


# An Approach to Audio Description of Humour in Different Cultural Settings<sup>1</sup>

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**ENG Abstract.** Audiovisual translation and, more specifically, accessibility, play a fundamental role in the multicultural world we live in. Due to cultural and social diversity, there are groups of people who depend on media accessibility services in order to consume audiovisual products because of their physical impairments, one of these services being audio description for the blind and visually impaired (AD). The aim of this paper is to provide an approach to how humour and cultural aspects travel in audiovisual comedies, and their influence on how audio described scripts are produced in different countries. For this purpose, we will carry out a corpus analysis comparing the Spanish and the American AD versions of the original comedy film *Campeones* (Javier Fesser 2018) and its remake *Champions* (Bobby Farrelly 2023). The main findings of this descriptive study suggest that the AD of humorous audiovisual texts in a multicultural context is indeed a complex issue that could be addressed by Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986), as suggested by Martínez Sierra (2009), although further research is needed.

**Keywords:** Audiovisual translation, media accessibility, audio description, humour, culture.

## ES Un acercamiento a la práctica de la audiodescripción del humor desde diferentes contextos culturales

**Resumen.** La traducción audiovisual y, más concretamente, la accesibilidad, tienen un papel fundamental en la sociedad multicultural en la que vivimos. Debido a la diversidad cultural y social, existen grupos de personas que dependen de los servicios de accesibilidad a la hora de consumir productos audiovisuales debido a sus impedimentos físicos. Entre dichos servicios, destaca la audiodescripción para personas ciegas y con deficiencias visuales (AD). El objetivo de este trabajo es explorar de qué manera viajan el humor y los aspectos culturales en las comedias audiovisuales, y la forma en la que esto puede influir en cómo se producen los guiones audiodescritos en diferentes países. Para ello, se llevará a cabo un análisis de corpus en el que se compararán dos versiones de AD, una española y otra estadounidense, de la comedia *Campeones* (Javier Fesser 2018) y de su *remake Champions* (Bobby Farrelly 2023), respectivamente. Los principales resultados de este estudio descriptivo sugieren que la práctica de la AD de textos audiovisuales humorísticos en un contexto multicultural es, en realidad, un tema complejo que podría abordarse mediante la teoría de la relevancia (Sperber y Wilson 1986), tal y como sugiere Martínez Sierra (2009), aunque es necesario llevar a cabo más investigaciones al respecto.

**Palabras clave:** Traducción audiovisual, accesibilidad audiovisual, audiodescripción, humor, cultura.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. State of Art: Audio Description, Humour, and Culture. 3.1. Audio Description. 3.2. Humour. 3.3. Culture. 3.4. AD of humorous texts in different cultural settings. 4. Results of the corpus analysis. 5. The relevance theory and its possible applicability to the AD of humorous audiovisual texts and cultural references. 6. Concluding remarks.

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### 1. Introduction

Due to the cultural and social diversity that is present in society, accessibility is an essential tool to enable people from all over the world to access audiovisual information. This also applies to people with disabilities,

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and thus to the blind and visually impaired in different countries, for whom AD plays a fundamental role when it comes to understanding and enjoying an audiovisual work. AD, by definition, poses many restrictions to professionals, who need to turn images into sound while not overlapping with the dialogues (see AENOR 2005). But one of the biggest challenges of audio describers is AD of humour, gathering the general restrictions of AD and the limitations of humour translation (Martínez Sierra 2010: 90), among which cultural implications must be mentioned.

This paper aims to achieve the following objectives: To review of the notions of 'AD', 'humour' and 'culture' in order to conceptualise our subject of study, that is, the AD of humorous texts in different cultural settings; to illustrate how the AD of audiovisual humorous texts is carried out in a multicultural<sup>2</sup> setting, and to study the extent to which the Relevance Theory can be applied to the practice of audio describing comedies<sup>3</sup> in different countries.

## 2. Methodology

In this section the methodology that has been followed to carry out the present study is described. In order to achieve the objectives that were set out in the Introduction, we first study the notions of 'AD', 'humour' and 'culture', and then create links between them so as to conceptualise our subject of study, thus adopting a descriptive and correlational scope (see Williams & Chesterman 2002). Based on the authors' guide for research in Translation Studies, this corresponds to the idea of conceptual research. After reviewing the literature on our subject of study (Section 3), we conduct an empirical part of the work in which we carry out a corpus analysis consisting in the comparison of the audio described versions of the original Spanish film *Campeones* (Javier Fesser 2018) and its American remake *Champions* (Bobby Farrelly 2023).

In order to carry out the comparative corpus analysis of the AD versions of the selected clips from these two films, we adapt<sup>4</sup> Martínez Sierra's table proposal (2010: 92-93) to the main purpose of this contribution, that is, to explore how humour and cultural aspects are dealt with in audio described scripts in different countries (see the Introduction). We present the model used for this analysis in Table 1.

Table 1. Table model adapted from Martínez Sierra (2010: 92-93) and used for clip analysis

Clip number						
TCR						
Contextualisation of the clip						
Characters appearing in the clip and actors and actresses performing their roles						
Humorous passage	Elements contributing to humour	AD	Is the AD missing relevant details?	Missing elements	Was there room for more AD?	Does the AD meet the applicable standards?

Based on the results of this analysis (see Section 4), we consider the possibility of applying the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986) to the AD humorous texts that are aimed at spectators from different cultures (see Section 5), following Martínez Sierra's proposal (2009). Finally, we present the concluding remarks of our study (see Section 6).

## 3. State of Art: Audio Description, Humour, and Culture

Even though the concepts of 'AD'<sup>5</sup>, 'humour'<sup>6</sup> and 'culture'<sup>7</sup> have been widely explored in the last decades as separate study fields, the AD of humour is a relatively new area of study and research on it is scarce<sup>8</sup>, and so is the AD of humorous texts in a multicultural setting<sup>9</sup>. For this reason, as explained in the Methodology section, we review these three notions and create links between them in order to conceptualise our subject of study.

<sup>2</sup> We use this concept to refer to productions that are set in different cultures. Regarding our study corpus, we analyse how the AD of an original Spanish comedy and its American remake has been carried out.

<sup>3</sup> Martínez Sierra (2009) already proved the application of the Relevance Theory in AD in general and in the AD of humour in particular.

<sup>4</sup> See also López Rubio (2024), in which an adaptation of this table was also presented in order to analyse how humour had been addressed in a selection of Spanish comedy films.

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth study of this practice, see the research conducted by Frazier (1975), Orero (2005), Benecke (2007), Braun (2007), Orero & Wharton (2007), Fryer (2016), and Matamala & Orero (2013), among others.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the works by Nash (1985), Raskin (1985), Attardo & Raskin (1991), Attardo (1994, 2002, 2017), Zabalbeascoa (1996, 2001, 2005), Yus (1997, 2016), Martínez Sierra (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005b, 2005c, 2008) and Vandaele (2001, 2002), among others.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Martínez Sierra (2003), Mendiburo-Seguel & Páez Rovira (2011), Miltner & Highfield (2017), Jiang et al. (2019), Lu et al. (2019), and Sawicki (2020).

<sup>8</sup> See the studies conducted by Mateos Miguélez (2005), Orero & Wharton (2007), Martínez Sierra (2009, 2010, 2015, 2020, in press), Ortuño Carbonero (2017), Latorre Jara (2021), and López Rubio (2024).

<sup>9</sup> An approach to this subject of study could be the contrastive research carried out by Sanz-Moreno (2018) on the AD of taboo topics, which, as stated by Dore, "are usually exploited for humorous purposes" (2019: 266). Other relevant research studies addressing the topic of AD of cultural references are the works by Szarkowska & Jankowska (2015) and Jankowska (2022).

### 3.1. Audio Description

AD is a recent but blooming research field which, according to Matamala & Orero (2013: 150), can be defined as follows: “Audio description (AD) is the descriptive technique of inserting audio narrations, explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and actions taking place in a variety of audiovisual media, when such information about these visual elements is not offered in the regular audio presentation”.

In other words, this practice consists in turning the visual material into verbal content (“the visual made verbal”, as stated by Snyder 2008: 191). A number of researchers (such as Díaz-Cintas 2008: 7; Martínez Sierra 2010: 88; and Chaume 2013: 148-149) agree that accessibility modes like AD and subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) are an integral part of audiovisual translation. The reason why AD is considered as a translation process is that it is a type of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1959), which means that a determined visual message is converted into sound and thus transferred through the acoustic channel in order to make its content accessible for the blind and visually impaired. In this sense, Bardini’s definition of AD (2020), which is based on Zabalbeascoa Terran (2008), should be presented:

Zabalbeascoa Terran (2008: 24) defines the audiovisual screen text as “a combination of verbal, non-verbal, audio and visual elements to the same degree of importance” where “the various elements are meant to be essentially complementary and as such may be regarded as inseparable for a fully satisfactory communication event.” According to this definition, if AD is to act as an audio substitute for the visual components, it has to be carried out in a fashion that ensures its interaction with the existing audio in order to maintain the original complementarity of the channels. Furthermore, as a substitute for the visual, AD must deliver the verbal and non-verbal information entailed in the visual part of a film. According to Zabalbeascoa Terran, visual, audio, verbal and non-verbal are all equally important for generating the audiovisual message.

In addition to that, Rodríguez Posadas claims that AD is a special type of translation because “it is not directed at a different linguistic community but rather at a specific social group” (2010: 210). However, as we see it, if the product is set in a multicultural context, the AD could really be aimed at a different linguistic community, as it is the case of our study corpus (see Section 4).

One of the main reasons for the relatively recent boom of accessibility for the media and, more particularly, of AD services, is the fact that the number of countries that are creating laws in order to make the programming grid accessible is growing<sup>10</sup>, and so are standards and guidelines<sup>11</sup> on how to elaborate accessible texts for blind and visually impaired audiences. Nevertheless, it ought to be pointed out that there is not a universal list of conventions that can be applied to accessibility modes in all countries. Because of this, it is useful for professionals to pay attention to recommendations provided by different territories on making audiovisual products accessible so as to produce texts that satisfy the needs of the main target which they are addressed to. However, these suggestions do not usually give detailed information about more particular aspects, such as the description of humorous content<sup>12</sup> (see, for instance, López Rubio 2024) and the AD of cultural references (see Sanz-Moreno 2018).

### 3.2. Humour

According to Martínez Sierra, humour is one of the aspects of AD that needs to be dealt with (2010: 99). It is a rather complex subject of study, especially because of the many problems it can cause to translators and also due to its remarkable cultural component (see Martínez Sierra 2004). Humour is inherent in social interaction and, though it is true that it is an inseparable and unique quality of human beings, it can be a rather problematic concept to define. In fact, authors like Attardo (1994: 3) have stated that it is difficult to reach an appropriate definition for such a complex cognitive, cultural, and social aspect.

On the one hand, when describing the notion of ‘humour’, it is fundamental to make a distinction between ‘humour’ as a text element and ‘comedy’ as a genre. In this sense, ‘humour’ is considered as all elements corresponding to human communication that have the purpose of creating a determined effect (especially smile or laughter) on the target of the text (see Vandaele 2001, 2002, 2015; Chiaro 2010; and Martínez Sierra 2015). In contrast to that, ‘comedy’ is usually understood as a determined textual genre with specific formal and structural requirements that make it differ from other textual genres.

On the other hand, Nash (1985: 26-27) distinguishes between ‘humour’ and ‘the act of humour’. According to the author, ‘humour’ is considered as the human condition for producing and receiving a humorous product, whereas ‘the act of humour’ can be defined as the practical application of humour, which corresponds to the translation of humour (Nash 1985: 26-27). In addition to that, according to the author, the act of humour has three references, which we will introduce next:

<sup>10</sup> See the Spanish Ley General de la Comunicación Audiovisual (2022) and the Report and Order on audio description by the Federal Communications Commission (2020) in the USA.

<sup>11</sup> Given the fact that, in the present study, we analyse a corpus of AD texts from Spain and from the United States, the UNE standard (AENOR, 2005) and the Audio Description International (ADI) Guidelines by the American Council of the Blind (2003) are worth mentioning. In this respect, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) should also be cited, as well as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2018) and the European Accessibility Act (2019).

<sup>12</sup> It is relevant to mention some important works which provide guidance on how to elaborate AD in general, with no specific reference to humour. See, for example, Fryer (2016) and the ADLAB Audio Description guidelines (Remael et al. 2015).

- (1) A 'genus', or derivation, in culture, institutions, attitudes, beliefs, typical practices, characteristic artefacts, etc.
- (2) [A] characteristic design, presentation, or verbal packaging, by virtue of which the humorous intention is indicated and recognized.
- (3) [A] locus in language, some word or phrase that is indispensable to the joke.

Among all the possible definitions of humour, the most suitable one according to the approach taken in this study is Nash's, as it focuses on the linguistic and cultural components of humour and emphasises on the *skopos* (Reiss & Vermeer 1984) or purpose of the humorous passage, which he refers to as the 'intention' (1985: 9-10).

### 3.3. Culture

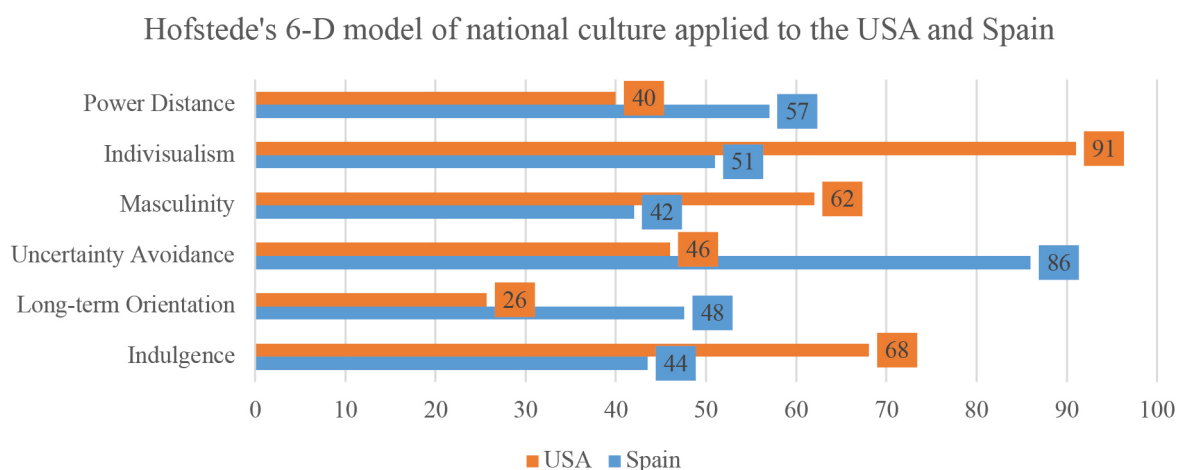
According to Steensland (2011), from the perspective of sociology, the notion of 'culture' can be defined as follows: "[it] refers to the beliefs that people hold about reality, the norms that guide their behaviour, the values that orient their moral commitments, or the symbols through which these beliefs, norms, and values are communicated".

Following Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, there are initially six key dimensions that can be used to understand cultural differences across countries, which are *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *individualism-collectivism*, *masculinity-femininity*, *short vs. long-term orientation*, and *restraint vs. indulgence* (see Hofstede 2001 and 2016). According to Hofstede (2016 online), individualism "is the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being interdependent as members of larger wholes".

Power distance is defined by the author (2016 online) as "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally". In Hofstede's words (2016 online), masculine societies "are much more openly gendered than feminine societies". Based on the author's 6-D model of national culture, uncertainty avoidance "deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity", so in avoiding societies people tend to be less tolerant and usually avoid risks. According to Hofstede (2016 online), long-term orientation deals with change, which implies that long-time-oriented cultures are more flexible to change. Finally, indulgent cultures are more open to the good things in life, whereas restrained cultures tend to believe that "life is hard, and duty, not freedom, is the normal state of being" (Hofstede 2016 online).

Based on the open access dimension data matrix provided by the author for research purposes (Hofstede 2016), we can give a general idea of the characteristics of the two cultures in which the selected study corpus is set. This is shown in Table 2. Please note that, as already emphasised by Hofstede (2016)<sup>13</sup>, the based culture data for the six dimensions presented by the author are only illustrative, and within-country variation should be taken into account.

Table 2. Hofstede's 6-D model applied to American and Spanish cultures



As stated by Sawicki (2020: 681), "[b]y examining the measurements of these dimensions in varying demographics, content creators can better understand how a certain cultural group would respond to a particular humor appeal". When addressing the topic of culture within the translation of humorous texts, some authors (see, for example, Jáuregui 2008, Mendiburo-Seguel & Páez Rovira 2011; Dore 2019, and Jiang et al. 2019) agree that culture strongly influences the way humorous references are perceived, so we can assume that the characteristics of the two cultures implied in our corpus analysis (see Section 4), that is, Spanish and American culture, will also have an influence on humour, and thus on its AD.

<sup>13</sup> On his webpage, Hofstede (2016 online) warns that "[the] dimensions were not postulated but found inductively. Each new study uses new respondent sets and different countries. Even if it used the same questions, these questions might have come to mean different things. So we should take dimension scores with a grain of salt".

Having described the notions of 'AD', 'humour', and 'culture', it is now time to provide a general overview of AD of humour in a multicultural setting.

### 3.4. AD of humorous texts in different cultural settings

Over the last decades, humour translation has been regarded by many authors as a challenging subject of study (see Zabalbeascoa Terran 2001; Vandaele 2002; and Martínez Sierra 2004, 2005b, 2005c, 2008; among many others), and so is the translation of cultural references. It must be noted that when audio describing audiovisual humorous texts in a cultural context, the priorities and constraints of AD, humour and cultural traits are in conflict one with each other.

According to the literature that has been reviewed so far, we can assume that, when audio describing comedy films, professionals must try to keep as many humorous elements from the source text as possible in the target text when its function (Nord 1997) is to create a determined humorous effect (see Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa Terran 2017). At the same time, audio describers need to adjust to the restrictive parameters of AD, such as time and space constraints (see, for example, AENOR 2005). Nonetheless, when it comes to AD of foreign comedy films, the number of restrictions tends to be even higher, as several complex aspects need to be taken into account. Among them are intercultural differences, restrictions which are already existent during the AD process (such as the need of not overlapping dialogues), humour implications, and the need of representing them in the target text while focusing on the main aim of this kind of texts, which is producing humour, but in this case, producing it to be received by an audience with different cultural background and, most likely, whose sense of humour may also be different from that of target audience of the original work.<sup>14</sup>

One of the main conditions when giving details that help the target culture spectators understand a cultural reference and, thus, infer and react to the humorous content of a culturally-marked joke is having the time and space for including this description in the AD script. Therefore, it is not surprising that the AD of humorous audiovisual texts set in a multicultural and multilingual context be an even more complex task, as it gathers both the restrictions of the AD practice and the main requirement of humour, that is, "the production of amusement" (Martínez Sierra 2009: 1).

Ultimately, it is also important to bear in mind that giving details does not imply explaining jokes including cultural references, but to provide the necessary hints so that the audience can infer the relevant information contained in the source text by their own means and, therefore, enjoy the audiovisual work without encountering obstacles interfering in the understanding process.

## 4. Results of the Corpus Analysis

Having analysed the data obtained from the corpus analysis of the AD versions of the film *Campeones* (Javier Fesser 2018) and its remake *Champions* (Bobby Farrelly 2023), for which we used Table 1 (see the Methodology section), we now compare the information collected from the analysis of the two clips in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the comparative corpus analysis

CORPUS ANALYSIS RESULTS		
Analysis parameters	Clip 1 ('Campeones', Javier Fesser 2018)	Clip 2 ('Champions', Bobby Farrelly 2023)
<i>TCR selected</i>	00:18:02-00:22:16 (4 minutes and 14 seconds)	00:14:15-00:18:27 (4 minutes and 12 seconds)
<i>Total number of AD segments</i>	21	20
<i>Elements contributing to humour</i>	<p><b>Images:</b> for example, the attitude of the team members as they wait for Marco to introduce himself, the way they and Marco look at each other, the gestures the players make when Marco explains what they are going to do, the reaction of the group when Marco throws them a ball, Marco's gesture of surprise when the big player takes the ball from him and goes to the hoop alone, when Marco sees the shoes a player is wearing, or when he holds his nose when a player comes up to him to give him a hug. / <b>Dialogues:</b> e.g. a player saying that he already has a girlfriend when Marco asks them to pair up, the discussion with another team member about whether he has a girlfriend or not, or Jesús Lagos Solis' insistence on his own name. / <b>Situation:</b> the contrast between the logic with which the players express themselves and act and Marco's prejudiced attitude.</p>	<p><b>Images:</b> e.g. Marcus's gestures, the way the characters are dressed, the team players' postures as they wait for Marcus to introduce himself, the way they and Marcus look at each other, or Marcus's surprised gesture when Darius goes to the hoop on his own or when Marcus tries to get out of a player's hug. / <b>Dialogues:</b> e.g. a player saying he already has a girlfriend when Marcus asks them to pair up, or the explanation the player gives while hugging Marcus. / <b>Situation:</b> the fact that Marcus feels out of the group dynamic and does not understand the players' logic.</p>

<sup>14</sup> According to Mendiburo-Seguel & Páez Rovira (2011: 92), people from different cultures may have a completely different interpretation of a very same joke (Mendiburo-Seguel & Páez Rovira 2011). This statement can undoubtedly be applicable to audio describing humour for a different cultural target from that which the source audiovisual text was aimed at.

CORPUS ANALYSIS RESULTS		
Analysis parameters	Clip 1 ('Campeones', Javier Fesser 2018)	Clip 2 ('Champions', Bobby Farrelly 2023)
Missing elements	<b>Images:</b> the gestures (how they are performed), the looks (the way the characters look at each other), the postures, attitudes, reactions and humorous behaviour of the characters in the scene (both those who speak and those who do not), the description of the place, the location of the characters in space, the way they express themselves, the colours, clothing and physical characterisation (there is no time for long descriptions, but the silent gaps could have been exploited more).	<b>Images:</b> the gestures (how they are performed), the looks (in what way characters look at each other), the postures, the attitudes, the reactions (especially Marcus's) and the humorous behaviours of the characters appearing in the scene (both those who speak and those who do not), the location of the characters in space, the way they express themselves, the physical description of the characters (there was time, especially in TCR 14:49-14:51, to provide more details about it), the place where the characters are located and the way actions are performed (e.g. how the players shoot the basketball).  <b>Sounds:</b> when Marcus scratches his head sonorously after Darius refuses to play in his team.
Number of non-used silent gaps	<b>9</b> (TCR 18:43-18:46, TCR 19:29-19:31, TCR 19:57-20:00, TCR 20:16-20:18, TCR 20:21-20:23, TCR 21:05-21:07, TCR 21:29-21:31, TCR 21:46-21:48, and TCR 22:01-22:03).	<b>8</b> (TCR 14:28-14:30, TCR 14:33-14:38, TCR 14:49-14:51, TCR 14:59-15:02, TCR 15:06-15:08, TCR 15:54-15:56, TCR 17:43-17:46, and TCR 18:29-18:31).
Number of times when the AD has not met the applicable standards	<b>1</b> (It is not clear who the AD is referring to as a character until it says "el ausente", which can be translated as "the absent one". See TCR 20:30).	<b>1</b> (It is redundant for the AD to explain that "he [Marcus] blows a whistle". The AD could have said that he takes the whistle, as the sound of the whistle being blown can be heard through the acoustic channel. See TCR 14:42).

In view of the results of the comparative analysis shown in Table 3, we pose ourselves the following questions: **1)** *In which way the need of maintaining humorous elements and cultural references in the target text is conditioned by time restrictions and by the need to follow AD standards that are applicable in each case?* **2)** *How should audio describers deal with the constraints of these three branches while trying to give a solution to the priorities required by the target text?*

In order to give an answer to these questions and to determine which parameters are primarily required to be transferred to the target text, it may be useful to consider its importance in the text by applying the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986), as suggested by Martínez Sierra (2009) when addressing the AD of humorous texts.

In the following section, we will provide an overview of this principle and we will consider its applicability to the AD of humorous texts which are set in different cultures.

## 5. The Relevance Theory and its Possible Applicability to the AD of Humorous Audiovisual Texts with Cultural References

The Relevance Theory<sup>15</sup>, which is also known as the Principle of Relevance, was developed by Sperber & Wilson (1986), from the influence of Grice's maxim of relation (1975). One of the main purposes of this theory is to explain how we communicate linguistically (see Reyes 1996 & Martínez Sierra 2009). According to Wilson (1993: 345-346), the Relevance Theory is based on the following assumptions about linguistic communication:

- Every utterance has a variety of linguistically possible interpretations, all compatible with the decoded sentence meaning.
- Not all these interpretations are equally accessible to the hearer (i.e. equally likely to come to the hearer's mind) on a given occasion.
- Hearers are equipped with a single, very general criterion for evaluating interpretations as they occur to them, and accepting or rejecting them as hypotheses about the speaker's meaning.
- This criterion is powerful enough to exclude all but at most a single interpretation (or a few closely similar interpretations), so that the hearer is entitled to assume that the first hypothesis that satisfies it (if any) is the only plausible one.

As Martínez Sierra (2009) explains, when the sender of a message makes clear their intention to communicate something, an adequate effect is presumed for the minimum necessary effort of processing the information provided. Then the receiver has to make a difference between the sentence meaning – that is, according to Martínez Sierra, "what the speaker's words mean" – and the utterance meaning – or, in other words, "what the speaker actually means" (2009: 1).

<sup>15</sup> For further information on this subject and on its applicability to audiovisual translation and humour, see the works by Yus (1997, 2016), Martínez Sierra (2004, 2005a, 2009), Díaz-Pérez (2014), Gutt (2014), and Braun (2016), among others.

As stated by Martínez Sierra, in the case of AD, there is an interaction between existing and contextual assumptions, though the main target audience “cannot really count on the images” (2009: 1). It is therefore necessary for professionals to describe the information provided by the image that cannot be accessed through sound, so that the blind and visually impaired can understand and enjoy audiovisual works in spite of the restriction of visual elements and time constraints. As suggested by Martínez Sierra (2009: 1), audio describers need to provide the relevant and new information contained in the images in the source text<sup>16</sup>.

According to the Relevance Theory we just introduced, we can assume<sup>17</sup> that, in the case of AD of humorous texts that are set in different cultures, as the ones selected for the corpus analysis (see Section 4), what is relevant is to include humorous elements in the target text contributing to what Martínez Sierra (2009: 1) calls “the production of amusement”, as well as to adapt the references to the cultural dimensions of the target audience (see Section 3.3.). It is therefore important to transfer significative cultural traits into the target text. If cultural references are not understandable for the target culture members, they may be replaced by others that are universal, or translators may even make them more explicit, in order for the target text to fulfil its function (Nord 1997).

Although it is true that relevant content needs to be audio described (see, for instance, AENOR 2005, and the American Council of the Blind 2003), time constraints will not always allow professionals to mention what is relevant in all cases, as shown in Table 3 (see Section 4). That is the reason why we find that there are missing elements in the AD of the two clips selected for the study corpus. In this sense, we agree with Zabalbeascoa Terran (1997: 331-332 and 2001: 257) when he states that there are first order priorities when it comes to the relevant content that needs to be transferred into the target text, and other priorities which become secondary when it is not possible to include everything that is considered relevant.

In the case of AD, as we mentioned before, information that is meaningful for the plot and that is provided through images needs to be described in the first place, but when it comes to the AD of humorous texts in a multicultural setting, the requirements of the AD practice, the humorous function of the text and cultural references are relevant factors to bear in mind.

It is important to highlight, though, that there is a number of non-used silent gaps in the AD version of both clips which could have been exploited in order to reduce the amount of relevant missing information (see Table 3 in Section 4). In order to confirm whether the missing information concerning humour and culture has had a negative effect on the reception of the clips by the target audience in the two cultures implied, we deem it necessary to conduct a reception study in which the extent to which the AD of these products meets users’ expectations and needs is measured.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

One of the most challenging tasks that audio describers of humorous audiovisual texts need to carry out is trying to keep the humour in the target product, if the purpose, or *skopos* (see Reiss & Vermeer 1984), of the text is keeping the film a comedy (see Martínez Sierra 2010). Due to the many restrictions caused by the interaction of the AD technical requirements with humorous elements and cultural specificities, it is very likely that humorous elements not be kept in the target text in the same way than they were in the original product, as shown in the results of our corpus analysis (see Table 3).

Answering the questions posed in Section 4, we can assume that this practice may become even harder when AD constraints converge with the need to keep the film a comedy (Martínez Sierra 2010) and with the need of making it work in a different culture (Jankowska 2022). In this sense, there are some priorities that audio describers need to deal with, such as the need of reproducing the necessary conditions for humour in the target text and adapting the product to the target culture, as well as the importance of adjusting to the applicable standards for AD. In this sense, based on the results of our corpus analysis (see Section 4), and considering Martínez Sierra’s (2009) proposal of applying Sperber & Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986) to the study of humour in audio described products, we suggest that the same principle could also be applied to the AD of humorous texts set in different countries.

According to Martínez Sierra (2009), the relevance degree achieved in the audio described target version of audiovisual texts is sometimes affected in a negative way, or even impeded, as it is not always possible to transfer all the key aspects that it would be optimal to in order to recreate favourable conditions for humour in the target text. In this sense, the Relevance Theory is an important principle for professionals to consider, as it can help them identify the most important information to be described in each segment so that the blind and visually impaired audience can infer the author’s intention (*skopos*) and, therefore, get the expected effect.

Last but not least, let us not forget that the present work constitutes a descriptive approach to this still little explored but relevant subject of study. In this sense, the results of this contribution should be contrasted by means of experimental and reception studies that might provide more concrete evidence about how the AD of humorous texts is received by blind and visually impaired people from different countries.

<sup>16</sup> In this sense, it is also important to consider the interplay between image and sound (see Chaume 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Previous research works carried out by Martínez Sierra (2004, 2005a, and 2008) already showed the application of the Relevance Theory to the translation of humour in dubbed comedies, and the study we mentioned before (Martínez Sierra 2009) covers its application to the practice of AD in the field of media accessibility, for which we believe that the application of the Relevance Theory to the object of our research is more than feasible.

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