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**“SUBTITLING IN COMEDY FILMS  
AND HOW TO TRANSLATE THEM.  
ANALYSIS OF THE SUBTITLING IN  
THE BIG LEBOWSKI”**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Modern culture heavily relies on audiovisual products, and the popularity of these kinds of products has increased in the last years thanks to globalisation, the Internet, and the evolution of electronic devices. Now it is straightforward to see a film from other foreign countries, no matter their languages, thanks to streaming services, making the viewing of audiovisual products like films more accessible for everyone around the world. But for this to happen, the work of a translator is vital. This undergraduate dissertation will analyse the film “The Big Lebowski” from the SL, being English, to the TL, being Spanish, to see this process. All this while we see the type of jokes the translator encounters, and what translation technique is used. The results will show what kind of jokes appear throughout the film, and with what translation techniques they are translated.

**Keywords:** Spanish, English, humour, subtitling, subtitles, comedy film, audiovisual translation, translation, The Big Lebowski.

## **RESUMEN:**

La cultura moderna depende en gran medida de los productos audiovisuales, y la popularidad de este tipo de productos ha aumentado en los últimos años gracias a la globalización, internet y la evolución de los dispositivos electrónicos. Ahora es muy sencillo ver una película de otros países sin importar su idioma gracias a los servicios de streaming, lo que hace que ver productos audiovisuales como películas sea más accesible para todo el mundo. Pero para que esto ocurra, la labor de un traductor es realmente importante. No importa si alguien ve una película doblada o subtitulada, debajo de ese excelente trabajo hay un traductor. Este TFG analizará la película “El Gran Lebowski” desde el TM, que es el inglés, al TO, que es el español, para ver este proceso. Todo ello mientras vemos con qué tipo de chistes se encuentra el traductor y qué técnicas de traducción utiliza. Los resultados mostrarán qué tipo de chistes aparecen a lo largo de la película, y con qué técnicas de traducción se traducen.

**Palabras Clave:** Español, Inglés, humor, subtitulado, subtítulos, comedia, traducción audiovisual, traducción, El Gran Lebowski.



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We live in an interconnected world, thanks to globalization, where a large number of people with different languages and cultures live. That is why translation is essential in our lives. Translation makes communication between people possible, no matter their background, language, or culture. Nowadays, we are more connected than ever thanks to technology, and audiovisual products have become one of the most demanded products worldwide. The translation of audiovisual products is key for the understanding between people and cultures and enables the consumer to travel and seek new experiences on their laptop or smartphone. That is why, in this undergraduate dissertation, we are going to talk specifically about audiovisual translation.

There are all forms of audiovisual products. In the past, the only audiovisual commodities were films, TV series, or programs and ads that aired on live TV. There was not much subtitling from foreign audiovisual creations and the only subtitled products were films. Now, thanks to globalization, modern technologies, and streaming services, people search for more audiovisual productions. And not only films or TV series, but audiovisual products from social media also. Videos from TikTok or Instagram are immensely popular, and because of this, subtitling is more in our lives than ever.

Audiovisual translation has also gained more popularity among academic studies of translation, and many theorists of the translation community have researched and written about it. In the last decades, increased papers have been related to this topic because of the increase in importance this branch of translation has nowadays.

Comedy is an interesting genre to analyse in audiovisual translation. When studying and practising this type of translation for an audiovisual creation, comedic pieces are always a challenge for the translator. The academic not only must follow the rules and guidelines of audiovisual translation, but they will also have to ensure it is funny for the target audience, sometimes completely changing the joke in the source language (SL), to a different one in the target language (TL) for the understanding of the people watching the audiovisual product and make them laugh. However, there are rules in translating humour, so the translator cannot make whatever change they want to always keep in mind that the translation must not be literal most of the time, but humorous by taking some freedom in the translation. But this will be explained later.

To show audiovisual translation in comedy practically, the well-known film *The Big Lebowski* will be used as an example. It is an excellent film to analyse, as it is a comedy motion picture critically acclaimed because of its script. In this dissertation, we are focusing on the subtitling of the comedy film. It has an abundance of references to the American culture and the city it is settled in. It is an ideal film to show the richness of culture, references, and idioms it has between its lines. Therefore, one of our objectives is to show how alluring and complex the process of subtitling is in this type of genre: comedy films.

### **1.1 PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide information on the process of translating subtitles and humour, being comedy films a demanding type of films to translate. This undergraduate dissertation will focus on subtitles only, not dubbing. They both are part of the subject of ‘audiovisual translation,’ but they each have their particular history and techniques. Although an audiovisual translation must do both, they are quite different in approach, and the final goal of this essay is to focus on subtitling only.

To achieve this, this dissertation contains a theoretical and practical approach to this matter. In the theoretical part, an introduction to translation will be made, followed by a more in-depth analysis of audiovisual translation, which is the crucial point of the dissertation. This dissertation will focus on the subtitling part of the audiovisual translation, as was mentioned before. We will make a comparison between subtitling and dubbing and analyse subtitling.

The second part will be a practical analysis of the subtitling of the film *The Big Lebowski*, from the SL English to the TL in Spanish. This acclaimed comedy directed by the Coen brothers, will allow us to apply the theory of subtitling and understand it better. We will analyse the cultural background of the film, the slang, the difficulties in the translation that could be appreciated, the errors that have been made in the subtitling of the film, and their viable solutions. Finally, this dissertation will finish with the conclusions obtained from the studies previously mentioned.



## 2. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

### 2.1 HISTORY OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

One of the most problematic aspects of filmmaking, since the beginning of the motion picture industry, has been the commercialization of foreign films in countries where actors spoke a different language than spectators. That is why the film industry began thinking about ways of solving this problem.

In the beginning, it was relatively easy, as the films had no sound. This era was named as the “silent film” era. In these films what they did was describe sounds or write the dialogues in what was named “intertitles” (Bravo, 2004: 209; Chaume, 2020: 2). The intertitles were sort of title cards that appeared between scenes, written in white letters on a black background (Chaume, 2020: 3). Before these intertitles, other techniques were used like placing words over the actors and actresses heads, or by freezing the scene and writing the sentences over that static scene (Chaume, 2020: 3; Izard 1992). This was demanding, so they followed the intertitles technique. This also facilitated the translation of films for their abroad version. Films innovated with the intertitles, as the graphic characters, fonts, and decorations could be changed (Chaume, 2020: 3). In the twenties, the German expressionists produced the idea of the filmic diegesis. This group of creatives used letters, notes, or posters to place there the intertitles which gave a more natural feeling and did not stop the pace of the film (Chaume, 2020: 3). An example of a film that uses this technique is *The Cabinet of Dr. Cagliari* (1920).

Two different techniques were used when translating these films into another language. One was translating the intertitles to the TL, and the other one was having a person translating the film simultaneously in the TL in the cinema (Chaume, 2020: 3). The second one was particularly popular in Spain. Buñuel (an acclaimed Spanish film director), says in his memoirs that these people were called “explainers” (Chaume, 2020: 3). They were renowned people in the country, recognized by their work and whose names appeared in the programs (Chaume, 2020: 3). Their work consisted in explaining what was happening while the film was playing. The explainers worked alongside the pianist of each cinema room, walking through the corridors of the room and explaining the film to the viewers (Chaume, 2020: 3-4). Various explainers placed themselves behind the screen and carried out sort of a live dubbing of the film, also incorporating the sounds of the film, for example, a dog barking or a horn, using objects (Chaume, 2020: 4). Some of them also did different voices for the various characters (Chaume, 2020: 4).

The problem began when the cinema industry changed completely, from mute films to sound films, thanks to the “talkies” (Bravo, 2004: 209). These “talkies” were similar to microphones used nowadays, but more rudimentary and experimental. The first film that had sound was made by Warner, who produced the film *The Lights of New York* in 1928 (Chaume, 2020: 5). On one hand, actors and actresses were against this sudden change, as they only interpreted films by not talking or memorizing any script, and in which they had to exaggerate their acting. While on the other hand, sound conquered the ears of the audiences and people were astonished by this revolution in filmmaking. People did not want mute films anymore. “Intertitles” disappeared as there was no reason to keep writing them because of the appearance of sound in films. Now, the film industry has a huge problem when commercializing their films in foreign markets because translating intertitles is one issue, but translating a sound film is a completely different situation and much more complicated. The film company Metro Goldwyn Mayer thought that this revolution would make English a universal language and that there was no need for translation in films. They were wrong, as the reality was other, and facts stated that only 5% of the world spoke English at that time (Chaume, 2020: 5). No one wanted to lose the other 95% of the audience. The first idea was the subtitling of American films into French, German, or Spanish (Chaume, 2020: 5). Sadly, this did not have a good result, as they encountered an illiterate world in the 1930s (Chaume, 2020: 5). So what they did was replace the original sound with a new one in whatever language they needed (Bravo, 2004: 210; Chaume, 2020: 5-6). This was named dubbing. This process was extremely complicated as they had to rewrite the script in a way that when dubbed matched the open vowels and bilabial consonants to the lips of the actors. The industry tried other ways, but the dubbing was finally the best and most used option in the 1930s (Chion, 1992: 351).

The years passed and companies had to find other solutions as dubbing was an expensive and lengthy process. And that is when film companies reconsidered returning to the old ways bring back the intertitles but in a special and new way. In 1984, Fabrizio Fiumi invented electronic subtitling, which consisted of the simultaneous subtitling of the film on an electronic screen that accompanied the film screen (Chaume, 2020: 11). The screen was on a side, above or below the screen. Then, in 1988 Denis Auboyer invented and commercialized subtitling by laser, and is the tool that we still use at present (Chaume, 2020: 11). It consists of a laser ray controlled by a computer which burns the time with

great precision and much more quicker and with less harm than the previous method (Chaume, 2020: 11).

That is how subtitles and the process of subtitling were created. This process was between ten and twenty times cheaper than dubbing, and it took a shorter time to translate and commercialize the films in other countries (Bravo, 2004: 210). It soon became immensely popular in the film industry, especially in small countries. A cheaper and faster way to show films to the rest of the world while conserving the magic of the original language.

## **2.2 SUBTITLING**

Subtitling could be defined as “a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours 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” (Cintas & Remael, 2014: 8). The subtitles must be displayed correctly following the subtitling rules shown below to make the reading easy, and in synchrony with the image to not confuse the spectator (Cintas & Remael, 2014: 9; Bravo, 2004: 211-214).

There are five possible combinations between the sound of the film and its subtitles (Diaz-Cintas, 2012: 5-7):

- a) Standard interlinguistic subtitles: translation from sound language L2 to subtitles language L1. The most common one is when commercializing a film in a country in which they speak a different language from the film.
- b) Cross-linguistic reverse subtitles: the reverse process as the previous one. This is not common, but it is widely used in language learning.
- c) Interlinguistic subtitling in L1: there is no translation between the language audio and the language subtitles. The audio and subtitles are in the same language. It is used for deaf and hearing-impaired viewers.
- d) Interlinguistic subtitling in L2: both audio and subtitles are in the foreign language. Used for language learning.
- e) Bilingual subtitles: in which the sound is in one language and the film offers lines of subtitling in two different languages each at the same time. This type of

subtitling is often seen at international film festivals and in certain multilingual countries. These subtitles can be up to four lines long.

### **2.3 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Three fundamental characteristics of film subtitling differ from other forms of translation (Reid, 1990: 156; Bravo, 2004: 211):

- a) Translation in film subtitling does not make any drastic change in the original work, but it must reduce its length so an easier reading could be made while watching the film.
- b) In this type of translation, the translator must take a script that is mainly dialogue to a written text. The objective is to reproduce a conversation and the way people speak in written language, something that is exceedingly tough to make. To do this, the translation is rewritten several times until the studio production's approval.
- c) The final translation is shorter than the ST. According to Chion (1992: 359), no more than 70% to 80% of the spoken dialogue should be translated. This is because the translator's job in this case is to condense the text for the audience to enjoy it by not taking too much time reading the subtitles so they can watch the image. The spectator is seeing a film, not reading a book.

Following these three essential characteristics of audiovisual translation, there are three actions performed during this type of translation (Reid, 1990: 156; Bravo, 2004: 212):

- a) The source text (ST) is shortened.
- b) The content is translated into the TL.
- c) The oral code is transposed into a written code.

### **2.4 SUBTITLING STANDARDS**

There are obligatory standards for how the subtitles should be displayed (Bravo, 2004: 212; Asensio, 1993: 55-57). There are some variations between one producer to another, but they all follow the same standards. The following are just guidelines that the translators follow in audiovisual translation to make reading subtitles more comfortable and quicker reading (Bravo, 2004: 212):

- a) Each subtitle must be no longer than two lines, so the viewer can read the subtitles in little time and spend more time watching the film than reading.
- b) Each line should be no more than forty characters, and each subtitle no more than seventy. The translator should include spaces and punctuation when counting characters.
- c) No need for the two lines to be the same length, and it is not necessary to use all the space there is in the first line. It is better to have the first line shorter than the second one, as the reader will always focus on the shorter line.
- d) Five to six seconds is the optimal screen time for each subtitle.
- e) Between subtitles there must be a gap of a quarter of a second minimum.
- f) Capital letters should be reserved for translations of signs and written on the screen in the original.
- g) Accents should be in capital letters.
- h) Full stop to indicate that the sentence or utterance is finished.
- i) Italics for voices off or songs and letters.
- j) Short dash at the beginning of an utterance to show a change of speaker.
- k) Numbers should be written in figures to save characters and space. Also, use abbreviations if possible.
- l) How to proceed with taboo terms changes depending on the producers, distributors, country, channel, etc.
- m) Obviously, perfect synchrony between subtitles and images is mandatory.

#### **2.4.1 Reading Process**

When people want to see a film with subtitles, they want a pleasant experience. But when watching a subtitled film, it is scientifically proven that it is exhausting for our brains because of the challenge of watching, reading, and hearing a film all at once (Bravo, 2004: 214-215). It is a challenging task for the brain, as several experiments have shown that doing two or more activities simultaneously makes the amount of mental activity devoted to each thing decrease (Bravo, 2004: 214-215).

Following this, the translator must consider the speed of readership of the viewer. People academically prepared, and without visual or intellectual difficulties can understand and read a text effortlessly (Ivarsson, 1992: 37). A normal viewer can read a block of two lines of subtitles in less than four seconds (Bravo, 2004: 214).

Taking this into account, the translator needs to be meticulous in their job and take into account that the readership of the subtitles should be as accessible as possible.

## **2.5 SPECIFIC TRANSLATION PROCEDURES IN SUBTITLING**

After displaying the basics of audiovisual translation in subtitles, now we can go through the more specific rules when subtitling a film. Audiovisual translation has a lot of similarities with literary translation, but when translating we must consider that it is a subordinate translation, having its own specific rules (Toda, 2005: 3-4). To affirm this, a quote from the manual of TV3 would help:

...la traducción para el doblaje [podemos aplicarlo también al subtitulado] está sometida a una restricción que no tiene la traducción literaria y es que el espacio físico del texto está condicionado por la duración en tiempo real de los diálogos. [...] La necesidad más frecuente, que es la de acortar frases, imposibilita a veces recoger íntegramente todos los significados de la frase original. Entonces se deben seleccionar necesariamente los significados prioritarios, que son los que garanticen que el espectador no pierda el hilo, y descartar los que resulten accesorios. (Televisió de Catalunya 1997: 15)

The procedures that will be described in this section are text reduction, restrictions, chunking sentences, several characters speaking at once, and on-screen texts. For us, the most important ones, are text reduction and chunking, as well as how to face a translation when several characters are speaking.

### **2.5.1 Text reduction**

As said before, it is more appropriate to give a shortened version of the ST. The ST must be reduced by about 25% to accomplish the rules mentioned in the previous section and because of the processing of information, such as visual overload of information (Bravo, 2004: 215). This process is one of the most troublesome for translators as they have to decide which parts to include in the translation and which parts will not be included (Ivarsson, 1992: 90).

Text reduction is a process made thanks to compensation. This term could be defined as “the making good of some communicative loss by substituting equivalent effects” (Varela, 2008: 2; Hatim, 1990: 239). Wilss (1982) makes a more in-depth analysis of this

concept: “Obligatory lexical-morphemic restructuring [...] is necessary when, for example, a certain concept, a certain lexeme combination, or a derivational pattern is absent from the TL inventory, and the only compensatory way out open to the translator is a lexical by-pass strategy such as paraphrasing or explanatory translation.” (Wilss, 1982: 104). This process could be understood as a paraphrase, but the difficulties in the translation make this process go beyond (Varela, 2008: 2). To understand this, Keith Harvey delivers another definition, saying that compensation is “a technique for making up for the loss of a source text effect by recreating a similar effect in the target text through means that are specific to the target language and/or to the target text” (Harvey, 1995: 66). All these definitions share the idea of loss of significance by the change of language and the attempt of managing it through compensation.

Thus, it is important to say that text reduction does not mean mutilating the ST or reducing its content. The theoretical explanation of this is called noise. Noise is an unwanted and unpredictable addition to communication (Bravo, 2004: 215). This makes the information within a communicative context corrupt. Still, thanks to the incorporation of redundancy, the message can be seen because of the diverse ways languages have of expressing the same idea (Bravo, 2004: 215-216). In addition, empirical studies have shown that redundancy occupies a portion of more than 50% of most spoken languages in Europe (Bravo, 2004: 216).

### **2.5.2 Restrictions**

When translating in an audiovisual format, there are various restrictions that the translator must consider, particularly when going through the process of compensating, as explained above. Thanks to the research made by Martí Ferriol, we can observe four main restrictions to be considered when translating an audiovisual product into the TL (Martí Ferriol, 2006: 131-133):

- a) Formal restrictions: these are the standard rules in audiovisual translation.
- b) Linguistic restrictions: linguistic variations between languages.
- c) Iconic restrictions: those specific to the language of films.
- d) Sociocultural restrictions: the simultaneous coexistence of linguistic and iconic culture.

These restrictions have been formulated after the research of famous and recognized individuals within the audiovisual translation community, like Whitman, Asensio, Zabalbeascoa, and Chaume. There are also other minor restrictions to take into account (Martí Ferriol, 2006: 128):

- a) Professional restrictions: the ones imposed by the working conditions.
- b) Textual restrictions: the requirement of high artistic demands in the target text (TT) when the ST has artistic purposes.
- c) Contextual restrictions: related to the utility of the translation.
- d) Nule restrictions: when there are no restrictions in the translation.

### **2.5.3 Chunking sentences**

Chunking sentences might be simple, but when done inaccurately it might convince the viewer not to watch a subtitled film. Each subtitle must consist of a single syntactic and logical unit or, when impossible, of two or more complete but shorter ones (Bravo, 2004: 220). This is essential, as we do not want the reader to feel overwhelmed, have a tough time reading, or even have to re-read a subtitle. The translator must not divide a sentence's lexical or syntactic components, but spread a sentence several times, each containing a coherent constituent for the viewer to not get lost (Bravo, 2004: 220).

### **2.5.4 Several characters speaking at once**

This is a troublesome scenario in which a translator can find themselves. You have to follow every procedure while translating characters who are speaking quickly or who are interrupting each other. In addition, there are instances in which various characters are speaking at the same time when in a discussion. They tend to speak fast, interrupting one another, yelling, etc. In this situation, the translator must make an effort to translate these passages. There are two practical solutions (Bravo, 2004: 221-222).

- a) Use the two lines of subtitles, one for each character. Place a short dash before each line. This technique makes the switch between dialogues noticeably clear, but it reduces the amount of space greatly, so the translator has to display the subtitles more quickly, making the readership more complicated.



- b) When the subtitling is done by Teletext, the translator can use distinct colours for each character that is speaking. The bad part is that this technique adds more information to the viewer.

### **2.5.5 On-screen texts**

As a film is mainly visual, the director may introduce important pieces of information through banners, newspapers, letters, etc. Anything important for the plot and that the viewer must know to understand the film must be translated also.

## **3. HUMOUR**

People often think that humour is simple, not serious, and even a degrading aspect when related to something artistic. In this essay, we are talking about cinema, and in cinema, humour is especially looked down upon by critics and the general public. Audiences conceive this type of film as a way to pass the time, while critics, companies and the film industry do not take them seriously. This genre of films is typically easy to monetize, and that is frequently the prime objective of the companies, developing comedy films that are accessible and effortless to watch.

People generally think that it does not require any acting skills to be in a comedy. Also, the job of actors and actresses in comedy films is not recognized by any awards. There are numerous examples of professionals who were only seen as comedy actors and actresses and were thought of as having low acting skills, who nailed a dramatic performance in a “serious” role. There are numerous examples, Adam Sandler in *Uncut Gems* (2019), Robin Williams in *Good Will Hunting* (1997), Jennifer Aniston in *Cake* (2014), and Steve Carell in *Foxcatcher* (2014).

We could think of Spain for example. This country releases a considerable number of comedies every year, and its cinematography nowadays is based on that. It is mainly because of the culture. That is in addition to our TV culture with numerous humour TV shows, contests, TV series, etc. There are good comedies in this country like *Amanece que no es poco* (1989), *La escopeta nacional*, the well-recognized abroad *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988), or a more recent one like *Ocho apellidos vascos* (2014). Fortunately, the Spanish audience still has good taste in comedy thanks to its

culture and understands the genre, enjoying all kinds of films and TV shows from any country.

### 3.1 TRANSLATING HUMOUR

Although translating humour is a challenging task, there is nothing not translatable. But it is clear that for the translator to do a superior job in their translation of a text, not only they have to be bilingual, but bicultural also (Botella, 2017). In addition, the translator must have creativity when approaching a complicated task like this, always having in mind the target audience, and always considering the audiovisual product. As Agost (1999: 108) said: “A great imaginative effort and having a special creativity as well as a very extensive linguistic competence is required”. Ultimately, the main objective is to make people laugh, and that is achieved in great part by knowing the culture of the objective audience (Nash, 2014). In many cases, laughter comes from references to the audience’s culture:

Parody accommodates and even excuses the mockery of logic; the unlikely circumstance is made acceptable by the amusing distortions of parodic expression. Parodic style and subverted logic together define one essential quality of comic narrative; the integrity of its artifice ... leads us to consider it purely in its terms, as something distanced from all that is involved in the word realism. This may appear to be a paradoxical conclusion, since humour and comedy often have reference to social institutions and interactions, and are therefore commonly supposed to be realistic. They may be truthful in their reflections on human nature, but realistic is seldom the word for their style and narrative method. (Nash, 1985: 102)

For example, in the humorous TV program *Humor Amarillo*, the dubbed version was completely different from the original version. It was a program in which a group of contestants tried to win in various obstacle courses. Although the people tried to win a prize, the program’s objective was different: it was to obtain laughter by telling jokes or making fun of the incidents that happened to the participants. The jokes in Japanese did not make any sense to a Spanish audience, so the translators decided to rewrite the entire script with jokes about Spanish culture, politicians, affairs, etc.

There are few cases in which the translator could have the possibility of having that much freedom in a translation, and in films or TV series, it is nearly impossible. However,

it is an example that helps to understand that the main objective of the translation of a humourist audiovisual product is to make people laugh.

### **3.2 TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION OF HUMOUR**

It is important to say that humour is a subjective subject and that this field depends ultimately on personal thinking, culture, family, and experiences; in addition, humour is constantly evolving because of the passing of time, influencing and providing new elements to the culture of a country (Luque, 2014: 39). This type of translation, although exceedingly troublesome, is a “stimulating challenge” because of the opportunities this type of text contributes for its translation (Leibold, 1989: 109).

Firstly, the translator must establish a classification of the different situations they will encounter when translating a humorous text. Hickey (1999) divides these situations into ones that depend on universal knowledge, ones created by a specific society or culture, and ones that come from the language. This classification, although it gives an excellent ground for our translation, is not exactly complete, and a more in-depth classification will be needed (Zabalbeascoa, 1993: 268-274):

- a) International jokes. These are the jokes that are understood in the SL and the TL.
- b) Jokes based on institutions or cultural models embedded in the SL. These jokes are related to the general knowledge of the country, which motivates the translator to change them to institutions and cultural models of the TL.
- c) Jokes related to the sense of national humour. Strictly related to the subjective humour of a country or group of people. Each country has a different sense of humour, and this case gives a lot of problems in the translation because a change of the jokes is not always a good option.
- d) Linguistic jokes.
- e) Visual jokes. These are the jokes that rely on the visual image.

Humour is a priority when translating comedic types of text, but it is also key to keep in mind the situations in which humour is a priority or not. Here are some examples (Zabalbeascoa, 2016: 10):

1. Top: TV comedy, joke stories, one-liners.

2. Middle: happy-ending love or adventure stories, TV quiz shows.
3. Marginal: as a pedagogical device in school, humour in Shakespeare's tragedies for example.
4. Prohibited: certain moments of high drama.

There are also other dilemmas that the translator encounters when translating a humorous text, which could be encompassed in issues with the original references and culture, the comedic timing, joke-telling, the translator's professional context, or verbal humour depending on the visual context (Zabalbeascoa, 2016: 14).

### **3.3 TECHNIQUES OF TRANSLATION FOR HUMOROUS TEXTS**

Hurtado Albir (2001) proposes a series of techniques incredibly useful in the translation of short sentences and utterances. Comedic devices are typically short utterances, making the following techniques immensely advantageous for a translator in a humorous text.

1. Adaptation: substitution of one cultural element from the culture of the SL to another of the target culture.
2. Linguistic extension: use of further linguistic elements in the TL than those appearing in the SL.
3. Amplification: introduction of explanatory elements with a metalinguistic function.
4. Calque: literal translation of a word or short utterance from the SL.
5. Linguistic compression: the use of fewer linguistic elements to convey the same message.
6. Discursive creation: the creation of a unique equivalence that is not predictable out of context.
7. Description: substitution of a term or expression by a description of its form or function.
8. Elision: elimination of information elements present in the original text.
9. Coined equivalent: use of a term considered equivalent in the TL.
10. Generalisation: use of a more general or neutral term.
11. Modulation: change of point of view, approach, or category of thought.
12. Particularisation: use of a more precise or concrete term.

13. Borrowing: use of the same term in the TL. Two types:
  - a. Pure borrowing: keeping the original spelling.
  - b. Naturalised borrowing: adapting the spelling to the TL's alphabet or phonetics.
14. Substitution: use of a linguistic element where a paralinguistic element appears in the TL and vice versa.
15. Literal translation: word-for-word translation.
16. Transposition: change of grammatical category.
17. Variation: change of linguistic or paralinguistic elements affecting aspects of linguistic variation.

#### **4. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY**

##### **4.1 HYPOTHESIS**

The following points are the hypothesis of this undergraduate dissertation based on the analysis of Botella (2017), which is based on Varela's (2004) audiovisual text analysis and Zabalbeascoa's (2005) analysis of the problems faced when translating humour:

1. The translator will have complications in the linguistic aspect of the SL to translate it into the TL, which can be verified mainly through linguistic jokes.
2. Cultural references will be altered in the translation to the TL.
3. The amusement part of the jokes will not be lost no matter if the significance of the joke in the SL is lost, or if the joke is changed in the TL.

##### **4.2 METHODOLOGY**

"The Big Lebowski" 's original version of the film is in US English. Because of the reputation of the director and its production, the film was released all around the world. Because the film received various awards and impacted the history of cinematography, this film is still watched nowadays and streamed on most streaming platforms or available for purchase or rent.

In this undergraduate dissertation, we will use the Filmin streaming platform as the source of information for the analysis of the translation of this film. Filmin is now a reputable streaming service established in Barcelona, Spain. It was incredibly convenient

to choose this platform among others because of its reputation, excellent service, and Spanish foundations. This streaming service provides this film with its original language and Spanish subtitles, which are the necessary tools to conduct this analysis.

The portrayal of each translation analysis of the film will be shown in a table of contents, making the information analysed displayed more clearly. It will be as follows:

<b>TABLE X</b>
<b>Time</b>
<b>Context</b>
<b>Original version</b>
<b>Spanish version</b>

Each table will contain a number to identify and differentiate it. The second row of the table will be the time of the text commented. We will use minutes and seconds as follows: for example, 13:42 (13 minutes and 42 seconds). The third row will contain the context of the scene. The two last rows are going to be reserved for the original version text and the Spanish subtitles.

Below each table, there will be an analysis of each translation presented. The following aspects are going to be commented on in the analysis of the translations: any translation difficulties, different comments, the translation techniques used, and even a personal translation if necessary. All the methodology will be based on the theory presented in this undergraduate dissertation (see sections 2 and 3). Following these theories and ideas written above, we will try to give the most rigorous analysis, and sometimes solutions to the wrong subtitles, if possible.

### **4.3 SYNOPSIS**

*The Big Lebowski* is a comedy film written by the “Coen brothers,” Joel Coen (director) and Ethan Coen (producer). The film is about a loafer named Jeffrey Lebowski, best known as “The Dude,” who likes to go bowling with his friends. His life goes upside down when the protagonist is assaulted by mistake, only because he has the same name as the intended victim. He then discovers that this victim is a billionaire whose wife has been kidnapped. He commissions the main character and his friends to deliver the ransom

to his attackers and bring his wife back home, but his great friend Walter Sobchak plans to keep the ransom money to themselves.

Thanks to its characters, dialogue and the absurd situations the protagonist is in, the film satirises American society and thinks about existential reflection. The main theme is identity and how to see yourself, and we can see that through The Dude. He is stuck in a series of absurd situations, while he thoughts where he fits in this chaotic world and society he lives in. Another important theme is the American dream. This theme is embodied in the character of “The Big Lebowski,” the rich Lebowski. Although he symbolises success and all is good in American capitalism, he results in fraud. Ultimately, it is important to understand the piece of text you are working on to get a better translation.

## **5. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SPANISH SUBTITLING IN THE BIG LEBOWSKI AND THE ENGLISH ORIGINAL AUDIO**

First, thanks to the theory stated in points 2.4 and 2.5.1 to 2.5.5, we will verify if the translation provided in the subtitles analyses follows the specific translation procedures of subtitling. Some of the procedures previously mentioned will not be specified as they cannot be reflected in the final translation.

Secondly, following the theory specified in points 3.2 and 3.3, we will analyse and classify the translations according to the type of joke and the process of translation followed by the translator.

### **5.1 SUBTITLING STANDARDS AND SPECIFIC TRANSLATION PROCEDURES IN THE SUBTITLING**

After a thorough analysis of how the subtitles were displayed, it can be seen that it complies with all the essential subtitling standards of point 2.4. Some aspects worth mentioning are that the lines shown in the film on this Filmin platform have a maximum of two lines, the upper line being shorter than the lower one, and respecting the maximum number of words per subtitle. Furthermore, italics are shown when music is played, shirt dashes are used when the speaker changes, a full stop is used when an utterance is finished and, lastly, capital letters are used for signs and when a text or phrase appears written on the screen, among others.

Another key factor in the subtitling, as seen in point 2.5, is the specific translation procedures. It is inconceivable to appreciate the exact percentage of the original text that was reduced in the translation, but we can examine numerous examples of restrictions, chunking sentences, several speakers talking all at once and on-screen text.

There are several examples of restrictions and chunking sentences in the film. Maude’s utterances present a considerable amount of noise, so in almost all of her lines, there are cases of restrictions and chunking sentences. Examples of several speakers talking at once could also be seen clearly, as there are numerous. For example, when the Dude and Walter are talking, while they are bowling, (16:20) about the dog Walter has brought because of his ex-wife, there is one line reserved for each character, which is always preceded by a short dash. Finally, an example of on-screen text in this film is, for example, the title of the film Lebowsky’s wife is in, named “LOGJAMMIN” which is shown in the subtitles as “TRONCOS FLOTANTES.”

## 5.2 HUMOROUS TRANSLATIONS IN THE FILM

<b>TABLE 1</b>
<b>Time</b> 1:01
<b>Context</b> The narrator introduces the protagonist.
<b>Original version</b> <i>The Dude</i>
<b>Spanish version</b> <i>“El Nota”</i>

Table 1

Joke classification: linguistic joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

It may be worth mentioning one of the film's central translations: the main character’s name. The word “dude” is usual in the English vocabulary, but this character is “The Dude” not like any other man. That is the reason the translation must maintain that character that has the protagonist’s name, with the complication of having a usual word of the English language in it. The translator chose to go with “El Nota.” We can only speculate why they chose this name, but it surely has character in it, and it is as short



as the original name while maintaining the comical aspect of it. One hypothesis is that it comes from the phrase “eres un notas” in Spanish, a phrase whose meaning may suit the protagonist.

<b>TABLE 2</b>
<b>Time 5:18</b>
<b>Context</b> One of the two men peed on the Dude’s rug.
<b>Original version</b> BLOND MAN: Woo? The Chinese man, WOO, zips his fly. WOO Yeah? BLOND MAN: Isn't this guy supposed to be a millionaire? WOO: Fuck. BLOND MAN: Yeah, what do you think? WOO: He looks like a fuckin' loser. DUDE: Hey. At least I'm <i>housebroken</i> .
<b>Spanish version</b> DUDE: Eh, por lo menos <i>no meo por el suelo de casa</i> .

Table 2

Joke classification: internal joke.

Translation technique: description.

The film just started, and we get to know the main protagonist through a ridiculous scene like this. Two guys got the wrong house, and the Dude makes fun of them, although they damaged the furniture of his apartment, beat him, and peed on his rug. The tone of the film and the personality of the main character are shown during this scene thanks to the word “housebroken,” which is when a pet is trained to pee/poop outside. This was then translated into a description of the word in TL, as there is no equivalence in Spanish.

<b>TABLE 3</b>
<b>Time 9:14</b>

<p><b>Context</b></p> <p>The Dude and Walter talking about the rug.</p>
<p>Original version</p> <p>WALTER: That rug <i>really tied the room together</i>, did it not?</p> <p>DUDE: Fuckin' A.</p> <p>DONNY: And this guy peed on it.</p> <p>WALTER: Donny, Please.</p> <p>DUDE: You know, this is the fuckin' guy... I could find this Lebowski guy.</p> <p>DONNY: His name is Lebowski? That's your name, Dude!</p> <p>DUDE: This is the guy, who should compensate me for the fucking rug. His wife goes out and owes money all over town, and they pee on my rug?</p> <p>WALTER: They pee on your fucking Rug?</p> <p>DUDE: They peed on my fucking rug.</p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>WALTER: Esa alfombra <i>le daba un toque</i> a la habitación, ¿no?.</p>

Table 3

Joke classification: internal joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

Two guys entered his house and intimidated him, and he could only think about his rug and how lovely it made the room. That rug was, for him, the central point of the living room. It is trivial, but that rug outsets the film, and motivates the protagonist going forward hoping he gets a new rug.

<p><b>TABLE 4</b></p>
<p><b>Time</b> 8:31</p>
<p><b>Context</b></p> <p>Walter and the Dude are talking about the Chinese person who peed on the Dude's rug. They do not know why two men came into the Dude's house to intimidate him and ask him for money.</p>
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>DUDE: Walter, the Chinaman who peed on my rug, I can't go give him a bill, so what the fuck are you talking about?</p>

<p>WALTER: What the fuck are you talking about?! The Chinaman is not the issue here dude! I'm talking about drawing a line in the sand, Dude. Across this line you do not, - - also, Dude, <i>Chinaman</i> is not the preferred nomenclature, uh, Asian-American, Please.</p> <p>DUDE: Walter, this isn't a guy who built the rail- roads, here, this is a guy –</p> <p>WALTER: What the fuck are you talk—</p> <p>DUDE: Walter, he peed on my rug.</p> <p>DONNY: He peed on the Dude's rug.</p> <p>WALTER: DONNIE YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR ELEMENT! Dude the Chinaman is not the issue here.</p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>WALTER: Además, El Nota, &lt;&lt;<i>chino</i>&gt;&gt; no es la nomenclatura adecuada.</p>

Table 4

Joke classification: internal joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

Analysing the term “Chinaman,” and searching for its real meaning under this word, we could see that “Chinaman” means more than a person of Chinese precedence; it is an offensive term not only referring to a Chinese person but to all people perceived East Asian ethnicity. Another problem is that in the Spanish translation, you cannot translate “Chinaman” as “hombre chino.” Taking all this into consideration, the translator opted to translate this term as “chino.” Here in Spain, some people employ “chino” for any person who has East Asian ethnicity no matter if they are Chinese or from another East Asian country. So, the final effect remains unchanged in the translation.

<b>TABLE 5</b>
<b>Time</b> 10:22
<b>Context</b> Brandt shows the Dude all the achievements of The Big Lebowski.
<b>Original version</b> DUDE: So he’s a <i>crip</i> ... you know a, a... <i>handicapped</i> . BRANDT: Mr. Lebowski is <i>disabled</i> , yes.
<b>Spanish version</b> DUDE: Así que es... ¿un <i>minusválido</i> ?

BRANDT: El Sr. Lebowski es <i>discapacitado</i> , sí.
---

Table 5

Joke classification: linguistic joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

The joke mentioned here is that the Dude uses an offensive word to refer to the physical condition of The Big Lebowski. Brandt corrects him by saying the correct word to refer to his condition. In the SL “crip” and “handicapped” are used as offensive terms, while in the Spanish version, there is only one term used which is “minusválido.” In the end, this term preserves the meaning of the two other English terms.

<b>TABLE 6</b>
<b>Time</b> 12:52
<b>Context</b> The Dude is introducing himself to The Big Lebowski.
<b>Original version</b> That, or uh, his <i>Dudeness</i> , or uh <i>Duder</i> , or uh <i>El Duderino</i> , if, you know, you’re not into the whole brevity thing,
<b>Spanish version</b> DUDE: Eso o su <i>Dudidad</i> o <i>El Notar</i> o <i>El Notarino</i> , si no le van los diminutivos.

Table 6

Joke classification: linguistic joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

A complicated phrase to translate as the protagonist plays with his nickname. In the first nickname the translator decides to play with the word “Dudeness,” resulting in “Dudidad.” It loses the “Nota” nickname while resembling the exact game the protagonist does in “Dudeness.” In the second one, he maintains the play the protagonist does with the termination of his nickname adding an “r” and making his nickname like a profession: “Duder” in English, “El Notar” in Spanish. The last one is like the second one, adding “rino” in this case. The translator does the same making it “El Notarino.”

<b>TABLE 7</b>
<b>Time</b> 14:09
<b>Context</b> The Dude exists in The Big Lebowski's office.
<b>Original version</b> LEBOWSKI: Your "revolution" is over, Mr. Lebowski! Condolences! <i>The bums lost!</i> My advice to you is, to do what your parents did! Get a job, sir! The bums will always lose-- do you hear me, Lebowski?... THE BUMS WILL ALWAYS LOSE! BRANDT: How was your meeting, Mr. Lebowski? DUDE: Okay. The old man told me to take any rug in the house.
<b>Spanish version</b> LEBOWSKI: ¡Perdieron los <i>holgazanes!</i>

Table 7

Joke classification: internal joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

Something is odd with this millionaire Lebowski. He has pictures with important people, the keys from a pair of cities, Brandt is trying to impress the Dude, etc. And when we hear Lebowski speak, we can see a man who does not like people who have less money than him, especially the Dude, who has no job and does not want to have one. He is a clear representation of American capitalism. The film mocks him by his depiction of him. He is wealthy and he came from Vietnam, two characteristics highly valued in the American capitalist society, but we later know that he is a fraud and that his wealth is from his family. He does not even control his companies; his other family members manage them as he is incapable of being a successful businessman.

<b>TABLE 8</b>
<b>Time</b> 17:02
<b>Context</b> The Dude, Walter, and Donny are bowling against the team of his friend Smokey in a bowling competition. Walter thinks he was over the line when he threw the ball, and Smokey does not think so. Although the Dude does not bother about it, Walter says that

<p>this is not Vietnam and that there are rules in bowling. He pulls out a gun against Smokey to intimidate him.</p>
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>WALTER: I'm sorry Smokey, You were over the line, that's a foul.</p> <p>SMOKEY: Bullshit. Mark it eight Dude.</p> <p>WALTER: Excuse me! Mark it zero. Next frame.</p> <p>SMOKEY: Bullshit. Walter! Mark it eight Dude.</p> <p>WALTER: <i>Smokey, this is not Nam.</i> This is bowling. There are rules.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>DUDE: You can't do that man. These guys, you know, they're like me, they're pacifists. Smokey was a conscientious objector.</p> <p>WALTER: You know Dude, I myself dabbled with pacifism at one point. Not in Nam, of course—</p> <p>DUDE: And you know he's got emotional problems man!</p> <p>WALTER: You mean--beyond pacifism?</p> <p>DUDE: He's fragile, very fragile!</p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>WALTER: Smokey, esto no es <i>Vietnam</i>.</p>

Table 8

Joke classification: national joke.

Translation technique: coined equivalent.

Here we lose information about how he says Vietnam. As many USA men fought in Vietnam for years and that word was widely used during the war, soldiers like Walter shortened the word to “Nam.” In Spain we do not use “Nam,” we name it Vietnam, as it is a country that has no relation with us, unlike the USA. We could only hear it from the news channels who called it properly. It is not a bad translation as no one in Spain could understand “Nam” without any context, although the English version shows that Walter was a soldier in Vietnam thanks to the shortening of this word.

<b>TABLE 9</b>
<b>Time</b> 32:44
<b>Context</b>

The Dude and Walter are in the car planning to deliver the ringer.
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>DUDE: He hung up, man! You fucked it up! You fucked it up! Her life was in our hands man!</p> <p>WALTER: Easy, Dude.</p> <p>DUDE: We're screwed now! We don't get shit, they're gonna kill her! We're fucked, Walter!</p> <p>WALTER: Nothing is fucked Dude. Come on. <i>You're being very unDude</i>. They'll call back. Look, she kidnapped her--</p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>WALTER: Vamos. <i>No pareces tú mismo</i>.</p>

Table 9

Joke classification: linguistic joke.

Translation technique: description.

The word “unDude” is a wordplay with the protagonist's nickname, which means he is not being himself. This translation maintains the meaning of the word but loses the grammatical wordplay in the SL.

<b>TABLE 10</b>
<b>Time</b> 42:23
<b>Context</b> The Dude meets Maude.
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>MAUDE: Does the female form make you uncomfortable, Mr. Lebowski?</p> <p>DUDE: Uh, is that what this is a picture of?</p> <p>MAUDE: In a sense, yes. My art has been commended as being strongly vaginal. Which bothers some men. The word itself makes some men uncomfortable. Vagina.</p> <p>DUDE: Oh yeah?</p> <p>MAUDE: Yes, they don't like hearing it and find it difficult to say. Whereas without batting an eye a man will refer to his "<i>dick</i>" or his "<i>rod</i>" or his "<i>Johnson</i>".</p> <p>DUDE: "Johnson"?</p>
<b>Spanish version</b>

<p>MAUDE: Sí, no les gusta oírlo y les cuesta decir mientras que un hombre nombra <i>sin problemas</i> a su <i>pene</i>, su <i>polla</i> o <i>soldadito</i>.</p>
--

Table 10

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

Maure is a peculiar woman, as well as her conversations. She mentions three ways of naming a penis. Two more vulgar like “dick” or “rod,” and she finishes with a peculiar way of naming it “Johnson.” There are three possible origins for this name. One could be after the Indiana town named “Dick Johnson.” The second one could be after the British slang “John Thomas,” meaning “penis” also. The last one may be after the baseball bats company named R. G. Johnson, with these bats resembling somewhat a penis.

<b>TABLE 11</b>
<b>Time</b> 44:04
<b>Context</b> It is the title of the porn movie starring The Big Lebowski’s wife.
<b>Original version</b> <i>LOGJAMMIN’</i>
<b>Spanish version</b> <i>TRANCOS FLOTANTES</i>

Table 11

Joke classification: linguistic joke.

Translation technique: calque.

A “logjam” is a substantial number of floating logs that block a river. The meaning of “Logjammin’” in this type of movie implies a sexual meaning. With the translation of “Trancos flotantes” we can see that the translator made a literal translation of the word.

<b>TABLE 12</b>
<b>Time</b> 45:44
<b>Context</b>



Maude negotiates with the Dude.
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>MAUDE: If you successfully do so, I will compensate you to the tune of 10% of the recovered sum.</p> <p>DUDE: A hundred.</p> <p>MAUDE: Thousand, yes, <i>bones or clams</i> or whatever you call them.</p> <p>DUDE: Yeah ah, but, but what about my uh—</p> <p>MAUDE: --your rug, yes, well with that money you can buy any number of rugs that don't have sentimental value for me. And I am sorry about that crack on the jaw.</p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>MAUDE: <i>Pavos, papeles</i>, o como quiera llamarlo.</p>

Table 12

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

Maude is a peculiar woman who often uses words that are either old-fashioned or which are high-level words not used in a colloquial conversation. She also seems to have trouble socializing and understanding social interactions. In this conversation, she uses “bones” and “clams” to refer to money, as if the trouble of Lebowski not understanding what she has said was not mentioning the word “money.” The issue was that the Dude did not know what 10% of a million was.

<b>TABLE 13</b>
<b>Time</b> 46:18
<b>Context</b> The Dude is talking with a taxi driver.
<p>Original version</p> <p>DRIVER: --So he says, "My wife's <i>a pain in the ass</i>. She's always <i>tryin' to bust my friggin aggets</i>, my daughter's married to a <i>Jadrool loser bastard</i>, I got a rash so bad on my ass I can't even siddown. But you know me. I can't complain."</p> <p>DUDE: Fuckin' A, man. I got a rash man. Fuckin' A... I gotta tell ya Ton' man, earlier in the day, I was feeling really shitty man. Really down in the dumps. Lost a little money...</p>

TONY: Heyh you know what? Forgeddaboutit huh, forgedaboutit.
DUDE: Yeah, fuck it man! I can't be worried about that shit. Life goes on man!
<b>Spanish version</b>
DRIVER: Así que dice: << Mi mujer es <i>un coñazo</i> . Siempre <i>me está tocando las pelotas</i> . Mi hija está casada <i>con un cabrón fracasado</i> , ...>>

Table 13

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: adaptation.

In this monologue conducted by the driver, we can follow the story of a man who has a problematic life while a lot of comical expressions and cultural references are used to describe his situation. “A pain in the ass” and “tryin’ to bust my friggin’ aggets” are expressions adapted in the TL, then translated to an equivalent in the target culture. “Jadrool” is Italian slang for a loser or a bum. The cultural background of the word is lost in the TL, although the meaning is not.

<b>TABLE 14</b>
<b>Time</b> 1:17:09
<b>Context</b>
There are times in the story when it stops for the narrator to speak. This narrator seems to speak like an old cowboy. Here we are in the middle-end of the film where the Dude was drugged, and he is now dreaming.
<b>Original version</b>
THE STRANGER'S VOICE: Darkness warshed over the Dude-- <i>darker'n a black steer's tookus</i> on a moonless prairie night. There was no bottom.
<b>Spanish version</b>
THE STRANGER'S VOICE: Más oscuro que <i>el culo de un toro negro</i> en una pradera una noche sin luna.

Table 14

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: literal translation.

“Black steer’s tookus” in proper English means “black bull’s arsehole.” “Tookus” comes from Yiddish, having its original root in Hebrew, meaning “under.” We lose all the cultural background of the TL, but the meaning is the same.

<b>TABLE 15</b>
<b>Time</b> 1:29:10
<b>Context</b> The Dude confronts the man who has been following him since the beginning of the film.
<b>Original version</b> DUDE: Why're you following me around? Come on, fuckhead! MAN: Hey, relax man, <i>I'm a brother shamus</i> . The Dude is stunned. DUDE: Brother Shamus? Like an Irish monk MAN: What the fuck are you talking about? My name's Da Fino! I'm a private snoop! Like you, man! DUDE: What?
<b>Spanish version</b> MAN: Tranquilo. Soy un hermano <i>investigador</i> . DUDE: ¿Un hermano? ¿Cómo un monje irlandés?

Table 15

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: generalisation.

“Shamus” means private investigator. This word comes from the Irish name Seamas. This connection was made because there is a high number of Irish people in the police department in the USA. This is tricky to translate as there is no equivalence in Spanish of “shamus,” so the translator decided on a translation in meaning.

<b>TABLE 16</b>
<b>Time</b> 1:42:08
<b>Context</b>

<p>The Dude and Walter are in a mortuary as their friend Donny has died. The urn is expensive, and they only want to scatter his ashes. They decide to go to a supermarket and buy their own “urn.”</p>
<p><b>Original version</b></p> <p>DUDE: Can't, can't we just rent it from you man?</p> <p>DONNELLY: Sir, this is a mortuary, not a rental house.</p> <p>WALTER: We're scattering the fucking ashes!</p> <p>DUDE: Walter, Walter, Walter—</p> <p>WALTER: WHAT JUST BECAUSE WE'RE BEREAVED DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE SAPS!</p> <p>DONNELLY: Sir, please lower your voices.</p> <p>DUDE: Man, don't you have, you know, something uh, else we can put 'im in? You know?</p> <p>DONNELLY: That is our most modestly priced receptacle.</p> <p>WALTER: GODDAMNIT!! <i>Is there a Ralph's around here?</i></p>
<p><b>Spanish version</b></p> <p>WALTER: ¿Hay algún <i>supermercado</i> por aquí?</p>

Table 16

Joke classification: cultural joke.

Translation technique: generalisation.

A “Ralph’s” is an American supermarket. A Spanish speaker does not possess knowledge of this kind of supermarket. An option would be to translate it to “¿Hay algún Mercadona por aquí?,” but that would not be correct as there is no “Mercadona” in the US. Although it would maintain the comical meaning of the scene of going to a cheap supermarket, selecting a simpler solution like translating it as “supermarket” to maintain the meaning is enough.

## 6. RESULTS

Now, after analysing the subtitling of the film “The Big Lebowski,” we are going to comment more in-depth on the humorous aspect of the translation. The previous practical part of the dissertation has shown that comedy texts are complicated to translate into the TL, as the comedic part of it must prevail. Thanks to the four-joke classification

(Zabalbeascoa, 1993) and the translation techniques (Hurtado, 2001), we were able to correctly analyse the translation of the film.

In this section, we will briefly comment on the basic subtitling standards and the specific translation procedures of the film analysed in the previous section, then move on to the interpretation of the results given by the humorous analysis of the subtitles.

Firstly, the subtitling standards were accomplished in the film, as seen in section 5.1. We analysed the list of standards with the subtitles of the film and all of them appeared, mentioning the most important ones in the analysis. Now, about the specific translation procedures, we could see all procedures in the subtitles as seen in the examples given in section 5.1 as well, although text reduction was impossible to see if it was done, as we do not have the translation text onto the TL to see how many words it has compared to the original text.

Secondly, the humorous section of section 5.2 gave interesting results to comment on. To begin with, the four-joke classification was divided into internal jokes, national jokes, cultural jokes, and linguistic jokes. All of them were seen in the film as we can see in Figure 1:

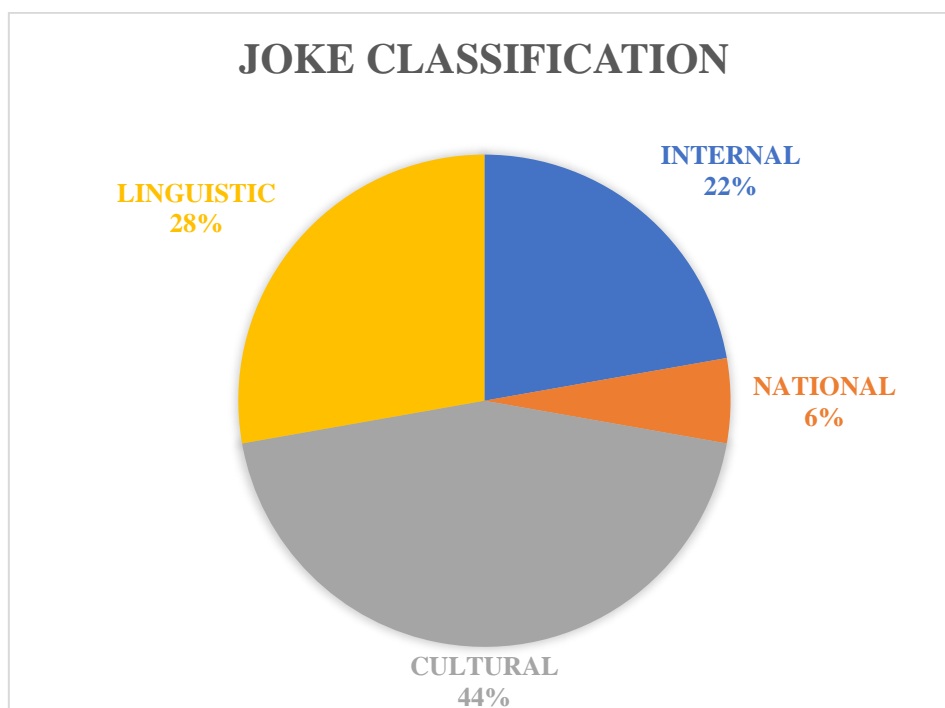


Figure 1

After analysing the type of jokes present in the film, we can conclude that the cultural joke is the most prevalent in the film. This signifies that the translator had to deal with a

cultural reference 44% of the time. In addition, the second most used joke is the linguistic one with a percentage of 28%. This indicates that the translator encountered most of the time, with the two most complicated jokes to translate from one language to another, as it has been previously stated in point 3.1.2. These two are then followed by 22% of internal jokes and 6% of national jokes, which are clearer to translate into the TL, especially the internal jokes.

Taking all the translation techniques of point 3.1.3 into consideration, the following appeared:

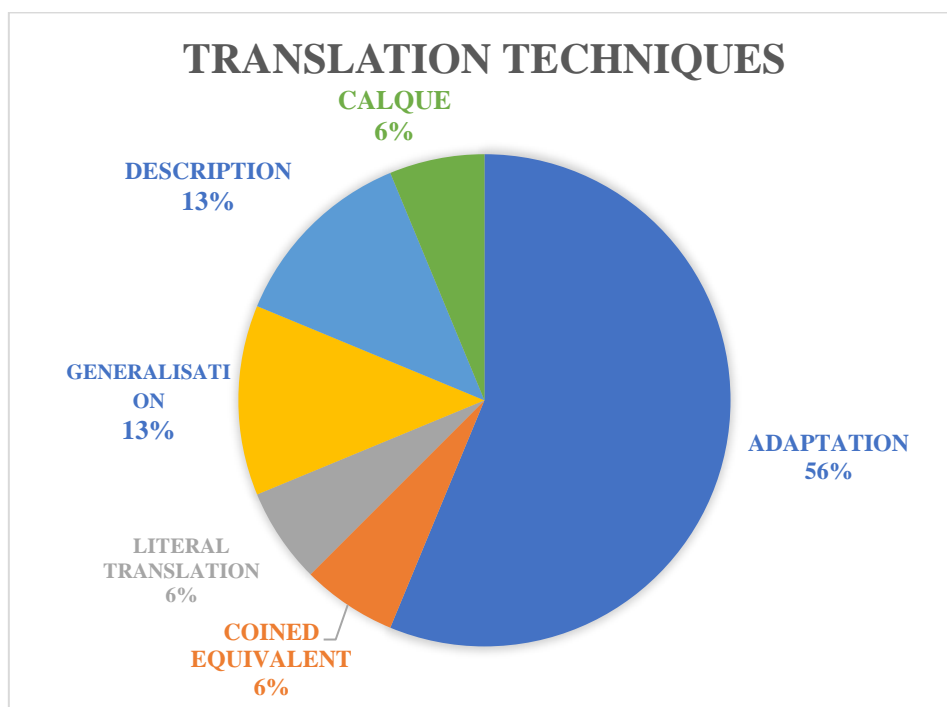


Figure 2

Amongst the seventeen techniques shown in point 3.1.3, only six were used. The most widely used technique by a significant percentage is adaptation, with 56%. Meaning that half of the time the translator preferred to adapt a joke into the TL. This is mainly because, as we have seen in Figure 1, nearly half of the jokes are cultural ones. This type of joke most of the time must be adapted to the culture of the TL. The second most popular ones were description and generalisation with 13%, then followed by literal translation, coined equivalent and calque with 6%. These techniques generally translate the meaning of the joke into the TL, so the target audience understands what the meaning of the joke is but loses the background of the joke in the SL, whether it is linguistic, national, or cultural.

Now, after analysing the film in-depth, we can see if our hypothesis was correct thanks to the analysis and the theory used about types of jokes and the techniques used to translate them. The hypothesis stated in point 4.2 was:

1. The translator will have complications in the linguistic aspect of the SL to translate it into the TL, which can be verified mainly through linguistic jokes.

About this first point, there were cases in which the translator, linguistically speaking, had difficulties with the SL. This happened mainly with linguistic jokes, as stated in the hypothesis, like in Table 6 or Table 9, not being able to translate the wordplay into the TL and searching for another solution with the adaptation, description, or calque techniques as seen in the analysis.

2. Cultural references will be altered in the translation to the TL.

The second point refers to altering cultural references in the translation to the TL, meaning losing or changing the reference of the SL. This was the case as there are many examples like Table 13 or Table 15. The translator had to maintain the comedic part of the joke while losing the cultural reference because it could not be understood in the TL.

3. The amusement part of the jokes will not be lost no matter if the significance of the joke in the SL is lost, or if the joke is changed in the TL.

Finally, the third point encompasses the preservation of the amusing part of the jokes the amusement part of the jokes, as it is a comedy film. We can see this in Table 2 and Table 16, for example. The first one is an internal joke, and the second one is a cultural joke. Although they are different types of jokes, and both are translated with different techniques (description and generalisation), the amusing part of the joke remains causing the same effect on the spectator no matter the change of the translation from the SL.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The reason for this academic dissertation was to investigate one of the most present helps we as a society have in our lives, which are subtitles. Everybody watches foreign audiovisual media from all around the world learning, socializing, or having fun, and it is now ordinary for every visual product to support it with subtitles in all languages possible. Here we gave an example of a film, a medium that is increasingly more popular amongst people.

Overall, we can say that our three hypotheses were assessed and correct. The translator ultimately has a comedic objective in the translation and, although the cultural references of the SL were lost in the TL, the translator made sure the target audience (in this case Spanish audience) found the film amusing through the various techniques used by the translator in each type of joke encountered. All this is seen through the results, demonstrating that the film mostly works with cultural jokes, and the translator uses the adaptation technique the majority of the time, deciding to adapt the jokes to the TL.

The hypothesis was also reviewed thanks to the analysis and the theory used in this academic dissertation. We had three hypotheses that were challenged and demonstrated as correct after a thorough analysis of the subtitling of the film and an adequate use of the theory following the type of jokes and techniques for translation. After these results, we could understand better the process of translating a comedy text in subtitles.

In conclusion, this dissertation has gone in-depth on what techniques can be used to be a good translator in comedy films thanks to the theoretical basis of the study of humour in detail, and the practical work made in the film *The Big Lebowski*. Following the basic rules of subtitling and the specific rules of translation, an excellent job in subtitling can be achieved. But, when a translation encounters a comedic text, the four types of jokes we have seen, and the several techniques shown on how to translate them can also be incredibly helpful.

All this process showed that translation may be challenging, but for comedy, it is crucial to also comprehend the source material while keeping the comedic part of it which is, at times, incredibly laborious between languages, as seen in the practical section. Overall, the translator must have the creativity to successfully achieve this endeavour.



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