

“I’m just crackers about cheese!” – Subtitling wordplay in Wallace and Gromit into German

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It is enough to turn on the TV or to go to the cinema to realize that, regardless of any travel inconveniences or even a possible motion sickness, humour does travel across linguistic and cultural barriers. (Jankowska 2009: 1)

Can humour indeed overcome linguistic and cultural barriers? The question remains as to the degree of “motion sickness” involved in this transfer, as well as the role which translators and translation strategies play in keeping transfer-related damage to a minimum. My poster presents the results of an experimental, receptor-oriented study which investigates the reception of two different strategies for subtitling English wordplay into German. Two translations of the animated English-language short film Wallace and Gromit in *A Matter of Loaf and Death* were screened for German-speaking test audiences, whose reaction was then recorded in a questionnaire. The existing translation, which was broadcast on German television and published on DVD, followed an approach based on formal equivalence and therefore rarely diverges from the original dialogue at word level, but equally sacrifices parts of the extensive humorous content inherent the text. This was contrasted by a specifically produced alternative translation which prioritised equivalence of effect, and as such the transfer of linguistic humour at the cost of formal similarity. The research project also explored the influence of source language comprehension on the reception of both versions, as it was assumed that a formally different subtitle text could be interpreted as “incorrect” by members of the audience with knowledge of English. In light of the fact that English as a second language is spoken by a growing number of people in the German language community, the effect of this development on the viewers' requirements for audiovisual translation strategies and modes of linguistic transfer are considered relevant for the field. Furthermore, the reception of subtitling as opposed to dubbing by a German audience is investigated in this context.

Reference

Jankowska, Anna (2009) Translating Humor in Dubbing and Subtitling In: *Translation Journal*, Volume 13, No. 2 [Internet] <http://accurapid.com/Journal/48humor.htm> (accessed 16/02/2012)