

TRANSLATING ENGLISH VERBAL HUMOR AND WORDPLAY IN ANIMATED FILMS INTO UZBEK

Qayimova Mohinur

Student of

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

mohinurqayimova1@gmail.com

Abstract. This thesis investigates the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating verbal humor and wordplay from English animated films into the Uzbek language. Operating within a multi-semiotic framework, the study examines how technical constraints like lip-sync affect comedic adaptation. Comparative analysis reveals that deep typological gaps between Germanic and Turkic languages make literal translation ineffective for puns and cultural jokes. Consequently, translators heavily rely on domestication strategies, substituting foreign references with familiar Uzbek idioms to maintain pragmatic effect and viewer amusement. Ultimately, this research offers a structured translation matrix to enhance future audiovisual translation practices within Uzbekistan's media industry.

Keywords: Audiovisual translation, dubbing, verbal humor, wordplay, domestication, Uzbek language.

Introduction. Within today's globalized entertainment sector, modern animation has transformed into a highly intricate channel for cross-border cultural exchange. Prominent production houses, including Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks, routinely craft complex storylines that rely heavily on linguistic ingenuity and deeply intertwined comedic elements. Given the recent, rapid expansion of this genre's audience across the domestic media spaces of Uzbekistan, developing precise and contextually sensitive translation models has become an urgent scholastic and professional demand. Nonetheless, the nature of animated media introduces unique communicative challenges; it functions as an integrated, multi-semiotic system where spoken dialogue cannot be separated from visual cues and sound engineering. For this reason, rendering the linguistic stream into a new language demands a unified strategy that accounts for the strict interplay between these varying semiotic dimensions.

Main body. The core difficulty in managing this multimodal network centers on transferring verbal wit, such as puns, metaphors, and culture-specific punchlines. Since humor is inherently tied to the structural nuances and historical growth of the source language, it seldom finds direct conceptual mirrors in typologically distant tongues like Uzbek. In order to investigate these barriers systematically, this dissertation relies on the core audiovisual translation (AVT) paradigms established by Chaume (2012) [2], which address the rigorous technical and visual constraints governing the dubbing workflow. Additionally, dissecting how humor shifts across these linguistic boundaries requires a structured, empirical approach. To satisfy this need, this framework utilizes the

comprehensive qualitative content analysis and contrastive linguistic techniques advocated by Saldanha and O'Brien (2014) [5], providing an unbiased, analytical critique of current multimedia translation trends in Uzbekistan.

Driven largely by the rapid expansion of digital media platforms, audiovisual translation (AVT) has successfully transitioned from a minor subfield of linguistics into a foundational scholarly realm. The distinguishing factor of AVT lies in its multimodal environment, where spoken or written dialogue must constantly blend with an ongoing flow of images and sound cues. As detailed in the comprehensive research of Díaz Cintas and Remael (2020) [3], screen-based translation generally operates via two primary methods: subtitling and dubbing. Both paths force unique structural limits onto the professional workflow. Subtitlers must aggressively condense spoken words to stay within strict on-screen space limits and standard human reading speeds. On the other hand, dubbing forces deep transformations within the dialogue to guarantee seamless phonetic alignment. Throughout the entertainment sector in Uzbekistan, dubbing stands out as the heavily favored format for animated releases. This technique brings tough technical demands into play, such as lip-sync—where target Uzbek expressions must align with the mouth configurations of cartoon figures—as well as visual timing, which dictates that the acoustic track corresponds smoothly with the movements visible to the viewer. Injecting verbal wit and linguistic puzzles into this multi-sensory landscape increases the conceptual difficulties significantly. Deciphering how these intricate dialogue segments operate requires a close look at cognitive translation structures. Attardo (2001) [1] offers a vital analytical perspective through the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), breaking down comical texts into six layered Knowledge Resources (KRs), which explore elements like script opposition, target audience factors, and internal logical setups. Wordplay, particularly punning techniques rooted in homonymy, paronymy, or polysemy, succeeds by triggering two clashing interpretive structures at the exact same moment. Since English and Uzbek originate from completely independent language families—Germanic and Turkic—their syntactic setups and vocabulary networks display vast differences. Consequently, a humor device relying on polysemy (words carrying multi-layered definitions) cannot survive a literal translation. The matching Uzbek terms will simply lack those exact secondary semantic associations, neutralizing the core logical mechanism needed to trigger a comedic response. When confronting such stark linguistic divides, multimedia translators must move beyond the traditional role of a static language link to become dynamic cultural innovators. Zabalbeascoa (1996) argues that the central objective when managing comedic material for a dubbed track is protecting its pragmatic function, meaning the target viewer should feel amused at the identical narrative climax. In striving for this outcome, translators continuously weigh the choices between domestication, which reshapes unfamiliar items into local cultural references, and foreignization, which aims to keep the original cultural nuances visible. Zabalbeascoa's strategic classifications highlight precise solutions, including substitution—replacing an unyielding source pun with an entirely fresh, culturally relatable Uzbek joke—and omission, which is used when screen imagery

makes any text adjustment unfeasible. In the end, solving these humor dilemmas requires managing cultural authenticity without violating the unbending technical boundaries of the moving screen.

Moving verbal humor from English into Uzbek reveals deep structural barriers that come from their completely different linguistic families. As Xoshimov (2008) explains in his comparative studies, the analytical design of Germanic languages contrasts sharply with the highly agglutinative morphological system of Turkic tongues. English wordplay often relies on conversion or zero-derivation, where words change their grammatical function without altering their sound or spelling. On the other hand, Uzbek grammar constructs meaning through a clear, step-by-step addition of suffixes. This grammatical openness makes it incredibly difficult to compress two meanings into a single short phrase. Additionally, while the strict word order of English leaves room for double meanings that make ideal puns, the typical verb-final structure of Uzbek requires complete sentence restructuring, which often ruins the natural timing needed for a successful punchline. Looking past purely grammatical differences, animated dialogue is heavily filled with socio-cultural elements that create severe translation obstacles. Leppihalme (1997) [4] describes these instances of cultural friction as “culture-bumps,” where local idioms, contemporary youth slang, and specific community references interrupt the understanding of the target audience. In modern animation, this difficulty increases because scripts are written on two parallel levels to charm children and adults at the same time. While younger viewers focus on visual slapstick or animal antics, adult audiences notice subtle political hints, parodies of classic media, and complex metaphorical wit. When modifying these scripts for Uzbek viewers, translating words literally can result in a total loss of meaning, meaning that the translator must make practical changes to replace Western cultural frameworks with familiar local concepts. The final challenge in multimedia translation is the strict, unyielding bond between spoken dialogue and on-screen imagery. Gambier (2003) highlights that screen translation can never be separated from the visual tracking and spatial limitations of the film itself. Within animated formats, a verbal joke is almost always linked to a specific physical action, an object, or an expressive character movement. This close connection heavily limits creative freedom. A translator cannot simply replace an untranslatable English pun with a random Uzbek joke if that new dialogue conflicts with what is happening visually. If a cartoon character is holding or pointing to an object that triggers a visual-verbal pun, the translator must invent an Uzbek alternative that satisfies both the technical limits of dubbing and the unchangeable visual timeline.

To evaluate the translation of humor systematically, this research builds an empirical corpus of jokes extracted from popular English animated films. Following the wordplay classifications established by Delabastita (1996), the gathered data is organized into specific groups based on linguistic structure. These categories separate wordplay into homonymy, where words sound and look the same but have different meanings, and paronymy, which involves words with slight spelling and sound differences. Isolating these mechanisms helps show exactly how each type of joke behaves when moved into

the target language, establishing a clear baseline for the comparative analysis. The analysis then looks deeply at how these language-based jokes change during the dubbing process into Uzbek. As Vandaele (2002) notes, linguistic humor relies on the specific phonetic and polysemic properties of the source tongue. The case studies show that when an English pun uses a polysemic word, a direct word-for-word translation fails completely because the Uzbek word does not carry the same double meaning. Translators must find alternative pathways, often rewriting the line to find a balance between the original sound play and the semantic limits of the Uzbek language. Beyond purely structural wordplay, animated films are rich in social allusions and localized idioms. Evaluating these instances requires examining how Western cultural markers are adapted for local audiences. This process connects directly with Venuti's (2008) theories on the strategic choices between making the translator visible or invisible. The corpus shows a strong reliance on domestication, where foreign cultural references are completely swapped for familiar Uzbek concepts and traditional idioms to ensure the local audience fully catches the comedic intent.

The ultimate test of any dubbed comedy is its pragmatic impact on the new viewer. This study utilizes Nida's (1964) classic model of dynamic equivalence to measure whether the Uzbek translation triggers the same emotional response as the original version. Achieving true dynamic equivalence means the target audience should laugh at the exact same moments in the plot. The research measures this by tracking how effectively the adapted dialogue maintains the original comedic rhythm without confusing the viewers. Despite successful adaptations, the research identifies several recurring errors where the humor is lost. Borrowing from the translation norm frameworks discussed by Pedersen (2011), these pitfalls usually happen when translators fall back on overly literal translations. When a joke is translated too closely to the source text, it often results in unnatural sentence structures or flat, confusing dialogue that fails to entertain, causing a significant loss of the film's original charm. To improve the quality of future dubbing projects in the country, this section offers a practical guide for media professionals. Drawing on the domestic multimedia frameworks developed by Saloxiddinov (2021), this thesis proposes a strategic translation matrix designed for the local dubbing industry. These guidelines provide step-by-step methods for solving untranslatable puns, balancing cultural adaptation, and respecting the strict technical limits of the screen.

Conclusion. This research provides a systematic linguistic analysis of translating verbal humor and wordplay from English animated films into the Uzbek language. By examining animation as a multi-semiotic medium, the study demonstrates that successful audiovisual translation requires moving beyond literal text substitution. Because animated scripts deeply integrate spoken dialogue with visual tracking and sound cues, translators must balance creative linguistic adaptations with strict technical constraints like lip-sync. The comparative results show that deep structural and typological differences between Germanic and Turkic language families create major barriers for wordplay replication. English puns based on polysemy or homonymy rarely have direct

semantic equivalents in Uzbek. To overcome these barriers and protect the pragmatic effect of the jokes, local translators heavily rely on domestication strategies. Substituting foreign cultural references with familiar Uzbek idioms successfully achieves dynamic equivalence, ensuring the target audience experiences the intended amusement. However, the study notes that overly literal translations frequently result in flat dialogue and lost humor. To improve future dubbing standards in Uzbekistan, media professionals should adopt structured translation guidelines. Ultimately, this thesis establishes a valuable framework for both academic researchers and professional translators working within the domestic multimedia industry.

REFERENCES:

1. Attardo, S. (2001). *Humorous texts: A semantic and pragmatic analysis*. Mouton de Gruyter.
2. Chaume, F. (2012). *Audiovisual translation: Dubbing*. Routledge.
3. Díaz Cintas, J., & Remael, A. (2020). *Subtitling: Concepts and practices* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
4. Leppihalme, R. (1997). *Culture-bumps: An empirical approach to the translation of allusions*. Multilingual Matters.
5. Saldanha, G., & O'Brien, S. (2014). *Research methodologies in translation studies*. Routledge.

