Translating Dialect Humor in the American Sitcom:
A Case Study

Christopher Marvil
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Abstract
Dialect humor has a long literary tradition in the English language, but its fundamentally cultural nature makes it difficult to translate. Taking an interdisciplinary approach and drawing from several areas of research, including translation of linguistic variation, humor, and audiovisual texts, this work compiles a model for dialect humor translation, used to analyze dubs of the dialect humor-laden genre of the American sitcom. The discussion finds that dialect is often poorly or not at all translated, resulting in solutions that produce little humor, and that habitual practices appear to differ between Spain and Latin America. Among other conclusions, a larger corpus and/or consideration of LV as a trait of comedic characters rather than a feature of singular jokes could benefit future studies. Lastly, humor, rather preserving the same source text jokes, should be prioritized when dubbing dialect humor.

Key words: dialect humor, linguistic variation, third language (L3), translation

Resumen
El humor dialectal tiene una larga tradición literaria en la lengua inglesa, pero su carácter fundamentalmente cultural hace que sea difícil de traducir. Para la realización de este estudio se ha empleado una estrategia interdisciplinaria y se ha indagado en varios campos de investigación, incluyendo la traducción de la variación lingüística, del humor, y de los textos audiovisuales. De esta forma, este trabajo recopila un modelo para la traducción del humor dialectal, que se utiliza para analizar doblajes del género de la sitcom estadounidense, en la cual el humor dialectal es habitual. Con todo, se pone de manifiesto que los dialectos frecuentemente son traducidos de manera errónea -en ocasiones ni siquiera son traducidos-, lo que deriva en soluciones que carecen del humor necesario; y que las prácticas habituales parecen diferir entre España y Latinoamérica. Una de las conclusiones más relevantes revela que un corpus más grande y/o la consideración de la variación lingüística como rasgo de los personajes cómicos podrían beneficiar estudios en el futuro. Por último, se considera que el humor debería priorizarse cuando el humor dialectal se dobla en vez de preservar los mismos chistes del texto origen.

Palabras clave: humor dialectal, variación lingüística, tercera lengua (L3), traducción
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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

“A southern gentleman goes to Las Vegas. Sitting in a cocktail lounge and sipping on some bourbon, he beckons the waitress and says quietly, “Miss, y’all sure are a luvly, luvly lady. Can ah persuade y’all to give me a piece of ass?” Flattered, the waitress suggests going up to his room. When they return half an hour later, the man sits down at the same table and the waitress smiles and asks, “Will there be anything else?” “Why yes,” replies the southern gentleman. “Ah sure ‘preciate what y’all just did for me. It was real sweet and right neighbourly of y’all. But where ah come from in Alabama, we lahk our bourbon real cold, so ah still need a piece of ass for mah drink.”

Dialect as a textual feature has been present in English literature for centuries, dating at least as far back as the transition from Middle English with the inclusion of dialectal representations in “The Reeve’s Tale” in Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (Ilhem, 102). The phenomenon has seen endless study by scholars as a literary tool over the centuries, but it is prudent to perhaps step back and consider its function—its function, even, in its very first instance in “The Reeve’s Tale.” Chaucer presents two bumbling, scheming brothers hailing from the north of England in his narrative, whose plot to cheat a miller runs into countless snares and mix-ups; their speech is markedly different from the London dialect of Chaucer, and their clueless nature is a sharp contradiction to their
occupations as students at Cambridge. The purpose of the story, and by extension, the dialect representations that characterize the two brothers, is very simple: to be funny.

This function of dialect as a humorous component in texts is a frequent occurrence; given the countless examples ranging from Shakespeare to Dickens to Mark Twain, some might even argue it to be a primary function. The theory of what actually defines humor—the topic of a true jungle of publications and lifetimes of research—continues to be extremely subjective and subject to a number of different scholarly opinion, but for the present purposes, with a more detailed look into the mechanisms of dialect humor further on in this thesis, it suffices to underline its intrinsically cultural nature. Dialectal representations in fiction operate by imitating and exaggerating lexical, syntactical, and morphological features of real-world varieties that depart from standard language (Maatta, 321). Within in the context of scripted humor, then, these instances operate as references on which a reader can base their understanding of the joke, whether it be by means of individual wordplay, or as script-based elements in a wider cultural or stereotypical situation (Asimakoulas, 823).

Let us take the quote presented at the beginning of this section as an example. The phonetic representation of the man’s Southern accent contextualizes the reader of the joke and allows them to form a mental approximation of how his speech sounds. The punchline, as a result, does not surprise or alienate the reader, in the sense that they are immediately able to understand with the reference of their cultural knowledge; they can immediately comprehend, and agree, that “ice” and “ass” do indeed sound similar when enunciated by a Southern speaker, therefore finding the humor in the situation. The question, then arises: how can this be translated?

1.2 Objectives and Methodology

The principal objective of this thesis is to investigate the common translation restriction of linguistic variation (LV) in fictional texts as paired with its frequent (and equally problematic) companion, humor. It aims to provide a detailed theoretical look into the many factors that come into play when translating dialect humor, particularly within the context of the American sitcom. Given the relative lack of published research regarding the translation of dialect humor, the literature review will take an interdisciplinary approach; this will include works published on the topic of dialect translation, humor
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translation, and audiovisual translation, taking stylistic, cultural, and practical aspects of translation into account.

Furthermore, as a product of the compiled literature, the thesis shall present a rudimentary translation model for dialect humor that will be of a typological nature, detailing various types of solutions and sub-solutions; this model will be employed in an analysis of a corpus. Before undertaking the analytical portion of the thesis, the corpus will be contextualized with a review of dialect humor and its prominence within American comedy. Each show sampled for the analysis will receive a short summary of its premise, its production, and its relevance to the thesis as a widely dubbed text with frequent occurrences of dialect humor.

Proceeding forward, the corpus will be analyzed under the previously described model, examining both the original and the dubbed target text (TT). *Family Guy, Friends,* and *Fuller House* have been selected, primarily for their success and popularity, and by extent, their widespread distribution internationally in the form of dubbing. Two samples from each show have been selected for analysis; for the purpose of variety in the corpus, half of the samples (one from each show) shall feature LV as a central joke feature, while the other half shall feature LV as a secondary feature. Both Latin American and Spanish dubs will be considered, comparing and contrasting the solutions taken between the two.

With each sample, the source text (ST) joke will be contextualized and scrutinized before comparing with the target text. In some cases, an alternative solution may be proposed. Certain dialects in English literature, such as AAVE or Irish English, have a history and tradition of phonological representation in writing, and will be transcribed as such to better illustrate auditory and phonetic aspects of the ST. Other varieties are not as accessible in eye-dialect and/or recognizable to an average reader, but nevertheless are indicated with inserted comments. As a general goal, we will assess the overall preservation of humor in the TT as a priority. A subsequent discussion will identify trends in the data, including the structure and function of dialect jokes within the ST, common patterns in solution types, similarities and differences between Latin American and Spanish dubs, and the potential implications and consequences of common solutions.

A set of conclusions will recapitulate the proposed translation model, and in reference to the analysis and discussion, comment on its potential shortcomings. The results of the analysis and trends observed in the discussion will also be summarized, and potential
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areas for research highlighted by any limitations in the scope of the present thesis will be indicated. Lastly, final observations on translation of dialect humor with respect to the findings of this thesis will be made.

1.3 Structure

This work shall consist of eight separate chapters; the first chapter is made up by the introduction, further divided into an overview of the subject matter, the objectives and methodology for the thesis, and the present description of the work’s organization and format. The second chapter presents a literature review as a means of revisiting current research concerning the examined topic, split into three principal areas: (theories of) dialect and its translation, humor and its translation, and audiovisual translation. The third chapter draws from this compiled research to propose an original typological model of dialect humor translation; points on this model will be referenced regularly in the analysis.

Moving on from the theoretical content of the thesis, the fourth chapter first presents background information relevant to the examined samples—a contextualization of dialect humor within American comedy, and a description of the American sitcom as a genre—before addressing the corpus itself, summarizing each of the three sitcoms utilized for analysis. The fifth chapter is composed of the analysis; six samples are included in the text and indicated by text boxes. Each original sample is labeled as Example #, Name of Show, S#E# Min:sec. and subsequently analyzed dubs (also in text boxes) are labelled as Example # Dub- Spain/LA; these transcriptions shall also be referenced in all following chapters. The sixth chapter is a discussion that reviews the results of the analysis and observes trends and unanswered questions for further research. The seventh chapter is a conclusion that summarizes the findings of the thesis and makes final observations.

The eighth chapter is a bibliography of all referenced works throughout the thesis. All references, as well as in-text citations within the body of the thesis, have been formatted according to the style guide established in the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook (Modern Language Association of America), following the United States norm for academic works concerning language and literature.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Dialect and its Translation

Given translation’s relative novelty as a domain of academic research, the field borrows heavily from other areas of study, and as such, factors such as linguistic variation (LV) in texts can be examined from a variety of perspectives. The most visible obstacle that a deliberate inclusion of dialect in a text presents is linguistic in nature, due to the notable contrast of lexicon, phonetics, syntax, and morphology with the standard language employed throughout the rest of the text, but a thorough translator will also want to take into account the sociological implications of a particular and how it relates to and affects the message relayed to a reader.

2.1.1 Linguistic Variation

To fully understand the implications that the inclusion of a dialect in text can present, it is helpful to examine what defines a dialect itself. Halliday (1964) was one of the first scholars to apply an academic approach to the variations present in language, asserting that all linguistic deviances can be attributed to either social or functional variation: respectively, variation dependent upon the user, and variation dependent on use (75). Under Halliday’s model, dialect falls under the former category, which he further divides into geographical, temporal, social, (non)standard, and idiolectal subcategories.

Halliday’s taxonomy is clearly not exclusive in its grouping; any instance of dialect, particularly when considered within the context of humor and translation, will likely convey information from multiple subcategories regarding the speaker, all of which can act as factors in a joke. A joke that depends on confusion between two speakers due to difference in accent, for example, depends on course on the phonological characteristics of the given accent, but might also play on stereotypes that the speaker of the non-standard dialect is poorly educated and therefore more likely to have trouble understanding a dialect apart from their own.

Hudson (1993) agrees with the vague nature of linguistic variation, stating “one man’s dialect is another man’s register” (51). His argument insists variation can not only simultaneously invoke sociolectal, geolectal, temporal, and idiolectal connotations, but also stretch across social and functional dimensions; this is to say that speakers can and will modulate dialectal futures of their speech in response to the register they find
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themselves operating in, an act that itself produces deeper social insinuations when taking into account the specific contexts to which a dialect is consciously or unconsciously prescribed by the speaker. Even more pertinent to this thesis is the consideration that certain dialects—namely Scottish English and AAVE (AAVE is prominent in Example 2 of the analysis)—are often traditionally employed for humorous purposes within their respective cultures, which arguably applies that their association with humor extends to an (perhaps derogatory) association with less formal and more demotic registers (Macaulay, 56) (Smokoski, 18).

This affiliation of dialects with lower registers, as well as their very often sociolectal component, is an important perspective to consider when examining them from a sociolinguistic mindset and offers an important insight into their literary role. Armstrong (2013) states “standardization is the expression of a broader ideology, to do with a hierarchical, as opposed to an egalitarian, view of how society should be order…standard borrows prestige from its users,” and further argues “very few speakers enjoy such linguistic security that they can neglect to adapt their speech to someone of different social status, and this is the root of stylistic or situational variation” (6). This is to say, ideological in nature or not, standard language is perceived as a “correct variety,” inevitably relegating dialectal variations to more informal registers; dialect humor very often plays upon this disparity, constructing deliberate juxtapositions against standard language to humorous effect.

2.1.2 Translation of Dialects

As the prominence of dialects as an aspect of literary texts existed for many centuries before the formation of translation studies as an academic field, the issue naturally was quickly addressed as a research question by scholars. In 1965, Catford published A Linguistic Theory of Translation, which asserted that linguistic variation can be classified into two main types: permanent, and transitory, or susceptible to shift according to register, style, and mood (303). Dialect falls into the permanent category under Catford’s classification, which he further separates into geographical, temporal, and social varieties. Catford’s proposed solution is to search for “equivalents”—an undoubtedly loaded term in the context of the 21st century—in the target language based on either topographical (that is to say, a purely geographic reference in the target culture) or spatial (social) criteria (146).
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What Catford’s model lacks is clearly a more comprehensive view of culture as a whole in his proposals. *Cultureme* is a commonly referenced term in present-day translation studies, referring to cultural information born by a linguistic unit (Katan, 79). Santamaria (2000) states, “culturemes perform a referential function that helps readers enlarge their knowledge about the fictional characters and settings authors portray… authors make use of CRs to help readers form certain mental representations about their characters” (416). This is precisely the function of dialect reproduction in literature; the presence of linguistic variation allows readers to infer a wider range of assumptions of the speaker based on the social/political, geographical, and temporal connotations attached to the dialect in the source culture; a supposed “equivalent” in the target culture, evidently, may not succeed in conveying all of this encoded information.

House (1997) takes more encompassing approach to the issue, not only defining dialect but also defining two distinct classes of “situational dimensions”: those of the language user (geographical origin, social class, and time) and those of language use (medium, participation, social role relationship, social attitude, and province) (42). The first three classifications cover the aspects outlined by Catford’s model, but by considering the additional context of the “user,” House is able to successfully to paint a more detailed picture of the entire information load that language variation in a text can convey. With regards to translation, unfortunately, her conclusion was that a completely inclusive solution cannot exist, implying that some sacrifices must be made in the translation process (Taylor, 82).

Moralistic standpoints on the matter of translating dialects, of course, do not aid to the dilemma of real-life translations. Countless strategies can and have been proposed to aid translators in determining a solution. Määttä (2004) hypothesizes that literature itself is a dialect, and that characters who speak in (representations of) dialects are automatically marked to the reader as distanced from the main body of speakers (320). He also takes care to note that written language in any form is a mere simulation of spoken language; in the particular case of dialects, the author chooses only some traits of spoken linguistic variation to reproduce in their text, and any literary instances are therefore not an entirely faithful representation (320). Määttä identifies four main techniques employed for creating these representations (321).

- Phonological (non-standard spelling can be employed to represent speech that deviates from standard pronunciation)
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- Morphosyntactic (grammar and syntactic structure)
- Lexical (vocabulary)
- Eye dialect (non-standard spelling that does not represent non-standard pronunciation, but does suggest an overly dialectal speech, lack of education, or general foreignness)

As far as translation goes, Määttä states that a translator must take into account what techniques have been used in the ST when determining a solution for their transmission in the TT. Additionally, he notes that several other factors come into play when considering how to translate a dialect; apart from his reiteration that no dialect in a piece of literature is a complete representation, Määttä states that all language is ideological, and as such the ideology implied by the use of a dialect must be a priority when engaging in the translation process (321). As a stylistic matter, he also notes that some languages and cultures have a lower tolerance to dialect representation in texts than others, which could limit options for solutions (322).

Along the same lines, Ramos Pinto (2009) conceptualized a branching typology of translation solutions for linguistic variation, considering solutions that preserve linguistic variation as a feature of the TT under the terms “spatial and temporal coordinates” of the ST (294). Each option detailed in the model offers different possibilities with regards to the preservation of deletion of connotative attributes possibly inferred by the linguistic variation of the ST, including formality, social and power relations, geographical collocation, and intelligibility to the reader. Assuming that the translator wishes to preserve the space (setting) of the ST, as is typical in most cases, the following solutions are possible:

If the translator chooses to employ features that are familiar to the target reader as non-standard-

- Use of a standard variety in direct discourse followed by written indications informing the reader that the character was speaking in a non-standard variety.
- Reduction of the linguistic variation to forms of address and honorifics
- Upgrading the level of standard discourse formality
- Use of oral discourse features
- Use of features from different non-standard varieties
- Use of features of specific non-standard varieties

If the translator chooses to employ features unfamiliar to the target reader as non-standard (Ramos Pinto echoes Maatta’s sentiment regarding the importance of considering target language literary culture when choosing a solution, stating that some cultures may not
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suspend their linguistic disbelief for the application of a native dialect to a character in a foreign setting, while others may not readily accept unfamiliar, constructed features as a representation of native dialect—

- The direct import of certain lexical features from the ST.
- The introduction of lexical features from the ST, but following spelling norms of the TT
- The development of a ‘virtual dialect’ (Ramos Pinto, 295)

It is important to note that both of these strategies tend to conceptualize dialect representations in relative terms to whatever other variation is employed in the narrative, which is not entirely illustrative of a sociolinguistic standpoint. While some research suggests that non-standard dialects may be more susceptible to conditioning their prestige counterparts, one is in no way “derived” from another (Kroch, 17). Corrius Zabalbeascoa’s work (2011) is a possible bridge to this gap, proposing as an alternative a model that identifies L1 (the principal linguistic variety of a ST), L2 (the target language), and L3 (a secondary linguistic variety—possibly a third language entirely, but dialectal for the purposes of this thesis—found in either the ST or TT), all of which operate independently from one another as separate elements (3).

The authors identify some of the challenges that an L3 presents when a text is to be translated, derived from its central function as a signal of “more than one identifiable speech community being portrayed or represented within a text” (5). Within the specific terms of dialect translation, Zabalbeascoa and Corrius’ model is useful because it still permits the utilization of the more traditional aforementioned techniques. In particular, they take care to make an allowance for an invented L3 in both the source and TTs; concerning the setting of dialect humor, this is important both in the perspective of (sometimes meaningless) stereotypes of dialects used as comedic devices, wherein the actual semantic content of speech carries less priority, as well as the possibility of creating an invented L3 as a solution, as is arguably paralleled in Ramos Pinto’s model (“development of a virtual dialect”).

### 2.2 Humor and its Translation

Humor and translation studies coincide in that both fields are protean in character, borrowing from heavily from preexisting sociological, psychological, and linguistic research to form their own theoretical base (Zabalbeascoa, 2005, 185). Both concepts
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evade concrete definition, with many different proposed schema arguing their respective conceptual frameworks. It is because of this many-armed form taken by both notions that an interdisciplinary approach is needed when dealing with an attempt to consolidate the two into any sort of model to be applied to the translation of humor; Zabalbeascoa speaks to this need for a comprehensive perspective when considering translation restrictions involving humor, stating “if there is insufficient dialogue and awareness of progress made in related fields (e.g., humor studies), certain translation problems and issues can only be addressed by applying “general” theoretical models and proposals” (186). As such, this section shall attempt to both provide a brief overview of humor theory, providing groundwork for readers to begin to understand examined samples of humor in an autonomous sense, as well as more particularized theories for humor translation, which are more applicable when analyzing them for purposes of translation; both perspectives offer insights into what may or may not be an appropriate solution.

2.2.1 Theories of Humor

Humor itself is a vaguely defined term that appears to serve a wide variety of contexts and meanings; Monro speaks to this semantic broadness, stating that the word “humor” can be applied to all literature and to all informal speech or writing in which the object is to amuse, or rouse laughter in, the reader or hearer.

“In its narrower sense, humor is distinguished from wit, satire, and farce. It is less intellectual and more imaginative than wit, being concerned more with character and situation than with plays upon words or upon ideas; more sympathetic and less cruel than satire; more subtle than farce. On the other side, it shades into fancy and imagination, since it is concerned, as they are, with exploring the possibilities of unlikely situations or combinations of ideas, but differs from them in being concerned only with the laughable aspects of these imagined situations.” (349)

Disregarding the loosest uses of the term and considering it from a theoretical perspective, arguments surrounding humor are classically divided into three main schools of thought: superiority theories, incongruity theories, and relief theories. As will be presently examined, each of these theories has its stronger points of applicability, but also appears to fail to extend to other instances of humor. Examining dialect humor from an angle based purely in “humor studies,” considering each of these three possibilities as a framework offers insights into its mechanisms, its nuances, and what translation might best serve to transfer its effects into a given TT and culture.
Superiority theories in general purport that humor derives from observing a perceived superiority, finding humor in the misfortune and inferiority of others (Monro, 350). This conceptualization seems credible enough when compared to classic instances of jokes built on slapstick comedy, villains getting their comeuppance, drunkards, and dunces. Indeed, it is likely arguable that a large portion of dialect humor falls under this umbrella, playing up to stereotypes in order to construct a joke (see Examples 1, 2, 4, and 6 of the analysis for instances of this). To illustrate the concept with the joke presented at the beginning of this thesis’s introduction, it could be asserted that the reader laughs at the stupidity of the waitress, oblivious to her miscomprehension of her customer’s accent. However, one might not find this answer to be completely satisfactorily—after all, does the humor of the joke not come from blurred line between ice and ass itself, caused by a Southern accent, rather than the misfortune of the waitress?

Incongruity theories attempt to explain this by arguing that humor manifests itself in the perception of disparity, or something that does not belong; as Monro describes it, “the abrupt intrusion into the attitude of something that is felt not to belong there, of some element that has strayed, as it were, from another compartment of our minds” (352). Notable manifestations will be seen in Examples 2, 3, and 5 of the analysis. Unlike superiority theory, incongruity also makes a much greater allowance for humor mechanisms such as wordplay, providing an explanation for why deliberate juxtapositions between words and ideas can be funny. Keeping this in mind, and applying the concept once again to the introduction’s joke, a reader might laugh because he or she finds the pronunciation of “ice” as “ass” to be incongruent with the innocent nature of the man’s request, further bolstered by the contextual exaggeration found in his hotel room romp with the waitress.

The final category, relief theory, is based in the argument that humor and the urge to laugh arises from a “removal of restraint” (354). In other words, events and ideas that cause stress or run contradictory to our sense of what is right are revealed to be untrue, provoking laughter as an expression of relief. This conceptualization is of course most obvious in classic comedic images such as a “BANG” flag emerging from a gun, revealing that there is no real bullet or risk of death, but proponents of the theory extend its applicability by asserting that relief is also found in a more abstract sense. If relief theory is to be believed, humor is a manner of relieving suppressed urges that may or cannot be acted upon: we laugh at lewd jokes because it relieves some of our own sexual
tension, we laugh at pranks at the expense of others because of our own suppressed urges toward malicious behavior, and we even laugh at wordplay because it relieves the pressure of normal linguistic conventions. Going back to dialect humor once more with the example of the introduction’s joke, a relief theorist might argue that the joke’s humor is found in the relief that the Southern gentlemen was never so forward to flaunt societal norms and solicit a waitress for some “ass,” but rather was asking for “ice” all along.

Each one of these humor theories clearly has its strengths and weaknesses, capable of making a compelling account for some instances of jokes and appearing to be rather far-fetched for others. In the same sense, not all instances of dialect humor are best explained by just one theory of humor; a joke that heavily relies on stereotypes and satire to drive its punchline is most receptive to classification under the superiority theory, while wordplay based on linguistic variation is generally better explained by incongruity. Relief theory, as Munro puts it, “accounts admirably for laughter at indecency, malice, and nonsense,” (which linguistic variation can of course contribute to) but in that same respect seems rather stretched when applied to jokes such as the example of the Southern gentleman where the dialect itself is the most blatant mechanism of the joke (355). Of course, there can be times when dialect is not central to a joke, but rather a contributing and reinforcing element. It is when these elements of humor must be translated that these perspectives are valuable; to begin to reconstruct a joke in a new language with possible new contextual disparities, it is helpful to the translator to understand how the joke originally functioned in the TT.

2.2.2 Translation of Humor

The principal challenge that presents itself when the task of translating a humorous text is undertaken, according to Vandaele, is that the ST relies essentially on implicit knowledge and cultural schemes; as target readers may not be included in the “comedic paradigm” that is privy to the humor of the original joke, challenges inevitably arise in the process of translation (150). However, Vandaele postulates that humor translation's greatest restriction lies in the fact “humor has a clear penchant for (socio)linguistic particularities (group-specific terms and “lects”) and for metalinguistic communication” (150). Devices such as dialect humor, both through wordplay and stereotypical referents, are some of the most commonly found across humorous texts. The difficulty is therefore translating humor that “may contain (clashes between) registers, dialects, sociolects, and
idiolects which have no straightforward equivalent in the target language” (Vandaele, 151).

To examine practical theories of humor translation often begins with reflections on priority, and how a translator might determine whether a joke must be preserved. Zabalbeascoa (2001) defines 4 “labels” for texts containing humor, ranging from negative contexts where humor is contradictory to the register of the text, to high (comedy) (257). Priority as a matter of including or deleting a joke will not enter as a very important factor in this work, as sitcoms fall under the latter category, and humor is the generally central element that must be translated. However, it may be possible to define elements of a joke that can be prioritized and retained while others are deleted as a tactic for reaching a solution.

Zabalbeascoa in the same work also proposes a classification of jokes in audiovisual texts and their common solutions, which can serve the translator by shedding light on possible conflicts with the target language and culture (259):

- International jokes: jokes that do not depend on wordplay or familiarity with a specific cultural context, and therefore function between at least two cultures (the source and target involved in any given translation).
- Cultural-institutional jokes: jokes that mock cultural elements and institutions (media, commercial brands, government, etc.). They typically require adaptation as a solution if the target culture does not have source culture knowledge, with solutions closer to the source culture than the target culture being preferable, or as an alternative, moving towards a more abstract level of context.
- National jokes: Stereotypes, prominent national topics, genres particular to the source culture, a “national sense of humor” (i.e. a willingness to engage in self-deprecating humor) which may not be accepted in the target culture or acceptance of topics that are more taboo in the TC.
- Linguistic-formal jokes: jokes that rely on linguistic phenomena such as polysemy, homophony, rhyme, metalinguistic references, etc., and strive to underline humorous relations between linguistic signs and their pragmatic uses. These types of jokes are obviously extremely difficult to translate.
- Nonverbal jokes: jokes that depend entirely on non-spoken elements (i.e. slapstick humor).
- Paralinguistic jokes: jokes that pair non-verbal elements with verbal elements, such as actions or gestures that match up with spoken dialogue.

As a final category, Zabalbeascoa includes the complex joke, as a manner of including jokes which may fall into multiple categories of the typology, and also mentions "degree of textual integration" with elements such as plot, characterization, or a series of jokes as factors to consider. This recalls the previous mention of priority; each translation problem
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presents the consideration as to whether the same joke must be preserved as a matter of plot or character, or if certain features of a multifaceted joke must be prioritized over others. However, in terms of dialect humor, we shall see that it mostly falls under the categories of cultural-institutional, national, and linguistic-formal, demanding sometimes abstract solutions from the translator.

In terms of concrete strategies for translating humor, very little literature has been written on the topic. Zabalbeascoa (2005) is one of the contributors to this area of investigation, proposing a binary branching scheme as an outline; a translator’s options progressively range from completely preserving the source joke, to proposing a similar joke, to proposing any joke, to employing some other form of compensatory tactic, or in the worst case, omitting the instance of humor altogether (200). Chiaro’s (2017) take on the topic is similar; she hypothesized four different possible solutions to ST humor: leaving the verbal humor unchanged, replacing the verbal humor with a different instance of verbal humor, replacing the verbal humor with an idiomatic expression (a more specific suggestion than Zabalbeascoa’s “compensatory tactic”), and lastly, ignoring the wordplay altogether (423).

Zabalbeascoa (2018) further adapted his binary branching scheme to address the question of multilingual humor, utilizing once again his aforementioned L3 framing of LV in texts. His work mainly examined interlingual samples, rather than the intralingual nature of dialectal variation, but is still pertinent to this work and its corpus in that it provides a highly visual perspective of translation, conceptualizing the logical process that a translator might pass through to arrive at a given solution (168). Notably, Zabalbeascoa’s model appears entirely dependent on what the translator determines to be the principal translation problem when an L3 is present, using it as a singular starting point (173); as he demonstrates, a translator may mark “L3” as the issue to build the tree from, but may also simply build from “humor”, in which case L3 is encompassed by “the same type of humor” as a primary solution, “unintelligible message” if the translator determines the misunderstanding generated by L3 in the ST to be the translation problem, and so forth (178).

Under this model, it is possible to test several different trees (this is to say, identifying several different potential “sources” of the problem) before succeeding in finding one that illustrates a satisfactory solution, or a satisfactory representation of the process undertaken to arrive at a solution (181). This “procedural” aspect is the focal point of
Translating Dialect Humor

Zabalbeascoa’s binary branching maps; while they provide valuable insights, their versatility comes from the fact that they do not classify solutions, but instead allows them to rise as necessary in response to any given tree and its starting point. It is not a general typological perspective that gives an overview of what kinds of solutions might exist for L3.

Davies is one of the very few that have specifically addressed dialect humor, analyzing the presence of dialect in jokes and the functions it can serve before arriving at four principal questions the translator must ask before the text should be reproduced in the target language (n.p.):

1. *Is the dialect worth translating?* This is to say, can the joke function without the element of dialect? Davies argues that humor undergoes natural “streamlining”, stating that unnecessary components are pruned because jokes must be easy to remember and deliver.
2. *Why is the dialect used?* Dialects are strong indicators of identity, whether it be geographical, ethnic, or social, and Davies believes that this information must be reflected in the translation.
3. *Why does the central character have said identity and how does it underpin the joke?* Once the identity reference is discerned, the function its associated stereotypes and connotations may be pinpointed in the joke.
4. *Bear in mind that a dialect may be a vehicle for nonsense humor.* Davies makes the caveat that a dialect may serve the sole function of being unintelligible to the average reader, in which case the translator should find a (dialect or non-dialect) solution that is equally unintelligible and funny, avoiding being confusing or infuriating to the target reader.

2.3 Audiovisual Restrictions

Factors of audiovisual translation will not play a large role in the analysis carried out in this work, but it is important to take into consideration some of the restrictions that the practice poses when evaluating translation solutions. More specifically, the principal concern is that of dubbing, as the corpus shall only consider dubbed translations, and not subtitling. Dubbing, of course, refers to translation of spoken dialogue in the ST, and a subsequent reproduction in the TT by TL actors and actresses. As will be seen, it can often limit the options of the translator and pose practical challenges.

The restriction that is unique to dubbing is synchronization; a translator must take physical factors into account when formulating their ideas for solutions, which can often dampen opportunities for more abstract or free solutions. Chaume (2004) identifies three main types of synchronization to be taken into account: isochrony, or an equivalency
Translating Dialect Humor

between the duration that the actor in the ST moves their mouth to speak and the span in which the TT actor must do so (this can be problematic when a disparity exists between the speech rates of a language pair— looking to that of this work’s case study, Spanish is typically spoken at a faster rate than English and fits more syllables into a given time span); phonetic synchrony, or a verisimilitude between the labial movements of the ST and TT actors, with the impression of vowels and bilabial consonants coming into approximate agreement; and kinetic synchrony, or a concordance of the TT with bodily movements and gestures of the actor in the ST (41). If the translation does not respect these synchronies, it can have the effect of breaking the illusion of an original dialogue and cause the target viewer to be conscious of the fact that they are watching a dub.

With regards to the case of sitcoms, one must remember that animated series typically constitute an exception to the rule (Examples 1 and 2 are animated); Chaume states “because the characters obviously do not speak, but rather move their lips almost randomly without actually pronouncing the words, a precise phonetic adaptation is not necessary, except in the case of extreme close-ups or detailed shots in which the character seemingly pronounces an open vowel” (46); it should be noted, however, that this statement is becoming increasingly outdated due to advances in current animation technology. It is also important to note that a translation destined for dubbing passes through a large quantity of production phases before reaching the recording studio for voice actors to interpret. Zabalbeascoa (2001) is careful to warn that the translator him/herself is very often only involved in the very first phase of production, providing more or less a “draft” TT, which is subsequently vulnerable to change by members of the production team without any further consultation with the translator (252).

3. Approaching Translation of Dialect Humor

A measured approach to translation of dialect humor, then, has an apparent wealth of factors to take into consideration before reaching into a solution. In practice, of course, decisions are much more intuitive and improvisatory—more suited to post-procedural dissection by models such as Zabalbeascoa’s binary branching tree—but drawing from the reviewed literature to form a descriptive method applicable to analysis, we can more or less define the following steps as a representation of a general typology of dialect humor translation solutions. Dialect, following the conventions of Zabalbeascoa and
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Corrius’ work, shall be referred to as L3 to aid in visualizing it as an independent factor of this model.

1. Examine the ST L3 joke in its own context.

Before even taking into the account the process of translation, the translator should endeavor to understand the mechanism, structure, and function of the joke in its original setting. Theories of humor can be helpful in determining how a joke works—particularly, superiority approaches for heavily stereotypical jokes, and incongruity for wordplay/linguistic jokes. The distinction between L1 and L3 can be identified, and L3 can begin to be considered as a joke feature.

2. Apply translation considerations to the joke.

Once a comprehensive understanding of the joke has been attained, the translator can start to classify the joke’s “translatability”—this is to say, does it have subject matter that is tied to L1/L3, i.e. national, cultural, or linguistic in nature? Are there any non-verbal elements that must be acknowledged?

3. Determine whether L3 can/should be preserved as a joke feature.

Ask the question: is L3 a central or secondary feature to the joke? How is it portrayed—phonological, morphosyntactic, or lexical variations, or eye dialect? Is the L3 portrayal simply intended to be nonsense, or does the actual content contain semantic meaning that is important to the text? Could it be delivered in L1 in the ST without the total loss of humor, and by extension, relegated to L2 in the TT? Do other translation problems inhibit otherwise viable L3 solutions in the TT?

4. Choose a solution

a. Preserve ST joke while maintaining L3 as a feature. This option is likely in cases where all joke material is relatively universal between L1 and L2, and an acceptable L3 equivalent exists in L2 culture. L3 may or may not be central to the joke.

b. Propose a new joke that does not resemble the ST joke but maintains the same L3 feature. This option is likely in cases where the joke material is problematic for translation and/or L3 is a central feature that ought to be preserved.

c. Preserve the ST joke but remove L3 as a feature: maintain the original joke but deliver it entirely in L2. This option is likely in cases where the source joke material is relatively universal between L1 and L2 cultures, but no acceptable L3 equivalent
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exists, or an otherwise acceptable L3 equivalent in L2 culture is inhibited by other translation restrictions of the joke that take priority. L3 is likely not a central feature.

d. Propose a similar new joke that does not include L3 as a feature: (likely in cases where L3 is not a central feature to the joke, an acceptable L3 equivalent does not exist, or an otherwise acceptable L3 equivalent in L2 culture is inhibited by other translation restrictions of the joke that take priority.

e. Propose a new joke entirely that does not include L3 as a feature: create a new joke that does not resemble the original joke and does not maintain L3 as a feature. Likely in cases where L1 joke material is problematic for transfer to L2 culture and an acceptable L3 equivalent does not exist in the L2 culture.

f. Employ some other form of compensatory tactic.

g. Delete the joke entirely.

5. In cases where L3 preserved, select a sub-solution (from Ramos Pintos, 295).

- Use of a standard variety in direct discourse followed by written indications informing the reader that the character was speaking in a non-standard variety.
- Reduction of the LV to forms of address and honorifics
- Upgrading the level of standard discourse formality
- Use of oral discourse features
- Use of features from different non-standard varieties
- Use of features of specific non-standard varieties
- The direct import of certain lexical features from the ST
- The introduction of lexical features from the ST, but following spelling norms of the TT
- The development of a ‘virtual dialect’

It should be noted that these proposed guidelines make allowances for written texts; in the case of the corpus, dubbing is the method of translation. As such, some solutions, such as translator’s notes or eye dialect, are not viable.

4. Corpus and Background

4.1 Dialect Humor as a Staple of American Comedy

Some scholars assert that dialect humor has been central to the definition of American comedy since its birth, found in instances of humor comparing Old World academics and aristocrats to their “plain country men” counterparts in the New World (Blair, xii). American culture still in fact, in many circles, places a great deal of value on the “common man,” rejecting education and worldliness as a default ideal. As the nation’s cultural trajectory steadily separated itself from its British roots, American humor, and by extension, dialect humor, continued to develop into a recognizable phenomenon in its
own right, with the focal contrast shifting from British and American speech to the speech of those in the urban mid-Atlantic to rural New Englanders, Southern farmers and settlers on the frontier.

Distinct ethnic and racial identities, one of the pillars of the American culture and history, entered into the body of literature produced by American humorists. Most famous of all are perhaps Mark Twain’s portrayals of the black vernacular spoken by slaves, and as a contrast to said dialect, uneducated white speech of the South; he very frequently employed eye dialect and phonetic spellings suggesting the pronunciation of dialect speakers. The use of African American speech as a comedic marker in American domains has remained in use to this day, not only in the deliberately racial material of comedians such as Chris Rock and Tyler Perry, but also in recent phenomenon such as meme culture, which will often employ AAVE to indicate the presence of humor (Smokoski, 35).

Equally significant to AAVE humor in terms of ethnic and racial groups is the expanse of humor produced by Jewish Americans. Jewish humor, existing long before the emergence of American comedy but enhanced within American culture nonetheless, has accrued a body of literature in its own right in the field of humor theory. It features irony, wordplay, and self-derogation as central characteristics, but above all, routinely employs portrayals and parodies of the English spoken within Jewish circles, often heavily accented by New York vowels and peppered with Yiddish words and phrases that can sound comical to the American ear (Attardo, 542). Time Magazine in 1978 estimated that 80% of professional stand-up comics in the US routinely featured on stage and television were Jewish, and individuals such as Jerry Seinfeld and Joan Rivers successfully marketed humor mocking Jewish-American culture to the wider population (TIME, n.p.).

Dialect humor as a comedy staple saw little delay in being transposed to audiovisual mediums. *I Love Lucy*, an early sitcom that enjoyed widespread popularity, first aired in 1951 and routinely employed jokes surrounding the character Ricky Ricardo’s heavy Cuban accent, and even occasionally veering from dialectal humor into multilingual territory, featuring gags involving poor translations and rapid, angry rants in Spanish. The film *Sixteen Candles*, released in 1984, is an example of dialect humor that has not stood the test of time; Gedde Watanabe’s portrayal of a heavily accented foreign exchange student is now considered by many to be offensive towards Asian Americans in a modern context. Academic literature has concerned itself with this perspective of the genre; even 30 years prior, Levenson had written a critical commentary of dialect humor on behalf of
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the American Jewish committee in 1952, evidently to little effect (Levenson, n.p.). In the most recent years, the sitcom has remained a familiar slot in American television production; as will be evident in analysis of its content, preservation of its American character is central to the task of its translation.

4.2 The American Sitcom

“Sitcom”, as a term in reference to a specific television genre, first appeared in the American publication *LIFE* in 1964, as a shortening of the phrase “situation comedy”, originating in *TV Guide* (Marc, 1). It had been employed and subsequently circulated as a descriptor of programs such as the (aforementioned) wildly popular *I Love Lucy*, whose creator William Asher has even been lauded as “the man who invented the sitcom” (Cook, n.p.). In general, it has been applied to comedy programs that feature a small cast of main characters alongside several recurring ones; while there can be arching plotlines that can stretch across seasons or even the entire series, episodes are usually self-contained and require little contextualization to understand plot or the jokes employed. Sitcom humor is very often heavily cultural in nature, playing on popular references and making fun of conventions and traditions.

The term appears to have been born alongside television as a popular, widely accessible audiovisual medium; while the sitcom has obvious precedents in radio productions such as *Our Miss Brooks*, no recorded use appears to exist before the 1950s at the very earliest (Marc, 1). Some historians indicate that the very first example of what may truly be considered a “sitcom” is in fact to be found in British production, with the 10-episode series *Pinwright's Progress* that was broadcast in the United Kingdom between 1946 and 1947, but further examination of the sitcoms evolution in the US market appears to indicate its propensity for dialect humor (Marc, 2).

Many very early sitcoms that were produced in the United States and later syndicated around the world were in fact adaptations of existing radio programs. As a general observation, American radio productions were often creative and ambitious with the voice acting employed due to the need to compensate for the lack of visual medium provided to the audience. Consequently, it was common for dialect humor to form a central part of comedic material; *The Goldbergs*, for example, a radio program that was directly adapted for television, frequently mocked the Jewish-American culture that dominated the greater New York City area, playing on comedic contrasts between the thick Ashkenazi accents...
Translating Dialect Humor

of older characters and the standard (albeit Bronx-affected) accents of younger characters (Marc, 2).

The effect of this reliance on ethnic and dialect humor in sitcom production, certainly not unique to *The Goldbergs*, is arguably that American audiences were essentially conditioned “from birth” to accept non-standard LV in the comedic media they consumed—even modern day American productions will often include a host of regional accents, and increasingly, languages (see popular series such as *Orange is the New Black*, *Modern Family*, and *Jane the Virgin* for regular inclusion of Spanish-language dialogue in original English productions), among their main cast of characters (Lippi-Green, 101). In a study carried out by Vilkensen (2013), as many as 30% of characters from a sample of popular American sitcoms spoke in non-standard dialects, with New York English and British English being the most common variants employed; dialectal variation was typically, but not always, reserved for secondary characters (Vilkensen, 76). The implication of this pattern, besides the likelihood that dialects are often used to quickly convey associated stereotypes to personify role that are not otherwise characterized through extensive screen time, is arguably that they are very frequently used for recurring or one-off jokes and bits, something that will be observed firsthand in the subsequent analysis.

4.3 Corpus

Proceeding forward with this theoretical framework to which real-world translation solutions can be subjected, a series of examples from various American sitcoms will be analyzed, examining both the original and the dubbed TT. *Family Guy*, *Friends*, and *Fuller House* have been selected, primarily for their success and popularity, and by extent, their widespread distribution internationally in the form of dubbing. Each show is heavily cultural in the character of its humor and the references employed by jokes, and by extent, regularly utilize LV as comedic material. A brief examination of each program provides an orientation for its analysis and an insight into how its humor operates.

*Family Guy* is an American animated sitcom that premiered on Fox in 1999 and has since ran for 17 seasons, accumulating a large fanbase and many accolades during its production. An arguable factor in its ride to popularity is its distinct character and format; *Family Guy* presents significant number of jokes in “cutaway” sequences that are not constrained by the plotline, which allow for it to fit in a high volume of material that is
not necessarily interrelated. Its relevance to this thesis is found in its extremely heavy
dependence on pop culture, commonly mocking and parodying American life. Crawford
argues that audiences are attracted to the show because they find pleasure and humor in
its constant nods to familiar content and experiences:

“Family Guy trades heavily on pop-culture nostalgia, with most of the fantastic
elements that intrude on the narrative coming straight out of television, film, or
general pop-culture history. The show appeals to people who grew up with
television, and episodes are steeped in the memories of old sitcoms and commercials.
The payoff for the viewer is the pleasure that accompanies the “knowingness” of
recognizing an obscure reference and the status elevation this can bring within a
community of fans (63).”

The series is currently shown around the world and has been dubbed into many languages.
The comedy of Family Guy, as stated, is based principally based in parodying American
culture; as a feature of this, the show regularly employs dialect humor, both in the form
of featured jokes and as more subtle character traits. Peter Griffin, the bumbling
protagonist, and his wife Lois, for example, both speak with heavy New England accents
characteristic of the uneducated and the working class; this adds an undeniable layer of
cultural reference, leaned upon, for instance, when Peter falls into his characteristic antics
where his (lack of) intelligence is the butt of the joke. Their infant son Stewie, by contrast,
speaks with an inexplicable posh British accent, a trait which is by no means a
coincidence in relation to his capacity for genius feats of technology and science and the
fact that he views himself as superior to his family members. Various others whose
dialectal features play into their character jokes make regular appearances: Mort
Goldman, a mising Jewish neighbor who speaks with a distinct Yiddish prosody;
Cleveland Brown (and his wife, Loretta), a friend of Peter’s who speaks an AAVE that
becomes particularly pronounced in moments of excitement or anger; Consuela, a
Hispanic maid who speaks heavily accented broken English and occasionally lapses into
Spanish; and many others.

Friends premiered on NBC in 1994 and ran for 10 seasons, airing its final episode in
2004. The show was highly popular throughout its production, consistently ranking
among the most viewed primetime programs in the US, and has not suffered in reruns,
continuing widespread syndication and featuring on streaming platforms such as Netflix.
The show proved to suit international tastes as well, becoming well known through
dubbed and subtitled versions abroad, often gaining a status as a sort of rose-tinted
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idealization of life in New York City, and as a result, serving as an outbound pipeline of American culture (Lubin, n.p.).

This profound cultural influence is not undocumented; Davies (2013) states that the trend-setting reach of the show extended from the hairstyles of women around the world to language itself (2). “Emma” quickly rose to become one of the most popular baby names in the US following the birth of the character Rachel’s daughter on the show; even more astounding, everyday speech patterns also saw an effect. Roberts and Tagliamonte found that a shift in intensifier usage—a change in preference for “so” (often employed by the characters), instead of the previously favored “very” in the UK and “really” in the US, had a direct correlation with the show’s run (288).

*Friends’* style of comedy is largely observational in nature, making witty observations and cutting parodies of everyday life. Dialect, as such, is a frequent element of the show’s jokes. While the main cast all speak in Standard American English, save for Joey, whose working-class Italian background is occasionally reflected in his speech, there are frequently secondary characters whose manner of speech contributes heavily to comedic material. Examples of this include Janice, Chandler’s Long Islander girlfriend whose accent is exaggerated to the point of parody; Emily, Ross’s English fiancé; Estelle, Joey’s Brooklyn-talking agent; and others.

*Fuller House* premiered on Netflix in 2016 and continues to run presently, currently in production of its fourth season. The show is a sequel series to *Full House*, an ABC program that ran from 1987-1995; a large part of the current series’ draw among viewers is a result of its conscious inclusion of nostalgic elements for viewers of the original show. This is often self-deprecating in nature, parodying the saccharine, “wholesome” nature of *Full House*, and free from the constraints of its mother series designation as “family programming.” *Fuller House* ventures more often into the territory of popular culture references and humor, including nods at politics and world events that were almost never seen in the original series. Dialect humor occasionally as a part of this domain, both in the form of throwaway jokes and recurring characters, such as Kimmy Gibbler’s Argentine husband, Fernando Guerrero, whose heavily accented English and occasional forays into Spanish are a frequent source of gags.

5. Analysis
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Example 1 comes from *Family Guy* (FG); Peter, one of the main characters of the show, has befriended a group of middle-aged women and joined their social circle, gossiping with them and insulting his wife Lois behind her back. His anthropomorphous pet dog, Brian, rebukes him upon learning this, giving a lead-in to a cutaway gag.

**Example 1 *Family Guy* S17E13 12:23**

**Brian:** Peter, Lois is your wife. You should be defending her, not talking trash and gossiping behind her back like some kind of Midwestern teenager.

*scene cuts away to high school hallway*

**Midwestern Teenager:** (heavy Midwestern accent) Did you gals hear about Ally Gallagher? She let Allan Ackerman smack her in the back with his tallywacker behind the snack shack.

**Girl 1:** What?

**Girl 2:** Nobody here in Maryland understands a single word you’re saying.

**Girl 1:** You should move back to Minnesota.

**Midwestern Teenager:** I can’t go back, I Snapchatted Matt Gackerack a Kodak of my ass crack.

L1 in the joke is the standard American English spoken by Peter and Brian (Peter’s Rhode Island accent does not come in to play in this particular instance), while L3 is the exaggerated Upper Midwest accent spoken by the subject of the joke, which in terms of phonemes alone can sound odd and humorous to standard L1 speakers (the audience). Considered in terms of theories of humor, the joke appears to be well characterized by the superiority theory, evidenced by the demeaning nature of Brian’s reference to a “Midwestern teenager”; a literal conceptualization could be “your behavior puts you on the level of this gossiping individual who speaks with a ridiculous accent.”

Translation presents obvious problems. Viewed through the lens of Zabalbeascoa’s joke types, the joke appears to be both national and (overwhelmingly) linguistic. Target viewers will likely not be familiar with American geography to the point of being able to recognize the geographical reference of the Midwest, nor the potential stereotype inferred by the context: most areas of the Midwest of rural and sparsely populated, consisting of small towns where people (stereotypically) are more likely to gossip. The principal
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mechanism of the joke, and the representation of L3, lies in the heavy use of words containing the vowel /æ/ (gals, Ally, Gallagher, etc.), which in Upper Midwestern English commonly has a preceding palatal approximant /j/ inserted. The repetition and exaggeration of the phonetic feature provides a comedic effect, and opens the dialect and its associated culture itself for ridicule.

As previously stated, L3 is primarily signaled through phonetic devices. Other potential markers—lexicons such as “gals” and “tallywacker”—are not heavily associated with the Midwest in particular and were more likely selected because of their phonology. To this end, the actual semantic content of the Midwestern teenager’s dialogue appears to be relatively unimportant; although the vocabulary employed is humorous, the content of the dialogue only seems to under the textual constraints of being gossip, and serving as an obvious (and humorous) exaggeration of an accent. As a result, L3 is very much a central feature to the source joke, which could not be delivered in L1 with the same effect; with that said, the inclusion of L3 serves very little textual function, plausibly leaving the possibility for the substitution of a non-L3 joke in the TT. Few non-verbal factors come in to play, especially considering that lip synchrony is not a major consideration with animated mediums. The dubbed version for Spain for example 1 has been transcribed below.

Example 1 Dub-Spain

**Brian**: Peter, Lois es tu esposa. Deberías defenderla, no hablar mal de ella y codiciar a sus espaldas como una adolescente del medio oeste.

**Midwestern Teenager**: ¿Os habéis enterado de lo de Ally Gallagher? Dejó que Allan Ackerman le metiera la chistorra en el potorro detrás de los tigres.

**Girl 1**: ¿Qué?

**Girl 2**: Que sepas que en Maryland no entendemos ni una sola palabra.

**Girl 1**: Deberías volverte a Minnesota.

**Midwestern Teenager**: No puedo volver, le envié a Matt Gackerack un selfie de todo mi bullarengue.

With regards to the audible aspect, it is important to note that the Midwestern Teenager in this case does not speak with any accent that differs from the standard peninsular
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Spanish spoken by all other characters. It might be said otherwise that L3 were in this case deleted as a joke feature, but the retention of “no entendemos ni una palabra” in the TT implicates the presence of some form of an L3. An attempt to preserve the “same” joke has evidently been made, but the only potential indication of linguistic variation is found the use of lexicon (“chistorra”, “potorro”, and in particular, “bullarengue”) that deviates from standard European Spanish. One possible explanation is that the translator has focused in on the use of “odd” terms in the source such as “tallywacker,” assigning them an individual comedic value in the source joke that was arguably outweighed by their phonetic contribution to an all-the-more cohesive joke provided by the Midwestern accent of the teenager. As a whole, in any case, the solution “works” in the minimal logistic sense that the solution includes an import of these lexical features as an L3 sub-solution, which are sufficiently obscure in L2 to illustrate a degree of LV. However, the solution might suffer from lack of clarity, or a failure to produce a notable degree of humor with the vocabulary chosen. The Latin American (LA) dub is transcribed below.

**Example 1 Dub- LA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brian: Peter, Lois es tu esposa. Deberías defenderla, no ponerla a caldo y chismear a sus espaldas como una adolescente del medio oeste.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midwestern Teenager</strong>: Chicas, ¿escucharon lo de Alla Galagher? Dejó que Allan Ackerman le pegara en la espalda con su pene detrás de la cafetería.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girl 1</strong>: ¿Qué?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girl 2</strong>: Nadie en Maryland entiende ni una palabra de lo que estás diciendo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girl 1</strong>: Deberías regresar a Minnesota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midwestern Teenager</strong>: No puedo volver, le mandé fotos de mi trasero por chat a Matt Gackerack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the solution presented here, it is important to make a note about the phonetic aspect of the dub; while there is a noticeable difference in the speech of the Midwestern Teenager as compared to the standard Latin American speech of the other characters, it is unclear as to whether the variation is dialectal (or an attempt thereof). The speaker’s pronunciation of /s/ more closely resembles the retracted sibilant common to Spain than the clear-cut [s] employed in Latin American Spanish, but does not include other phonemes that would clearly mark it as a dialect representation. It is possible that the differences are simply idiolectal. In any case, lexical variations have been deleted in the
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translation, instead employing a very literal transcription of the dialogue in the ST. This would leave by elimination “preservation of the ST joke without L3 maintenance.” However, just as in the European dub, the presence of an L3 is virtually mandated by “Nadie en Maryland entiende ni una palabra de lo que estás diciendo.” As such, the translation suffers due to the lack of any discernable L3 when one is indicated, and very little humor mechanism besides the internationality of humor in vulgar speech and/or gossip is left behind.

Example 2 also comes from Family Guy. In this excerpt, Brian has gone to investigate a strange noise outside, and finds himself confronted with a (similarly anthropomorphous) skunk rooting through the family’s garbage cans.

**Example 2 Family Guy S12E18 3:27**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brian</th>
<th>Hey, who the hell knocked over the garbage ca- woah, woah, woah, hey, hey, I don’t want any trouble!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skunk</td>
<td>(speaking in AAVE) Well, you in the wrong place if you ain’t lookin’ for trouble, boy. NOTHING but trouble out he-uh. Big ol’ hoot owl come down, scoop you up, take you eye out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Alright, well, you can at least clean this stuff up when you’re done? Otherwise it’s gonna start to smell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skunk</td>
<td>Oh, you don’t like smell, huh? Well sniff on this!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Ah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skunk</td>
<td><em>laughs</em> Yeah, you got that stink all up on you now!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The joke in this scene operates mainly on the premise that most US viewers—the ST’s primary audience—are familiar with the nuisance of skunks digging through trash cans, and spraying people or animals unfortunate enough to come near them with a stench that does not dissipate for several days. It is not unusual for a dog let out the back door to pee to come back in reeking of skunk (much to the owner’s despair). In this respect, the joke presents a certain degree of incongruency; the humor comes from the personification of the skunk and the assignment of malicious intent to its attack on Brian, who attempts to reason with it. L3, therefore, is more of a secondary feature in the joke, contributing to the personification of the skunk rather than functioning as the mechanism of humor itself. AAVE of course serves as L3 in the source joke, offering stereotypes in the source culture.
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about “ghetto” black men as being more likely to commit a crime or engage in unprovoked violence; this particular nuance can be viewed from a superiority standpoint.

In terms of translation, the joke is multifaceted. The humorous concept of personified animals is very much international, but the element of the skunk is slightly more national; target viewers are almost certain to know what a skunk is and of its ability to spray, but will perhaps not relate as much to the joke’s exaggeration of a sprayed pet as a household nuisance. The inclusion of the L3 is cultural and linguistic, and L3 in the ST is heavily represented through phonetic, lexical, and morphosyntactic features. The joke does include nonverbal elements (the trash cans, and Brian being sprayed by the skunk), and furthermore serves a textual function, as the problem of Brian’s stench is subsequently a reoccurring plot point in the episode.

The solutions chosen in the dubbed versions for both Spain and Latin America dub were virtually identical, save for phonetic and minor lexical differences between the standard varieties of both dialects, and the consideration that the skunk’s native range extends to some northern regions of Mexico. As such, only the European dub shall be examined in this case (transcribed below).

Example 2 Dub-Spain

| Brian: | Eh, ¿quién demonios ha tirado el cubo de basura- eh, eh, uy, uy- no quiero problemas. |
| Skunk: | Pues te has equivocado de sitio si no quieres problemas, chico. Porque aquí no hay más que problemas. Aquí baja el búho gigante, te agarra, ¡y te saca un ojo! |
| Brian: | ¿Puedes al menos limpiar todo esto cuando hayas terminado? Porque si no, pronto empezará a oler. |
| Skunk: | O sea, que no te gustan los olores, ¿eh? ¡Pues huele esto! |
| Brian: | ¡Ah! |
| Skunk: | *laughs* Sí, ahora tienes el pestazo pegado a todo el cuerpo! |

It should be firstly noted that both characters in the dubs speak in standard peninsular Spanish, with no indication of LV on the skunk’s part. The main body of the joke concerning the exchange between Brian and the skunk, however, has been preserved. The solution may therefore be best described as “preservation of the ST joke while removing ST as a feature.” While the cultural/linguistic inclusion of an L3 contributed to the principal international aspect of personified animals, the TT joke was robust enough to
function without this added nuance, albeit possibly without the national facet of a viewer being able to personally identify with the problem of a sprayed pet.

Example 3 comes from the program *Friends*; Ross, a main character who works as a doctor of paleontology, has just begin a new position as a university professor and inexplicably found himself imitating a British accent while giving his first lecture due to his extreme nerves. His sister, Monica, and her friend, Rachel, come to observe his lecture and are quick to notice his change of accent, joining in to his consternation and inventing accents of their own.

**Example 3** *Friends* S06E04 11:40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ross</strong></td>
<td>(American accent) I got up there and they were all staring at me. I opened my mouth and the British accent just came out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rachel</strong></td>
<td>Yeah, not a very good one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ross</strong></td>
<td>Will you please...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dr. Rathman</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Geller? Kurt Rathman. I’m a professor in the paleontology department here. Do you have a moment to talk about your lecture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ross</strong></td>
<td>(English accent) I’m sorry, I’ve got plans with my sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monica</strong></td>
<td>Monica Geller (trills “r” heavily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ross</strong></td>
<td>(English accent) Right, will you excuse us for one moment? (To Monica, in American accent) What are you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monica</strong></td>
<td>(American accent) Oh, you can have an accent, but I can’t? (To passing students, in Irish accent) Top o’ the marnin’ to ya, laddies!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ross</strong></td>
<td>Just, please, stop!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>the two turn back to Rachel and Dr. Rathman</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rachel</strong></td>
<td>(To Kurt, in Indian accent) Yes, yes, Bombay is very very nice this time of year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The driving force behind the humor in example 3 does not appear to be a question of superiority, but rather one of incongruency; audiences laugh because they are aware that Ross, and subsequently Monica and Rachel, speak with a standard American accent (L1 in this joke), and the sudden appearance of new accents (there are multiple L3s) is
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inconsistent with their characters to the point of being ridiculous. L3 is represented both phonetically and through lexicon such as a transitionary “right”, “top o’ the marnin”, and “laddies”. In terms of translation, the exact mechanism of the joke, or the use of accents, is perhaps linguistic, but the general concept itself is fairly international: a character complicating their work situation by nervously slipping into an imitation of a different accent is not something is a joke that could arguably work in most languages. The obstacle arises in the dilemma of how much an audience will accept as credible in the TT dub. As target viewers are aware that the Friends characters live in New York, and if disbelief is to be suspended, speak English, the simple substitution of a regional Spanish accent may not be accepted. As far as other limitations, a non-verbal factor comes in to play—when Monica shouts “top o’ the marnin’ to ya,” she moves her arms in a manner that appears to suggest something along the lines of an Irish dancer or a leprechaun, which must be considered when translating.

Example 3 Dub-Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ross</th>
<th>Cuando iba a empezar, todos me miraban fijamente. He abierto la boca y me ha salido un extraño acento.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Sí, uno no demasiado bueno.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>¿Podéis dejarme en paz?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Rathman</td>
<td>Dr. Geller- Kurt Rathman. Soy profesor del departamento de paleontología. ¿Podríamos comentar su ponencia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>(with “accent”) Lo siento, había hecho planes con mi hermana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>Monica Geller (trills “r” heavily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>(with accent) Exacto, nos disculpa un momento. (To Monica, with normal voice) ¿Qué estás haciendo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>¿Tú puedes hablar raro y yo no? (To passing students) ¡Pasad un buen día, chavolotes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>¿Quieres dejarlo? Por favor, ya basta!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the two turn back to Rachel and Dr. Rathman*
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Rachel: (To Kurt, in indeterminable accent) Sí, sí. Bombay está precioso en esta época del año.

Addressing first the audible/phonetic aspect of the dub, it must be noted that Ross does not appear to speak with any determinable accent. His pronunciation and vocabulary do not deviate from the standard Spanish dialect normally spoken by the actors; however, he does employ an odd rising-and-falling, somewhat overly dramatic intonation. The translators in this instance had little choice in whether to include L3/the joke as a whole in their solution, as L3 is the focus of the joke and serves a textual function as a plot point in the episode. Consequently, an attempt to deliver the “same” joke in L2, Spanish, would make little sense—some might say as such with the solution detailed above.

The translator chose to use the same joke as the source; it is not necessarily a case of “preserving the ST joke but removing L3 as a feature,” as stated in this work’s model, as some attempt of including an L3 has apparently been made, and as previously stated, the joke is unable to function without L3 as a central feature. However, if we are to take a critical stance, the solution fails to produce an overly humorous effect precisely because the sub-solution for L3 is not sufficient in its compensation for the ST. The character’s reference to the presence of L3 as an “extraño acento” despite the fact that it is not an apparent imitation of any particular dialect only furthers potential confusion for the target viewer. Monica and Rachel’s instances of L3 are slightly less obscure in this respect; Monica’s speech comes off a little more clearly as an attempt to be overly informal and “hip”, or in linguistic terms, employing a register and sociolect not natural to her character, while Rachel’s L3 production is more identifiably foreign, in passable agreement with her line’s reference to Bombay. The Latin American dub took a markedly different approach.

Example 3 Dub-LA

Ross: Subí allí y todos se quedaron viéndome. ¡Abrí la boca y apareció este acento británico!

Rachel: Sí, y no es muy auténtico.

Ross: Por favor…

Dr. Rathman: Dr. Geller? Kurt Rathman. Soy un profesor del departamento de paleontología. ¿Podriamos hablar de su cátedra?
Examining the solution taken by in the translation, it is a clear-cut case of preserving the ST and maintaining L3 as a feature. A dialect-for-dialect solution has been employed, using features from a nonstandard target language dialect as a substitution for Ross’s British accent in the ST. Opinions on the “funniness” of English-accented Spanish aside, the downfall of this solution could be said to be dilemma of suspension of disbelief. As many target viewers are aware that the characters they are watching are in theory speaking English, the employment of any natural L2 accent or dialect brings an awareness to the fact that they are watching a dub; the realization that Ross’s language is affected by a non-native accent of the very language he is supposedly speaking could potentially remove humor from the joke. A parallel argument might exist for a hypothetical solution in which the ST L3 is replaced by a native Spanish dialect in the TT; audiences might more readily laugh at natural LV that they know and identify—perhaps even a particular variety that is commonly seen as humorous, such as Andalusian Spanish for European viewers—but runs the same risk of breaking the illusion of originality created by a dub.

The second sample from *Friends* (example 4) centers on an exchange between one of the protagonists, Joey, who works as an actor, and his agent Estelle.

**Example 4 Friends** S12 E10 8:26

*Estelle: *speaking on the phone* (strong New York accent) No. No, no, no, no, I’m not saying you’re not talented, dear, you’re very talented. It’s just that with the bird dead and all, there’s very little act left. Oh, honey, give me a break, will you?

*Joey knocks and enters*
Translating Dialect Humor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estelle:</th>
<th>Oh, I’ll talk to you later. Well, there’s my favorite (“favorite” is particularly marked, pronounced “fay-VU-rit”) client! So, tell me darling, how was the audition?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joey:</td>
<td>Well, I think it went pretty well. I got a callback for Thursday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle:</td>
<td>Joey! Have you ever seen me ecstatic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey:</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle:</td>
<td>Well, here it is. <em>Attempts a smile that appears more to be a grimace</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The humor in this scene is tied heavily to the character of Estelle as a whole. With the context of the entire series, viewers are aware that Estelle is an eccentric, brusque, and elderly woman, rather ironically working in the “younger” territory of show business. Her appearance, with excessive hair and makeup and gaudy jewelry, as well as a cluttered, antiquated office, her perpetual cigarette in-hand and her resultant raspy voice as well as a distinctive, somewhat old-fashioned New York accent, and the constant impression that her talent agency is on the brink of collapse all contribute to the ridiculousness of her character as a recurring gag; this may be viewed through the lens of superiority, or incongruency, if one considers the humor to stem from the fact that Estelle does not resemble what one would imagine a New York City talent agent to be.

We can also individually examine the original jokes that come into play; Estelle’s comment during her phone call regarding the dead bird paints an incongruous picture (a magician without a live bird to fly out of his top hat, or something along those lines), or allows the viewer to laugh out of superiority at the magician who wishes to continue without his main prop. Her question “have you ever seen me ecstatic” and the subsequent “smile” also blur between superiority and incongruity, as viewers can both laugh at the dissonance between her expression and her supposed “ecstasy” as well as her inability to express happiness itself, a continuation of the gag of her character’s aforementioned brusqueness. L3, then, is arguably both her NY accent as well as the more idiolectal traits found in her smoker’s rasp and her joyless delivery. Dialectal traits are found principally in Estelle’s pronunciation.

Moving on to translation considerations, the scene can be said to employ primarily international jokes (the “dead bird” joke and Estelle’s “ecstatic smile”)—theater acts involving birds are binational between the source and target cultures, while emotional expressions are of course universal—while the gimmick of Estelle’s character is more cultural in nature. Nonetheless, it is important to note that even most aspects of the
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character joke of Estelle—that is to say, the previously described incongruency with the more “glitzy” world of New York show business—are able to work in the TT, as the notion of a talent agent as a relatively young, savvy individual are also arguably held in the target culture; furthermore, New York in the target culture is often idealized high-paced and glamorous, which only serves to strengthen the gag. The L3 aspect, however—the use of a heavy, outdated New York accent (this type of LV is typically restricted to elderly, typically lower-class individuals) is problematic for translation, given the lack of an L2 equivalent. There are no real non-verbal factors with regards to L3, and it does not serve (in this episode) a textual function.

The dubbed version for Spain is subsequently transcribed. The Latin American transcription has not been included due to its near-identicality, apart from the standard variety employed by dubbers.

Example 4 Dub-Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estelle:</th>
<th><em>speaking on the phone</em> No, no, no, no, no he dicho que no tengas talento. ¡Tienes mucho talento! Es sólo que ahora que se te ha muerto el pájaro, tendrás que cambiar de número.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Joey knocks and enters</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle:</td>
<td>Venga, cariño, déjame respirar, ¿vale? Te llamaré luego. Vaya, aquí está mi cliente favorito. Díme, cariño, ¿cómo te ha ido la audición?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey:</td>
<td>Bueno, creo que ha ido bastante bien, tengo una segunda prueba el jueves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle:</td>
<td>Joey. ¿Alguna vez me has visto extasiada?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey:</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle:</td>
<td>Pues, ahora me verás. <em>Attempts a smile that appears more to be a grimace</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In respect to L3 in the translation, Estelle does not speak with any discernable LV. Interestingly, aside from the absence of any regional accent, the idiolectal aspect of her raspy tone has also been omitted; this could be (weakly) explained by the fact that smoking in the US is less prevalent and more associated with the elderly and/or people of lower socioeconomic class, which is not a reflection of the case in Spain (where smoking is not heavily stigmatized among youth or upper classes), nor Latin America (where smoking is overall even less common than in the US). Overall, given the internationality of all jokes and gags present, the dub has opted for a “preservation of the ST joke while removing L3 as a feature”, rightfully labeling L3 as a secondary feature to the joke.
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The next sample comes from the Netflix series *Fuller House*; Stephanie Tanner, the sister of protagonist DJ Tanner, has returned to San Francisco unexpectedly from a stint working abroad in London as a DJ. As a result of her time living in England, she has lost her normal American accent to a British one, either unaware of the change or unable to switch back (to the consternation of Danny, her father, and Becky, her aunt).

**Example 5 *Fuller House* S1E1 3:46**

**DJ**: I thought you were stuck in England!

**Stephanie**: (English accent) Oh, no, love, I just wanted to make a flashy entrance!

**Danny**: Steph, that accent’s really cute. Would you please stop doing it?

**Stephanie**: What accent? Oh, daddums, don’t be daft!

(Later, when all are seated around the breakfast table)

**Stephanie**: Becky, could you please pass the “wa-uh”? (“water” is pronounced Cockney-style with a glottal stop)

**Becky**: It’s “water”.

**Stephanie**: “Wa-uh”.

**All**: “Wa-ter!”

**Stephanie**: Just pass the OJ.

The sample of the ST here contains two separate jokes, albeit linked together by the running gag of an incongruent British accent affected by Stephanie. The first instance of humor appears to be exactly that: a joke best supported by the incongruency approach. The source audience in particular is likely familiar with the character, given the show’s status as a sequel series to the program *Full House* aired during the 80s and 90s, or at the very least can contextually infer that Stephanie is family to the rest of the American cast, and as such is deviating from her natural speech. The second tends more towards a superiority approach, with the rest of the Tanner family mocking Stephanie’s pronunciation of “water”, or alternatively, a continued incongruency approach if one considers the underlined disparity between American and British pronunciation. L1 is standard American English, while L3 is British English, represented both phonetically
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through Stephanie’s pronunciation, and lexically, through the use of words such as “love” (as a term of endearment), “daddums” as a diminutive of “dad”, and “daft.”

Applying translation considerations, the two jokes both involve national and linguistic elements: national deriving from any mockery or stereotyping with respect to Stephanie’s accent, and linguistic from the humor produced by Stephanie’s pronunciation (“water”, in particular) and word choice. The first exchange regarding Stephanie’s accent is cohesive to the text, but the second joke surrounding the pronunciation of water does not serve much textual purpose in terms of the plot; the only critical function it provides is to underline the difference between L1 and L3. Few non-verbal elements enter into the joke, save for a gesture by Stephanie when asking to be passed the orange juice.

A transcription of the version dubbed for Spain follows.

**Example 5 Dub- Spain**

| **DJ:** ¿No estabas atrapada en Inglaterra? |
| **Stephanie:** No, querida, sólo quería hacer una entrada triunfal. |
| **Danny:** Steph, es super mono ese acento. ¿Paras ya, por favor? |
| **Stephanie:** ¿Qué acento? Ay, papito, no seas tonto. |
| … |
| **Stephanie:** Becky, ¿Becky, me pasas el “acua” por favor? |
| **Becky:** Es “agua”. |
| **Stephanie:** “Acua”… |
| **Todos:** ¡Agua! |
| **Stephanie:** O sea, pásame el zumo. |

The solution taken by the translators in this case best fits in the category of preserving the ST joke and maintaining L3 as a feature, with perhaps any critical caveat lying in the clarity and effectiveness of an L3 sub-solution. In terms of an L3 sub-solution, the case leans toward the employment of features (in this case, phonetic) from a non-standard variety, as well as the import of lexical features, to debatable effect. L3 in the dub is not any clear regional variety; if it is to be classified under any discernible variation, it might be sociolectal in nature, as the dubbing voice actress seems to affect a somewhat
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pretentious intonation that comes across as an attempt to seem “pijo” within L2 culture. This is slightly muddled by the fact that the L3 solution lacks cohesion with the preserved textual reference to England, as well as use of “papito”, a diminutive lexicon that is more typical of Latin America than Spain; it seems likely that translator sought an equivalent for “daddums” in the ST without perhaps considering its tie to the original L3. The second joke of the sample— the “acua” exchange— is not an obvious continuation of the L3 gag, and as a result loses much of its original humor.

The version dubbed for Latin America follows.

**Example 5 Dub- LA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DJ</th>
<th>¡Pensaba que estabas en España!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie:</strong> (Spanish accent) No, amor, sólo quería una entrada rimbombante.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danny:</strong> Steph, hablas con un acento extraño. ¿Puedes detenerte?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie:</strong> ¿Qué acento? Oh, padre, ¡no seas necio!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie:</strong> Becky, pásame el H2O.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becky:</strong> Es agua.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie:</strong> ¿H2O?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All:</strong> ¡Agua!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephanie:</strong> Pásame el jugo, ya.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, the solution taken in the Latin American solution is a more direct case of source joke preservation with L3 maintenance. L3 in the translation is represented by a clearly peninsular Spanish dialect, contrasting with the L2 (neutral Latin American Spanish). L3 is solely expressed through phonetic differences, with none of the lexical variation included in the ST. The solution is effective in the sense that L3 is immediately recognizable to the audience, and cohesive with corresponding changes made to accommodate textual restrictions (substitution of plot references to “England” and “London” with “Spain” and “Madrid”, respectively). However, criticism might be found in the same restriction presented by the Latin American solution for the previously
examined sample from Friends; the obvious inclusion of L2 culture and LV brings awareness to the dubbed state of the program.

The answer to the debate is of course found in how much humor and cohesion is prioritized over other factors such as faithfulness to the ST and source jokes, as well as considerations such as the “credibility” of a dub to an audience, or in other words, ensuring that a viewer’s attention is not drawn to the fact that they are watching a translation. If the Latin American L3 solution is to be accepted, an argument for improvement might be found when examining the “water” joke. The translators chose to avoid the linguistic-formal joke employed in the ST, choosing instead to substitute the ST variation with a contrast between “agua” and “H2O.” As seen with the European dub, the joke loses humor because it is not cohesive to the plot point of Stephanie having acquired a new accent while abroad. A possible alternative is a simple alteration of the joke, substituting “water” for an existing L3/L2 contrast in the ST: “zumo” and “jugo”, for example. The conflict with the subsequent line, “pásame el jugo, ya” is resolved with an adjustment to a different beverage, such as milk.

This direct L3 substitution as a solution is not restricted to the Latin American domain; it has the potential to work within the European Spanish dub as well. References to England are easily changeable to an American Hispanophone country, such as Mexico or Argentina, with a respective adjustment to the L3 represented, and a simple inversion of the “zumo/jugo” solution previously proposed. Nonetheless, there is also the possibility of proposing a new joke as a solution. For instance, considering the brevity of L3’s presence in the episode (only some 4 or 5 minutes in total) and the fact that Stephanie’s character is established to have worked as a DJ in nightclubs while abroad, it could be possible to delete any reference to LV and instead have Stephanie speak excessively loud as a result of hearing loss from exposure to loud music; lines such as “hablas con un acento extraño” could be modified to “hablas muy alto.” Apart from functioning within the textual and plot boundaries of the ST, the joke would be overall more international in nature and less likely to draw intention to the translated state of the TT. The restriction in this case would principally be the need to conform to lip synchronization and would require more careful work on the part of the translator, which may or may not be permitted by time and budget constraints.
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Our last sample, Example 6, also comes from *Fuller House*. In this scene, DJ, Stephanie, and DJ’s best friend, Kimmy Gibbler, have gone to a night club there. While there, they encounter Fernando, Kimmy’s Argentinian husband whom she is in the process of divorcing. Fernando engages in one of his repeated attempts to seduce Kimmy and reconcile their marriage, inviting her to dance.

**Example 6 *Fuller House* S1E3 13:08**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fernando: (Argentinian accent) Kimberlina, may I have this dance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Kimmy shakes her head</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fernando begins to move his hips in time to the music</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fernando:** Look what you have done to my hips!

*Fernando begins to move his shoulders as well*

**Fernando:** Now look what you have done to my shoulders! Everything is wiggling!

**DJ:** Ignore him.

**Kimmy:** (imitating Fernando’s accent) But everything is wiggling!

*Kimmy takes Fernando’s hand and moves to the dance floor*

The humor in this particular joke, like the previously seen example of Estelle from *Friends*, partly lies in the character of Fernando himself. Fernando plays up to American stereotypes (suggesting a superiority viewpoint) of Latin men as handsome, seductive, and talented dancers, with his extremely heavy accent (L3 in this sample) contributing to the caricature. However, the in-text joke found in “everything is wiggling” is more divided in nature between superiority and incongruity theories; the viewer can both laugh at the incongruity of “everything is wiggling” (in conjunction with Fernando’s exaggerated dance moves), because it is a strange way to describe one’s dancing, and laugh through a perception of superiority in regards to Fernando having said it, bolstered by the fact that his odd word choice both has an explanation (Fernando is not a native English speaker) and that Kimmy herself subsequently draws attention to his imperfect English through her imitation. Taking this into account, L3 is conveyed phonetically through Fernando’s accent, as well as lexically, with his unnatural word choice and use of the diminutive “Kimberlina.”
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Considering translation, the joke firstly has nonverbal elements that are important to take into account. However, Fernando’s dancing is not necessarily a hampering factor for translation; their humor is international in nature and can produce an equally comedic effect in the ST. “Everything is wiggling”, then, can be classified as “linguistic-formal”, as the humor comes from a strange choice of lexicon; Fernando’s accent, and use of Spanish-isms such as “Kimberlina”, also fall under this category. Stereotypes of Latin men are delegated to the “national” category. The joke carries some textual function, as the exchange leads into the next scene, but the L3 aspect does not.

A transcription of the version dubbed for Spain follows; The Latin American dub will not be transcribed due to its similarity, but will be discussed.

Example 6 Dub- Spain

| Fernando: (Argentinian accent) Kimberlina, ¿me concedes este baile? |
| *Kimmy shakes her head* |
| *Fernando begins to move his hips in time to the music* |
| Fernando: Mira lo que haces con mis caderas. |
| *Fernando begins to move his shoulders as well* |
| Fernando: ¡Y ahora mira lo que haces con mis hombros! ¡Todo se me contonea! |
| DJ: Pasa de él. |
| Kimmy: ¡Pero es que todo se le contonea! |
| *Kimmy takes Fernando’s hand and moves to the dance floor* |

It should be mentioned that the TT has preserved Fernando’s Argentinian origin; his marked Argentinian accent contrasts with the L2 (standard peninsular Spanish). In this respect, L3 has been preserved as a feature of the ST joke; however, the TT is clearly not identical to the ST. While most aspects of the source joke have been reproduced—Fernando’s dancing, and the lexical oddity of “contonearse”—Kimmy’s imitation of Fernando’s accent has been omitted, as she responds in what is clearly (with regards to phonetics) is L2. The Latin American dub is nearly identical in these respects, with exception of the translation of “everything is wiggling”; instead, “todo se mueve” was chosen as a solution. This is arguably also an omission in the sense that “moverse” sounds
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much more “natural” as a referent to dancing than “conteonearse”. Another possible translation loss is found in the previously discussed stereotype regarding Latin men in the source culture; while a parallel stereotype does exist in the target culture, it may lose humor or clarity due to the fact that it is a “self-stereotype.” In any case, the joke is still able to work in either L2, European or Latin American Spanish, given the “international” funniness of the dance, the inclusion of a form of L3, and Kimmy’s submission to a humorous “seduction” by a physically attractive character. If an alternative were to be proposed that included Kimmy’s L3 imitation, it might be possible to find a solution that included a very obvious characteristic of Argentinian Spanish for her to mimic, such as an aspirated /s/ or the replacement of [ʎ] and [ʝ] with [ʃ]. However, this may be restricted by the obvious constraint of lip synchronization when it comes to dubbing.

6. Discussion

Beginning with an examination of dialect jokes within their original context of American sitcoms, all jokes appeared to lend themselves most strongly to classification under the superiority or incongruity theories of humor. While it is to be conceded that these theories were not proposed in conjunction or intended to “coexist” by their proponents, they were helpful in pinpointing the comedic “tools” of each joke and providing a more logistical view of how each joke functioned. Cases where superiority theory was applicable in almost all cases were incidences of stereotypes being employed for comedic purposes, or “defective” character traits were featured—i.e., an exaggerated Midwestern accent being used to illustrate a negative comparison, or a character being unable to express joy, respectively—while incongruity theory (in the majority of cases) was often the better explanation for instances where wordplay/linguistic jokes were employed, or where characters “put on” accents that the audience knew were not true to their characters. Relief theory did not appear to be a satisfactory explanation in any of the cases analyzed. Furthermore, almost all cases where an argument was made for superiority theory were concerned with recurring or one-time characters: to be exact, the Midwestern teenager and the L3 aspect of the skunk from Family Guy, Estelle from Friends, and Fernando from Fuller House. This presents an interesting parallel to the previously mentioned Vilkensen study (found on p. 25 of this thesis), which had found that dialectal variation in sitcoms was typically reserved for secondary characters.
When translating the examined L3 jokes, Zabalbeascoa’s classification of joke types was not used exactly as prescribed in his own work. Complex and paralinguistic were not used as categories when multiple and/or nonverbal elements were concerned; rather, each individual aspect of the joke was classified accordingly. Nonverbal was never applicable given that this work deals with verbal jokes. With this allowance taken into account, international, cultural-institutional, national, and linguistic-formal elements all came into play when dealing with dialect humor. Circumstances where L3 was a central feature of the joke were typically national or linguistic-formal in nature, relying on stereotypes, false accents, or wordplay, while jokes that only included L3 as a secondary feature tended more towards international and cultural-institutional classifications. The notable exception to the latter was the case of the “everything is wiggling” seen in Friends (Example 6), whose linguistic nature did not stem directly from L3.

The distribution of the central/secondary status of L3 in the thesis’ sampled jokes was deliberate—a 50/50 mix was selected for analytical purposes, with one sample including L3 as a central feature and one with L3 as a secondary feature being chosen from each of the three series presented—but the method of L3 representation in the ST’s was fairly consistent: all L3’s were represented phonetically, all but one sample (Example 5) included lexical representations, and one L3 representation included morphosyntactic features (Example 2). There was no apparent relation between the method of L3 representation in the ST and if/how L3 was translated to the TT. Most ST jokes across had a textual function, which did not appear to have an effect on the type of solution applied in the TT. It is also worth noting that the semantic content delivered in L3 was not always important; in cases such as the Midwestern teenager from Family Guy (Example 1), L3 only needed to deliver a linguistic joke, or bring a stereotype into play.

The main factor that appeared to have an effect on the translation solution applied for L3 jokes was in fact whether L3 operated as a secondary or central feature of the joke. Only two of the six possible solutions listed on p. 19 of this work were employed in any of the examined cases—“preserve ST joke while maintaining L3 as a feature” and “preserve the ST joke but remove L3 as a feature”—and the former was utilized exclusively in cases where L3 was a central feature (Examples 1, 3, and 5), while the latter was delegated to jokes where L3 was secondary (Examples 2, 4, and 6). In all translations where L3 was removed, the jokes were still able provide in the TT due to the strength of other comedic factors.
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With regards then to L3 sub-solutions in instances of L3 preservation, an interesting trend was noticeable between Spanish and Latin American dubs: in two of the three applicable samples, Latin American dubs opted for “use of features of specific non-standard varieties” as a solution, or “dialect-for-dialect” translation (seen in Examples 3 and 5). While this posed some potential drawbacks—principally, a lack of cohesion to the joke, or a possible negative effect on the audiences’ suspension of disbelief—these solutions were generally effective in preserving humor in the TT. The Spanish dubs, conversely, did not typically provide any clear indicators of LV in the target jokes, or translated only isolated L3 characteristics that did not consider L3 as a whole (as observed in Examples 1, 3, and 5). This often resulted in confusing translations that lacked humor.

7. Conclusions

This thesis investigates the translation of dialect jokes, carrying out a review of literature in various different areas of study—linguistic variation, translation of dialects, theories of humor, translation of humor, dialect humor in American comedy, and the American sitcom—in an effort to paint a clear picture of how dialect jokes are employed in American sitcoms, and provide a potential model to aid for dialect joke translation. This model borrowed and adapted from methods proposed by several different scholars, including Zabalbeascoa’s joke types for translation, and Ramos Pintos’ solutions for translation of linguistic variation, and attempted to consider various factors such as ST context and function, and translation priorities and restrictions. Nonetheless, the model was restrictive in its length and complexity, often did not supply clear categorizations for translation solutions (see both dubbed solutions for Example 1, as well as the Spain dubs of Examples 3 and 5) and could be greatly improved or replaced.

An analysis carried out on a selection of joke samples (containing instances of dialect) taken from American sitcoms found that in common practice, ST jokes are always preserved and reproduced in the TT. Said ST were most often characterized by incongruity theory, but superiority theory was a suitable explanation for stereotype jokes in particular, which were normally limited to secondary characters, as notably seen in Examples 1 and 6. Dialect is consistently maintained, albeit not always clearly or to a humorous effect, when it is a central joke feature (Examples 1, 3, and 5), and deleted when it is a secondary joke feature (Examples 2, 4, and 6). Latin American dubs preferred
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to directly substitute linguistic varieties in target jokes, while Spanish dubs were less clear and more confusing in their selection of sub-solutions for dialect.

However, the corpus for this thesis was small in size and selective in nature; a larger, more comprehensive study of one or more series over several seasons could provide a more accurate picture of what translation practices are carried out in real-world dubbing. A greater theoretical consideration of dubbing practices and differences between Latin American and Spanish dubbing could also provide a better picture of why certain solutions are chosen and how disparity occurs across dubs. Furthermore, this study focused almost exclusively on individual jokes involving dialect. Partly due to the model employed, it was not effective in evaluating linguistic variation as a humorous character trait independent of jokes (along the lines of the Example 4), which is arguably more common in American sitcoms (see Vilkensen). Inclusion of more literature regarding character traits as a joke and considering them in a more methodical study could shed more light on this type of dialect humor.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the strict adherence to source jokes in the translation corpus, oftentimes at the expense of humor; Examples 1, 3, and 5 are arguably illustrative of this. Translation in any situation is a case of prioritization; in comedic texts like sitcom, humor is virtually always the top priority. There are of course often many constraints placed upon translators in any given situation; especially in audiovisual translation, translators often work on tight deadlines and their work is subject to change on the whim of producers. Nevertheless, it is in this sense that the final conclusion of this work is not that dialects should be translated into target jokes more often, or translated better, but that translators dealing with dialect humor should strive to ensure that their work is funny, whether it mean departing from dialect as a joke feature, or even departing from the source joke altogether if the text permits it and an alternative has a much funnier potential; translations that fail to be funny only open themselves to further breakdown in effectiveness among their target audience and resultant critique. To modify a quote by Henry Ward Beecher, “a translation without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It’s jolted by every pebble on the road.”
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8. Works Cited


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