration, as it reinforces the beating the robot is receiving. This addition was possible because the commentator is in VOICE OFF, so synchronization is not an issue, and it acts as a compensatory translation of a previous PUN>NON-PUN joke.

EXAMPLE 4	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart is asking his father to buy him a new, bigger bike. Marge interferes in the conversation refusing to buy the bike.	
V.O. Segment: The kitchen lady's right.	Translated segment: La cocinitas tiene razón.
Joke type: International	Translation technique: NON-PUN>PUN
Character (optional): Homer	
Possible translation: La cocinillas tiene razón.	

Table 9. NON-PUN>PUN example.

In this case, Table 9 shows a NON-PUN>PUN example, where the original excerpt was a non-comical one, and the translation changes it into a humoristic one by using wordplay like *cocinitas*². The proposed translation is *cocinillas*³ which suits better the scene and Marge's character. In this instance, both translations suit well, as well as adding a comical value to the original segment.

After analysing both humour and translation and their evolution, we need to analyse them together, so we can get insight into which translation technique is used in every type of joke.

² That likes to cook or is good at cooking

³ Person who interferes in domestic affairs, especially in the kitchen, which are none of his business. Person who likes to cook.

Type	International	Cultural	Institutional	National	Language-dependent	Visual	Complex
PUN>PUN	25 (75,75%)	0 (0%)	1 (50,00%)	4 (66,66%)	3 (60,00%)	3 (100%)	3 (27,27%)
PUN>NON-PUN	3 (9,09%)	1 (33,33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (20,00%)	0 (0%)	4 (36,36%)
PUN>PUNOID	1 (3,03%)	1 (33,33%)	0 (0%)	2 (33,33%)	1 (20,00%)	0 (0%)	1 (9,09%)
TRANSFERENCE	1 (3,03%)	1 (33,33%)	1 (50,00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (27,27%)
NON-PUN>PUN	2 (6,06%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
ZERO>PUN	1 (3,03%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	33	3	2	6	5	3	11

Table 10. Percentage of translation techniques used in each joke type.

Table 10 represents the percentage of translation techniques employed in each joke instance. DIRECT COPY and PUN>ZERO are not included in the table as their overall percentage is 0, there are no instances of these techniques.

International jokes are mostly translated as PUN>PUN (75,75%) as the jokes usually have an equivalent or are similar in both languages. The instances where the humoristic translation was not achieved are very low (9,09%), the rest of cases are produced because either the script permitted it, like the segment shown in Table 8, or because there was a Spanish equivalent which suited best, like Table 11.

EXAMPLE 5	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart is wondering if he heard his robot talking, while Homer totally denies it.	
V.O. Segment: The hell it did.	Translated segment: De eso nada monada.
Joke type: International	Translation technique: PUN>PUNOID
Character (optional): Homer	
Possible translation: No need for possible translation.	

Table 11. International joke converted into PUNOID.

In this case the joke is converted into a Spanish saying, which makes the comical value closer to the culture, as well as maintaining the essence of the original.

No cultural jokes are translated via PUN>PUN, as these instances are culturally strong and there are no Spanish equivalents, so jokes have to be translated via PUNOID or TRANSFERENCE, or eliminating the comical value, as seen in Table 6. In the counterpart, institutional jokes are a straightforward choice, being PUN>PUN or TRANSFERENCE based, as institutions have an equivalent or their name remains.

National jokes are easily translated, as they are based on stereotypes which are known around the world, so translating them does not prove a problem being a 66,66% PUN>PUN translated, and the 33,33% converted into PUNOID.

At first, language-dependent jokes seem to be difficult to translate, but the percentages show that most jokes do not lose humoristic value when translated, being only a 20% those which lose it.

Visual jokes are all translated PUN>PUN, because the jokes rely more in the visual impact rather than in words.

EXAMPLE 6	
Chapter information: Season 25, episode 9	
Context: Homer comes back after escaping prison, and Marge tells him to go back.	
V.O. Segment: There's no shampoo, just soap!	Translated segment: No tienen champú, solo jabón.
Joke type: Visual	Translation technique: PUN>PUN
Character (optional): Homer	
Possible translation: No need for possible translation.	

Table 12. Visual joke PUN>PUN.

As seen in Table 12, the joke itself is not as comical as other ones, as we need an image, which is Homer being bald. What this tells us is that visual jokes can be more easily and freely translated, as the image will take the humoristic value.

Finally, Complex jokes are the ones which have the higher percentage of PUN>NON-PUN translations (36,36%), as they are formed by various joke types, increasing the difficulty, but still the translator did a great job, as the rest of jokes maintain their comical value, sometimes with an equivalent (27,27%) or using a TRANSFERENCE (27,27%) and in some cases creating a PUNOID. 10 out of 11 Complex jokes are formed by language-dependent instances joint with cultural and international jokes. Those language-dependent/cultural jokes are the ones which lose the comical sense, as both categories are those which prove to be more difficult to adapt into the Spanish culture, as seen in Table 7. But some Complex jokes are also perfectly translated, as shown in Table 13 and 14.

EXAMPLE 7	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart is trying to destroy his bike and throws it into the road, Doctor Hibbert runs over it.	
V.O. Segment: Celebration´s over, boys.	Translated segment: Se acabó la Celebration chicos.
Joke type: Complex (language dependent/cultural)	Translation technique: TRANSFERENCE
Character (optional): Doctor Hibbert	
Possible translation: No need for possible translation.	

Table 13. Complex joke TRANSFERENCE

In this example, a TRANSFERENCE is used to deal with the Complex joke, which deals with a cultural reference and plays with the language: *Celebration* is a well-known song by the group Kool & The Gang. In this case it works as both the cultural and the language-dependent joke. A TRANSFERENCE is used as the group is also known in Spain and if it was adapted a loss in humour could happen. This translation works perfectly as the comical value is maintained, and the joke is understood in the target culture.

EXAMPLE 8	
Chapter information: Season 15, episode 9	
Context: Bart's robot gets into the final and has to fight the leading champion, Frink's robot.	
V.O. Segment: Knock-a-Homer will try to unseat the five-time defending champion Smashius Clay, AKA Killhammad Aieee!	Translated segment: ¡Machaca Homer tratará de destronar al cinco veces campeón Puñiles Clay, alias Matahamed Ali!
Joke type: Complex (language dependent/cultural)	Translation technique: PUN>PUN
Character (optional): Commentator	
Possible translation: No need for possible translation.	

Table 14. Complex joke PUN>PUN.

This last example proves the quality of the Spanish translation, the joke plays with different cultural references: first, the robot's name is based on a Native American's name; making up a name combining it with a verb, based on Cassius Marcellus Clay, also known as Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest fighters of all time. The translator opted by following the essence of the original joke, keeping that Native American essence to the name, *Jefe Machaca Homer*, and respects the reference made to the boxer, choosing *Puñiles* referring to him as he used only his fists, as well as keeping his name.

6.1. FINAL REMARKS

This analysis although small, proves that the translation of *The Simpsons* is one of a great quality, as there are no jokes left untranslated, and the percentage of jokes which maintain the comical value is very high. We can clearly see an evolution in both the humour and translation, especially in humour, due to the globalization, making cultures closer to each other, leading to a point where the jokes are understood by almost anyone

around the world. The possible translations offered are just an adaption to the present year, and in no way are intended to be perfect ones.

Finally, it is necessary to state that the analysis can be highly improved if done with a much bigger corpus, analysing the in between seasons to see what happened in them, in order to understand the evolution after 30 years of broadcast.

7. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Having noted the results of the study carried out and given the proper and useful examples, we must conclude answering the questions proposed in the beginning of the paper and give a global insight about the proposed issue.

Regarding the question of humour, the show has triplicated the number of humorous resources from the beginning of the show, which shows a clear improvement. More than half of the jokes are International, which means that the both the cultures are now close enough to have equivalent jokes. Only two more jokes are worth mentioning, National jokes which pose almost a 10% as the series' purpose is to criticize the American society; and, Complex jokes which represent a 17%. Looking at the evolution of jokes, International jokes do not stop increasing, as well as complex jokes. Some jokes were newly introduced in the more advanced seasons of the show, such as language-dependent or visual jokes. This induces us to think that the tendency will continue increasing in the following seasons of the show. In the counterpart, although posing a significant percentage, national jokes do not increase nor decrease within seasons, leading to a stable tendency.

Moving into translation techniques, PUN>PUN practices pose more than a 60% while PUN>NON-PUN only represent a 14%, with a quick glance, this means that the translation is very efficient, meeting the most important requirement in humoristic translation, making laugh. Transferences and the creation of punoids also represent a important number, almost a 10% each. Looking into these percentages we can affirm that the translator better prefers altering the translation rather than losing the joke. It is also worth mentioning the creation of new puns or the NON-PUN>PUN cases that, although having a low percentage, mean that the translation has great quality. If we look at the evolution of jokes, not only it maintains the PUN>PUN effectivity, but it increases throughout the show, as well as the creation of punoids and transferences, meaning that the quality of the translation improves rather than maintaining the quality. In the case of PUN>NON-PUN, the number increases because the number of jokes rises, but it does not have such a growth as seen in the previous cases. We must also note that creating jokes or converting non-comical situations into funny comments only occur in the middle season, which does not guarantee that this will continue in incoming seasons.

Evaluating the type of translation used in each joke, we come to the conclusion that, as previously mentioned, it is only worth commenting International, National and Complex jokes. International jokes are translated PUN>PUN in a 75% of the cases, due to the fact that the joke has equivalents in both languages, so achieving a good translation does not pose a problem. National jokes have mainly a PUN>PUN translation because we already know much about the American culture, but in some occasions punoids need to be created as the joke is very culturally specific and a reformulation is needed. Lastly, Complex jokes differ from the rest, as it is the only one which the highest number of PUN>NON-PUN due to the complexity of many jokes. They also count with many different types of translation, depending in the types of jokes combined, in many times leading to transferences, as some aspects of a joke do not have a clear equivalent, and the translator opts for maintaining the original version rather than losing the joke.

Having concluded with the data presented, we must answer the research questions proposed:

1. Evolution of humour throughout the show: there is a clear evolution, the number of jokes increases drastically, but not only does the number grow, but the quality does too, and will continue increasing in the future as many jokes are understood nowadays and screenwriters can adventure in the introduction of more complex and imaginative ones.
2. Evolution in the translation: evolution can be seen too, especially from season 1 to season 15, where the PUN>PUN cases rise exponentially, as well as introducing new ways of translating in the latest seasons. The series evolves, but so does the translator, which has been translating since the very beginning, and this can be clearly seen as she maintains a different register for each character, which makes the final result to be closer to the spectator.
3. Relation between jokes and ways to be translated: most of the different types of humoristic resources have been translated PUN>PUN, which does not offer a very detailed relation, having only Complex jokes as the exception, having more losses in humour than any of the other types.
4. Quality of the translation: as mentioned in the theoretical background, the Spanish translation of the show has gained an award by the Fox, this is supported by the fact that only a 14% of the extracts lose their comical value, which represents a very small percentage taking into account that many jokes are very culturally

bounded, resulting in a very challenging translation. The examples provided also prove this quality, which range from very basic jokes to the creation of newly created jokes, which, from a subjective point of view, a lot of the times the translated versions result funnier than the original one.

All in all, analysing the results globally, the humoristic translation of *The Simpsons* shows that there has been a remarkable improvement and evolution throughout the seasons, as well as proving to be a high-quality translation.

Lastly, we must comment how this work can be expanded. As this paper has only barely started the issue, a deeper research could be done by adding the in-between seasons as well as more episodes in order to contrast those results with the ones presented in this dissertation. Another possible expansion may be adding the South American Spanish translation and comparing the three cases, as there is a huge difference between Castilian and South American Spanish, as it would be interesting to see how humour varies from one version to another.

Audiovisual translation is a very demanding field which is in constant change; as society quickly evolves, translation needs to adapt to it. When we see a film or a show we never notice why or how it is broadcasted in our language, neglecting the translator's work, which is extremely challenging and of vital necessity in our country. With this paper we ought to bring light into this issue and raise awareness on why do we laugh when we see one of our favourite episodes of *The Simpsons* at lunch time.

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