

***How funny is dubbing? English to Spanish***  
*dubbing in the sitcom 'How I Met Your Mother'*

how i  
met your  
mother

Have you ever been watching a TV show in its translated version and needed to turn the joke back to its original language to be able to laugh? I know I have, and many other multilingual media consumers also find themselves frequently having to translate jokes to be able to enjoy them. In this research, we wanted to know how much humour was actually lost in this process.

*Language and humour* are key elements of human behaviour, so how do they interact in these translations?

We picked a sample of Spanish and English speakers who lived in Spain (meaning they share cultural environment), and asked them to rate 8 clips containing joke scenes from the North-American TV show *How I Met Your Mother* depending on how funny they found the scenes. These clips contained 2 scenes where the humour was carried in the context, and in the rest the humour settled on linguistic elements. We looked into the nature of Puns, Wordplays and Punchlines, and compared how the scenes were valued in the different groups. We also provided them with a test which punctuated their humour use and understanding, hypothesizing that the higher the punctuation in the test – showing a positive and active use of humour - the higher the ratings would be.

Once the data was collected through a Google Questionnaire the results were tested. The hypothesised correlation assumed between humour understanding and humour rating was not shown. It is clear, then, that one cannot assume that simply because someone's appreciation of humour is high, they may find any and all types of humour amusing.

We also looked into the clips, and saw that there was a significant difference between the ratings of the linguistic jokes between the samples, which did not show up in the contextual jokes. This proved that the humour rating was different, and with the group means we saw that the direction of the difference was that the English clips were rated higher. As each set of clips portrayed a different type of linguistic joke, we could also appreciate significant differences between the sets and within the sets, showing that it is not the type of joke which may be found funnier, but the joke itself.

*Humour is a very personal experience*, and there is not a static rigid pattern that can be set to approach and assume about how people live humour. We proved that the original clips were funnier than the translated ones. The differences between the types of jokes and the sets relied mainly on the translating process, meaning that *jokes can be translated differently*, and depending how we do that –regarding its faithfulness to the linguistic elements, the humoristic elements, the contextual elements, etc.- *the linguistic humour elements may sail or sink in translation*.

Now, may you be a linguist, a psychologist, a teacher, multilingual, or simply interested in these fields, you can now settle your arguments on whether a show is funnier in the original version or the translated one. It is, and I invite others to dig deeper into humour and linguistics to use this great tool for its many and diverse uses in all possible fields.

cómo conocí  
a vuestra  
madre



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