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# Linguistic Adaptations, Humour and Cultural Variations in Subtitling *Inglourious Basterds* (2009)

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## **Abstract**

Due to technological advancements that have increased the general availability of films, new digital platforms such as Netflix have emerged. Furthermore, the great dominance of the American film industry across the world —Spain included— has emphasised the importance of translation, giving a new boost to the area of study called audiovisual translation. This dissertation uses Jan Pedersen's translation strategies list (2005) in order to study the subtitles into Spanish from the English original version of the film *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) by Quentin Tarantino. This analysis seeks to understand whether these strategies have preserved the original meaning of the English version when translated into Spanish, focusing on even more difficult aspects when dealing with translation: humour and cultural references. The dissertation explores the different issues that arise when translating from a language into another, since cultures are different and they perceive a text in a different way. Since this film has already been studied by other scholars —such as Alejandra Sánchez Veiga, who studied the translation for the DVD version of the film—, this dissertation focuses on the subtitles of the version for Netflix, focusing on the strategies used for the translation process, but also presenting the differences and alternative translations of some of the examples, since some humorous and cultural references' translation proposed by Sánchez can be perceived as archaic. In order to demonstrate the issues and problems that audiovisual translation may create, evidence from the movie will be studied and analysed in detail. The analysis concludes with a reflection regarding which strategy used is more suitable in order to preserve the meaning of the source text when transferred into the target text.

**Key words:** Translation, Humour, Cultural reference, Metamessage, Subtitling.

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## Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the process of globalisation has accelerated in many fields, including certainly in culture. The impact of technological advancements, such as the Internet, is allowing people to access materials in other languages more easily. In the area of film, these changes have increased the number of citizens who watch movies in the original language with the help of some kind of translation. In other words, this means that more audiences are focusing on the transfer of meaning from the source text into the target text.

These changes have given a major boost to the discipline of audiovisual translation. According to Chiaro, “[a]udiovisual translation (AVT) is the term used to refer to the transfer from one language to another of the verbal components contained in audiovisual works and products. [...] As the word suggests, audiovisuals are made to be both heard (*audio*) and seen (*visual*) simultaneously but they are primarily meant to be seen.” (2012, 1). Interestingly, “[... d]espite being a professional practice that can be traced back to the very origins of cinema, [...] AVT has been a relatively unknown field of research until very recently. [...] Apart from growing as a professional activity, thanks primarily to the digital revolution, AVT has now become a resolute and prominent area of academic research.” (Díaz-Cintas 2009, 1). Subtitling and dubbing are essential within this field, but unlike dubbing, subtitling allows the audience to perceive if the message is successfully rendered in the target text (TT) from its source text (ST). In addition, AVT permits people to understand the values of a particular society but it also allows their transference from one culture to another. As a consequence, it leads to both beneficial and detrimental matters, such as the promulgation of stereotypes and false assumptions, like the Americans being direct and tactless or the Italians being obsessed with fashion.

Audiovisual translation is complex to analyse since it deals with audio and image. Thus, the issue of translating a cultural reference has been controversial and a much disputed subject within the field of translation, since they can appear as an image, and consequently, they are impossible to be translated. Hence, how is it possible to transfer the meaning of the original version and language into the translated version if cultural references and humourous dialogues are full of slang, taboo words and idioms? In order to successfully transfer the meaning and importance of elements such as humour and cultural references to the target text, different modifications are necessary so as to fulfil the audience’s needs.

In order to address these key issues, this dissertation will analyse the humourous and written cultural references from *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) by Quentin Tarantino, relying on Jan

Pedersen's translation strategies list (2005). Although the film focuses on a real historical period — the Nazi occupation of France—, it distorts historical truth, because the director is successful in portraying serious violent scenes impregnated with humour; at the same time, though, it emphasises stereotypes of American patriotism, since the military unit known as the Basterds, led by Aldo Raine, kill Nazis in order to end the Third Reich.

As it is observable, this film deals with several different cultures, such as the French, the German, the American, the Italian, the Jewish and the British culture. Consequently, different languages and cultural references, both visual and spoken, are presented and some of them are treated within the film. Regarding the methodology used, examples from the English audio have been provided and compared to the subtitled Spanish text, giving analytical insights on which translation strategies have been applied, supported by several experts' contributions within the field. Although the DVD film's version has already been inquired by other scholars, this dissertation presents the Netflix's one as an object of study, since they differ from one another. This written piece will start by presenting how humorous scenes, both explicit and implicit, have been transferred from English into Spanish. Moving forward, audible cultural references will be analysed from the ST into the TT. Finally, examples in which both cultural references and humour are present will be examined.

## **1. Humour**

Since the humorous perception varies from one person to another, it is more notorious between different cultures. During the process of translation, different issues arise towards the transference of humour from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) because opaque elements make the process difficult since some adaptations are needed in order to fulfil the intended message. Hence, the process of translation “[...] ha de dar prioridad al efecto que produce el chiste en el receptor (se ha de tomar la idea o la intención del mensaje humorístico original y adaptarlo a la cultura meta con el fin de provocar una respuesta equivalente en el nuevo lector/oyente).” (Mateo 1995, 13). In addition, the process of translating humour determines the subtitling process of an audiovisual product, especially in films that are loaded with cultural references, historical accounts and satirical elements such as the one studied in this dissertation, Quentin Tarantino's film *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). Inevitably, this creates difficulties during the process of subtitling and adapting all the elements mentioned above to the receiver culture. Moreover, “[...] humour

represents a challenging task for subtitlers, forcing them to activate creative solutions, which at times, in order to achieve the desired effect, are some way detached from the original.” (Díaz-Cintas in Longo 2009, 105). Humour transference responds to the internal challenges of audiovisual translation and hence to the particular needs of the target society. Bearing in mind the cultural differences and the cultural backgrounds that can be perceived by the audience on the same product, translators need to establish some adaptations of the original discourse so as to fulfil the needs of the receivers, causing consequent difficulties to a complex process which is the one of subtitling. Therefore, even though humour is a universal competence, it will be determined by the cultural background and the ideology present in each particular society, having different interpretations on the same message. These varying interpretations are determined by the two different ways in which humour is splitted: explicit and implicit humour.

### **1.1. Explicit humour**

Explicit humour and its direct viewer’s perception are determined by the image and the sound that accompany the film’s subtitling. Elements such as the voice intonation or the body language are evidence that indicate when a humourous statement is uttered. Thus, the context is necessary both to transfer and to understand the intended message since “[e]n el plano explícito del significado manejamos el contenido semántico de cualquier tipo de signo, condicionado por el sistema y por el contexto.” (Portillo 2013, 114). For as to successfully convey a humourous meaning, it is then necessary not only to take into account the typical instances of humour that are shared by the audience, but also other elements such as the context of the utterance and the language that has been particularly used. Hence, humour is not only attached to language itself but to other elements that conform the composition of the cultural product.

Explicit humourous utterances can break with the seriousness of the film’s context. Once that Von Hammersmark had been shot by a Nazi soldier, the Basterds take care of her. When the *frau* tells them that Hitler will assist in the premiere of Frederick Zoller’s film, Donny Donowitz, the Jewish Bear, expressed his surprise by saying:

“[f]uck a duck.”

“*Me cago en la leche.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 01:41:47).

According to Fernández, “[... i]n the case of Spanish and English, blasphemous words are also common to both languages, though in Spanish the number of sacrilegious terms is more

extensive, often preceded by the construction *me cago en*.” (2009, 211). Following Pedersen’s classification (2005, 6), the translator has opted for ‘substituting’ the SL expression with a common TL expression, since ‘fuck a duck’ and *me cago en la leche* are both popular expressions indicating frustration and discontent. As in Spanish there is no similar expression in terms of linguistics, the translator provided an accurate translation but has failed in maintaining the colour of the original expression. According to Ávila-Cabrera, it is also a case of ‘transposition’, since it “[...] is employed in cases where a cultural element is changed for another well known in the target culture for clarification purposes.” (2016, 214). A ‘direct translation’ (Pedersen 2005, 5) would be “*que le den a un pato*” and, although the humour is perceptible, it may have led to confusion to the target audience, because it is not used. Thus, this perspective’s change has been useful in order to maintain the intended message of the ST.

Tarantino’s capacity to distort real violent history and creating a fictional one full of humourous scenes is undoubtable. When Aldo’s soldiers and himself found the prison in which Hugo Stiglitz was in because of killing Nazis, Aldo the Apache, in name of all the Basterds, tells Hugo:

“[w]e just wanna say, we’re a big fan of your work. When it comes to killing Nazis, I think you show great talent, and I pride myself on having an eye for that kind of talent. But your status as a Nazi killer is still amateur. We all came here to see if you wanna go pro.”

*“Que sepas que admiramos tu trabajo. En lo de matar nazis, creo que tienes mucho talento. Y me siento orgulloso de saber detectar esa clase de talento. Pero como asesino de nazis, aún eres un aficionado. Venimos por si quieres profesionalizarte.”*

(Tarantino 2009, 00:29:50).

According to Nedergaard-Larsen, “[i]f the rendering of dialogue representing a particular culture-bound problem is successful, it may be because the subtitler —consciously or intuitively— has chosen a good strategy. Conversely, when faced with a rendering which does not seem optimal it is easier to find the [parameters] that should have been taken into account by the subtitler.” (1993, 224). The translator has opted for a direct translation (Pedersen 2005, 5) in order to maintain the intended message, but the English version has a humourous hidden message, also known as ‘metamessage’ —concept to which I will return later— that is lost in the Spanish version, since ‘wanna go pro’ reflects the informal language of Aldo, while *profesionalizarte* is accurate in terms of meaning but results very formal and the satire lacks. Thus, in order to maintain the strength and the humourous colour of the statement, an alternative translation would be “*para convertirte en el*



*puto amo*”, since both the intended message and the humorous colour are perceptible straightforwardly.

## 1.2. Implicit humour

Implicit humour is determined by the metamessage, the hidden intended meaning of the sentence. According to Katan, “[...] every message contains another message: the metamessage. The metamessage is located at a higher level and frames the message. The frame itself is an internal mental representation which can also contain an idealized example or prototype of what we should expect.” (1999, 36). Elements such as the intonation and the language itself, accompanied by the audience’s capability in decoding the humorous speech, play an essential role. As Portillo stated, “[...] gran parte del espectro del sentido otorgado por los hablantes a la proposición se sitúa en plano implícito. Bucear en el contenido implícito de una proposición significa abarcar toda la información que transmite el enunciado más allá de su contenido proposicional.” (2013, 114). Modes of expression such as irony, sarcasm and cynicism characterise this kind of humour, since they are linguistically conveying a message that, in reality, is totally opposed to the one that it is intended to be transferred. In other words, the audience does not have to rely only on the language used but on the expected hidden message of it, the metamessage. Additionally, when a SL reference does not have its equivalent within the TL, the translator needs to replace it for a more familiar one within the receiver audience or omit it, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

Irony may not be understood straightforwardly by the receiver of the message. In the film by Tarantino, irony is present when the Basterds succeeded in the ambush of some Nazi soldiers, such as Rachtman. In this particular scene, Aldo threatens Rachtman in order to tell them where the Nazi’s central spot is, and the German soldier refuses to uncover the rest. Thus, Aldo calls for the Jewish Bear, who hits his victims with a baseball bat, and tells him:

“[g]ot a German here wants to die for his country. Oblige him.”

“*Aquí hay un Alemán que quiere morir por su país. Hazle los honores.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 00:33:13).

As Mateo stated, “[n]o sólo es fundamental que un receptor capte los mensajes para la completa realización de la ironía, [...] sino que dicho receptor produce un efecto *feedback* sobre el ironista, de manera que éste modela su ironía según quién tenga al otro lado de la comunicación.” (1995, 56). According to Pedersen’s article (2005), the strategies used in order to transfer the SL meaning to the TL is substitution since ‘oblige him’ has been replaced by the

translator as *hazle los honores*, expecting the audience to perceive the ironic touch of the statement, meaning that Donowitz should proceed. Additionally, according to Mason (1994, 70), ‘modulation’ is also visible, since there is a “[...] *shift in the perspective of text users on the concept or concepts being activated.*” (italics in the original), because a direct translation of ‘oblige him’ would be “*obligale*” and, although the meaning would have been transferred successfully, the ST reference is almost obsolete. Consequently, the subtitler has also opted for updating it within the TT. Thus, a different SL perspective has been presented into the TL. By making this replacement, the Spanish version has a metamessage that attributes more humour if compared to the SL text, since in the SL it is more direct and violent and, consequently, less ironic.

The use of irony, when detected by the audience, helps to decode the metamessage of the sentence. Once that Aldo the Apache and his Jewish-American soldiers, as well as the German sergeant Hugo Stiglitz have retained some Nazi soldiers, in which among them was Werner Rachtman, Aldo breaks with the seriousness of the scene by saying:

“[w]ell, Werner, if you heard of us, you probably heard we ain’t in the prisoner-taking business. We’re in the killing Nazi business. And cousin, business is a booming.”

“*Werner, si nos conoces, ya sabrás que hacer prisioneros no es lo nuestro. Nos va lo de matar nazis y, hermano, no veas cómo está el negocio.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 00:30:27).

According to Kishor, “[a]uthors can use irony to make their audience stop and think about what has just been said, or to emphasize a central idea. The audience’s role in realizing the difference between what is said and what is normal or expected is essential to the successful use of irony.” (2012, 67). Hence, in this particular sequence of the film, Aldo is using irony while stating that their ‘business is a booming’ so as to give importance to the need of ending with the Third Reich by killing the Nazi soldiers. Focusing on the subtitling process of this particular scene, some elements need to be critically pointed out. Although “*primo*” means ‘cousin’ in Spanish, it has been translated as *hermano*, resulting in a transposed perspective change so as to use a common term in Spanish’s informal language. The humorous last sentence is reinforcing the idea of the Basterds being strong and cruel to the Nazis, directing the audience’s attention to the main idea of the discourse.

## 2. Cultural references

Cultural references are complex to translate due to the different cultural background of the target audience. Elements such as history, politics, values and beliefs consolidate and define the identity of each territory as well as each culture. Therefore, “[t]ranslators, and interpreters [...] need to be well versed in the customs, habits and traditions of the two cultures they are mediating between. [They] will also need solid background information [...] and [to be familiar with] contemporary social and political history. These form the backbone of a culture’s cognitive environment.” (Katan 1999, 10). Hence, different views of the same cultural product can be perceived depending on the audience’s cultural tradition. Consequently, “[...] what one must determine is the response of the receptor to the translated message. This response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting.” (Nida and Taber 1982, 1). Additionally, translators have the ability to convey the intended meaning from the SL into the TL since they are carrying the same cultural background as the target audience and, through different translation strategies, they can transfer the same idea from one language into another. Therefore, since identity is essential in translating cultural references, the translator must know the different cultural and idiomatic equivalents, such as idioms, between both languages.

Translating specific linguistic elements such as idioms is complex due to the metamessage they have implied in their meaning. When the British General Ed Fenech and Lieutenant Archie Hicox met in order to discuss Operation Kino —the premiere of Frederick Zoller’s film—, they celebrated the forthcoming Hitler’s defeat and the fall of the “master race” (Tarantino 2009, 1:07:52). General Fenech stated:

“[...] we have all our rotten eggs in one basket. The objective of Operation Kino, blow up the basket.”

“[...] *tenemos todos los huevos podridos en una cesta. El objetivo de la Operación Kino, volar la cesta.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 01:07:54).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the metamessage behind this idiom means “to depend for your success on a single person or plan of action” (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Thus, what General Fenech meant by using this idiom was that they only had this chance, the Operation Kino, to end with the Third Reich, since they had all the relevant Nazi figures, the ‘rotten eggs’, in the same room, the ‘basket’. Hence, this example reflects that, “[r]egarding culture in

terminological concepts, an additional explanation or the correct target term is needed; regarding the linguistic form of terms, the target norm shall always be applied. Cultural features in the syntax will be changed into target idioms, so as not to affect technical communication.” (Stolze 2009, 140). Focusing critically on the subtitling process (Pedersen 2005, 5), the translation strategy used is direct translation, since the ST idiom has its equivalent in the TT language, although it slightly differs, considering that in Spain it is more commonly said “*manzanas podridas*”. Interestingly, in Sánchez’s dissertation (2015, 13), it can be seen that the DVD version offered another translation: “[...] *tendremos todas las manzanas podridas en un mismo saco*.”. Thus, it is observable that, although the metamessage of the example of the film is fully understandable, the Netflix’s TT is more literal if compared to the ST, since in the DVD version, ‘basket’ *cesta* had been originally substituted for ‘sack’ *saco* and ‘rotten eggs’ for *huevos podridos*.

All the SL idiomatic expressions are then intended to be deeply evaluated in the process of subtitling so as to find a suitable option in the TL. Once that Von Hammersmark had been shot by a Nazi soldier in the tavern, Aldo, who lost three of his followers in the gunfire, asked her what happened, since he was waiting outside the inn. When she was about to explain herself, Aldo intervened by saying:

“[’f]ore we get into who shot John, why did you invite my men to a rendezvous in a basement with a bunch of Nazis?”

“*No me cuentes milongas. ¿Por qué llevaste a mis hombres a un sótano lleno de nazis?*”  
(Tarantino 2009, 01:37:38).

As Stolze stated, “[c]ulture determines how people speak and write and perceive each other. Consequently, cultural elements, therefore, must be present implicitly in texts, but as a background feature they are implicit. This becomes crucial in translation, when a translator from a different culture may not be able to adequately interpret the implicit cultural traces, or even misinterprets them.” (2009, 126). According to YourDictionary, ‘who shot John’ means “[a] long and involved explanation; a thing of which an explanation would be long and involved.” (YourDictionary 2021). According once again to Pedersen’s translation strategies list (2005, 6), the translator opted for substituting the SL idiom for one similar idiomatic expression in the TL in terms of metamessage. The Spanish expression *no me cuentes milongas* is used when someone is talking a lot but saying little and, if compared to the metamessage of the SL idiom —although in linguistic terms they are totally different— both idiomatic expressions are interchangeable since they fit within the context. Sánchez presented in her dissertation that the DVD version translated the SL text as “[a]ntes de discutir quién mató a quién...” and she offered an alternative version: “[a]ntes de hablar

*gilipollecés*” (2015, 15). Thus, it is observable that there is a similar metamessage within both different translations, but it is obvious that within the context of the film, and being conscious of Aldo’s personality, Sánchez’s alternative translation fits better. Regarding the Netflix’s version, the translator has succeeded in keeping the idiomatic meaning, although, due to the context, it could be considered too polite.

Even polyglots may face translating issues when dealing with idioms since they have a different cultural background. Colonel Hans Landa is a polyglot, since he is from Austria, speaks English, German, Italian and French. When he and his followers finally caught Aldo and Utivich, the Nazi asked Aldo if he would show mercy to him in the hypothetical case that it was the Apache who had control over Landa. The Colonel, referring to the speculation, continued by asking:

“[w]hat is that English expression about shoes and feet?”

“¿Cómo es esa expresión que tienen ustedes?”

[and Aldo replied:]

“[I]looks like two shoes on the other foot.”

“Parece que se han cambiado las tornas.”

(Tarantino 2009, 02:04:14).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “the boot/shoe is on the other foot [refers to the fact that] the situation is now the opposite of what it was, especially because someone who was weak now has power.” (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Basing on the list of the translation strategies that Pedersen created (2005, 6), the translator has preferred to substitute the SL idiom for a similar one in the TL successfully, since, although in terms of linguistics they completely differ, the metamessage is completely transferred. Thus, it is observable that the translator’s job is complex, and Landa demonstrates it in the film when he asks how the idiomatic expression is, although he already knows its metamessage, since he has a great knowledge of English.

The perception and mental construction of a culture can be determined by stereotypical discourses. Once that the Basterds succeeded in retaining three Nazi soldiers in order to force them to say where the rest of the German officials are set, Aldo perpetuates a stereotype by saying:

“[h]ey, Hirschberg, send that *kraut* sarge over.”

“Oye, Hirschberg. Mándame ese cabeza cuadrada.”

(Tarantino 2009, 00:26:53).

According to the Collins Dictionary, ‘*kraut*’ is an “offensive, slang, derogatory word for German” (Collins Dictionary 2021). When defamatory words with a cultural baggage within its

meaning are used in a discourse, their connotations are normally well-known by the translator, bolstering the stereotype. Consequently,

[t]he task of adapting the cultural referent to the knowledge of the target audience falls to the translator. If a decision is made to employ calques and loans, the cognitive effort required of the target audience increases, as does their knowledge of the other culture. Were this process to be applied equally to all exchanges involving translation, it would undoubtedly facilitate the emergence of more plural societies, despite the symbolic violence which occurs with the incursion of translation into any given social setting. (Santamaria 2010, 526-527).

According to Jan Pedersen's translation strategies list (2005, 6), the translator has opted for substituting the English loan word from German by replacing it by a different and promulgated stereotype into the target culture. '*Kraut*' has been substituted with *cabeza cuadrada*, and its metamessage relies on the popular perception of considering Germans as stubborn people and incapable of being spontaneous. Thus, the translator has successfully brought the metamessage to the target audience, since both cultural references or stereotypes perpetuate a derogatory meaning.

### 3. Humour and cultural references

Discourses that combine humour and cultural references may result in untranslatability, considering how difficult to translate are each of these instances on their own. Those ST cultural references, such as idioms or expressions, that can also imply a humorous touch are normally transferred in the TT by replacing them with a similar one. However, as Mateo states, "[a]lguna alusión cultural puede, efectivamente, resultar intraducible: la pregunta que entonces se tendrá que hacer el traductor es si eso es verdaderamente importante para el conjunto de la obra. [...] También el público extranjero puede reír por diversas razones que acompañan al texto aunque no perciba una referencia concreta." (1995, 238). For instance, particular types of humour, such as black humour, are normally controversial due to their possible ambiguous and offensive interpretations, since these instances of humour are normally attached to cultural backgrounds. Consequently,

[f]rom a translational perspective, cultural referents are the source of some challenges even though this is not only a translation issue since, within the same community, not all references are fully understood by all its members. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that we live in a global world where some of these

references are likely to be known in many countries. Humour can be translated and the best way of doing it successfully seems to be by activating strategies that use terms and expressions different to the ones employed in the source text. The translator has to come up with another text that tries to recreate in the target audience the same effect that was intended for the source audience. (Jiménez 2009, 141).

There is no standard version of humour nor a unique interpretation of a humorous statement. When a humorous phrase is intrinsically attached to a cultural reference, it is not only the audience who is challenged in its capacity for understanding, but also the translator. Cultural differences complicate the translating process and, if humour plays an essential role for the successful understanding of the particular statement, its interpretation can be ambiguous, causing a possible offensive attack on the identity of the target culture individuals.

Humorous cultural references may be also deleted since the subtitling process is restricted in terms of text length. One evidence of this deletion is the sequence of *Inglourious Basterds* when Aldo is threatening the Nazi soldier Werner Rachtman forcing him to say where are spotted the rest of the Third Reich military defenders. Aldo's vocabulary is direct and informal, since he proceeded as:

“[n]ow, Werner, I'm gonna ask you one last goddamn time, and if you still 'respectfully refuse,' I'm calling the Bear Jew over here, and he's gonna take that big bat of his, and he's gonna beat your ass to death with it. Now take your *Wiener-schnitzel*-lickin' finger and point out on this map what I want to know.”

“*Te lo pregunto por última vez. Si sigues negándote, llamo al Oso Judío. Cogera su gran bate y te dará una paliza hasta matarte. Así que coge tu dedo y señala en el mapa lo que quiero saber.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 00:32:27).

According to Santamaria, “[i]n the process of translation, the elements associated with the referents that are part of the collective memory of individuals from the source society are not usually conveyed successfully unless the translator includes more information. All cultural references are linked to a given set of values in the natural environment where they were produced. However these values may not be the same in the target culture.” (2016, 144). Although taboo words such as ‘goddamn’ and ‘ass’ have been omitted, there is also a loss of message strength in “[...] *te dará una paliza hasta matarte.*” Although the idea is transferred successfully, there is a humour loss in the TT due to the omission of ‘ass’. Thus, an alternative translation could be “*te*

*golpeará el culo hasta matarte*”. Regarding the ST humorous cultural reference, and basing on Pedersen’s translation strategies list, ‘[w]iener-schnitzel-lickin’ finger’ has been ‘paraphrased’ (Pedersen 2005, 8), ‘generalised’ (2005, 6) —since it only refers to the object— but also partly ‘omitted’ (2005, 9) since, in the TT’s result, only *dedo* has been kept. The cultural reference has been omitted and, consequently, the humorous touch has been lost. As reported by Sánchez’s dissertation, the DVD version opted for substituting ‘[w]iener-schnitzel’ for ‘*kartoffel*’, meaning ‘potato’ in German. The substitution of the cultural referent was unnecessary, although it was also implying a cultural reference and a subsequent humorous touch, but Sánchez offered an alternative version that fits perfectly: “[a]sí que señala con tu dedo de chupar bratwurst/salchichas y dime lo que quiero saber.” (Sánchez 2015, 17). She substituted the cultural reference for another one, but the humorous touch is also present, as well as the stereotypical image of the Germans eating *bratwurst*. Regarding the Netflix’s version, both humour and the stereotypical idea have been completely lost.

Cultural references, as well as humorous stereotypes, can also undergo a domestication process in the target language. When the Basterds retained Rachtman, the Tennessean leader threatened the Nazi soldier by referring to a cultural product of his country by telling him:

“[n]ow if you ever wanna eat a *sauerkraut* sandwich again, you gotta show me on this map where they are, you gotta tell me how many they are, and you gotta tell me what kinda artillery they are carrying with them.”

“*Si quieres volver a comer un sándwich de chucrut, tienes que enseñarme en el mapa dónde están. Tienes que decirme cuántos son... y tienes que decirme qué artillería llevan encima.*”

(Tarantino 2009, 00:31:05).

Hence, the use of this cultural reference as a source of humour reflects what Botella uttered in her work “Translation of Intertextual Audiovisual Humor. *May the Force be with You.*”: “[...] some concepts on culture-specific references as mechanisms [are] used to create humor, understanding culture to be customs and lifestyles, always in constant change, within a society.” (2017, 19). Since *chucrut* is a more popular term within Spain if compared to ‘*sauerkraut*’, the substitution that the translator has provided has succeeded in terms of audience understandability since they are synonyms. This German cultural reference and stereotyped custom has been employed in order to create humour. In both languages, the message is straightforwardly perceptible by the viewers. If the cultural referent is understood, it means that the stereotype is perpetuated by the creator and, possibly, by the audience. It is humorous how Aldo succeeded in terms of mixing humour by using a cultural reference within a tense and shifting moment in the



film. Sánchez's dissertation presents that the DVD version substituted 'sandwich' for "bocadillos" (2015, 11) and this procedure results unnecessary, since, as the Netflix version offers, *sándwich*, as well as *chucrut*, have been domesticated and both nouns have undergone the Spanish phonological adaptation and they are commonly known within the TL culture.

Cultural references can also be nationalistic figures which may not be known universally. In this audiovisual product, Aldo is talking to Hicox, Donowitz and Stiglitz since they are about to enter the tavern in order to talk with Von Hammersmark, who is on the Basterds' side against the militia of the Third Reich and she is the one who decides the meeting point. If she was discovered by the Nazi soldiers that are found in the tavern, the Basterds' plan would fail. However, the place which was supposed to be empty of Nazis was full of them. Aldo was frustrated, and he demonstrated it by saying:

"[y]ou don't gotta to be Stonewall Jackson to know you don't want to fight in a basement."

*"Hasta mi sobrina sabe que no se puede luchar en un sótano."*

(Tarantino 2009, 01:12:07).

According to Bruti, "[s]ometimes, more exceptionally though, it may also happen that the speech act in the subtitle is richer than that in the original, not so much quantitatively, but qualitatively, because the expression, and consequently the message that is conveyed, is richer." (2009, 236). Regarding the translation strategies' list by Pedersen, the subtitler has opted for translating 'You don't gotta be Stonewall Jackson' as *hasta mi sobrina* by a process of 'cultural substitution' (2005, 6). Thus, the ST has a metamessage, implying that it is obvious that having a gunfire in a basement is not convenient. Stonewall Jackson was an American military, considered an icon due to his work during the American Civil War, reflecting his patriotism. The TT has avoided this national figure by substituting it for an expression whose metamessage means the same as in the ST. *Hasta mi sobrina* has a humorous overtone which is not found in the ST. Consequently, the Spanish version fits within the film's context and also breaks a tense moment with Aldo's intervention.

Leaving nationalistic figures aside, popular fictional characters are also cultural referents that can be found in audiovisual discourses. When Aldo Raine and Utivich were finally captured by Colonel Hans Landa, the latter told the remaining Basterds what had he done for the Third Reich, making a kidding allusion to the fact that he does not like to be known as "the Jew Hunter" (Tarantino 2009, 00:13:26). When Landa was explaining his work and before he and the Basterds made a deal, Aldo Raine sarcastically interrupted the Colonel by saying:

“[t]hat’s a pretty exciting story. What’s next, Eliza on the ice?”

“*Qué divertido. ¿Qué sigue? ¿Una de Super Ratón?*”

(Tarantino 2009, 02:06:35).

These particular referents, which conform part of the popular tradition of the SL may not be known in the TL and, consequently, these “[...] intra-cultural referents sometimes have no equivalent in the target culture and the translator has to decide whether this cultural information, taken for granted in the source-language culture, can be maintained in the translation or has to be substituted or modified so as not to generate alterations in the eventual balance of cognitive effects and mental effort, and parallel alterations in the humorous effects.” (Yus 2012, 7). Focusing on Pedersen’s translation strategies list (2005), the subtitler has substituted the SL humorous cultural character ‘Eliza on the ice’ for a very-well known one within the Spanish community *Super Ratón*. Additionally, the context and the comic scene that Utivich and Aldo create due to their opposed attitude towards Hans Landa, make Aldo’s interruption the humorous climax of the scene. Sánchez presented, in her dissertation, the DVD text version, which is almost identical to the Netflix’s one, since in the earlier version it was translated as “[a]pasionante. ¿Qué viene ahora? ¿Algo de Super Ratón?” (2015, 15). Thus, both translations demonstrate that the translator’s job was successful in terms of transferring the meaning of the ST to the TT.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have sought to analyse the subtitling process into Spanish of the film *Inglourious Basterds*, from the digital platform Netflix, as a source that draws attention to how ambiguous explicit or implicit humorous elements and cultural references are normally translated during the process of subtitling, and also to demonstrate how, due to its dependance on both image and sound, explicit humour may break the earnestness of a particular scene. In addition, it has been demonstrated that implicit humour is characterised by its hidden metamessage. Even though humour is universal, the cultural background of the audience is then essential for the successful understanding of the humour present in the SL. Hence, the values, attitudes, and traditions of each particular audience may determine the humorous perception of an utterance. However, through the whole dissertation it has been demonstrated how *Inglourious Basterds* has succeeded in terms of going from a violent historical fact to a humorous fictional one by using humour and without disturbing the ongoing of the main actions. Nevertheless, it has been also pointed out that irony may prevent the audience from understanding a message directly even though when it is perfectly

perceived by the audience it is useful in order to understand the metamessage. Moving to cultural references and their role in the process of subtitling, it has also been revealed that they are elements complex to translate due to the cultural background connotations that they carry, as the examples provided have depicted. In addition, another essential point that has been highlighted is that linguistic elements, such as idioms, which carry a metamessage underneath, not only need to be assessed in order to find an equivalent within the TL, but it may also result difficult for polyglots so as to understand both its meaning due to their cultural background or the idiom itself. Moving forward, the role of stereotypical discourses in the subtitling process of a particular audiovisual product has also been displayed through this dissertation, hence reinforcing the argument that they are brought when there is a mental construction of a culture within people's minds. Furthermore, since both humour and cultural references are difficult to translate, this dissertation has shown a variety of examples in which these features lead to problems of translation in order to avoid untranslatability. Humour and culture will always be challenging for translators, as they will be forced to delete and domesticate the SL information in order to preserve the basic idea of the statement. Finally, it has been shown that both nationalistic figures and popular fictional characters are also cultural references that may bring humour to the statement due to the metamessage they may carry.

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