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A Study on English Film Title Translation

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ABSTRACT

As far as cinema is concerned, translation is a key and complex element when it comes to distributing films to other countries, since each society has its own cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasy, and it is necessary to know how to adapt to them in order to make such distribution possible. This final project focuses on the analysis of the translation of English film titles into Spanish. In particular, we have looked into different types of translation and how these are related to the main textual functions of film titles. These two parameters will be taken into account for the analysis of a corpus of 379 English film titles (151 comedies and 228 dramas) and their respective translations into Spanish. The results derived from this analysis show that the different translation patterns used depend on the functions of the titles rather than on specific linguistic factors.

Key words: film title translation, audiovisual translation, translation techniques, functions of film titles.

RESUMEN

En lo que respecta al cine, la traducción resulta un elemento clave y complejo a la hora de distribuir las películas a otros países puesto que cada sociedad tiene una idiosincrasia cultural y lingüística propia, y es necesario saber adaptarse a ellos para que sea posible esa distribución. Este proyecto final se centra en el análisis de la traducción de títulos de películas inglesas al español. En concreto, se estudian los diferentes tipos de traducción y cómo están relacionados con las principales funciones comunicativas de los títulos de películas. Estos dos parámetros se tendrán en cuenta para el análisis de un corpus de 379 títulos de películas inglesas (151 comedias y 228 dramas) y sus respectivas traducciones al español. Los resultados derivados de este análisis muestran que los diferentes patrones de traducción utilizados dependen de las funciones de los títulos más que de factores lingüísticos específicos.

Palabras clave: traducción de títulos de películas, traducción audiovisual, técnicas de traducción, funciones de los títulos de películas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Film Title Translation As Part of Audiovisual translation	4
2.1. <i>Film Title Translation: An Underexplored field</i>	5
2.2. <i>Translation Techniques in English-Spanish Film Title Translation</i>	7
2.3. <i>The Functions of Film Titles in English-Spanish Translations</i>	10
2.4 <i>Previous Studies on the Translation of English-Spanish Film Titles</i>	11
3. Objectives	13
4. Methodology	14
4.1. <i>Compilation of Film Titles</i>	14
4.2. <i>Classification of Film Titles</i>	15
4.2.1. <i>According to Translation Techniques</i>	15
4.2.2. <i>According to Communicative Functions</i>	16
5. Presentation of the Results	16
5.1. <i>Drama Films</i>	17
5.2. <i>Comedy Films</i>	19
5.3. <i>Results According to the Communicative Functions of the Titles</i>	23
5.3.1. <i>Functions in Drama Films</i>	23
5.3.2. <i>Functions in Comedy Films</i>	26
6. Discussion and Main Conclusions	30
7. Appendix	32
8. Bibliography	32

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years there has been an upsurge in studies on the translation of film titles (Santaemilia 2000, Luján 2010, Diaz Tejio 1997, among others), as it has become more and more evident that film titles constitute the first contact between the film as a product and the viewer. This first impression is of vital importance considering that the message conveyed by the title serves for the understanding of a film, its message, or simply to attract the audience's attention. Depending on the director's intention, different communicative functions are used, three of which will be studied in this final project. The appellative function, the referential function and the expressive function. (See section 2.2). On this basis, it will be observed how the different translation techniques used in the translation of film titles play a fundamental role in the way in which the titles convey messages with one communicative function or another. The translation techniques included in this project are literal translation (including quasi-literal translation), zero translation, adaptation and creation. (See section 2.3). The study of the interaction between translation techniques and the textual functions of titles is the main objective of the present study.

In order to accomplish this aim, a brief introduction to the definition and history of audiovisual translation has been provided (section 2), followed by the role of film title translation within the field (section 2.1). The description of various translation techniques and film title functions, together with a brief review of previous studies dealing with this topic will be presented in under the rest of sub-sections. The main objectives of the project and the methodology used to compile the corpus and extract all the results are stated in sections 3 and 4 respectively, and finally, the discussion of the results and the main conclusions derived from it will be included under section 6.

2. FILM TITLE TRANSLATION AS PART OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Audiovisual translation can be defined as a technical method of translation that emerged in the 1930s and achieved the linguistic transfer of an audiovisual text (Chaume, 2004).

There are several terms that have been used to refer to the translation of films such as “transadaptation” or “film dubbing”, used by Fodor (1976); or “screen translation” used by Mason (1989), among others. However, the best-known term today is “audiovisual translation”, which, together and parallel with different factors such as technology, society and the cinema industry itself, have developed greatly in the last century.

However, at the beginning of the 21st century, as Díaz Cintas (2008) states, audiovisual translation is still poorly developed and insufficiently taught both in Spain and internationally, despite the increase in research and technological advances of other types of translation such as legal or literary translation. This delay may be due to the fact that audiovisual translation has an additional challenge compared to other types of translation, since apart from translating a text, it is necessary to work with two canals: the auditory canal and the visual one. This challenge is not so evident in the case of the translation of film titles where only a very short text (normally a short sentence, a group of words or even just one word) is translated and so this type of translation is not normally included as part of the audiovisual translation process. A brief account on the role of the film title translation is presented in the following sections where English-Spanish translations are used to illustrate the different points of discussion.

2.1 FILM TITLE TRANSLATION: AN UNDEREXPLORED FIELD

With globalization the flow of media products, especially audiovisual ones, has increased greatly and so, the translations of those products (usually created in the English language) into other languages have become more and more numerous and necessary. In the case of films, the title is the component of the product that, like any other type of title in cultural or literary works, entails the first contact between the audience and the product. The objective of the title text is to "condense the theme and gain the public's attention" (Acuña and Rodríguez 2002: 181) so that the audience feels attracted or interested in buying (i.e. watching) the film. From this viewpoint it is convenient to find an appropriate and satisfactory translation for each film title, since many factors such as marketing and consumption are involved in the intended purpose

of the product consumption: The number of viewers who will watch a film or the success it will achieve at the box office may be affected by a mistranslation (or a lack of translation or transfer of meaning).

The fact that the role of the translator when transferring a title from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL) is so important and double-folded (i.e. translator *vs.* marketing manager) is making this topic increasingly interesting among translation scholars. According to Vîlceanu (2008), the translator is a writer and at the same time a linguist, that is, a person who takes some written material in one language and converts it into the equivalent in another language. Bell (1991: 15) sums it up as follows: the translator decodes a message conveyed in one language and converts it into the equivalent in another language. However, in the case of film title translations those equivalents may not be understood as the best possible translation but as the best captivating or “catchy” title for a potential audience, a contrast and that is at the base of the difference between audiovisual translation in general and the translation of film titles in particular.

Expanding and deepening this difference, while there is a great body of audiovisual translation works in the field of translation, the study on the translation of film titles is quite scarce and recent¹. In fact, in film translation studies, the translation of titles has been virtually ignored (Jiménez 1997) or not considered as such since some of them are left untranslated, although in the latter case the translation is referred to as *zero translation* or *creation* (e.g. *Jojo Rabbit* or *Troop Zero*). Additionally, translators usually face a wide range of social problems when dealing with film title translation. One of them is that it is not considered a professional job and the task is not carried out by a translator but by the distributors themselves. Therefore, many translations turn out to be untranslated (i.e. keeping the original title) or totally different from the original titles, as in the title of the film *Finding Your Feet*: According to the Cambridge online dictionary, this expression means “to become familiar with and confident in a new situation”. Nevertheless, the Spanish translation is *Bailando la Vida*. Instead of looking for an equivalent to this expression in the TL, it has been preferred to look for another expression that is totally different but appropriate because the film is about a lady who joins a dance class.

¹ Nowadays, social networks such as Facebook or Instagram offer multiple lists of film title translations for the only purpose of entertainment rather than for an academic one.

On the other hand, in cases when the title is actually translated, the literal translation of film titles often leads to some controversy due to the public's disagreement with certain choices because they consider them inappropriate or because they observe that there is not enough connection between the message of the film or the plot and the title. According to some authors (e.g. Fuentes 2000, among others) the reason why these translations are considered inappropriate is because certain references well-known in the original culture are missed in the translated title. A case in point is *All the President's Men*, translated into Spanish as *Todos los hombres del presidente*, where it can be seen that a literal translation has been conducted, and thus the allusion to a famous phrase from Alice in Wonderland (Lewis 1865) has been lost (*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall / Humpty Dumpty had a free fall / all the King's horses / and all the King's Men / couldn't put Humpty together again*).

The translation of film titles must, therefore, be considered “translation” because if the function of the original title is to be maintained in the TL, this should be carried out by a translator. In the case of zero translation, it must be taken into consideration whether it has been kept as such for marketing reasons or because the title was considered to be perfectly understandable without the translation and it would be more attractive in the original version. From this viewpoint then, both factors, i.e. the functions of the titles and the translation techniques, are of vital importance to understand the complexity of this type of translation, an issue that will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH-SPANISH FILM TITLE TRANSLATION

There are different translation techniques² when translating film titles in order to adapt them to the target function (if this is in fact the ultimate goal), such as the following: keeping the original English title (according to some authors like Santaemilia 2000, this would not even be considered translation *per se*); translating it literally; moving

² The terms strategy and technique are used sometimes interchangeably in some translation works, but this study has followed the term used by Molina & Hurtado Albir (2002) to refer to the five types of translation.

away from a literal translation to satisfy commercial needs; to adjust the grammar of the TL by changing slightly the title; or completely replacing the original one using a different message.

In this section these translation techniques will be explained and illustrated with English-Spanish examples, using specialized terminology (taken mostly from Molina and Hurtado Albar (2002) and Negro (2010)): zero translation, literal translation, quasi-literal translation, adaptation and creation.

By using **zero translation** the original title in its SL is maintained. It is also known as “non-translation” and it is often used when proper names (e.g. *Peter Rabbit*; *Enola Holmes*), or place names (e.g. *Chicago*) appear in the title. Its use is growing nowadays, as young people are becoming more familiar with the English language (*rabbit* meaning “ratón”) and cultural references (*Holmes* as the surname of the famous detective in the literature).

However, some scholars are not in favour of this specific technique since they consider the title does not provide the intended information unless the audience understands it. For instance, Negro (2010) claims that the non-translation of the title means that it is not informative, since it does not adapt to the linguistic rules of the TL, nor does it have any appellative function because if the viewers cannot understand the given message, the director cannot connect with them.

Another frequently used technique is **literal translation** (e.g. *The Light between Oceans*: “*La luz entre los océanos*”), which is one of the most useful and reliable techniques in the field because it helps the viewer to identify the film. One of the main problems with this technique is that sometimes when translating a title literally, some key cultural aspects of the TL are not rendered, as occurs with the film *Friday the 13th*, which was translated into Spanish as *Viernes 13*, overlooking the fact that the day of bad luck in Spain is not Friday but Tuesday.

Within literal translation we find a variation or sub-type called **quasi-literal translation** (Jiménez 1997), which is produced when the literal translation undergoes minor modifications. These modifications refer mainly to the insertion or omission of words and grammatical changes, as in *Darkest Hour* translated as “*El instante más*

oscuro” or *Midnight Sun* as “*Amor a medianoche*”, where one or two words within the translation have not been translated literally.

In the case of grammatical changes these can be found both in morphology (e.g. a plural form in the original title becoming a singular one as in *The Remains of the Day*: “Lo que queda del día”) and in syntax (e.g. a change in the grammatical category of words, like a verb into a noun in *Obey*: “*Obediencia*”; or an affirmative statement turning into an interrogative sentence in *Meet Joe Black*: “¿Conoces a Joe Black?”), being this latter change related to the *appellative function*, as will be discussed later (see section 2.2).

In order to obtain a quasi-literal translation reductions can be used, whose aim is to condense the original title into the target one by omitting elements (that is, “Flying” in *Last Flag Flying*: “*La última bandera*”). The opposite type of modification is known as extensions, where instead of omitting elements, they are added to the original title (that is, the noun “príncipe” in *Charming*: “*El príncipe encantador*”), and so this technique is usually associated with the *referential function*, as will be illustrated later (see section 2.2).

Adaptation is the fourth technique under consideration in the present study and it occurs when the title of the SL is adapted to both the TL and culture. This would be applied in the case of set phrases, cultural references, or language-specific collocations that would not be understood if they were translated literally, which would be the case of *Carriers*: “*Infectados*”, where a literal translation like “portadores” into Spanish would not render by itself the meaning linked to the collocation “carriers of a disease”. From this viewpoint, usually adaptations are used to achieve more expressiveness in the titles (i.e. they fulfill an *expressive function*, see section 2.2) and so they may provide a certain connotation in the translation (a negative connotation in the case of “*Infectados*”).

Finally, the use of the technique called **creation** implies that the translated title becomes completely different from the original one. It is basically creating or inventing a new title instead of translating it. Sometimes the creation may lead to reveal more information in the translated title than in the original, exposing something that is going

to happen in the film. This is the case of examples like *Ice Princess*: "Soñando, soñando...Triunfé patinando" or *Dead Man Walking*: "Pena de muerte", where a happy end (expected from a comedy) or a tragedy at the end of the film (expected from a drama), respectively, is advanced in the translation. On other occasions the new title in a creation technique is completely descriptive (without advancing how the film ends), and sometimes, commercial factors are the only reason why a title is modified, as in *Permission*: "Una relación abierta", where the Spanish translation seems more appealing than the information expressed in the original title.

2.3 THE FUNCTIONS OF FILM TITLES IN ENGLISH-SPANISH TRANSLATIONS

As one of the factors that may play an important role in the translation of film titles, the function of the text (i.e. that of the title) should be taken into consideration as it refers to the general communicative purpose, being the ultimate purpose of translating a film title not only the rendering of the closest equivalent in the TL but, maybe more important than this, to sell the film as a product. In line with this ultimate purpose, a film title, like any other kind of text, is linked to certain textual functions such as the appellative, referential and/or expressive functions. Whether the TL title keeps the same function as the SL one or not will depend on each specific case.

More specifically, target film titles may be related to the *appellative function* (Nord 1995: 274) when their translations are used to create and save the contact with the target recipients by grabbing their attention with familiar patterns and making the title easier to remember. For instance, in film titles proper names are not typically translated because this function of attracting the viewer's attention is fulfilled with keeping the same cross-culturally and universally well-known name in the target title (e.g. *Churchill* or *Lady Macbeth*). This appellative function can be also observed in a title when the text addresses the viewer directly with a question, as in *Do You Believe?* (2005), although sometimes it may be lost in the Spanish translation: *El poder de la Cruz*.

On the other hand, other target film titles may fulfill a *referential function* (that is, the function that supplies a certain degree of context to the title) when they provide

the receiver with a description of the plot (i.e. the title reveals the theme, content or genre of the film). The titles translated with this purpose tend to be translated with a long text which usually includes a great deal of information (e.g. *Den of Thieves*, translated as “*Juego de ladrones: El atraco perfecto*”; *Gold*, translated as “*Gold. La gran estafa*”).

Finally, the **expressive function** (understood as the one that catches the public’s attention to a greater extent) is usually found in target film titles when they include words that express emotions such as diminutives, superlatives or augmentatives, or adjectives with positive or negative connotations. The first-person singular pronoun (I) can even be used to demand an involvement or a participation on the part of the target audience, as in *I Feel Pretty* - *¡Qué guapa soy!* Additionally, this function can be fulfilled in the translation with the use of literary resources such as rhymes, onomatopoeias, personification and, alliteration in order to impact the receiver (e.g. *Masterminds* - *De-mentes criminales*, *Dough*- *La mejor receta*, *The Star*- *Se armó el Belén*). In these three cases, a more expressive function is obtained in the target title than in the original, by using a wordplay, a superlative and an idiomatic expression, respectively.

Therefore, the functions of film titles play an important role not only in their SL but also when deciding whether their translation will render an equivalent function in the target audience or not. In fact, it could be argued that the functional factor when translating this type of texts has a predominant role in contrast with the translation techniques used, which seems to be a more secondary factor affecting the translated text as a product, as some studies mentioned in the following section reflect.

2.4. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON THE TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH-SPANISH FILM TITLES

As already mentioned above (see section 2.1) and pointed out by Jiménez Serrano (1997), research on the translation of film titles is scarce and very few academic

scholars have been devoted to rigorous studies of this topic (e.g. Jiménez Serrano, 1997; Díaz Teijo, 1997; Santaemilia, 2000; Luján, 2010; Negro, 2010, to name some) and these scholars offer different approaches to their analysis.

A recent and general approach to this topic was given by Peña-Cervel (2016) whose work *Motivating Film Title Translation: A Cognitive Analysis* concluded that cognitive linguistics has great potential in translation studies as this provides a descriptive approach to translation that helps to increase its functionality.

Among those approaches closer to our own study, it would be convenient to mention that of Negro's (2010), who confirmed the relevance of title translations and focused on the difference between adaptation and creation in the film title translation, concluding that in subordinate types of translation such as advertising translation, zero and literal translations prevail. Part of Negro's (2010) conclusion had already been attested by Santaemilia (2000: 210), who conducted a study on the Spanish translation of titles of English films that were released in Valencia between 1990 and 1996, and who concluded that the use of the non-translation or zero-translation technique (or borrowings) is progressively increasing with or without justification.

Another author who supports this finding is Luján (2010), who concludes in his study on the translation of film titles in Spain, that over the years, zero translation has increased.

A different approach is chosen by authors such as Calvo (2000), who focused on describing the translation techniques employed in the translation of Anglo-Saxon film titles and their motifs, or those of González Ruiz (2000) and Serrano Fernández (2001), who chose a more historical approach to the topic: the former author conducted a study on censorship and the translation of film titles during Franco's dictatorship, and the latter carried out a similar study but focused on the Spanish political transition period.

Having described some previous studies concerning the English-Spanish translation of film titles, this study will differ from them in two facts: i) a greater corpus of English-Spanish titles has been compiled to analyse the translations; and ii) a distinction of two film genres is presented to show if this condition implies a difference in the translation analysis. More details about these two facts and how they relate to our main objective will be described in the next section.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the present study is to describe the English-Spanish translation of film titles in the last three years to find out if there are any general characteristics associated to the translation of this text type according to two main issues discussed in the present study so far: the communicative functions of texts (Nord 1995) (see section 2.2) and the translation strategies used in the film title translation (Negro 2010) (see section 2.3). For this purpose, we are meant to provide an answer to the following research questions:

- 1) Are there specific translation techniques (see section 2.2) mostly used in this type of translation than others? Are any of these techniques more frequently found in comedies or in dramas?
- 2) Is there any communicative function (i.e. appellative, referential or expressive, as described in section 2.3) that prevails as typical in the translation of English film titles into Spanish? Is this function different if the film is a comedy or a drama?
- 3) Are the translation techniques used in film title translation related somehow with the function fulfilled by the target titles?

The answer to these two questions will provide valuable information about the translation pattern(s) followed in this type of texts and how they relate to either their communicative functions or the film genre they belong to. The methodology section that has been used to answer these questions will be described in the next section.

4. METHODOLOGY

This section is divided into two subsections. The first one explains how the corpus was compiled, which films were chosen and where they were taken from. The second subsection describes the classification of titles that has been carried out taking into account both the translation techniques used in the target text, the functions of both original and target versions of the film titles and the film genre they belong to. Moreover, the data in the [APPENDIX](#) containing the full list of films that make up the corpus has been classified according to a certain model: On the left is the release date of the film in the United States or in the United Kingdom, followed by its original title. To the right is the date of the film's release in Spain, followed by the title translated into Spanish. To the right of the title are the translation techniques used, and finally, the changes made from the original title to the target one in terms of their respective communicative functions.

4.1 COMPILATION OF FILM TITLES

The first step has been to collect the information that appears in the corpus. Such corpus consists of titles of a certain number of films released in Spain from 2017 to 2020, being divided into two groups: comedy and drama film titles. The decision to choose these two cinematographic genres was not an arbitrary one. As two completely different and virtually complementary genres, it makes sense that the functions of each title are almost entirely different from each other. All titles are in both English (SL) and Spanish (TL). [Elseptimoarte.net](#), [filmaffinity.com](#), [espinof.com](#) and [estrenosdecine.eu](#) have been chosen as the main sources from which to compile all these data. All film titles have been taken from [Elseptimoarte.net](#) because it was the most complete in terms of including the details about genre, the year of release in the US, UK and Spain, the original title and the translated title, etc. The other pages have been used to corroborate such information. As for the choice of films, absolutely all the drama and comedy films that appeared on [Elseptimoarte.net](#) from 2017 to 2020 were included. The reason was to obtain results that were as representative of the current state in this type of translation as

possible. In total, 379 films are included in the corpus: being 151 of them comedy films (39,8%) and 228 of them drama films (60,2%).

Within comedy films, 35 comedy-dramas have been analysed as if they were a sub-group to verify whether the translation techniques used or the communicative functions of these titles are those that predominate in drama or in comedy.

4.2 CLASSIFICATION OF FILM TITLES

This section describes the classification of original and target titles according to the translation techniques used in the target titles and the communicative function of both the original and the target title.

4.2.1 ACCORDING TO TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES

Table 1 shows the classification of film titles of both genres according to the translation techniques employed and described in section 2.2. Examples extracted from our corpus are used to illustrate each type: example (1) shows a zero translation as both the original title and the target title are the same; title (2) implies a literal translation and (3) a sub-type (i.e. a quasi-literal translation) with a lexical extension; adaptation is illustrated in (4) with the use of a set phrase; and, finally, creation exemplified in (5) shows how the target title's meaning has nothing in common with that of the original one.

Table 1. General classification of film titles according to the translation techniques used

Original title	Target title	Translation technique
(1) <i>Baby driver</i>	<i>Baby Driver</i>	Zero translation
(2) <i>Isle of Dogs</i>	<i>Isla de perros</i>	Literal translation
(3) <i>Mary Poppins Returns</i>	<i>El regreso de Mary Poppins</i>	Quasi-literal translation
(4) <i>Knives Out</i>	<i>Puñales por la espalda</i>	Adaptation
(5) <i>Kajillionaire</i>	<i>Cómo sobrevivir en un mundo material</i>	Creation

4.2.2 ACCORDING TO COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS

For the analysis of the functions of the titles, as table 2 shows, all titles describing information about the film were classified as titles with a referential function (like title (6)). The titles classified within the appellative function are proper names of people, places (like title (7)), literary works or songs, or even all the titles which are questions addressed to the viewer. Finally, titles considered as expressive are all those that contain set phrases, idiomatic expressions, superlatives, etc. (as in title (8)). It could be the case that the function of the target title differs from that in the original one, as example in (9), where both differ from one title to the other.

Table 2. General classification of film titles according to the communicative function

Original title	Target title	Communicative function
(6) <i>God's Not Dead: A Light in Darkness</i>	<i>Dios no está muerto: Una luz en la oscuridad</i>	Referential in both texts
(7) <i>Arctic</i>	<i>Ártico</i>	Appellative in both texts
(8) <i>Rough Night</i>	<i>Una noche fuera de control</i>	Expressive in both texts but more in SP
(9) <i>Radioactive</i>	<i>Madame Curie</i>	From referential to appellative

5. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

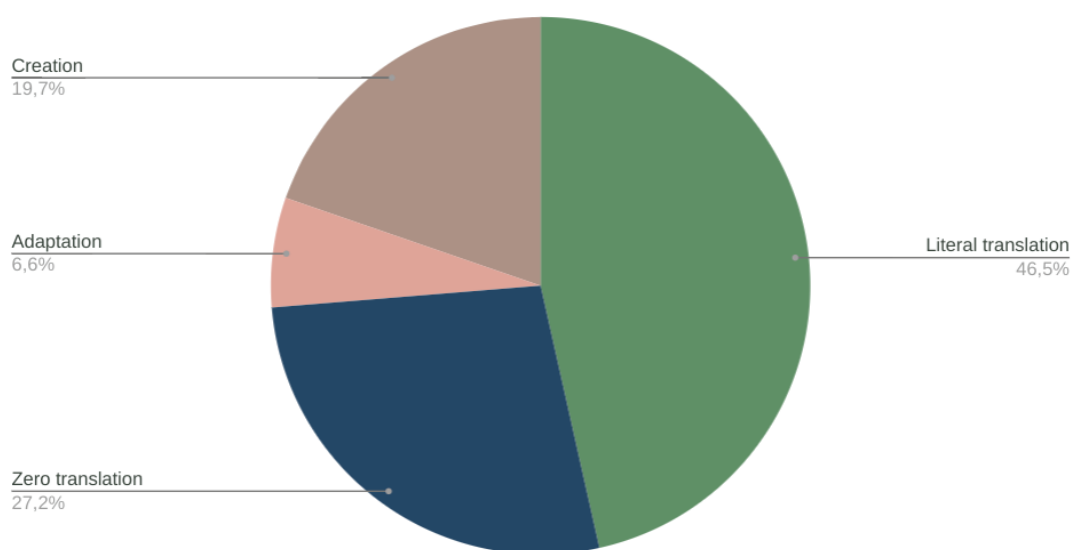
This section will present all the results obtained after having compiled the 379 films and completed their classification. First, the translation techniques used in both drama and comedy will be analysed, followed by the analysis of the functions of both genres. In addition to this, a brief analysis of dramatic comedies will also be carried out.

5.1. DRAMA FILMS

The sum of all the drama films that have been analysed makes a total of 227 films (60.2%). Of these, as figure 1 shows, in 107 titles (46.5%) the technique of literal translation has been used, in 62 (27.2%) the original title (zero translation) has been kept, in 45 (19.7 %) the translator(s) have opted for creation and finally, only in 15 titles (6.6 %) adaptation has been used.

Figure 1

Translation strategies (drama)



Within the titles translated with the literal translation technique, 22 films (20.8%) show quasi-literal translation, which, as a total by itself, implies slight changes classified as lexical (54.5%), morphological (9.1%) or grammatical extensions (31.8%) and reductions (4.5%). Therefore, the majority of quasi-literal translations are made up of lexical changes like, for instance, *The Darkest Hour*: “*El instante más oscuro*”; *Midnight Sun*: “*Amor a medianoche*”; *A Simple Favor*: “*Un pequeño favor*”, etc. The second highest percentage in quasi-translations is that of changes due to lexical extensions, such as *The Book of Henry*: “*El libro secreto de Henry*” or *Victoria and Abdul*: “*La Reina Victoria y Abdul*”, providing the audience with an explanation about who Victoria is by means of adding one referential word, “Reina”. It is worth pointing out the small percentages of morphological changes and reductions found, as only one

film has been translated with this latter sub-technique: *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, translated as *La sociedad literaria y el pastel de piel de patata*.

Zero translation (27.2%) is the second technique used within the drama genre of film titles, a relatively high percentage which seems to support Negro's (2010) results (see section 2.4).

The creation technique is the second least used in this type of film genre (19.7%). As in the case of adaptation, neither humour nor puns need to be translated in drama films as their titles are mostly descriptive or contain proper nouns. However, in most cases where this technique has been found, it has served to make the translated title more referential or explain a little more about the context (this is explained in depth in section 5.2. where the functions-techniques relation is analysed). A clear example is the title *Aftermath*, translated as *Una historia de venganza*. By using this technique, the original title does not have much to do with the translated one and acquires a much more referential function. Other significant cases in which this happens are the titles *Love Sarah: Una pastelería en Notting Hill*, or *The Happy Prince*, which from its original title not much can be deduced about the plot, but due to the use of creation in the Spanish translation, it is known who the main character is and also the theme of the movie: *La importancia de llamarse Oscar Wilde*. It is worth pointing out that this technique is not always used to make the title more descriptive or referential, but it can also be used for other communicative functions, such as an expressive one in the case of *The Kid: "Sin piedad"* (more dramatic and so capturing more attention), or an appellative function: *Extraction: "Tyler Rake"*, becoming an appellative title in the TL due to the use of a proper name.

As for adaptation, this is the technique that is the least commonly employed in the translation of titles within this genre (6.6%). This may result from the fact that drama titles do not usually contain many idiomatic expressions or puns, although there is a number of exceptions in the corpus. In the case of *Dog Eat Dog* translated as *Como perros salvajes*, this technique has been employed because the original title is an expression used when one would do anything (good or bad) to achieve success. By

adapting the title in Spanish and not making a literal translation, it conveys a message similar to the original, providing an expressive function in both languages. On other occasions, the adaptation is done for cultural reasons as in the title *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, translated as *Tres anuncios en las afueras*, or *Five Feet Apart*, translated as *A dos metros de ti*. In the translation of the former it is not necessary to know the exact place where the action takes place, especially if it is not familiar to someone living in another country. Furthermore, the translation remains faithful to the original title. In the latter case, the adaptation serves to clarify the units of measurement that differ from one culture or language to the other (*feet vs. meters*). In the film *The Professor and the Madman*, an adaptation in the translation, *Entre la razón y la locura* provides a much more expressive function capturing the viewer's attention to a greater extent.

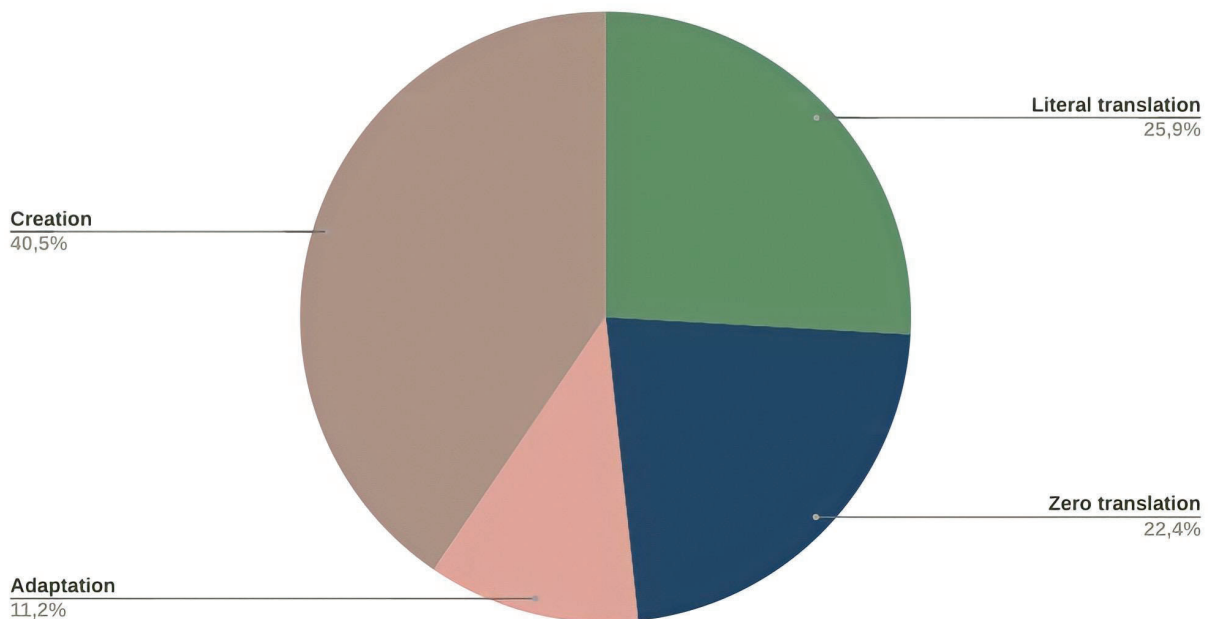
To sum up these first results, it is observed that the predominant translation technique in drama films is literal translation. By not translating humour or almost any puns, as mentioned above, what is preferred is to maintain the translated title as faithful as possible to the original title to convey the same meaning as that in the TL, but only sometimes obtaining the same effect on the viewers of the SL as on the viewers of the TL (this (un)parallelism between the original and the target text in terms of the effects on the viewers will be analysed later in section 5.2).

5.2. COMEDY FILMS

Compared to the number of drama films included in our corpus, the number of comedy films is considerably smaller, since, according to www.elseptimoarte.net, most of the comedies released in Spain in recent years were not in English. For the analysis of the translation techniques used in the translation of comedy titles, 151 film titles have been collected. Of these 151 films, only 116 films that belong solely to the comedy genre have been analysed, and the other 35 that are dramatic comedies (a mixture of the two genres) have been examined separately to make the results obtained as accurate as possible. Out of the 116 comedies, 47 (40.5%) have been translated using creation; 30

(25.9%) have been translated literally; 26 (22.4%) were not translated and 13 (11.2%) have been adapted. These results are reflected in Figure 2:

Figure 2 (Comedy)
Translation strategies



The creation technique (40.5%) is the most used in this film genre, just the opposite of what happens in drama films (where it was the second least technique used with 19.7%). This is because one of the most difficult elements to translate is precisely the humour, and with the use of this technique it is achieved a title completely different from the original, but with that touch of comedy that can attract the viewer much more. A clear example is the title *Masterminds*, translated as *De-mentes criminales*, where thanks to the wordplay and the use of creation, the title becomes more appealing than the original.

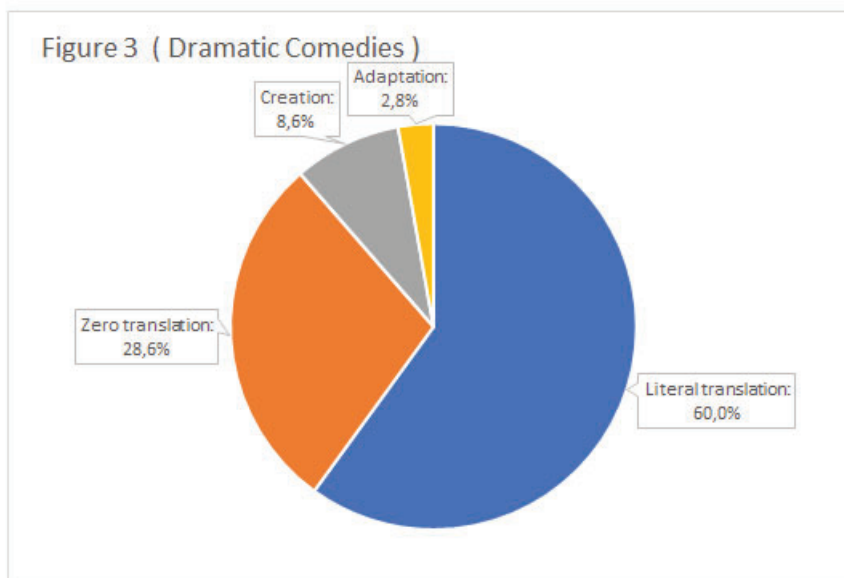
As for the case of literal translation in comedy film titles, it is the second most used technique. Within the literal translation results, 43.3% of them corresponded with quasi-literal translations, such as *The Hitman's Bodyguard*: “*El otro guardaespaldas*” or *Girls Trip*: “*Plan de chicas*”, and 30.8% within this sub-technique have undergone

changes by extension (e.g. *The Witches*: “*Las brujas (de Roald Dahl)*”; *Charming*: “*El príncipe encantador*”). Although the percentage of comedy titles translated quasi-literally is significantly higher than that of drama films (20.8%), these sub-techniques share the same order as those of drama films, with reductions and morphological changes as the scarcest at 7.7% and 15.4%, respectively.

The third technique, with 22.4% of use, is zero translation, whose percentage is close to that in drama titles (27.2%). Although most of the zero translations are proper names, there are plenty of examples in which the title has been left untranslated (e.g. *The Love Witch* or *Baby Driver*).

Finally, although adaptation is the least used, as it occurs in drama films, a much higher percentage is observed in comedy titles (from 6.6% to 11.2%), and the reason is the one mentioned above: humour. By using this technique, a title can be slightly modified without having to create a new one to achieve the same effect as the original title. Some examples from the corpus are the following, where the expressive function is maintained in both titles: *Gnome Alone*: “*Sola en casa*”; *Super Troopers 2*: “*Super Maderos 2*”; *Booksmart*: “*Súper empollonas*”.

A third small category in film genres has been compiled: dramatic comedies. The corpus includes 35 films whose genre is both comedy and drama, and, as figure 3 shows, the results obtained from the use of translation techniques parallel those derived from the drama genre title analysis: 60% literal translations; 28.6% zero translation; 8.6% translations by creation; and 2.8% adaptations.



Within the percentage of literal translation, 28.6% of the titles were translated quasi-literally being the only difference with respect to comedies and drama that there were no quasi-literal translations due to lexical changes; the rest of the changes (i.e. reductions, expansions and morphological changes) show similar percentages as those in the other two genres.

To sum up the results derived from the comedy titles, it seems that the most predominant technique used in the translation of comedy titles is creation rather than literal translation as in drama film titles. This result leads us to assert that the translation techniques used in this type of texts varies depending on the genre of the film, being the creation technique more frequent in the translation of comedy titles where humour is usually part of both the original and the target message. In contrast, in the case of drama titles, it seems that these restrictions do not usually apply and so literal translations are mostly found in these cases. We consider that this finding contributes to a better understanding of the patterns followed in this type of translation.

5.3. RESULTS ACCORDING TO THE COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE TITLES

In this section the various translation techniques viewed so far will be analysed in terms of how they modify the communicative functions of the original titles mentioned in section 2.3. (i.e. referential, expressive, and appellative) and if film genres differ in this sense.

5.3.1. FUNCTIONS IN DRAMA FILMS

This section includes the results of the analysis of all the communicative functions from the perspective of each of the translation techniques used.

Table 3. Functions in **literal translations**.

Non-identified function (No f)	Both Referential (R)	Both Expressive (E)	Both Appellative (A)
11 (13.1%)	33 (39.3%)	31 (36.9%)	9 (10.7%)

According to the results presented in table 3, when literal translation is used in drama film titles, in most cases both titles with a referential function (39.3%) and an expressive function (36.9%) are retained, as in *Murder on the Orient Express*: “*Asesinato en el Orient Express*”, or *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*: “*El sacrificio de un ciervo sagrado*”, where much information about the plot of the film is described. Examples of literal translations that maintain an expressive function would be *All the Money in the World*: “*Todo el dinero del mundo*”, or *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*: “*La des-educación de Cameron Post*”, being the latter a quite unusual case because it is very difficult to maintain a wordplay in a literal translation. In fact, it is the only one in the whole corpus.

The third percentage in the ranking of literary translations (13.1%) is that of titles that do not have any of the functions clearly identified, or in other words, they are specifically neither referential, nor appellative, nor expressive. They are usually short titles that do not say much about the film or do not provide much information to the viewer, such as *The Seagull*, translated as *La gaviota*.

Finally, 10.7% are literal translations that maintain the same appellative function as the original like proper names translated into a similar name as in the target title (e.g. *Dunkirk*: “*Dunkerque*”).

Table 4. Functions in **quasi-literal translations**.

Both R	+R in SP	Both E	No f	No f to R
6 (27.3%)	6 (27.3%)	8 (36.8%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)

With quasi-literal translations, changes in functions when translating titles are infrequent. In most of them (8 titles, 36.8%) both texts keep an expressive function (e.g. *Midnight Sun*: “*Amor a medianoche*”). There are 6 film titles (27.3%) where the referential function is increased with respect to the original title (e.g. *At Eternity's Gate*: “*Van Gogh, a las puertas de la eternidad*”; *Hillbilly Elegy*: “*Hillbilly, una elegía rural*”) and other 6 films where both texts have a referential function (e.g. *Official Secrets*: “*Secretos de Estado*”); finally, 1 film (4.5%) has no identified function and another which changes from having no function to referential (e.g. *The photograph*: “*Retrato de un amor*”).

Table 5. Functions in **Zero translations**.

Both A	Both E	Both R	No f
37 (59.7%)	10 (16.1%)	3 (4.8%)	12 (19.4%)

In the case of the films that have been translated using the zero translation technique shown in table 5, the predominant function is the appellative one (close to 60%). This is because there are many proper names that have not been translated in the target title within the corpus: *Lady Macbeth*, *Detroit*, or *Bohemian Rhapsody*. A lower percentage of titles with this technique (19.4%) does not have any prominent function in the original title and therefore neither in its translation. Among the titles translated with the zero translation that are not proper nouns and have a function, we find titles with an expressive function, such as *Loving*: “*Loving*”, which is expressive because of the use of an adjective with a positive connotation, or *Most Beautiful Island*: “*Beautiful*”

Island”, which apart from including a positive connotation includes a superlative. To a lesser extent, titles with a referential function also appear, for instance *A Ghost Story*: “*Ghost Story*”, which clearly describes the theme of the film despite its brevity.

Table 6. Functions in **creations**.

E to A	No f to R	No f to E	E to R	A to R	-R in SP	R to E	+R in SP	Both E	A to E	+E in SP	No f to A
3 (6.7%))	4 (8.9%))	4 (8.9%))	12 (26.7%)	4 (8.9%))	1 (2.2%)	2 (4.4%))	5 (11.1%)	5 (11.1%)	1 (2.2%))	3 (6.7%))	1 (2.2%))

With creations, as table 6 illustrates, there is a higher number of changes in the communicative functions between the original and the target texts compared to the previous techniques. The predominant changes consist of moving from an original title with an expressive function to a translation with a referential function, i.e. the translated title provides more information to the viewer than the original title, which could justify the use of this technique. Some examples found are *Cold Pursuit*: “*Venganza bajo cero*” and *Teen Spirit*: “*Alcanzando tu sueño*”.

Next, it can be seen other types of modifications with a lower representativeness: the target title becomes more referential than the original one (11.1%) (e.g. *21 Bridges*: “*Manhattan sin salida*”) or an expressive function is maintained in both titles (11.1%) (e.g. *The Aftermath*: “*El día que vendrá*”); the rest of the cases (8,9% or lower) usually change into a referential (e.g. *Gold*: “*Gold. La gran estafa*”), expressive (e.g. *The Escape*: “*La búsqueda de la felicidad*”; *Wildlife*: “*Lo que arde con el fuego*”; *A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood*: “*Un amigo extraordinario*”) or appellative function (e.g. *Radioactive*: “*Madame Curie*”);

Table 7. Functions in **adaptations**.

Both E	A to R	Both R	A to E	R to E	+E in SP
9 (60%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)

Regarding the results derived from the use of the adaptation technique illustrated in table 7, the highest percentage is that of titles that keep an expressive function both in the original title and in the translation (60%) (e.g. *Life Itself*: “*Como la vida misma*”); To add more expressiveness to the translated title is a change attested in 13.3% of the cases (e.g. *The Turning*: “*Otra vuelta de tuerca*”).

With only one example, the rest of changes in functions represent 6.7% of the total and they are usually referred to changes into a referential (e.g. *Miss Sloane*: “*El caso Sloane*”) or expressive function (e.g. *Tell It to the Bees*: “*El secreto de las Abejas*”; *The Professor and the Madman*: “*Entre la razón y la locura*”).

As a brief summary of this section, it is observed that in the literal translation technique, the most common in drama, most of the titles maintain the same referential function as the original title, while in the quasi-literal, and adaptation techniques, the expressive function is usually maintained. With the creation technique, most titles change their communicative function with respect to the original title, and usually move from an expressive title to a more referential one. Finally, in zero translation, the predominant function is the appellative one, since most of these titles are proper names.

5.3.2. FUNCTIONS IN COMEDY FILMS

This section presents the results obtained from the analysis of all the functions that comedy films have depending on the different translation techniques used.

Table 8. Functions in **creations**.

+E in SP	+R in SP	Both E	E to R	Both R	No f to E	R to E	E to A	A to E	A to R
9 (19.1%))	7 (14.9%))	11 (23.4%))	6 (12.8%))	3 (6.4%)	3 (6.4%)	4 (8.5%))	1 (2.1%))	2 (4.3%))	1 (2.1%))

As opposed to the results obtained from drama films when using creation, in the majority of the cases (23.4%), the functions of the original titles remain expressive when the titles are translated (e.g. *Snatched*: “*Descontroladas*”; *Pitch Perfect 3*: “*Dando la nota 3*”; *Finding Your Feet*: “*Bailando la vida*”). The next highest

percentage (19.1%) corresponds to translations that achieve a higher expressive function than the original title (e.g. *Military Wives*: “¡Que suene la música!”, *Fatman*: “Matar a Santa”; *Blockers*: “#SEXPACT”).

The translations that achieve a more referential function than the original title represent 14.9% (e.g. *The Comeback Trail*: “La última gran estafa”; *Hustlers*: “Estafadoras de Wall Street”) and in a closer percentage (12.8%) there are translations where the original expressive function is lost in favour of a referential one (e.g. *Kajillionaire*: “Cómo sobrevivir en un mundo material”; *Bad education*: “La estafa”).

The rest of the changes represent lower percentages (from 8.5% to 2.1%) and mostly imply changes into an expressive (e.g. *A Bad Moms Christmas*: “El gran desmadre (Malas madres)”; *Stan & Ollie*: “El gordo y el flaco”; *Dough*: “La mejor receta”; *The Star*: “Se armó el Belén”), referential (e.g. *Doolittle*: “Las aventuras del doctor Dolittle”) or appellative function (e.g. *The Happytime Murders*: “¿Quién está matando a los muñecos?”). Less frequently, both titles maintain a referential function (e.g. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul*: “Diario de Greg: Carretera y manta”).

Table 9. Functions in **zero translations**.

Both A	Both E	Both R	No f
18 (69.2%)	3 (11.5%)	4 (15.4%)	1 (3.8%)

As table 9 shows, there are not so many changes in the functions when zero translations are used, as the target title is not modified by the translation. The highest percentage (69.2%) corresponds to titles that have an appellative function both in the original title and in the translation, which are mostly proper nouns: *Christopher Robin*; *Yesterday* (the name of an album), and *Enola Holmes*. In the second place (15.4%) both titles have a referential function: *Men in Black: International*, or *The Love Witch*, and in the third place (11.5%), titles with an expressive function in both texts: *Prevenge*, which is expressive because it is a pun, or *Onward*. Finally, there is one film with no communicative function identified: *Cars 3*.

Table 10. Functions in **literal translations**.

Both R	Both E	Both A
10 (58.8%)	5 (29.4%)	2 (11.8%)

The results in table 10 show that literal translations like zero translation in terms of communicative functions have scarce changes because the translation does not change, they are faithful to the original titles at that level as well. In most of the cases, both titles maintain a referential function, as it can be seen in *Game Night*: “*Noche de juegos*” or in *The Spy who Dumped Me*: “*El espía que me plantó*”. In the rest of the cases, 5 titles maintain an expressive function such as *The Dead Don't Die*: *Los muertos no mueren*, and 2 that maintain an appellative function (e.g. *the Addams Family*: “*La familia Addams*”).

Table 11. Functions in **quasi-literal translations**.

+E in SP	Both E	Both R	+R in SP	-R in SP
2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)	5 (38.4%)	3 (23%)	1 (7.7%)

In quasi-literal translations, as illustrated in table 11, there is no shift from one communicative function to a completely different one, but rather subtle modifications (more expressiveness or more/less referentiality). In most cases (38.4%), the communicative function of both texts is referential (e.g. *The Hitman's Bodyguard*: “*El otro guardaespaldas*”), then cases (23%) that acquire a more referential (e.g. *The Witches*: “*Las brujas de Roald Dahl*”) or expressive function (e.g. *The Boss Baby*: “*El bebé jefazo*”). Finally, only in 2 film titles (15.4%) an expressive function is maintained (e.g. *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie*: “*Capitán Calzoncillos – Su primer películón*”) and only 1 title (15.4%) loses referentiality in the Spanish translation: *The Secret Life of Pets 2*: “*Mascotas 2*”.

Table 12. Functions in **adaptations**.

Both A	Both E	E to R	+E in SP	Both R
1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)

Regarding the use of the adaptation technique in table 12, most functions (53.8%) do not change in this case and both titles keep an expressive function. This is not surprising since, when translating humour, the adaptation usually tends to modify slightly the title to try to maintain the same function as the original title (e.g. *Booksmart*: “*Superempollonas*”; *Dog Days*: “*I love dogs*”; *Logan Lucky*: “*La suerte de los Logan*”; *Fun Mom Dinner*: “*Juerga de mamis*”). In the other less representative cases, some titles keep a referential function (e.g. *The War With Grandpa*: “*En guerra con mi abuelo*”; *Gnome alone*: “*Sola en casa*”), and some other keep an appellative one (e.g. *Why him?*: “*¿Tenía que ser él?*”).

In this type of film genre, where creation is the most commonly used technique, a greater expressiveness is usually achieved in the translated title than in the original, while with the use of zero translation there is a greater appellative function, with adaptation the expressive one predominates, and with both creation and quasi-literal translation, the functions of the titles remain referential in both languages.

To finish the analysis of the communicative functions according to genres, table 13 shows the results obtained from the analysis of the films that are dramatic comedies:

Table 13. Functions in **dramatic comedies**.

	Creation	Zero translation	Adaptation	Literal	Quasi-literal
Both E	1 (33.3%)	2 (20%)		3 (20%)	2 (33.3%)
Both R		4 (40%)		6 (40%)	2 (33.3%)
Both A		4 (40%)		6 (40%)	
R to E	2 (66.7%)		1 (100%)		
E to R					1 (16.7%)
+R in SP					1 (16.7%)

In the creation technique, the main results in table 13 show that the change from a referential function to an expressive function predominates (66.7%), while in zero translation there is a tie between keeping the translated title and the original title with the same function (referential and appellative, both with 40%), as in literal translation. Generally speaking, when using the quasi-literal technique, there is a tendency to keep both titles with the same function: expressive and referential (33.3% in both cases).

6. DISCUSSION AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

After having presented all the results of the translation techniques used to translate the original English titles of the films into Spanish, and the communicative functions of the titles, it can be seen the following links between the research questions posed in section 3 and the results described in section 5. Regarding the drama film titles, most of the translations are carried out using the literal translation technique which, at the same time, is meant to keep mostly the referential and/or expressive functions of the original

titles, with the ultimate purpose of clarifying the meaning of the original title or the main theme of the drama.

This could be interpreted as a preference to maintain as faithful as possible the target title with respect to the original, and the director's decision is still protected, whereas in comedy films the translation method used is mostly the creation technique (research question 1). The main reason for this contrast may lie in the concept of humour in translation. It is one of the most difficult elements to translate in any kind of translation, and in film titles it is not an exception. However, most of the translations made with the creation technique maintain the same function as that in the original title, that is, the expressive function, which is also a reasonable result as this communicative function is meant to catch the audience's attention through the expression of (mostly comical) emotions in a very short piece of text (research question 2).

On the other hand, our study has also attested, as other previous studies (e.g. Negro, 2010), that the zero translation is also common in film title translation, although it is more frequently found in dramas than in comedies (research question 1). Likewise, this technique is also associated to a particular function that is the appellative one, a result that seems to point to the fact that this type of translation has the purpose of making the title easy to remember in both languages (research question 2).

As for the translation of drama-comedy titles, the pattern is similar to that of drama titles as the predominant technique is literal translation, which generally maintains the same referential function as that in the original title.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to show how specific translation techniques and textual functions are typically found in the translation of titles and how this fact depends on the type of film genre the title belongs to. Furthermore, it has been proven how there is a direct influence between the translation technique and the function of the original and target texts (research question 3), as in drama title translation the literal translation allows to keep a referential and/or expressive function, while in comedy title translation creation allows to keep the same expressive function as that of the original catching the viewer's attention in the same way as original titles do.

7. APPENDIX

The appendix used in this final project can be found in this [link](#)

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