

## Book review

**Dore, Margherita (ed.) (2021). *Humour Translation in the Age of Multimedia*. London: Routledge.**

Margherita Dore's edited volume brings together the fields of linguistics and media studies, focusing on two prominent areas of research therein, Translation Studies and Humour Studies. Concentrating on humour translation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, "the age of multimedia", as it is aptly labelled, the book contributes significantly to the existing literature (Martínez Sierra 2008; Chiaro 2010; Perego 2014; Dore 2019). As Dore pertinently claims, "the present challenge lies in understanding some of the many processes humour translation entails, thanks to the rapid evolution of new technologies" (p. 2).

*Humour Translation in the Age of Multimedia* includes ten chapters (besides the editor's introduction to the topic and the volume) authored by leading or eminent scholars in research topics as diverse as memes and advertising, popular culture products such as films and TV series, amateur dubbing and audio describing humour. It becomes immediately apparent from the volume's title that the emphasis is on mediated humour rather than spontaneously arising humour in everyday social interaction. Interestingly, case studies on the benefits of (transferred) humour for specific audiences are also included in the volume (chapters 9 and 10). Such research addresses the complex phenomenon of humour from a critical perspective. This is reflected in this volume which involves addresses scholarly concerns that could be viewed in parallel to those echoed in critical humour studies or critical comedy studies (see, for example, Nieuwenhuis & Zijp 2022: 346, and references therein). Furthermore, the volume includes articles which make a valuable claim about the complex role of the translator as a cultural mediator in today's digital era (chapters 5, 6 and 7).

In chapter 2, "Humour translation in the digital age", Delia Chiaro takes a fresh look into the strategies involved in humour translation in the digital age, foregrounding the word *humour* as an important pillar of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, next to "migration" and "translation" (p. 28). Chiaro contends that "neither verbal humour itself, nor the strategies involved in its translation, have substantially altered in time" (p. 10) but, what seems to have changed, is the novel ways in which humour *travels* in our era of smart technology. Chiaro purports that humour has become multimodal and points to the importance of interdisciplinarity in humour research. The questions she sets about to explore are quite fundamental: How does humour become viral? Can other-than-English digital humour reach the level of global epidemics? How does the parameter of age work in the appreciation of internet memes? Such questions highlight the need for translation. Her analysis shows that not only can language be a barrier, with English becoming more and more international, but also that English or US/Western internet memes' templates proliferate in our digital world. In addition, the author delves into the significance of non-verbal signs in interpreting memes and digital humour in general, and thus points to the importance of promoting multimodal analytical frameworks in Translation Studies.

Chapter 3, "Two cases of doping, two instances of humour: Creative humour in cultural dialogue", investigates the idea of humour translation in memes as a process of creativity and cultural adaptation, acknowledging the tension between global and local creation in the

dissemination of memes. Following an intersemiotic and folklorist analysis on their data (Estonian sports memes), Liisi Laineste and Piret Voolaid suggest reasons for the untranslatability of memes and make useful observations on the textual/verbal level about the most popular humorous mechanisms in the creation of memes, pointing out that wordplay and punning are on top of the relevant list. They also point out the importance of global and local narratives' intertwining regarding the adaptation of memes. Interestingly, their analysis of sports memes on two doping cases, one international and one local, demonstrates a higher-than-expected degree of variation and originality in the Estonian data. According to the authors, this finding shows that "meme mechanisms have an equal potential in different languages" (p. 51), regardless of how widely a language is spoken. Laineste and Voolaid conclude that future research should focus on the performativity of the texts rather than hermeneutics.

"From translation to transcreation of humorous items (memes) on Romanian social media channels" is the third study of the volume, in chapter 4, and focuses again on memes and digital humour. Its author, Christian Lako, also points to the challenges of multimodal humour translation influenced by the evolution of new technologies. Lako analyses how search engines, social media channels and learning websites can be used to test the popularity of terms such as *memes*, *joke*, *humour*, along with their equivalents in Romanian. He follows a translation-based approach, inspired by the work of eminent scholars such as Jeroen Vandaele and Lawrence Venuti, discussing the translation strategies (direct transfer/zero-translation, partial translation, full translation) applied when transferring humorous memes from one language/context to the other. He argues for the *transcreation* of humorous memes and *copycatted humour*. Practically, internationalised memes can be good examples of transcreation, while copycatting may refer "to completely recreated outcome in the target culture [...] often entirely recontextualising it" (p. 57).

In chapter 5, "Selling our souls for a laugh: Translated humour in advertising", Adrián Fuentes-Luque and Cristina Valdés lead the reader into the area of translated humour in advertising and specifically in TV commercials. The authors address the major considerations of current literature on Translation Studies on the one hand, and Audiovisual Communication and Advertising on the other. They face the interdisciplinarity of humour translation, the importance of the "principle of functionality" in humour and advertising alike, and the complex nexus among agents, objects and audiences in the field. Considering the challenging question of the (un)translatability of humour in our highly globalised communication context, they highlight the importance of the translator in audio-visual advertising as an intrinsic component in the translation production process of advertising material and a first-rate intercultural mediator, whose role should be boosted. Indeed, they coin the word *trans-creators* for translators (p. 88) to raise awareness of their creative and cultural skills in transferring source cultural elements, such as ads, into effective and functional target texts in the new context. Based on the analysis of several dubbed ad subtitled examples (spots) shown on Spanish TV, Fuentes-Luque's and Valdés's illuminating study, "Selling our souls for a laugh. Translated humour in advertising", thoroughly addresses translation strategies and dilemmas as well as marketing and advertising policies and norms in this context.

Chiara Bucaria's study in chapter 6, "Between marketing and cultural adaptation: The case of comedy film titles in Italy", is a thorough analysis of the translation and marketing strategies employed for rendering comedy film titles in Italy. Inspired by Christiane Nord's (1995; 1997) translational approach of functionalism in paratexts and imbued by the tools of ethnography in the form of semi-structured interviews with Italian film distributors and marketing experts, Bucaria offers an explicit discussion of translation strategies and an interesting comparative analysis of a ten-year period corpus (2009 to 2018) of film titles. Her comprehensive work shows the adaptation or "re-creation" of titles in Italian to be the main strategy, thus showing

that the rendering of film titles is a proponent of a broader cultural mediation activity adopted by film distributors in local markets. It also considers the genre of comedy in comparison to other filmic genres, hinting at potential translation shifts based on target audiences' expectations and financial/profit reasons. Bucaria's chapter ("Between marketing and cultural adaptation. The case of comedy film titles in Italy") concludes with considerations for further research ranging from studies on the translation of paratexts belonging to other film genres to "cross-cultural analyses of film title adaptation from and into other lingua-cultural contexts" (p. 111).

Chapter 7, "Multilingual humour in audiovisual translation: Multilingual realities, humour and translation in an ever-changing mediascape", also involves an approach to audiovisual translation (AVT). In this study, Patrick Zabalbeascoa focuses on the transference of multilingual humour in the modern mediascape. In this case, however, this rigorous study involves a broader spectrum, including theoretical and practical considerations on audiovisual multilingual humour and multilingualism in general, while conversing with other top-notch scholars in the field (Chiaro, Delabastita, Dore, Yus). The chapter raises fundamental questions regarding comprehensibility, awareness, and the implications of (using) multilingualism in films for all constituents of the communication scheme (creators, translators, audiences). The answers are reflected in a series of particularly thought-provoking suggestions for future research, overcoming traditional schemata and calling for a thorough approach drawing on skopos theory, semiotic analysis and media discussion in our globalised world. The chapter concludes with a series of parameters seen in a historical perspective and reflecting new trends in the translation of L3 in dubbed or subtitled humorous films. Zabalbeascoa's structuralist approach to translation strategies regarding multilingual (humorous) films does not restrict in the least his multifaceted discussion of pragmatic factors, such as the appreciation of an L3 in humour comprehension, analysis and rendering; multilingualism as a rhetorical feature rather than an oddity; and, importantly, the demanding role of today's translator in a mediated globalised world.

Albert F. S. Pai's study (chapter 8) of humour subtitling concentrates on the transference of humorous English expressions in a BBC sitcom into Traditional Chinese subtitles. "A corpus-based approach to the study of subtitling humour" demonstrates how a DIY corpus can help researchers to both quantitative and qualitative analyses in tailor-made research questions about humour in AVT studies. Based on a thorough methodology which exploits corpus linguistics, relevance theory, the General Theory of Verbal Humour, and translation theories, Pai's model can stand as an inspiring corpus-based approach to the translation of humour in AVT studies. In addition, his data analysis involves both macro- and micro-strategies with reference to preferred subtitling strategies. Indeed, his interdisciplinary work informs theory on the respective fields. For example, he proposes a typology of humour frames and a taxonomy of subtitling strategies.

In chapter 9, "Amateur dubbing and humour to promote well-being among hospitalised children and adolescents", linguist and researcher in AV and Translation, Margherita Dore, along with psychologist and clinical research expert Laura Vagnoli concentrate on the fast-growing research on dubbing in Translation Studies since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More precisely, they study the importance of a category of *amateur dubbing*, namely *altruist dubbing*, as a non-pharmacological technique for pain and anxiety management among hospitalised children and adolescents in Meyer Children's Hospital, Florence, Italy. Their innovative pilot project combines research in dubbing and humour, on the one hand, with psychology, on the other, recording promising results for the general well-being and stress alleviation among young patients who have become actively involved and engaged in experimenting with humorous AVT content. The authors also consider the potential effectiveness of amateur dubbing among young patients from a pedagogical viewpoint, for example L1 and L2 acquisition. Nevertheless, they sincerely state clearly that this activity "must

be verified in terms of applicability and efficacy for the development of a standardised methodology and guidelines” (p. 171). They also stress the need for comparisons with other non-pharmacological techniques as well as quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Evidently, Dore and Vagnoli’s study, based on intriguing experimental research, opens new pathways to multimodal humour translation for other than simple entertainment purposes, most importantly for the relief of symptoms in patients.

Chapter 10, “Audio describing humour. Seeking laughter when images do not suffice”, on the relatively recent practice of audio describing (AD) translation, contributes, like chapter 9, to the study of humour translation for specially designed audiences and points to the role of AD in enhancing “the possibilities of success of total humorous enjoyment” for these audiences. Martínez Sierra investigates the significance of AVT for blind and/or visually impaired people. In fact, his focus on AD, as an alternative mode of AVT, brings into focus the growing prominence of the concept of accessibility to the media. In doing so, Chapter 10 aptly concludes the volume, for it pronounces some quite fresh values in our contemporary society, such as “diversity, accessibility, inclusion” (p. 189). Based on Snell-Hornby’s (1988) prototype model (10.6) and his own taxonomies of potentially humorous elements in audiovisual texts (10.5), Martínez Sierra’s study is detailed, making appropriate distinctions between humour in AVT and AD humour, as well as useful observations about the challenges a translator faces in the latter case. The chapter’s conclusion about the implementation of reception studies to investigate how humour is perceived when partial access to it is denied, brings the audience to the fore. Moreover, it makes a powerful claim for parallel studies in stage performances, a research area which, I would say, is underrepresented in this volume.

The next chapter (11), entitled “Epilogue. Local laughter, context collapse and translational agency”, is written by Jeroen Vandaele and should be seen as an intriguing macroscopic study on humour (in translation) and laughter in our ever-growing mediated international multicultural world. Vandaele reviews this volume’s chapters and elaborates on the answers provided therein. He is very succinct in pronouncing the basic questions which the present volume addresses. Firstly, he acknowledges the need for an update on the research of humour translation in the new world of multimedia. Secondly, he observes that because of their “conceptual stability” (p. 197) verbal humour and translation strategies have not “substantially altered over time”, in Chiaro’s words (p. 10). Consequently, it is argued that in the age of multimedia humour, translators have to cope with the same (translation) humour mechanisms. Having stressed “the positivity and negativity of laughter” (p. 196) and given preference to the term *laughter* over the terms *humour* or *comedy*, Vandaele stresses the importance of context and processing of humour. As demonstrated in this volume, what has changed in the multimedia age is that humour is conveyed in totally new ways. Translation can enhance this process. Therefore, the author is quite apt in suggesting important questions on the present role of translation and the globalised effects of local laughter. He refers to the phenomenon as “context collapse” (p. 204) meaning that a message originally designed for a specific (local) audience can be quickly and widely multiplied by social media and thus gain diversified audiences worldwide (globally). His examples from local laughter scandals turning into international ones and resulting in offence of varying degrees are quite pertinent. They reveal the complexity of the performance and the consumption of humour in the multimedia world, raising a critical question about the impossibility of humour in a future world where everyone lives in a digitalised world in which responses might be too different and too quick to calibrate.

Margherita Dore’s edited volume is an inspiring book in focusing on the intersections of Translation Studies, Linguistics and Media Studies. As such, it does credit to Routledge’s interdisciplinary perspective. Used as a wide-ranging textbook and an up-to-date research study, it will be treasured by students and researchers alike. Besides, the reader will find it particularly

rewarding to navigate through the concise index of people, concepts/subjects/theories, and source texts (titles of memes, sitcoms, TV shows, films). There is one final note I would like to share, particularly with the publishing team: Please be kind to readers with presbyopia. We would appreciate a bigger font size.

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