punctum.
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEMIOTICS

ISSN 2459-2943
https://punctum.gr

06 | 01
2020

Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space

EDITED BY
Evangelos Kourdis & Susan Petrilli

PUBLISHED BY
THE **HELLENIC**
SEMIOTIC SOCIETY

Humor and intersemiosis in films: Subtitling *Asterix and Obelix*

punctum.gr

ABSTRACT

Humor has long been the subject of research by scholars coming from different disciplines and fields. Raskin (1985) classified humor theories into three main categories: the incongruity theories, the hostility theories, and the release theories. This paper, drawing on the theory of incongruity, aims to investigate the interplay of verbal and nonverbal humor in audiovisual contexts. The research involves examining selected humorous scenes from the French film, *Astérix aux Jeux Olympiques* (2008), and its subtitled version in Greek. Humor in the Asterix and Obelix films is multifaceted. As in the case of the initial comic series, the film reproduces instances of double-layered humor; humor seems to work on two levels. On the surface level, it targets a broad audience, including children and adolescents. On a deeper level, it is constructed to imply a hidden innuendo or secondary layer intended for a more culturally embedded audience (Gavriilidou and Tsakona 2004-2005). Gavriilidou and Tsakona (2004-2005) note that "the extraordinary and unconventional portrayal of characters and their settings as well as the deviation from a balanced and canonical use of two semiotic codes, language and image, creates humor." This same trait is reproduced in the film. The analysis will be based on semiotic systems' synergy and multimodal film analysis of selected scenes from the original.

ARTICLE INFO:

Volume: **06**

Issue: **01:2020**

ISSN: **2459-2943**

DOI: **10.18680/hss.2020.0009**

Pages: **185-202**

By: **Loukia Kostopoulou**

KEYWORDS:

incongruity theory

humor

Asterix and Obelix

audiovisual translation

intersemiosis

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

1. The notion of incongruity

Scholars and researchers of different disciplines and fields have long used humor as a subject of research. Vandaele emphasizes that humor is a form of social play. As he explains (2010: 148), "our symbolic mind can turn uncertainty, surprise and danger into what we call humor." Humor is a human trait, and it is distinct from laughter. In this respect, Tsakona and Popa (2011: 3) observe that 'the term is associated with, and differentiated from, other terms, such as the comic, irony, satire, ridicule, parody, mockery, scorn, funny, ludicrous, etc.' Thus, humor can have different facets ranging from comic to satire, parody, and so on. Raskin (1985: 31-36) has classified the theories of humor into three main categories: the incongruity theories, the hostility theories, and the release theories.

Keith-Spiegel (1972), Raskin (1985), and Attardo (1994, 1998) approached the issue emphasizing two main concepts that pertain to humorous stimuli: incongruity and superiority. These concepts are not easily recognizable; fear or disappointment can, at times, be the result of incongruity, whereas euphoria or aggression can be the result of superiority (Vandaele 2002). As Vandaele (2002: 222-223) explains, "humor is at different times either overdetermined or underdetermined by incongruity and/or superiority." He considers both incongruity and superiority as imperfect notions. According to him, they cannot be differentiated, since incongruity and superiority coexist in humorous instances. As he notes (2002), incongruity theories are less oriented towards the social aspects of humor and more towards the cognitive features. In this regard, Attardo (2008: 103) points out that "incongruity theories claim that humor arises from the perception of an incongruity between a set of expectations and what is actually perceived." Different branches of linguistics approach humor in different ways. Linguistics has, in fact, (ibid.: 104), opted for this kind of theory because it is an 'essentialist' discipline, trying to explain the essence of humor, what makes humor funny. A semiotic approach to humor would differ in the sense that it would focus on both the denotation and, more interestingly, on the connotation of humorous instances, be they in books, films, comic books, etc.

Tsakona and Popa suggest that incongruity forms the basis of humor. Incongruity theories date back to philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant, among others. The prevalent view among them is that humor arises when there is a violation of what is expected:

> [It] emerges from two overlapping but opposed scripts. However, such violations do not generate by default a humorous response. Fear, agony, anxiety, panic, anger, curiosity, disgust, etc. may also result from something deviating from the norms and disrupting social order. Thus, humor is further perceived as the *enjoyment of incongruity*. Humorists and their audience have to feel safe and not threatened by the violation of their expectations. (Tsakona and Popa 2011: 4)

Film audiences feel protected due to the 'wall' that seems to arise between the film and the viewer; in this sense, it becomes possible to enjoy humor. What should be stressed is that all these theories are based on the verbal aspect of humor; in fact, Raskin (1985) acknowledges that the script-based theories of humor exclude nonverbal humor. In the category of nonverbal humor, he (1985: 43) includes "a non-verbal situation [that] is accompanied by a text but the text is just a component of the joke rather than its creator." Norrick (2004: 401) also comments that jokes that fall under the oral joke performance category present significant differences from verbally oriented jokes because of the interactional features of the joke performance and the "pantomime, gestures, voice shifts […]." In films, we usually have complex jokes, wherein humor arises from the combination of verbal and nonverbal signs. But what is the singularity of audiovisual humor? Are there any specific characteristics in this type of humor?

2. The singularity of audiovisual humor

Many scholars have attempted to define or describe the nature of audiovisual texts (see Chaume 2000; Delabastita 1989; Sokoli 2000; Zabalbeascoa 2001, 2008, among others) and of audiovisual humor (Asimakoulas 2004; Chiaro 1992, 2005, 2010; Dore 2020; Martinez Sierra 2004, 2008; Zabalbeascoa 1994, 2014, etc.). Nonetheless, this task is quite arduous since "our understanding of the object world is greatly influenced by our cultural background, which includes the texts we have been exposed to (e.g., conversations, books, posters, lectures, mass media)" (Zabalbeascoa 2008: 21). Since humor is more often than not culture-specific, its understanding presupposes a thorough knowledge of the source language's culture and connotations (both verbal and nonverbal). On this issue, Nash (1985: 9) makes a similar comment, "[w]e share our humor with those who have shared our history and who understand our ways of interpreting the experience. There is a fund of common knowledge and recollection, upon which all jokes draw with instantaneous effect."

Taking into account the textuality conditions described by de Beaugrande and Dressler, Zabalbeascoa suggests that a prototypical audiovisual text should comply with the following conditions:

a) AV text users use their eyesight (to look, to watch, and to read) and their ears (to listen to speech and other sounds).
b) The various elements of an AV text work in a complementary way, since they were produced to work together, i.e., the music is chosen to go with the pictures and words, or any other combination of AV text items.
c) There are three main stages of production 1) pre-shooting and/or planning, 2) shooting (directing, camera operating, make-up, and acting), and 3) post-shooting (editing and cutting). (Zabalbeascoa 2008: 23-24)

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

We should emphasize that, in audiovisual contexts, humor derives from the synergy of various semiotic systems; the synergy can either enhance the comic effect or complete it. Audiovisual translation scholars have categorized audiovisual humor in several categories catering to cultural specificities and audiovisual parameters (visual elements, aural elements, or a combination of these humorous elements). They have also stressed the anchoring or redundancy effect that seems to determine the type of relationship among semiotic codes.

2.1. Interlingual translation of humor

Humor sometimes travels very well across cultures, while other times, it does not succeed "to amuse in the new location" (Chiaro 2010: 1). Especially in comedies, humor is the driving force of the film. Not being able to reproduce the same comic effect to the target audience may even lead to the failure of the films' success outside domestic borders. This article aims to explore the notion of humor, through an interdisciplinary lens, by combining humor studies, audiovisual translation, and translation semiotics. More specifically, I will analyze the interaction of different semiotic codes in films and how these enhance the humorous effect. I will examine how humor is transferred in the subtitles and whether the humorous effect is recreated or not.

The literature on the translation of humor has resided on prescriptive paradigms of good and bad or on impressionistic ones, accepting humor as a monolithic or intuitive phenomenon (Vandaele 1993). Drawing on Attardo's knowledge resources and Vandaele's proposals, Asimakoulas suggests that:

> verbal humor involves social/cognitive expectations, that is, a sort of norm acceptance and/or norm opposition. Norm acceptance is when, for instance, a stereotype, a cliché, something societies have established as inherently funny is used […]. 'Norm acceptance' refers to contextual/social factors generating humor and their moment-to-moment assessment and shows that something can be humorous without exclusively involving a clash or incongruity. (Asimakoulas 2004: 824)

Norm, as Asimakoulas suggests (ibid.), "highlights the social rootedness of humor." It can "involve two clashing interpretations" of a pun or a wordplay "in situations where it is not appropriate" (ibid.). Norm acceptance/opposition can be used in films to establish 'humorous communication between the director/screenplay writer and the viewers. It is the vehicle to highlight/establish cleverness […] natural understanding, levity, in-groupness […], and the assertion of a common metalanguage or a shared code of some sort' (ibid.: 825).

Reception studies on humor have attempted to systematize the phenomenon and assert whether one could refer to universal or culturally specific humor, as well as,

whether another culture was susceptible to such instances. In this respect, translation and, in our case, subtitling, plays a pivotal role in rendering humorous instances and promoting the audience's satisfaction.[1]

As regards recent studies on this issue, Perego observes that they:

> show that compensation in the most diverse forms is regularly resorted to when translators have to handle humor, and a dynamic (vs. formal) equivalence (Nida, 1964) is typically opted for to overcome the hurdles. […] But in the final analysis, it is the audience's ability to (re)interpret the translated product that plays a major role in its final appreciation and enjoyment, especially as regards the humorous nuances of the film he or she has decided to watch. (Perego 2014: 13)

Transferring humorous elements, be they puns, play on words, etc. is very demanding. Hence, Perego's stress on the audience's interpretative ability. Other scholars have underlined the audience's role in film reception and humor appreciation (see Antonini 2005; Chiaro 2010, etc.). From this perspective, reception studies would be instrumental in mapping how humor travels culturally and how it is received and interpreted by foreign audiences.

As Antonini (2005: 212) aptly points out, translating on-screen humor is not as straightforward as translating written humor. Verbal humor, "though notoriously difficult to translate when it is simply written or spoken, […] on screen it can become especially complex when visuals and vocals coalesce" (Chiaro 2009: 162). The transfer of formally based humor is even more complicated than referentially based humor (Attardo 1994: 28-29).

There are three major operations while transferring humor: elimination, rendering, and simplification (Antonini 2005: 213-214). In the case of elimination, we observe that the target text is deprived of all those elements that "do not modify the sense of the message but its form (e.g. pleonasms, hesitations, repetitions, onomatopoeia, interjections etc.) and of those elements that the viewer can gather from the visual information" (Antonini 2005: 213). The second translation strategy consists in reproducing instances of humor in the target language. The final strategy has to do with the simplification or fragmentation of the syntactical structure of the aural text. As for the translation of puns in audiovisual products, Chiaro (2009: 28) mentions four possible options, further refining Antonini's classification. The first option is to leave the pun unchanged in the source language; the second is to replace the source language pun with a target language pun; the third is to replace the source language pun with an idiomatic expression in the target language, and the final option is to ignore the pun altogether.

[1] Also see Ruch (2001).

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

I would suggest that Antonini's classification refers to the macro level, thus implying the employment of general translation strategies for the transfer of audiovisual humor. In contrast, Chiaro's classification refers to the microlevel, suggesting the adoption of specific translation techniques for particular instances of verbally expressed humor in the text.

Bearing in mind that people of different nationalities laugh at different things, a literal translation of wordplay or other allusions hinders understanding (Fuentes Luque 2001). Experimental research on the perception of audiovisual humor by Spanish viewers confirms the researcher's initial hypothesis, namely that humor is lost in translation, especially in the subtitled version of films where humor was rendered literally.

Though the screen translator operates on the linguistic level, he/she should bear in mind gestures, visuals, and music because words that appear on the screen "are neither self-sufficient nor independent" (Chiaro 2009: 163). Hence, the translation of a humorous element into another language presupposes analytical skills and the ability to restructure the original to produce a humorous effect in the target text (ibid.: 18). Bearing in mind both the temporal and spatial constraints of subtitling, this task becomes even more demanding (see Diaz Cintas and Remael 2007).

3. Intersemiosis and multimodality in films

Jakobson (1959) was the first one to broaden the meaning of the term 'translation.' Thanks to him, argues Torop (2000: 595), "a semiotic turn took place on the borderline between translation studies and cultural semiotics." According to Torop, both the scope and methodology of translation studies changed, and this led to the inclusion of more translation activities in the translation studies umbrella. One of these activities is intersemiotic translation or transmutation, that is, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (Jakobson 1959: 261). As Queiroz and Aguiar suggest (2015: 201), "[a]fter Jakobson's definition, the term became broader and now it designates relations between systems of different nature, though not restricted to the interpretation of verbal signs'. According to the authors (ibid.), this process is evident in several semiotic phenomena, namely, literature, cinema, comics, poetry, dance, music, theater, sculpture, painting, video, etc. Petrilli and Ponzio explain that the translator's role is to move beyond the verbal signs:

> The translator must navigate the iconic dimension of language and move beyond the conventions and obligations of the dictionary to enter the live dialogue among national languages, among languages internal to a given national language, and among verbal signs and nonverbal signs. (Petrilli and Ponzio 2012: 20)

Thus, since the first definition of intersemiotic translation proposed by Jakobson, the concept has evolved to include nonverbal semiotic systems and to suggest that language is not the prevalent semiotic system. According to Kourdis and Yoka (2014: 162), this new definition of intersemiotic translation allows the translator "to by-pass the most powerful semiotic system […] and to invest in non-verbal forms of communication." In advertisements, for example, intersemiosis depends "upon the joint perception of word and image" (ibid.: 176).

The preponderance of the visual or nonverbal aspect has been emphasized not only by semioticians but also by filmmakers and film theorists. In this sense, Barnett (2017 [2008]: 12) describes cinema as "an articulated image stream" in which language "is simply the meaningful articulation of elements within an overarching structure." He argues that in cinema, "verbal logic will become secondary and articulated pictorial and musical logics become primary" (ibid.). Barnett goes on to explain how meaning can arise in film texts: "Two signs, when juxtaposed, can carry meaning off into very different directions, and how we ultimately take them may be determined by a common, conventionalized usage or a unique context that will likely have an arbitrary component." (ibid.: 13).

For Kourdis (2018: 322), "when we translate signs (intralingually, interlingually, intersemiotically), we translate cultural constructions that are sociocultural conventions where the notion of code is inherent." He explains that connotation is a more complex cultural construction than denotation, and for this reason, it is not easy to translate. Following the same line of thought, Dusi (2015: 183) mentions that intersemiotic translation is "not a simple transcodification, but a transcultural, dynamic and functional event caught between the requirement to remain faithful to the source and the need to transform it into a text that is understood and accepted in the target culture." Intersemiotic translation is a dynamic process since languages are open systems that allow translatability, given that they keep their boundaries (ibid.). All scholars emphasize the cultural aspect of translation. Transferring the connotation of a verbal or visual sign in another cultural system is very demanding and needs good interpretative skills on the part of the translator. A thorough analysis of film texts would comprise both intersemiotic analysis of all semiotic codes and their interplay and an interlingual analysis of humor.

Another concept that will be of particular use in my analysis is that of multimodality. One of the foremost scholars in the field, Gunther Kress (2009: 54), defines mode as "the socially shaped and culturally given resource, for making meaning." In this sense, everything that is a meaning-making resource could be considered a mode; for instance, in films, colors, graphics, music, and gestures, intonation is regarded as a mode. Of course, the meaning of a sign is both socially and culturally shaped, and this defines the experience. da Silva exemplifies it quite rightly:

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

> If one can imagine a scene—only one—of a movie by reading a passage—and only one—of a book, then we can believe that IT must occur at lower levels, between statements, speeches, and lexical units within a movie or text. And such units do not necessarily have to correspond to each other strictly. A form of perceiving or feeling, a word can be translated into another possible mode but related to that word in another way, like color, an image, or even a smell. (da Silva 2017: 77)

All these modes should be taken into account while analyzing humor in film texts as they work complementarity and enhance the comic impact.

4. Humor in *Asterix and Obelix*

The Asterix and Obelix films are adaptations of the original comic books written by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. Humor in the Asterix and Obelix films is multifaceted, comprising both verbal humor and sociocultural humor. As in the initial comic books, the films reproduce some instances of double-layered humor that seems to work on two levels. On the first level, it targets a broad audience, including children and adolescents. On a deeper level, it is constructed to imply a hidden innuendo or secondary layer intended for a more culturally embedded audience who should understand the source culture (Gavriilidou and Tsakona 2004-2005), allusions and intertextual references linked to it.[2] Gavriilidou and Tsakona (2004-2005: 145) explain that "the extraordinary and unconventional portrayal of characters and their settings as well as the deviation from a balanced and canonical use of two semiotic codes, language and image, creates humor" (my translation). This same trait is reproduced in the film analyzed. The film adaptation of the original comic books abounds in anachronisms, play on words, humorous names of the main characters, and cases of pragmatic and historic incongruity. Referring to the original, print version of the comic, da Silva explains:

> It comprises references to places, peoples, and situations, relating to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, the time of the creation of the great majority of the albums, and of other World History times and moments, all of which are transported to the time in which the adventures take place: year 50 B.C. (da Silva 2017: 77)

In *Astérix aux Jeux Olympiques* (2008), both the audio and the visual semiotic systems are fully exploited to send verbal and nonverbal signs. All elements are intended to make the meaning of the words and the script more dynamic (see Zabalbeascoa 2008:

[2] Also see Tsakona (2009).

31). For my analysis, I used Vandaele's (2002) taxonomy of the types of incongruity. This taxonomy allows us to understand how humor is constructed. I have also combined it with multimodal film analysis focusing on various codes (cinematographic, visual, aural, etc.).

4.1. Types of incongruity

A fundamental notion of understanding the concept of incongruity is that of the cognitive scheme. Vandaele (2002: 226) defines the notion of cognitive scheme as "every mental construction a human possesses whereby to relate and, thus, to give meaning to or interpret stimuli from the outside world." He perceives the cognitive scheme as "a way of representing interiorized, interpreted reality" (ibid.). In this sense, incongruity is a contradiction to the cognitive scheme. Vandaele expressively underlines the 'idiosyncratic' character of humor perception:

> A stimulus referred to mental schemes can always yield different interpretations. In principle, anything can be a sign of anything (Charles Sanders Peirce's 'infinite semiosis'). Although we deal here with strongly conventionalized communication— mainstream film comedy—naming the various types of humor encountered will turn out to be a border-crossing activity. This is because an adequate typology of humor would have to be an adequate typology of everyday cognition. (Vandaele 2002: 227-228)

Vandaele (2002) enumerates several types of incongruity: linguistic incongruities, pragmatic incongruities, narrative incongruities, incongruities located in the field of art 'parody' which are considered cases of intertextual incongruities, incongruities located in the social field 'satire' which are considered social incongruities and finally, 'unlocated' or 'absolute' incongruities. In the first sequence (8.35-9.50), we observe an example of narrative incongruity. It has to do with the time that the fictional story takes place. Brutus uses the word *casque* [helmet] to refer to a Roman *galea*. This is considered an anachronism, and it is a widespread instance of humor in the film. In the Greek subtitles, this humorous happening is easily reproduced by translating the word *casque* with the word *κράνος* [helmet], thus 'violating what is expected' (see Tsakona and Popa 2011). In this instance, one can observe an example of visual and verbal disruption. What is seen in the image, namely a *galea*, is not congruous with the verbal sign uttered, namely *casque*. Thus, humor in this sequence arises due to both the incongruity of using an anachronism and the mismatch between verbal and visual signs.

Media texts, and in general popular culture texts, have copious intertextual references that aim to enhance genre conventions or involve the audience. Julia Kristeva originally coined the term intertextuality and defined it (1984: 60) as "the transposition

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

of one (or several) sign system(s) into another." In another work (1986: 37), she remarks that "every text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; every text is the absorption and transformation of another." As D'Angelo (2010: 33) observes, "intertextuality describes the relationships that exist between and among texts." The author explores several intertextuality modes, namely *adaptation, retro, appropriation, parody, pastiche,* and *simulation*. I will consider mainly the case of parody since many instances in the film function as parodies of earlier works. D' Angelo (2010: 38), referring to the definition of the *American Heritage Dictionary,* notes that parody is "a literary or artistic work that imitates the characteristic style of an author or a work for comic effect or ridicule." In the same frame of thought, Hutcheon writes that parody "is an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inventing, and 'transcontextualizing' previous works of art" (cited in D' Angelo 2010: 38).

Torop (2000: 77) suggests that there are different approaches to intertextuality.[3] The text-oriented intertextual interpretation, which looks at texts and its qualities; the reader-oriented approach, which explores how the reader assumes the text and the intertext; the author-oriented approach wherein one proceeds from the author, his intentions and presumed knowledge and, finally, the intertextuality of culture itself. Quoting Toporov, Torop (ibid.) notes that "all members of the given cultural-linguistic community exist in the common intertextual space."

According to Torop (2000: 81), "it seems reasonable to analyze separately intertextuality as semiotic (semiotizing) space, i.e. a possible world of meaning generation, and specific elements (fragments) of one text in another text as *intexts*." In my analysis, I will be looking at "elements in a text which relate either in an explicit or in a hidden way to another text" (Gaifman cited in Torop 2000: 81).[4] Torop (2000: 81) refers to the presence of elements of one text in another text as *intextuality,* and the fragments being called *intexts*.

Another example of incongruity is the intertextual reference to the lyrics of the 1984 song *Besoin de rien, Envie de toi* [I want nothing, I want you]. The lyrics of the song are supposedly Brutus's poetic creation. The parody becomes more evident when Brutus endeavors to sing the poem, and the Roman soldiers spontaneously become the chorus. The humorous element is further enhanced by his troubled look when he realizes that his poem is somewhat ridiculous. First, we see the scared face of Irena and then his

[3] Also see Torop (2003).
[4] Gaifman's work is interesting in that she recounts several parameters for intertextuality:
a) a technical aspect of intertextual connections, or the problems of the discovery of intertextual elements,
b) the nature of an intertextual connection (creating an atmosphere, background, hidden code which may be deciphered, etc.),
c) the degree of explicitness of one text in another text,
d) in what aspect a text is active in another text, e) the role of one text in another text (cited in Torop 2000: 81).

question*: "Bon, ce n'est pas… C'est ridicule?"* [Was this ridiculous?]. Irena's nodding confirms his suspicion. The punchline of this humorous scene is the comment by the Greek Alafolix [in Greek *Καψουρίξ* meaning crazy in love] when Brutus says *"Je vais le refaire*" [I am going to repeat it.] and Alafolix replies*: "Please don't*." This last punchline is transferred in the Greek subtitles using an idiomatic expression *Θα το ξαναπώ. Να μας λείπει.* [I will say it again. Spare us from this.] What makes this scene even funnier is Brutus's pomposity at the beginning of the scene when he starts reciting the poem. Building on this, the scene continues to grow in hilarity when he starts dancing and singing. On the visual plane, the facial expressions in this scene, combined with Brutus's poem's last comment, are of pivotal importance, as they show the situational shift from the serious to the ridiculous.

As far as the cinematographic code is concerned, the frame size is medium close-up. The camera angle follows a horizontal perspective, and thus we can assume that it portrays a sense of detachment. As far as the kinetic code is concerned, the character's gaze involves the on-screen space that is the diegetic world of the scene. In it, Brutus's gaze is engaged and directed at Irena. All these semiotic systems work together in conveying a comic effect on the viewer.

On the verbal plane, Brutus recites and then sings another version of the original song, which will become even more comic for the recipients of the source language version that are already acquainted with the original song. The poem rhymes in the original French version, and the translator has chosen words that rhyme as well.

Source Text	**Target Text**	**Back Translation**
Besoin de rien, *envie de toi,*	*Δε θέλω τίποτα,* *μονάχα εσένα*	*I don't want anything,* *only you*
Comme jamais envie *de personne*	*Ποτέ δεν ήθελα* *άλλον κανένα*	*I've never wanted* *anyone else.*

Evidently, the translator has kept the meaning in the subtitles. In the Greek subtitles, we have the use of words that rhyme *εσένα* and *κανένα*, just as in the original French dialogue, we have two words that rhyme *besoin* and *rien* and one word that is repeated, namely *envie*. This is a case of both formal and stylistic equivalence. The translator has reproduced this stylistic effect by opting for words that rhyme as well. As far as Antonini's classification is concerned, one could note that humor is rendered in the subtitles. In Chiaro's classification, we observe that humor is rendered in the target language; it is materialized by opting for rhyme words. In the following example, we have another case of the rendering of humorous elements.

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

Source Text:	**Target Text**	**Back Translation**
Comme l'hiver *aime l'automne*	*Όπως ο χειμώνας* *Το φθινόπωρο αγαπάει…*	*Like winter* *Autumn loves…*
Comme l'amour *aime Vérone*	*Για σένα η καρδιά μου* *Δεν παύει να χτυπάει…*	*For you my heart* *Never ceases to beat*

Like winter
autumn loves

Like love
Verona loves

The song has been partly transformed. The translator has kept the notion of winter and autumn and the comparison between the two seasons and has opted for choosing two words, *αγαπάει* [loves] *χτυπάει* [beats] that rhyme in Greek. This same stylistic feature characterized the original French dialogue. The words *automne* and *Vérone* rhyme, and one can note the repetition of the word *aime*. The last two lines of the poem are recreated in Greek to obtain a result that rhymes in the target text. From Antonini's proposed strategies, one could observe that this is the second case, that of rendering humor. Based on Chiaro's classification, one can discern that humor is replaced by a target language pun. It is a case of recreation of the humorous effect by restructuring the poem and finding words that rhyme in the target language. Chiaro compares translating verbally expressed humor (VEH) to translating poetry, in terms of difficulty:

> As well as the presence of unusual lexical collocations and irregular word order, poetry relies on patterns of repetition at all levels of sound, syntax, lexis, and meaning. Furthermore, the visual impact of a poem is also essential (Jakobson 1960), and this is even more so the case concerning more unconventional poetic forms such as concrete poetry (Chiaro 2010: 3).

The author explains that the translation of puns, and VEH in general, follows the same pattern as it is quite challenging to make a pun with the same word in two languages. At the same time, "the chances of finding the same type of pun (i.e. a homophone, a homograph, a homonym etc.) are even slimmer" (ibid.: 4). Translators try to reproduce some formal or stylistic features of the original or decide to recreate humor to have a comic impact for the target audience.

In the next sequence (15.17-16.54), we have examples of narrative incongruity, which could also be considered as incongruities located in the field of art (intertextual incongruities). They are cases of intertextual references to film awards and films. As

Lievois and Remael (2017: 323) point out: "Employed as a device to activate the memory of a film seen in the past while watching a new film, [film] allusions also prompt the audience to interpret the current film on the basis of their knowledge of the evoked film." Being a film about the Roman era, the viewer does not expect to see intertextual references to French film awards (namely the César film award) or a 1969 film by Henri Verneuil, titled *The Sicilian Clan*. This film was one of the first films in Alain Delon's career and huge box-office success in France. Once the culturally embedded viewer listens to the film score by Ennio Morricone, he/she will be reminded of this film. Scores of other films are regularly used in films to enhance the comic effect. Lievois and Remael (2017: 324) notably acknowledge that "scores of other movies […] regularly allude to their precursors, often in the form of parodies." Later on in the film, viewers' suspicion about the intertextual reference is confirmed, since Caesar, in his monologue, refers to his participation in the film. In the same sequence, we have an example of pragmatic incongruity. Caesar uses the third person singular while talking about himself. The culmination of this hilarious monologue is the greeting *Ave moi!* [Ave me!]. Humor in this sequence is constructed on two levels. On the first level, we have visual humor, i.e., Caesar's visual comparison to the leopard and the visual metonymy of the eagle and his imperial position. Hilarity ensues as a visual image of a leopard is shown in conjunction with Caesar producing a leopard-like roar, with both instances reminding us of the feline in question. On a deeper level, humor is based on the use of the film *The Sicilian Clan* score.

Humor is based on paralinguistic features, such as Alain Delon's intonation while explaining that Caesar is a leopard and a samurai. We witness his eyes while talking, resembling those of an insane man. Finally, in this sequence, we observe an example of linguistic incongruity when Caesar says about himself *"César est immortel, pour longtemps."* [Caesar is immortal, for a long time.] As for the translation techniques used in this sequence, in the subtitles, the translator has retained the verbal humor and cultural references to films based on the titles' official translation. As far as the kinetic resources are concerned, Caesar's gaze is off-screen, being directed at the mirror and showing the victory sign. This sign further exacerbates the absurdity of the monologue and thus humor. As far as the cinematography is concerned, the camera angle is frontal, involved, and the frame's size is medium/close-up. When the camera focuses on Caesar's facial expression, it becomes an extreme close-up.

In this respect, Vittucci raises a question of pivotal importance:

> But what if the humor relies on a combination of cultural references and iconic rebuses that are neither based on the soundtrack nor backed up by phenomena such as anchoring (soundtrack completed by the audiovisual message) or redundancy (soundtrack and audiovisual input delivering the same message)?

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

> Although the extraverbal language can increase the comic effect or, in some cases, even replace the language itself (in terms of both source soundtrack and interlinguistic subtitle), the mere iconic anchoring not always grants the 'automatic' transfer of the comic effect. (Vittucci 2017: 98)

That is why humor translation presupposes an in-depth analysis of the source text and its cultural connotations, and an attempt must be made to reproduce the formal or stylistic features of the original comic element.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis of the specific sequences, we observe that verbally expressed humor was rendered in the target text through the recreation of the humorous effect. This was possible through the replacement of original words that rhyme with words that rhyme in Greek. What is very significant is the synergy of semiotic codes, namely gestures, sound, cinematography, and the verbal code, that enhance the comic effect. The results confirm Chaume's (2013) claim that the complexity of audiovisual translation depends on understanding both verbal and nonverbal signs and Zabalbeascoa's stand (2008: 35) on the importance of nonverbal items in audiovisual translation. The relationship of AV text items that predominates in the analyzed sequences is that of complementarity, whereby the various elements are interpreted interdependently, i.e., they depend on each other for a full grasp of their meaning, potential, and functions. All cinematographic and photographic elements in the sequences 'carry meaning or […] help make the meaning of the words and script more explicit or dynamic' (ibid.: 31).

It would be interesting to combine the aforementioned research with future research in AVT humor reception. This combination of qualitative product research and experimental research will enable researchers to reach specific conclusions to improve audiovisual humor translations' quality. It would be interesting to decipher whether culturally different audiences laugh in the same places as in the original. This parameter is intricately linked with the quality of audiovisual humor translations. As Chiaro (2009: 37) explains, "[the] quality of the translation can either break or make a comedy." In this regard, reception studies will be invaluable in deciding how the quality of translation influences the success of a film in the global market.

References

Antonini, Rachele 2005. The perception of subtitled humor in Italy. *Humor* 18 (2): 209-225.

Asimakoulas, Dimitris 2004. Towards a Model of Describing Humour Translation: A Case Study of the Greek Subtitled Versions of *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun*. *Meta* 49 (4): 822–842. Available here.

Attardo, Salvatore 1994. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Attardo, Salvatore 1998. The analysis of humorous narratives. *Humor* 11: 231-260.

Attardo, Salvatore 2008. A primer for the linguistics of humor. In: Victor Raskin (ed.) *The Primer of Humor Research*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 101-156.

Barnett, Daniel 2017 [2008]. *Movement as Meaning in Experimental Cinema. The Musical Poetry of Motion Pictures Revisited*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Chaume, Frederic 2000. *La traduccion audiovisual: studio descriptive y modelo de analisis de los textos audiovisuals para su traduccion*, PhD manuscript submitted at the Universitat de Jaume 1 de Castellon.

Chaume, Frederic 2013. The turn of audiovisual translation: New audiences and new technologies, *Translation Spaces* 2. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 105-123.

Chiaro, Delia 1992. *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*. London and New York, Routledge.

Chiaro, Delia 2005. Foreword. Verbally Expressed Humor and translation: An overview of a neglected field. *Humor* 18 (2): 135-145.

Chiaro, Delia 2009. Issues in audiovisual translation. In: Jeremy Munday (ed.) *The Routledge companion to translation studies*. London: Routledge, 141-165.

Chiaro, Delia (ed.) 2010. *Translation, Humour and Literature. Translation and Humour*, vol. 1. London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Company.

D'Angelo, Frank 2010. The Rhetoric of Intertextuality. *Rhetoric Review* 29 (1): 31-47.

da Silva, Adrian Clayton 2017. On Jakobson's Intersemiotic Translations in Asterix Comics. *Comparatismi* II: 71-81.

Delabastita, Dirk 1989. Translation and Mass-communication: Film and T.V. Translation as Evidence of Cultural Dynamics. *Babel* 35 (4): 193-218.

Diaz-Cintas, Jorge and Aline Remael 2007. *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.

Dore, Margherita 2020. *Humour in Audiovisual Translation: Theories and Applications*. New York and London: Routledge.

Dusi, Nicola 2015. Intersemiotic translation: Theories, problems, analysis. *Semiotica* 206: 181–205.

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

Fuentes Luque, Adrian 2001. *La recepcion del humor audiovisual traducido*. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada.

Gavriilidou, Zoe and Villy Tsakona 2004-2005. Οι χιουμοριστικοί μηχανισμοί στα κόμικς: Ανάλυση της σειράς ιστοριών του Αστερίξ [Humor mechanisms in comics: an analysis of *Asterix]*. *Glossologia* 16: 145-165.

Jakobson, Roman 1959. On linguistic aspects of translation. In: Reuben A. Brower (ed.) *On translation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 232-239.

Keith-Spiegel, Patricia 1972. Early Conception of Humor: Varieties and Issues. In: Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee (eds.) *The Psychology of Humor. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*. New York and London: Academic Press, 3-39.

Kourdis, Evangelos and Charikleia Yoka 2014. Intericonicity as intersemiotic translation in a globalized culture, 11th World Congress of IASS/AIS, 5-9 October 2012, Hohai University Press, 162-176.

Kourdis, Evangelos 2018. The Notion of Code in Semiotics and Semiotically Informed Translation Studies: A Preliminary Study. In: Oana Andreica and Alin Olteanu (eds.) *Readings in Numanities, Numanities - Arts and Humanities in Progress,* Vol. *3*. Springer, 311-325.

Kress, Gunther 2009. What is mode? In: Carey Jewet (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London and New York: Routledge, 54-66.

Kristeva, Julia 1984. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia UP.

Kristeva, Julia 1986. Word, Dialogue, and Novel. In: Moi Toril (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader*. New York: Columbia UP, 34-61.

Lievois, Katrien and Aline Remael 2017. Audio-describing visual filmic allusions. *Perspectives* 25(2): 323-339.

Martinez Sierra, Juan José 2004. *Estudio descriptive y discursive de la traduccion del humor en textos audiovisuals. El caso de Los Simpson*. PhD Thesis, Universitat Jaume 1.

Martinez Sierra, Juan José 2008. *Humor Y Traduccion: Los Simpson Cruzan la Frontera*. Castello de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume 1.

Nash, Walter 1985. *The Language of Humour*. London and New York: Routledge.

Norrick, Neal 2004. Non-verbal humor and joke performance. *Humor* 17 (4): 401-409.

Perego, Elisa 2014. Humour and audiovisual translation: an overview. In: Gian Luigi De Rosa, Francesca Bianchi, Antonella De Laurentiis and Elisa Perego (eds.) *Translating Humour in Audiovisual Texts*. Peter Lang, 9-14.

Petrilli, Susan and Augusto Ponzio 2012. Iconicity, Otherness and Translation. *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 7 (1): 11-26.

Queiroz, João and Daniella Aguiar 2015. C.S. Peirce and Intersemiotic Translation. In: Pericles Trifonas (ed.) *International Handbook of Semiotics*. Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer, 201-216.

Raskin, Viktor 1985. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Ruch, Willibald 2001. The perception of humor. In: Alfred W. Kaszniak (ed.) *Emotion, Qualia, and Consciousness*. Tokyo: Word Scientific Publisher, 410-425.

Sokoli, Stavroula 2000. Research Issues in Audiovisual Translation: Aspects of Subtitling in Greece, Pre-doctoral research dissertation manuscript for Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona.

Tsakona, Villy 2009. Language and image interaction in cartoons: Towards a multimodal theory of humor. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 1171-1188.

Tsakona, Villy and Diana Elena Popa (eds.) 2011. *Studies in Political Humour. In between political critique and public entertainment*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Torop, Peeter 2000. Intersemiosis and Intersemiotic Translation. *European Journal for Semiotic Studies* 12 (1): 71-100.

Torop, Peeter 2002. Translation as translating as culture. *Sign Systems Studies* 30 (2): 593-605.

Torop, Peeter 2003. Intersemiosis and Intersemiotic Translation. In: Susan Petrilli (ed.) *Translation Translation*. Amsterdam/ New York: Rodopi, 271-282.

Vandaele, Jeroen 1993. *Vers un modèle d'analyse pour la traduction de l'humour.* The Naked Gun *en version doublée*, unpublished MA thesis: University of Leuven.

Vandaele, Jeroen 2002. Humor Mechanisms in Film Comedy: Incongruity and Superiority. *Poetics Today* 23 (2): 221-249.

Vandaele, Jeroen 2010. Humor in translation. In: Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (eds.) *Handbook of Translation Studies,* vol. 1. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 147-152.

Vitucci, Francesco 2017. The semiotic cohesion of audiovisual texts. Types of intersemiotic explicitations in the English subtitles of Japanese full-length films. In: Iwona Bartoszewicz and Anna Malgorzewicz (eds.) *Studia Translatorica. Paradigmen in der Translationsforschung ein-und Aussichten.* Wroclaw/ Dresden: Neisse Verlag, 83-104.

Zabalbeascoa, Patrick 1994. Factors in dubbing television comedy. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 2 (1): 89-99.

Zabalbeascoa, Patrick 2001. El texto audiovisual: factores semioticos y traduccion. In: J. D. Sanderson (ed.) *¡Doble o nada! : Actas de las I y II Jornadas de doblaje y subtitulación de la Universidad de Alicante*, 113-126.

Zabalbeascoa, Patrick 2008. The nature of the audiovisual text and its parameters. In: *The Didactics of Audiovisual Translation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 21-37.

Zabalbeascoa, Patrick 2014. La combinación de lenguas como mecanismo de humor y problema de traducción audiovisual. In: Gian Luigi De Rosa, Francesca Bianchi, Antonella De Laurentiis, Elisa Perego (eds.) *Translating Humour in Audiovisual Texts*. Bern: Peter Lang, 25-47.

Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics | **06:01:**2020
ISSN 2459-2943 | DOI: 10.18680/hss.2020.0009 | **punctum.gr**

Filmography

Astérix aux Jeux Olympiques (2008) dir. by Frédéric Forestier and Thomas Langmann.

AUTHOR

Loukia Kostopoulou (PhD) is Special Teaching Fellow at the Department of Translation, School of French Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

ISSN 2459-2943
http://punctum.gr

PUBLISHED BY
THE **HELLENIC**
SEMIOTIC SOCIETY