

Machine Translation on the Verge of a Laughing Fit: A Comparative Study Between Human and Machine Translation in Pedro Almodóvar's comedies

Alba Jiménez Espejo

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

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Over the last years, the use of machine translation has experienced a growth in the field of professional translation especially with regards to scientific, technical or legal contexts, due to these texts being composed by formal language and without polysemy. Many professional translators and translation companies use machine translation as an efficient tool along with post-editing practices. In this way, machine translation is no longer solely used in technical contexts, but it has expanded to other fields such as audiovisual translation. Media content is these days present in almost all communications, since Social Media, and Internet content also take stock from audiovisual formats. The new media distribution platforms with streaming services, multi language content, and fast turn over, is also increasing the need for fast translation services. However, audiovisual translation presents extra challenges, since materials used in this kind of translation are usually characterized by a large cultural component. One of the problems an audiovisual translator has to confront when translating a film is to mediate between the cultures of the source and target languages. The audiovisual translator must act as an intermediary between both cultures. This intercultural component takes on even greater importance when the audiovisual material holds a humoristic nature.

While much work has been published on the human translation of humour in audiovisual content, little is known on the results from automatic translation. This presentation will report the results from a study of the strategies employed in the translation of an audiovisual text by both a human translator and that of a machine translation service. The identified strategies will help to determine to what extent machine translation is able to acquire an intercultural mediator role. Results will foster a number of research questions towards understanding the translation of humoristic elements with a cultural component. The research methodology was that of a comparative analysis. For this, a corpus was created from three different stages. Firstly, all comedies from Pedro Almodóvar's filmography were analysed in its original language to compile all the humoristic elements that have a cultural reference according to West taxonomy [1]. Secondly, the second part of the corpus focused on cultural jokes extracted from the original English translation of the film. Finally, the last part corresponds to an English translation of the humoristic elements made by machine translation.

Regarding the analysis, the corpus was firstly divided into different groups, according to its level of pragmatic equivalence. This helped us to carry out the second part of the analysis in a clearer manner. For the second part of the analysis, the study examined, on the one hand, the cases that are successful in producing the same effect on the target audience as the original one. Those cases were examined both through humour and cultural translation theories in order to analyse the difference between the human and the machine translations. On the other hand, the cases that were not successful in transferring the same sense as the original reference were analysed to find out what kind of error has produced the

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EMAIL: albijimespe@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-5354-5395



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mistranslation. The presentation will finish with the analysis of the results to establish the level of translation competence of machine translation, and the challenge of successfully translating humour.

References

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