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**AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION OF HUMOR: SUBTITLES IN TV SERIES *'ALLO 'ALLO!***

**AUDIOVIZUALNI PRIJEVOD HUMORA: TITLOVI U TV SERIJI *'ALLO 'ALLO!***

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## Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to examine the ways in which humor was delivered to the audience in the source language, and to determine whether or not the translator achieved and preserved the humorous effect in the translation process of the audiovisual material. This is done through thorough examination of both Croatian and Serbian subtitles in the British TV series *'Allo 'Allo!*. This paper also lays out the ideas and theories made by some of the greatest contributors in the field of audiovisual translation up to this day. They serve as a basis for the analysis of the translation procedures which were employed in the process of subtitling. Since the TV series *'Allo 'Allo!* is abundant in cultural and historical humor, translators had a demanding task in the process of translation. Nevertheless, the study shows that most of the translated material was adapted successfully.

**Keywords:** audiovisual translation, subtitling, verbal humor, Croatian subtitles, Serbian subtitles, translation strategies, source language, target language

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## 1. Introduction

Any form of translation requires excellence in its practice prior to its scholarly theoretical foundation. At the same time, it is highly important to underline that diverse translation subfields go hand in hand with the needs and inventions of time. Therefore, it goes without saying that inventions, along with the translation practices, have prepared the ground for contemporary theories in the field of translation studies. One of the subfields or subdisciplines of translation studies is fully devoted to the invention that has changed the world of entertainment, and probably, the direction of our living room sofas.

When a motion picture film got its first subtitles, it was evident that cinematography would become the precursor for new practices in translation. Then again, who would have thought media would come so far in not even a century? Let us be honest - not even a hundred years ago, there was no TV, and yet, here we are, with our smart phones and wireless internet connections, chatting online with people who are thousand miles away. Everything we need to know or want to know is a small device, a media platform and a click away. Well, unless it is not in a language we do not understand. In that case, we will try to find a translated version of the video, TV show or movie we are interested in. And that is where the audiovisual translation steps in.

## 1.1. The history behind the term “audiovisual translation”

For quite some time, the study of language has most predominantly been focused on the process of obtaining/learning the language and accordingly, its teaching. Translation studies, which has not been given much credit in the past, has become more noticeable part of the academic study of language as scholars started examining and determining the quality of the translated materials by analyzing the translation processes and strategies used in them.

Scholarly papers and articles written on the topic of what is nowadays unified into a single term - audiovisual translation (AVT) - suggest that the researches in this field have been conducted since the early 1920s, when cinematography emerged as the most prominent visual art form.

Many works on audiovisual translation have been written since the 1920s, but not all publications are traceable. The reason lies in the fact that some of them were never formally published/printed, but rather passed around in the circles of those professionals who were interested in the topic, privately or academically.

“On occasions we come across manuscripts that have been passed around without ever having been published (Laks 1957 and Minchinton 1986). Sometimes they are in-house documents that never reach the hands of the general public. Where it concerns monographic books, most of them have been published by small publishing houses, where the distribution is usually very erratic. In the early 1990s, the *European Institute for the Media* (EIM) in Düsseldorf had a section in its library dedicated to AVT. Unfortunately, it stopped compiling these publications and at present there is no other international organization having taken over the reigns. The scattering of material has not only made the bibliographical search complicated for a researcher starting in this area, but it also means that some scholars have carried out their work without knowing what others had already done in the field.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Díaz-Cintas, Jorge, “Subtitling: the long journey to academic acknowledgement” (Article in *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, Issue I, [www.jostrans.org](http://www.jostrans.org), 2004), p. 54

And while some of the preserved works take us into the depths of the theory of audiovisual translation, some papers only present stale and already-read ideas. Hopefully, due to the increase of the audiovisual materials in mass media, and their dominance on the digital platforms, this area of study will present even larger number of formal scholarly papers and theses in the days to come.

That being said, we must turn our attention towards the existing papers and clarify the history of the term. Since dubbing and subtitling, which have developed along with the sound motion pictures, are the two most distinctive and well-known forms of audiovisual translation, it is to be expected that terms such as “film dubbing”<sup>2</sup> and “film translation”<sup>3</sup> arose in the pioneer works of scholars who were interested in this topic. In the beginning, cinematography translation was exclusively reserved for the big screen. As the years went by, the translation practices directed their attention to a smaller medium – television. The popularity of television translated into the wider availability of entertainment and information, and thus marked the growing interest in the translation processes done in this medium, so scholars decided to use “film and TV translation”<sup>4</sup> and “media translation” as terms which represent translation done on both film and TV.

In the era of digitization, audience became heavily dependent on the usage of electronic devices. This led to a higher production of the audiovisual materials and their translation, which came to be known as “screen translation”<sup>5</sup> and “multimedia translation”<sup>6</sup>. In the most recent scholarly works, the term “multimedia translation” and “audiovisual translation” have been commonly used to define the process of translating both audio and visual forms which are presented on the screen. Be that as it may, audiovisual translation is usually presented as an umbrella term for processes in translation that are concerned with the audiovisual language transfer. Even though audiovisual translation is primarily concerned with the translation of the verbal component of the video, its nonverbal component cannot be disregarded. The combination of both elements is crucial for its understanding and finally, its process of translation. Accordingly, we can define

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<sup>2</sup> Fodor, Istvan, “Film dubbing : phonetic, semiotic, esthetic and psychological aspects”(Hamburg: Buske), 1976

<sup>3</sup> Snell-Hornby, Mary, “Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach”(John Benjamins Publishing), 1988

<sup>4</sup> Delabastita, Dirk, “Translation and Mass-Communication: Film- and T.V. Translation as Evidence of Cultural Dynamics”(Journal Babel), 1989

<sup>5</sup> Mason, Ian, “Speaker meaning and reader meaning: preserving coherence in Screen Translating”(Babel, Aberdeen University Press), 1989

<sup>6</sup> Gambier, Yves and Gottlieb, Henrik, “(Multi)Media Translation”(Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company), 2001

audiovisual translation as a process that deals with the reproduction of the auditory and visual forms from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL).

Yet, this definition does not help us see the vastness of the processes audiovisual translation deals with. Many scholars have dedicated their papers to thoroughly investigate and analyze this mode of translation, with distinct emphasis on its submodes, so in order to completely clarify the theory behind the practice, we must learn more about the audiovisual history.



## 1.2. The bond between the invention and practice – short history of cinematography and development of audiovisual translation

The translators have experienced the perks of audiovisual translation long before it became a theoretical research discipline in the field of translation studies. As a professional practice, audiovisual translation did exist since the beginning of the cinema, but it was in the early 1990s when it became the focus of objective and concrete scientific academic analysis.

The beginning of the 20th century marked the dawn of the new branch of translation - audiovisual translation. Shortly after the first motion picture films (early 1900s), which are commonly known as “silent films” due to their soundlessness, there was a need for a certain text that could either substitute the character dialogue or provide a background story for the narrative. This was done through the use of the so-called “intertitles” which is the term used to define textual cards inserted between the action pictures.

From a translator’s point of view, intertitles<sup>7</sup> (which were also called subtitles at the time) were quite simple in their nature, since they could easily be substituted with textual cards in the target language and thus, effortlessly incorporated in the moving pictures altogether. However, in the 1920s, “talkies” became the next big thing in the world of entertainment and a new challenge for the translators. Talkies are short movie productions that are also known as the “talking pictures”, which suggests that along with the moving pictures, they have a synchronized auditory component. This significant innovation in the world of cinematography brought substantial changes for the translators who were no longer employed to translate only particles (textual cards) of the film. Talkies required more than just mere substitution of an element; they required reproduction of the film as a whole.

In the 1930s, adjustments were inevitable part of a sound film/talkie which was to be seen in a country whose viewership was unfamiliar with the language it was originally filmed in. While the scenario and the set remained the same in the reproduction, the dialogues were spoken by the

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<sup>7</sup> Ivarsson, Jan, “Subtitling for the Media, A Handbook of an Art” (Stockholm, TransEdit), 1992

domestic actors in the mother tongue of the country the reproduction was done for. However hard it was to translate some culturally oriented dialogues, it was even harder to find strong and convincing characters that could deliver authentic depth of emotions on the set. The audience did not tolerate the scarcity of artistic interpretation, and sooner rather than later, the reproductions of talkies became widely unpopular. At the same time, they were very expensive, so once they became unappreciated, they came to be non-profitable as well, which meant that there was a demand for a new solution.

The solution came in two new post-production translation forms, namely, dubbing and subtitling. While the reproductions of talkies transform the “original” films completely, dubbing is a mode of translation that slightly modifies the visual part and completely customizes the audio material for the target audience. On the other hand, in the translation process of subtitling, both segments are left unaltered, and the original dynamics of the audiovisual material is preserved.

Even though both modes of translation are commonly used nowadays, I will go into greater details when it comes to subtitling since the theoretical background will contribute to profound understanding of the analysis of Croatian and Serbian subtitles in TV series *'Allo 'Allo!*

### 1.3. Subtitling

Subtitling is “[a] term used to refer to one of the two main methods of language transfer used in translating types of mass audio-visual communication such as film and television.”<sup>8</sup> It represents a mode of audiovisual translation that is manifested through the incorporation of particles of the written text called *subtitles* or *captions*. While dubbing/voice-over is usually done for those who are unfamiliar with the source language, the main goal of subtitling is not always translation. Subtitling can be done in the source language, as well as the target language, as long as the change of the mode is achieved and the audio material is transformed from a spoken to a written medium.

One of the interesting facts I have stumbled upon reading Baker’s Routledge Encyclopedia<sup>9</sup> is that dubbing altogether is up to 15 times more expensive in comparison to subtitling. I strongly believe that this number is even higher nowadays, since modern inventions changed the world of cinematography and made dubbing even more challenging with the use of new technologies. When it comes to the translation of the audiovisual material to the target language, more people opt for subtitling since it is “an inexpensive, quick, foreign-culture friendly and generally fairly politically correct mode of screen translation.”<sup>10</sup>

Luyken gives us a great insight into the most notable characteristics of subtitling by stating that subtitles are: “condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue and are almost always added to the screen image at a later date as a post-production activity.”<sup>11</sup> This definition gives us a condensed overview on what are subtitles, what are they used for, where are they positioned, and how are they produced.

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<sup>8</sup> Shuttleworth, Mark and Cowie, Moira, “Dictionary of Translation Studies” (Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, 2004), p. 61

<sup>9</sup> Baker, Mona, “Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies” (Routledge, London and New York, NY, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> O’Connell, Eithne, “Choices and Constraints in Screen Translation” In L. Bowker et. al.(eds.), Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007), p.67

<sup>11</sup> Luyken, Georg-Michael et al. “Overcoming language barriers in television : dubbing and subtitling for the European audience” (Manchester: European Institute for the Media, 1991), p. 31

The scholars generally classify subtitling using two parameters - linguistic and technical. The technical parameter determines the technologies which are used in the process of subtitling. Bartoll differentiates between two types of technical subtitles: the *open* and *closed* subtitles<sup>12</sup>. The burnt-on or open subtitles are subtitles which are non-optional, which means that they have already been integrated into the audiovisual material (etched with an acidic material or by a laser onto the moving pictures). These subtitles cannot be removed from the screen so the viewer is not given freedom to turn them off, as in the closed subtitles where a viewer can decide whether or not he wants to see them appear on the screen. The closed subtitles are also called optional since they are broadcasted separately and are encoded via transmission signal that allows the viewers to use them simultaneously with the audiovisual material.

On the other hand, the linguistic parameter closely inspects the language modifications done in subtitling. This parameter clarifies “the relationship that is established between source and target languages, whether this is the same or not.”<sup>13</sup> In 1997<sup>14</sup> and 2005<sup>15</sup> respectively, Gottlieb wrote about *interlingual* and *intra-lingual* subtitles or subtitling, and in 2001<sup>16</sup>, Díaz Cintas gave prominence to the above-mentioned forms, yet with a slight difference in the coining of the terms; in her book *La traducción audiovisual: el subtitulado*, she talks about *interlinguistic* and *intra-linguistic* subtitles.

Intra-lingual subtitling is a process which happens within a language. Díaz Cintas calls it *captioning*<sup>17</sup> since there is obviously no change of the language, but Gottlieb terms it as *vertical subtitling*<sup>18</sup>, obviously wanting to point out that there is no transfer of language, though there is a transfer of mode (from oral to written) since the main source - speech - is written down in its original language.

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<sup>12</sup> Bartoll, Eduard, “Parameters for the classification of subtitles” In Pilar Orero (ed.), *Topics in Audiovisual Translation* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 55-57

<sup>13</sup> Bartoll, Eduard, “Parameters for the classification of subtitles” In Pilar Orero (ed.), *Topics in Audiovisual Translation* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), p. 57

<sup>14</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitles, Translation & Idioms”, thesis. (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1997)

<sup>15</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitling” In Mona Baker (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2005), pp. 244-248

<sup>16</sup> Díaz-Cintas, Jorge, “La traducción audiovisual: el subtitulado” (Salamanca: Almar, 2001)

<sup>17</sup> Díaz-Cintas, Jorge, “Audiovisual translation in the Third Millennium” In G. Anderman & M. Rogers (eds.), *Translation Today: Trends and Perspectives*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2006), p. 199

<sup>18</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitling” In Mona Baker (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2005), p. 247

This type of subtitling is usually done for deaf or hard of hearing and language learners.

Intralingual subtitling has also become very noticeable in languages which have a wide range of dialects. With over more than fifty dialects, English and Chinese are perfect examples that can depict the reality of languages whose speakers are sometimes unable to understand their own language if it is spoken in a different dialect.

Interlingual subtitling, on the other hand, is the subtitling translation process that occurs between the two languages. Essentially, the similar process happens in the traditional written translation where the source language is transferred into the target language. However, interlingual subtitling has a twist - it represents a language transfer process (SL->TL) that is conditioned by its form - subtitles, suggesting the change of mode: from oral to written. While the traditional written translation does not change mode (written source language -> written target language), interlingual subtitling does (oral source language -> written target language). Gottlieb also uses terms *diagonal subtitling* or *oblique subtitling*<sup>19</sup> to denote the change made in both modes: from oral to written form, and from the source language to the target language.

Since this thesis analyzes Croatian and Serbian subtitles of the British TV series, it is safe to say that interlingual subtitling, along with its norms and restrictions, is its primary concern.

Given that “people generally speak much faster than they read, subtitling inevitably involves . . . technical constraints of shortage of screen space and lack of time.”<sup>20</sup> The time and space constraints are extremely relevant to this subtype of audiovisual translation which permits no more than 64 characters in a two-row subtitle that is displayed on the screen from 4 to 6 seconds. Such constraints imply changes which are inevitable between the two modes (verbal and written). Since subtitles should not exceed 12 characters per second<sup>21</sup>, original dialogue (in oral form) is often contracted in the written form (whether subtitles are in the source language or are translations of the SL audio material) to fit the reading pace of the viewer. Antonini states that

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<sup>19</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitles, Translation & Idioms”, thesis. (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1997), pp.71-72

<sup>20</sup> O’Connell, Eithne, “Choices and Constraints in Screen Translation” In L. Bowker et. al.(eds.), *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007), p.67

<sup>21</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitles and International Anglification” (*Nordic Journal of English Studies*, University of Gothenburg, 2002), p. 219

“the reduction of the utterances regarding the number of words they include varies between 40 to 75 per cent.”<sup>22</sup> This subtitling norm allows viewers to read the captions during the moving pictures without putting effort in the process of reading, sometimes barely even being aware of the reading process.

Translating foreign audiovisual material and adapting it for the audience in the form of subtitles suggests that “apart from being an excellent translator of foreign-language lines, a good subtitler needs the musical ears of an interpreter, the no-nonsense judgment of a news editor, and a designer's sense of esthetics, (in addition, as most subtitlers do the electronic time-cueing themselves) the subtitler must also have the steady hand of a surgeon and the timing of a percussionist.”<sup>23</sup>

With so many roles and technical constraints they need to take notice of, the translators use various strategies in the subtitling translation process. Some of the most commonly known are:

- Elimination – the process of cutting out elements from the transcription of the audio which do not distort or modify the meaning of original.
- Rendering – the process of dealing with dialects, taboo/bad language, or slang.
- Simplification – the process of promoting comfortable reading by fragmenting and simplifying the syntax of the original.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, most of the audiovisual materials that undergo the process of SL -> TL subtitling initially hold culturally oriented traits found in the source language. Considering my thesis is based on the topic of audiovisual translation of humor, which became one of the most challenging and thought-provoking types of the intercultural exchange through the process of subtitling, I will continue my research by going into the theory of translating humor.

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<sup>22</sup> Antonini, Rachele, (2005). “The perception of subtitled humour in Italy: An empirical study’, in Chiaro, D. (ed.), HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research, Special Issue Humor and Translation, Volume 18 (2), (Mouton De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2005), p. 213

<sup>23</sup> Gottlieb, Henrik, “Subtitles and International Anglification” (Nordic Journal of English Studies, University of Gothenburg, 2002) p. 222

<sup>24</sup> Antonini, Rachele, (2005). “The perception of subtitled humour in Italy: An empirical study’, in Chiaro, D. (ed.), HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research, Special Issue Humor and Translation, Volume 18 (2), (Mouton De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2005), pp. 213-214

## 2. Humor

Humor is a cultural and social phenomenon which can be traced in every language. It is considered to be universal since every single person in the world has experienced the perks of humor. However, humor is not always interculturally understood. If we overlook the first barrier, which is the instance of a different language, two different nations do not have to share the interest in the same type of humor. For all we know, they might not be able to understand it even if it is translated. When it comes to translating humor, the task of a translator is certainly not an easy one.

Humor is a huge part of our day-to-day life, our culture and our history, so over time we have learned what is tried to be achieved with a certain type of humor through various social situations we have been a part of. At the same time, not many of us have stopped and thought about how difficult it would be to translate some cultural and/or social pun into another language. From a translator's point of view, along with high proficiency in language, one must be acquainted with the social and cultural background of both nations in order to successfully translate humor from the source language to the target language. Study of language and study of humor are two fields one must excel in prior to the interpretation and audiovisual translation of humor.

Humor is an integral part of fields who are closely dealing with humans and their behavior. Psychology, sociology and linguistics are only some of many studies who recognized the importance of the concept that affects our mood, relieves us from stress, changes our state of mind, and finally, culminates in laughter.

If you ask a translator what was one of the hardest things he ever had to translate, you would probably get the same answer - cultural humor. Well, a translator would not use the instance "cultural humor" (unless he is in a circle of his fellow linguists), but rather "puns", "jokes" or "wordplays", and would probably continue informing you about clever ways which led him to a creation of a perfect and culturally adapted text.

The adaptations of verbal humor are extremely challenging, especially in the case of subtitling. Most people do not notice three forms they are exposed to while they are watching foreign audiovisual materials with captions. Two of the three forms are visual, while the third one is auditory. This suggests that while we are watching the moving pictures and on-screen captions, we are also hearing the voice track. One of the forms is unchangeable and that is the moving pictures. Most people's brains are limited to focus on the two out of three forms. It is possible to master the art of following all three forms at the same time, but with a certain time limit. The process of subtitling is thus not only requiring mentally, but also physically.

All these facts suggest that in the process of translating humor, dubbing has the upper hand in terms of freedom in adaptation. In dubbing, source/original audio track is substituted with the target/adapted one, which leaves no room for viewer's knowledge of a possible mistake a translator might have done in the translation process. Adapted humor in dubbed audiovisual material can only have two outcomes: laughter or absence of a single sound. Dubbing translator does not have to dwell on the successes or failures of his adaptations, while in subtitling a translator has to be precautionous since the viewer can hear the original audio track which leaves a chance for him comprehending the original piece.

In the process of dubbing, a translator does not need to dwell on the source verbal material and viewer's understanding of it, while the process of subtitling requires awareness of the cultural background of the viewer that may or may not be familiar with the culture of the audiovisual material he is watching. A visual media translator who is subtitling a certain material must be aware of both source and target culture, and a wide range of target viewers who vary in age, schooling, experiences, etc. This implies that translators can never assume - they must be certain of the choices they have made in the process of translation since "familiarity with a cultural code is prerequisite for the spontaneous mental restructuring of elements that result in amusement and laughter... Individuals are not conscious of this requirement, because they already possess the cultural knowledge to which they compare the humour-generating stimuli. An individual who is not a member of a specific culture and therefore has not internalised its behavioural patterns and value systems may not experience humour."<sup>25</sup> A translator must be extremely cautious when

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<sup>25</sup> Medhurst Andy, "A National Joke, Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identity" (Routledge, New York, 2007), p.12



handling and adapting the puns to the target language/culture. Audiovisual adaptation of contextual, culturally-oriented humor is much more than just a plain, straight-forward translation of words and sentences. Deep understanding and absolute familiarity with cultural and humor equivalents in both source language and target language is vital for any translator who wants to give it a shot at subtitling.

## 2.1. Humor theories and strategies

Even though practice most often does come before the theory, an aspired individual and even an experienced translator should be aware of the theoretical part that offers an insight on the most common translation procedures and strategies. Since this thesis is interested in two fields of study in particular (namely the field of translation studies and the field of humor studies), one must examine the sphere where the aforementioned fields overlap and collide, in order to create the ultimate theoretical background which will help us scrutinize the evaluation of the Croatian and Serbian subtitles in *'Allo 'Allo!*

In the context of audiovisual translation, humor has not been on the list of the most researched subtopics. I strongly believe that scholarly works on subtitling humor will share the same destiny as those on audiovisual translation who gradually went from neglected to prominent in the overall study of language. This subtopic of audiovisual translation is uniquely demanding since it "is not as straightforward as the translation of written, totally verbal word play, or even of the interpretation of an orally produced pun."<sup>26</sup>

Humor and its outcome - laughter - are codependent which means that one cannot happen without the other. Scholars made a distinction between types of humor by analyzing humorous acts/texts and closely observing audience's reaction to them. Salvatore Attardo, a linguist, professor and the editor-in-chief of *Humor, the journal for the International Society of Humor Research*, differentiates between two types of humor: *verbal* and *referential*. He states that "referential jokes are based exclusively on the meaning of the text and do not make any reference to the phonetic or syntactic realization of the lexical items which make up the joke. Verbal jokes, on the other hand, in addition to being based on the meaning of the elements of the text, make reference to the 'surface' realization of the text."<sup>27</sup> This suggests that referential jokes are based exclusively on the literal meaning of the text, whereas lexical items in verbal jokes have an upturn presented through their prevalent phonological ambiguity. If we put in the

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<sup>26</sup> Antonini, Rachele, (2005). "The perception of subtitled humour in Italy: An empirical study", in Chiaro, D. (ed.), HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research, Special Issue Humor and Translation, Volume 18 (2), (Mouton De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2005), p. 212

<sup>27</sup> Attardo, Salvatore, "Linguistic Theories of Humor" (Berlin, Mouton De Gruyter, 1994) p. 28

aforementioned relation of humor and its outcome, it can be interpreted as follows: if we laugh because the content of the pun is funny, we are surely laughing due to the use of referential humor; but if we laugh due to the witty use of words who have a similar pronunciation (yet different meaning), we are laughing because of the use of verbal humor.

The audiovisual piece can incorporate verbal/referential and visual humor. These two modes of humor can entice laughter both individually and combined. While the visual humor as seen in *Mr.Bean* is extremely demanding from the viewpoint of an actor, the verbal part of the audiovisual piece is unmistakably reserved for the translators. However, the translators cannot disregard the strong link between these two modes since their interaction and, lack thereof can result in the occurrence or absence of laughter.

If we want to analyze the subtitles of the TV series *Allo Allo!*, we must understand the link between the predominant use of verbal humor in SL and its TL adaptations into two Slavic languages. The adaptation can be considered successful only if one knows and understands what was being said in the first place (in the pun in the source language). This is why in 1991, Ruskin and Attardo introduced a theory on verbal humor named *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH) which was an extended version of Ruskin's *Semantic Script Theory of Humor* (SSTH) in which they have stated that verbal humor occurs when the audience is presented with the punchline, found in the latter script, which explains the meaning of the previous script. The understanding of the humorous scripts is successful if a viewer understands the use of language, the narrative strategies, the target, and the situation in a pun. The way our mind travels between the scripts and finally perceives the joke as a whole is linked by the logical mechanism. As a translator, one must be able to perceive all spheres of verbal humor and adapt them accordingly.

When it comes to the processes of adaptation, Eugene Nida is the first one to introduce the terms of *formal* and *dynamic equivalence* - the two most used practices in the process of delivering the message from the source language to the target language.

Formal equivalence is "a relationship which involves the purely "formal" replacement of one word or phrase in the SL by another in the TL...i.e. a procedure purposefully selected in order to

preserve a certain linguistic/rhetorical effect,”<sup>28</sup> while dynamic equivalence “is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship, that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message.”<sup>29</sup>

Formal equivalence is source-oriented, while dynamic equivalence turns its focus towards the target recipients and their understanding of the target language. The goal of dynamic equivalence is to transfer the meaning of the source text to the target text in a way that the message (which a target language reader has received) corresponds with the message the author of the source language sent.

Both forms of equivalence have their pros and cons, but “a recent summary opinion on translating by literary artists, publishers, educators, and professional translators indicates clearly that the present direction is toward increasing emphasis on dynamic equivalences.”<sup>30</sup>

One out of many translation techniques translators turn to are surely processes of *adequacy* and *acceptability*<sup>31</sup>. Díaz Cintas states that adequacy is a procedure in which the translated product complies with the values and terms found in the source product, whereas acceptability is seen as a procedure in which the translation encloses the linguistic and cultural values of the target language system. We can use translations of the Bible as perfect examples of the usage of these two principles in a written medium. The Bible is surely the most translated book in the history, and it is needless to say that its translations have changed over time. In the beginning, translators wanted to interpret what was being said in the most accurate way, putting aside the semantics and pragmatics, and thus depriving the readers of the meaning behind the words. Nowadays, such translations are seen as archaic and way too literal. New translations of the Bible are following the principle of acceptability and have put emphasis on the readers and the target culture, for the purpose of better understanding of the text.

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<sup>28</sup> Hatim, Basil, Munday Jeremy, “*Translation, An advanced resource book*” (Routledge, New York, 2004), pp. 40-42

<sup>29</sup> Venuti, Lawrence, “*The Translation Studies Reader*” (Routledge, London and New York, 2000), p. 129

<sup>30</sup> Venuti, Lawrence, “*The Translation Studies Reader*” (Routledge, London and New York, 2000), p. 130

<sup>31</sup> Díaz-Cintas, Jorge, “In search of a theoretical framework for the study of audiovisual translation” in *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*, edited by Orero Pilar (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing, 2004) p. 29

In terms of humor, acceptable is only something that the audience can understand, and if not, a translator misses the whole point of a pun by staying true to the source text and being “linguistically adequate”. Blindly following the adequacy technique, which is more source oriented, often means letting people get lost in the translation. In a restrictive medium such as subtitling, people sometimes do have to make certain sacrifices, especially when it comes to double entendre in English, which is commonly used to create humorous effect.

Be that as it may, in all processes of translating and adapting humor, the translators must be extremely careful that the subtitles in the target language echo the humor expressed in the source language. Consequently, translators opt for one or even several adaptive translation techniques.

In his works, Venuti accentuates the importance of two translation strategies, which he termed as *domestication* and *foreignization*. While the latter is explained as a process in which a translator decides to use the terminology of the source language in order to deliver the meaning found in the original material, the former is explained as a process in which a translator uses linguistic and cultural phenomena of the target language to convey the meaning of the source text. Depending on the context, the audience and overall understanding of the source culture, a translator can choose between these two strategies when it comes to translating humor.

Audiovisual translation of external culture-bound references (ECRs) is a very demanding task for translators since the audiovisual mode commonly accentuates the images over the language<sup>32</sup>. Along with domestication and foreignization, ECRs ask for other procedures which Pedersen<sup>33</sup> qualifies as follows: retention (a procedure in which the translator preserves the ECR in the target language), specification (a procedure in which the translator preserves the ECR but gives a thorough explanation in the TL), direct translation, generalization (a procedure that occurs once the translator uses the superordinate term in the TL), substitution (a procedure in which the SL term is replaced with the equal or similar meaning), and finally omission (a procedure which ignores the ECR altogether if it is not essential part of the narrative in any way). Besides culture-specific terminology as found in nouns (i.e. *čevapčići*) and ECRs in proverbs, language-play is

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Pedersen, Jan, “Subtitling Norms for Television: An Exploration Focusing on Extralinguistic Cultural References” (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), p.76

one of the most demanding challenges translators are faced with. Homonymy, homophony, polysemy, alliteration, rhymes, atypical pronunciation and various representations of accents are only few of many possible choices the authors of the SL text use to create a humorous effect in the audiovisual material.

English language is one of the “richest” languages when it comes to the wordplay. Its homophones are usually one of the go-to creators of humor instances. Slavic languages, on the other hand, do not rely on wordplay in creation of the puns since its words are pronounced as they are spelt, (and even those who are spelt the same are highly accentuated which leaves no room for confusion - gore gore gore gore - gore brda jače plamte).

Among many SL phonological and morphological initiators of humor, there is one that is highly demanding when it comes to translation - accent. In the TV series *'Allo 'Allo!*, accent is one of the most important devices actors use in order to achieve the humorous effect. But what is so funny about the accent? Every single person has an accent, since it is a mere representation of the speech patterns which are characteristic among a certain social or regional sphere.

The humorous side of the accent can be traced in its stereotypical nature - or to put it more clearly - people usually associate accents to certain groups and connect them with the general traits of their community. Since the storyline of a British sitcom *'Allo 'Allo!* follows the life of French, Germans, and British in the small French city during the World War II, a prominent contrast in the verbal part was inevitable and expected. It was marvelously achieved with the employment of peculiar English accents of French and German which represented stereotypical foreign (mis)pronunciations of English language.

### 3. Analysis

The most popular TV series in the Balkans in the 1990s were Mexican soap operas and English sitcoms. Intense emotion and drama was reserved for the viewers of the Mexican TV series, while the audience of the English TV series enjoyed both visual and verbal humor.

The interest in the British televised shows continues to be high up to this day, and there is hardly a person older than eighteen who does not know a catchphrase from his beloved series. *Only Fools and Horses*, *Black Adder* and *'Allo 'Allo!* are the most popular British shows aired in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. While in former Yugoslavia the source materials were translated into Serbo-Croatian, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia do it for their own audiences nowadays.

Even though they are very similar in their nature, Slavic languages have their differences when it comes to perceiving and, consequently, adapting humor. For the purpose of this paper, the only subtitles available were those published by the DVD publisher *Blitz Film & Video Distribution*, with both Serbian and Croatian subtitles. The analysis will show if anything from the source language got “lost” in one or both adaptations, and accordingly, if the humorous effect has been preserved in the processes of audiovisual translation.

As we have previously stated, this was not an easy task for the translators since there is a certain spatial and temporal constraint in subtitling that limits translator's wit in the process of translation. Cultural diversity in the source language has been presented through the usage of numerous homophones, homonyms and language-play. In Croatian and Serbian language, the occurrence of homonymy and homophony for the sake of humor is very rare. This is why the translators had to turn to the more phonological-morphological solutions when adapting source language to Croatian and Serbian subtitles.

The storyline of *'Allo 'Allo!* follows the everyday life in the small town of Nouvion in Nazi-occupied France during World War II. René Artois is the owner of the local café, and the main character whose daily life gives us an insight into the complexity of Frenchman's love life and

absurdities of the war. As a Frenchman, he has been given a task by the French Resistance to hide two British airmen in his house and communicate with London via radio transmitter hidden under his mother-in-law's bed. At the same time, René's customers are German generals who want to hide various artifacts from their superiors in order to keep them for themselves and sell them after the war. René's cellar in the café serves as a perfect hiding spot for the artifacts, so in order to survive, he is in cahoots with Germans as well. While married to Edith, he has many mistresses which he (often) successfully hides from the eyes of the public and his wife. All these situations seem to intertwine as the time passes which makes his life very hectic and (from our perspective) hilarious.

Even though the storyline follows the life of a Frenchman René in a French city, he, as well as other characters who are German or Italian, speaks English. French, German and Italian stereotypical accents of English help us spot the ethnic differences between the characters. On the other hand, British airmen and Michelle use posh English which again, in a rather theatrical manner, employs the humorous effect since posh English is used only by the English upper-class, and now can be found in a small French city, uttered by a French girl (who says for herself that she "has a little English") and two British air force soldiers. However, it has not been clear what "language" is used in the interaction happening between the Germans and French who seem to talk in the same manner between themselves and in the presence of each other. Since they comprehend each other, we can assume that Germans are speaking French with a German accent.

The multicultural and multilingual environment has been successfully presented in the ST, and its authors, as Delabastita states: "craftily create a multilingual illusion of a multilingual reality" in a "monolingual sitcom for a monolingual audience."<sup>34</sup>

I want to underline that the analysis of Croatian and Serbian subtitles in TV series *'Allo 'Allo!* does not wish to characterize the translated material as "good" or "bad", but rather as successful or unsuccessful in terms of preserving the humorous effect.

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<sup>34</sup> Delabastita Dirk, "Language, Comedy and Translation in the BBC Sitcom 'Allo 'Allo'" in Delia Chiaro "Translation, Humour and the Media. Translation and Humour Volume 2 (London, Continuum, 2010), p. 206



## S1E00 - The British Are Coming [Pilot Episode]

Yvette informs René that some unknown people are requiring his presence in the back room. René enters the room and meets Michelle from the French Resistance who tells him a short story about the destiny of the previous owner of the Resistance's safe house, and notifies him that his café has been chosen to be the new safe house of the Resistance and that he is to hide the two British airmen on his premises. However, René does not want to be the "new hero of the Resistance".

### Source text:

Michelle: Your café is to be the next safe house.

René: Ahh... Oh, well, uh... If you do not mind my saying, it is not a very good choice. No, this house is most terribly unsafe. It is crawling with Germans.

Michelle: But you are on very good terms with them.

René: Well, yes - and again, no! Let us say we get on. We have to, do we not? I mean, just because they are the enemy, does not mean you can be rude to people, not in my business.

### Croatian subtitles:

Michelle: Vaš kafić je nova sigurna kuća.

René: Ako smijem reći, ovo vam nije dobar izbor. Ova kuća je sasvim nesigurna. Puna je Nijemaca.

Michelle: Dobri ste s njima.

René: Jesam, ali i nisam. Gura se. U ovom poslu čovjek mora biti pristojan.

### Serbian subtitles:

Michelle: Vaš kafić je nova sigurna kuća.

René: Ako mogu da primetim, ovo vam nije dobar izbor. Ova kuća je potpuno nesigurna. Puna je Nemaca.

Michelle: Dobri ste s njima.

René: Jesam, ali i nisam. Gura se. U ovom poslu, čovek mora da bude pristojan.

Both adaptations have successfully captured the meaning of the source text. The obvious difference between the two adaptations can be noticed in René's first utterance. "If you do not mind my saying" is adapted as "Ako smijem reći" to Croatian, while the Serbian subtitler opted for "Ako mogu da primetim". While the Croatian translator followed the form and preserved the meaning of the source text, the Serbian translator opted for the process of domestication by putting emphasis on the meaning of the phrase in the target language. Furthermore, if we compare the length of the source text with its adaptations to both Croatian and Serbian language, the first thing we notice is the obvious omission which occurs in the last part of the René's monologue. As I have previously mentioned, subtitling is a restrictive medium that has time and space limitations. One of the strategies a subtitling translator most often turns to is omission. In this example, the translator decides to omit the part of René's statement, namely - "I mean, just because they are the enemy," due to the fact that both him and Michelle referred to Germans in the previous part of the dialogue. René continues and says "does not mean you can be rude to people, not in my business," and its adaptation in Croatian is "U ovom poslu čovjek mora biti pristojan." If we inspect Serbian translation "U ovom poslu čovjek mora da bude pristojan" of the source dialogue, we can observe that there is no loss of information between the two adaptations.

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René decides to invite his wife and two waitresses into the back room so they can meet Michelle. He stumbles upon Maria, one of the waitresses with whom he is intimately involved, and says:

Source text:

René: I want you in the back room.

Maria: Monsieur Rene, what about your wife?

René: This is a matter of utmost urgency.

Maria: But with you, it is always a matter of utmost urgency.

René: We shall be doing this for France!

Maria: No, you are the one who does it for France, I am just a waitress.

René: Do as you are told! Yvette, Edith, in the back room.

[They enter the back room.]

René: Michelle, this is my wife, Edith, I have told her everything.

Michelle: Will she talk?

René: Incessantly. But, uh... Not about anything important.

Croatian subtitles:

René: Smjesta u sobicu.

Maria: G. René, a vaša žena?

René: Ovo je veoma važno.

Maria: Kod vas je uvijek sve važno.

René: Ovo je za Francusku.

Maria: Vi to radite za Francusku. Ja sam konobarica.

René: Poslušaj me! Yvette, Edith. U sobicu. Moja žena Edith. Sve zna.

Michelle: Hoće li pričati?

René: Neumorno. Ali o nebitnim stvarima.

Serbian subtitles:

René: Smesta u sobicu.

Maria: G. René, a vaša žena?

René: Ovo je veoma važno.

Maria: Kod vas je uvek sve važno.

René: Radimo ovo za Francusku.

Maria: Vi to radite za Francusku. Ja sam samo konobarica.

René: Poslušaj me! Ivet, Idit. U sobicu. Moja žena Idit. Sve zna.

Michelle: Hoće li da izbrblja?

René: Neumorno. Ali o nebitnim stvarima.

While the double entendre has not been as straightforward in the Croatian adaptation “Ovo je za Francusku” of the source text “We shall be doing this for France”, the Serbian translator decided to adapt it as “Radimo ovo za Francusku”. *Ovo* is a neuter demonstrative pronoun that suggests

indefinite activity in this case. The Serbian adaptation “Radimo ovo za Francusku” uses the verb in the first person plural, *(mi) radimo*, to imply the double entendre. The first meaning is the obvious one – René wants to introduce them to Michelle in the back room and inform them about their obligations towards the Resistance and France; and the second one – he wants to invite Maria to join him in the back room in order to share intimate moments with her. Croatian subtitle is less successful in capturing and adapting this humorous moment. Additionally, when Michelle asks René if his wife will keep her mouth shut (about the Resistance and their plans), she uses the phrase: “Will she talk,” and René replies “Incessantly”. Croatian adaptation of Michelle’s utterance is “Hoće li pričati” while the Serbian is “Hoće li da izbrblja”, and both adaptations have opted for the same translation of René’s utterance - “Neumorno”. I believe that the latter adaptation of Michelle’s question is not in complete coherence with the phrase which follows it since one cannot “izbrbljati neumorno”. A person can *brbljati* or *pričati neumorno*, but you can *izbrbljati* something from time to time, not incessantly. This suggests that the utterances in the translation process cannot be perceived as individual particles that can stand alone. If the language is not interconnected during the dialogue, its meaning can never be successfully depicted.

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René decides to show Michelle the room in which he hid the radio transmitter. They go to the attic but his mother-in-law does not wish to have any company.

Source text:

René: It is the Resistance!

Mother-in-law: I do not need any assistance.

Croatian subtitles:

René: To je Pokret.

Mother-in-law: Ne treba me okretati.

Serbian subtitles:

René: To je Pokret.

Mother-in-law: Ne treba niko da me okreće.

These adaptations are perfect examples of the humorous use of word-play and rhyme in subtitling. René's mother-in-law Madame Fanny La Fan has a hearing impairment and uses a hearing aid. However, even with the use of the hearing aid, she is unable to decipher the utterances and throughout the series, her misunderstandings have enticed laughter. In this example, the translator decided to preserve the *-sistance* of "Resistance" and "assistance" in Croatian by adapting it into "Pokret" and "okretati", and "Pokret" and "okreće" into Serbian. The Croatian adaptation seems to be more successful since the TL base form *-okret* (Pokret, okretati) is similar to the SL base form *-sistance* (Resistance, assistance) in its form.

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The British airmen have caught René by surprise by coming two days too soon. Michelle tells him to "hide" them under the noses of Germans – in the café.

Source text:

René: Maria, these are two British airmen, I want you to take care of them.

Maria: Both of them?

René: Yes, of course both of them.

Maria: At the same time? But my room is so small!

René: Find them a table!

Croatian subtitles:

René: Maria, ovo su britanski piloti. Pobrini se za njih.

Maria: Obojicu?!

René: Naravno.

Maria: Istovremeno?! Soba mi je mala.

René: Pronađi im stol.

Serbian subtitles:

René: Marija, ovo su britanski piloti. Pobrini se za njih.

Maria: Obojicu?

René: Naravno.

Maria: U isto vreme? Imam malu sobu.

René: Pronađi im sto!

The double entendre of the phrase “I want you to take care of them” in the source text has been perfectly adapted into both Croatian and Serbian subtitles. Since René’s waitresses have been the ladies of the night in order to obtain goods from Germans, Maria thought that René wanted her to show two British airmen a good time. In both Croatian and Serbian it is translated as “Pobrini se za njih” which has the same dual meaning as the utterance in the source language.

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S1E01 – The Fallen Madonna

From time to time, the mother-in-law does hear the whole sentences correctly, but they are always out of the context, which again entices laughter.

Source text:

Mother-in-law: Oh my daughter, heaven be praised. A grandchild at last.

René: You old fool! I have not put her in the family way.

Mother-in-law: Then who has?

Edith: We are just looking it up in the book.

Mother-in-law: So many strangers, have you no shame?

Croatian subtitles:

Mother-in-law: Kćeri moja, hvala nebesima! Napokon unuče!

René: Stara budalo, nisam joj ništa napravio!

Mother-in-law: Tko onda jest?

Edith: Samo provjeravamo u knjizi!

Mother-in-law: Toliko ih je? Stidi se!

Serbian subtitles:

Mother-in-law: Ćerko moja, hvala nebesima! Napokon unuče!

René: Stara budalo, nisam joj ništa napravio!

Mother-in-law: Ko je onda?

Edith: Proveravamo u knjizi.

Mother-in-law: Toliko ih je? Stidi se!

This dialogue occurs in the midst of the radio call with England. While René and Yvette are going through the code book in search for the phrase “The baby will arrive a week early”, Edith’s mother overhears it and jumps to the conclusion that her daughter is pregnant. After René tells her that he has not done anything to her daughter, she poses a question but gets an unlikely answer that suggests her daughter’s promiscuity. The humorous effect in this scene was delivered through Edith’s reply to her mother (after the mother had asked her whose baby it was) “We are checking the book!” which is translated into “Samo provjeravamo u knjizi!” to both Slavic languages. The *book/knjiga* they are referring to is the code book, but her mother gets the notion that her daughter has been taking notes of how many lovers she has had and is now checking to see who is the father of her child.

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### S3E01 - The Nicked Knockwurst

The scene occurs in the bathroom where René is having a bath. His mother-in-law and her lover, Monsieur LeClerc, are interrupting him by storming into the bathroom since there is no lock on the door. He sends them both out, but then hears a third knock on the door.

#### Source text:

René: What is it?

Yvette: It is I, Yvette. Are you ready for two big jugs?

René: Yes, come in.

[Yvette comes into the bathroom, carrying two jugs of hot water.]

Yvette: Shall I let you have it?

René: By my feet, [yes].

Yvette: The old boiler is in a terrible state.

René: I do not know why I married her in the first place.

#### Croatian subtitles:

René: Tko je?

Yvette: Yvette. Jesi li spreman za dva velika vrča?

René: Jesam! Uđi!

Yvette: Hoćeš ih?

René: Po nogama.

Yvette: Stara je kanta u komi!

René: Ne znam zašto sam se uopće njome oženio.

#### Serbian translation:

René: Šta je bilo?

Yvette: To sam ja, Yvette. Mogu dva velika krčaga?

René: Da! Uđi!

Yvette: Da ti dam?

René: Kod nogu.



Yvette: Stari bojler je u užasnom stanju.

René: Ne znam zašto sam se uopšte ženio njom.

As most words in the English language, noun *jugs* also has several meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Noun *jug* is most prominently used to describe “a cylindrical container with a handle and a lip, used for holding and pouring liquids,” as defined in the Oxford Dictionaries. However, in the English slang, *jugs* (plural form) can be understood as “a woman’s breasts”. Therefore, knowing the background story and the (intimate) relationship between René and Yvette, the author has used vulgar slang and the double entendre in the source language to entice humorous effect. Namely, jugs are translated as “vrčevi” in Croatian subtitles and as “krčagi” in Serbian subtitles, nouns which do not have any other meaning than a container in which you place a liquid/beverage. Between the two meanings, translators chose to translate the former. If they were to use the latter (vulgar slang) meaning of the word *jugs* and translated it as *grudi*, the rest of the conversation would not have any sense (eg. “Shall I let you have it?; “By my feet, yes.”). Also, it would not have anything to do with the visual part of the material in which we see Yvette carrying two containers of hot water. Furthermore, the translator continues and adapts original utterance “Do you want them” as “Hoćeš ih” into Croatian. However, since the humor in the target language was not achieved in the sentence before it (with the double entendre of *jugs* in the target language), *them/ih* cannot be easily understood in the target language and a viewer will most certainly not recognize the humor in the referred statement. On the other hand, Serbian translator decided to translate it as “Da ti dam” which has the same dual meaning as found in the source language and fits perfectly into the whole dialogue. After Yvette says *hoćeš ih/da ti dam*, René replies “Yes, by my feet” which is adapted into Croatian and Serbian as *po nogama/kod nogu*. This suggests that the latter adaptation, namely that into the Serbian language, has been more successful since the dialogue “Hoćeš ih?; Po nogama” does not make any sense whatsoever. The double entendre can be traced in the same dialogue with the English noun *boiler* which can be defined as “a fuel-burning apparatus or container for heating water” and informally as “an unattractive or unpleasant woman” in the English language. In the dialogue, Yvette and René are obviously referring to his wife Edith but, in the Croatian/Serbian language it is translated into *kanta/bojler* meaning *bucket/boiler*, which are nouns which have no dual meaning in the target language.

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## S5E12 - Parade of Prams

After General von Klinkerhoffen has threatened to send Lieutenant Gruber and Colonel von Strohm to the Russian front, they visit René to come up with a plan.

### Source text:

Captain Bertorelli: This a terrible news. You tell that General Klinkerhoffen from me, if he do this to my friends, we, the Italian army, we not invade England.

### Croatian subtitles:

Captain Bertorelli: Strašno! Ako to učinila, mi, Talijani, ne išla u invaziju.

### Serbian subtitles:

Captain Bertorelli: Strašno! Ako to uradila, mi, Italijani, ne išla u invaziju.

Captain Bertorelli is an Italian officer that has been appointed to Colonel von Strohm. His accent is a representation of the stereotypical English accent Italians have. Most commonly he mixes up genders when speaking in English, and does not follow the rules of syntax. Even though the foreign accent and mispronunciation of words are Captain Bertorelli's trademark in the source language, both Croatian and Serbian subtitlers have decided to achieve humorous effect by using grammar incorrectly in the adaptation of the original. In this particular case, "You tell that General Klinkerhoffen from me" is adapted into Croatian subtitles as "Ako to učinila" and into Serbian subtitles as "Ako to uradila". Apart from the obvious omission that has taken place in the process of adaptation, we can observe that Captain Bertorelli is using feminine gender – *učinila/uradila; išla/išla* – in cases when the original used "he" – a masculine personal pronoun (third person singular) and "we" – a neuter personal pronoun (first person plural).

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S5E13 - The Bank Job

One of the most famous catchphrases in *'Allo 'Allo!* is the greeting phrase of an Englishman pretending to be a French officer. Even though *moaning* has an erotic allusion, the translators decided to opt for a neutral form by mistyping *dobro jutro* in both Croatian and Serbian language.

Source text:

Officer Crabtree: Good moaning.

Croatian and Serbian subtitles:

Officer Crabtree: Dobar jutar.

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After entering the café, Officer tells Edith and Yvette that René has been captured by the Communist Resistance. All of a sudden, Michelle from the French Resistance appears from the back room to inform Edith about the same matter.

Source text:

Michelle: René has been captured!

Edith: Yes, we just hid the nose.

Yvette: She means heard the news.

Croatian subtitles:

Michelle: René je uhvaćen!

Edith: Primile smo nos.

Yvette: Primile smo novost.

Serbian subtitles:

Michelle: René je uhvaćen!

Edith: Čule smo nos.

Yvette: Čule smo vest.

After being engaged in a dialogue with Officer Crabtree, Edith starts speaking bad French and Yvette needs to translate it for Michelle who is unaware of the meaning of Edith's utterance. The translator opted for "novost" instead of "vijest" in Croatian, preserving the nasal form of the source text in the back translation. A difference can be spotted in the length of the word in the SL and TL (SL: nose, news; TL: nos, novost), but the meaning was preserved along with the flow of the conversation. The Serbian adaptation of the word "news" as "vest" is not as suitable for these intertwined utterances.

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Since the girls from the Communist Resistance have held Mimi, Colonel and Lieutenant as captives, René has decided to rob the bank and pay the ransom to set them free. He is doing that because Mimi, one of the servant girls, has the original paintings on her person which René intends to sell after the war. It is night time and the group is trying to get a hold of money. Important note: Since Officer Crabtree's utterances and word-plays cannot be easily understood if they are not an integral part of the original audiovisual material, I have decided to write down what he intended to say in the brackets.

Source text:

Officer Crabtree: Good moaning. Do I take it you are ribbing the bonk? [Good morning. Do I take it you are robbing the bank?]

René: Yes, we are ribbing the bonk. [Yes, we are robbing the bank.]

Officer Crabtree: But that is against the loo. It is licky for you that I am on your sawed. [But that is against the law. It is lucky for you that I am on your side.]

Croatian subtitles:

Officer Crabtree: Dobar jutar. Pljuckate barku? [Dobro jutro. Pljačkate banku?]

René: Da, pljuckamo barku. [Da, pljačkamo banku.]

Officer Crabtree: Ali to je protiv zahoda. Dobro da sam vašoj stranki. [Ali to je protiv zakona. Dobro da sam na vašoj strani.]

Serbian subtitles:

Officer Crabtree: Dobar jutar. Pljuckate barku? [Dobro jutro. Pljačkate banku?]

René: Da, pljuckamo barku. [Da, pljačkamo banku.]

Officer Crabtree: Ali to je protiv zahoda. Dobro da sam na vašoj stranki. [Ali to je protiv zakona. Dobro da sam na vašoj strani.]

The humorous effect has been achieved at the very beginning of the dialogue when Crabtree says “Good moaning” in the middle of the night. In the phrase “Pljuckate barku” in Croatian and Serbian language, translators wanted to achieve humor by staying true to the notion in which humor was delivered in the source text. They decided to follow the form and tried to adapt the SL verbal humor into the target language dialogue.

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Michelle and Crabtree are waiting outside and keeping watch, but after René and the group are not to be heard or seen in a while, the two start discussing:

Source text:

Michelle: They are taking a long time.

Officer Crabtree: Do you think we should have a poke? [Do you think we should have a peak?]

Michelle: A poke?

Officer Crabtree: A poke to see what is happening. [A peak to see what is happening.]

Croatian subtitles:

Michelle: Ovo predugo traje.

Officer Crabtree: Da bacimo uho? [Da bacimo pogled?]

Michelle: Uho?

Officer Crabtree: Da vidimo šta rame. [Da vidimo šta rade.]

Serbian subtitles:

Michelle: Ovo traje predugo.

Officer Crabtree: Da bacimo uvo?

Michelle: Uvo?

Officer Crabtree: Da vidimo šta rude.

This dialogue is a perfect representation of the target-oriented translation as found in dynamic equivalence translation strategies. *Baciti oko/pogled* is a phrase in Croatian and Serbian which stands for “take a look”, and the translators opted for *uho/uvo - ear* to preserve the humorous effect of the original text in which *peak* is substituted with *poke* to denote Officer Crabtree’s bad French. Since *oko and uho* are both human organs, we can say that the translators have successfully adapted the original text to its target language by prioritizing the meaning over form, and expressing the funniness of bad French with the usage of wrong “organ” in the target language.

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S5E14 - Communists in the Cupboard

After robbing the bank and obtaining the money for the release of the prisoners of the Communist Resistance, everything seems to be back to normal. However, not for long. A new day has come and Officer Crabtree is entering the café to tell the unexpected news regarding the last night.

Source text:

Officer Crabtree: Good morning. I have bad news. When you robbed the bank, there was a witness. [Good morning. I have bad news. When you robbed the bank, there was a witness.]

Yvette: A witness!

Officer Crabtree: He has drawn pictures of the suspects. [He has drawn pictures of the suspects.]

René: The suspects?

Officer Crabtree: Yes, you are the suspects.

Yvette: Suspects!

René [to Michelle]: Is there not a language school, to which you can send this man?

Officer Crabtree: Nobody has seen them because I have not yet pinned them on the board.

[Nobody has seen them because I have not yet pinned them on the board.]

René: The board?

Officer Crabtree: The board outside the police station. [The board outside the police station.]

Croatian subtitles:

Officer Crabtree: Dobar jutro. Imam loš nos. Kad ste *opljućali* baku, bio je jedan očekivač.

[Dobro jutro. Imam lošu vijest. Kada ste opljačkali banku, bio je jedan očevidac.]

Yvette: Očevidac.

Officer Crabtree: Naribao je slike lopoča. [Naslikao je slike lopova.]

René: Lopoča?

Officer Crabtree: Vi ste lopoči. [Vi ste lopovi.]

Yvette: Lopova!

René [to Michelle]: Zar ga ne možete poslati na nekakav tečaj?

Officer Crabtree: Nitko ih još nije vodio jer ih nisam obavio. [Nitko ih još nije vidio jer ih nisam objavio.]

René: Obavio?

Officer Crabtree: Na plohi pred policijom. [Na ploči pred policijom.]

Serbian translation:

Officer Crabtree: Dobar jutar. Imam loš nos. Kad ste opljuckali baku, bio je jedan očekivač.

Yvette: Očevidad.

Officer Crabtree: Naribao je slike lopoča.

René: Lopoča?

Officer Crabtree: Vi ste lopoči.

Yvette: Lopova!

René [to Michelle]: Zar ne možete da ga pošaljete na neki kurs?

Officer Crabtree: Niko ih još nije vodio jer ih nisam obavio.

René: Obavio?

Officer Crabtree: Na tuvli pred polucijom. [Na tabli pred policijom.]

If a translator comes across the same words and/or phrases in a written medium of the source text, he is obliged to keep the same translation of the noun/phrase throughout the target text, especially in the case of formal scriptures and international documents. In subtitling, one can have the freedom to adapt the translation as he wishes, as long as the message and the tone in the target text are preserved. Crabtree uses the same phrases in the sentences in S5E13 and S5E14, however, their adaptations are quite different. While in S5E13 a Croatian translator opts for *novosti*, *news* in S5E14 is translated as *nos* (yet never as *vijesti*). The possible reason behind this decision can be traced in the nasal phoneme that can be heard on the original audio track. Being aware of the audible part of the scene, the translator may have decided to stay true to the original expression in the source text by using *novosti* and *nos* instead of *vijesti*. At the same time, Serbian translator, who translated *news* as *vest* in S513, adapts noun *news* to *nos* in S5E14. In S5E13 Crabtree's *ribbing the bonk* is translated as *pljuckate barku*, while in S5E13 it is adapted as *opljucali baku* into Croatian and as *opljuckali baku* into Serbian. There is a possibility that the Croatian adaptation has a typo since *opljuckali baku* is more similar to the phrase *opljačkali banku*. Both phrases and individual verbs *opljucali* and *opljuckali* do not have any meaning in Slavic languages. Furthermore, *suspects* is not adapted into *osumnjičenici* but rather into *lopovi*, and in bad French *lopoči*. *Language school* is adapted to "tečaj" in Croatian, and to "kurs" in Serbian language, which are both possible translations of the original English noun. Is



the Croatian adaptation more successful than the Serbian? No. Both adaptations are successful in their languages respectively.

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Later on, Colonel, Lieutenant and Captain are in the café. The Captain Bertorelli fancies Madame Edith and courts her.

Source text:

Captain Bertorelli: Ah, the beautiful lady. I kiss-a your hand-a.

Translated text:

Captain Bertorelli: Prekrasno dama. Ljubi ruka.

Back translation:

Captain Bertorelli: Prelepa dama. Ljubim ruka.

In Croatian adaptation of the source text, Captain Bertorelli's utterances are marked with the usage of the wrong case (*prekrasno* is neuter gender while *dama* is feminine gender noun). This is done to mimic the humor enticed by typical Italian mispronunciation of foreign words that do not end in vowel (ie. kiss-a) which can be traced in the source text. The omission of personal pronouns, along with the auxiliary verb "to be" in the target language, has marked the Serbian adaptation.

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## S5E15 - Forged Francs and Fishsellers

The money that René and his group have stolen from the bank was Gestapo's money. Herr Flick decides to investigate and disguises himself into the fish seller, knowing that the money stolen from his bank account is forged. Crabtree approaches his stand on the market place:

### Source text:

Officer Crabtree: Your fosh is very pingy. [Your fish is very stinky.]

Herr Flick: Go away.

Officer Crabtree: You cannot spoke like thos to an ifficer of the loo. Where is your strait treeders loosence? [You cannot speak like this to an officer of the law. Where is your straight trader's licence?]

[Herr Flick shows him his ID card.]

Oh, Gestoopo. I will have a pound of wonkles. [I will have a pound of winkles.]

Herr Flick: What are wonkles?

Officer Crabtree: These are wonkles.

Herr Flick: Winkles. What part of France do you come from?

Officer Crabtree: I am half Itoolian. [I am half Italian.]

Herr Flick: Itoolian?

Officer Crabtree: Yes, Itoolian.

Von Smallhausen: I think he means Italian.

Officer Crabtree: I was brought up in Nipples. [I was brought up in Naples.]

Herr Flick: Nipples?

Officer Crabtree: Yes, you know the old soeing? See Nipples and do. [Yeah, you know the old saying? See Naples and die.]

### Croatian subtitles:

Officer Crabtree: Ruda vam smradi. [Riba vam smrdi.]

Herr Flick: Odlazi.

Officer Crabtree: Ne možeš tako s polujajcem. Gdje vam je dizala? Gestupo. Molim pola kilograma cunjki. [Ne možeš tako s policajcem. Gdje vam je dozvola? Gestapo. Molim pola kilograma kunjki.]

Herr Flick: Što su cunjki?

Officer Crabtree: Ovo su cunjki.

Herr Flick: Kunjki. Iz kojeg ste dijela Francuske?

Officer Crabtree: Napola sam Tuljan. [Napola sam Italijan.]

Herr Flick: Tuljan?

Officer Crabtree: Tuljan.

Von Smallhausen: Želi reći, Italijan.

Officer Crabtree: Odrastao sam u Na polju. [Odrastao sam u Napulju.]

Herr Flick: Napolju?

Officer Crabtree: Kako se kaže, idi Na polje i umri. [Kako se kaže, (v)idi Napulj i umri.]

Serbian translation:

Officer Crabtree: Ruba vam smradi.

Herr Flick: Odlazi.

Officer Crabtree: Ne možeš tako sa polujajcem. Gde vam je dozvola? Gestupo. Dajte mi pola kilograma paža. [Ne možeš tako s policajcem. Gdje vam je dozvola? Gestapo. Dajte mi pola kilograma puževa.]

Herr Flick: Šta je paž?

Officer Crabtree: Ovo je paž.

Herr Flick: Puž. Iz kog ste dela Francuske?

Officer Crabtree: Pola sam Ituljan.

Herr Flick: Ituljan?

Officer Crabtree: Ituljan.

Von Smallhausen: Hoće da kaže, Italijan.

Officer Crabtree: Odrastao sam u Nipulju.

Herr Flick: Nipulju?

Officer Crabtree: Kako se kaže, idi u Napulj i umri.

This dialogue contains many malapropisms (wrong usage of words that sound similar to one another; provoking humorous effect) in the source language. *Loosence* is a *licence* and *Nipples* is *Naples* in the English language. In this case, the translators had a demanding task in the translation process in which they needed to convey the source language meaning by interpreting its mispronunciations, and adapting them in a way that the Croatian/Serbian viewers can understand the utterances. They did it by translating *licence* as *dizala (dozvola)* into Croatian and as *dozvula* into Serbian language. *Nipples* became *Na Polju (Napulju)* in the Croatian adaptation, and *Nipulju* in Serbian. However, we can observe that the sexual reference from the source language (Nipples) was not preserved in the target languages (Na Polju/Nipulju). “See Nipples and do” is a phrase which requires viewer’s knowledge in terms of cultural and historical background. If we overlook the bad French Officer Crabtree uses, we can detect the famous phrase “See Naples and die” which translates into “Vidi Napulj i umri” in both Croatian and Serbian language. It is adapted as “idi Na Polje i umri” in Croatian and as “idi u Napulj i umri” in Serbian. Both translators have opted for the verb “idi” instead of “vidi” even though “see” from the original phrase was not altered in the Officer Crabtree’s French adaptation. While the Croatian language preserves the utterance “Na Polju” throughout the Officer Crabtree’s dialogue with Herr Flick, Serbian translator adapts it as “Nipulj” at first, and in the next sentence refers to it as “Napulj”. We can conclude that the profound knowledge in history and culture can entice laughter, since the SL meaning of the phrase does seem to be concealed in the Officer Crabtree’s “bad French”. However, both adaptations have preserved the humorous tone used in the source language.

## Conclusion

Due to the Croatian and Serbian language and their restrictions in adapting English blunders, as well as the restrictive mode the original text was adapted into (subtitles), the translators had a challenging task of preserving the source language form and meaning, while making sure that the source language mispronunciations and malapropisms were preserved in the target language.

Before doing the analysis, I have watched the show with the English subtitles. I have to admit that the adaptation of SL meaning to TL subtitles would be something I would opt for as a translator, since I have always thought that the equivalence should rarely be formal. However, I have learned that, when it comes to translating humor, one must find the perfect balance between the two and in *'Allo 'Allo!*, the translators achieved this. However, it must be noted that some instances required a solution that is closer to either SL form or SL meaning. In such cases, the translators often chose to preserve the form over meaning in the target language.

Was anything “lost in translation”? Yes, it surely was - at least for some viewers. Viewers who are not familiar with the English language and its accents, and those who have just recently started watching *'Allo 'Allo!*, and are unsure about the theme of show and its cultural and historical background might not understand the translation and therefore not be amused with the TL humor. This shows us that the viewer's background knowledge on topics presented in any audiovisual material is crucial. However, for a viewer who has a basic formal knowledge, the Croatian and Serbian adaptations as found in subtitles of TV series *'Allo 'Allo!* is most amusing since it clearly preserves the funniness of the show and its usage of verbal humor.

The popularity of the show in the Balkans region illustrates that the B/C/S audience has great interest in the British humor. A considerable number of *'Allo 'Allo!* reruns in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia shows that the source language humor has been successfully adapted into the subtitles of the target languages.

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