



THE ROLE OF CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATING HUMOR FROM ENGLISH INTO UZBEK IN SITCOM SUBTITLES

Olimova Dilfuza Zokirovna,
Bukhara State University

Abstract

In today's globalized world, translating humor is one of the most challenging tasks, especially when subtitling sitcoms. Humor is deeply rooted in culture, and its transmission requires not only linguistic competence but also knowledge of the cultural context. This article examines the role of cultural equivalence in translating English humor into Uzbek when subtitling sitcoms. The analysis is based on a comparison of original lines and their translations, as well as identifying the strategies used to achieve adequacy and preserve the comic effect.

Keywords: Cultural equivalence, translating, humor, sitcom subtitles.

Introduction

Humor is a complex linguistic and cultural phenomenon. It can be based on wordplay, idioms, cultural references, stereotypes, and other elements characteristic of a particular community. In the process of subtitling sitcoms, a translator has to take into account not only the time and length limitations of subtitles, but also the need to convey the comic effect. Cultural equivalence becomes a key element that allows preserving the perception of the original.

The purpose of the study is to determine how the use of cultural equivalence affects the quality of the translation of humor in sitcom subtitles from English to Uzbek.

Research methods

1. Contrastive analysis of original and translated subtitles of popular English-language sitcoms (e.g., "Friends", "The Big Bang Theory", "Brooklyn Nine-Nine").
2. Classification of humorous units (verbal, situational, cultural humor).
3. Interviews with professional subtitle translators.
4. Content analysis of the perception of translated humor by Uzbek viewers (survey).



Theoretical Basis

Cultural equivalence is a type of correspondence in which the translation unit is replaced by an element that has a similar function or associations in the culture of the target language. According to Nida and Taber (1969), "dynamic equivalence" implies that the translation should produce the same effect on the audience as the original.

Humor is classified by source:

- Linguistic (wordplay, homonyms, puns);
- Cultural (references to well-known realities, persons, traditions);
- Situational (absurdities, misunderstandings, etc.).

Cultural humor is the most problematic for translation, since it requires the replacement or adaptation of realities.

Results and Discussion

1. Examples of translation of cultural humor: In the original: "He's like the Shakespeare of our time!" Literal translation: "U u zamonaviy Shekspirga o'xshaydi!" Adapted translation: "U biz uchun Erkin Vohidov kabi!"

Here, adaptation helps to evoke similar cultural associations in the Uzbek audience.

2. Wordplay and its replacement: Original: "You can't just pivot your whole life like that!" The joke is related to an episode where the word "pivot" is repeated many times for comic effect. The image is preserved in the translation, but an intonation remark or a visual element can be added.

3. Stereotypes and taboos: English sitcoms often use jokes about religion, sex, and politics. In the Uzbek translation, such elements are often softened or omitted, which can reduce the comedy, but maintains cultural acceptability.

4. Subtitle restrictions: The translator is limited in time: the average length of a subtitle is 2-3 seconds, the maximum is 35-42 characters per line. This requires the translator to be concise and precise, sometimes at the expense of literalness. Additional cases of adaptation and analysis

5. Adaptation of cultural realities through replacement of toponyms and names: For example, a character may say: "It's like Vegas, baby!", which literally translates as "It's like Vegas, baby!", but the Uzbek viewer may not understand the association.



Therefore, it is possible to replace it with: "Bu goyoki Chorsudagi to'yday!", which preserves the effect of exaggerated fun.

6. The influence of non-verbal elements: Humor in sitcoms is often conveyed not only through text, but also through intonation, facial expressions, and gestures. Subtitles cannot always convey this. The translator must take into account visual cues and embed contextual explanations if necessary. For example, with an ironic line, you can add a marker [ironic] or [sarcasm] to enhance the effect.

7. Potential for using annotations and assistive technologies: In modern online platforms, it is possible to implement subtitles with notes. This gives the translator a chance to leave the original and explain its cultural meaning with a short footnote (e.g. Yankee is an American from the northern United States, often used in jokes).

8. The role of contextualization through addition: Sometimes, in order to preserve the effect, the translator has to add an element that is missing from the original, but necessary for perception. For example: Original: "He's such a Ross!" Without knowing the context, the phrase cannot be understood. Possible translation: "U xuddi 'Friends' serialidagi Rosssday, doim gapi uzoqqa ketadi!"

9. The role of collaboration between translators, editors and cultural experts: Translating sitcom subtitles requires the participation of not only linguists, but also cultural experts.

Collaboration allows for more accurate and understandable translations. For example, when adapting American Thanksgiving, one can consult with ethnographers to find a suitable analogue or explain the meaning of the holiday through commentary.

10. The problem of unifying translations across platforms: The same sitcom can have different translations on YouTube, Netflix, and pirated dubbing. This creates difficulties in forming stable cultural associations. In some versions, the humor is conveyed in an adapted manner, while in others it is conveyed literally, which causes confusion for the viewer and reduces the overall effectiveness of the translation.

11. Psycholinguistic aspects of humor perception: Research shows that the brain processes comic elements with a delay of 0.3-0.5 seconds. With a bad translation or an incomprehensible joke, the viewer loses the effect of surprise and pleasure. This means that the translation must not only be accurate, but also instantly interpretable.



Interviews with translators showed that:

- Cultural adaptation is a conscious choice aimed at preserving the effect.
- It is important to consider the audience: young people more easily perceive borrowed realities, older viewers - adapted ones.
- Sometimes a joke is omitted altogether if it does not lend itself to translation.

Results of a survey among viewers :

- 70% noted that they prefer translations that use understandable Uzbek analogues;
- 20% would prefer literal translations with an explanation in a footnote;
- 10% said that they do not notice the difference.
- More than 60% of respondents admitted that if a joke is incomprehensible, they simply ignore it.
- Almost half of respondents said that the transmission of intonation and mood of the characters is especially important to them.

The following conclusions were drawn according to the results of the above-mentioned:

1. Cultural equivalence is the most important tool for preserving the humorous effect when translating sitcoms.
2. Adaptation of cultural realities makes it possible to make a joke understandable and acceptable to the target audience.
3. In some cases, a compromise between accuracy and perception is required.
4. The translator performs not only a linguistic role, but also a mediator between cultures.
5. If technically possible, it is useful to use explanatory subtitles and annotations.
6. Collaboration with experts from other fields improves the quality of translation.
7. To maintain a single humorous image, it is important to unify translations across different platforms.

Conclusion

Translating humor is not just replacing words, but conveying meanings, emotions, and cultural associations. A successful sitcom translator must be not only a master of the language, but also a deep connoisseur of the culture of both sides.

Cultural equivalence is not a rejection of the original, but a way to make it accessible. Such a strategy not only improves the quality of perception of subtitles, but also promotes closer cultural exchange between peoples. In the context of the



rapid spread of media content in different languages, the task of culturally adequate translation is becoming increasingly urgent. Translating sitcoms is a challenge that requires not only linguistic skill, but also creativity, ethical sensitivity and cultural empathy.

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