

The Reconstruction of French Humour in Turkish and Arabic Subtitles: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract. *Humour constitutes a widespread and multilayered dimension of human communication, serving functions that facilitate social interaction, strengthen persuasive discourse, and render cultural subtleties visible. Nevertheless, the translation of humour presents a multifaceted area of difficulty, particularly when transfer takes place between linguistically and culturally distant contexts. This article examines the difficulties and possibilities involved in transferring French humour into Turkish and Arabic, specifically as it appears in *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs* (Asterix and Obelix: The Big Fight). The selection of the Asterix and Obelix mini-series as the object of analysis is not coincidental; the production's rich verbal, visual, and cultural texture of humour offers a suitable sample for evaluating the effectiveness of different translation methods. The process of translating humour requires not only the achievement of linguistic equivalence, but also a profound understanding of the sensitivities of the target audience, cultural references, and the specific features related to the timing and presentation of the comic element. In this study, the Turkish and Arabic translations of the production in question are analysed from a critical perspective; the methods employed, the difficulties encountered, and the effects of linguistic and cultural divergences on the successful transfer of humour are discussed. In this article, subtitles containing humorous elements selected from the source text and its translations are examined under three categories: humorous elements, wordplay, and general translation strategies. For the classification of humorous elements, Martínez-Sierra's model of humour classification is employed. In the analysis of subtitles, Delabastita's translation strategies are used for the translation of wordplay, while culture-specific and extralinguistic elements, as well as general humour translation transfer strategies, are examined within the framework of Jan Pedersen's taxonomy. Pedersen's strategies, which were specifically designed for subtitle translation and proposed for the translation of extralinguistic culture-bound references, have been applied to the translation of extralinguistic elements present in a literary work. Evaluations have been made by applying Pedersen's strategies to the translations of extralinguistic elements in a literary work. The study attempts to determine which of the most fundamental approaches, defined as source-oriented or target-oriented, translators tend to adopt more prominently. As a result of the study, it has been observed that there are significant differences between the two compared target-language outputs in terms of their ways of transferring humour: Turkish subtitle translations are target-language-oriented, whereas Arabic subtitles are source-language-oriented.*

Keywords: *humour translation, translation studies, Asterix and Obelix, animation translation, audiovisual translation*

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Fransız yumorunun türk və ərəb subtitrlərində yenidən qurulması: müqayisəli təhlil

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Xülasə. Yumor insan ünsiyyətinin geniş yayılmış və çoxqatlı bir ölçüsünü təşkil edərək sosial qarşılıqlı əlaqəni asanlaşdırır, inandırıcı diskursu gücləndirən və mədəni incəlikləri görünən edən funksiyalar yerinə yetirir. Bununla belə, yumorun tərcüməsi, xüsusilə linqvistik və mədəni baxımdan bir-birindən uzaq kontekstlər arasında köçürmə söz konusu olduqda, çoxşaxəli çətinlik sahəsi yaradır. Məqalədə fransız yumorunun, xüsusilə *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs* (Asteriks və Obeliks: Rəislərin Döyüşü) əsərində ortaya çıxdığı biçimi ilə türk və ərəb dillərinə köçürülməsi zamanı meydana çıxan çətinliklər və imkanlar araşdırılır. Asteriks və Obeliks mini-serialının təhlil obyektini kimi seçilməsi təsadüfi deyildir; əsərin zəngin verbal, vizual və mədəni yumor toxuması müxtəlif tərcümə üsullarının effektivliyini qiymətləndirmək baxımından əlverişlidir. Yumorun tərcüməsi prosesi yalnız linqvistik ekvivalentliyin təmin edilməsini deyil, eyni zamanda hədəf auditoriyanın həssaslıqlarının, mədəni istinadların və komik elementin zamanlaması ilə təqdimatına xas xüsusiyyətlərin dərindən qavranılmasını tələb edir. Tədqiqatda sözügedən əsərin türk və ərəb dillərinə tərcümələri tənqidi baxış bucağından təhlil edilir; istifadə olunan üsullar, qarşılaşılan çətinliklər və linqvistik-mədəni fərqliliklərin yumorun uğurlu köçürülməsi təsirləri müzakirə olunur. Məqalədə mənbə mətdən və onun tərcümələrindən seçilmiş yumor elementləri ehtiva edən subtitrlər üç kateqoriya üzrə araşdırılır: yumor elementləri, söz oyunları və ümumi tərcümə strategiyaları. Yumor elementlərinin təsnifatı üçün Martínez-Sierranın yumor təsnifatı modelindən istifadə olunur. Subtitrlərin təhlilində söz oyunlarının tərcüməsi üçün Delabastitanın tərcümə strategiyaları əsas götürülür; mədəniyyətə xas və dilxarici elementlər, eləcə də ümumi yumor tərcüməsi köçürmə strategiyaları isə Jan Pedersenin taksonomiyası çərçivəsində araşdırılır. Xüsusilə subtitr tərcüməsi üçün hazırlanmış və dilxarici mədəniyyətə bağlı istinadların tərcüməsində tətbiq olunmaq üçün irəli sürülmüş Pedersen strategiyaları ədəbi əsərdə mövcud olan dilxarici elementlərin tərcüməsinə tətbiq edilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: yumor tərcüməsi, tərcüməşünaslıq, asteriks və obeliks, animasiya tərcüməsi, audiovizual tərcümə

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Introduction

Humour, as one of the most complex and multilayered phenomena of human communication, is a significant form of discourse that shapes social interaction. In its broadest sense, humour encompasses oral and written expressions as well as situational and cultural elements that aim to provoke laughter. However, humour is not limited to entertainment; it is also a multifaceted communicative phenomenon with critical, cultural and cognitive dimensions. The transfer of humour across languages and cultures is therefore regarded as one of the most problematic areas of translation studies. In audiovisual translation in particular, the linguistic, cultural and contextual layers of humour make the translation process even more complex. This requires translators not only to transfer meaning, but also to reconstruct the humorous effect.

The main aim of this study is to analyse comparatively, through ten humorous subtitle examples selected from *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs*, the strategies by which French humour is reconstructed in Turkish and Arabic subtitles. In line with this aim, the research questions are as follows:

- Through which strategies is the humorous effect in the French source text transferred into Turkish and Arabic subtitles?
- How can the humorous elements in the *Astérix* and *Obélix* production be categorised according to Martínez-Sierra's classification?
- Which strategies have Turkish and Arabic translators preferred in examples involving wordplay?
- Which strategies for the transfer of extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs) have been used in examples containing cultural references?
- What differences can be observed between Turkish and Arabic subtitling norms?
- In line with these questions, the study is grounded in three complementary theoretical models in order to address humour translation from a multidimensional perspective: Martínez-Sierra's taxonomy of humorous elements, Delabastita's strategies for translating wordplay, and Pedersen's taxonomy of ECR transfer strategies.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study consists of a review of the relevant literature, a classification of humorous elements, and translation strategies for wordplay and ECRs.

In the translation studies literature in Türkiye, studies on humour translation have gained significant momentum in recent years, particularly in parallel with the development of descriptive translation studies and audiovisual translation (AVT) practices. On the theoretical level, Karavin Yüce (2021) discusses how the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) can be used in the description of humour translation. In relation to audiovisual products, the subtitle and dubbing translations of humorous elements in popular sitcoms such as *The Big Bang Theory*, *Modern Family*, *Family Guy*, and *Friends* have frequently been examined in the light of relevance theory, superiority and incongruity theories, and the humour classifications of Pedersen and Martínez-Sierra (Çakıroğlu, 2019; Erguvan, 2015; Fırat, 2022; Kocaevli, 2019; Uras Yılmaz & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Koç, 2024; Ay & Tarakcıoğlu, 2025). In the field of animation, productions such as *Ice Age*, *Madagascar*, *Shrek*, *Rick and Morty*, and *SpongeBob SquarePants* have been analysed in terms of substitution, compensation, and literal translation strategies, as well as humour losses arising from the synchronization constraints imposed by dubbing (Koç, 2018; Çavuşoğlu, 2023; Eray, 2023; Kahvecier, 2023; Tüfekçioğlu, 2013; Xia et al., 2023). Among these studies, several findings directly related to the present research stand out. Çavuşoğlu (2023) found that, in the Turkish dubbing of *Shrek*, the translator adopted a mixed strategic approach and that target-culture-oriented creative interventions, such as rendering “kick the bucket” as “nalları dikmek”, played a decisive role in the localisation of humour. Koç (2018) revealed that the dual structure of animations, which address both children and adults, directly affects translation decisions and that visual messages can compensate for verbal losses. Uras Yılmaz and Çakıroğlu (2021) determined that, in the Turkish subtitlings of *The Big Bang Theory*, the substitution strategy was most frequently employed through a target-text-oriented approach.

AVT studies go beyond the transfer of humour in general and also cover specific issues such as gender and feminist translation practices (Sarımehmet, 2023). In the field of literary translation, the translatability of universal and cultural humour has been questioned across a wide range of texts, from *The Canterbury Tales* to the “Chick-lit” genre (Demirkol Ertürk, 2019; Baytar, 2019; Ünsal, 2020; Karavin, 2021; Yazıcı, 2020). In the context of children's literature, Arslan Bilir and Özcan

(2024) contributed to humour translation in the Turkish-Arabic language pair by examining the Arabic translations of the Bizim Matrak Sınıf series. In addition, Çalışkan and Yalçın (2025) analysed the French subtitles of the film *Kuru Otlar Üstüne* within the framework of Jan Pedersen's strategies. The common feature of all these studies is that translators adopt different strategies in the face of linguistic and cultural barriers, and that these strategies directly determine the humorous effect on the target audience.

On the theoretical level, Vandaele (2002, pp. 150–151) conceptualises humour primarily as a cognitive effect in terms of translation studies and defines humour translation as the aim of achieving the same or a similar comic effect in the target text. Attardo (2001, 2024), on the other hand, approaches humour not by defining what it is, but by examining how it functions; he foregrounds semantic mechanisms in humorous texts, such as the activation of multiple scripts and the construction of meaning through relations of opposition between them.

Audiovisual Translation and Martínez-Sierra's Classification of Humour

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is an umbrella term referring to the transfer of the verbal components of audiovisual works and products from one language into another (Eray, 2023, p. 111). Rooted in the silent film era, this practice became more complex with the transition to sound cinema and with the emergence of subtitling, dubbing and multilingual versions (Perego, 2014, p. 9). The main modes of AVT are dubbing and subtitling, to which voice-over, narration and audio description for the visually impaired may also be added. Historical, economic, cultural and linguistic factors are decisive in determining which mode is adopted in different countries (Perego, 2014, pp. 9–10; Perego & Taylor, 2012). Chiaro (2014, p. 19) states that the translation of humour in audiovisual texts is not entirely different from the translation of verbal humour, yet the fact that humour may be visually fixed creates an additional difficulty. Luyken et al. (1991, pp. 153–165), on the other hand, distinguish between plot-carrying meaning elements and atmospheric meaning elements in audiovisual translation, emphasising that translators must first identify the elements that carry the plot.

By adapting Patrick Zabalbeascoa's classification of humour, Martínez-Sierra develops an ad hoc taxonomy of humorous elements consisting of eight levels for analysing humour in audiovisual texts (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, p. 290). A point that is particularly important for the present study is that a single joke may contain more than one humorous element. For this reason, Martínez-Sierra distinguishes between simple examples and compound, or multi-element, examples (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, p. 295). The eight categories are as follows:

Community-and-Institutions Elements refer to cultural or intertextual features rooted in a specific culture. According to Martínez-Sierra, such elements may include politicians, celebrities, organisations, newspapers, books, films and similar references; they may be explicit or implicit and acoustic or visual (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, p. 290). Community-sense-of-humour elements refer to topics that appear to be more popular in some communities than in others; this does not necessarily imply cultural specificity, but rather preference. Linguistic elements are based on linguistic features and may be explicit or implicit, spoken or written. This category includes wordplay, double meanings and other forms of humour arising from the structural features of language. Visual elements require a distinction between humour produced by what is seen on screen and visually coded versions of linguistic elements. Graphic elements include humour derived from a written message inserted into the screen image. Paralinguistic elements cover the non-verbal qualities of the voice, such as intonation, rhythm, tone, timbre and resonance, and are associated with emotional expressions such as screaming, sighing or laughter. Non-marked (humorous) elements refer to miscellaneous examples that are not easily classified under the other categories but are nevertheless humorous; they may be acoustic or visual, explicit or implicit (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, p. 291). Sound elements, inspired by Fuentes's (2001) concept of sound jokes, include sounds in the soundtrack or special effects that

produce humour either by themselves or in combination with other elements (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, pp. 291–292). Martínez-Sierra's findings indicate that a significant portion of humour in audiovisual texts is translatable, that translators attempt to minimise loss even when the humorous load is reduced, and that the complete absence of humour in the target text is rare (Martínez-Sierra, 2005, pp. 293–294). Consequently, the criterion of success in humour translation is not necessarily one-to-one formal correspondence, but the maintenance of humorous potential in the target text, whether in a reduced or intensified form (p. 294).

Delabastita's Strategies for Translating Wordplay

Wordplay has long been one of the linguistic phenomena most frequently discussed in translation studies and one that poses significant difficulties for translators. Delabastita defines wordplay, or pun, as a general term for communicatively significant textual phenomena in which structural features of the language or languages used are exploited in order to bring two or more linguistic structures with similar forms and different meanings into confrontation (Delabastita, 1996, p. 128). This definition provides a broad framework that encompasses both the formal and semantic dimensions of wordplay. In terms of formal organisation, Delabastita distinguishes four main types: homonymy, in which sound and spelling are identical; homophony, in which sound is identical but spelling differs; homography, in which spelling is identical but sound differs; and paronymy, in which there are slight differences in both sound and spelling (Delabastita, 1996, p. 128).

Delabastita (Delabastita, 1996, p. 134) proposes a comprehensive framework regarding the strategies that may be used in the translation of wordplay. In the first strategy, PUN → PUN, the source-text wordplay is rendered by means of a wordplay in the target language, and this wordplay may differ to a greater or lesser extent from the original wordplay in terms of formal structure, semantic structure, or textual function. In the PUN → NON-PUN strategy, the wordplay is transferred through a non-punning expression. This expression may preserve both meanings of the wordplay in a non-punning context, select one of the meanings at the expense of the other, or translate both components of the wordplay in such a way that they become unrecognisable. In the PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE strategy, the wordplay is replaced by a wordplay-related rhetorical device, such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony, or paradox, which aims to recapture the effect of the source-text wordplay. In the PUN → ZERO strategy, the textual segment containing the wordplay is completely omitted. In the PUN ST = PUN TT strategy, the translator reproduces the source-text wordplay in its original form; in other words, the translator does not translate it in the strict sense. In the NON-PUN → PUN strategy, the translator adds a wordplay in textual positions where the original text does not contain one. This may be done in order to compensate for source-text wordplays lost elsewhere, or for any other reason. In the ZERO → PUN strategy, completely new textual material containing wordplay is added, without any clear antecedent or justification in the source text other than serving as a compensatory device. Finally, editorial techniques such as explanatory footnotes or endnotes, comments offered in translators' prefaces, and the provision of different or multiple solutions for the same source-text problem may also be used (Delabastita, 1996, p. 134).

Delabastita (1996, p. 134) emphasises that the claim that wordplay is untranslatable is misleading. What is usually meant by this claim is that none of the available solutions satisfies the requirements of translational equivalence. Wordplay may therefore be open to various forms of interlingual rewriting, even if these solutions do not always meet a narrow understanding of translation proper.

Pedersen's Strategies for Cultural and Extralinguistic Elements and Humour

The translation of cultural elements occupies a central position in translation studies. Pedersen (2005, p. 2) proposes the concept of the Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference, abbreviated as ECR, as a

unit of analysis. He defines an ECR as a reference attempted by means of a culture-bound linguistic expression that refers to an extralinguistic entity or process and is assumed to have a discourse referent identifiable to the relevant audience as part of its encyclopaedic knowledge (2005, p. 3). In other words, ECRs are expressions pertaining to realia or cultural items that are not part of a language system.

Pedersen defines seven main strategies for the transfer of ECRs into the target language (2005, pp. 3–9). The first strategy, official equivalent, differs from the other strategies in that it involves a bureaucratic rather than a linguistic process. For an official equivalent to exist, in line with Hermans's (2003, p. 39) argument concerning "authentication", some kind of official decision by authorised individuals regarding an ECR is required (Pedersen, 2005, p. 3). Retention is the transfer of the ECR into the target text either unchanged or adapted to the orthographic/morphological rules of the target language. According to Pedersen, this strategy is the most source-language-oriented strategy oriented towards the source language (Pedersen, 2005, p. 4). Specification refers to leaving the ECR in its untranslated form while making the ECR in the target text more explicit or more specific than the ECR in the source text by adding information that is not present in the source text. This is carried out through explicitation or addition. Explicitation may be regarded as any strategy that expands the text or makes explicit something that is implicit in the source text. It covers cases in which the added information is implicit in the source-text ECR as part of the name of the ECR expression. Addition, on the other hand, refers to cases in which the added information is implicit as part of the meaning or connotations of the ECR. According to Pedersen, when this strategy is used, the translator intervenes in order to provide guidance for the target-culture audience (Pedersen, 2005, pp. 4–5). Direct translation, although it is not frequently used for proper names, is common in the transfer of items such as company names, official institutions, and technical devices. Unlike the strategies of specification and generalisation, the semantic load of the source-text ECR remains unchanged, and no addition or omission is made. This strategy is divided into two subcategories according to its result: calque and shifted translation (Pedersen, 2005, p. 5). Calque is the result of a strict word-for-word translation and may sound foreign to the target audience. When a calque is produced, the shifts made are only obligatory shifts; that is, changes required by the differences between the source and target languages. The more common and less source-language-oriented option is to make certain optional shifts that render the ECR less obtrusive; this is referred to as shifted translation. Therefore, the strategy of direct translation occupies a kind of intermediate position between source-language- and target-language-oriented strategies, between the "exotic" and the "domesticating" (Pedersen, 2005, p. 5).

Generalisation refers to replacing an ECR that refers to something specific with something more general; this strategy typically involves translation, although it does not necessarily require it. It generally involves a relationship of hypernymy, yet the form of the target-text ECR may or may not preserve the uniqueness of the referent (Pedersen, 2005, p. 6). Indeed, there are similarities between the strategies of generalisation and addition, since in addition the information added is often a hypernym. Thus, addition may be seen as a practice that emerges as a result of generalisation plus retention. The difference between the strategies is linguistic and derives from the perspective adopted towards the ECR in the source text. In generalisation, there is an upward movement on the hypernymic scale, and the resulting target-text element is less specific than the ECR in the source text. In addition, however, the movement is in the opposite direction and involves a part-whole relation rather than a technical hypernym. Substitution involves removing the source-text ECR and replacing it with a different ECR or some form of paraphrase. Two types of substitution are possible. In cultural substitution, the source-text ECR is removed and replaced with a different ECR. In its least marked form, a transcultural ECR expected to be known by the target-text audience is used in place of the source-text ECR. Paraphrase, on the other hand, involves reformulating the ECR, either through reduction to sense or by completely removing all traces of the ECR and using a paraphrase that fits the context (Pedersen, 2005, pp. 6–9). Paraphrase is also carried out in two ways: sense-transfer

paraphrase and situational paraphrase. In sense-transfer paraphrase, the source ECR is removed, but its meaning or relevant connotations are preserved through a paraphrase. It is generally used to solve ECR problems that are too complex for the strategies of generalisation or specification (p. 8). In situational paraphrase, however, the meaning of the source ECR is completely removed, and another expression that fits the situation is inserted independently of the meaning of the source-culture ECR. For this reason, it is also referred to as a “quasi-omission” strategy. This method is often observed in the transfer of ECRs containing puns, or wordplay (p. 9). The final strategy, omission, means not replacing the source-text ECR with anything; in other words, it is not included in the target text. Certain conditions may make omission an applicable option, but it may also be preferred out of convenience. In Leppihalme’s (1994, p. 93) words, “a translator may choose omission responsibly after rejecting all alternative strategies, or may resort to it irresponsibly in order to avoid the trouble of researching something unfamiliar” (as cited in Pedersen, 2005, p. 9).

Pedersen also identifies parameters that influence translators’ decision-making processes (2005, pp. 10–14). The most functional parameters for the present study are transculturality, extratextuality, centrality of reference, intersemiotic redundancy and media-specific constraints. Transculturality concerns the degree to which an ECR is accessible to source- and target-text audiences and includes transcultural, monocultural and microcultural ECRs. Extratextuality concerns whether an ECR exists outside the source text: Text external ECRs exist independently of the text, whereas text internal ECRs are constructed for the text or series of texts at hand. Centrality of reference indicates whether the ECR is central at the macro or micro level. Intersemiotic redundancy concerns the extent to which the visual and auditory channels support the reference. Finally, media-specific constraints refer to the temporal and spatial limitations of subtitling and to the semiotic shift from spoken to written language.

The theoretical approaches discussed in this section offer an integrated framework for analysing both the linguistic and cultural dimensions of humour translation. The following methodology section explains how this framework is applied to the corpus.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design, in which phenomena and perceptions are examined holistically in their natural setting, as indicated by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021). Among qualitative research methods, the case study design has been adopted. A case study is appropriate when a contemporary phenomenon is examined within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined, and when multiple sources of evidence or data are available (Yin, 1984; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 301). In this context, the translation of humorous elements in *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs* is treated as a specific case situated within a particular platform, period and adaptation context: Netflix, 2025 and a contemporary animated miniseries.

The corpus of the study consists of the original French subtitles of *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs* available on Netflix, together with the official Turkish and Arabic subtitlings provided on the same platform. The five episodes of the miniseries were watched scene by scene, and ten examples were selected according to their suitability for humour analysis, their applicability to the three theoretical models — Martínez-Sierra, Delabastita and Pedersen — the diversity of humorous elements, and the representativeness of translation strategies. The humorous units were manually entered into an Excel table. These units include linguistic and extralinguistic elements that may lead viewers to laugh, feel surprise, recognise irony or perceive exaggeration. Within this scope, wordplay, figures of speech, formulaic expressions, references to social institutions, celebrities, historical events and contemporary cultural items were recorded. The Turkish and Arabic subtitles are treated as

professional subtitling outputs because they are the official subtitles provided by Netflix. For each humorous unit, Martínez-Sierra's taxonomy was first applied in order to identify the humorous element; subsequently, depending on the linguistic or extralinguistic structure of the example, the relevant strategy was identified within Delabastita's or Pedersen's model.

The analyses carried out in line with this methodological framework are presented in the findings section on an example-by-example basis. For each example, the humorous element is first identified, the translation strategies employed are then determined, and finally the degree to which the humorous effect is preserved in the target text is evaluated.

Findings and Evaluation

In this section, ten humorous subtitle examples selected from *Astérix et Obélix: Le Combat des Chefs* are systematically analysed within the framework of the three models discussed above: Martínez-Sierra's (2005) taxonomy of humorous elements, Delabastita's (1996) strategies for translating wordplay, and Pedersen's (2005) strategies for rendering ECRs. For each example, the humorous element is first identified, the translation strategy used is then determined, and finally the degree to which the humorous effect is preserved in the target text is evaluated.

For each example, the French-Turkish-Arabic subtitle segment is first presented in tabular form. The channels through which humour is constructed — linguistic elements, community-and-institutions elements, non-marked (humorous) elements and so forth — are then explained, together with the ways in which the humorous load changes in the target texts. Where wordplay or sound similarity is present, the example is coded within Delabastita's framework; where cultural references or proper names are involved, it is coded within Pedersen's framework. At the final stage, the reasons why the Turkish and Arabic solutions preserve, partially preserve or weaken the humorous effect are discussed, after which the findings are examined in terms of strategy frequencies and norm tendencies.

Example 1

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Toujours sur ta potion tragique? Magique.	Zehirli iksir mi? Sihirli	أما زلت تعمل على شرابك المأساوي؟ "السحري" صحيح

Context. The village chief asks Getafix, who is preparing a potion.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

Type: Paronymy

Elements: tragique [tʁazik] ↔ magique [mazik]

Mechanism: Sound similarity in the final syllable (-agique)

Martínez-Sierra (2005, p. 291) defines Linguistic Elements as elements based directly on linguistic features, which may be explicit or implicit and spoken or written. In this example, the humorous effect is produced through paronymy — similar sound with different meaning — between tragique “tragic” and magique “magical”. The surprise created by this unexpected sound similarity functions as the comic trigger.

Secondary Category: Paralinguistic Elements

Martínez-Sierra (2005, p. 291) defines Paralinguistic Elements as the non-verbal qualities of the voice, such as intonation, rhythm, tone, timbre and resonance. In this scene, the character's emphatic correction and tone of voice contribute to the humorous effect; however, this element cannot be fully transferred into subtitles, which inevitably reduces part of the humorous load.

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → PUN

Delabastita (1996, p. 134) defines this strategy as the rendering of a source-text wordplay by means of a target-text wordplay, even when the target wordplay differs from the original in form, semantics or function. The Turkish subtitle uses the paronymic pair zehirli “poisonous” and sihirli “magical”, thereby preserving the sound similarity in the final two syllables (-hirli). Although there is a semantic shift from “tragic” to “poisonous”, the function of the misunderstanding-and-correction sequence is preserved.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN → NON-PUN

In the Arabic translation, the expressions “المأساوي” (al-ma’sāwī — tragic) and “السحري” (al-siḥrī — magical) preserve the semantic contrast. However, since the final syllables of the Arabic words (-āwī / -rī) do not create a comparable paronymic relation, the humorous trigger is largely neutralised. This solution therefore corresponds to Delabastita’s PUN → NON-PUN strategy.

Evaluation

In this example, the comic trigger is the misunderstanding created by the paronymic relation between tragique and magique. The humorous effect emerges at the moment of mishearing or misreading and is closed by the correction. From Martínez-Sierra’s perspective, the main humorous element is linguistic; therefore, the reconstruction of phonological or morphological proximity in the target text is decisive for preserving the humorous load.

The Turkish subtitle, based on the pair zehirli/sihirli “poisonous/magical,” constitutes an instance of Delabastita’s PUN → PUN strategy and preserves both readability and the rhythm of misunderstanding plus correction. In the Arabic subtitle, however, semantic transfer is preserved but the sound-based trigger is weakened; thus, the effect is reduced largely to the level of information transfer and corresponds to PUN → NON-PUN.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: If sound proximity cannot be established in a one-to-one manner, a short and rhythmic misreading followed immediately by a correction may strengthen the humorous function without disrupting subtitle layout. For example: “شرايك الشقي؟ ...السحري، صحيح” “Your mischievous potion? Magical, right.”

Example 2

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Chapeau blanc et taches rouges, on ne touche	Ak başlı, kırmızı benekliyse elleme!	قبعة بيضاء وبقع حمراء، لا تلمسه
Taches rouges et chapeau blanc, fiche le camp !	Kırmızı benekli, ak başlıysa aman ha!	بقع حمراء وبقعة بيضاء، ابتعد عنه

Context. This is a rhyme used as a clue to determine whether the mushroom is poisonous.
Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

These examples draw on didactic formulaic structures based on rhyme. Such formulas produce humour not only through sound patterning and formal arrangement, but also through a style that imitates folk wisdom, proverbs or advisory sayings. In this respect, the source of humour is grounded in the linguistic organisation of the text, particularly in rhyme, rhythm and formulaic expression, which fall under Martínez-Sierra’s Linguistic Elements (2005, p. 291).

Secondary Category: Community-and-Institutions Elements

These didactic formulas transform nursery-rhyme-like warning formulas, often transmitted to children, through ironic rewriting. They therefore also carry humour at the level of social practices and institutionalised habits. This secondary layer corresponds to Martínez-Sierra's Community-and-Institutions Elements, which include humour constructed through references connected to the traditions, habits and institutional culture of a particular society (2005, p. 290).

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

French Structure:

The expressions *touche* [tuʃ] and *camp* [kɑ̃] do not form a perfect rhyme; nevertheless, they create a rhythm-oriented structure.

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE

Delabastita (1996, p. 134) defines the use of a related rhetorical device as the replacement of wordplay by a wordplay-related device such as rhyme, alliteration, repetition, irony or paradox. In the Turkish translation, the expressions *elleme / aman ha* preserve rhythm, brevity and formulaic closure rather than reproducing a full rhyme; the nursery-rhyme format is thus adapted to Turkish.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN → NON-PUN

In the Arabic subtitle, plain imperative sentences are used in the form of “لا تلمسه” (do not touch it) and “ابتعد عنه” (stay away from it); rhyme and rhythm are lost, and the didactic formulaic structure based on rhyme is not preserved.

Evaluation

In this example, the discourse pattern proceeds through the ironic reconstruction of an advisory warning that imitates a nursery-rhyme form. Through description, rhythm and half-rhyme, the source text produces a memorable formulaic expression. Humour therefore does not rely merely on the semantic play of individual words, but on the holistic functioning of the formulaic discourse pattern. For this reason, rhythmic organisation, brevity, density and the imperative closure become decisive in the target-text reconstruction.

Although the Turkish subtitle does not produce a perfect rhyme, it provides compensation through a related rhetorical device by preserving the one-beat closure and the nursery-rhyme tone. The Arabic subtitle, however, shifts towards a more informative tone through plain imperative sentences; consequently, the formulaic effect and ironic imitation are significantly weakened.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: While preserving the accuracy of the content, a two-part and rhythmic closure that captures the nursery-rhyme tone may be preferred. For example: “قبعة بيضاء...! وبقع حمراء... لا تلمسها، ابتعد عنها”

Example 3

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Ah, voilà. Potion de grand-mère...	İşte burada! Kocakarı iksiri ama işe yarıyor.	ها هو ذا! ووصفة منزلية لكنها فعالة

Context. Getafix, finds the potion he had previously prepared.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Community-and-Institutions Elements

Martínez-Sierra (2005, p. 290) defines Community-and-Institutions Elements as cultural or intertextual features rooted in a specific culture. In this example, *grand-mère* “grandmother” evokes

traditional family structures and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. The humorous effect arises from the irony of presenting a homemade remedy as an alternative to scientific or formulaic expertise.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

This example contains both an idiomatic expression and a cultural reference.

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution

Pedersen (2007, p. 35) defines Cultural Substitution as one of the most domesticating strategies for rendering ECRs, since the source-culture element is removed and replaced with a target-culture or transcultural element.

“Kocakarı ilacı/iksiri” “old wives’ remedy/potion” is an established idiom in Turkish culture. It may be described as approaching the status of a quasi-official equivalent in Pedersen’s sense, since it is not an official equivalent in the strict sense but is familiar enough in the target culture to function as an entrenched cultural substitute.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Generalization

Pedersen (2005, p. 6) states that Generalization involves replacing an ECR referring to something specific with something more general. In the Arabic subtitle, the expression “وصفة منزلية” (homemade recipe/remedy) removes the specific grandmother reference, weakens the connotations of intergenerational knowledge, and opts for a more general expression.

Evaluation

The expression *potion de grand-mère* in this example carries an implicit form of cultural humour that evokes the tradition of the “grandmother’s remedy” or “homemade cure” in collective memory. In such cases, if a word-for-word translation does not evoke a similar tradition in the target culture, the humorous load carried by the expression may be significantly reduced.

In the Turkish subtitle, the tradition is localised through the expression *kocakarı iksiri* “old wives’ potion,” and the comic effect becomes more pronounced thanks to its ironic tone. In the Arabic subtitle, however, although the expression “وصفة منزلية” (homemade recipe/remedy) preserves the general meaning, it cannot sufficiently convey the connotations of “grandmother/elderly wisdom”; therefore, the humorous effect is largely diminished.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: An expression such as “وصفة جدتي”, or a more suitable alternative that activates a similar tradition in the target culture, may help preserve the humorous tone.

Example 4

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Tais-toi et mets une toge. C'est quoi, ces braies de barbare ?	Sus da ihram giy. Bu barbar pantolonu ne böyle?	اصمتي وارندي التوجة الرومانية لم ترتدين سروال الهمج هذا؟

Context. A Roman scolds his niece because of the clothes she is wearing.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Community-and-Institutions Elements

This example contains a historical reference based on the opposition between Rome and Gaul. The Roman character’s description of Gallic clothing as barbarian reflects an Ancient Roman perspective. The humour is therefore linked to a culturally specific stereotype and corresponds to Martínez-Sierra’s Community-and-Institutions Elements (2005, p. 290).

Secondary Category: Non-Marked (Humorous) Elements

In this example, humour is also constructed through a derogatory tone and situational irony. It therefore contains a secondary Non-Marked (Humorous) Element, because part of the humour does not depend solely on the historical reference and remains broadly understandable in an intercultural context.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution + Generalization

Pedersen (2007, p. 35) defines this strategy as the most domesticating strategy for rendering ECRs, whereby the foreign element is completely removed and replaced with a local element. In the Turkish subtitle, the choice of *ihram* for *toge* may be evaluated as cultural substitution, since the source-culture-specific garment name is removed and replaced with another cultural element that has strong associations in the target culture. The rendering of *braies* as *barbar pantolonu* “barbarian trousers,” on the other hand, approaches the strategy of generalisation, since it conveys the specific garment name through a more general term.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Explicitation + Generalization

In the Arabic subtitle, the expression “التوجة الرومانية” (Roman toga) reflects Specification. Since the term *toge* is retained through transliteration and the qualifier “Roman” is added in order to make the referent more explicit, the solution corresponds more specifically to Explicitation. The rendering of *braies* as “سروال الهمج” (trousers of the barbarians) can be coded as generalization, since the specific garment term is replaced by a more general noun.

In this example, humour is constructed through the Roman-centred tone of superiority and the discursive framework marked by the label “barbarian.” Therefore, in the transfer of garment names, a balance is sought between the cognitive load placed on the target audience and the rapid activation of stereotypical humour.

Parameter of Transculturality

Within Pedersen’s framework, a transcultural ECR is one that is more or less equally accessible to both the source-text and target-text audiences. In this context, the concepts of the “Roman Empire” and “barbarian” point to a historical field of reference widely shared across Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultural geographies. Therefore, the accessibility of the ECR is relatively high for the target audience. In this example, a direct equivalent for *toga*, possibly with a brief qualifier, would be sufficient to preserve the reference while keeping the humorous stereotype visible.

Evaluation

In this example, humour is produced through the cultural stereotype based on the Rome/barbarian opposition. The comparison between *toga* and *braies* makes the conflict of identity visible through garment names. Therefore, in the transfer of object names functioning as ECRs, it is necessary to strike a balance between the cognitive load placed on the target audience and the humorous function of the expression. In the Turkish subtitle, the choice of *ihram* for *toga* may produce a comic allusion; however, it may also be considered problematic in terms of historical and systemic consistency. Moreover, it may cause the viewer to ask momentarily, “Why *ihram*?”, thereby delaying the humorous effect. In the Arabic subtitle, by contrast, the preservation of the name belonging to the source culture strengthens the informational dimension of the reference; however, when no discursive tone is established to support the stereotypical humorous aspect, the effect may remain limited.

Translation Suggestion: In the Turkish subtitle, rendering *toga* through a more direct equivalent such as “*toga*/Roman robe” may activate the cultural stereotype more rapidly and avoid delaying the

humorous effect. In the Arabic subtitle, a short qualifier such as “التوجه الرومانية” may clarify the reference and make the direction of the stereotypical humour more visible.

Example 5

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Bienvenue, envahisseurs bien-aimés	Selam olsun! Hoş geldiniz işgalciler	مرحبا يا أعزاءنا الغزاة التحية لك
Peut-on envahir ta demeure pour discuter, Aplusbégalix ?	Selam olsun. Evinize de girip sohbet etsek mi Egasus Seramiks?	أتسمح لنا بغزو منزلك لتتحدث يا ألباسيينيك"؟"

Context. Cassius Ceramix welcomes the Romans and asks the Roman Gallic chief a question.
Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

Character names in the Astérix series are systematically based on wordplay. The name Aplusbégalix consists of the mathematical formula $A + B = X$ and the Gallic name suffix “-ix,” as in Astérix and Obélix.

Secondary Category: Community-and-Institutions Elements

The reference to the mathematical formula $A + B = X$ is an ironic allusion to school knowledge and scientific discourse.

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → PUN, with a different wordplay

In Turkish, the name “Egasus Seramiks” creates a sound play through a possible reference to “Pegasus,” the mythological horse, and the word “seramik” “ceramic,” while also maintaining a connection with the *Asterix* naming tradition through the preservation of the “-iks” suffix. Indeed, Delabastita (1996, p. 134) states that source-language wordplay may be transferred into the target language through a different yet equivalent form of wordplay.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN ST = PUN TT (Direct Transfer)

Delabastita (1996, p. 134) notes that wordplay may, in certain cases, be preserved without translation, especially when proper names are involved, corresponding to the strategy of PUN ST = PUN TT. In this example, the Arabic subtitle renders the form “ألباسيينيك” through transliteration, in a way that approximates the French pronunciation. However, since this transfer cannot reconstruct the wordplay mechanism of the source text in the target text, the humorous effect is significantly weakened. Therefore, although the solution appears to be a direct transfer, in functional terms it comes close to reducing the wordplay to a non-punning form, namely PUN → NON-PUN.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution

Pedersen (2007, p. 34) emphasises that cultural substitution is unusual from the perspective of the minimax principle because finding an appropriate substitute requires research and effort. In this context, the Turkish subtitle may be read as a domesticating move aimed at increasing the target audience’s immediate accessibility.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Retention

Pedersen (2005, p. 4) states that retention is the most SL-oriented strategy, yet it is not always the most suitable solution for Monocultural ECRs because it offers no guidance to the TT audience. In this example, although retention through transliteration formally preserves the reference, it limits the

humorous effect because it does not provide clues that would enable the target audience to reconstruct the wordplay.

Evaluation

In this example, humour arises from the combination of irony based on a contradiction, such as showing affection to an “invader,” and a sarcastic question form. Thus, the basic mechanism operates largely at the discursive/pragmatic level. For this reason, tone is at least as decisive as lexical choice in reproducing the humorous effect.

Although the Turkish subtitle makes the irony more visible, when the level of explicitness increases too much, there is a risk that the subtlety of sarcasm may be weakened. The Arabic subtitle, on the other hand, shifts towards a more neutral discourse; as a result, the contrast between “beloved” and “invader” becomes blurred, and the humorous load is significantly reduced.

Translation Suggestion: In both languages, a short exclamation or marker of irony may make the sarcasm visible without requiring additional explanation; for instance, Turkish sözde “so-called,” or an Arabic marker such as “يا...!” could fulfil this function.

Example 6

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Tu ne feras qu'une bouchée d'Abraracourcix	Toptoriks'i paspas edersin	ستهم "هيبيديكس" شر هزيمة

Context. A Roman motivates the Gallic chief.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

In this example, two linguistic elements coexist:

Character name: Abraracourcix = à bras raccourcis, meaning “to attack vigorously / to set to work energetically.”

Idiom: Faire qu'une bouchée de = “to swallow in one bite / to defeat easily.”

Secondary Category: Non-Marked (Humorous) Elements

Situational irony is produced through the exaggeratedly confident tone of the discourse.

Analysis of the Turkish Subtitle Translation — Name

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita: PUN → PUN

Toptoriks evokes a connotation of stoutness or heaviness and preserves the “-iks” suffix.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen: Cultural Substitution

Analysis of the Turkish Subtitle Translation — Idiom

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita: PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE

The expression paspas etmek “to wipe the floor with someone” functions as a Turkish idiom.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen: Cultural Substitution

Analysis of the Arabic Subtitle Translation — Name

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita: PUN ST = PUN TT

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen: Retention

Analysis of the Arabic Subtitle Translation — Idiom

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita: PUN → NON-PUN

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen: Generalization, in relation to the idiom.

Combination of Strategies

In examples of this kind, it is common for strategies to operate in combination. Pedersen notes that, in actual translation practice, strategies are frequently combined (2005, p. 9). In this example, the Turkish translator's use of two separate cultural substitutions for two distinct linguistic elements

demonstrates a clearly interventionist approach aimed at preserving the function of humour in the target text.

Evaluation

In this example, the idiom *ne faire qu'une bouchée de X* produces comic exaggeration by connecting the concrete image of “a single bite” with the metaphorical meaning of “defeating someone easily.” In such structures, when the concrete image can be preserved, the humorous effect generally becomes activated more rapidly.

In the Turkish subtitle, the humorous load is preserved by reconstructing a similar exaggeration through the choice of an everyday and effective idiom. In the Arabic subtitle, however, a more general action is selected, the image of “a single bite” becomes blurred, and humour is largely reduced to the level of a display of power.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: A rendering such as “سألتهمه لقمة واحدة” “I will swallow him in one bite,” which preserves the concrete image of the idiom while remaining brief, may be proposed as a more suitable option in terms of both fluency and comic effect.

Example 7

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Mais c'était un petit coup	Ama hafifçe attım...	لكنها كانت رمية خفيفة
Pas de quoi en faire un dolmen	Pireyi mozole yapma	لا تهوّل الأمر

Context. Obelix claims that the stone was not hard and argues that the matter should not be exaggerated.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

This is a parody of the French idiom *en faire tout un fromage* “to make a cheese out of it,” meaning “to exaggerate something / to make a big deal out of it.” By replacing *fromage* “cheese” with *dolmen* “a megalithic stone monument,” a cultural element appropriate to the *Astérix* universe is added, and sound similarity is also established.

Secondary Category: Community-and-Institutions Elements

“Dolmen” is a symbol of Celtic/Gallic culture and corresponds to the historical context of the production.

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE

Delabastita (1996, p. 134) defines this strategy as the replacement of wordplay by a related rhetorical device rather than the direct reproduction of the pun. The subtitle solution *Pireyi mozole yapma* “Do not turn a flea into a mausoleum” offers a two-layered reconstruction. On the one hand, the Turkish idiom *pireyi deve yapmak* “to make a camel out of a flea / to exaggerate” is adapted, thereby preserving the pattern of exaggeration. On the other hand, by replacing *deve* “camel” with *mozole* “mausoleum,” an ancient funerary structure, an image compatible with the historical setting is introduced. Thus, although the wordplay is formally replaced by idiomatic reconstruction, the humorous effect and the historical connotation specific to the fictional universe are preserved together.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN → NON-PUN

In the Arabic subtitle, the general meaning is conveyed through the expression “لا تهوّل الأمر” (do not exaggerate the matter)” Since both the wordplay and the historical reference are lost simultaneously, the humorous effect is weakened.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution — target-language idiom + historical adaptation
Pedersen (2007) shows that a cultural substitute may make a reference more accessible to the target audience in a space-efficient manner, even though the direct referent is not preserved. In this example, the Turkish subtitle uses such a substitute while also adapting the idiomatic structure.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Sense-Transfer Paraphrase

Pedersen (2005, p. 8) states that in sense-transfer paraphrase, the source ECR is removed, while its meaning or relevant connotations are preserved through paraphrase. In this example, “dolmen” is completely removed and only the meaning of exaggeration is transferred. The world-building function is lost, and the humorous effect becomes markedly ordinary.

Evaluation

In this example, the expression en faire un dolmen simultaneously activates both wordplay and an ECR by combining an object specific to the Astérix universe, namely the stone structure “dolmen,” with the formula of “exaggeration.” Humour is produced through this dual construction that evokes the fictional universe.

The Turkish subtitle offers a functionally strong reconstruction because, through its compensation-based solution, it maintains both idiomatic exaggeration and the image of a stone structure. In the Arabic subtitle, however, since a general expression of exaggeration is used, the world-building function of the dolmen disappears, and the humorous effect becomes significantly conventionalised.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: A solution preserving the ECR, such as “لا تجعل منها دولماً” “do not make a dolmen out of it,” or a brief compensatory expression evoking a similar image of a “large/imposing stone structure” in the target culture, may render the universe-specific humour more visible.

Example 8

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
On a beau chasser les Gallo-Romains, ils reviennent toujours	Bu Galya-Romalılar vazgeçmiyor	مهما طردنا الرومانيين من أصول غالية فإنهم يعودون
Chassez le Gallo, il revient au naturel	Galesizce geliyorlar	يعودون مهرولين دوماً

Context. Asterix and the village chief speak among themselves.
Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary and Secondary Categories: Linguistic Elements + Community-and-Institutions Elements

The French proverb chassez le naturel, il revient au galop — “drive out the natural, and it returns at a gallop,” meaning that a person’s or thing’s nature inevitably returns — is inverted and reconstructed in a humorous and ironic manner. While galop “gallop” produces sound play through its phonetic proximity to Gallo “Gaul,” naturel “natural” is also connected to the historical context of “Gallo-Roman,” thereby expanding the cultural association. This example therefore combines Linguistic Elements and Community-and-Institutions Elements rather than belonging to a single category.

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → ZERO, partially + NON-PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE, as compensation

In the Turkish subtitle, due to the substantial loss of the proverbial irony, the translation moves partially towards PUN → ZERO, that is, loss of the source wordplay. Subsequently, compensation is attempted through a new target-language sound play, corresponding to NON-PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE as a compensatory move. However, the compensation remains functionally limited because it cannot reconstruct the full multilayered structure of the source text — proverb, sound play and historical reference — to the same degree.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN → NON-PUN

In the Arabic subtitle, the wordplay is entirely deactivated and only the general meaning is transferred. From Delabastita's perspective, this corresponds to a "PUN → NON-PUN" solution.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen, for both target languages: Situational Paraphrase
Pedersen (2005, p. 9) states that situational paraphrase involves the complete removal of the meaning of the source ECR and the insertion of another expression that fits the situation; he also refers to this as "quasi-omission." In this example, the parody of the proverb and the cultural reference are both lost.

Parameter of Transculturality

When the level of transculturality is evaluated within Pedersen's framework, the proverb in question may be said to function as a microcultural ECR. Pedersen (2005, p. 11) defines a microcultural ECR as a reference bound to the source culture but too specialised or local to be assumed to be within the encyclopaedic knowledge of either the ST or the TT audience. The limited recognisability of the proverb even among source viewers increases both the reception threshold and the difficulty of translation.

Evaluation

This example makes visible one of the most challenging cases in the corpus. The difficulty arises from: (i) its status as a microcultural ECR with limited recognisability even within the source culture; (ii) the multilayered humorous structure produced through the inversion of a proverbial formula; and (iii) its high degree of language-dependence, grounded in French-specific phonological proximity. In examples of this kind, humour requires marked intertextual competence, since it depends on the viewer's prior recognition of the formula and ability to notice the deviation from it. Therefore, in Turkish and Arabic, when no correspondence can be established with a similar formula in the target culture, the mere transfer of meaning renders the comic deviation invisible and significantly weakens the humorous effect.

Example 9

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Ça, c'est tout petit, comme toi	Bel altından vurdun. Çünkü bacak kadarsın	هذا فعل دنيء. يكاد يكون مثلك

Context: Obelix feels hurt by Asterix and speaks in an offensive manner.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

Humour is constructed through the polysemy of the word petit "small/low." On the one hand, reference is made to the "smallness/lowness" of the action; on the other hand, the addressee's short stature is implied, thereby turning the insult into a two-layered one.

Secondary Category: Visual Elements

In the target text, this linguistic mechanism is reinforced by the visually prominent presentation of the short character, and the visual dimension of humour comes into play. Martínez-Sierra (2005, p. 291) defines Visual Elements as humour produced by what is seen on screen or by visually coded versions of linguistic elements. In this scene, the visual presence of the character reinforces the verbal disparagement and intensifies its effect.

Analysis from the Perspective of Delabastita

Turkish Translation Strategy: PUN → PUN, expanded

In this example, two separate idiomatic resources are employed together in the target text in response to a single wordplay in the source text. The expression *bel altından vurmak* “to hit below the belt” carries connotations of moral baseness or unfairness, whereas *bacak kadar* “knee-high / as short as a leg” directly points to physical shortness. Thus, a single polysemous mechanism in the source text is reconstructed and intensified in the target language through two idioms. This shows that Delabastita’s (1996, p. 137) principle of compensation is applied here as a form of enrichment. The single-layered wordplay in the source text is transferred into the target text by being divided into two more visible layers.

Arabic Translation Strategy: PUN → NON-PUN

The Arabic subtitle, by contrast, moves towards a more general formulation: “هذا فعل دنيء. يكاد يكون مثلك” (This is a low act. Almost like you). Although the semantic field of “low/base” is partially preserved through the word “دنيء”, the “short stature” dimension of the polysemy and the idiomatic force are considerably weakened. For this reason, the Arabic subtitle strategy approaches the category of PUN → NON-PUN from Delabastita’s perspective.

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution + Addition

Pedersen (2005, p. 5) states that, in the strategy of addition, the translator intervenes in order to provide guidance for the target audience. Here, through an interventionist approach, the translator constructs a denser and more functional humorous pattern than that of the source text.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Generalization

The expression “هذا فعل دنيء. يكاد يكون مثلك” in the Arabic subtitle generalises the idiomatic expression in the source language and weakens the humorous effect.

Evaluation

In this example, humour is constructed by associating a disparaging insult with a physical characteristic; in other words, the linguistic play combines with character comedy and mockery to create a two-layered effect. In such cases, the everyday and established idioms of the target language function as an important lever in the reconstruction of humour.

In the Turkish subtitle, the simultaneous use of two idioms encodes both the sense of “unfairness/baseness” and the mockery of “shortness” at the same time, thereby increasing the humorous load. In the Arabic subtitle, however, since a more abstract formulation is preferred, the image of “shortness” and the sharpness of the insult are softened, and the humorous effect is weakened.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: A rendering such as “!ضربةٌ تحت الحزام... وأنت قصيرٌ أصلاً” “A blow below the belt... and you are already short!” which combines the dimensions of attack and mockery in a brief and idiomatic structure, may strengthen the effect by carrying both the criticism of the action and the physical mockery together.

Example 10

Source Text (FR)	Target Text (TR)	Target Text (AR)
Perdu pour perdu	Ya herrü ya merrü	ليس لدينا ما نخسره

Context: The Gallic chief utters this expression to indicate that, since they have reached a point of no return, he is ready to risk everything.

Martínez-Sierra Classification

Primary Category: Linguistic Elements

The French idiom *Perdu pour perdu* condenses, in a short and rhythmic expression, an attitude of courage and risk-taking born out of desperation, along the lines of “since we have lost / if we are going to lose anyway, then we might as well...”

Analysis from the Perspective of Pedersen

Turkish Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution + Official Equivalent

The expression *ya herrü ya merrü* “all or nothing” is a Turkish idiom of Arabic origin. If it is treated as a culturally entrenched target-language idiom, the Turkish solution can be interpreted as Cultural Substitution; however, because the source expression *Perdu pour perdu* does not itself constitute an ECR in Pedersen’s strict sense, this example should primarily be evaluated as an idiomatic-functional replacement rather than a full Official Equivalent. In the Turkish translation, not only is the meaning transferred, but the rhythmic and decisive tone of the source text is also maintained.

Arabic Translation Strategy: Situational Paraphrase

In the Arabic subtitle, the source text is rendered through the expression “ليس لدينا ما نخسره” (we have nothing to lose). Thus, although the basic meaning is transferred, the idiomatic density, formulaic effect, and rhythm are largely weakened.

Strikingly, the idiom *ya herrü ya merrü*, which is of Arabic origin, is not used in the Arabic translation. This shows that translation choices are shaped not by the etymological origin of a word or expression, but rather by usage habits and discursive appropriateness in the target language.

Evaluation

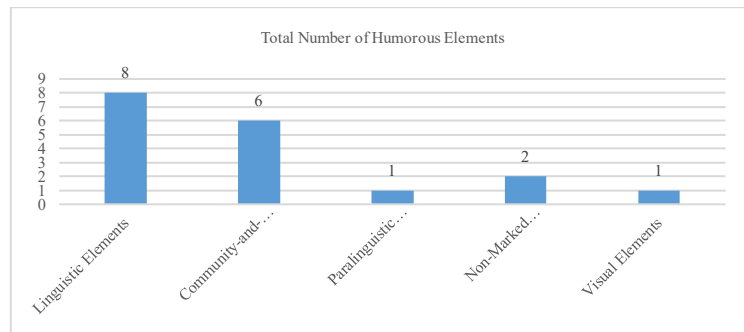
In this example, the formula *Perdu pour perdu* compresses a defiant attitude of “since that is the case, then...” into a short expression. When a similarly formulaic “all or nothing” expression can be found in the target language, the effect is significantly strengthened.

In the Turkish subtitle, the choice of *ya herrü ya merrü* creates a strong localisation through an established idiom and heightens the tone of the character. In the Arabic subtitle, although the meaning is rendered accurately, the formulaic and rhythmic effect is weak, and the discourse turns into a more serious motivational statement.

Translation Suggestion for Arabic: An idiomatic equivalent corresponding to “all or nothing,” such as “إما كلُّ شيءٍ أو لا شيءٍ”, or a shorter and more forceful expression, may help capture the traditional/formulaic tone of the source text.

General Findings and Summary Tables

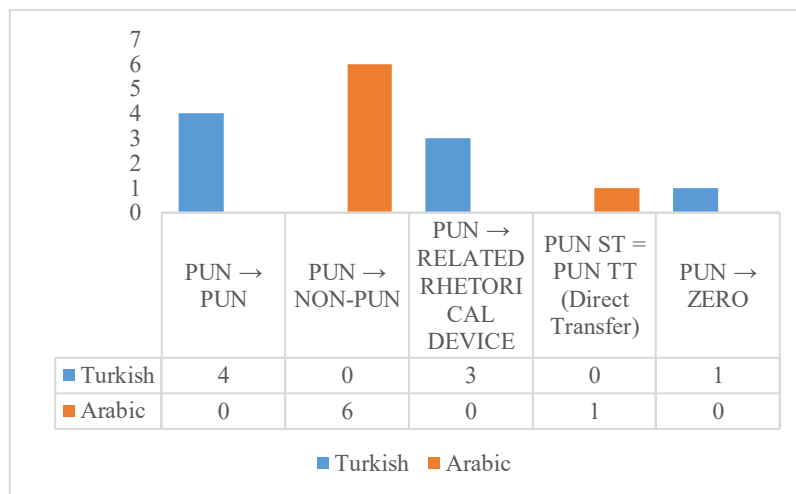
Table 1
Distribution of Martínez-Sierra's classification



Finding 1. Eight of the ten examples contain Linguistic Elements. This is consistent with the humour tradition of the *Astérix* series, which is strongly based on wordplay.

Finding 2. Likewise, eight of the ten examples fall into more than one category. This confirms the usefulness of Martínez-Sierra's taxonomy for identifying multilayered humorous elements in audiovisual texts.

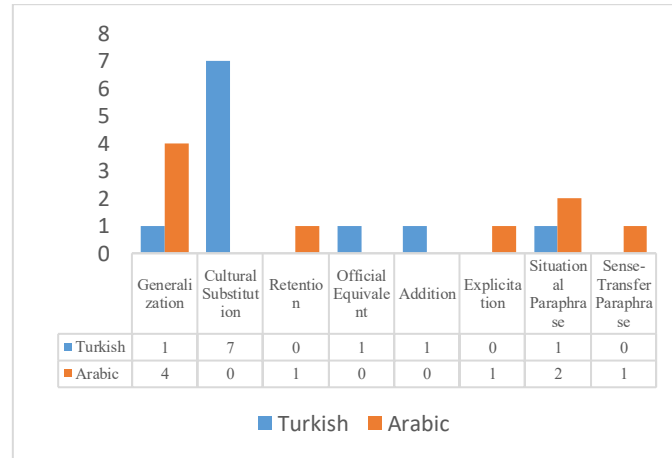
Table 2
Distribution of delabastita's strategies



Finding 3. While the strategies of PUN → PUN and PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE are dominant in the Turkish translations, accounting for 88%, the strategy of PUN → NON-PUN is dominant in the Arabic translations, accounting for 75%.

Finding 4. Delabastita's (1996, p. 134) rejection of the myth of untranslatability is supported by the Turkish translations. Wordplay can be transferred, albeit through different forms and with varying degrees of functional equivalence.

Table 3
Distribution of Pedersen's Strategies



Finding 5. Cultural Substitution is dominant in the Turkish subtitles, indicating a predominantly TL-oriented and interventionist tendency. In the Arabic subtitles, Generalization and Situational Paraphrase are more common; these strategies do not correspond to a strictly SL-oriented position in Pedersen's taxonomy, but rather indicate a more semantically oriented and less culturally substitutive mode of transfer.

Finding 6. In terms of the degree to which humour is preserved in the target text, the humorous effect is largely maintained in the Turkish translations, accounting for 80%, whereas in the Arabic translations humour is either partially preserved or entirely lost, with complete loss accounting for 30%.

Finding 7. The Turkish subtitle tradition in this corpus displays a TL-oriented and domesticating tendency, whereas the Arabic subtitles exhibit a more retentive and semantic/information-oriented tendency rather than consistent cultural substitution.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has shown that the integrated use of three complementary models offers a strong framework for analysing the translation of audiovisual humour. Martínez-Sierra's taxonomy reveals the multilayered nature of humorous elements; Delabastita's model enables the systematic analysis of wordplay translation strategies; and Pedersen's taxonomy explains how ECRs are rendered in subtitling. As suggested by Delabastita (1996, p. 134), wordplay is not simply "untranslatable"; rather, it requires creative intervention on the part of the translator. Indeed, in Çavuşoğlu's (2023) study on the Turkish dubbing of *Shrek*, the translator's use of the expression *nalları dikmek*, which is familiar to Turkish viewers, instead of the idiom "kick the bucket," constitutes a concrete example of such creative intervention. While the Turkish translations in the present corpus support this claim, the Arabic translations demonstrate the role of norm differences. The success of audiovisual humour translation depends on the translator's ability to identify the relevant humorous element, prioritise functional equivalence, decide whether interventionist strategies are required, and make effective use of the idiomatic resources of the target culture. When the findings of this study are compared with previous research, both convergences and divergences emerge. In Eray's (2023) Turkish-Arabic comparative study on the *Ice Age* series, it was similarly found that Turkish translations displayed a target-culture-oriented tendency, whereas Arabic translations were more source-retentive. This convergence suggests that the observed norm difference may point to a broader translation tradition rather than a feature of one particular production. Similarly, in the studies conducted by Çavuşoğlu

(2023) on Shrek dubbing and by Uras Yılmaz and Çakıroğlu (2021) on the subtitles of *The Big Bang Theory*, a target-culture-oriented approach was found to be dominant in Turkish translations, and the substitution strategy was frequently preferred. These findings support the interventionist tendency observed in the Turkish subtitles in the present study.

Delabastita's (1996, p. 134) approach to the translatability of wordplay is supported in this study through the Turkish translations. The fact that the PUN → PUN strategy could be applied in several Turkish examples demonstrates that wordplay can be transferred through functional equivalence even between different language pairs. In the study by Uras Yılmaz and Çakıroğlu (2021), it was likewise found that when the literal translation of linguistic play was impossible, the translator resorted to substitution and that, in general, the humorous effect was successfully transferred. By contrast, the fact that PUN → PUN was not used in the Arabic translations shows that Delabastita's theoretical possibility is conditioned in practice by translation norms and traditions.

When evaluated in terms of Pedersen's (2005, 2007) strategy classification, the Turkish subtitles are positioned strongly on the side of TL-oriented intervention through Cultural Substitution. The Arabic subtitles, however, are not simply SL-oriented in the strict sense: they also make frequent use of Generalization and Paraphrase, which reduce or neutralise the cultural and humorous load rather than replacing it with target-culture material. This finding overlaps with Koç's (2018) study on the Madagascar series, where the age group and cultural familiarity of the target audience were found to determine strategy choices: substitution or explicitation was used for references considered difficult for child viewers, whereas direct transfer was preferred for elements of global popular culture.

Martínez-Sierra's (2005, pp. 293–294) finding that humour in audiovisual texts is largely translatable is partially confirmed in this study. The preservation of the humorous effect in a large proportion of the Turkish examples supports this claim, whereas the occurrence of complete loss in some Arabic examples shows that translatability is dependent on norms and strategy choices. As emphasised by Çavuşoğlu (2023), in dubbing translation not only the translator but also the voice actor plays a vital role in the transfer of humour, for instance through accent. It may therefore be argued that, since subtitling lacks this additional dimension, linguistic and textual strategies become even more important.

Possible Reasons for the Norm Difference between Turkish and Arabic

Several factors may explain the Turkish-Arabic norm difference observed in this study. First, from the perspective of historical translation traditions, audiovisual translation in Türkiye has been shaped particularly by the dubbing tradition since the 1970s. This tradition has created a basis that encourages translators to make adaptations oriented towards the target audience. As Perego (2014) states, countries' translation traditions are shaped by historical, financial and cultural factors. In the Arabic-speaking context, by contrast, subtitling has historically been a more widespread mode of audiovisual translation; this may have produced a more retentive and semantically conservative translation habit. Second, translation decisions are shaped not by the etymological origin of an expression, but by its frequency of use and discursive appropriateness in the target language. In this study, the idiom *ya herrü ya merrü*, although of Arabic origin, is used in the Turkish subtitle but not in the Arabic translation. This shows that the historical circulation of an idiom does not guarantee its functional availability in a contemporary target text. Third, Cultural Substitution is not used in the Arabic translations, even though Arabic has a rich repertoire of idioms and proverbs. This finding suggests that the Arabic subtitling solutions in this corpus are more retentive and information-oriented, whereas the Turkish solutions are more culturally substitutive and interventionist.

In light of the findings of this study, the following suggestions may be offered for future research: 1) Comparative platform studies could examine how different global platforms such as Netflix, Amazon

Prime and Disney+ subtitle the same production, thereby revealing the effects of platform policies on translation norms. 2) Semi-structured interviews with professional subtitlers could illuminate the decision-making processes behind strategy preferences. 3) Historical norm analyses could trace the development of Turkish and Arabic subtitling norms and explain the origins of the current norm difference. In addition, studies on different language pairs may contribute to a broader understanding of humour translation norms.

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