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# DUBBING ‘HERCULES’

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## ABSTRACT

*This present paper presents a descriptive analysis of the humorous extracts from a children’s DVD movie called ‘Hercules’, a dubbed version of the well-known Greek hero and his labors. The analysis will be based on how successfully humour can be transferred from the source language (English) to the target language (Greek) in terms of cultural references. There will be a taxonomy of the humorous elements as well as culture-specific references in this child-targeted DVD movie based in the classification of jokes of Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996: 2:2). Drawing on the findings of this pilot study consisting of only one dubbed DVD children’s movie, this paper is aimed to represent the strategies applied when translating cultural and humour specifics.*

**Keywords:** English-Greek, humour, audiovisual translation, dubbing, intercultural communication, culture-specific references

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- firstly, to represent how humour is translated into the target language with respect to cultural references, translation idioms and equivalence.
- Second, to identify how humour elements could be classified according to Zabalbeascoa’s classification of jokes and whether new types of humour can emerge.
- Third, to list all the humour types, a useful tool for a future research to investigate to what extent they appear/or differentiate from other types of humour found in relevant DVD dubbed movies of Hercules.

### 1.1 Corpus

For this pilot study, I selected the dubbed movie of ‘Hercules’. The choice of the DVD was determined by the following factors : a) it is very popular b) it includes many humorous elements mostly culture-targeted and language-targeted (the use of slang language is extensive) and c) Hercules is a hero in mythology, known worldwide for his labours. Thus, it would be interesting to describe the humour elements that are presented in English, an international language and how successfully they are transferred into the Greek language through dubbing.

### 1.2 National –sense of humour joke

In this category, Zabalbeascoa (1996, 2:2) reports that by ‘National-sense-of humour joke I mean that certain joke-types and joke-themes are apparently more popular in some countries or communities than in others and constitute a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding. For example, some communities like to make fun of themselves whereas some others do not and prefer to laugh at somebody else’s expense.’ In the example below, the latter takes place. It would be very interesting to analyse the reasons behind the translator’s choice to use this national joke in a children’s movie.

- Situation: Some young men are playing a game and don’t want Hercules to join them. Thus, they call him ‘geek’.

*What a geek!*

Translation: Αμερικανάκι

In this example, the word 'Αμερικανάκι' has a negative implication and could be considered a very offensive characterisation for the American culture and nationality. It is inappropriate and considered even to be a well hidden anti-American propaganda as this child-targeted movie will be shown to Greek audience (children above 5 years old and adults as well) who subconsciously will adopt anti-American feelings and in the worst scenario will repeat this expression, which is perceived as a mockery. An alternative translation could be a literal translation, as there is an equivalent that could be used in this case: Τι σπασικλάκι!

### 1.3 National Cultural-sense-of-humour

With national cultural-sense-of-humour elements, there is a need to find references of the original ones in the national culture of the target languages, in order to retain the humorous effects for the target audience.

- Situation: Panic and Pain, the two assistants of Hades in the underworld are trying to deny that Hercules is still alive.

*Every boy was named Jason and the girls were all named Brittany*

Translation: όλα τα αγόρια τα βαφτίζανε Παντελή και όλα τα κορίτσια Αγλαΐτσα

The equivalence priority of the translator here was first to produce a comic effect and second to find the most common names in Greek children's literature in order to elicit laughter from children.

### 1.4 Language-dependent joke

A language-dependent joke is basically a joke that is related to the linguistic functions of the language. In this category, the translator has succeeded in transferring the humorous elements, because Greek and English are closely related in terms of literal meaning.

- Situation: Throughout the whole movie, there are many cases that names are laughter-eliciting.

*Jercules - Hunkules*

Translation: Χαζοκλή – Τεκνοκλή

### 1.5 International Joke

The international joke is a humorous word or phrase independent of cultural or linguistic restrictions. There are no language and culture boundaries imposed by any culture. It has to do mostly with the scenario itself and the characters of the movie. Here is an indicative example of an international joke:

- Situation: Zeus is talking to Hades after a long time.

*You ought to slow down. You'll work yourself to death.*

Translation: Κάνε λίγο κράτει. Δουλεύεις μέχρι θανάτου. (Θα ψοφήσεις στη δουλειά)

## 2. General Remarks on the analysis of humour in a dubbed movie

We notice that some English words **are not translated**, as the translator considers that they will be understood by the Greek audience, including children. These are some examples: *time out*, *excellent*, *game*, *set*, *match*, *halt*.

It is worth mentioning that in this children's movie **the language is rather colloquial and slang**. Overall, this is happening probably in order to be more easily comprehensible and laughter-eliciting for the audience of children. There are a lot of instances where the names in the source language are very funny for children, such as Mr.High and Mighty being translated as Ο κος Σιγά τ'Αυγά. The translator could find easily the equivalents and there was no humorous effect lost. Some indicative examples are: *Step aside* ( κάνε στη μπάνα ), *hold it!* ( για μισό..), *dude* ( φίλε ), *now we did it* ( όχι, τη βάψαμε ), *butt out, buddy!* ( σπάσε, μεγάλε).

Unfortunately, in the dubbing process, it is expected that some of the humorous effect will be lost after all. Although in the below example the translator could find equivalence, he/she did not prefer to use this strategy but opted for another one.

- Situation: People of Thebes are complaining to Philoctetes about the power of Hercules due to his failure to protect them from future disasters.

*Young man, we need a professional hero, not an amateur.*

Translation: Χρειαζόμαστε έναν πραγματικό ήρωα, όχι κάποιον να κάνει το αγροτικό του.

This example is rather an unsuccessful one. Taking into account that the target audience would be children, we should not expect a child to understand the figurative meaning of the word ‘αγροτικό’. A child should not be expected to know that a graduate of medicine in order to complete his/her degree of medicine must spend a training period of one year as a village doctor. So, the children will be rather confused as they will relate Hercules labours to farm work. The joke is lost because the knowledge required to appreciate it should not be possibly expected from the audience. I would therefore suggest the following alternative, which is a word-by word translation.

Translation: Χρειαζόμαστε έναν επαγγελματία ήρωα, όχι κάποιον που είναι ερασιτέχνης.

### 3. Future Perspectives

It is important to bear in mind that the process of dubbing a DVD is a demanding one, especially when it has to deal with children’s movies.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the findings of this pilot study need further analysis as well as comparison to future studies of other dubbed DVDs concerning the transfer of humour and cultural references.

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