

Investigating Subtitling Strategies
for the Translation of Wordplay in
Wallace and Gromit –
An Audience Reception Study

by

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Abstract

This thesis constitutes an experimental, receptor-oriented study which investigates the reception of two different strategies for subtitling English wordplay into German. Two translations of the animated short film *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* are screened for test audiences, whose reaction is then recorded in a questionnaire. The existing translation, which was broadcast on German television and published on DVD, follows 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 is contrasted by a specifically produced alternative translation which prioritises equivalence of effect, the transfer of linguistic humour at the cost of formal similarity. The research project also explores the influence of source language comprehension on the reception of both versions, as it is 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 by a German audience is investigated in this context.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In a Monty Python sketch from 1969 entitled “The funniest joke in the world”¹, which is set in the Second World War, a joke writer invents a joke so funny that anyone who hears or reads it dies laughing. The military translate it into German in order to use it as a weapon: every translator only renders one word, so as not to succumb to the devastating power of the joke (one of them accidentally reads two words and has to spend a few weeks in hospital). The translated German version is then used in battle, killing numerous enemies. The Germans attempt a counter-joke – their best one is selected and used in action, but the translated English version is so bad that it has no effect on the British troops.

This seemingly absurd skit in true Monty Python style touches upon an ongoing, realistic issue which might have been familiar to the well-known British comedy troupe themselves: If something is funny in one language and associated cultural context, can it be transferred into another language and still have the same effect as in its original form? And if so, is the word-for-word approach employed by the British army in the sketch the appropriate way of tackling this task? Could the German counter-joke have had the desired impact on the British troops had a different translation approach been employed? Was it perhaps due to the particular type of humour and the specific joke that rendered the British joke transferable, while the German one was inherently untranslatable and therefore could never have succeeded in English? Or perhaps there is such a divergence between tastes in humour and the cultural conventions as to what is funny of both language communities that even the most skilful translator would have been unable to accomplish a successful cultural transfer?

All joking aside, these questions have remained at the centre of research into humour translation for an extensive period, even leading to a discussion between scholars as to whether or not linguistic humour is indeed ever translatable at all. Instead of an

¹ This sketch originally appeared in the first episode of the TV programme *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (BBC 1969-74)

approach to humour as a translation “problem” in need of a “solution” (e.g. Davis 1997, Vandaele 2011), which is arguably part of a more general problem-based view of translation studies, an alternative approach is to focus research on strategies rather than on the categorisation of norms and solutions. It remains evident that linguistic humour presents a challenge for the translator in many cases. Delia Chiaro refers to it as “acrobatic language” which is “aimed at an in-group”² – the linguistic complexity and the cultural specificity to which this description refers being only two characteristics which can potentially complicate the language transfer of humour. One area where this is particularly acute is the translation of wordplay. The discipline in which this challenge is often encountered – audiovisual translation (AVT) – is also the field where it is rendered more challenging by additional restrictive factors. As Chiaro observes (2006: 6), comedies which contain very few puns and rely on a different type of humorous effect, or those that contain very little language such as *Mr Bean* are more likely to overcome cross-cultural and cross-linguistic barriers to become box-office successes than those which are dense in wordplay. The film which was used in this study, *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, is a prime example of the latter case, as wordplay occurs on average once per minute in this film, which is one reason why it was chosen for this project. As wordplay is an integral part of comedy and likely to remain so, the question arises as to how – not if – it is possible to achieve a successful transfer of wordplay into a target language, either for subtitling or for dubbing purposes.

The dilemma which faces a translator dealing with the challenge of subtitled wordplay is founded on the simultaneous presence of two texts, which means that this mode of language transfer allows the viewer to compare the source text and the target text and therefore to arrive at an evaluation of the relative appropriateness of a given translation of any one utterance. Evidently, this is only possible if the viewer possesses sufficient knowledge of the source language to enable such judgements. In this research project, English is the relevant source language, whilst German is the

² in a paper presented at the Media for All conference in London in June 2011 which is awaiting publication

language into which a film is translated. In this particular scenario the intended audience is probably capable of some comprehension of the original dialogue, as knowledge of English is wide-spread amongst the German language community. Another question which will be investigated in this experiment is whether this phenomenon of source language comprehension interferes with the reception of wordplay which has been subtitled using different strategies and in what ways this interference is manifested.

When it comes to the translation of wordplay, a central dilemma resides between the retention of clarity and credibility and the maintenance of formal fidelity to the source text, as well as the consequent prioritisation of the transfer of information on the one hand, and the preservation of comedic value by selecting the funniest option, even if this entails a move away from the original, on the other hand. Subtitled comedy films represent a genre in which these two priorities meet and indeed often clash. If the first approach is chosen, there is a distinct possibility that the humorous quality is lost or diminished in the process. In this scenario, subtitles merely serve as a guide to comprehension, while the viewer relies on his or her knowledge of English for the comprehension of wordplay.

In the second case, the audience might recognise the formal divergence between source and target text and interpret this as a “wrong” translation. This approach, however, could also be received successfully viewers if they are able to recognise the creative effort that has gone into the translation in order to retain comic effect, which could add a further positive dimension to the viewing experience. In order to establish a tendency of preference towards one or the other, an experiment was conducted which aims to gauge the audience’s reaction to each translation approach through the use of two different German translations of the same film dialogue. Hypothesizing that “[the] quality of translation can either make or break a comedy” (Chiaro 2006: 8), it seems important to investigate exactly which features characterise a “quality translation” to the prospective audience, thereby taking into consideration the transparency of subtitling as a translation method (which means that the source text is

audible at all times), by conducting an experimental reception study which involves English-speaking as well as German-speaking viewers.

In order to achieve this, two subtitled versions of the animated short feature *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* (Aardman Animations 2008) as well as an un-subtitled version were screened to three different groups of viewers, who then recorded their response in a questionnaire. A control group of English native speakers watched the original, un-translated version of the film, in order to provide a basis with which the evaluation by the two experimental groups could be compared. Two groups of native speakers of German viewed two subtitled versions respectively, each one identical to the other but for the translation of wordplay. One version is based on the existing German translation which was broadcast on television and published on DVD (released by Aardman in 2009), whilst the alternative translation was developed specifically for this project. Both texts will be discussed in depth in Chapters 4 and 5.

When an English-language film or programme is transferred to the German market, the predominant mode of linguistic transfer is dubbing, where the dialogue is re-recorded and thus completely replaced. This could theoretically give the translator the freedom to alter the text in order to achieve humorous effect, as source and target text cannot be compared and possible differences will therefore go unnoticed. This would suggest that the existing translation, which was produced for dubbing, follows a freer approach which prioritises the humorous effect which is integral to the genre. However, the opposite is the case. The translator who was commissioned for the existing translation seems to have focused on formal similarity (or was simply too pressed for time to employ a more creative approach). Consequently, the alternative translation for the reception study was produced in line with an approach which prioritised the transfer of humorous effect. Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 11) argue that “the traditional notion of formal fidelity [...] has now been revised and made all translations more flexible, but this is especially the case of subtitling and other forms of audiovisual translation”. Can we consider, however, that such flexibility extends to

wordplay, where, in the majority of cases, formal fidelity and equivalent effect constitute a classic dichotomy?

In terms of an appropriate methodological framework, it could be argued that a study involving German participants and subtitled films remains flawed, as dubbing is the more wide-spread method in this language community. Irrespective of the fact that the project would not have been feasible using an alternative dubbed version, as it would have been impossible to reproduce an almost identical soundtrack but for different wordplay renderings (this would have required a recording studio and the same dubbing actors which recorded the existing version), the question remains as to whether the traditional distinction between dubbing and subtitling countries is still appropriate in this day and age. According to a prediction made by Gottlieb in 1994, the above-mentioned preference for dubbing might be more flexible than generally perceived and could undergo radical future change:

According to the European Broadcasting Union, this pattern [of preference] will change in the near future: the increasing exchange of films and television across the European language barriers, will – coupled with a growing appetite for linguistic authenticity – lead to a notable increase in the need for a shared European subtitling strategy...
(Gottlieb 1994: 261)

The question whether or not this prognosis is valid today will be investigated in this thesis. It should be noted that there has been a remarkable development concerning the influence of the English language in Germany, notably in the incorporation of English expressions into the German vocabulary, as well as a tendency towards earlier and more widespread learning of the English language in schools. In a survey conducted by the *Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache* (Society of German Language) in June 2008, 63 percent of participants claimed to speak English “reasonably well” (as opposed to 22 percent in 1961). In the age group of 16- to 29-year-olds the percentage was 84 percent (Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache 2008). This trend may have an effect on viewers' preference for greater linguistic authenticity, as they are increasingly able to understand the original dialogue. Other contemporary phenomena such as the popularity of fansubbing, the use of subtitles in mainstream films and the rise of the

DVD with its choices of viewing modes might have a similar influence on today's audience. The study at the basis of this research will investigate the level of English knowledge amongst the test audiences and its impact upon their reception of a subtitled film and their understanding of successful wordplay translation.

The development described above is not only a potentially influential factor regarding the future of subtitling and its acceptance amongst German speakers, but could, in turn, exacerbate English-language comprehension amongst German viewers. This, then, constitutes a crucial element in the transparency of subtitling as a method of audiovisual translation, and the resulting accountability of the translator (Gottlieb 1994: 268), which this research explores. The overall question remains, therefore, whether the transparency of subtitles as a method – combined with the factor of increasing audience comprehension – are more influential in the reception of a comedy translation than its potential to make viewers laugh.

Interestingly, although translation can be regarded as a service for the benefit of a user, research in translation studies is more often than not of a descriptive, rather than experimental, nature (Fuentes Luque 2003: 293). It is important to assert the significance of a contribution to the (as yet rather underrepresented) receptor-oriented approach to the discipline by conducting a study which focuses on the reception of a translation by the very people for which it is commissioned: the audience. Such projects not only complement the descriptive, text-oriented research which is also crucial in the field, but can establish a stronger link between the academic field of translation studies and the translation or audiovisual translation industries which can incorporate its findings into contemporary practice.

One should also consider that it must be in the interest of the screenwriter and film-maker that their work is received positively by the target audience and that it remains true to the dominant characteristics of its original genre – in this case, the comedy genre. When it comes to animated films, for instance, where a large team of people spend an enormous amount of time and intricate effort to arrive at the finished product, it cannot possibly be in the interest of the film-maker(s) that the impact

which the film has on its viewers is diminished by a suboptimal translation strategy. Gottlieb (2005: 16) is of the opinion that “very few literary or film translators take such liberties in their translations as those that would be possible within the paradigm of ‘acceptability’. And little wonder, when the target audience in most speech communities buy foreign-language books or films, they expect the foreign culture to show”. The corpus film *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, for example, is characterised by a nostalgic “Englishness” in all respects, which is an important factor in its appeal to a home audience. One might argue that when the audience buys a ticket for a film which has been marketed under the label “comedy”, they expect to be amused. The question is what should be considered more of a distortion: being “true” to the semantic content and linguistic style, or prioritising in favour of the core character of the picture, which is indicated in its genre and according to which people are either persuaded or dissuaded to watch it. This is the central question which this research explores and which will be elaborated in this thesis.

The thesis is structured in the following way: the chapter following this introduction is dedicated to the art and craft that is audiovisual translation, focussing on its particularities, typical characteristics and the specific challenges with which it presents the translator as well as the viewer. The European context regarding audiovisual translation, and the impact of the digital turn on the discipline, will also be explored in this chapter. Chapter 3 foregrounds relevant theoretical questions and investigates existing research on the translation of verbally expressed humour, before discussing the specific theoretical framework employed in the experimental study in this project, namely the typology for wordplay and the strategies which can be applied in its translation into a target language.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis of the test film which was chosen for the experiment. It explores the reasons behind the selection of an animated feature for the reception study, as well as a detailed analysis of its structure in terms of humour and particularly of the use of wordplay. All occurrences of wordplay in the original

dialogue of the film will be analysed, as a basis for the discussion of both translated versions, which will follow in Chapter 5. This chapter is a discussion of the methodology underlying the experiment. Firstly, both the existing and the alternative wordplay translations are discussed, before moving on to the organisation of the reception study: the questionnaires handed out to participants, the recruitment process and the screening procedures in both the UK and Germany. Chapter 6 constitutes a statistical analysis of the data procured in the reception study. A discussion of the results will be undertaken in Chapter 7, which concludes the thesis.

Chapter 2: Audiovisual Translation

The term 'audiovisual translation' (often abbreviated AVT) has been applied to the practice of translation which includes the visual semiotic channel since the 1990s and is now predominantly used by scholars in the field (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 12). 'Film translation' or 'cinema translation' are also occasionally used, however these terms seem to exclude audiovisual material that was not produced for the cinema, such as television programmes, while the terms 'screen translation' and 'multimedia translation' are more accommodating to texts such as web content, computer games and other non-filmic material (*ibid.*). In the context of this thesis, the term 'audiovisual translation' will be applied, as it is widely used in the academic field and blurs the boundaries between the different media and genres to which it extends, while also stressing the semiotic dimension at its heart. It can be seen to incorporate forms of transfer such as opera and theatre surtitling, intralingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing or audio description for the blind and partially sighted, with the latter constituting a form of intersemiotic translation. This seems appropriate, regardless of the fact that what is being investigated here is an interlingual transfer of wordplay in the form of a subtitled film.

As far as films and television programmes are concerned, there are three main methods of making these items accessible for a foreign language audience: subtitling, which involves written captions on screen, dubbing, during which the original spoken dialogue of a film is replaced by a pre-recorded target language version, and voiceover, which superimposes a target language soundtrack over a reduced source language soundtrack. All three methods are fundamentally different from one another, and all have their advantages and shortcomings. Preferences vary as far as different regions are concerned: for a considerable period, dubbing has been the preferred method in Europe's large speech communities such as Spain, France, Italy, and Germany/Austria, while Scandinavian countries and smaller states such as the Netherlands have traditionally preferred subtitled films. Eastern European countries, such as Poland and

the Baltic states, have predominantly used voiceover in the past (Herbst 1997: 291; see also Section 2.1.2). The reasons for this division are partly related to the cost of each method – dubbing is more expensive than subtitling (the exact cost relation between dubbing and subtitling varies depending on the country³). The genre of the film also plays a role in this decision, as children’s films are almost always dubbed, while voiceover is often used for documentaries. In the case of *Wallace and Gromit*, dubbing was the chosen mode of transfer for the German market. Dubbing is the predominant mode of transfer for the medium of television in Germany, and the translated version was aimed at a television audience. Another factor is the history and tradition of the country – in Germany, for example, dubbing is a result of infrastructures and industries created under fascist rule, when dubbing was enforced as a means of compulsory indoctrination (Szarkowska 2007: 7). Another factor in the choice between subtitling and dubbing is the question of habit – audiences seem to prefer whatever method they are accustomed to (Delabastita 1990: 98). Whether or not this distinction still applies today and what this means for the study at hand will be investigated in Chapter 2.1.1.

The two most widely-used modes of audiovisual translation, namely subtitling and dubbing, can be considered to represent two ends of the scale as far as the visibility or overtness of the translation is concerned. While the audience can be under no illusion that they are watching a translated version of a film when looking at subtitles, dubbing creates the illusion that the film characters are indeed speaking in the target language. Szarkowska (2007: 2) argues that “dubbing is a form of domestication whereas subtitling can be regarded as foreignisation”. Domestication, a term coined by Venuti (1995), means that dubbing interferes with the original text to a greater extent and brings it closer to the target culture by creating the illusion that the audience is not watching a translated version at all. It “decreases the sense of ‘otherness’”

³ According to a study by Media Consulting Group (2008: 6), the cost of dubbing is approx. 7 times higher than for subtitling in large markets such as Germany and France, and approx. 20 times as expensive in Northern European countries. Results from this study might not constitute absolute findings, but can serve as a guideline concerning the situation within the AVT industry, of which there is little publicised documentation.

(Szarkowska 2007: 9). This can especially be said for films dubbed into German during the 1950s to 70s, when the extent of domestication was such that this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as “alemannitis” (Maier 1997: 72), meaning that, during the translation process, the regional character of the original film was all but extinguished and replaced by a local flavour. Subtitling, on the other hand, never ceases to remind viewers that they are presented with a translation; they are “aware of its foreignness at all times” (Szarkowska 2007: 2). The following sections will explore the intricacies and characteristics associated with audiovisual translation, before looking at the industry in Europe and its present situation, as well as how AVT and AVT research have been affected by the rise of digital technology.

2.1 A polysemiotic form of translation

The reception study at hand uses two subtitled versions of the same film in order to test strategies for transferring wordplay into a target language (see Chapter 5 on Methodology). When dealing with issues related to subtitling, it is essential to understand how this form of translation functions and why it should be viewed differently from other types of translation. All subtitled material consists of four components: the image, the spoken dialogue, the non-verbal sound and the written information on the screen. These three interact in a complex and specific manner to form a filmic text that, in the case of interlingual subtitling, a target language audience can understand in its entirety. The activity of creating this finished product is argued to constitute more of an adaptation than a translation (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 9) because of its highly constrained nature (see also Section 2.1.1).

Various factors related to the medium and the specific nature of audiovisual translation in general have a marked effect on the end result. The basis of subtitling is the necessity for a suspension of disbelief on the part of the viewer, which means audiences are required to ignore the fact that spoken text in a different language is written on the screen and that this text needs to be perceived as if it were the actual spoken dialogue. German audiences arguably have not internalised this to the same

extent to which, for example, Scandinavian audiences have, due to the fact that they are more accustomed to dubbing as the preferred method of audiovisual translation. However, watching a fictional film or television programme arguably requires the suspension of disbelief even without subtitles, as does the reading of fiction, in order to engage with the plot and the characters. The question arises of whether reading subtitles requires an extension of this suspended disbelief or whether it can be incorporated in the imaginative effort already required to block out the awareness that one is watching actors deliver scripted lines. In either case, viewers are required to use their suspension of disbelief to an extent that the written dialogue on the screen is not perceived as disruptive to the experience as it takes the audience outside of the film. Also, for the purpose of this research, it might even be beneficial to have an audience that has not had the experience of years of watching subtitled programmes and films. It might be assumed, therefore, that participants take a more critical stance and look upon the subtitles more discerningly rather than trusting the translator out of habit.

Supporters of subtitling argue that it is the preferable method because the authentic “flavour” of the original is retained. The actor’s unique idiolect (his or her individual speech patterns), voice quality and diction are considered by such critics of dubbing to be too integral to the film-making process to be simply replaced by a studio to which this task is outsourced. Also, the non-verbal (and as such non-language-specific) aspects of acting, such as tone of voice, as well as emotive elements such as cries or laughter, are concealed under the dubbing soundtrack and have to be artificially re-created in a kind of laboratory situation. This could be considered unfortunate, as these elements create meaning which is untouched by linguistic barriers. Subtitling often requires the condensation of spoken dialogue as space on screen is limited. However, it is argued that the loss of certain elements which are sacrificed in the shortening of the dialogue is compensated for by the presence of the original (Szarkowska 2007: 10). This could be the case either by means of non-verbal communication from the actor as described above, or through source language

comprehension, especially in scenarios where English is the language in which the film was originally produced.

A disputed but interesting factor related to subtitling which should not be ignored is the effect it has on viewers in terms of language acquisition: if the standard of English as a foreign language is much higher in countries where subtitling is the predominant method than in countries where dubbing takes this role as claimed by Baker (1998: 75)? Also, choosing subtitling as a translation method means that visitors, tourists and foreigners living in the country can watch the film at the same time as the regular target audience, which increases the potential paying audience for a film. Dubbing, on the other hand, allows for children and people with reading difficulties, as well as viewers with impaired vision, to be able to comprehend the film in its translated form. The research project forming the basis of this thesis uses subtitling as a method of translating the test film from English into German, as the creation of an alternative soundtrack which differs only in wordplay translation but is otherwise identical to the existing version was technically impossible to provide. This illustrates another characteristic of subtitling: aside from being cheaper than dubbing, it is also more accessible to a range of users – professionals as well as amateurs. “Fansubbing” of anime for example (but increasingly of other material as well) owes its rise in popularity mainly to the availability of subtitling freeware such as for example Urusoft’s *Subtitle Workshop* on the internet.

The most prominent characteristic of subtitling as a specific type of translation, however, is the fact that it allows the receptor to compare the source and target text at all time. As such, a subtitled film leaves much less scope for manipulation, making the translation process highly transparent and also constituting a great challenge for the subtitler, who is aware that the recipient of his or her work has the possibility of monitoring the translation process. Considering the ever-increasing knowledge of English amongst the German population, the overwhelming majority of viewers will at least partly grasp the meaning of original utterances – subtitles in this case can serve as a guide to comprehension, rather than depriving the viewer of the opportunity to

understand the dialogue independently. At the same time, the foreign identity of the text is accentuated and the source culture is made apparent. Another typical and unusual feature of subtitles is that they are fleeting and transient in nature (an exception to this is the possibility of pausing and rewinding film offered by DVD and video), a characteristic which would normally be more associated with interpreting (Schröter 2005: 27), but at the same time this method does not offer the possibility of feedback or bilateral communication.

Intersemiotic Interference

As Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 45) point out, audiovisual translation is mostly characterised by the semiotic complexity of the text that is translated, where several sign systems co-operate to create a coherent story. Other authors refer to these semiotic channels as “communicative channels” (Gottlieb 1994: 265), “channels of discourse” (Gottlieb 1997: 210), or “film signs” (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993: 213). A film text usually consists of the following semiotic elements, as listed in Chiaro (2006:1):

- ~ Acoustic verbal signs (such as the spoken dialogue or song lyrics)
- ~ Visual verbal signs (such as banners, newspaper headlines, etc.)
- ~ Acoustic non-verbal signs (such as the music or the background noises)
- ~ Visual non-verbal signs (such as facial expressions, the setting, the general picture composition etc.)

The translator only has influence on one of these sign systems. In the case of dubbing, the acoustic verbal signs of a film are altered; where subtitling is concerned, it is the visual verbal sign system to which the subtitles are added, without having any effect on the remaining signs. All sign systems are very closely interlinked to form an elaborate semiotic construct which can constitute an enormous restriction for the subtitler as he or she must accommodate for this influence of other sign systems on the (acoustic and visual) verbal sign system in the translation. However, the effect of

the visual non-verbal sign system on the verbal systems can also be an advantage for the translator, for example when this solves a terminological translation problem by showing the object in question on the screen and thus aiding comprehension on the part of the viewer (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993: 214). As far as the comedy genre is concerned, the polysemiotic nature of the film text has a distinct influence on the translation process. The humour in a text often relies on several of the channels acting in concurrence in order to achieve comic effect, for example when the ambiguity required to create a pun is emphasised by the image (see also section 3.3). At the same time, verbal humour is highly lingua-culturally specific (Chiaro 2006:2), meaning that what is funny in a given language (and possibly culture) can vary considerably. The combination of these factors is responsible for the great difficulty presented by the translation of comedy programmes or films.

Other experts in translation have focused on this important characteristic of AVT. Chaume Varela (2004: 16) defines the audiovisual text as “a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning”, while Baumgarten (2008: 7) refers to film as a sign system, a “coherent whole composed of interdependent elements”, which “universally exploits all conceivable extrafilmic sign systems”. This interplay and interdependence of meaning from different semiotic systems, also occasionally referred to as multimodality (Guichon 2007, Baumgarten 2008), poses the greatest challenge for the audiovisual translator. Another characteristic element in most audiovisual material, particularly films, mentioned by Baumgarten is its “prefabricated orality” (2008: 7), which is to say that natural and spontaneous spoken language is imitated, and as such approximated, but can never really be achieved due to the scripted nature of most material involved in audiovisual translation.

It should be pointed out that “[...] the relationship between the different channels in translated film media is first and foremost an issue for the subtitler and the viewers” (Schröter 2005: 39). It is true that the nature of audiovisual texts as polysemiotic entities has implications for the viewer as well as the translator. Due to the additive

nature of subtitles, which means that subtitles are added to the existing sign systems without replacing the source text (which is therefore available at any time), there exists an ever-present “dual gap” in television subtitling. This gap exists not just between two groups of recipients (the “home” audience and the target audience), but also between the two modes of reception – listening to the source text (SL) dialogue and reading the target text (TL) dialogue (Gottlieb 1997: 211). Depending on the degree to which the target audience can comprehend the source language, this can lead to interference between the two: the so-called *feedback effect* (see Chapter 2.4), which can be either an advantage or a problem for the subtitler (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993: 214). As verbal humour “highlights the interplay between the [...] semiotic systems of the medium” – the synchronicity of word and image can be the basis of a joke, as can the interplay between spoken and written language (De Linde & Kay 1999: 13); this acts as a restrictive factor for the subtitler faced with the need for a creative solution.

One author who has investigated the polysemiotic nature of AVT in some depth is Henrik Gottlieb (2005: 2), who offers a semiotically based taxonomy of translation that takes into account the various types of translation we encounter today in the media landscape. Defining AVT as “the translation of transient polysemiotic texts presented onscreen to mass audiences” (2005: 13), Gottlieb assigns this type of activity to the category of conventionalised translation of polysemiotic texts. In this context, subtitling constitutes a diasemiotic form of translation (meaning a different semiotic channel is used to convey the translation compared to the original), while dubbing belongs to the category of isosemiotic translation (meaning it communicates through the same channel as the original, namely the audio channel). He also defines subtitling as fundamentally supplementary in nature, which means that the audience has simultaneous access to the source text, as discussed above (Gottlieb 2005: 5). When multilingual audiences read subtitles while hearing the original dialogue, the viewer “processes dialogue and subtitles as ‘diamesic twins’” (Gottlieb 2005: 6). His taxonomy is based on the way in which the audience perceives the target text cognitively, therefore placing emphasis on the recipient of the translation. When subtitles are

added to an audiovisual text, the original channels are unaltered but the balance between the different semiotic channels is changed: text reception becomes predominantly visual (Gottlieb 2005: 11).

This can mean that the audience uses subtitles not just as a guide to understanding, but as a way of evaluating the translation according to their own standards, a phenomenon so wide-spread in Scandinavian countries that some subtitlers may decide on an unnatural construction for fear of being accused of a “wrong translation” (Gottlieb 2005: 6). With a substitutional method of audiovisual translation such as dubbing, this is of course less likely to occur, as it would require the audience to use their lip-reading skills in order to decode the original dialogue. Gottlieb concludes: “with time, and depending on national educational systems etc., the communicative power of the written subtitle may decrease as audiences pick up not only intonational cues, but also semantic and stylistic elements in the original dialogue – especially, of course, if this is in English” (Gottlieb 2005: 11). It is this speculation which is put to the (empirical) test in this study.

It becomes clear from these theoretical considerations that, based on the unique situation in which the source and target text can be directly compared at all times, subtitles incorporate a type of accountability which is not inherent in any other form of translation. Any translation that differs noticeably from what is said in the original dialogue could be perceived as a “breach of reference” (Pedersen 2007: 35) or indeed an “authenticity problem” (Gottlieb 1994: 269), if this is identified by the viewer. This “intersemiotic feedback” is based on audience comprehension, but also refers to the interference of the visual code with the written text (Gottlieb 1997: 219), thus rendering a collision between two semiotic channels influential enough to “render a more idiomatic, domesticated rendering counterproductive” (*ibid.*, 268). The question is investigated here whether this is true for comedy, where a rendering which looks on the surface to be appropriate to a non-expert audience is likely to be unsuccessful from a perspective of humour transfer (as the translator is often required to take advantage of the full comical potential of the target language, which may involve a

diversion from the source text surface structure). The likelihood that a translation which prioritises humorous effect and therefore foregoes formal equivalence wherever necessary will achieve a mixed or even negative reception by the target audience is higher in the event that a large part of the audience is able to understand the source language. It will therefore be interesting to see whether there is a correlation between a viewer's knowledge of English and their reception of a subtitled comedy film.

2.2 Advantages and challenges

After considering the specific characteristics of subtitling as a method of transferring filmic texts into a target language, in a comparative context that considers the other widely used mode of bringing audiovisual material to a target-language audience – dubbing – this section will undertake a detailed examination of the implications of this method for the translator and the viewer. Most literature regarding subtitles, however theoretical, stresses the fact that this type of specialised translation is a highly *constrained* one. While it cannot be denied that AVT presents very specific challenges to whoever attempts it, this does not set it apart from other types of translation. Nevertheless, the polysemiotic text and the fleeting nature of the medium mean that the translator is required to keep certain restrictions and intricacies in mind when working towards the purpose of dubbing or subtitling. These influential factors affect the translated text to such an extent that a short overview of the limitations, but also the advantages of each of these types of translation, seems important in order to gain an understanding of how they affect the translation process. “The constraints active in audiovisual translation influence the presence of audiovisual translation norms and translation techniques in the translation phase”, as Marti Ferriol (2007: 178) argues. For example, according to Marti Ferriol's findings (2007: 180), when formal constraints are active in a text, translation strategies for dubbing tend to be more interpretative-communicative, whereas those for subtitling are more literal. As techniques and strategies (for wordplay translation) are the central subject of this research study, it is

considered appropriate to investigate AVT on a more general level before looking at a specific case.

The inter-dependence of the different sign systems and the limiting effect this can have on the options available to the subtitler has already been discussed in the previous section. Of the various other factors to be taken into account in relation to audiovisual translation, the ones which are frequently named first and foremost are of a temporal and spatial kind: the subtitler has at most two lines of limited length in which to fit the translation of spoken dialogue.

As a result of this, the spoken dialogue frequently has to be reduced: “in film, the machine runs at a constant speed and mindlessly unspools its translation at an unchanging rate. The translator must condense his translation in the physical space of the frame and the temporal length of the utterance” (Nornes 2007: 162). The necessity of speech condensation can lead to a change in style, for example making the utterance shorter may make it more formal (Pettit 2005: 14). As far as the translation of wordplay is concerned, the space and time restrictions imposed on the translator have an effect on the range of options he or she can feasibly use in a scene – these are already limited by the linguistic specificity of wordplay (see also Chapter 3.3). For example, if the numerous restrictions affecting the translation of wordplay allow a solution for a particular case of wordplay, this could still be rendered unfeasible by a constraint which is imposed by subtitling as a mode of translation.

In addition to this, the projected reading speed of the audience plays an important part: Allowing for some variation due to a viewer’s age and hearing ability, the average reading speed of a person is around 70-74 characters in six seconds (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 23). This constraint further exacerbates the requirements of condensing the spoken dialogue, even with an estimated audience that consists of fully literate adults, and arguably results in a change, possibly even in a loss, of meaning. Evidently, if the viewership includes children or people with limited vision or literacy, this effect is re-enforced. At the same time, there are a number of advantages related to the intersemiotic nature of subtitles, for example the fact that people who do not speak

the target language but are familiar with the source language – such as foreign residents or tourists – can comprehend the film alongside the target audience. Another challenge presented by this method is the importance of the synchronisation between text and image, as the dialogue must, ideally, be in sync with the action on screen: “films represent and actualise a particular reality based on specific images that have been put together by a director. Thus, subtitling – dubbing and voice-over, too – is constrained by the respect it owes to synchrony in these new translational parameters of image and sound” (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 9). For anyone attempting to transfer wordplay successfully from spoken to written form and from one language to another, this requirement is likely to add to the already considerable challenge inherent in this endeavour.

The transfer between spoken and written language indeed presents a whole range of issues. One of them is the representation of the phonological component of speech in written form (De Linde & Kay 1999: 12). This concerns important elements of language such as tone of voice or accents and additional foreign languages, all of which are difficult to convey in writing. If one or more of these elements are used for characterisation purposes or to create humorous effect for example, this can be lost in transit if subtitling is the method of choice. However, if the viewer is familiar with the source language at least to some extent, he or she may be able to benefit from such elements nevertheless. Furthermore, subtitles are sometimes considered a distraction from the action on screen, as the viewer has to divide his or her attention between the two. This can also be seen as an aesthetic problem by some viewers, who might feel that “disturbing subtitles crowd out the picture and ruin the composition” (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 34). While this is certainly a problem for some viewers (personal preference plays a big part in the individual decision for or against a particular mode of transfer), others appreciate the fact that a subtitled film includes all the nuances of sound which are part of the filmic text and an important part of the film-making process. Also, subtitling does not interfere with the non-verbal elements of language, such as facial expressions or gestures (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 35). Another quality for which subtitles are appreciated by many is their didactic potential. For example,

subtitles are claimed by some to help to “increase literacy, teach and maintain minority languages and consolidate official languages” (*ibid.*). For example, intralingual subtitles can function as didactic aids for second-language learners, as has been demonstrated in a number of studies (for example by Vanderplank 1988, Bird & Williams 2002, Van Lommel et al. 2006, or Caimi 2006).

Subtitling also has the advantage that it can be used to render discursive elements that appear in the image, such as signs, letters, messages, etc. (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 8). This is especially useful for animated features such as the test film, which use visual-verbal information as a source of humour, but also for films of other, non-comedic genres which might rely on written text to convey information which is essential for the narrative. Of course, both modes of transfer can be combined at any given time, for example to give a translation of a written sign or a text message which is shown on screen, while the spoken dialogue can be heard in its dubbed version at the same time.

The labelling of audiovisual translators as *corrupt*, in their acceptance of “a vision of translation that violently appropriates the source text, and in the process of converting speech into writing within the time and space limits of the subtitle, they conform the original to the rules, regulations, idioms, and frame of reference of the target language and its culture” (Nornes 2007: 155). He goes on to argue that “[subtitling] is a practice of translation that smoothes over its textual violence and domesticates all otherness while it pretends to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign” (*ibid.*). While this may present an overstatement of the subversion involved in the process of AVT, Nornes does touch upon the need for adaptation of the source text to fit the requirements of the medium and the mode of transfer. It remains questionable, however, whether subtitling can be said to “pretend” to retain a foreign flavour while essentially domesticating all “otherness”, when the original source language text is available to the viewer at all times. In a situation in which the source language is English and the target language German, is it not possible that source language comprehension will prevent this effect from occurring? The implications of such

changes on the choice of translation strategies remains one of the central questions investigated in this research project.

Dubbing, on the other hand, also possesses specific advantages and constraints. One of the reasons for its widespread popularity is that literacy levels among the audience or the quality of their vision have no bearing on the viewing process. This means that children and people with reading difficulties or those with poor sight can enjoy the translated version of the film any obstruction. Yet we must also acknowledge the drawbacks of dubbing including the potential for manipulation or censorship (especially in totalitarian political systems), as described above. Another reason why some viewers reject dubbing lies in its concealment of the original voices of the actors and the consequent loss of authenticity of the acting and of the film-making. This point can be countered by the argument that dubbing does not affect the composition of the image, which arguably is perceived by many to be the most significant semiotic channel of a film text. It should be remembered that when we consider dubbing, the quality of the finished product is highly important: “When executed very well, it is difficult to distinguish a dubbed film from the original” (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 36), while “substandard dubbing can be insufferable” (*ibid.*).

2.2 The situation in Europe regarding AVT

In Europe, a distinction has traditionally been made between so-called dubbing countries and subtitling countries. Larger language communities such as France, Italy, Spain and Germany/Austria/Liechtenstein/Switzerland use dubbing as their main method of linguistic transfer, as their large number of inhabitants and therefore potential viewers renders this expensive technique financially viable. Smaller communities such as the Scandinavian countries, where the target market is comparatively small, have traditionally used subtitling. A study on the dubbing and subtitling needs in Europe conducted by Media Consulting Group⁴ in 2007 supports the

⁴ *Study on Dubbing and Subtitling Needs and Practices in the European Audiovisual Industry*, published in 2007

position that this distinction is not sufficiently complex, but rather represents an oversimplification of the situation (MCG 2007: 4), especially when it comes to the mode of language transfer used for cinema works. For example, it was observed that many of the classic dubbing countries are “clearly moving towards subtitling” with only Italy and Spain resisting this trend. As the map shown in Figure 1⁵ illustrates, as far as television broadcasts are concerned (irrespective of services available for the deaf and hard-of-hearing), the distinction still stands. In the cinema, both practices are used alongside one another in Germany, as Figure 2⁶ shows.

In Germany, not just financial but also historical factors played a part in the development of the current situation. The infrastructure on which the dubbing industry rests in Germany was established during the era of dictatorship in the 1930s and 1940s, when dubbing was implemented as a tool for censorship due to its substitutional rather than additive nature (Sarkowska 2007: 7). For example, in the first German translation of the 1942 film *Casablanca*, the character of Victor László, a fugitive Czech resistance leader who has escaped from a concentration camp, was turned into a Norwegian nuclear physicist and discoverer of the mysterious “delta rays” Viktor Larsen for the German-speaking audience.⁷ It was not until 1975 that the film was re-dubbed and broadcast on television in its unabridged and uncensored form.

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/docs/overview/evaluation/studies/dubbing_sub_2007/ex_sum_ds_en.pdf (accessed 17/08/2010)

⁵ Source: Media Consulting Group (MCG)/ Peacefulfish (2007) *Study on Dubbing and Subtitling Needs and Practices in the European Audiovisual Industry – Final Report*. [Internet]: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/docs/overview/evaluation/studies/dubbing_sub_2007/ex_sum_ds_en.pdf (accessed on 17/10/08)

⁶ Source: Media Consulting Group (MCG)/ Peacefulfish (2007) *Study on Dubbing and Subtitling Needs and Practices in the European Audiovisual Industry – Final Report*. [Internet]: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/docs/overview/evaluation/studies/dubbing_sub_2007/ex_sum_ds_en.pdf (accessed on 17/10/08)

⁷ According to the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034583/alternateversions> (accessed on 04/07/11)

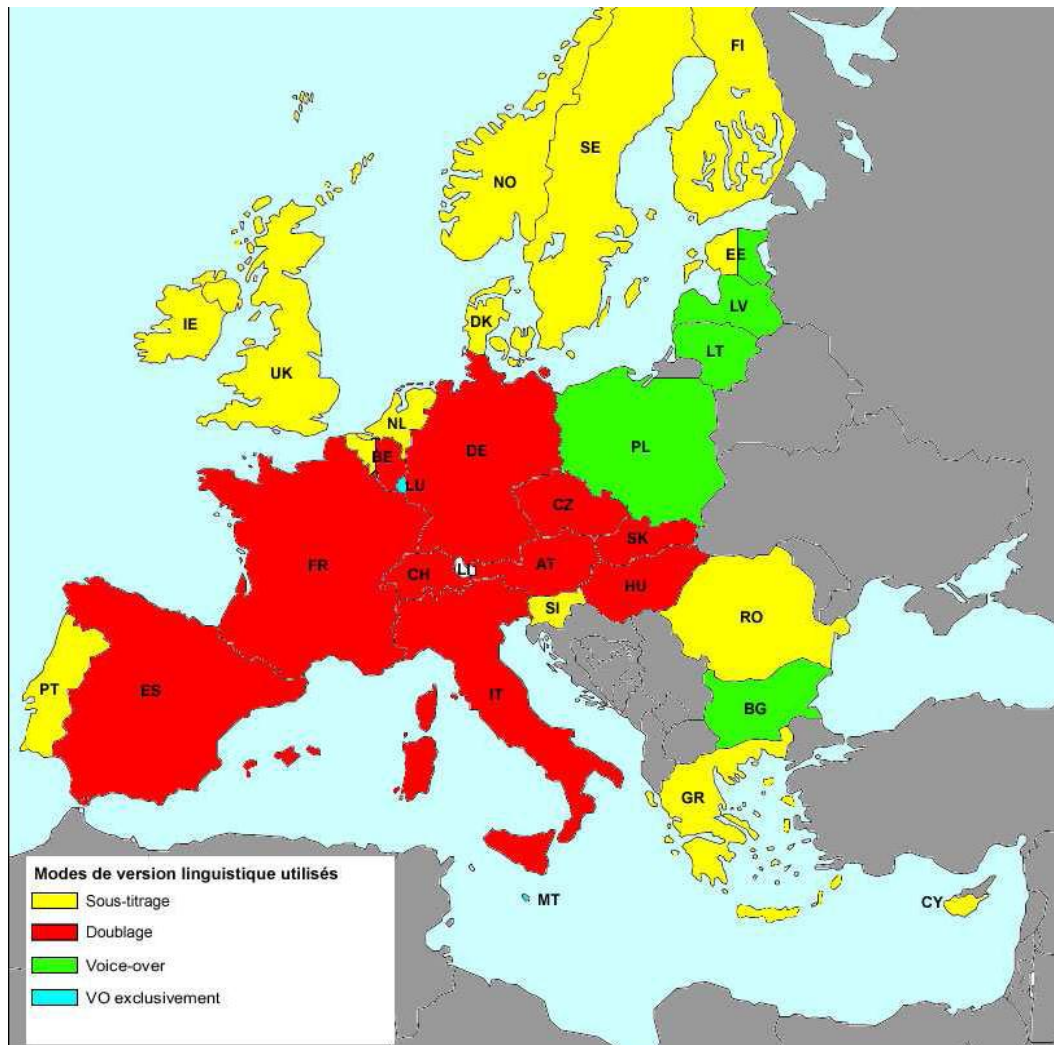


Figure 1: Map of language-transfer practices for television works broadcast in Europe

The prevalence of dubbing is therefore still felt in the medium of television, for which it is the preferred option in the German-speaking countries. As a whole, the audiovisual translation industry in Europe is alive and well and it is estimated that the turnover for European dubbing and subtitling industries lies in the region of 400 million Euros per year (MCG 2007: 42). Do these developments undermine the current validity of historical distinctions between dubbing and subtitling countries? Schröter argues that the boundaries between the two alternatives might be in the process of dissolving:

Perhaps the trend is that the traditional dichotomy between dubbing and subtitling countries is gradually weakened. While general preferences might take generations to overcome, individuals will increasingly enjoy a choice between subtitled, dubbed, and original versions, possibly because distributors and TV bosses recognise the

heterogeneity of their audiences, and certainly because technical innovation (like the DVD or digital television) will make it increasingly feasible.
(Schröter 2005: 11)

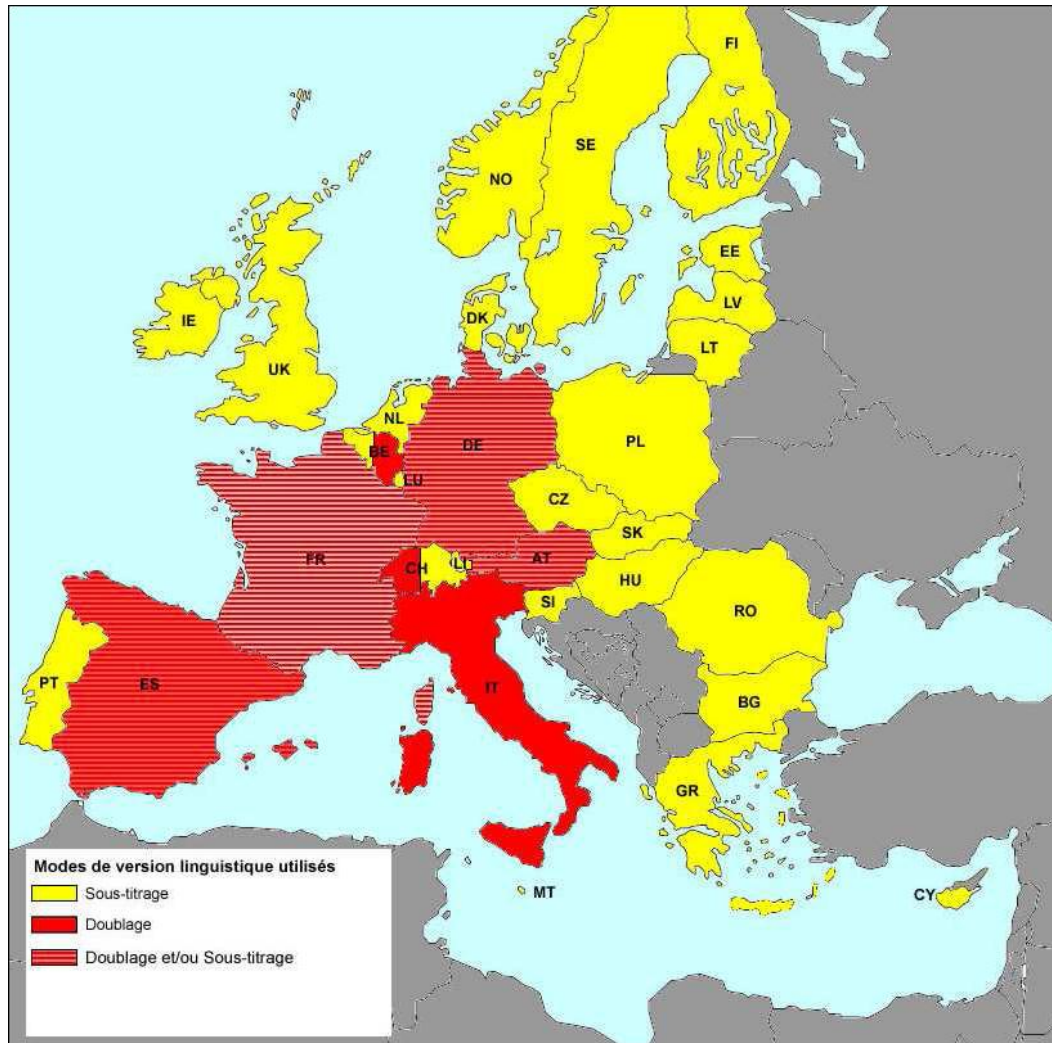


Figure 2: Map of language-transfer practices for cinema works screened in Europe

Various factors can be considered to have an influence on the perception and viewing habits of German-speaking audiences in the context of subtitling practices. There is, for example, a marked increase of “part-subtitling” (O’Sullivan 2007: 81) in mainstream film. This term is used by Sullivan to describe such subtitles which are aimed at the primary audience of a film, and which enable the production of films in more than one language wherever narrative structures require this, such as González Iñárritu’s 2006

feature *Babel* (large parts of which are set in Japan and Morocco and feature local actors speaking the authentic language in which the character would speak), but also television productions such as the US series *Lost* (2004-2010), where a Korean couple's consistent usage of their own language to each other is subtitled for the English speaking audience (and consequently all other non-Korean-speaking audiences who, depending on their language of choice, might be watching an otherwise dubbed episode). This phenomenon is "increasingly dominant in mainstream film" (*ibid.*) in an effort by film-makers to add integrity and authenticity to the production.

Furthermore, fansubtitles (also called "fansubs"), which are "fan-produced, translated, subtitled version(s) of a Japanese anime" (Diaz Cintas & Muños Sanchez 2006: 1), have become more popular in recent years with the development of cheaper software and subtitling freeware. The marked rise in popularity of this phenomenon has leaked out into other genres as the connections between fandom, technology and audiovisual media become closer and more complex. One interesting development to arise from this consideration is the influence of video hosting sites on the consumption habits of audiovisual material. Arguably, the amateur side of audiovisual translation is gaining influence, not just in terms of actual language transfer, but media consumers are also gaining access to more and more subtitled material at a mouse-click. It is sometimes argued that fansubbing could be just the tip of the iceberg as far as the decentralisation of the media establishment is concerned (Gonzalez, 2006); what we can say, however, is that fansubbing is raising the profile of subtitles in areas where they are less frequently used, giving this mode of language transfer higher visibility.

The arrival of the DVD (digital versatile disc) has also had an enormous influence on the way audiovisual material is accessed and viewed. In combination with laptop computers, films can now be watched anywhere and anytime, while also being easier to duplicate. Movie rental companies such as *Netflix* or *Lovefilm*, which send DVDs or Blu-Rays out to customers in the post for them to watch and then return in the same way, are benefiting from the format and enjoy growing popularity amongst the

population.⁸ The choice of the languages that are distributed on one disc is thus governed by territorial extents of rights and media chronology (MCG 2007: 9). This means that linguistic boundaries associated with different viewing markets are dissolving and more translated versions of films are now produced than ever before.

A development which could be said to exert an influence on the way films and programmes are consumed is the advent of digital television technology and the consequent evolution of digital subtitles on TV. This has been closely linked to a steady increase of programmes that are subtitled on digital channels. Online television-on-demand services, such as *BBC iplayer*, also provide subtitled programmes and digital technology allows users to record programmes with subtitles more easily than was previously the case with analogue television.⁹ In Germany, the television industry is behind the UK in terms of providing subtitled programmes, as at the moment, around a quarter of programmes on state television broadcaster ZDF are subtitled¹⁰, compared to an impressive 100 percent of programmes on the BBC.

2.3 AVT and AVT research in the digital age

As demonstrated in the previous section, audiovisual translation (AVT) is, and has always been, inextricably linked to technology. The “state of the art” regarding the production and distribution of audiovisual material has traditionally shaped the way in which subtitlers work – for example, with the possibility of digitising the image, the whole profession underwent radical change (Diaz Cintas 2005: 1) in a number of ways. The DVD has now successfully replaced the VHS format in the world of visual entertainment and has established itself as the main storage medium for audiovisual material. This has had significant consequences for the industry of AVT. Firstly, it means that the amount of subtitling work to be undertaken by translators has

⁸ As of July 2011, online DVD rental company *Lovefilm* has 1.6 million subscribers

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/reception/analoguetv/subtitles.shtml> (accessed on 06/07/2011)

¹⁰ According to the CRB-Report published by ZDF in 2010

http://www.unternehmen.zdf.de/fileadmin/files/Download_Dokumente/DD_Engagement/CSR-Report_komplett_ES_72dpi.pdf (accessed on 06/07/2011)

increased, as noted above a DVD can incorporate eight audio versions and up to 32 subtitled versions of the same material per disk. Even smaller, independent publishers usually include up to three languages per DVD. Another new phenomenon, which is rooted in the increased storage capacity of the DVD compared to older formats, is the provision of bonus material which often needs to be translated too, such as making-of footage, interviews, commentary soundtracks, and other contributions, which, in their entirety, can take up more space than the actual film or series itself. It has also been noticeable that material (particularly in the television genre) that was not originally subtitled is being re-released on DVD and therefore belatedly subtitled, even in those countries where, traditionally, only a dubbed version would have been produced.

The digital era has equally brought great opportunities for subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description tracks for the blind and visually impaired (AD). Increased storage capacity has given rise to a greater supply and subsequently also to a greater demand for SDH and AD, and pressure groups are continuously lobbying for further expansion (Diaz Cintas 2005: 4). Digital video formats also brought with them the possibility of central control when it comes to DVD-related services, such as multilingual subtitling (Georgakopoulou 2006: 116). This is especially relevant in the face of growing piracy, which constitutes a major problem for film studios and distributors and remains responsible for losses of billions of pounds every year. In order to counteract this issue, storing films on central servers is a useful way of controlling assets more effectively (*ibid.*). On the other hand, piracy is one reason why the time window between theatrical and DVD release is becoming ever shorter, resulting in even greater time pressure for the translators who work for dubbing and subtitling companies. The centralised production of DVDs is also less costly, a factor which exerts a considerable influence on this development. Finally, the question of copyright is also a relevant issue, as central control makes it much easier to archive subtitle files and to re-use them for later releases (Georgakopoulou 2006: 117).

Technological advancement has also had a marked impact on audiences and their viewing habits. It can be said that the DVD has contributed to giving the viewer a more

active role in the production and distribution of AV material, as well as more control: there tends to be more (language) settings to choose from, the film can be stopped, skipped back or repeated at leisure, extras such as extended or deleted scenes, production notes and commentaries take the audience further into the formerly removed area of film production and generally contribute to putting them more at ease when it comes to the handling of audiovisual material.

The new pro-active stance of the viewer as such is also an influential factor when it comes to subtitling and the exposure to subtitled material. With the rise of Web 2.0, the availability of audiovisual material, but also the possibility to play with it, has started to bloom. Subtitling and film editing software is now available without payment and the use of video platforms is widely accepted. As a result, there is a noticeable rise in audiovisual “engineering” as a popular pastime in which existing or newly recorded material is re-edited, sped up, slowed down, provided with new background music, and subtitled for viewers who do not understand the original dialogue. Fansubbing in this format is booming and is no longer limited to Japanese anime but extends to programmes from all genres which are now subtitled and shared on the Internet.

This development is interesting for the purpose of AVT research for several reasons. Firstly, the above-mentioned trend towards confident handling of audiovisual material by amateurs is giving the profile of subtitling a boost, as it is the AVT method of choice for most internet-related activity. It also means that the average viewer is becoming more and more familiar with the world of the image and the new technologies that inspire it. This new and knowledgeable audience will probably take a different and more active approach to AV material and is also more likely to exhibit different needs and demands. Diaz Cintas (2005: 11) even speculates that there might be a future trend towards translation-related metatextual information for certain audiences, or as part of the bonus material of a DVD. He also argues (2005: 12) that there should be different approaches to subtitling, just like there are very different viewers and very different audiovisual publications.

The technological advances introduced by the digital era do not end here – digital television has made a breakthrough which, again, is not without consequences for the AVT profession, as the choice of audio channels or subtitled versions is greater and the technological possibilities for providing viewers with options have multiplied. Equally, video-on-demand providers are enjoying increasing popularity, where the chain of distribution and reception never leaves the medium of the internet and hard copies of the film are not even part of the process. All in all, we seem to be in the midst of what is a “period of extreme dynamism and creative activity in the world of subtitling in general, and DVD subtitling in particular” (Diaz Cintas 2005: 14). The processes involved are breaking up and becoming more flexible, audiences are becoming more involved, material is shared globally, borders and barriers are softening. Consequently, it can no longer be valid to categorise countries depending on whether they “prefer” their films dubbed or subtitled, even if this is still the theatrical method of choice. The audiovisual world is becoming more interconnected and more interactive all the time.

One of the last bastions to be conquered in this respect is the process of production and film-making itself, which until recently was firmly in the hands of the relevant industry. However, there is evidence to suggest that this might not be the case for much longer. The desktop digital revolution, or “the film studio in your flat” as filmmaker and founder of the digital arts organisation *onedotzero*, Matt Hanson, describes it,¹¹ is seemingly upon us. The use of crowd-sourcing (relying on the efforts of the general public) in film-making is the latest development in a long line of technological and cultural trends affecting the audiovisual world. Collaborative film-making platforms are emerging, such as the Finnish *www.wreckamovie.com*, where contributions to film production are free and open to anyone. These communities use the internet for the conception, production and distribution of audiovisual material, with the majority of the creative input coming from the internet user and film aficionado. The networking community includes all the roles involved in the film-making process, from animation artist to screenwriter and webmaster, currently a

¹¹ In an interview with Gary Henson, published on <http://www.apengine.org/wp-content/plugins/as-pdf/generate.php?post=2035> (accessed on 08/07/11)

community of just under 8,000 people (July 2011). The first feature length picture to originate from the platform and to be shown in theatres was a science fiction animation entitled *Iron Sky*. The idea of “collective scripting” is directly related to the *Copyleft* movement, which gives the author of a piece of work the option of allowing the receiver to adapt and modify the work, for example through the GNU General Public License or the Share-alike license awarded by the organisation Creative Commons. The author thus surrenders some of his or her rights under copyright law. The first project to make use of this notion is the collectively scripted *A Swarm of Angels*, which is funded by 50,000 participants each contributing 25 pounds in order to be entitled to make suggestions for the script. The final say, however, rests with filmmaker Matt Hanson and his board of creatives.

With greater technological advances come greater expectations by the user. With each new and innovative feature of a technical construct, users adapt their scope of reasonable expectations towards the same product. With the advent of the camera-phone came the demand for phones to naturally incorporate a picture-taking device. Will a generation growing up with YouTube, game consoles and video-on-demand services not similarly develop the need for new and more interactive narrative structures? The more control the creative industries are relinquishing in favour of the audience, the more of this influence will be demanded. Perhaps the audiovisual (translation) industry, like others, needs to change in order to stay the same. If this is true, however, then the same applies to the research that explores it. The audience is a crucial component in the AVT process – research on audience reception is therefore necessary to reflect its growing influence on the industry.

Chapter 3: Humour and Translation

Humour – the “quality of action or speech which excites amusement” (Highbeam Encyclopedia 2008) – is a complex, elusive, and controversial concept. The idea of what constitutes humour varies between individuals and cultures – a cartoon depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper (*Jyllands-Posten*, September 2005) can spark huge outrage amongst the Muslim world, whole countries can react with indignation to a comedy film by a British comedian (such as the reaction from Kazakhstan when Sasha Baron Cohen’s *Borat* was released in 2006), and in the United States federal law states that it is an offence to joke about murdering the president.¹² Researched within a range of fields including psychology, sociology and linguistics, humour presents a particular challenge when combined with the art of translation. The question of the possibility and modes of transferring humour into another language has long been the subject of academic debate, with opinions regarding whether this is even feasible diverging to some extent. Some experts are more optimistic than others, for example Anna Jankowska:

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.
(2009: 1)

Many would agree with Jankowska – humour can indeed overcome linguistic and cultural barriers – however, 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. If a humorous text is not received with amusement in the target culture, does the fault lie with the translation or with wider cultural difference? Is it possible to project constructs of “national” humour based on the common social, historical and political experience as

¹² Title 18 USC Sec. 871 of the US code. Source: <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/18C41.txt> [accessed 25/05/11]

well as the shared linguistic and cultural knowledge inherent in a society and is the translation of humour therefore an impossible undertaking? Thus, an important question to ask when investigating the role of humour translation in varying perceptions of (audiovisual) texts is whether the concept of a “sense of humour” is entirely universal or rather culture-specific, and whether linguistic humour constitutes a special case in this respect (in contrast to, for example, physical humour). When someone slips on a banana skin and lands on his or her behind, is this more likely to receive laughs around the globe than the witty remark a comedian might make about it? One example where a franchise based on non-linguistic humour has achieved international popularity and success is the largely mime-based *Mr Bean*, who rarely speaks and therefore does not require translation.

If cultural factors really do exert considerable influence on the reception of comedy films, for example, the issue for the translator (and also the researcher) is the identification of a means to accommodate this by incorporating cultural and linguistic considerations in the translation in a way which eases the transfer and respects the humorous frame of reference provided by the target language. When translating humorous texts, where the desired effect on the recipient is relatively clear-cut, is the success of a translation easier to determine than for other texts, and does that make the translator’s job any easier? When the translation of a humorous film is successful, the audience’s appreciation can have a direct impact on the translator’s visibility. The dubbed Polish version of *Shrek* (Dreamworks 2001) was received so positively that the translator behind it, Bartosz Wierzbietka, became a celebrity and his later works were advertised under the markedly enhanced profile “translated by Bartosz Wierzbietka” (Jankowska 2009: 2).

A reception study carried out by Delia Chiaro showed that 75 percent of Italian participants were unable to comprehend the verbally expressed humour (VEH) contained in nine different translated extracts from television programmes (2004: 138). Chiaro concludes from her research that “in cases in which VEH is not dependent on visual elements on screen and is purely verbal and reliant on general encyclopaedic

knowledge, the quality of translation may well be at least partly responsible if the audience does not get the joke” (2004: 139). Translators themselves also seem to agree that VEH is one of the most significant issues which they face in their job: in a survey amongst 96 screen translators in Italy, all of them ranked VEH as their greatest challenge in the dubbing process (Beninca 1999, cited in Chiaro 2004: 138). Research on the translation of humour has been mainly focussed on issues of translatability from the translator’s point of view, rather than addressing the intrinsic function of humour, which is to amuse the audience – in psychological terms, to evoke exhilaration. Adrian Fuentes Luque shares this impression:

The successful reception of an audiovisual production [...] depends not only on a good phonetic and character synchrony in the case of dubbing, or reader-friendly presentation in the case of subtitling, but especially on the quality of the translation of the audiovisual text. Viewers are the ultimate and direct receivers of translated audiovisual texts, and their characteristics and expectations seem all too often not to be taken into account before and during the translation process.
(2003: 293)

Willibald Ruch defines the psychological concept of exhilaration as “a short-lived process of ‘making cheerful’ or the temporary rising and fading out of a cheerful state” (Ruch 1998a: 122). This covers a span from low (slight amusement) to high (outburst of laughter) and is influenced by exhilarants (stimuli) as well as situative, actual and habitual factors which inhibit or facilitate the induction of exhilaration. Interestingly, he also states that the threshold for laughter varies for each individual human subject. This last point is highly relevant for the choice of experimental structure for this project; a method was devised which did not consider levels of laughter as a response to verbal humour as a quantitative or qualitative factor, as this was considered too individual and subjectively variable to be measured as a generic expression of exhilaration. Gauging the audience's exhilaration on the basis of recordable outward signs such as smiles or laughter was therefore deemed too unreliable to constitute a central consideration for the study (this will be further discussed in Chapter 5). According to Ruch (1998b), there are interindividual (between individuals), intraindividual (between situations) and actual dispositions for humour: “We are all

inclined to appreciate, initiate, or laugh at humour more at given times and less at others” (207). What is frequently referred to as “sense of humour” is in fact a combination of those factors, coupled with cultural sensitivities and conventions, but also in relation to personal experience. Ruch also argues (*ibid.*) that while the expression of humour differs between cultures, the “affective and mental foundations”, i.e. the faculty for humorous expression, are arguably universal. In the context of the research at hand, these considerations have been taken into account in the design of the reception study. In order to minimise the influence of situative factors on humour reception, care was taken to ensure that the screening process was as identical as possible for every group.

These considerations demonstrate the elusive nature of humour as subject of empirical research. Gauging exhilaration by means of measuring its expression (laughter, smiles, chuckles etc.) seems unreliable in isolation from any indexical measurement of a participant’s actual or habitual degree of exhilaratability, defined by Ruch (1998a: 122) as the “readiness to respond to a humour stimulus with positive affect and laughter”. Measuring this would have exceeded the scope of this study, hence exhilaration was measured in a more reflexive way, namely by asking participants to reflect on the exhilarant (the humour contained in the film) and to assess their own exhilaration (see also Chapter 5 on methodology).

Whilst the study must be considered in the wider context of the challenges of translating humour, it focuses more specifically on the translation of wordplay. The difficulty inherent in translating wordplay lies in its “lingua-cultural specificity” (Chiaro 2006: 3). Wordplay takes advantage of such intricate linguistic idiosyncrasies that transferring it into a target language (which would require a duplication of the same characteristics in that language) is considered unfeasible by some. Words or utterances might be homonymic, paronymic or homophonous in one language but not another, which means that in order to achieve exhilaration amongst the audience, a creative solution is required. However, the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual translation adds to the challenge by providing the visual sign system as an additional element in

linguistic humour, which further limits the options a translator has at his or her disposal for the transfer of these stylistic elements. It is this concurrency of intersemiotic dependency and linguistic specificity which makes this type of translation both fascinating and extremely challenging.

3.1 Existing research in the area

The subject of how wordplay is treated in audiovisual translation has been explored by several authors, mostly from a descriptive angle. The following section will focus on an overview of existing research in this field, the adoption of diverse approaches to the translation of verbal humour and the connections between theoretical and empirical work by other scholars and the research study at the heart of this thesis. A prominent researcher in this field, Henrik Gottlieb (1997), takes into account the polysemiotic nature of the audiovisual text in his analysis of wordplay translation. He establishes a link between the characteristic difficulties involved in wordplay translation and the typical constraints associated with subtitling. Gottlieb describes a “dual gap” (1997: 211) inherent in subtitling as a method of translation: the linguistic and cultural discrepancy between the two audiences, coupled with the fact that viewers listen to the original language whilst reading the translation on the screen. His identification of “intersemiotic feedback” (1997: 219), the phenomenon which is at the very centre of the research study at hand, refers, on the one hand, to the effect of film dialogue which interplays with non-verbal elements inherent in the film text (i.e. the image), but also the interference from the audio-channel in a scenario in which the viewer is able to comprehend the original dialogue. Due to the unique situation in which source and target text can be directly compared at all times, subtitling as a method incorporates a type of accountability which is not inherent in any other form of translation. In a target culture such as the German-speaking countries, where knowledge of English as a second language is common and source-text comprehension can therefore be assumed for at least part of the audience, the investigation of the effect of this phenomenon on the reception of subtitled comedies is essential, as it influences the

decision a translator should make in relation to strategies for the linguistic transfer of wordplay.

Any translation which differs noticeably from what is said in the original dialogue could be perceived as an “authenticity problem” (Gottlieb 1994: 269), if this is observed by the viewer. The effect occurs when two semiotic channels collide, and it could possibly even be so strong as to “render a more idiomatic, domesticated rendering counterproductive” (Gottlieb 1994: 268). Whether this is true for verbally expressed humour, where a target language-oriented rendering might be more advantageous to achieve comic effect in the target language (because the translator can take advantage of the full linguistic comical potential the target language has to offer), in a country where the majority of people claim significant comprehension of English, remains one of the questions at the heart of this research.

In one of the first experimental studies on the subject, Adrián Fuentes Luque (2003) has addressed the question of audience preference and response by testing a clip from the Marx Brothers’ film *Duck Soup* on three groups of participants, one English-speaking control group and two Spanish-speaking groups who each watched either the dubbed or the subtitled version of the film. He controls the variable of source language comprehension by only choosing participants without any knowledge of English for the subtitling group (2003: 296), but then goes on to explain that in the subtitling group, “humorous effect will not be triggered unless viewers are sufficiently familiar with the English language to distinguish an Italian accent or defective English as a source of humour” (2003: 301). However, through its selection of a non-representative panel of participants and the deliberate identification of viewers with no knowledge of English, the inherent structure of the experiment is instrumental in creating this very situation from the beginning. The methodology of the project described in this thesis differs from this approach, as groups were chosen which were as heterogeneous as possible (see also Chapter 5 on Methodology). Fuentes Luque uses three different research methods to measure the degree of exhilaration amongst his audience: observation of viewers’ immediate reactions, a questionnaire, and an interview immediately following

the viewing. The first element was ruled out for the study at hand because of its individuality (as discussed in the first section of this chapter) and consequent unreliability to produce significant results.

Fuentes Luque's study shows that dubbing is perceived to be the more suitable method of audiovisual translation to convey humour and then goes on to make a crucial point relating to the research area of humour translation: "the fundamental difference between the reception of humour in a [...] social context and [...] in an audiovisual representation is that, in the first case, humour emerges in a [...] spontaneous way. While in the case of audiovisual texts, humour carries an explicit intentionality" (Fuentes Luque 2003: 304). This means that within the comedy genre, the intention of the text as far as the audience is concerned is as straightforward as it can be – to elicit exhilaration by any means provided by the target language. Fuentes Luque's motivation for carrying out an experimental rather than descriptive research project is shared by the author of this thesis: it seems important that the viewer as receiver of an audiovisual text be made a primary consideration when researching audiovisual translation. Nevertheless, audience-based studies represent a minority of work in this field. Hence, this study responds to the "clear need for more research on receivers, the extent and type of their knowledge, and their expectations" (Fuentes Luque 2003: 294).

The translatability of verbal humour has also been investigated by Juan José Martínez-Sierra (2005), in a case study focussing on the animated series *The Simpsons*. He concludes from his analysis that "most humour is translatable" (2005: 294), and that the existence of shared background knowledge is essential for the successful translation of humorous items (*ibid.*). In a connected discussion, he also calls for a re-consideration of the view that the visual sign system acts as a restriction for the translator, as, in his opinion, the opposite (namely the image facilitating comprehension) is often the case. His confirmation that a translation which is different from the original in form and/or content can still elicit exhilaration, provides an essential assumption in the context of the research project at hand. The question

which remains, however, is whether such a translation solution with a humorous load is recognised as such by the target audience, especially when they are able to compare it to the original joke and deduce that the target language version is semantically divergent. When the image acts as an aid to comprehension by underlining and thus supporting the verbally expressed humour displayed by a character in reference to an item on the screen, this might not prove too restrictive for the translator. If, however, as is frequently the case with wordplay, the image serves to trigger the cognitive backtracking process which is crucial for the comprehension of the ambiguity involved, this makes it problematic for the translator to find a solution which is different from the original in content but nevertheless carries a humorous load. This is confirmed by a study conducted by Anna Jankowska (2009), who found that the loss of humorous elements was greater in subtitled translations compared to dubbing versions. She also concluded that the divergence between the two methods was most pronounced in the case of jokes which fall into the linguistic category, such as wordplay (2009: 6).

Research in this area carried out by Thorsten Schröter (2005) is also relevant to the study at hand as it constitutes a descriptive rather than theoretical foundation. In his thesis which investigates how what he refers to as “language-play” (and of which wordplay is only one component) is dealt with in dubbing and subtitling, Schröter pays specific attention to factors which are commonly expected to influence the finished product, such as the chosen method, the target language and the individual translator. He uses a corpus of 18 English-language films and a total of 99 different renderings into various Northern European languages for his analysis. Schröter is keen to stress that language-play and wordplay “overlap only partially” (2005: 365), as language-play includes creative language use which is not strictly based on ambiguity. He concludes that the extent to which it is possible to transfer the play over to the target language without any particular creative effort is decisive for the outcome of the translation of language-play (Schröter 2005: 366). Furthermore, the most common approach in dealing with language-play, according to his research, is direct translation – regardless of whether this leads to loss of humorous effect or not. It is also relevant for this research to note that Schröter used the variable “animated, non-animated or mixed”

to describe individual films, as a potentially influential factor in the choice of translation strategies, but found that it was indeed not a decisive factor. This is interesting insofar as it suggests that any findings from a study analysing the translation of animated films, such as the one at hand, can be applied to live-action features as well.

3.2. Approaches to the translation of humorous texts

The question of “free or literal” translation is as old as the activity itself. It has been treated by a divergent set of scholars, going back as far as Cicero, Horace or St. Jerome, who, when criticised for producing incorrect translations, defended his work as following a “sense-for-sense” rather than “word-for-word” approach (Munday 2001: 19). A range of concepts and terminologies have been developed in the attempt to come to terms with the fundamental dilemma of form versus content, and include Jakobson’s (1959/2000) idea of meaning, Nida’s (1964) distinction of formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark’s (1981) concept of semantic and communicative translation, Venuti’s (1995) domesticating and foreignising approaches, or Reiss and Vermeer’s (1984) skopos theory. The following section investigates how these theoretical frameworks can be applied to the translation of humorous texts, particularly to that of wordplay.

3.2.1 Meaning and equivalence

The movement away from word-for-word equivalence and toward sense-for-sense equivalence has continued since the mid-20th century, with a number of theorists providing different terms and definitions for the two concepts. The focus within translation studies has shifted toward the target culture and the recipient. Two central issues in this ongoing debate of free versus literal translation in the 1950s and 60s are the ideas of meaning and equivalence (Munday 2001: 36). Roman Jakobson (1959) was the first influential theorist to refer to meaning in a linguistic sense and to link it to the

concept of equivalence. According to him, translation means “substituting messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire [equivalent] messages in some other language” (1959/2000: 114). He assumes that languages are capable of rendering messages which have been written in other languages; translation should therefore strive for “equivalence in difference”. This requirement applies particularly to the text type at hand, namely the comedy film genre. Code-units in different languages rarely carry the same humorous load, even if they overlap semantically, yet it is possible to render concepts interlingually using different code-units. The question thus arises whether the idea of concepts is of relevance in relation to comedic texts. Arguably, the effect in this case is not directly dependent on “meaning” or “message”, but can be achieved by any other code-unit which creates humour in the target language.

In the 1960s the theoretical approach to translation became more systematic (Munday 2001: 39), incorporating more concepts from the area of linguistics. Eugene Nida’s science of translation, including the concepts ‘formal’ and ‘dynamic’ equivalence, has been influencing the field of translation studies up to the present day. Formal equivalence as a translation approach is oriented towards the source culture, whilst dynamic equivalence is based on the principle of equivalent effect. According to Nida, the translator should prioritise meaning over style. However, when one is dealing with linguistic humour, the form of the language is crucial for its appeal (Rapaelson-West 1989: 128). Is wordplay not a matter of style, or should the above rule be extended to include “meanings” in order to apply to wordplay? If the priority of translation is to preserve all semantic meanings included in the source text, and thus to transfer the ambiguity at the basis of wordplay, this would be an unrealistic goal as it is rarely possible. Chiaro calls this the “unfeasibility of formal equivalence when translating humour” (2010: 2). In order to achieve equivalent effect and thus equivalent response (exhilaration), the stylistic device as such (wordplay) must be prioritised.

Other concepts which attempt to describe the same dilemma are for example the ideas of acceptability and adequacy. Gideon Toury (1995) formulated the idea of

“acceptability”, which means that the target text is to make sense in the target culture, and which constitutes an orientation towards the textual norms of the receptor culture. This is a more pragmatic approach than the notion of equivalence as described by Nida. Gottlieb (2005: 16) argues that it encourages manipulations of the source text which result in distortions of the original content and form: “the target audience has reason to expect that what they are getting is a truthful representation of the original work, whose author is still featured on the front page.” Although this statement refers to literary translation, the same holds true for audiovisual translation: the screenwriter’s name is presented onscreen while the translator’s identity often remains covert, for example on most DVDs, whereas in literary translation the name of the translator is mentioned. The notion of adequacy as described by Toury prioritises the maximum reproduction of the source text’s functional features, regardless of the expectations of the prospective audience (Toury 1980, in Manini 1996: 171). As is the case with most other theoretical frameworks which take the form of a spectrum or scale, there exist “a series of intermediate positions and the possibility of inconsistent behaviour in between” (Manini 1996: 171).

Newmark’s terminology of semantic versus communicative translation presents a similar scale. His idea of communicative translation, as the attempt to produce an effect which is as close as possible to the original response from the receptor, is similar to Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, however Newmark is of the opinion that equivalent effect is impossible to achieve since it is “inoperant if the text is out of TL space and time” (Newmark 1981: 39). Applied to the translation of wordplay in film, this would mean that as the subtitled or dubbed version of the film is screened and watched in a different space and at a different time from the original, then equivalent humorous effect cannot be achieved. This is arguably true insofar as the habitual and situative factors which contribute to a person’s exhilaratability are individually different (this also applies to individual ST receptors) and cultural differences could also influence perception. However, communicative equivalence as a goal – i.e. striving for the closest possible effect to the original – can still be applied to the process of wordplay translation. After establishing the desired outcome in this way the question

remains, however, as to *how* the translator is to arrive at this goal, and whether there is an approach or a set of strategies which are more successful in achieving this goal than others. This is what the study at hand sets out to investigate.

3.2.2 The role of skopos

From a functional or skopos-oriented perspective on translation, the function (Greek: *skopos*) of a text and the intention on the part of the sender should be the main focus point for the translator. The function is communicated to the recipient through the text, in order to create a frame of mind which enables the recipient to process the text in the way it was intended by the sender:

In order to make their texts work, text producers will try to provide them with (linguistic or non-linguistic) markers indicating the function the text is intended for, such as particular format, specific syntactic structures or stylistic devices. (Nord 2010: 186)

In the case of film texts, genre plays an important role in this process of assigning a text to a particular type (and therefore skopos). An animated film such as the *Wallace and Gromit* adventures will arguably inspire certain expectations in their prospective audiences, based on their genre,¹³ their (intended and actual) appeal to children, and, in the case of *Wallace and Gromit*, the context of previous instalments in a series of films featuring the same characters. Aside from these formal markers, semantic and stylistic markers – such as the frequent use of linguistic and physical humour and the creative use of language – facilitate this process of identification and categorisation and leave little room for doubt as to the skopos of this particular text: the exhilaration of an audience which varies in age and life experience (and, in the case of recipients watching a subtitled version, the ability to comprehend the source language dialogue).

If a subtitler or dubbing translator were to follow this approach consistently when working on a wordplay-laden text such as the corpus film, the resulting approach

¹³ Animation is often treated as a genre in itself in spite of the varied range of animated works published in the history of film-making (see also Chapter 4.1). Genre-specific expectations may still be created in viewers due to the high number of high-grossing “mainstream” animations within the “family” or “comedy” genres.

would probably prioritise humorous effect by all means possible. This would be in accordance with the skopos theory put forward by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, which states that a translation is meant to function for its intended purpose and addressees in the target culture:

An English-language author writes an English novel for an English-language readership. The German target text is written for a German-language readership which, to put it simply, lives in a different 'situation' than the English reader. [...] This requires equivalent behaviour in situations which are considered equivalent.

(Reiss & Vermeer 1991: 33)

This implies that the translator is at liberty to take all necessary steps to preserve the skopos in the target text, even if this means altering the formal or semantic structure of the original utterance. Translating, therefore, becomes a “goal-oriented procedure carried out in such a way as the translator deems optimal under the circumstances” (Vermeer 1989: 13). The skopos theory is “intended to solve the eternal dilemmas of free vs. faithful, dynamic vs. formal equivalence” (Nord 1997: 29), and it takes into account the fact that faithful recreations of a text’s surface structure in the target language do not always result in adequate translations. This seems straightforward: when applied to the translation of wordplay – a situation where a faithful recreation of a text’s surface structure is rather unlikely to duplicate the ambiguity necessary to recreate the original wordplay, which, in a functionalist sense, would mean the translation is unsuccessful – a skopos-oriented approach allows the translator to do whatever it takes to make the audience laugh, using any opportunity for the creation of wordplay which the target language has to offer. Of course, the interplay of spoken (or written) language and the visual sign system has a restrictive effect on this approach, as the creative freedom required is limited by the visual input, as discussed above. The perhaps less obvious but equally significant question remains, however, as to how the target audience will receive the result of a skopos-oriented wordplay translation. In a scenario where a certain percentage of viewers have at least some knowledge of the source language (in the case of English as a SL, this is not unrealistic), and can therefore compare the source text with the target text, will a translation based purely on equivalence of effect be perceived as “wrong” if the formal and/or

semantic structure of the original joke have been changed? Is the time it takes to hear, read, identify and process a case of wordplay in a film enough to recognise and acknowledge the successful transfer of source language wordplay into (dynamically equivalent) target language wordplay? Will it therefore make a difference whether or not viewers are able to comprehend the original dialogue, and to what extent? This reception study sets out to investigate these questions.

3.2.3 Domesticating and foreignising approaches

An important distinction between two basic approaches to translation is the one between foreignisation and domestication:

Foreignisation refers to a strategy whereby a significant trace of the original is retained, while domestication assimilates a text to the cultural and linguistic values of the target culture.

(Paloposki & Oittinen 2000: 374)

This terminology was introduced by Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998), who himself argues in favour of foreignising strategies (1995: 23) in order to take advantage of their “defamiliarising effect” (Ramière 2006: 2) of making readers more receptive to cultural differences. The effect of foreignisation would then be to make the process of translation overt, as the receptor is under no illusion as to the origin of the text. Domestication, on the other hand, might result in a more fluent, idiomatic text by levelling cultural and lingua-specific elements, thereby concealing its foreignness and conforming to the needs and expectations of the target culture.

Evidently, these two approaches constitute the ends of a spectrum and not all solutions can be clearly assigned to either one or the other position. Furthermore, marking the boundaries between them can be highly difficult. The distinction between the two concepts, however, is a useful tool to conceptualise a translation or to analyse strategies which have been applied to the translation of culture-specific elements (Ramière 2006: 6). Some researchers claim to have observed a tendency towards foreignising strategies in the translation of audiovisual humour (Martinez-Sierra 2005:

295). What does this mean? If a foreignising tendency is applied to the translation of wordplay, is the result a literal transfer in which the wordplay is lost? Contrary to culture-bound references, where an unfamiliar item can be identified as “foreign”, a non-adaptation of wordplay is likely to go unnoticed unless the viewer has access to the original text (e.g. is watching a subtitled comedy), watches a comedy where canned laughter is used (which would result in confusion and/or frustration as the viewer would expect humorous context where there is none), or possesses sufficient source language knowledge to realise that wordplay is contained in the original utterance. Alternatively, the reception could also be one of neutral non-amusement or even puzzlement, in the event that a literal transfer leads to a contextually nonsensical target language utterance.

When it comes to the transfer of wordplay with the intent to exhilarate (thereby aiming for dynamic equivalence, communicative translation, or the reproduction of the same *skopos*), is a domesticating approach in the Venutian sense not more likely to be successful? This would mean to take full advantage of the target language in terms of creating wordplay which specifically functions in the context for which it is created, in order to amuse viewers who are part of a culture and language community with its own take on what is funny. This research project sets out to investigate this very question by comparing the reception of two translations, one based on formal equivalence which has a foreignising effect on the translation of ambiguous lexical items which constitute wordplay, and one which is based on dynamic equivalence and prioritises *skopos*, which means domesticating verbal humour to make it as accessible as possible for the target language viewer. The reaction from both audiences, combined with information regarding their knowledge of the source language and resulting ability to comprehend the original humour, is expected to shed light on this recurring dilemma.

3.3 Wordplay

The following section explores the humorous device which is at the centre of this research study. Definitions of the concept of wordplay, different typologies and ways of categorising varying forms of wordplay, as well as a range of strategies which can be employed for its translation will be discussed and woven into a framework to assist the analysis of the corpus film and translation. Based on the theoretical foundation, a typology will be presented which has been created for the purpose of this research study, and which was used for the analysis of the English screenplay of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* as well as the existing German translation, but also serves as a theoretical grounding for the alternative translation which was created specifically for this project. Wordplay has been the subject of varied and extensive research within a number of areas – the following provides an overview of the divergent approaches of a selective group, mainly within the field of translation studies, rather than a comprehensive investigation of this topic area.

3.3.1 Concepts and definitions

The phenomenon frequently referred to as “wordplay”, but also as “punning” (Delabastita 1997), “verbal play” (Chiaro 1992), or viewed as a subcategory of “language play” (Schröter 2005), has been the subject of varied research within diverse fields, such as linguistics, anthropology, psychology, semiotics, literary criticism, but also within the field of translation studies. Views on what constitutes wordplay are relatively homogenous despite the different terminologies employed. Joel Sherzer defines wordplay as “a projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic” (1978: 341), which refers to the fact that it takes advantage of the ambiguity inherent in a lexical item. This is indeed the most prominent characteristic of this type of humour: wordplay uses the ambiguity contained in a signifier – a word, phrase, syntactic structure or idiomatic expression – in order to create humorous effect. Koestler’s definition stresses the same point: “The pun is the bisociation of a single phonetic form with two meanings – two strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot” (1964:

65). As is illustrated here, the terms *pun* and *wordplay* are not synonymous, but refer to the same concept of ambiguity, with *wordplay* also incorporating creative language use in which the ambiguity of a lexical item or structure is not the predominant element.

Chiaro (1992: 2) regards wordplay as “every conceivable way in which language is used with the intent to amuse. Wordplay stretches way beyond the joke which, in itself, is indeed a handy container in which such play might occur, but this blanket term also covers the sort of double entendre which is so common in conversation, public speeches, headlines and graffiti”. Again, the concept of creating double meaning with the objective of amusing listeners, readers or viewers is at the centre of the concept of creative language use. Other scholars place their focus more firmly on the effect of wordplay on the recipient and his or her role in the success of linguistic humour: “the humour of a pun depends very much on the expectation of the addressee and the way he or she is taken by surprise” (Alexieva 1997: 138). Leppihalme (1996: 201) defines wordplay as involving “some linguistic modification”, for example in the form of lexical substitution, meaning that a word is replaced by, for example, an antonym, a homophone, or a paronym. It can also consist of a reduction or addition of an existing coined phrase, or its syntactic modification (Leppihalme 1996: 202).

Dirk Delabastita (1995: 128) defines wordplay as follows:

Wordplay is the general name indicating the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less similar meanings.

His definition places emphasis on the fact that wordplay can involve a varying range of similarity between the signifiers, which is relevant insofar as puns frequently rely on paronymy, in which humorous effect is derived from similarity rather than identity. Alan Partington (2009: 1795) distinguishes between “exact puns”, where two sound sequences are identical, and “near puns” – those which play on the resemblance of two lexical or phrasal items.

It is important to note, however, that ambiguity itself (whether it draws on identity or similarity) is not a sufficient condition for the creation of wordplay. For example, in the test film the main character Wallace asks Piella “Are you still ballooning?” The use of the word *ballooning* does not constitute wordplay in itself but the humorous effect is created by the context in which it is used, even though the word *ballooning* could be taken to mean two entirely different things – riding in a balloon and growing in size. Salvatore Attardo (1994: 133) argues that wordplay is “concocted”, meaning that somebody deliberately designs it in order to achieve a particular effect. The context must be constructed so as to force an alternative reading – in the case of a film this can be achieved by the visual sign system. Only in combination with the image and the context does the above utterance become wordplay. The second meaning is evoked by the fact that the addressee of the question is visibly larger than in the flashback shown seconds before, which suggests she has indeed “ballooned” in recent years. Punning therefore takes advantage of lexical priming (Partington 2009: 1796), which is part of a (native) speaker’s linguistic knowledge and which tells him or her “what is preferred and what is unusual combinatorial behaviour of items (and of speakers) in given conditions, that is, in a given discourse type they are familiar with” (Partington 2009: 1797). This means that (linguistic) experience is leading the listener/viewer to a particular interpretation, before the context in which the wordplay occurs causes him or her to re-address the utterance and find a second meaning, the discovery of which then results in exhilaration. Hence, the viewer is likely to grasp the more salient meaning first (the rules of politeness would indicate that Wallace is asking about Piella’s air travel habits rather than her weight), only to then be forced into backtracking and adding a second meaning when she reacts with indignation.

In the case of idiomatic wordplay, recipients are more likely to grasp the idiomatic meaning of an utterance first, as idiomaticity is more salient than literalness (Giora 2003: 18). For example, when Wallace says to Gromit “we have to go back to the grind”, the more salient interpretation of this is the figurative one, namely that they have to go back to (an unspecified type of) work. Only the context reminds the viewer that the literal sense of this utterance is also valid, as they run a flour mill. Again an

initial interpretation is overridden by a backtracking process, during which the recipient looks for and finds a humorous reading. In *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* this trigger is frequently provided by the image, as shall be seen in the source text analysis (section 4.2). The film-makers thus take advantage of the creative freedom inherent in their medium, as well as the intricacies of the English language and the cognitive processes of humour reception in order to add (adult) appeal to their film.

This deliberate exploitation of priming in readers, listeners or viewers achieves what Partington (2009: 1798) refers to as “unusuality” and as such is a primary characteristic of creative language use. It is highly relevant to the project at hand that, according to Partington’s analysis, non-native speakers of a language will have different, probably less pronounced, expectations regarding collocation and colligation and are therefore arguably less able to comprehend wordplay in a second language unless they have near-native proficiency. This could limit the influence of source-language comprehension on wordplay reception and could act in favour of a more liberal approach to wordplay translation.

Another significant characteristic of wordplay is therefore that it is intentional – this is suggested by Delabastita in the expression “communicative significance” (1993: 117): wordplay depends on its context to “activate” all meanings contained in the signifier, especially in such cases where they are not immediately obvious to the recipient. This criterion excludes phenomena such as malapropisms or slips of the tongue from his concept of wordplay, as they are not intentionally placed in a specific setting. It also means that wordplay is associated with a specific purpose, for example to be humorous, attention-seeking, persuasive etc. (Diaz Perez 2008: 37), which makes it a popular stylistic device: Paul Simpson (2003: 21) argues that “puns in which there is play at the lexical level account for over 90 percent of all verbal jokes”. In a situation like the one at hand, where the wordplay is designed (and therefore “intended”) by the screenwriter and then lent to a fictional character to be used in a film dialogue, the intentionality of the wordplay could be said to be less immediate, but arguably equally

(or possibly more) pronounced as its distinct purpose is to amuse an audience. It is this close and interdependent relationship with its verbal or situational context, amongst other factors, which poses a challenge for the translator as such devices cannot easily be isolated and adapted to the target language whenever this becomes necessary.

Wordplay is frequently employed as a stylistic means in comedy films, where the exhilaration of viewers is a primary goal. In order to be successful as a communicative act, however, the audience must possess a certain degree of shared knowledge (Chiari 1992: 10) which enables them to make the interpretation intended by the filmmaker¹⁴, identify the wordplay and acknowledge its “craftiness”, which then results in exhilaration. If the joke requires an explanation in order to achieve this effect, the spatial and temporal constraints of the audiovisual text make this impossible (and explaining a humorous device arguably impairs its quality whatever the circumstances). The common denominators required for the communicative success that is the understanding of a joke therefore include a shared language and the necessary sociocultural knowledge to arrive at the intended understanding of the utterance.

This challenge is increased in the translation of wordplay through its interlingual asymmetry. Different words are polysemous, synonymous or homophonous in different languages, or have different emotive or stylistic meanings (Alexieva 1997: 141). There has been some disagreement regarding the question of whether wordplay is translatable or not, with the individual view strongly linked to the scholar's definition of what constitutes a valid translation. Based on Toury's (1995: 32) notion that a translation is any text that is accepted as a translation in the target culture, both Delabastita (1996) and Diaz Perez (2008) represent the position that wordplay is indeed translatable. Gottlieb (1997: 216) argues that loss of wordplay in translation is often perceived as the loss of laughter. It should therefore be of the highest priority to the translator to maintain the comic effect in a scene as far as possible – the use of for

¹⁴ This is linked to the construct of ‘national humour’ – national identities, common cultural denominators and a shared linguistic background could be seen to be important factors in the access to and appreciation of linguistic humour.

example a non-punning joke to compensate for this may be useful to achieve equivalence of effect. It is important to note that the translator's professional skill and individual approach (as well as arguably a certain talent and affinity regarding humour translation) are key elements in the process. Schröter (2005: 367) presumes that "apart from the characteristics of the source-text sequence, the individual translator and his or her specific choices are the most decisive factor in the translation of language-play in film."

3.3.2 Typology

Ritva Leppihalme (1996: 198) points out the importance of wordplay identification by the translator "in order to select one of these methods [for translation], or even to start contemplating what might be at stake in a given choice". For the analysis of the wordplay contained in the corpus, it seems essential to provide a framework with which to classify and categorise both the original wordplay and the two translations used in the reception study. This section will discuss different typologies arising from existing research, before elaborating upon the typology designed for and used in this research study.

Two prolific authors in the field of humour translation, Gottlieb (1997: 209) and Delabastita (1996: 128), discuss the following, most prominent types of wordplay:

- ~ **Wordplay based on homophony:** homophones are words or phrases which sound alike but carry different meanings, such as for example the words *rain* and *reign*. There are several examples of such phonemic ambiguity in the chosen sample text, as shall be discussed in the Corpus Chapter (4).
- ~ **Wordplay based on homography:** homographs are spelled identically, but not necessarily pronounced the same way. They present an opportunity for humorous use of their graphemic ambiguity, such as for example between *bow* (verb) and *bow* (noun), *lead* (verb) and *lead* (noun), or *wind* (verb) and *wind* (noun).
- ~ **Wordplay based on homonymy:** homonymy occurs when words (lexical homonymy), words in context (collocational homonymy) or phrases (phrasal

homonymy) are pronounced and spelled identically whilst their meanings are entirely unrelated, such as for example the words *mean* (average) and *mean* (nasty), or *down* (feathers) and *down* (opposite of *up*). This can be due to the fact that a link between them has ceased to exist or has been forgotten, or that they simply happen to share a signifier.

- ~ **Wordplay based on paronymy:** paronymic wordplay is based on phonemic or graphemic similarity, meaning that two words or expressions are spelled or pronounced in almost (but not quite) the same way. One example for paronymic wordplay from Delabastita (1996: 128) includes the church slogan “come in for a faith lift”.

Delabastita (*ibid.*) additionally distinguishes two further formal criteria:

- ~ **Vertical Puns**, where the relationship between the components is established on a paradigmatic level, which means that the components are represented in the same portion of text.
- ~ **Horizontal Puns**, which means that the relationship between the components is established on a syntagmatic level, i.e. they appear lineally in the sequence of the pun.

Delia Chiaro (2002: 38) names five basic categories which are similar to Gottlieb’s and Delabastita’s typology. She distinguishes **homophones** (she also uses this term for cases where this principle is merely alluded to), **homonyms**, **polysemes** (graphically and phonetically identical items with different, but related meanings), **play with syntax**, and **play with pragmatic conventions**.

Francisco Diaz Perez (2008: 38) offers the following linguistic typology:

- ~ **Phonologic puns** are based on words which share several phonemes, but are not related etymologically or semantically. This incorporates the concepts homophony, homonymy, and paronymy.

- ~ **Polysemic puns** involve the confrontation of the two or more different meanings which one word carries. In the case of polysemy the two meanings of a word are related (such as for example the different uses of the word *mouth*), while homonyms carry two independent semantic loads. Whilst the distinction between the two concepts of homonymy and polysemy is clear and unchallenged, the question of whether two words are in fact related or not is not always as straightforward, as the connection can be obvious or subtle.
- ~ An **idiomatic pun** is constituted by an idiomatic expression, often on the basis of a confrontation between the literal and the figurative meaning of a known phrase. The inherent ambiguity of such items makes them perfect for use in verbally expressed humour. As the idiomatic meaning is usually the more salient one, the context (for example the image) has to activate the alternative (figurative) meaning.
- ~ A **syntactic pun** occurs when a statement can be analysed syntactically in at least two different ways, for example by applying different readings concerning word class, such as in the following joke: What has four wheels and flies? – A garbage truck. Here, the salient reading of the word *flies* would be as a verb, but the answer causes the recipient to backtrack and re-apply his or her language knowledge to the word, this time interpreting it as a plural noun.
- ~ **Morphological puns** involve words which can be related to other words by means of derivation or compounding or other morphological mechanisms.

Walter Nash (1985: 138) offers one of the more detailed typologies of wordplay. He classifies the most prominent types of creative language use as follows:

- ~ **Homophones**, as defined above, and **homophonic phrases**, which adhere to the same principle of phonetic identity, albeit applied to whole phrases instead of words. For example: *Humpty dumped 'is hat on the wall* (compared to *Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall*). As this is a coined phrase from literature, the latter reading is the more salient. This joke will therefore only work in writing, as the

alternative meaning required for humorous effect is contained in the graphical representation of the phrase.

- ~ Based on the concept of paronymy, Nash also lists **mimes** in his typology: words which are similar, but not identical to the twin on which they are playing, such as for example in the imagined feline newspaper *The Mews of the World* (rather than *The News of the World*). Again, the same principle can be applied to phrases – **mimetic phrases** – such as for example *Your honey – or your wife?*, in reference to the coined phrase *Your money or your life?*
- ~ Nash also includes **homonyms**, as defined above, in his typology, giving the examples *plot* (a plan or a patch of soil), *shell* (a piece of military equipment or a souvenir from the beach), and *bank* (the side of a river or a financial institution). The same can apply to a combination of words, thus constituting a **homonymic phrase**.
- ~ When two words are blended to create a humorous neologism, a **portmanteaux** such as *burple* (a blend of *burp* and *purple*) is created. When idiomatic expressions are altered or combined to form a new phrase, this, according to Nash, is referred to as a **contact** or **blend**. The example he gives for this is *Leave it where sleeping dogs lie* (a play on *let sleeping dogs lie*)
- ~ Nash also includes a type of wordplay in his framework which is concerned with the morphology behind a lexical item: **pseudomorphs** humorously assume a seeming morphological construction where there is none, such as in the following joke: *What do you do with a wombat? – Play Wom*. The zoological term *Wombat* is not a compound noun, however the joke “pretends” otherwise, as the answer implies that a *Wom Bat* is a piece of sporting equipment. The listener is able to activate the alternative meaning because the term *Baseball Bat* is salient enough to allow this semantic transfer.
- ~ Finally, Nash includes a number of highly specific categories in his typology, such as **etymological puns** (which require meta-knowledge about the word in order to understand the wordplay), **bilingual puns** (which use words from two languages),

and **pun-metaphors** (ambiguous metaphors of the kind often used in newspaper headlines).

Typology for the Corpus Analysis

For the analysis of the original dialogue in *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, as well as the two translations used for the reception study, the following typology was created which arises from the classifications described above and is directly based on the typologies of Delabastita, Chiaro and Diaz Perez. A framework was required which was comprehensive enough to allow for an in-depth analysis of the source text and both target text versions, without being too detailed to allow for a clear and straight-forward distinction of the kinds of wordplay that occur in the dialogue. The working definition used in this context has its focus on the ambiguity inherent in wordplay, and therefore does not include creative stylistic devices which are intended to be funny but do not share this characteristic, such as for example rhyming slang, alliteration, punoids etc (see also analysis chapters). The following distinct and clearly defined categories were determined:

~ **Wordplay based on homonymy**

~ **Wordplay based on polysemy**

One lexical item has various (related) meanings (see above).

~ **Wordplay based on homophony**

~ **Wordplay based on homography**

~ **Wordplay based on paronymy**

~ **Syntactic Wordplay**

~ **Idiomatic Wordplay**

~ **Pragmatic wordplay**

This type of wordplay takes advantage of pragmatic conventions in a playful and creative way in order to achieve humorous effect.

3.3.3 Strategies for wordplay translation

At the stage of reverbalisation, when considering strategies, translators will need to reflect on target-language norms of writing as well as on reader expectations. They will also have to face the fact that target-text readers are unlikely to be familiar with many of the sources of source-text allusions and that minimum change or 'literal' translation as a strategy may [...] result in passages whose lack of coherence will puzzle readers.

(Leppihalme 1996: 215)

A translation is not a product of chance – it is the result of a multitude of decisions, whether they are informed or intuitive. The approach which a translator selects for a particular translation is of course not without consequence for the target audience – “preserving local ‘colour’, perpetuating (positive or negative) stereotypes, undermining or highlighting cultural specificities” (Ramière 2006: 5) are all potential side-effects of a translation – and thus also for the reception of a film or television programme in the target culture. Gottlieb argues that the notion of translation strategies is a purely theoretical concept without any relevance for the workplace: “most translators see themselves as common soldiers in the battlefield, rather than armchair strategists calmly considering their next move” (2005: 15).

However, perhaps translation strategies are not merely an element of the (ideal) process of listing various options and deciding on the most appropriate, but the necessary (and perhaps frequently unconscious) cognitive process of finding a solution which satisfies the translator enough to move on to the next subtitle. A decision for or against a possibility does not necessarily always involve an alternative to choose from, and a strategy is not always a formulated master plan but can be a split-second decision made for each individual case. Either way, when looking at the finished product in a descriptive manner, as is the most common scenario within translation studies, it is usually possible to detect a tendency or approach which governed this process. For example, Knittlova (2000: 10) argues that the consideration of text parameters is part of a phase of strategic decision-making in the translation process, which is then followed by decisions of detail.

Regardless of whether one believes wordplay to be essentially translatable or not, it regularly occurs in the world of audiovisual translation and some transference to the target language must be sought. This can prove extremely challenging, as Delabastita points out (1996: 126): “if puns owe their meaning and effects to the very structure of the source language, how could they be divorced from that language and be taken across the language barrier?” Different approaches or strategies are distinguished here. Gottlieb (1997: 209) suggests the following ways of rendering wordplay in the target language:

- ~ **Replacing** the source language wordplay **by non-wordplay** in the target language: this strategy sacrifices humorous effect in favour of remaining close to the source text, and is therefore focused on the source language.
- ~ **Not rendering** the wordplay at all and using the available space for the dialogue surrounding the pun. This means that any humorous effect is lost.
- ~ Rendering the wordplay **verbatim**, which either preserves the humour inherent in the original, or it is lost in the process. This is a relatively source language-oriented strategy.
- ~ **Adapting** the wordplay and its context to the local setting in order to retain the humorous effect. This strategy represents more of a target culture-oriented approach.
- ~ **Inserting** the wordplay **somewhere else** in the text, where the target language makes this possible. This compensatory strategy shifts the effect but retains it nonetheless, and is therefore relatively target language-oriented.

Diaz Perez (2008: 39) argues that “a pun in the source text can naturally be translated by means of a target text pun. The target text pun can be based on the same type of structural relations as the source text pun; it may or may not reproduce the formal structure of its original; and it can or cannot share the semantic organisation of the source text pun.” Whether or not the structure and semantic organisation of the wordplay can be maintained in the target language depends on a number of factors. If the language-specific characteristics which are at the basis of the wordplay

(homophony, homonymy, etc.) exist in the target language on a morphological as well as semantic level, then a transfer can be achieved without a structural or semantic alteration of the original utterance. Due to the lingua-specificity of wordplay as a stylistic device, this scenario will only apply in a limited number of cases. In this particular scenario where the source and target language are closely related (both are Germanic languages), this is certainly more likely to occur than in a situation where transfer takes place into an entirely different linguistic system. For all other situations – namely when the direct transfer results in a loss of wordplay – a strategy has to be chosen so that a solution can be found. There are a number of strategies based on descriptive analyses which arise from the relevant literature.

If a translator chooses to solve this problem by **replacing** wordplay **with non-wordplay**, this process can take different shapes. Both Delabastita (1993: 202) and Gottlieb (2005: 45) distinguish *non-selective translation*, which maintains the two source text meanings without assembling them into a pun, and *selective translation*, which only retains one of the two meanings and is therefore the end of wordplay by definition. A *diffuse paraphrase* as a solution maintains none of the source text meanings but provides an alternative structure. It is also possible for the translator to **replace a pun with a “punoid”**, a term coined by Delabastita (1993: 207) which refers to the attempt to recreate the effect of a source text pun by means of a rhetorical device such as rhyme, alliteration, repetition etc. This is a way of achieving exhilaration by means of creative language use which does not involve ambiguity.

A **direct copy** is achieved if the translator foregoes the translation entirely and the wordplay is transferred in its original form. This strategy relies heavily on the recipient’s knowledge of the source language. In the case of **transference** (Delabastita 1993: 210), target text words or sequences are “forced” to acquire the meaning of their source text counterparts, which they normally would not have. The translator projects an artificial ambiguity onto a lexical item in order to create wordplay in a scenario where the target language would not otherwise accommodate this. Finally, the translator also has the option of **inserting wordplay** into the target text where

there is no wordplay in the source text; this is usually done in order to compensate for the fact that a transfer was impossible in a different scene.

The approaches specified by Gottlieb and Delabastita serve as the theoretical basis for a set of translation strategies for wordplay which was used for the descriptive analysis of the existing translation of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, as well as the creation of an alternative (wordplay) translation which was then screened to a group of German-speaking viewers during the experimental stage of the reception study. The strategies are the following:

- ~ **Replacing wordplay with non-wordplay**, either selectively, non-selectively or as a paraphrase
- ~ **Not rendering wordplay** but instead using the available space for other dialogue
- ~ **Rendering the relevant utterance verbatim** – this may or may not allow for the successful transfer of wordplay
- ~ **Adapting wordplay to local setting**: changing the formal and/or semantic structure of the wordplay so that it functions in the target language
- ~ **Replacing a pun with a "punoid"**
- ~ **Direct Copy**
- ~ **Transference**

In the following section, the film *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* will be analysed according to the wordplay typology introduced here, before taking an in-depth look at its existing translation, this time using the above list of strategies for the translation of wordplay as a framework for analysis.

Chapter 4: The Corpus

The film which was selected for the reception study is the clay-animated short film *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, released by Bristol-based production company Aardman Animation in 2008. This chapter is dedicated to the film as such, the animation genre and the reasons that make both a suitable choice for this research project. The first part of the chapter investigates animation as an art form, while also exploring the factors which recommend animated films for research into wordplay translation. The next section then focuses on the specific idiosyncrasies of stop-motion animation, particularly clay animation, before introducing the test film itself and the production company behind it. This will take the shape of an in-depth analysis of the film's structure and special characteristics, its target audience and how it appeals to its wide viewership. In the penultimate section, the use of wordplay in the dialogue of *A Matter of Loaf and Death* will be analysed comprehensively, dividing all cases of wordplay in the film into three separate categories: wordplay which is purely verbal in nature, wordplay which relies on the visual sign system in order to achieve humorous effect, and wordplay which is only visual in nature. Finally, the existing audiovisual translation will be analysed in terms of how the transfer of linguistic humour was approached and achieved, using the theoretical framework which was introduced in the previous chapter.

4.1 The art of animation

Animation is the most dynamic form of expression available to creative people. Animation is a cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary art and craft, science, social science and much more. (Wells 2006: 6)

A film-making technique which began in the 1890s, animation has maintained its popularity over the decades and now plays a more significant role in the arts and entertainment industry than ever before (Lord & Sibley 2004: 17). In the words of

animation expert Paul Wells (2002: 1), animation is “arguably the most important creative form of the twenty-first century. [...] It is the omnipresent pictorial form of the modern era.” The genre has undergone a remarkable development from being considered mainly as a genre of children’s entertainment or an American (cartoon) tradition (*ibid.*) to being recognised universally as an art form and a medium of expression. Having arrived in the current era of post-photographic film, computer-generated imagery (CGI) has now become the dominant method of making mainstream animations, a development which has considerable impact on the aesthetics of the genre to a certain extent as the animator is “invisible” in such productions (no fingerprints or brushstrokes are visible on the finished product). A growing number of feature-length animations is being produced every year, and animation is becoming increasingly high-profile on the Internet or in the world of advertising. Animated films are also enjoying increasing commercial success: of the 30 highest-grossing films worldwide in 2010, six were animated features (*Toy Story 3* was the most commercially successful film of that year worldwide); in 2009 this number was eight. To compare, in 1990, only one out of the 30 most successful films worldwide was animated, whilst two out of 30 were animated in 1989.¹⁵

Current critical discourse is signalling a possible convergence of animation and live-action (Wells & Hardstaff 2008: 26). This refers to the frequent use of computer-generated special effects in live-action films, but also productions such as *A Scanner Darkly* (2006), where the two categories visibly merge to create a distinct hybrid look, as the film was shot digitally and then all live-action movement traced over by animators, a technique referred to as “rotoscoping”. The same applies to other productions such as the feature *WALL-E* (Pixar 2008), which is largely computer-animated but also features segments that include live-action characters. The fact that CGI is continuously becoming cheaper and more mainstream and is now increasingly available to amateurs arguably adds further to the influence and success of this rapidly expanding technology.

¹⁵ According to Internet Film Statistics Site <http://boxofficemojo.com> [accessed 17/05/11]

Yet even as these fundamentally different methods of film-making seem to be converging or increasingly co-operating, animation can nevertheless be considered a category of film that has its own defining characteristics. Some of these distinct features were decisive factors in the selection process for the film to be used in the research project at hand, as will be described in the following section. Many animated films have in common a certain narrative mode which is based on a highly specific film-making process: a world is created from scratch without the application of any rules. Paul Wells (2006: 70) describes the “distinctive language of animation” along the following specific elements:

- ~ *Metamorphosis*: Forms can be changed easily from one to another – the laws of physics have no bearing on the filmic world.
- ~ *Condensation*: A maximum degree of suggestion can be achieved using the minimum amount of imagery, as every take can be engineered to a specific purpose.
- ~ *Anthropomorphism*: Human traits can be projected onto animals, objects or environments.
- ~ *Fabrication*: The creation of completely imaginary and unconventional figures and spaces is possible (and even expected).
- ~ *Penetration*: ‘Interiors’ – whether psychological, technical or physical – can be easily visualised.
- ~ *Symbolic association*: The animator has the freedom to use abstract visual signs and the messages they convey.

These animation-specific features not only influence a film’s narrative and aesthetic structure, but also the use of language and dialogue and consequently have a significant impact upon its translation. Therefore, animated films can play a distinct role in research into audiovisual translation. For example, due to the abovementioned elements which are typical for animation as a film-making technique, takes or scenes in animated features can be engineered to support one particular joke or line of theme-based humour. Writers and animators are able to indulge in linguistic creativity

to the extent they desire, without having to fear a breach of realist conventions or credibility. They have a great wealth of stylistic means at their disposal and are able to use suggestion and symbolism to any degree that they choose. The immense creative freedom offered by the genre often results in great linguistic originality (one famous example being the hissing idiolect of Kaa the snake in Disney's *Jungle Book*), which characterises her as a snake, but also as a less-than-trustworthy character and presents a wealth of opportunities for research, taking advantage of these extremes in an experimental way.

The 'family value' of animated films

Animated films, like children's films in general, have a tradition of educating as well as entertaining, while also being traditionally perceived to be rooted in children's entertainment and often viewed as "innocuous and juvenile" (Wells & Hardstaff 2008: 48). A great majority of mass-media animation is indeed aimed at a young audience, namely in the shape of cartoons and computer games. This has led to a phenomenon that Johnny Hardstaff (2008: 49) has referred to as the "persistent juvenilisation of animation to lend innocence and stealth to adult agendas", for example by using computer games aimed at a very young target market to dispense marketing messages or teach life lessons. However, with feature-length animations becoming ever more popular, it is no longer only children who enjoy them but their growing appeal seems to transcend considerations of generation and age groupings. Often tagged as "family films", these productions are therefore no longer considered to be aimed exclusively at children. In order to be enjoyable and meaningful to all their prospective viewers, however, they are compelled to cover a range of levels concerning comprehension, as viewers are likely to have different levels of world knowledge, register or sense of humour. This is not just a challenge for the film-maker but also for the screen translator, who has to preserve these shades of meaning as far as possible in the target language version.

The idea of creating a work which is equally interesting to both children and adults is not a novel one and has for example been described by Eithne O'Connell in the context of book readership:

Books of this kind (while categorised by their primary target audience, i.e. young readers) in fact address two audiences: children, who want to be entertained and informed, and adults, who have quite different tastes and [...] expectations. (O'Connell 1999: 209)

Many such films and books seem to be ambivalent, meaning that they can be understood by a child on a simpler level and by an adult on a more complex, possibly ambiguous or satirical level. This "dual function" (O'Connell 1999: 210) allows for a film to be marketed as a family experience, granting it a wider target audience and greater financial turnover. Parents are ultimately the more influential group (as are critics, distributors, film-makers etc., who all belong to the adult world). They are the ones who assure commercial success of a product (through the purchasing of cinema tickets, DVDs, or merchandise), and are therefore targeted by the movie industry. Modern CGI-based animations are thus rarely marketed as children's films, but send out a clear message as to the ubiquity of their appeal. On the cover of the DVD of the 2007 animated film *Surf's Up* (Sony Pictures), to name just one example, the only quoted review states "parents and kids will love it".

The "double coding" in such family films can take several different forms. Allusions are a common means by which intertextuality is created or associations with the outside world are evoked, a phenomenon which Wojcik-Andrews describes in the following way (2000: 187): "Whilst allusions speak about filmic matters, they also talk about extrafilmic matters. Allusions take audiences outside of the film". Another popular method of adding an extra layer of meaning which is exclusively interpretable for adults is the use of sexual connotation (also used in the test film, as analysed in Chapter 4.2.3), as demonstrated by Lorenzo et al. (2003: 275) in their analysis of the animated TV series *The Simpsons* and its translation into Spanish. Zabalbeascoa (as quoted in Lorenzo et al. 2003: 277) refers to these instances as "black spots", namely "words or expressions that are open to being read differently by different sections of

the audience". While children are unlikely to register such double-entendres, adults will be entertained by them on a more sophisticated level.

When we move to consider the translation of children's films, dubbing is nearly always the chosen method for this genre, largely because of the typical target audience literacy and reading speed (O'Connell 2003: 101). The translator or dubbing adaptor will strive to preserve all levels of comprehensibility, both literal and figurative, in order to maintain their narrative appeal to the respective audience. According to O'Connell (2003: 108), "translators often feel free to translate only some of the layers within the text, ignoring the degree of complexity included by the author". Cartoons and animated films as such present a particular challenge for the translator, as the linguistic creativity inherent in the genre (frequency of puns, marked idiolects, neologisms, idiosyncrasies etc.) and the occurrence of cultural references all present translation issues which might not occur to the same extent in live-action productions (Tortoriello 2006: 3). At the same time, children as an audience "do not have a lot of time for obscure stuff" (*ibid.*), but prefer to be entertained on a more literal level. The translator ideally takes into account that he or she is translating for an audience whose world view and vision of life are not yet fully formed and might be relatively simplistic. If the translator for example neutralises the register or does not separate between child and adult language, the film might be mainly be comprehensible to adults. The translation of an animated film is thus also significant in pedagogical terms.

The fact that they frequently contain songs is another typical feature of cartoons and animated films that presents an issue for the (this traditionally applies to *Disney* productions). These are often connected to the plot in a meaningful way (Tortoriello 2006: 9). It is usually important that their meaning is preserved as it is relevant for the story, with the rhythm, tune and rhymes acting as serious constraints for the translator. He or she has to prioritise appropriately between the above elements in every individual case. In *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, however, this is not the case.

4.1.1 Animated films in AVT research

As described above, there is a fundamental difference between live-action and animated films. A live-action camera captures an *actual* movement and splits it into individual photographs which are then projected onto a screen in rapid succession, thereby re-creating the movement which has previously been recorded. In the case of animation, the majority of the work involved takes place between the photographs, as each individual one has to be created from scratch (Lord & Sibley 2004: 18). One of the objectives of the animator is to make the animating process as undetectable as possible for the audience. This process is extremely labour-intensive and time-consuming if done manually – on the other hand, however, it offers an enormous creative playground and a film-making method which can adapt to the purpose of any individual scene or shot. This plays into the hands of the comedic screenwriter:

When it comes to lexical play [...], the joker has simply to find an environment in which to place an item which is already two-faced in its own right. In other words, rather than render an item ambiguous by meddling with the item itself, it is the situation around the item which has to be adapted to contain the duplicity already inherent in the focus item.
(Chiaro 1992: 38)

Due to the fact that every element in animations is arbitrary and can be designed in isolation from the rules, restrictions or conventions of representation which would apply to the physical world, takes or scenes can be engineered to support one particular humorous effect. In addition, authenticity and realism are not significant criteria according to which animations are judged, as opposed to most other feature films. Another factor which gives animated films a particular role is their wide prospective audience. As discussed above, while the story itself and the animated characters normally serve to entertain younger viewers, adults are kept interested by means of intertextual references, sophisticated use of allusions on the visual-verbal level, or sexual innuendo and wordplay on the non-visual verbal level. This accounts for the humorous density and wealth of stylistic devices used in for example the animations produced by *Aardman*. Consequently, in order to retain all levels of

comprehensibility, those stylistic means need to be preserved by the translator as far as possible.

Director Nick Park and his production company Aardman Animations make extensive use of the opportunity to use visual verbal information in their clay-animation sets: The short film *Wallace and Gromit: A matter of loaf and death* contains 24 (partly recurring) different examples of visual wordplay in just 30 minutes of film. These examples are independent from the dialogue and constitute an important part of the film's appeal to an older audience, as they often refer to items or phenomena belonging to the real (adult) world.

4.1.2 Clay animation

The art and technique of three-dimensional stop-motion animation has its roots partly in the European tradition of avant-garde artists and children's television, and partly in Hollywood as a method for special effects in live-action films, for example in the 1933 feature *King Kong* (Wells 2006: 100), where those sequences which involved the title character were filmed on a small-scale set using this particular technique. Within the genre of stop-motion animation, one can further distinguish between animation using puppets or clay models (such as *Wallace and Gromit*), or such features which focus on animated objects and artefacts. It is believed that the first puppet film in history was made in 1908 by J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith and was entitled *The Humpty Dumpty Circus*, but it is also possible that the British artist Arthur Melbourne-Cooper made an animated advertisement in 1899 (*ibid.*). Similar to other traditions within animation, stop-motion animation is realised by recording individual images, moving the figures or artefacts in between recordings, and then playing the images in rapid succession so that the illusion of movement is created for the human eye, thereby taking advantage of a phenomenon called "persistence of vision" (Lord & Sibley 2004: 17). The eye is tricked into perceiving movement because it retains an image for a very short time after being exposed to it, during which the image can be exchanged for a slightly different one. If this is done 24 times or more within the space of a second, the

illusion of movement is created. In this particular case, this is achieved in a three-dimensional fashion, where articulated puppets or models, cut-outs, or other figures are brought to life with this technique.

The appeal of stop-motion animation lies in its “materiality”, its “textual aspects” and the hands-on approach which characterises it (Wells 2006: 103). This has meant that it has not as yet been extinguished by technical advance and new animation methods such as CGI (computer-generated imagery), but that it maintains a range of specialised artists and studios (for example *Aardman Animation*), as well as a wide viewership. Stop-motion animation is therefore an art form which has been relatively untouched by the “digital turn”, as it is still very much analogue in its methodology. The film used in this project belongs to this subgroup of animated film, specifically to the genre of clay animation.

Clay animation, sometimes also referred to as “claymation”, is a specific type of stop-motion animation where each animated item is formable as it is made out of a pliable substance, usually plasticine clay. This technique, like stop-motion animation in general, is characterised by its haptic quality. Whereas the animator is largely invisible (Wells 2002: 2) in animations using CGI, clay animation never conceals the fact that it was a pair of human hands, in conjunction with a creative mind, which sculpted the characters, as can be seen from the set-up itself but also details such as fingerprints on the plasticine. Wells (2006: 117) argues that the “presence of the ‘human hand’ gives the work itself a sense that in ‘being made’ it is highly accessible and could have been achieved by the viewer accordingly”. He therefore classes clay animation as “the most obviously ‘artisanal’ animation” (*ibid.*). Michael Frierson (in Wells 2006: 118) refers to the “low-tech nature” of clay and its “inherent visual appeal because it moves in 3D space and it’s very plastic” (*ibid.*).

According to Paul Wells (2002: 15), clay animation has a “greater flexibility for the fluid metamorphosis of forms”, and as such is possibly the method which best demonstrates the ‘hands-on’ nature of the animation process. This kind of reception could be considered as related to the concept of haptic visuality as “a kind of seeing

that uses the eye like an organ of touch” (Marks 2004: 1), described by Laura U. Marks (*ibid.*):

I found that haptic visuality invites a kind of identification in which there is a mutual dissolving of viewer and viewed, subject and object; where looking is not about power but about yielding; or even that the object takes on more power than the subject. Haptic images push us out of cinema’s illusionary depth and invite our eyes to linger on the surface of the image. Rather than pull us into idealized space, they help us feel the connectivity between ourselves, the image and its material support, and the world to which the image connects.

The spoken dialogue in such productions is recorded before the animation process begins, and the visuals are then synchronised to match the lip and character movements, with the sound being recorded afterwards. For all clay animation features produced by Aardman, for example, combining the moving image with the spoken dialogue is a much more laborious effort than in any live-action film. After recording the dialogue, all syllables are marked on the magnetic tape and then transferred to a bar chart, which helps the animator to identify where each one begins and ends (Lord & Sibley 2004: 154). The exact number of frames for which a sound lasts is noted, so that lip movements and gestures can correspond exactly to what has been previously recorded. The bar chart is then copied into a “dope sheet”, where the entire combination of action, sound effects and dialogue is laid out frame by frame. This is then used to create a scene, either by replacing the mouth of the animated character according to the appropriate sound in the dialogue, or by re-sculpting the facial expression for every take (Lord & Sibley 2004: 155). All this requires much time and effort and leaves no space for any improvisation or spontaneity on the day of shooting the image, or indeed recording the dialogue. The linguistic dimension of such productions is therefore engineered and meticulously designed to almost the same degree as the visual dimension. It could be argued that this is the most extreme form of “prefabricated orality” (Baumgarten 2008: 7) in any film-making process.

In the case of CGI, the experience differs somewhat from this particular type of realism. Similarly to cel animation (where drawings are photographed) but even more prominently, CGI animation revolves around the filling of a blank space with things that

only come into being when their images are assembled on a screen. The difference between clay animation and CGI is made clear by the following description by Scott Pleydell-Pearce (Animation Lead) and Bobby Proctor (Lighting, Modelling and Rendering Lead) from Aardman Animations, who describe their CGI technique as follows:

One of the most important things about CGI is that it's like working in space. It's a void. There's no floor, no sky, no walls, no air. Every single thing that we want to be seen has to be created. If you want sunlight to filter through a room and show dust particles in the air, you have to create those yourself. [...] There are no givens, like with a clay model or a real-world set-up. (Lord & Sibley 2004: 184)

This comment sums up one of the main characteristics of clay animation: what viewers see on the screen before them has existed in the real physical world and has been photographed and put on film. Involved in this process was a real (albeit small-scale) set and lighting design, and the characters you see – although inherently inanimate – are graspable, touchable entities. This is sharply contrasted by the specific narrative language of animation as a genre, where authenticity is not a criterion and the rules of the physical world do not have to apply. The following sections will investigate how the clay animations starring Wallace and Gromit, especially their latest adventure which was used for this project, make use of this creative freedom to appeal to their heterogeneous viewership.

4.1.3 Aardman Animations and the *Wallace and Gromit* films

Aardman, founded in 1976, was named after animators Peter Lord's and David Sproxton's first animated sequence to be picked up by the BBC, which featured a character named Aardman who was an inept superhero (Lord & Sibley 2004: 12). From the early days of their collaboration, it was important to the creators of Aardman to develop an adult audience for model animation. The pair soon began to focus on what was to become one of their trademark techniques: animating puppet characters to a soundtrack of recorded real-life conversations. *Conversation Pieces*, commissioned by

Channel Four Television in 1982, is one such example, as is the short film *Creature Comforts* from 1989, which was later turned into a television series.¹⁶

Director and animator Nick Park joined the company in 1985, in order to complete his first Wallace & Gromit-adventure which he had begun as a student at National Film and Television School: *A Grand Day Out* (Lord & Sibley 2004: 56). Released in 1986, the short film was well received by audiences and even earned an Academy Award nomination. Its sequel *The Wrong Trousers*, Aardman's first 30-minute film – this time commissioned by the BBC – won over thirty awards and is one of the most successful animated films ever made, establishing Wallace and Gromit as household names (*ibid.*). Wallace and Gromit made another appearance in the 1995 short feature *A Close Shave*. “Packed with visual jokes (...) and visual puns” (*ibid.*), these films established the particular appeal of their protagonists early on, which has contributed to the recognisability of Park's style and the familiarity that the characters enjoy amongst the audience. This great popularity is certainly enhanced by the traditional and time-consuming method Aardman uses to bring the characters to life: As discussed above, clay animation is notoriously labour-intensive and requires an enormous amount of patience and attention to detail, a circumstance which adds to the domestic, home-made appeal of the productions. Aardman co-founder Peter Lord echoes this impression: “There's no doubt in my mind that in our traditional hand-made animation we produce something unique and increasingly rare” (quoted in Lord & Sibley 2004: 14).

Chicken Run (2000) was Aardman's first full-length theatrical feature film to be funded by US production company DreamWorks, a collaboration that continued in 2005 with the release of *Wallace and Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*, and then again in 2006 when Aardman's first CGI animation, *Flushed Away*, made its way into cinemas. After this time period of working with US animation company DreamWorks, Park returned to a more domestic viewership with *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, as this feature was commissioned by the BBC and produced specifically for

¹⁶ Source: www.aardman.com/about-us/history [accessed on 12/04/2011]

a British television audience. Although the film was later translated into a number of languages and released on DVD, its initial target audience was the general British public on a Christmas holiday morning. This is likely to have been an influential factor in the conception and production process as far as extralinguistic as well as intralinguistic culture-specific references are concerned, due to the fact that these did not necessarily have to be understood by an international audience. Nick Park has confirmed this in interviews:

*It's nice to be out of that feature film pressure now. I don't feel like I'm making a film for a kid in some suburb of America - and being told they're not going to understand a joke, or a northern saying.[...] I'm making this for myself again and the people who love Wallace and Gromit.*¹⁷

The following section investigates the reasons why the *Wallace and Gromit* films (and this one in particular) are loved by so many people, as well as the motivation behind choosing *A Matter of Loaf and Death* for the research study.

4.2 The film used in the reception study: *A Matter of Loaf and Death*

Park's films work on many levels. Children respond to the broad character comedy, adults to the more sophisticated elements including the affectionate spoofing of movie genres such as horror films, thrillers, heist pictures, action movies and the deep shadows and crazy camera angles of film noir. (Lord & Sibley 2004: 56)

The film which was chosen for this reception study is the 2008 *Aardman Animations* production *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*. A short film of 29 minutes' duration, it was commissioned by the BBC, produced for television, and then later published on DVD and Blu-Ray. It was written by Nick Park and Bob Baker and directed by Nick Park, in order to be broadcast on the BBC on Christmas Day 2008, where it achieved the highest viewing figures of any programme that year.¹⁸

¹⁷ Nick Park Interview on BBC News, 03/10/2007, "Wallace and Gromit return to TV"

¹⁸ *The Guardian* Newspaper, 26/12/08, "TV Ratings: Wallace and Gromit lead BBC to Christmas ratings victory"

In this latest adventure, Wallace and his canine companion Gromit run a flour mill and bakery, offering deliveries of fresh bread to their customers. As is typical for the pair, the process of baking bread is highly automated, including robotic kneading arms and other cleverly eccentric contraptions that help the pair to run their business. This accentuated physicality of the manufacturing process is a typical element in *Wallace and Gromit* films and could be interpreted as an internal reflection on the haptic quality of clay animation as their trademark method of film-making. The films are exclusively set in a pre-digital world of analogue mechanics and interactions, the inherent nostalgia of which is probably a source of gratification and appeal for the audience. On a delivery run they are called upon to help Piella Bakewell (a now voluptuous former model) out of a dangerous situation, who then goes on to strike up a romantic relationship with Wallace. Gromit, however, finds out that she is on a revenge mission to kill thirteen bakers (a "baker's dozen"), as she blames their delicious merchandise for the weight gain which spelled the end of her modelling career. She intends Wallace to be her thirteenth victim, but Wallace is too smitten to listen to Gromit's warnings on his planned demise. When Piella brings him a cake which has a bomb hidden inside, the situation escalates and a fight ensues in the flour mill, which ends with Piella trying to escape in an air balloon for which she proves too heavy. The balloon sinks to the ground over the crocodile enclosure of the nearby zoo and the viewer can hear Piella being eaten by the animals. The following sections will consider some of the factors responsible for the film's great appeal to a wide audience consisting not just of children.

4.2.1 Intertextuality

One of the reasons that this film is entertaining to an adult audience as well as to children is the fact that it uses intertextual references as one of its main sources of humour. Hatim and Mason (1990: 120) define intertextuality as "the way we relate textual occurrences to each other and recognise them as signs which evoke whole areas of our previous textual experience". In this particular case, intertextuality takes

the form of visual references to other films – aided by the enormous visual flexibility and scope for creativity which is typical for animated films. The references used in *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* would be classed by Hatim and Mason as “active” intertextual items (*ibid.*), as they activate knowledge beyond the text itself. Nick Park is quoted to have said that such tongue-in-cheek homages are “a way of entertaining adults as well as children”.¹⁹ As the intertextual references in the film are predominantly visual in nature, they do not present a challenge for translation and as such are not relevant for the translator (a few occur as written information, which will be discussed in section 4.2.3). Nevertheless, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the film is structured, this section will take a closer look at all intertextual references used in this production. For reasons related to copyright law, example stills cannot be published in this thesis. Numbers given in the text refer to a separate document which is for examiners’ reference only.

The fictitious Bake-o-lite bread advertising campaign, for which Piella (the villain in the story) used to be a model, is based on a campaign launched by bread maker Nimble in Britain in the 1970s – both use a hot air balloon to symbolise the “lightness” of their product. Possibly more easily accessible for older viewers who remember the Nimble campaign, the connection between the two is still recognisable through the use of this distinct imagery. The name *Bake-o-lite* brings to mind the more commonly used term for polyoxybenzylmethyleneglycolanhydride (an early plastic): *Bakelite*. At the very beginning of the film, Baker Bob can be heard singing to himself while working on his bread dough. “*If I knew you were coming I'd've baked a cake, baked a cake, baked a cake...*”. This was originally a hit song for the American singer Eileen Barton in 1950 (a British version was recorded in the same year by Gracie Fields) and reinforces coherence by being thematically related to the film’s central theme – baking.

All other intertextual references in the film allude to other films (or television productions) by quoting the imagery and setting of iconic scenes or screenshots from

¹⁹ BBC News, 17/11/2008, *Latest Gromit misses out on Oscar*
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7733665.stm> [accessed on 17/11/2008]

widely known feature films (and one TV series). For example, the memory of a scene from the successful science fiction thriller *Aliens* (Ridley Scott, 1986) is evoked when Piella's dog Fluffles battles her with a fork lift (still no.1) – an image reminiscent of the fight between *Alien's* central protagonist Ellen Ripley and the Alien Queen (still no. 2).

The employment of explicit intertextual references is continued in a scene in which Gromit sneaks into Piella's house and up the stairs into her bedroom, and a take was inserted to reveal lightning lighting up the landing so that the outline of a person (in this case a doll) becomes visible from the bottom of the stairs (still no. 3). This is reminiscent of a famous scene from the film *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) in which the starkly lit image of Mrs. Bates appears at the top of a flight of stairs.

The film also alludes to a highly comical sequence from the 1960s television series *Batman*. In the relevant episode, Batman tries to dispose a fused bomb which is about to explode, and struggles to do so because a group of nuns, a marching band, a woman with a pram, a kissing couple in a boat, a gas canister and a family of ducks get in the way and prevent him from throwing it away. Towards the end of the scene he famously says: "Some days you just can't get rid of a bomb." In the parallel sequence in *A Matter of Loaf and Death*, Gromit tries to throw a bomb, which Piella has previously smuggled into the building in order to murder Wallace, out of the flour mill before it explodes. When he gets to the window, however, he is prevented from doing so by a group of nuns on one side of the house, and a family of ducks on the other side (still no. 4). Any viewer who is familiar with the appropriate scene from the *Batman* series is likely to recognise the cross-reference and draw humorous pleasure from this realisation.

In a montage which portrays Wallace and Piella's blossoming relationship, one part shows them handling a lump of dough (still no. 5) in a way which will remind most viewers of a similar scene in the box-office hit *Ghost* (Zucker 1990), in which Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore engage in erotically charged pottery to the sounds of The Righteous Brothers' *Unchained Melody* (still no. 6). In the intertextual reference in

Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death, the same song is played in the background, which strengthens the association with the original.

The film also references a number of films, books and titles from the music industry in its recurrent stylistic mode of written information, which is mainly used for humorous purposes. This will be described in depth in Chapter 4.2.5 in a discussion of wordplay which relies solely on the visual sign system. Nick Park also references one of his own films as, despite Piella's wealth and luxury, she makes her dog Fluffles sleep in a cardboard box with an old tartan blanket. The cardboard box is actually a Meatabix box, an invented brand which featured previously in the *Wallace and Gromit*-adventure *The Wrong Trousers*, and as such will be recognised by loyal fans of Aardman productions.

This mode of self-referential intertextuality features widely in the *Wallace and Gromit* series. For example, "Baker Bob", who is murdered in the opening sequence of *A Matter of Loaf and Death*, appears on an advertisement for his bakery in the 1995 production *A Close Shave*. The name for this character is itself an allusion to Bob Baker, who co-wrote the screenplay of the film. Another character reference, this time to *The Wrong Trousers* (1993), appears when Piella crashes into the zoo on her bike: a poster can be seen next to the zoo entrance which states that one of their penguins has gone missing. The photograph on the poster shows Feathers McGraw, the villain from the aforementioned feature who is locked in the zoo at the end of the film.

The film also alludes to aspects of film-making tradition such as visual styles or narrative devices – another way of creating intertextuality which is frequently employed by Nick Park and his team. Whilst *The Wrong Trousers*, for example, pays homage to the classic genre of heist films, the production at hand shows traits of film noir and other suspense film styles. The femme fatale character (Piella) and the sequence where Gromit enters her mansion and discovers her morbid plans can be recognised as central narrative elements borrowed from a film noir tradition, and function alongside the cinematographic references of stark light/dark contrast and the

dramatic shadow patterning in the scene. The opening title screen strongly recalls the classic horror genre, with its graphic style and underlying music.

None of these examples of intertextuality serve to propel the plot forward; rather, their dominant function is that of anticipating and creating humorous effect. The film-making technique of clay animation (and animation in general) evidently facilitates this, due to the enormous creative freedom it provides. As these many links with the extrafilmic world arguably serve to entertain the millions of *Wallace and Gromit* fans with every adventure, the question arises as to why this stylistic device is so appealing to viewers. While it cannot be assumed that every viewer recognises every single reference included in the film, the wide range of books, films, genres and styles which are alluded to in *A Matter of Loaf and Death*, for example, make it probable that viewers of every age and background can enjoy the gratification of drawing a connection between their world knowledge and the viewing experience of the film, which gives them a sense of comprehension, privilege and even expertise. For a film such as the one at hand, which aims to be entertaining and comprehensible for an audience of all ages, this is an ideal means to create a meta-layer of comprehensibility for the adult viewer. Similarly to wordplay, intertextual references are a source of enjoyment for older viewers when they are identified, whilst being unobtrusive for anyone who does not pick up on them.

4.2.2 Culture-specific references

The *Wallace and Gromit* films appeal to a wide domestic audience due to a number of different factors. One of them is arguably their explicit “Britishness”, which sets them apart from other animation features produced by the globalised narratives and aesthetic conventions of mainstream Hollywood. In addition to being conceived and produced in the UK, the films’ characters also represent a certain part of England, namely the Northern English county of Lancashire. This is used as a source of humour on a number of occasions and is one of the marked features of *Wallace and Gromit in*

A Matter of Loaf and Death. The specific elements which mark the film and its characters as being “Northern” are the use of regional accents and culture-specific references. The term “culture-specific references” commonly refers to “verbal and non-verbal (visual and auditory) signs which constitute a problem for cross-cultural transfer because they refer to objects or concepts that are specific to the original socio-cultural context” (Ramière 2006: 4).

These elements constitute a considerable challenge for the translator, to the point where they are widely regarded as untranslatable (Ramière 2006: 2). Pedersen (2005: 2) refers to them as “a kind of translation crisis point” and distinguishes between extralinguistic culture-bound references (entities, processes, names, places, institutions etc. within the encyclopaedic knowledge of the audience) and intralinguistic culture-bound references (such items which are part of the linguistic system, such as idioms, slang, dialect etc.). The film at hand uses both types, mainly in the shape of written signs and as a source of comic effect. Regional phenomena such as the Lancashire hotpot (a potato and meat dish) are referred to on signs, as is the longstanding rivalry between Lancashire and its neighbouring county Yorkshire, which has its origins in the Wars of the Roses between the House of Lancaster and the House of York in the 15th century. When Wallace is trying to get rid of a bomb which is about to explode, he tries to throw it out of the window and the viewer can see a sign on the fence which reads *Yorkshire Border – Keep Out!*. In order to understand the humour imbued in these features, a certain amount of culture-specific “inside knowledge” is required, which makes these references interesting from the perspective of linguistic transfer.

Intralinguistic culture-bound references are also used to elicit comic effect on a number of occasions, as can be seen in the next chapter which elaborates on the types of wordplay used in the feature. In some cases, not only formal knowledge of the source language is required for the comprehension of a joke, but also the idiomatic and regional intricacies which are all the more difficult for non-native speakers to grasp. Especially when a turn of phrase carries a literal as well as an idiomatic meaning,

understanding wordplay will strongly depend on the viewer's knowledge of both meanings associated with the word or phrase.

Translators have a range of possible strategies at their disposal to render culture-bound references. The translator must decide whether to preserve the "foreign" flavour of the material by leaving these references unchanged and as such drawing attention to the origin of the film and the cultural differences between source and target culture – an approach which is related to the concept of foreignisation as defined by Lawrence Venuti (1995: 20) as registering "the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad". The alternative option is to level these differences by moulding the text around the target culture. Venuti describes this as domestication, "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" (*ibid*). It is worth pointing out that these elements constitute a particular challenge in subtitling, where the restricted space and time available to the translator make paraphrases, footnotes and explanations impossible (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993: 213), and the input of the image has a restrictive effect on a translator's options.

Although they use different terms, most scholars refer to the same basic set of strategies for the translation of such material – these could be considered as situated on a scale from the most source language (SL)-oriented (or foreignising) to the most target language (TL)-oriented (or domesticating). Pedersen calls this the "Venutian Scale" (2005: 3), based on Laurence Venuti's (1995) distinction of foreignising and domesticating translation strategies (see also section 3.2.3). The decision between a more SL-oriented or a more TL-oriented style is a fundamental one which the subtitler is required to make. There are several factors which influence the choice of strategy for rendering culture-bound references, one of which is the genre of the audiovisual text. This determines whether, to use Nedergaard-Larsen's terminology (1993: 221) "language is central", "people are central" or "events are central" in the text. The degree of functionalism is therefore a decisive factor in the choice of approach (Pedersen 2005: 1). Both animation and comedy can be described as fictional (as

opposed to factual) genres and language is arguably “central” in both genres; it doubtlessly is in the chosen film which represents both categories. This would suggest that there is no immediate requirement for the subtitler to retain all information given in the text in order to respect the documentary function of the material. One might conclude from this that the translator in this case is at liberty to find humorous elements which function in the target language in a situation where linguistic and cultural knowledge is required for humorous effect, as long as there is no interference from the visual sign system. It is one of the central questions of this reception study whether this is indeed the case or whether the intersemiotic feedback-effect (see also section 2.1) will render this argument unstable.

4.2.3 Wordplay relying only on the verbal sign system

This chapter explores the use of wordplay in *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, specifically such cases in which it does not depend on the visual sign system for comic effect. This does not include examples where knowledge of the situational context is required in order to understand the humorous reference, although in those examples the visual channel does help to convey the information needed for comprehension. However, at the instance of its actual occurrence the visual channel is not directly required for the wordplay to be meaningful, as there is no direct reference to anything appearing on screen. The first example of verbal wordplay in this film is included in its title, which constitutes both an intertextual reference to the film *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) and an example of wordplay based on paronymy (the similar sound of *loaf* and *life*), where the inserted lexical item refers directly to the semantic field of baking. This is anticipatory of the predominant way in which wordplay is applied in this feature.

The next occurrence of wordplay which is not reliant on the visual channel takes place when Wallace and Piella introduce themselves to each other. As Manini notes (1996: 163), literary names which are ‘loaded’ in a meaningful way often have an element of

wordplay in them. The name *Piella Bakewell* incorporates wordplay on several levels, with the word *pie* appearing in the first name (which incidentally is also paronymous with the word *paella*), and the surname alluding to the town of *Bakewell* as well as the tart or pudding of the same name which originated there. This surname also carries a semantic load - *to bake well*. In terms of Manini's typology of meaningful literary names, it can be characterised as a transparent composite name (1996: 165), as it consists of two elements, a verb and an adverb.

A short while later Wallace wants to know whether Piella continues to fly the Bake-o-lite balloon:

~ *Are you still ballooning, Miss Bakewell?*

The word *ballooning* is deliberately used for its ambiguous quality: it creates wordplay which is based on polysemy – the two uses of the word *balloon* do not share a signifier by chance, but are related to the same signified (a stretchable round shape containing air). The humorous effect of this utterance is indirectly supported by the visual context, as the viewer can clearly see that Piella has gained in size since her Bake-o-lite modelling days, but the ambiguity is also pointed out by her irritated reaction, suggesting she has taken the word to mean “grow in size”. Wallace, however, had the meaning “to ride in an air balloon” in mind, which he makes clear immediately after seeing her indignation. This is therefore a relatively explicit type of wordplay where the association is not just initiated in the audience's mind, but pointed out by the very characters themselves in the form of a misunderstanding, which triggers the backtracking process that leads to the identification of wordplay and hence to exhilaration on the part of the viewer.

The film features a number of cases of idiomatic wordplay where a known expression which is rooted in the semantic field of baking is used to evoke ambiguity. Its literal meaning is used on a pragmatic level and usually serves to carry the dialogue or scene forward, while the figurative meaning creates a humorous effect in the audience's minds. A recurring example of this is contained in the storyline which presents Piella Bakewell's mission to kill thirteen bakers as provoked by her holding them responsible

for her voluptuous figure. She continually states her objective to be the completion of a *baker's dozen*. This is one of the examples of idiomatic wordplay where an established phrasal item results in humorous effect because both of its semantic levels apply to the context of the utterance. In this case, the figurative meaning of the saying – meaning thirteen, “from a former practice of giving an extra bun or roll free to a customer buying a dozen of any one article sold in the bakery” (Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English 1983: 44) – could be derived from the statement as the intended sense, but the literal significance could equally be interpreted, as all of the victims are bakers.

In another example of this type of construction, Wallace tells Piella that he must get back to the mill:

~ *Back to the grind, as it were.*

Under normal circumstances this would undoubtedly mean that he has to get back to work, as the word “grind” is a slang expression which refers to employment, but the literal meaning of *grind* as the act of making flour for the bakery adds a second level to this phrase, as this is in fact how Wallace spends his working days. Similarly, a little while later Wallace reminds Gromit that they should stop talking about Piella but instead return to their job:

~ *This isn't going to put bread on the table!*

The same principle as above applies here. The figurative meaning of the expression *to put bread on the table*, meaning *to be lucrative*, would be the more salient reading in most other situations but is contrasted with its literal meaning through the context, because the viewer is aware that it is indeed Wallace and Gromit's task to make bread for a living.

A while later, after a calamitous incident in their flour mill, Wallace and Gromit are recovering in the kitchen with a cup of tea. Wallace sums up the events as follows:

~ *We've both been through the mill this week.*

Again, both semantic levels of this idiomatic expression hold true, as the viewer knows from the preceding developments that both have been treated unfairly by their respective love interests and are exhausted from the developments of the week;

however, as the action has taken place in an actual mill, the situation emphasises the ambiguity of the saying in another typical example of wordplay in this film.

A case of linguistic creativity at word level occurs in the flour mill itself: when he accidentally covers her in flour, a none-too-pleased Piella refers to Wallace in these tones:

~ *You utter and complete fruitcake!*

The word “fruitcake” can refer to an “eccentric or mad person” (Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang 1992: 75), while at the same time grazing the semantic field of baking in doing so, as this is where the literal sense of the expression originates. This is one of the examples where the literal meaning of an item is not actually manifested, but merely serves as a humorous cross-reference. Similarly, when her plan of making Wallace her thirteenth murder victim is starting to come together, Piella enthusiastically confirms this to her dog Fluffles:

~ *Our final baker is nicely buttered up.*

Here, the figurative meaning of the phrase *to butter someone up* as to “try to get close to somebody by flattering them insincerely” (Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English 1983: 39) carries the more salient semantic load, as the literal meaning is not actually carried out but merely refers back to the baking- and bread-related semantic field.

On a different occasion, Piella calls Wallace a *gooseberry fool*. This is a case of wordplay based on polysemy, as the word *fool* not only refers to an unwise person but can, in certain collocationally restricted circumstances (when used in combination with a word referring to a fruit), describe a traditional English dessert. The word *gooseberry* carries additional connotations because it can also be used in a figurative sense, as in the expression *to play gooseberry* which describes the act of being the “odd person out” in a triangle. Whilst not constituting a contextual reference, this element certainly adds to the linguistic creativity of the utterance.

There is one example of wordplay which differs from the others insofar as it relies on sexual innuendo for humorous effect. This concept is related to that of idiomatic

wordplay, however it is usually based on an implicit ambiguity left to the viewer's imagination, or it takes advantage of an underlying type of polysemy, where a word is either commonly used in a sexual context or this association is evoked through the context or through paraverbal signs on the part of the speaker. In this example, Piella and Wallace are not on screen but can be heard talking one floor below (the focus of the scene is on Gromit and Fluffles who are in Gromit's room). The exchange goes as follows:

- ~ *Careful with that sausage, you greedy thing!*
- ~ *Don't mind if I do!*
- ~ *You've got quite an appetite!*

The innuendo in this case only works because the two characters are not visible on the screen but can merely be heard from afar. This leaves the (adult) viewer to imagine what other meanings might be attributed to the phrases they use. The word *sausage* is not an established slang synonym for penis, but has been used in such innuendos on so many occasions that there possibly exists a paved path of saliency in the viewer's imagination. As far as the word *appetite* is concerned, this is not an example of wordplay in the traditional sense, as there is no ambiguity involved. However, the use of the word helps to trigger the desired effect, as appetite can be of a sexual nature. This is not the first time that an Aardman production resorts to (implied) adult humour to entertain its older audience. In the feature *Wallace and Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*, several relatively explicit cases can be found.

4.2.4 Wordplay relying on the visual and verbal sign systems

The following chapter discusses the type of wordplay which relies on the visual as well as the verbal sign system for humorous effect. This type of wordplay is particularly interesting from the point of view of audiovisual translation, as it restricts the translator in his or her option for the translation, regardless of whether dubbing or subtitling is the chosen method of language transfer. The first example of this type of

wordplay to occur in the film takes the shape of Wallace complimenting Gromit on his breakfast toast:

~ *Well done, lad. Very well done.*

The wordplay only becomes apparent when the viewer sees the images which accompany these words: Wallace has just received a burnt piece of toast from Gromit, which gives this statement a new and additional meaning based on phrasal homonymy. A similar effect is attempted a few moments later when Wallace says:

~ *We're right on target.*

Without the support of the image, this utterance would most probably be taken to mean that they are keeping to their schedule; however, a second interpretation is thrown into the equation when the visuals reveal that the loaf of bread which Wallace has distractedly thrown out the van window has hit an elderly lady on the head. As the word *target* carries both the meanings "something to be fired at" as well as "desired goal", the scene results in wordplay as the image supports the less salient meaning contained in the word. This play on ambiguity would not have been possible without the semiotic input of the image.

When Wallace is about to jump out of the moving delivery van in order to come to Piella's help (who is hurtling down a steep hill on a bike without brakes), he hands over the steering wheel to Gromit with the following words:

~ *Here, Gromit! Take the wheel!*

Gromit attaches it on the passenger side and takes control of the vehicle. It is only the image which gives this short scene a comedic twist, as the utterance itself is naturally interpreted as a request for Gromit to move closer to the driving seat and take over the handling of the van. Instead, the physical entity of the steering wheel actually changes hands. Only when the scene unfolds visually does it become clear that the expression *take the wheel* could also be interpreted to that effect, and an underlying ambiguity comes to the surface. Similarly, in a scene where Wallace and Piella are sitting on a park bench feeding bread crumbs to the ducks, Wallace exclaims *Oh! Crumbs!* at the point at which he and Piella reach into the bag at the same time and

their hands touch. This can be interpreted as a mild expletive; however, the visual image evokes its literal sense for the viewer: bread crumbs.

Shortly after Piella and Wallace have become engaged, Gromit tries to warn his friend of the serial killer by showing him Piella's compromising diary which he took from her mansion. However, she manages to snatch it from him and throws it into the fireplace. While the image shows the book being eaten by the flames, Piella predicts:

~ *We'll get on like a house on fire.*

While there is no distinct ambiguity inherent in the expression "to get on like a house on fire", in such a way that it could be used in a literal sense, the image nevertheless adds to the comedy value of the scene by drawing a direct connection between the spoken dialogue and the visual information. This stylistic device might not fall into a traditional definition of wordplay as based on ambiguity, but it can be described as creative language use in audiovisual text, whereby the combination of image and dialogue is used in a creative manner to evoke amusement in the viewer. From a functionalist perspective one could argue that as such it fulfils the same function as the other, more obvious cases of wordplay, and is therefore included in this analysis.

A case of "overt" wordplay, which is made explicit by a character itself, occurs after Piella has accidentally been covered in flour and Wallace asks:

~ *Are you alright, my flower? Flour, get it?*

In this example, the ambiguity is not only recognised by the characters, but Wallace deliberately aims at humorous effect himself. For the audience, this kind of wordplay might be slightly less rewarding because its recognition is not left to the viewer but instead the joke is spelled out for them. It could therefore be referred to as "instant wordplay". However, for a younger audience, this type of joke is arguably easier to access.

After this incident in the mill, Wallace and Gromit share a cup of tea while Wallace reflects on the fickleness of women. He concludes:

~ *You can't be everyone's cup of tea, can you?*

This is accompanied by the image of Wallace and Gromit toasting their tea cups together. This is arguably not a straightforward example of wordplay, as there is no clear literal understanding of this expression but only the figurative one: somebody's cup of tea is "what one likes, is interested in, can do well" (Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English 1983: 125). However, similarly to the example above, the utterance is given a new humorous component by the visual sign system.

More proof that the wordplay in this production is predominantly of the idiomatic sort occurs when Wallace is desperately trying to set alight the candle on what he believes to be a celebratory cake (when really it is a fused explosive), but fails to do so because the match is not doing its job. Repeatedly trying, he mutters:

~ *Strike a light!*

Whilst this expletive would not exclusively be used in a situation when one is trying to set fire to something, but as a (dated) "exclamation of astonishment or protest" (Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English 1983: 525), Wallace's action whilst he is using it – conveyed by the visual channel – enforces the literal meaning of the idiom.

A characteristic example of idiomatic wordplay assisted by the visual channel occurs during the finale of the film. Piella, holding up a large spanner which she is about to throw into a machine, shouts:

~ *This has put a spanner in the works!*

As in several other examples, the figurative significance of the expression "to put a spanner in the works", in its primary meaning of "to deliberately prevent a plan from succeeding", is referred to on the verbal level, whereas the image makes reference to the literal level of the saying. Shortly after, whilst the screen shows Wallace with a bomb (including a lit fuse) stuck in the back of his trousers, Piella exclaims:

~ *Your buns are as good as toasted!*

This wordplay is based on a colloquial expression, where *buns* can be taken to mean *buttocks* (Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang 1992: 30). Again, the literal meaning of the phrase is closely related to the field of baking.

4.2.5 Wordplay relying only on the visual sign system

The first example of wordplay as part of visual or written information occurs right at the beginning of the film. A newspaper which Gromit is reading is entitled *The Daily Grind* (still no.7). This uses a slang term for employment, “daily grind”, to establish a reference to Wallace and Gromit’s profession as millers and bakers. At the same time, the phrase plays on an established formula for titles of newspapers in the UK – “The Daily ...” (for example the Daily Mail/Express/Mirror etc.). This linguistic joke is best described as idiomatic wordplay, as the literal and figurative meaning of “daily grind” is contrasted by the context in which the story is set.

When Gromit is in the kitchen washing dishes and at the same time overhears Piella’s failed attempt to murder Wallace, a bottle of washing-up liquid labelled *Furry Liquid* can be seen next to the sink (still no. 8) – a reference to the well-known brand of washing-up product “Fairy Liquid”. The wordplay here is based on paronymy: the word “furry” from the dog-related semantic field (contextualised by Gromit the dog washing the dishes in the same shot) sounds similar to the word “fairy”. This can be recognised by the audience and thus results in comic effect.

On the blades of Wallace and Gromit’s flour mill one can read the name of their business: *Top Bun* (still no. 9). This constitutes wordplay based on paronymy combined with an intertextual reference. The 1986 feature film *Top Gun* with Tom Cruise is evoked in the audience’s minds by the word “bun” – an item from the semantic field of baking - which sounds similar to the coined term to which viewers can form an association.

The next example can be found on the back of Wallace and Gromit’s delivery van. A sticker in the back window which reads *Flour to the People!* is visible when they drive off to deliver bread (still no. 10). Again the film uses wordplay based on the principle of paronymy, in this case between a coined phrase (“power to the people”), to which the (adult) audience can relate, and a lexical item which sounds similar but at the same time establishes a link with the film’s central theme – baking and bread.

In the same take, another humorous written sign becomes visible: on the van door it is also stated that Wallace and Gromit offer *Dough to Door Delivery* – following the same principle, in this example an idiomatic expression (“door-to-door delivery”) is changed into something similar-sounding which refers to the theme of baking.

In a take where Wallace can be seen delivering bread to a bakery (still no. 11), the viewer is presented with a whole range of visual wordplay. Firstly, the shop which is receiving bread from “Top Bun” (Wallace and Gromit’s business) is a patisserie called *Pat O’Cake’s*. The wordplay here takes advantage of paronymy by changing the beginning of one of the oldest nursery rhymes in the English language, “pattercake” (also sometimes spelled “pat-a-cake” or “pattycake”), to an Irish-sounding first and last name: “Pat O’Cake”. Humorous effect is achieved through an (intertextual) reference to a culture-specific phenomenon outside of the film, which at the same time reinforces thematic coherence by involving an associative reference to the main theme of the film, as the rhyme goes “pattercake, pattercake, baker’s man, bake me a cake as fast as you can”. In the same take, the number plate on Wallace and Gromit’s delivery van becomes visible: *DOH NUT5*. Rather than being a sophisticated use of ambiguity, this is simply a lexical item from the baking-related field, used in a specific format for comic effect. At a closer look one can also notice a sign in the window of the patisserie saying *Hot Cakes – Sold out*. In order to comprehend this comic element, one must be familiar with the idiom “to sell like hot cakes”, a coined phrase in the English language which describes a popular product, to which this allusion refers.

In a filmic montage which shows Wallace and Piella engaging in a romantic relationship, they can be seen on a canal boat (still no. 12), with Wallace dressed in what could be described as the outfit of a typical Venetian guide, punting along while Piella is sunning herself on top of the barge. To add to the romantic Venetian feel of the take, a billboard is shown in the background which creates the illusion that they are actually in Venice and have just passed a picturesque bridge. This is juxtaposed with another piece of written information in the top right hand corner of the screen, indicating that they are about to pass *Frank’s Hot Pot Factory* (see also Chapter 4.2.2

on culture-specific references). The slogan on the billboard reads *Fly to Venice with Cheesy Jet*. Similarly to the scene which includes the *Furry Liquid* bottle, the reference here is to a brand name from the real world – “Easy Jet”. Based on paronymy, this example of wordplay is also funny because the whole montage is designed to look satirically romantic, including intertextual references to similar scenes from other films (see also Chapter 4.2.1 on intertextuality).

In another example of intertextuality, a film poster on the wall of Gromit’s room carries the title *Citizen Canine* (still no. 13). Again, a word from the dog-related semantic field is used to create wordplay based on the principle of paronymy, as “canine” sounds similar to “Kane”. Large parts of the audience will associate this fictitious film with the well-known 1941 feature *Citizen Kane*. This type of additional information containing humorous elements is an important part of the film’s adult level of comprehensibility and appeal.

The same principle applies a short while later when a book entitled *Pup Fiction* can be seen in the rubbish bin when Gromit drives past in the delivery van (still no. 14). Again, a dog-related term (“pup”) is used to create wordplay based on paronymy and intertextuality, as the fictitious title sounds similar to that of the cult 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994). Similarly, in the same take one can see a magazine which has been stuffed into the bin, entitled *Beagle*, which bears a phonetic resemblance to the children’s magazine *Beano*. The humour here is achieved in a way which is typical for the whole film: paronymy between a coined lexical item or phrase and a word from the baking- or dog-related field is used to evoke amusement in viewer, based on the gratification of recognizing the allusion and of therefore being able to acknowledge the wordplay intended by the film-makers.

Other examples for this strategy include: shoes made by *Poochi* (still no. 15), a play on designer label *Gucchi*, *Puppy Love* by *Doggy Osmond* (still no. 16), a reference to the song of the same title by singer *Donny Osmond*, a record by a band named *McFlea* (still no. 16), an allusion to British pop-band *McFly*, and another record with the title *The Hound of Music* (still no. 17), a play on the name of the popular musical *The Sound of*

Music. Such comic elements which allude to phenomena that are part of the real (adult) world outside the reality of the film often constitute culture-specific references at the same time, if the title, product or company which is being referred to is only familiar within the source culture. *Beano* magazine, for example, is unlikely to ring any bells with German viewers. The other examples, however, refer to internationally known brands or classic films which can be recognized by the target audience. The problem here could be that the audience's knowledge of English is not sufficient to notice the wordplay and to realise the connection to the two thematic threads which are woven through the whole film (Gromit the dog and the profession of baking).

An example of visual wordplay without the use of extra-filmic references is contained in the book title of Gromit's guide to making the home killer-proof: *Electronic Surveillance for Dogs by B.A. Lert* (still no. 18). The name of the fictitious author constitutes wordplay which is based on the phonetic resemblance with the imperative *be alert*. This is humorous because there is a meaningful connection between this phrase and the context, as Gromit is being vigilant since discovering that Piella's plan involves the serial murder of bakers.

When Gromit pays a visit to Piella's house in order to return her purse, the image shows a sign over the entrance to her mansion which shows that her address is 12a Pastry Rise (still no. 19). In familiar fashion, the wordplay is based on a lexical item from the area of bread and baking and is inserted in a context where a second meaning of the item is emphasized, which creates comic effect. The combination of the words "pastry" and "rise" create what could be referred to as "collocational saliency", as in this context "rise" is likely to refer to the phenomenon of dough or pastry which contains yeast expanding in warm conditions. As part of an address, however, the word "rise" usually refers to a street. Ambiguity is therefore emphasised by the conjunction of context and collocation.

The final case of wordplay which is incorporated into written signs occurs after Piella has fallen into the crocodile pit at the zoo and it is implied that she was eaten by the animals. In a take where the bake-o-lite balloon rises from the enclosure without her, a

sign becomes visible which reads *Sponsored by Superb Snaps* (still no. 20). The wordplay here draws on polysemy, as the lexical item “snap” can refer to a photo but also describes the action of jaws or teeth coming together. By advertising a fictitious photo shop (indicated also by the small camera on the poster), a link is established between the two meanings of the word “snap”, as the viewer has just witnessed Piella being eaten by a crocodile. It is the recognition and acknowledgement of this creative language use which is a source of humour in the case of such elements.

4.3 The existing translation of *A Matter of Loaf and Death*

The following section constitutes an analysis of the existing translation, as published on DVD and broadcast on television in dubbed form, in terms of strategies used for the rendering of wordplay. An overview in tabular form of the different examples of wordplay and their two different translations into German can be found in Appendix A. There are 10 occurrences of wordplay in the original script which rely on the visual sign system to produce humorous effect. A further 13 examples do not use the visuals in order to achieve wordplay; instead, the humorous content is contained in the utterance itself. Of the 16 cases of wordplay which is only visible on the screen but not audible in the dialogue, no translations have been included in the German version. Like the original, the translation of the film title *Wallace und Gromit in Auf Leben und Brot* [*A Matter of Life and Bread*] is also based on wordplay, as both versions use paronymy as the basis of their humorous content (the words for death [Tod] and bread [Brot] sound similar). It must be noted that this translation was produced for the purpose of dubbing, which involves a different set of constraint than the transfer method of subtitling. This can affect the adaptation of the ST into another language, as for example the requirement of synchronicity can render a particular solution unfeasible, whereas the same translation can be used in a subtitle. The following analysis is therefore not a critique, but a detailed analysis of the existing translation of *A Matter of Loaf and Death* in direct relation to the experimental purpose for which it was employed.

Visual-verbal Wordplay

Out of 10 visually influenced cases of wordplay, none seem to have been translated in line with a strategic approach which prioritises humorous effect. There are three attempts at creating a separate comedic utterance based on wordplay, one direct copy from the original, and six cases where no comic effect was created at all. This means that the majority of visually supported wordplay is not adequately transferred into the German language. It should be noted that the limitations associated with using one particular semantic field for the creation of linguistic humour has a restrictive effect on the translator, particularly when this is supported by the image. This section is an analysis of the solutions chosen by the translator and the strategies he or she applied in the translation process, particularly for wordplay. Back translations immediately follow the translations.

The first example of visual-verbal wordplay is Wallace's ambiguous comment on the toast prepared by Gromit:

~ *Well done, lad. Very well done.*

This is rendered as

~ *Sieht knusprig aus. Sehr knusprig sogar.*

~ *Looks crunchy. Very crunchy, even.*

The wordplay in the original utterance is lost, as the translation is selective and retains only one of two possible meanings – the one which is supported by the image. The strategy seems to have been to replace wordplay with non-wordplay.

In the next example, the wordplay is again closely linked to the visual sign system. The utterance

~ *We're bang on...target.*

is given a humorous tinge by the image, which shows a bread hitting a woman in the head (see also previous chapter for an analysis of the wordplay contained in the original dialogue). It was translated as follows:

~ *Damit haben wir unser...Ziel erreicht.*

This phrase is rendered verbatim, which results in a loss of the language-specific wordplay as the expression is not ambiguous in German and does not coincide with the visuals due to a different sentence structure in the target language.

The same principle applies to the translation of the following exclamation:

~ *Here, Gromit. Take the wheel!*

This has been translated as

~ *Hier, Gromit! Übernimm' du das Steuer!*

The image shows Gromit attaching the steering wheel on the passenger side, instead of swapping seats with Wallace. The fact that this utterance has been rendered verbatim, however, means that the wordplay is not retained, as “übernehmen” (to take over) cannot be interpreted in the sense of “nehmen”(to take), whereas it would have been possible vice versa. The use of the more specific “übernehmen” rules out any scope for ambiguity and therefore prevents this solution from successfully retaining the wordplay in this line. Wordplay was therefore replaced with non-wordplay.

The same type of “selective” translation, i.e. a translation which retains only one of the multiple meanings inherent in an ambiguous expression, is applied in the next example. Wallace uses a mild expletive to express his embarrassment at reaching into the bag of crumbs at the same time as Piella:

~ *Oh! Err..Crumbs.*

In the German translation used for television and DVD, the utterance has been rendered verbatim, with the following result:

~ *Oh! Err...Krümel.*

This only preserves the literal meaning of the utterance, instead of retaining the wordplay, and could be interpreted as slightly incoherent (without the figurative meaning available to the viewer, Wallace is merely stating the obvious), but this could be attributed to his shyness and embarrassment at the relative awkwardness of the situation.

When Piella throws her diary into the fire in the presence of Wallace and Gromit, she exclaims, in reference to her relationship with Gromit:

~ *We'll get on like a house on fire!*

This image-dependent play on idioms has been translated as

~ *Unsere Herzen werden füreinander entflammen!*

~ *Our hearts will burn for each other!*

and as such is an obvious attempt to adapt the utterance to whichever features the target language offers regarding the relevant semantic field. The visual-verbal wordplay requires the use of an expression which relates to fire, otherwise the link to the image could be lost. Unfortunately, the chosen solution seems problematic on a pragmatic level, as it suggests a romantic involvement between Piella and Gromit, which the story does not provide. It must therefore seem inappropriate to viewers.

The first example of an attempted humorous solution occurs when Piella has lured Wallace into a trap and he is reaching precariously far over the edge of a board on which he and Piella stand, with the obvious implication that she is planning to push him so that he falls down into the mill and is “minced” by the grindstones. The original utterance accompanying these images is the following:

~ *You're so brave, Wallace! My mince pie!*

This was rendered as:

~ *Du bist ja so mutig, Wallace. Mein Hackfleischpastetchen (my mincemeat pie)!*

Piella here uses the familiar term “mince pie” as a semantic allusion to the cruel end that Wallace is about to face. Especially in light of the fact that Wallace and Piella have been using baked items as terms of endearment for each other throughout the film, this example of wordplay is more “assisted” in nature than merely alluding to the act of mincing something (or someone) by using the word “mince pie” or “Hackfleischpastetchen”. Aside from this detail, the utterance, combined with the threatening tone of voice in which it is spoken, maintains its function in the translation. It should be noted, however, that the German language would have provided other, possibly more straight-forward opportunities to allude to Wallace’s imminent death, such as for example using the word *Himmelstorte* (Heaven’s tart), or to at least use

cake terminology where the adjective syntactically refers to the cake itself (like “mince pie”), such as for example *Geriebener* or *Gestürzter Apfelkuchen* (“grated” or “toppled” apple pie). As there are no visuals concerned in this example and dubbing does not allow for any intersemiotic interference, it can be speculated whether the translator did not register the wordplay in the original utterance, or perhaps thought that the chosen translation was sufficiently humorous.

The other example of such a rendering of wordplay occurs just after Piella has been hit by a bag of flour and is now covered in the substance. Wallace shouts:

~ *Are you alright, my flower? Flour, get it?*

Interestingly, the wordplay is explicit in this example, as the character himself points out his own joke. The wordplay here is based on homophony between the word *flower* used as a term of endearment and the word *flour*. In the German dubbed version, he says

~ *Alles in Ordnung, mein Blümehelchen [sic]? Mein Mehlchen... Siehst du, alles voller Mehl!*

~ *Are you alright my little flower? My little flour... See, flour everywhere.*

The wordplay is impossible to re-create identically in German, as the language does not offer any homophones of the word *Mehl* (flour) which might be used as a term of endearment. In an attempt to maintain the comic effect of the utterance, instead of choosing an alternative solution which achieves this, the translator opts for a literal translation and forces the wordplay onto the chosen utterance by inserting an extra sound into the word *Blümelchen* (a grammatically incorrect diminutive meaning “little flower”), thereby creating the invented word *Blümehelchen*, the last two syllables of which could be taken to be the diminutive form or *Mehl: Mehlchen*. There are several problems with this solution. Firstly, the word *Mehlchen* is an artificial construction, as the diminutive cannot normally be used with mass nouns, and results in a semantically nonsensical neologism. This does nothing to aid the credibility of the translation from the audience’s perspective. Secondly, there is a pragmatic issue relating to the way Wallace pronounces the word *Blümelchen*, which sets the stage for the wordplay that is to follow. However, the utterance is constructed in a way which suggests that

Wallace exclaims the term of endearment, only to pick up on the homophony after a split second of reflection. The pronunciation of the word *Blümelchen* as *Blümehelchen*, however, suggests that he had the joke in mind already and was preparing for it. The combination of these two pragmatic signals results in a translation which is likely to leave the viewer puzzled.

In a scene where the two protagonists sit at their table and reflect on recent events, Wallace muses:

~ *You can't be everybody's cup of tea, can you?*

Again, the verbal text is given a humorous element by the visual level, which is lost altogether in the German rendering:

~ *Man kann nicht mit jedem gut Kirschen essen, oder?*

~ *You can't eat cherries with everyone, can you? (You can't get along with everyone, can you?)*

Whilst this translation conveys essentially the same information as the original, albeit with an idiomatic expression that is not usually worded in this way (it is traditionally used as *mit jemand ist gut Kirschen essen = someone is suitable for sharing cherries*), the allusion to the visual level is not included. The priority was clearly placed on formal equivalence, rather than focussing more on the comic element in the scene. The target language does not provide a translation option which achieves both, so there was a strategic decision to be made in favour of one approach. Whilst the strategy might have been to adapt the original to a local setting, the result is clearly a replacement with non-wordplay.

A further example of wordplay which relies heavily on the input of the image follows shortly after. Wallace fails to light a match and exclaims:

~ *Strike a light!*

The idiomatic wordplay is translated as:

~ *Na das ist doch...Geh schon endlich an!*

~ *Well, isn't this...come on, work!*

This solution can be seen to concentrate on conveying the “correct” meaning of the utterance, whilst foregoing the humorous effect offered by the source text. The lexical play of the original is therefore replaced by non-wordplay, and the link between the visual and the verbal is not maintained.

A clear example of idiomatic wordplay which interacts with the visual level to achieve comic effect is Piella’s exclamation, spoken while she is holding a large spanner in her hands.

~ *This has put a spanner in the works!*

As in all other examples of the same type, the literal meaning of the idiomatic expression is evoked by the image and therefore is not transferable in the event that the target language does not offer the same solution. The translation on the DVD is the following:

~ *Heißt das, du willst mir nen Strich durch die Rechnung machen?*

~ *Does that mean you want to cross a line through my calculation? (idiom: Does that mean you want to thwart me?)*

The strategy chosen in this case is clearly one of focusing on the semantic level and getting the basic information across as far as possible. As a result of this selective, plot-driven approach, the wordplay in the source text version is replaced by non-wordplay in the translation.

When it emerges that the bomb has somehow ended up in the back of Wallace’s trousers, Piella exclaims:

~ *Your buns are as good as toasted!*

This constitutes both a reference to the impending explosion and the exact position of the bomb, with the word “buns” belonging to the semantic field of baking, but also describing the very body part which is most likely to be affected when the bomb goes off: Wallace’s behind. This wordplay based on homonymy is impossible to recreate exactly in German, as there is no equivalent term which fulfils both functions. Observe the existing translation:

~ *Du altes Brötchen wirst gleich richtig getoastet!*

~ *You old bun are about to get a proper toasting!*

This solution is a near-verbatim rendering of the utterance, with the important difference that the reference to Wallace's behind is lost, which constitutes a partial loss of humour.

Verbal Wordplay

The character name *Piella Bakewell*, the only one in this feature which contains elements of wordplay, has been rendered as *Piella Backleicht* (*Piella Bake-light*). This response remains problematic for several reasons: firstly, the wordplay inherent in the original name is lost, as there is no lexical creativity noticeable to the German viewer in the first name "Piella" (pronounced "Pee-ella"), whereas the last name is more of a direct description than an example of ambiguity. In addition, the name of the bread company formerly endorsed by Piella, *Bake-o-lite* in the original, is also translated as *Backleicht*. This creates a problem of incoherence. The question arises as to why the translator decided on a language transfer of the character name (presumably to maintain the characterisation function of the name), but then did not choose a solution which arrives at this very goal. Luca Manini states that "[the] high degree of translatability [of meaningful literary names] is due to the fact that nearly all such names coincide with a common noun [...] and for these cases there almost always exists a relatively precise correspondence of words between the source language and the target language" (1996: 166). Although in this case the name consists of a verb-adverb composite rather than a proper noun, the same principle applies and it is evident that a more meaningful solution could certainly have been found (such as for example the solution chosen for the alternative translation, see Chapter 5.1).

In contrast, the next example of wordplay in the source text (Wallace's inquiry as to whether Piella still occasionally rides the balloon) results in an attempt to create a similar effect in the translated version. The original, ambiguous

~ *Are you still ballooning, Miss Bakewell?*

refers to her former role as "Bake-o-lite Girl", with the second meaning alluding to her weight gain since those days. The existing translation is the following:

~ *Kann man noch häufiger ihren Ballon bewundern, Fräulein?*

~ *Can one still admire your balloon, Miss?*

At first glance, this utterance is not ambiguous in German. Neither does the word “Ballon” carry any colloquial or slang connotations. However, a hidden reference to Piella’s weight gain is required by the scene, otherwise her violent reaction is likely to puzzle viewers. As the German language fails to provide an equally ambiguous solution which is also based on homonymy, a second meaning was virtually forced onto the word “Ballon”, intending it to refer to something else of round shape in Piella’s possession (such as possibly her belly). It can be deduced only from Piella’s indignant response that Wallace must have said something inappropriate, which causes the viewer to backtrack and search for ambiguity. A strategy of transference was hence applied in the translation of this example of wordplay, with a rather clumsy end result. It must be assumed that any lexical play which makes use of linguistic features already present in the language must be considered more successful by the viewer, as this is one of the main features of wordplay as a stylistic component of humorous texts or utterances. With the possible exception of sexual innuendo (where lexical items are given an additional sexual meaning which they might not have carried before), where transference is often accompanied and supported by nonverbal or paraverbal signs such as a specific tone of voice or a suggestive wink, this strategy defies the nature of wordplay, as the intention to create humorous content precedes the choice of lexical item. The language is forced into adapting to the speaker’s agenda, rather than the speaker moulding his joke around the linguistic material at his disposal. The result is somewhat artificial with a hint of desperation, as the speaker seems to have created wordplay at all costs.

The translation strategy of the next example of wordplay differs considerably from the previous attempt. The idiomatic wordplay contained in the utterance is adapted to the target language:

~ *Back to the grind, as it were.*

This provides a suitable figure of speech with a different literal meaning:

~ *Dann zurück auf den Boden der Tatsachen.*

~ *Well, back to the ground of facts/ back to reality.*

The remark refers to Wallace and Piella returning to their day's business, but also takes up the semantic thread relating to air travel which was spun in the preceding exchange. The use of a different but appropriate idiom is an example of a more liberal approach leading to a relatively natural-sounding humorous exchange; a direct result of adapting the wordplay to the target language. This translation was consequently left unchanged in the alternative version.

After daydreaming about his new acquaintance for a while, Wallace reminds himself to focus on his job as a baker, with the following ambiguous statement:

~ *This isn't going to put bread on the table.*

The literal meaning of the idiom is brought to the viewer's attention by the image and the context of the scene in which it is used, as in Wallace's particular case earning a living actually involves putting bread on the table. The target language does not allow for a verbatim rendering which retains the wordplay. The translator decided on a strategy of transference, where an existing idiom was extended and adapted to accommodate the context of the scene:

~ *Man soll kein Brot übers Knie brechen*

~ *One should never break bread over the knee (idiom. one should never bake bread in a hurry)*

This solution is not problematic because the expression *to break something over the knee*, meaning "to do something in a hurry", does not usually apply to proper nouns, but rather to abstract ideas and activities (for example actions and reactions). To break bread over the knee would therefore mean to "hurry bread". As far as the literal sense of this "custom-made" idiom is concerned, it is relatively difficult to imagine somebody breaking a loaf of bread over one knee (unless perhaps it is a baguette), which detracts further from the plausibility of this statement. Furthermore, even if the idiom were well-known, pragmatically it seems questionable that Wallace reminds himself not to hurry his bread-baking, when really he is tearing himself away from a daydream and motivating himself to get on with some work. The attempt to adapt this example of wordplay to the target language has therefore not been entirely successful, as the idiom in question was stretched beyond its means in order to fit the requirements of

the scene. A strategy of adaptation with an element of transference can be observed in this example.

The only example of wordplay in the form of sexual innuendo takes place in the shape of a short conversation between Wallace and Piella, which can be overheard by the viewer without them being able to see what the couple are doing at the time. This gives the following exchange a slightly suggestive tinge:

- ~ *Careful with the sausage, you greedy thing!*
- ~ *Don't mind if I do!*
- ~ *You've got quite an appetite!*

There appears to be no reason why this tone would not be retained in the German translation as it is a matter of suggestion rather than that of an obvious ambiguity inherent in the language. However, the innuendo is replaced by an altogether more innocent version of the same conversation:

- ~ *Möchtest du noch ein Würstchen, mein Schleckermäulchen?*
- ~ *Gerne, wenn's nichts ausmacht.*
- ~ *Und noch ein Sößchen dazu, mh?*

- ~ *Would you like another sausage, my sweet?*
- ~ *Yes, if you don't mind.*
- ~ *And some gravy, too?*

The superficial information exchanged in the utterances is altered so that any suggestive element contained in the original is eradicated in the translation. This takes away from the adult-oriented appeal of this scene, which is such an integral part of this genre. Whether this was done with the eventual broadcasting slot (a children's channel) in mind remains unclear. The fact that the film was published on DVD, however, should have been reason enough for the translator to try and maintain both levels of comprehensibility as far as possible. Arguably, at the time of translation it was not known whether the film would also be released on DVD. The translation strategy in this case seems to have been to replace the linguistic humour with non-humour.

The following case of wordplay is in keeping with a re-occurring theme: an idiomatic expression from the semantic field of baking and bread is used to place emphasis on its literal meaning through either the context or the visual image. Piella says to her dog:

~ *Our final baker is nicely buttered up.*

The existing German translation is the following:

~ *Dann wird unser letzter Bäcker hopsgehen.*

~ *That's when our last baker will snuff it.*

The translator made no attempt to preserve either of the two meanings of the idiom, but instead opted for unambiguous information (the two of them are about to murder another baker), which in the original utterance is merely implied. The wordplay inherent in the source text is not rendered, but the space is used to convey other information. One explanation for this solution is that the space was used to convey information regarding Piellas's plan to kill thirteen bakers, as the term "baker's dozen" does not exist in the target language. The transfer of any additional stylistic or humorous means is sacrificed in the process.

In a similar manner, the next example uses an expression from the field of baking in order to create humorous effect by playing on its ambiguity. In an enraged state of mind, Piella shouts at Wallace:

~ *You utter and complete fruitcake!*

The translation relies on an additional adjective to support the derogatory nature of the utterance:

~ *Du total verbrannter Napfkuchen!*

~ *You totally burnt deep-dish pie!*

Presumably, this is deemed necessary as the word "Napfkuchen", whilst maintaining the reference to baking, does not carry any derogatory connotations. Rather, this effect is artificially created for this specific situation. There is therefore an element of transference present in this solution.

The next example is one of the few where a verbatim rendering of the original results in a similar effect, as the target language offers the same linguistic features necessary to create the specific wordplay. Piella excuses her erratic behaviour by saying:

~ *I don't know what came over me! Apart from the flour.*

In the German dubbed version, the translation retains both the literal and the figurative meaning of the expression “to come over somebody”, (“jemanden überkommen”) by rendering the utterance verbatim:

~ *Ich weiß nicht, was über mich gekommen ist, abgesehen vom Mehl natürlich.*

~ *I don't know what came over me, apart from the flour of course.*

The effect is re-created without having to sacrifice the literal meaning.

Similarly, a baking-related item with a double meaning is used in another of Piella's statements:

~ *Getting back together again, you gooseberry fool!*

The use of the word “fool”, albeit correctly applied in the context to merely refer to a particular kind of dessert, also implies her impatience regarding Wallace's confusion as to the state of their relationship. In the German translation, this specific nuance of meaning is lost:

~ *Lass uns feiern, dass wir wieder zusammen sind, mein Stachelbeertörtchen!*

~ *Let's celebrate us getting back together, my gooseberry tartlet!*

There is no element in these words which would differentiate this exchange, where a word referring to a baked item is applied as a term of endearment, from all other examples in the film where this is the case. By rendering the utterance nearly verbatim, there is no obvious attempt at an adaptation to suit the linguistic specificities of the target language, as the word „fool“ is ambiguous in this context, but the word “Törtchen“ is not.

The translator does take these elements into account in other places, perhaps in situations where the suitability of the target language to create an equivalent effect is too obvious to ignore. In this next example, Piella implicitly announces the impending explosion by describing the “tea party” with the following words:

~ *It'll go off with a bang!*

The translation takes up the strategy employed and adapts it to the target language:

~ *Das wird ein Bombenerfolg!*

~ *It'll be a bomb success (idiom.= It will be highly successful!)*

The utterance is therefore successful in retaining the wordplay contained in the original.

There are only very few examples throughout the film where a creative solution to a “translation problem” does not seem advisable, as the target language offers no way of providing the same information (which is plot-relevant) in an equally humorous manner. One of these cases is the use of the expression *My baker's dozen*. Although the underlying meaning of the idiom is closely linked to a central element of the story (the reason why Piella is scheming to murder thirteen bakers exactly), the concept is unknown to the German-speaking viewer and a literal translation of the expression could result in confusion. The available space is used to confirm this evil plan for the audience: *Bäcker nummer dreizehn! (Baker No. 13!)*. The strategy here is therefore to not render the wordplay but instead use the available space for other information.

After a dramatic incident in the flour mill, Wallace concludes, in a conversation with Gromit:

~ *We've both been through the mill this week.*

This is yet another example of a known idiom which is used to have both its meanings stressed by the particular context of the scene. Had Wallace and Gromit not experienced a difficult day in a flour mill, the statement would nevertheless have been appropriate. The fact that they have, however, turns it into a case of idiomatic wordplay. The translator attempts to maintain this effect, with the verbatim rendering:

~ *Wir sind diese Woche ganz schön durch die Mühle gedreht worden, was?*

~ *We've been ground through the mill this week, haven't we?*

Despite the fact that this idiom is perhaps less widely used in a figurative sense than “to have been through the mill”, its meaning is unmistakable either way.

Visual Wordplay

None of the purely visual information (written signs, newspaper headlines etc.) has been transferred into the target language by using subtitles. The fictitious brand name *bake-o-lite* is mentioned in the dialogue and therefore communicated in the dubbed version as *Backleicht*; however, all other written information does not feature in the dialogue and is therefore not translated. This of course means that any wordplay contained in these signs (which is the case for the vast majority of them) is likely lost in the process. Viewers with a sufficient command of English may be able to benefit from the original as far as humorous effect is concerned, while people with little grasp of the source language receive no assistance for the comprehension of this part of the film. An analysis of the translation solutions for these cases of wordplay in the alternative subtitled version will be contained in the following chapter on methodology.

After an in-depth analysis of the existing translation of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*, there is relatively little evidence of a holistic approach to the translation of wordplay in this feature, based on the variety of ways in which this challenge has been handled. Any explanation for this can only be speculative in this context. It might be that the translator failed to identify part of the linguistic humour included in the text, or that he or she was simply unable to find an appropriate solution in the time available. It could be that the film was translated with a very young audience in mind, a conclusion possibly drawn based on its genre, and the more sophisticated layer of meaning was therefore given less attention than would otherwise have been the case. Whether or not the result of this approach elicits a positive response from an adult audience will be identified following the analysis of the empirical data.

Chapter 5: Methodology

For the purpose of this experiment, at first the existing translation as used for the dubbed rendition, which was broadcast on German television and published on DVD, was converted into a subtitled version. In order to do this, most of the dialogue was retained, but condensed in places where this was required due to the space and time constraints associated with subtitling as a method of audiovisual translation. Following this, an alternative translated version was produced and also made into a subtitle file. Both sets of subtitles are identical in terms of size, font, timing and segmentation. The only difference between these two versions remains that of the respective strategies used for wordplay translation – these are based on different approaches for the two versions, as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter. A third, un-subtitled version of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* was also used in the experiment as a basis for comparison; this version was only shown to native English speakers.

During the experimental phase of the project a group of 30 native speakers of English was recruited in the UK. They were shown the un-subtitled version of the film, before being given a questionnaire to express their reaction. The two subtitled versions were taken to Germany and shown to two separate heterogeneous groups of native German speakers. This chapter will discuss this process in detail, beginning with an analysis of the alternative translation used for the study and the strategies used to deal with wordplay.

5.1 The alternative wordplay translations used in the reception study

After having analysed the wordplay in both the original dialogue and the existing translation in the previous chapter, the following section will focus on the alternative translation which was produced specifically for this study. Rather than relying on a

selection of samples, every case of wordplay for which an alternative strategy was used, and which therefore differs from the existing translation, will be given and the strategy will be explained.

Visual-verbal wordplay

The first instance of verbal wordplay in the film comes from Wallace, who is in the process of praising Gromit when a burnt piece of toast pops up. This is accompanied by the following utterance:

~ *Well done, lad. Very well done*

This was modified in the alternative version of the subtitled film (again, the back translation from German immediately follows the translation):

~ *Gut gemacht, Junge. Und gut getoastet.*

~ *Well done, lad. And well toasted.*

The alternative option creates a similar effect to the original as far as the repetitive structure is concerned, whilst adding an element of sarcasm, as it is clear from the visual image that the toasting process has gone too far. The German *gut getoastet* cannot be categorised as phrasal homonymy like the original, however it is vaguely reminiscent of *gut durch*, the equivalent of *well done*. The humorous effect in this translation is therefore not based on wordplay but relies on a 'punoid', which aims at comic effect mainly by means of repetition.

Another alternative solution was found for the following exclamation:

~ *We're bang on...target!*

This phrase is accompanied by the visual image of a loaf of bread hitting a lady in the face. The alternative translation for this phrase is:

~ *Darauf sollten wir ab...zielen!*

~ *We should aim at that!*

It establishes a humorous connection between the image and the utterance by using the word *zielen* (to take aim) in an ambiguous context, emphasised particularly by the pause which separates the prefix *ab* from the verb stem. This solution is synchronised

with the visuals in a way that allows for the homonymy to take effect; this wordplay was lost in the existing translation. The strategy here was to adapt the original wordplay to the local setting, by using language-specific qualities offered by the TL to re-create a similar effect.

In the next example, only a very minor change has been made, which nevertheless makes the wordplay in this take more accessible to the German-speaking viewer.

Below I give the English text followed by my alternative translation:

~ *Here, Gromit. Take the wheel!*

This is now rendered as:

~ *Hier, Gromit! Nimm' du das Steuer!*

~ *Here, Gromit! You take the wheel!*

This version, accompanied by the image of Wallace handing the steering wheel over to Gromit who attaches it on the passenger side, is slightly more ambiguous compared to the existing solution *übernimm' du das Steuer! (You take over the wheel)*. The verb "nehmen" (to take) implies the passive reception of the steering wheel without the exchange of seats, whereas the verb "übernehmen" (to take over) is less ambiguous, in the sense that it implies an exchange of position, while the object which is taken over remains in the same place.

In a scene where Wallace and Piella are feeding ducks and both reach into the crumb-containing bag at the same time which leads to a stereotypically romantic moment often encountered in film history and is met with unease on Wallace's part. He exclaims

~ *Oh! Err...Crumbs.*

It is not possible to render this verbatim without losing comic effect, as the TL does not provide for the same homonymy. Hence, the existing translation foregoes this opportunity by remaining unambiguous. The alternative solution found for the scene is the following:

~ *Oh! Äh...Krümelchen.*

~ *Oh! Err...little breadcrumb(s).*

This is humorous on two levels. Firstly, the diminutive suffix *-chen* adds a second layer of meaning to the utterance, as it can now be understood as a term of endearment as well as a factual (and rather obvious) observation of what they are both reaching for. In addition, comic effect is achieved by the contrast between Piella's formidable appearance and the minuscule term of endearment thus chosen by Wallace.

Piella's implicit threat

~ *We'll get on like a house on fire!*

while she is throwing the evidence of her evil ways into the fire has been rendered as

~ *Ich bin schon Feuer und Flamme!*

~ *I'm already fire and flame (to be fire and flame = to be very enthusiastic)*

The idiom reproduces the effect of the original, where the image is associated with the literal meaning of an utterance, thereby strengthening the ambiguity inherent in an expression. The strategy employed here is adaptation to local setting, as the TL provided this idiom, which required a divergence from the original surface structure whilst creating an effect-driven translation solution.

When Piella is about to push Wallace off a platform so that he would fall into the workings of the flour mill, she hints at his imminent demise by uttering the following in a suggestive tone of voice:

~ *You're so brave, Wallace. My mince pie...*

~ *Du bist ja so mutig, Wallace. Mein gestürzter Apfelkuchen...*

This term from the field of baking literally means "plummeted/ toppled apple cake" and refers to a cake which is turned upside down and released from its mould after baking. This results in a translation which is not based on formal equivalence but rather on equivalence of effect. It is important to remember at this point that this solution is enabled by the chosen mode of transfer. If the required rendering were intended for dubbing, the specific constraint associated with this method of AVT would have to be taken into account and a solution containing fewer syllables would be required in order to ensure synchronicity. It should be noted that the German language would have provided other opportunities to allude to Wallace's imminent death, such as for example using the word *Himmelstorte* (Heaven's tart), or to at least

use cake-related terminology where the adjective syntactically refers to the cake itself, such as for example *Geriebener Apfelkuchen* (grated apple pie). The requirements for the next example were slightly different, as in this scene the wordplay is pointed out directly by the speaker, meaning that the audience is not left to recognise it themselves. Observe the original English dialogue:

~ *Are you alright, my flower? Flour, get it?*

These phrases cannot be literally translated without sacrificing homophony. This, however, would render the scene nonsensical, as Wallace is obviously amused by his own wit. Therefore, an alternative solution had to be found which provided a similar effect based on homophony, as Wallace only realises the phonetic ambiguity after he has spoken. Below is my translation:

~ *Oh, da bist du wohl direkt in meiner „Mehlbox“ gelandet, hihi! Verstehst du? „Mailbox“!*

~ *Oh, you've landed in my flour box, hihi! You see? "Flour box"! (homophonous with „you've reached my voicemail“)*

This solution is admittedly not very sophisticated as the image clearly shows that Piella did not fall into a box, but this somewhat befits the context of “overt” wordplay which is contained in this scene.

In another typical example of the visual channel supporting the ambiguity in a coined phrase to create linguistic humour, Wallace says to Gromit:

~ *You can't be everybody's cup of tea, can you?*

This is spoken while they are raising their tea cups as if to make a toast. For the alternative translated version which focuses mainly on equivalence of effect, a coined expression in German had to be found which includes the word ‘tea’ and can be used in this context without rendering the scene nonsensical:

~ *Naja, am besten erstmal abwarten und Tee trinken.*

~ *Well, we best wait and drink tea (wait and see what happens).*

This solution does not share the literal or figurative meaning of the original utterance, but re-creates the connection to the accompanying image, and therefore the humorous effect contained in this take.

The same principle applies to the following case, in which an idiomatic phrase is appropriate to the context as far as its figurative sense is concerned, while the literal meaning is supported by the image on screen. Wallace is trying but failing to light a match and therefore exclaims

~ *Strike a light!*

in order to voice his frustration. In the existing translated version²⁰ which was screened to one group in its subtitled form, the strategy used for this translation problem focused on transferring the figurative meaning, which leads to a loss of comic effect by sacrificing the wordplay in the process. In the alternative version screened to the other group, the following was used instead:

~ *Na das ist doch...Der Funke will nicht überspringen!*

~ *Well I'll say...The spark won't jump across! (idiom. there is no spark/no connection).*

Again, this translation moves away from the original meaning to a certain extent, which could be interpreted as an unsuccessful transfer by viewers with an ability to understand the source language dialogue. On the other hand, it re-establishes the link between the spoken words and the visuals, as featured in the English original. In this example as well as the previous one, the strategy employed for wordplay translation was to adapt it to the local setting, i.e. the linguistic specificities provided by the target language.

When Wallace is in danger of being blown up by a fused bomb which has become stuck in his trousers, Piella shouts out

~ *Your buns are as good as toasted!*

which constitutes wordplay on two levels – by using the colloquial second meaning of the word ‘buns’ to refer to somebody’s behind, which at the same time fits in with the bakery-related humorous theme which is present throughout the film, but also by drawing a link to the image, which suggests that Wallace’s backside is about to receive a roasting. This was not directly transferable into the target language, therefore a solution was chosen which maintains the bomb-related reference whilst also providing an idiomatic second meaning:

²⁰ “Das ist doch...geh schon endlich an!”

- ~ *Gleich kriegst du Feuer unterm Hintern!*
- ~ *You're about to get a fire under your bum! (idiom.: to light a fire under someone's bum= to put them under pressure)*

This solution fulfilled these criteria, albeit without making the same reference to the semantic field of baking as the original.

Verbal wordplay

When it comes to the telling character name *Piella Bakewell*, a different translation was chosen to the one found in the existing version, which was problematic for various reasons (see section 4.3). In an attempt to re-create the reference to Piella's love for culinary treats in the TL, the name *Pralina Backfisch* was chosen as her German name. The word *Praline* refers to a chocolate treat much like the English loan word *praline*, while *Backfisch* both describes a fried fish filet and a young woman (the latter being a rather old-fashioned term). While the original name *Piella Bakewell* carries connotations of pies, paella, and bakewell pudding (and also implies that she bakes well), the strategy of adaptation to local setting has transferred it in a way which creates a different set of associations for the character, however it is important to stress that it creates its own set of associations in the viewer, unlike the existing translation which was a non-wordplay replacement.

In a classic example of wordplay based on homonymy, Wallace asks Piella:

- ~ *Are you still ballooning, Miss Bakewell?*

While it is impossible to reproduce both meanings of the word 'ballooning' (to refer to both the act of flying in a balloon and gaining in size) – which is appropriate to the context of Piella's weight issues – a solution was required which a) delivers an equivalent pragmatic scenario, i.e. a query regarding Piella's balloon flying habits, b) carries an additional meaning which creates the effect of lexical homonymy, while c) this meaning should not be nonsensical in the given context if at all possible. The translation which was chosen is the following:

- ~ *Gehen sie noch häufig in die Luft, Fräulein?*

~ *Do you still take to the air? (in die Luft gehen = to take to the air/to erupt in a fit of rage).*

This solution fulfils the abovementioned criteria; however it does not refer to Piella's figure but rather to her temper. In the original version this utterance is the first point in the film at which her weight issues are verbally addressed, and which therefore hints at later developments. The TT in this case fulfils a similar function in implying that she has anger issues, which foreshadows the plot development that she will turn out to be a serial killer. The strategy used for this transfer was therefore to adapt it to a local setting.

One of many instances where wordplay which is associated with the semantic field of baking and bread occurs in the dialogue is Wallace's statement

~ *This isn't going to put bread on the table.*

Following the chosen approach of retaining the effect of the ST as much as possible, the alternative idiomatic expression

~ *Tja, der Mensch lebt eben nicht vom Brot allein...*

~ *Man does not live on bread alone (idiom., implied reference to the fact that humans need love and affection)*

also establishes a connection to the area of baking, whilst making sense in the context of the scene – Wallace is indeed about to embark on a romantic quest.

In an exchange which can be overheard – but not seen – by the viewer, Wallace and Piella discuss Wallace's supper using the following words:

~ *Careful with the sausage, you greedy thing!*

~ *Don't mind if I do!*

~ *You've got quite an appetite...*

The sexual innuendo contained in this brief conversation, which is supported by the fact that we as viewers are prevented from seeing the actual situation in which the two characters find themselves, had been neglected in the existing translation. An alternative solution was therefore required which conveys the same connotations as the original. Observe my translation:

~ *Immer langsam mit dem Würstchen, du frecher Kerl!*

- ~ *Nun gib's mir schon!*
- ~ *Du hast ja heute besonderen Appetit...*
- ~ *Careful with the sausage, you cheeky boy!*
- ~ *Well, give it to me then!*
- ~ *You've got a special appetite (an especially large appetite) today...*

With an almost verbatim rendering of the original exchange into German, a similar effect of double-entendre is achieved. For that reason, the existing, unambiguous translation was altered for the relevant viewing group, as this concept is an important element of the adult layer of comprehensibility and appeal which is so typical for this type of film.

After Piella has managed to lure Wallace into her evil scheme, she says to Fluffles, her dog:

- ~ *Our final baker is nicely buttered up.*

Again, the wordplay in this utterance is part of the semantic field of baking. In this particular case, this is in fact the only reason why this turn of phrase can be considered to constitute linguistic humour at all; the literal meaning of the term “battered up” (to cover something in butter) has no bearing on the scene. It is only the relation to bread and baking which creates humorous effect, as this is a recurring element in the film.

The German translation thus was required to achieve this effect as far as possible. The following expression was decided upon:

- ~ *Da schmieren wir unserm letzten Bäcker richtig was aufs Brot.*
- ~ *We're going to spread a lot on our baker's bread (to spread something on someone's bread = to rub someone's face in something)*

While the literal sense of the idiom in question is close to the original, the figurative meaning somewhat diverts from the ST. However, for this translation and the strategies on which it is based, comic effect was given priority over semantic and pragmatic accuracy in translating.

A further example of baking-related wordplay occurs when Piella shouts the following insult at Wallace:

~ *You utter and complete fruitcake!*

Similarly to the previous example, the linguistic humour here lies in the reference to the bakery-related theme on a literal level, while the figurative meaning of the lexical item in question fits in with the context of the scene. For the alternative translation, this effect was again prioritised over the literal meaning:

~ *Du angebrannter Windbeutel!*

~ *You overbaked cream puff/wind bag! (wind bag=shallow/hollow person)*

Used as an insult, the term “Windbeutel” carries a slightly different meaning to the original “fruitcake”; however, as the main goal was to find a baked item which can be used in a derogatory way in order to create a humorous reference, this solution seemed appropriate.

The final example of wordplay which combines the visual as well as the verbal semiotic channel to create comic effect comes from Piella, who exclaims:

~ *Getting back together again, you gooseberry fool!*

The expression “gooseberry fool” again combines baking-related vocabulary with a distinct pragmatic purpose, which in this case is the use of a very mild derogatory term. The same is achieved by the alternative German translation:

~ *Dass wir wieder zusammen sind, du Quarktasche!*

~ *Getting back together again, you bag of quark! (cheese pastry; quark = also used as very mild expletive)*

Although the term “Quarktasche” is not traditionally used in a derogatory fashion, the associated negative meaning of “Quark” gives the expression the required effect.

Visual Wordplay

Wherever space and time constraints allowed it, subtitles were included in the alternative version of the film to translate visual linguistic information for the target viewer. Numerous examples of such written signs appear in the feature, and most of them contain an element of linguistic humour, namely wordplay (see also section 4.2.5 for an in-depth analysis). In the existing translation screened to one group of German-speaking viewers, these have been left as they were, i.e. no attempt was made to transfer into the TL the comic effect which these examples of linguistic visual

information create. In the alternative version, it was not possible to include subtitles for all examples of this type of humour, as spoken dialogue had to be prioritised in terms of space and viewer attention. However, in all cases where they did not coincide directly with a spoken utterance, a translation was displayed on screen in yellow. The choice of colour is based on the assumption that unnecessary confusion on the part of the viewer is avoided if the translation of written information is visibly distinguished from the translation of audible dialogue. Whilst the audience is accustomed to the transfer of verbal exchange into written text, viewers might be less experienced when it comes to finding a translation of written signs on the screen. In a similar fashion, songs are often subtitled in a different style from other text, for example using italics or specific symbols. The colour yellow is sufficiently visible on the screen but differs enough from the colour white to make these subtitles stand out from the remaining text. The translations which were used in these cases, where a transfer was technically possible, are analysed below.

For the translation of *Flour to the People!*, a solution was found which is formally close to the original and uses the same principle of replacing part of an idiomatic expression with a lexical item from the field of baking which is paronymic to the original. The translation *Alle Macht dem Vollkorn!* (*power to wholemeal!*) is recognisable as sounding similar to the coined historical phrase *Alle Macht dem Volke* (*power to the people*), which enables comic effect in this case. In the same take, the audience can read on the back of Wallace and Gromit's van that they offer *Dough to Door Delivery*. As the target language does not provide the required phonological features to produce a formally equivalent solution, the strategy for this example was to replace the wordplay in the original with alternative wordplay in the translation, even though this meant a diversion from the original contextual meaning. The chosen solution is *Lieferung Für Laib und Seele* (*Delivery for Loaf and Soul*). In the TL, the phrase "body and soul" (*Leib und Seele*), made even more idiomatic by the use of the archaic "Leib" (body) which does not usually occur in modern language except for coined expressions such as this one, is homophonous with "Laib" (loaf). Therefore, the wordplay is re-

created in the translation in a way which is functionally similar to the original construction.

For the reproduction of the number plate which spells *DOH NUT5*, a format was required which corresponds to the make-up of number plates in the target culture, in order for it to be recognisable to the German-speaking viewer. The required solution therefore must consist of two letters, followed by two separate letters, which are then followed by three or four numbers (XX-YY-123). The most obvious word from the semantic field of baking which is spelled using exactly four letters is, of course, *Brot* (*bread*). The chosen solution for this subtitle is therefore *BR-OT-123*.

The bill board which advertises *Cheesy Jet* (see also Chapter 4.2.5) was subtitled as saying *Lusthansa* (paronym to *Lufthansa*, with the German word “Lust” being equivalent to the English “lust”). It appears in a montage which depicts the development of Wallace and Piella’s romantic relationship and therefore the translation seems appropriate in this context. As in the original, the wordplay is paronymy-based and refers to an airline (Easyjet being the original reference).

When Gromit follows Piella to her house, the viewers can briefly see that she lives at *12a Pastry Rise*. As is the case with much of the wordplay in this film, a baking-related reference is used to create comic effect, in this case by relying on the polysemy of “rise”, as analysed in section 4.2.5. In the alternative German translation, the solution *Bäcker Weg 12a* was chosen for this take. A word was required which is as a synonym for “street” (such as road, crescent, hill, rise, etc.) and which also had the homonymic potential to fit into the filmic context. The words *Weg* and *weg* are homographs – *Weg*, pronounced with a long “e”, means “way”, while a shorter pronunciation (*weg*) means “gone”. Because the word “Bäcker” is identical in the singular and plural form, the sign can be read as either “Baker’s Way 12a”, or as “Bakers Gone 12a”. Keeping in mind that this particular scene is to reveal that Piella has murdered 12 bakers, the translation could evoke the alternate meaning in viewers’ minds, thereby creating humorous effect.

The book title *Electronic Surveillance for Dogs by B.A. Lert* creates humour in a slightly different way from most of the other examples of wordplay discussed in this chapter. It creates the circumstances necessary for wordplay to come into effect, rather than taking advantage of target language-specific features as they are. A name is invented which, including the initials for two first names, is homophonous to the phrase “be alert”. This alludes to the fact that Gromit is on edge around Piella because he knows of her plan to kill a thirteenth baker. In the alternative German translation, a TT solution was available which uses the same principle to a similar effect: *Elektronische Überwachung für Hunde, von Miss T. Rauen*. The difference between the translation and the original is that, while the source text element uses homophony, the translated rendition is based on homography, which in this case seems appropriate as the information is conveyed via the visual sign system only. When reading *Miss T. Rauen*, the viewer is likely to notice that this name is a segmented version of the word “Misstrauen”(suspicion/suspiciousness). Of course, this presupposes that a German audience not only understands the English title „Miss“(which is highly likely), but also that they accept the slight implausibility of finding this title on a German book for the sake of allowing the joke to work.

The final example of visual wordplay which was subtitled in the alternative version is the sign which becomes visible when Piella plunges into the crocodile enclosure and is cruelly eaten. The sign on the screen says *Sponsored by Superb Snaps* and apparently advertises a photography shop. This is another example of wordplay which relies on polysemy, as analysed in section 4.2.5. The translation decided upon, *Präsentiert von Schnappi (presented by Snappy)*, uses paronymy to create comic effect. The word “Schnappi” not only alludes to a famous song about a crocodile, which is entitled *Schnappi, das kleine Krokodil* but it is also a paronym of “Chappy”, which is a well-known brand of dog food. Additionally, this translation continues the usage of dog-related references to create humour.

Other Modifications

There are a small number of problematic translation solutions in the existing version which do not fall within the category of wordplay translation. Nevertheless, in order to prevent them from exerting a negative influence on the reception by German-speaking audiences, they have been changed in both subtitled versions. Had they been left unaltered, the obvious divergence between the original utterance and the subtitle, perceived without the obvious need for a creative solution to recreate wordplay, could have influenced viewers in a way which could have led them to give the overall translation a more negative review. An attempt was therefore made to leave all translations which are unproblematic and do not need to convey any culture-specific or humorous information as formally equivalent as possible. The two examples in question are the following:

After the bomb has safely detonated in Wallace's dough-filled trousers, he exclaims *What a relief!* In the existing German translation, this was rendered as *Ah, was für ein schönes Muster!* (*Ah, what a beautiful pattern!*). It is relatively obvious how this mistranslation came about: the word *relief* was presumably interpreted in its rarer artistic/geographical sense. It cannot be ruled out that there was an element of deliberation on the part of the screenwriter, who might have used this word particularly for its ambiguity, thereby creating wordplay based on polysemy. Regardless of this point, however, the existing translation must seem obscure to the German viewer with knowledge of English, therefore it was changed to the more literal *Was für eine Erleichterung* (*relief in the sense of to be relieved*).

Earlier on in the film, shortly after the beginning of his relationship with Piella, Wallace muses: *Love is a many splendored thing, Gromit, but it doesn't half tire you out. I'm cream crackered!* In the existing translation this was rendered as *Liebe ist eine so wundervolle Sache, Gromit, aber ich denke ich langweile dich damit. Ich bin im siebten Himmel!* (*Love is such a beautiful thing, Gromit, but I think I'm boring you with it. I'm in seventh heaven!*) Not only does this solution diverge from the original on a formal level, it is also slightly problematic in terms of coherence. It is clear from the context

that Gromit is frustrated because Wallace has seemingly forgotten all about him in his smitten state, to which Wallace is completely oblivious. The consideration and care inherent in the target text utterance contradicts Wallace's behaviour at this point in the film. It has therefore been changed to the more literal *Liebe ist eine wundervolle Sache, Gromit, aber auch ziemlich anstrengend. Ich bin total erledigt! (Love is a wonderful thing, Gromit, but also very tiring. I'm totally knackered!)*. The use of Cockney rhyming slang ("cream crackered" to mean "knackered") does not constitute wordplay as defined in section 3.3.1, as it is not based on ambiguity at the semantic level but exploits phonetic characteristics of a word in order to establish a linguistic group marker.

After looking in depth at the three different versions screened to the participants in the study, it is now necessary to consider another major aspect of the project: the potential interference of source-language comprehension on subtitle reception. In order to determine whether knowledge of English has an impact on how the audience reacts to the two different approaches employed for wordplay translation, it is necessary to gain an impression of their level of English as a foreign language. The following section of this chapter focuses on this aspect of the research; I detail the development of the questionnaire used in the study to evaluate the level of English of the participants and briefly discuss the role of English as a second language in Germany and the theoretical background in Second Language Acquisition research.

5.2 Assessment of English knowledge amongst German groups

English knowledge amongst the German language community as a whole

According to a 2008 survey conducted by the US software company Rosetta Stone,²¹ 88 percent of working Germans over the age of 18 speak at least one foreign language. The international average is 57 percent. The survey also reveals that of all foreign languages spoken amongst the German population, English is the most prevalent –

²¹ According to a press release by Rosetta Stone available at <http://www.rosettastone.de/global/presse/20090210> [04/05/2009]

over 90 percent of participants in the study said they spoke English daily for business or professional purposes. The “Ex-word” study, commissioned by electronics manufacturer *CASIO* and conducted by research institute *Forsa* in 2007²² showed that of the 1,006 participants between the ages of 14 and 65, a total of 87 percent claimed to understand English to a “satisfactory” degree. Furthermore, 77 percent stated that, rather than avoiding the need to speak English in a professional or personal situation, they relish the challenge and take advantage of every opportunity to practice their second language.

Also in 2008, the *Gesellschaft für Deutsche Sprache* (German Language Society) commissioned a study which was conducted by the research company IMD Allensbach and which produced some telling results.²³ For example, the percentage of people who claim they speak English “reasonably well” has steadily increased from 22 percent in West Germany in 1961 to 67 percent in 2008. In the former East, the proportion has risen from 33 percent in 1990 to 49 percent in 2008, thus signalling that the gap between the two parts of the country with their different political history is slowly narrowing. In the Republic as a whole, 63 percent of Germans claim to speak English to a reasonable degree. This is to be expected when we consider not only the growing importance of English on the global market, which is reflected in the educational system, but also the role of new communication media and social networking in English usage. The percentage of people who speak English reasonably well varies according to age: in 16-20 year-olds, the percentage is 84, while only 38 percent of participants aged 60 and older fall into this category. For the discussion of the interference of source language comprehension in subtitle reception (which is a major focus of this project), it is important to keep this contextual information in mind. There is a chance that a part of any German audience will understand the source language dialogue to some extent, but this likelihood fluctuates depending on the age of the viewer and could also be diminished by the fact that the variety of English which is

²² To be found at <http://www.ex-word.de/de/presse/artikel/12994833/> [04/05/2009]

²³ Source: Allensbacher Archiv, IMD Surveys 1060, 3075, 5025, 9002, and 10019. Available from http://www.gfds.de/fileadmin/gfds_download/GfdS_Studie_Spracheinstellung.pdf (06/05/2009)

spoken in the film is phonetically situated in the North (however the accent is not very strong).

Second Language Acquisition – Theoretical background

The method used in this study to assess participants' knowledge of English as a foreign language draws on literature from the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This term refers to "the learning of another language after the native language has been learned" (Gass & Selinker 1994: 4), and as such can refer to structured learning in a classroom setting as well as to acquisition through exposure to the language in a more authentic or informal situation. As English language proficiency and consequently SL dialogue comprehension amongst a native German audience is an important element in this research study, language assessment formed part of the experimental design. Before elaborating on the specific method of assessment which was designed for the purpose of this particular experiment, the following section will introduce the theoretical background from which it was derived. Firstly, existing methods and strategies for assessing language knowledge will be discussed, before proceeding to examine factors which affect language learning.

As Bachman and Palmer have stated (2010: 20), "assessment is the process of collecting information about something we're interested in. [...] In a language assessment, what we're interested in is making an interpretation about some aspect of the taker's language ability". These authors go on to define language ability as "a capacity that enables learners to create and interpret discourse" (2010: 31). It is especially the latter – the comprehension and interpretation of discourse – which is relevant for the purpose of the current experiment, as this capacity establishes to what extent or not viewers may or may not be able to identify and understand the wordplay in the English dialogue of the film.

Due to pragmatic constraints it was not possible for the experiment to incorporate any extensive systematic language testing but the mode of language testing relied upon

more general factors. Thus, it was impossible to specifically test different language activities such as reading, speaking or listening skills. Arguably, the comprehension and interpretation of discourse requires mainly listening skills in the second language and assessment could therefore be limited to that activity; however, for the reasons mentioned above it was decided to conduct a survey based on generalisable external factors which influence proficiency – the assumption remains that listening, reading and speaking skills are an integral part of a holistic model of proficiency and are therefore equally affected by such factors.

In order to arrive at a suitable method for categorising participants according to their language ability, a range of methods and models designed for the assessment of language skills were considered in terms of their suitability for the particular situation for which they were required. In her article ‘Assessment of L2 Proficiency in Second Language Acquisition Research’, Thomas (2006: 311) observes that there are four main means of assessing second language (often referred to as L2) proficiency in existing research (with some used more frequently than others). They are the following:

Impressionistic judgement, which means “asserting that a learner has a given level of control over L2, on the basis of the experimenter’s unsupported evaluation, or the evaluation of some other (often unspecified) person” (Thomas 2006: 314). This could also involve the participants’ own impressionistic judgement of their proficiency. If evidence is given to support the judgement, this often involves a measure of how long the participant has lived in an L2-speaking environment (ibid.). Its weakness is that it gives readers of the research documentation no insight into how the assessor arrived at the particular judgement – it often consists of one person’s casual evaluation (Thomas 2006: 315). In the case of this project there is no time available to test participant’s ability by judging his or her knowledge “in action”, which means that there is no support for objective measurement and the researcher has neither the opportunity nor the expertise to form an impressionistic judgement to this effect. Hence, this method was found unsuitable for the purpose at hand.

Institutional status – this frequently employed mode of assessing language proficiency is conducted by “defining [students] according to their positions in some hierarchically-organized social structure, for example, as students in first-year versus third-year classes in L2” (Thomas 2006: 317). In this project, institutional status necessarily plays a defining role in the assessment of participants’ knowledge of English, as it allows a conclusion as to their proficiency without the need to perform any specific task or test. Therefore, of the five questions which form the basis of this assessment, one is dedicated to participants’ educational history and the duration of their formal English tuition (see also Chapter 5.3).

Standardised test/in-house assessment/research-internal measurement of proficiency – The advantage of a standardised or privately developed test to measure proficiency is that “defining subgroups requires no extra work, for either experimenter or participants, beyond recording each participant’s position in the relevant hierarchy” (Thomas 2006: 317). Often used in combination with another assessment method, this way of assessing viewers was not feasible in this case, due to the fact that this would have extended the duration of the experiment in a disproportionate fashion. Also, English proficiency is only one factor to be determined in the experimental framework and therefore must not constitute an overinvestment of time and resources. For this reason, the method of using a pre-existing standardised English test to assess participants’ English knowledge was rejected.

Standardised test scores – On the one hand, relying on institutionalised test scores such as TOEFL, IELTS or the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency as a recognisable benchmark would have granted the experiment a high degree of generalisability, as these tests are subject to constant scrutiny. On the other hand, in this context the question necessarily arises as to whether the elements measured in the test are the most relevant to the research. In the case of this project, it would have meant that only participants who have recently completed an officially recognised test of English as a foreign language could have taken part in the study. As this is usually done by students who plan to study abroad or members of the public applying for

posts which involve the use of English, it was considered unlikely that a group of thus assembled volunteers would be sufficiently heterogeneous (in terms of English proficiency) for the purpose of the experiment. It would have also been a great challenge to recruit a minimum of 60 participants who fulfil this requirement.

After careful consideration of the options, it was concluded that the method of assessing participants' knowledge of English to a sufficiently reliable degree would have to be designed to fit the requirements of the research project for which it was required. As Thomas asserts, "it may be necessary to create an assessment instrument tailored to the specific study, however this multiplies both the researcher's and the participant's tasks". After all, it should be considered whether "the extent to which more complex research design is made worthwhile by better resultant data" (Thomas 2006: 328). The following sections will detail the development of the relevant part of the questionnaire, beginning with a theoretical consideration of those external factors which have an impact on second language acquisition and on which this part of the methodology is based. It should be noted that this section does not constitute and can never constitute a comprehensive discussion of this complex area of linguistics. Rather, it is meant to serve as a contextual framework in order to illustrate how the relevant section of the questionnaire was developed.

Factors influencing L2 acquisition

Within the field of second language acquisition (SLA), much research has gone into the identification of influencing factors which affect its progress, a selection of which shall be introduced here. Based on the assumption that an assessment of these factors allows conclusions regarding a person's learning history, with the aim of arriving at an impression regarding their L2 proficiency, a set of five questions was developed which take these influences into consideration. Together they make up the second part of the German-language questionnaire and their responses are quantified to form a score

which reflects the participants' individual situation regarding English as a second language (see also section 5.3).

Age of learning (AOL) is probably the most examined and commented-on factor in L2 research. First and foremost it is this feature which determines whether a language is native or non-native to a speaker. In 1967, Lenneberg introduced the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which states that the native-like acquirement of an L2 is no longer possible after a putative critical period (in Flege et al. 1995: 3125). The hypothesis claims that a child's brain is still able to adapt to the required structures of various languages, an ability which is lost as the brain matures, so it has been reasoned (Gass & Selinker 1994: 240). The identification of the point at which this critical period for native-like attainment of the L2 ends has been the subject of divergent proposals. The AOL onset is often set at the age of six or seven years (Flege et al 1995:3125). In the recruitment stages of this project, it was stated that participants were required who are not native speakers of English. This would theoretically rule out anybody with a bilingual upbringing. If the AOL of a participant was low enough to have an influence on their speaking ability, this could also be expressed in a question which is based on self-assessment as it has been included in the questionnaire (see below).

Immersion: It is a common assumption in SLA research that exposure to the L2, or 'comprehensible input' as defined by Krashen (1985: 2) as language which is heard or read and is slightly more sophisticated than a learner's current state of knowledge, plays a significant role in learning a second language. In phonology acquisition research, 'length of residence' (LOR) is a frequently examined factor and is defined as "the number of years spent in a community where the L2 is the predominant language" (Piske et al. 2001:197). Within this area it has been hypothesised that LOR affects L2 learning only in the initial phase and will cease to have an ameliorating effect after the learner has spent a certain amount of time in the L2-speaking environment (*ibid.* 198, 208). Being in an L2 environment, for however long, also enables interaction with other speakers, which has a beneficial effect on learning as meaning is negotiated, adjustments are made and therefore acquisition takes place

(Gass & Selinker 1994: 210-218). In order to reflect this significant factor in L2 learning and acquisition, a question was included which focuses on this information. Assuming that, in terms of L2 progress, the difference between one year and three years of residence is less significant than the difference between a mere few days and a whole year of residence, the multiple choice options were designed accordingly, with the response “1 year or more” achieving the highest result in the quantification of the data.

Extent of L2 use: Even without the benefit of living in an L2 environment for a period of time, interaction with other speakers, ideally native speakers of the L2, has a positive impact on SLA. Consequently, age and extent of L2 use may be connected in so far as younger learners may have more opportunities to establish and preserve native speaker contacts. In the case of German natives learning English, it could also be argued that age and L2 use are related as it is mostly younger people who make use of new media and communication technology which is heavily English-centred and may require them to use English both actively for communication and passively for consumption. Therefore, two questions were included in the questionnaire that focus on active and passive L2 use, as this is considered to be a significant factor in their individual proficiency and the ease with which they handle audiovisual English-language material. For the design of the questionnaire it was assumed that the more frequently learners communicate in the L2, the more likely they were to have developed language ability to an extent where they are able to understand the original dialogue. However, if we only consider active use of the language, such as is needed for interaction, this excludes learners who employ their language knowledge in a more passive way, for example by practising their reading and listening skills (and those are the activities most relevant to this study). Therefore, two separate questions were included in the questionnaire to represent this aspect, with one focussing on active use and the other investigating passive use (see also section 5.3)

Formal instruction: Evidently, structured learning in a classroom setting plays a major role in language learning and remains the predominant method used by learners to

gain second language knowledge. Whilst being relatively ineffectual when it comes to features such as for example the degree of foreign accent retained (Piske 2001:201), formal instruction is certain to have an influence on L2 learning as a whole. As De Boot et al. state: “we must accept that we will never be able to filter out the exact effect of explicit instruction, but we do know it has some effect” (2005: 76). Most German native speakers begin their formal English tuition with little or no prior knowledge of the language and, depending on the duration of their formal education in general and the subject on which they choose to focus more than others, they will be taught English over a number of years, for up to 5 hours per week. Similarly, a person pursuing or having completed a degree in English teaching, English or American Studies, Translation or Interpreting will further develop their proficiency through more intense and prolonged instruction and use of the L2. A question regarding formal instruction was therefore included in the questionnaire in order to reflect this basic factor in language learning.

Attitude/confidence: There are numerous models that account for the influence of so-called affective factors on language learning, with one of the most prominent ones being Krashen’s *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (Gass & Selinker 1994: 147), which assumes that a high influence of affective factors has a negative influence on acquisition. Schumann’s *Acculturation Model* considers the distance which the learner perceives to exist, psychologically and socially, between him or her and the target culture (cf. Schumann 1986). The *Egopermeability Model* by Guiora focuses on the adoption of a new identity for the speaker when learning the L2, and his or her willingness to do so (Flege 1987: 169.). The fear of making mistakes and exposing oneself to ridicule may hinder the learning progress – children are usually less distressed by fears of this kind and suffer less from a potential loss of “narcissistic gratification” (Schumann 1986:382). Based on this assumption, it is considered influential whether a learner has the confidence and positive attitude to use the L2 whenever necessary or possible and to thus further their proficiency. To reflect this factor in the questionnaire, a question was included which asks participants to assess their own proficiency, as this expresses their confidence in their own ability while also giving an impression as to their actual

ability, albeit a subjective one. The Ex-word study mentioned in Chapter 5.2 confirms that the extent of L2 use correlates with attitude and confidence:²⁴ the more frequently participants put their English knowledge to use, the more positively they assessed their own ability. Those who thought that their English was good or very good claimed to use English several times a week.

To conclude, the factors formal tuition, extent of L2 use, length of residency and attitude/confidence were the main pillars on which the assessment of participants rested in the context of this project. In the following chapter, the resulting questionnaire will be discussed in greater detail.

5.3 The questionnaires

The experimental framework of this study includes one English questionnaire for the English-speaking control group and a German version for the two German-speaking groups of participants. The former is shorter as it excludes all questions regarding English language proficiency and film translation or subtitles. Both German-speaking groups received identical questionnaires, including a set of questions regarding their English language proficiency, and a question concerning the subtitles/translation presented in their version of the film. In this section, all questions will be discussed in detail. In the case of such questions which are only included in the German-language questionnaire, back translations are given alongside the original. Where this is not the case, the questions were equivalent in both versions of the questionnaire. Some of the questions give viewers the opportunity to add qualitative comments. The nature of these comments was not computed in any scores; they will be discussed in 6.3 after the statistical analysis. Both questionnaires are included in their entirety in Appendix C.

²⁴ To be found at <http://www.ex-word.de/de/presse/artikel/12994833/> [04/05/2009]

General Information

Question 1:

1. I am...

female.

male.

Question 2:

1. I am in the following age group:

0-11

12-19

20-31

32-49

49-64

65 or older

Question 1 and 2 constitute a simple start of the proceedings for the participant. The variables *Gender* and *Age* are relevant extraneous factors which must be considered in the data analysis. It is necessary to rule out any distortion of results on the basis of a difference in group composition. If it can be statistically confirmed that all groups have a similar make-up in terms of gender and age distribution, then these two variables can be eliminated as conditioning variables, making it more probable that any difference in response regarding the humour reception of the film can indeed be attributed to the different translation approaches. Also, the data will later be tested for correlations between the variables *Age* and *Gender* and the variables *Humour Reception* and *Subtitle Reception* (see Chapter 6 “Data Analysis”).

Assessment of ability to comprehend SL dialogue

In the German-language questionnaires, the five questions following this introductory section constitute the assessment of participants’ English language proficiency (see also section 5.2 on English language assessment). Assuming that a person’s second language proficiency is heavily influenced by five main factors (formal tuition, active use, passive use, immersion and confidence), each question represents a “piece of the

puzzle”, as it were. It should be noted that each question, when considered separately, is not sufficient to make any legitimate claim regarding the participant’s knowledge of English. However, it is the combination of the five which is hoped to give a near-adequate impression as to the proficiency of the person. The participant is given a score out of 5 for each component, the sum of which makes up the overall English score.

Question 3:

2. Während meiner Schulausbildung...

- Ich studiere oder habe einen Studienabschluss in Englisch/Anglistik/Amerikanistik/Übersetzen/Dolmetschen.
- ...hatte ich 8-10 Jahre lang Englischunterricht.
- ...hatte ich 5-7 Jahre lang Englischunterricht.
- ...hatte ich bis zu fünf Jahre lang Englischunterricht.
- Ich hatte nie formellen Englischunterricht.
- Ich habe seit meinem Schulabschluss einen oder mehrere Sprachkurse in Englisch belegt.

3. During my education...

- I am pursuing or have obtained a degree in English or American studies, translation or interpreting.
- ...I had 8-10 years of English tuition.
- ...I had 5-7 years of English tuition.
- ...I had up to five years of English tuition.
- ...I never had any English tuition.
- I have attended one or more courses in English since finishing my education.

The first question in this section targets the factor of formal tuition by enquiring about the kind and duration of English language teaching which the participant has received. Based on the German education system, the options include the following: studying or having studied English, English Translation or Interpreting at University or another institution of higher education; this latter option is considered the highest formal level of teaching in this context. The option “8-10 years of tuition at school” corresponds to the structure of the *Gymnasium* (secondary school) which leads to the *Abitur* (A-level equivalent), where English is a mandatory subject until at least year eleven (as the

education sector is governed by state rather than national law, divergences within the country are possible). This option reflects the institutional status of a person who continued their English course until they graduated from high school. The option following this (5-7 years of tuition), would apply to participants who either stopped studying English after year eleven or went to *Realschule*, a secondary school which qualifies pupils to take apprenticeships and finishes after year ten. The option “up to 4 years of English tuition” corresponds to the institutional status of a person whose English learning has not exceeded the minimum amount. The final option (“since finishing school I have attended one or more English language courses”) incorporates the idea that participants might have enrolled in formal English tuition since finishing their education, such as evening courses.

Question 4:

4. **Wie oft kommunizieren Sie aktiv, schriftlich oder mündlich (z.B. telefonisch, per Email, auf Facebook etc.),in englischer Sprache?**

- täglich
- mehrmals in der Woche
- mehrmals im Monat
- mehrmals im Jahr
- so gut wie nie
- nie

4. **How often do you communicate actively in English, in written or spoken form (i.e. on the phone, via email, on Facebook etc.)?**

- daily
- several times a week
- several times a month
- several times a year
- hardly ever
- never

The component “active use” is expressed by the question above, which focuses on frequency. The participant gives an estimate regarding the regularity with which he or she uses the English language to communicate actively with another person. This could be face-to-face, via telephone, email, or social networking sites on the Internet. The

answer to this question gives an insight into both the ease and the confidence with which the participant is likely to approach English as a medium of expression, as well as their level of practice. Both are crucial components in the overall proficiency of an L2 speaker.

Question 5:

5. Wie oft machen Sie passiv von ihren Englischkenntnissen Gebrauch (z.B. beim Lesen von Büchern oder Anschauen von Filmen)?

- täglich
- mehrmals in der Woche
- mehrmals im Monat
- mehrmals im Jahr
- so gut wie nie
- nie

5. How often do you use your English knowledge in a passive way (i.e. reading books or watching films)?

- daily
- several times a week
- several times a month
- several times a year
- hardly ever
- never

The third question in this part is very similar to the preceding one, however it is based on the idea of passive use, which includes reading, listening to, or watching English language material. This should give an indication of how accustomed the participant is to English language input.

Question 6:

6. Wieviel Zeit haben Sie in einem englischsprachigen Land oder Umfeld verbracht?

- ein Jahr oder mehr am Stück
- alles in allem bis zu einem Jahr
- alles in allem bis zu sechs Monaten
- alles in allem mehrere Wochen
- einige Tage

keine

6. How much time have you spent in an English-speaking environment?

one year or more at one time

up to one year in total

up to six months in total

several weeks in total

a few days

none

One important external factor in L2 acquisition is the direct contact with the language through immersion in an L2-speaking environment. This question assesses the participant's language proficiency by asking them to give the approximate length of time they have spent in an English-speaking environment. The greatest benefit is assumed to come from a stay of one year or more at one time; therefore, this is the highest-scoring option in the questionnaire. The remaining options score fewer points in the quantification of the data to form an overall language assessment (in the order they are named).

Question 7:

7. Wie schätzen Sie ihre Englischkenntnisse selbst ein?

hervorragend

sehr gut

gut

grundlegend

eher schlecht

nicht vorhanden

7. How would you rate your own English skills?

excellent

very good

good

basic

rather poor

non-existent

The final component in the scoring system will enable the researcher to gauge a participant's self-confidence in his or her English language knowledge. On its own, this question would be likely to give a distorted view of the person's actual proficiency, as it focuses on self-assessment only and therefore gauges confidence instead of actual knowledge (which would be impossible to achieve in this context). However, as part of a more comprehensive impression of the participant's habits and experience, confidence in his or her ability considered to be of vital importance, as it directly influences a person's tendency to make use of and rely on their actual proficiency and knowledge. It is also assumed that there is a link between confidence and actual proficiency, with extremely over- or under-confident participants constituting the exception, not the rule.

In order to attain a global and quantifiable mark for the English proficiency of viewers each multiple choice question was associated with a particular score out of five, which corresponded to the six different options in each question. In all questions the scores for the different choices was in a descending order: the first option was associated with a score of five and the last with a score of zero. Thus, in the case of question 7, the answer "excellent" scores five points, while the option "very good" would be given four points and so on, with the final option "non-existent" scoring zero points. This was done for every question in this part of the questionnaire and the points were then added up to give a final score between 0 and 25.

Questions regarding the test film

Part B of both questionnaires contains questions regarding the viewing experience of the test film. The questions in this part are designed to elicit information from participants regarding their evaluation of the film and its translation; however, the questionnaire is also designed to avoid being too transparent regarding its own focus. The aim is to avoid indirectly encouraging certain responses, thereby "putting answers in participants' mouths". This is a danger associated with multiple-choice questionnaires. Instead, the hope was that viewers would give an honest opinion when

answering more general questions, from which the underlying success of the translation approach and consequent set of strategies could be deduced. Also, with a research area as subjective and personal as humour, it was hoped that a more objective wording would allow participants to express whether or not they have perceived the wordplay which was the bases of the comedy in the feature, regardless of whether or not it is to their personal comedic taste. As the research question focuses on the transfer of humour into the target language rather than cultural differences in the perception of comedy, this approach was deemed appropriate. For the data analysis, the answers from the film-related questions were quantified to form a humour reception score, which will be explained in section 5.4)

Question 1:

1. I had seen this film before.

- Yes
- No

The section begins with a simple yes-or-no question. This is relevant insofar as a great divergence between the groups regarding previous viewings (and therefore potentially pre-formed opinions) of the film could be (partly) responsible for a difference in response. It is expected, due to the varying degrees of popularity of the film series in the UK and Germany, that the percentage of viewers who are familiar with the film is higher in the control group than in the German-speaking groups.

Question 2:

2. I would assign this film to the following category:

- Children's Film
- Comedy
- Detective Story/Murder Mystery
- Thriller
- Other: _____

Question 2 asks the viewer to assign the film to a category or genre. This is one of the questions which aim to evaluate a participant's reception of humour, and whether or

not he or she recognised and acknowledged the adult-oriented humour contained in the production. The answer options given in the questionnaire reflect the various elements present in the feature. The participant also has the option of naming a different category, if he or she feels the appropriate one is not already mentioned in the existing options. The answer to this question is intended to gauge how much of the humorous content of the feature has registered with the viewer, and also give an impression as to the extent to which the viewer has received the adult-oriented level of comprehensibility and appeal (by including the option “Children’s Film”).

Question 3:

3. In my opinion, the film was made for the following age group (more than one answer possible):

- 0-6 years
- 6-12 years
- 12-18 years
- 18 years and older
- No particular age range

Similarly, in order to gauge whether or not the adult-directed humour is appreciated by the participant, Question 3 asks them to decide what they believe is the appropriate target age group for the film’s audience. The original English language version makes it relatively clear that the film is not targeted at children alone, which can for example be deduced from the sophistication of the humour in certain scenes. If the participant includes an adult age group in his or her statement (multiple answers are allowed), or chooses the option “no particular age range”, it can be assumed that this more complex level of comprehensibility has been picked up either from the English original or from the translation.

Question 4:

4. For me, the appeal of this film is its... (more than one answer possible)

- ...animation technique.
- ...story/plot.
- ...humour.

- ...dialogue.
- ...characters.
- ...other: _____

In Question 4 the viewers are asked to specify what they liked specifically about the film. The question is worded in a way which allows an objective statement, enabling participants to acknowledge part of the film's appeal even if it was not to their own taste. The underlying intention of this question is one of (adult) appeal. Whilst some of the answers are translation-related (such as "the humour" and "the dialogue"), others are only indirectly linked to translation (such as "the characters" or "the plot"), and the answer "animation technique" is not dependent on the quality of the subtitles or the translation of wordplay. The response to this question will indicate which element of the feature's appeal remained in viewers' memory after the screening. If it is found that viewers are most impressed with elements of the film which were not altered in the translation, this could point towards an less positive reception of subtitles, whereas a positive reaction to translation-related factors implies that the translation strategy has been successful. Due to the somewhat unusual technique of clay animation, the option "animation technique" is expected to receive a high number of ticks. However, as multiple answers are allowed, this effect is unlikely to override any positive reactions to other elements of the film such as the dialogue or the humorous content.

Question 5:

5. Die Untertitel bei diesem Film...

- haben mich gestört.
- habe ich nicht bewusst wahrgenommen.
- waren notwendig, aber die Übersetzung war nicht gelungen.
- fand ich sehr gelungen, auch die Übersetzung.

5. The subtitles in this film...

- were distracting.
- I didn't really take any notice of.
- were necessary, but the translation was not good.

were successful, including the translation.

In the German-speaking groups, the next question refers to the subtitles from the translated film version which they have seen prior to filling in the questionnaire. The result from this question will form the independent variable *Subtitle Reception*, which this experiment investigates. The question gives participants the opportunity to rate the subtitles as well as the extent to which they aided their understanding of the film. Again, this question is not designed to make participants reflect on the actual translation alone, as the quality of the subtitles also depends on other factors, such as readability, clarity, segmentation, synchronisation with the image or accuracy of timing. Issues such as the divergence from the original which are included in Version 2, for example, are expected to be addressed here, if indeed they were problematic for the viewer. The response to this question will be relevant not only in the context of a group of German viewers (who might be more accustomed to dubbing) responding to subtitles in general, but also in terms of the specific translation strategies employed in the test film.

Question 6:

6. I thought the film was...(more than one answer possible)

- ...very funny – I laughed several times
- ...quite funny – I couldn't help but chuckle
- ...maybe funny for others, but I didn't find it funny.
- ...quite entertaining, but not particularly funny.
- ...not funny at all.

The sixth question in this segment focuses on the transfer of humorous content, and therefore touches directly upon the research question itself. The participants are asked to give an assessment of how funny they perceived the test film to be. The question also leaves room for additional comments from participants who wish to discuss their response further. This is deemed relevant as comments could provide further insight into exactly why (or why not) viewers found the film to be an exhilarant.

Question 7:

7. I would recommend this film to others.

Yes

No

The final question is intended to round off the questionnaire in a relatively straightforward fashion, by asking viewers to think about whether they would recommend the film to other people. This is arguably a familiar thought-process for cinema-goers and film lovers, as it is not unusual to rate a film in this way without giving a detailed critique to a person who might want to see the film for themselves. Room was given for additional comments in case participants wished to elaborate on their evaluation.

5.4 Quantifying responses

A system was developed for the variable *Humour Reception* according to a similar concept to the one applied to the quantification of the responses adding up to the *Level of English* score. In that case, answers corresponded to points between 0 and 5, in the order they appeared in the questionnaire. In the case of the *Humour Reception* variable, the quantification is slightly more complex and will be explained in this section.

The questions which formed a part of this variable were the ones which dealt with participants' reception of the film, with a particular focus on the reception of linguistic humour. They include the questions regarding genre assignment, targeted age range, specific appeal and assessment of 'funniness'. Scores range from a maximum of five points for positive reception, to a score of zero for a response which suggest an indifferent or negative reaction to the humour in the film. Values between zero and five were given to individual answers but also to combinations of answers where it was possible to give more than one response. Together they add up to a score of between zero and twenty.

Question 2: Genre assignment

The option *Comedy* receives the maximum score of 5 as it suggests a positive reaction to the humour in the film. The answer with the lowest score (0) is *Children's film*. While this does not necessarily reflect a negative reception per se, it nevertheless indicates that the typical adult layer of comprehensibility and humour (i.e. wordplay) was not acknowledged by the participant. The options *Thriller/Crime story* as well as *Animation* were given a low score of 1; the former represents a more adult genre but suggests that the humour inherent in the script was not fully acknowledged, while the latter also does not focus on the comedic aspect of the film. In the event that a participant chose the option *Other* and provided their own category, the points between 1 and 4 were assigned individually. For example, the response *Tragikomödie* (tragic comedy) was awarded 4 points as it incorporates the idea of *Comedy*.

Question 3: Targeted Age Range

The answer *No Specific Age* was assigned the maximum score of five as it implies that the multi-layered appeal of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* is fully acknowledged by the viewer. The lowest possible score of zero was associated with the lowest age group *0-6 Years*, as this suggests a very narrow appeal to children only. The options *6-12 years* (score of 1), *12-18 years* (score of 2), and *18 and above* (score of 3) were treated according to the degree to which they show an acknowledgment of the adult-oriented appeal, and therefore the humour, of the film. As multiple answers were allowed for this question, all combinations of answers were treated according to the same principle. For example, the answers *0-6* and *6-12* achieved a score of 1, while the combined options *6-12* and *12-18* and *18+* were given a score of 4.

Question 4: Specific Appeal

The highest-scoring response for this question is of course *Humour*, which is given the maximum score of 5. All combinations of answers which include *Humour* are also awarded a score of 5. *Dialogue* achieved a score of 3, as the appreciation for dialogue implies a degree of appreciation for linguistic humour. For the same reason, all combinations of answers which include *dialogue* also achieved a score of 3. The

options *Animation/Story/Characters*, as well as all combinations of answers which include two or all three of them were given a score of 1. Again, separate responses under the option *Other* were treated individually according to their association with the participant's reception of linguistic humour (for example the answer *Wordplay* was awarded the maximum number of 5 points).

Question 5: Funny or Not

For this straightforward question, the options were associated with scores in descending order: *Very Funny* achieved the maximum score of 5, *Quite Funny* was given 4 points, *Funny for others but not for me* was awarded a score of 3, *Quite entertaining but not especially funny* scored 2 points, while the answer *Not funny at all* received a low score of 1.

5.5 Data collection

5.5.1 Participants

Three separate groups of viewers were required for this study. One control group of native speakers of English ("**Group CG**") from the United Kingdom were asked to evaluate the un-translated, original version of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*. A total of 30 participants were recruited in England to make up this control group, to which the response from the German-speaking groups could then be compared. The two groups of German native speakers were recruited in Germany. Recruitment was conducted in various ways. Notices were displayed at Stuttgart University, emails were sent to contacts who then forwarded them on to other acquaintances in a "snowball" system. A local brass orchestra allowed a screening to be conducted after a rehearsal, whilst other participants were given the time and venue of screening and gathered there after receiving the information via email. The first group, hereafter referred to as "**Group Alt**", was exposed to the alternative subtitled version of the test film as described in detail in section 5.1. The second group (hereafter referred to as "**Group Ex**") was exposed to the subtitled rendition of the film

which is based on the existing translation which focused on formal equivalence. Group Alt consisted of 29 people, whilst Group Ex contained a total of 30 participants.

5.5.2 The screening process

The process of screening the different version of the test film to the relevant participants was kept as similar as possible for all three groups. People who had agreed to take part in the study were gathered in a room which fulfilled the requirements of the situation, namely it was considered to be of sufficient size, it had a projector or the possibility of using a portable projector, and also there were seats for every member of the audience. It was also deemed important that the rooms could be darkened, in order to maximise viewing quality. In the case of the German language groups, a selection of cold drinks was made available to participants as the fieldwork was undertaken in the month of July in Southern Germany and temperatures were in excess of 30 degrees Celsius. All in all, care was taken to create a natural movie-going experience rather than giving people the impression that they were operating under laboratory conditions.

Upon arriving and taking a seat, viewers were handed an information sheet (included in the Appendices) which informed them that confidentiality and anonymity of information were guaranteed by the researcher and that by filling in and submitting the questionnaire at the end of the session they declared their consent for their response to be used for research purposes. On the information sheet, as well as during the recruitment process, the only information given to participants as to the specific purpose of the study was that the project focused on the reception of English-language films by German audiences. It was considered important not to give detailed information regarding humour translation and subtitle reception before the screening, in order to avoid a scenario where people may pay special attention to these elements, rather than watching the film as they would normally do in their leisure time. Also, care was taken not to influence participants' answers in the questionnaire by making the central research question immediately obvious, as this could have led to an effect

sometimes encountered by empirical researchers, namely that participants intend to be helpful and try to give the “desired” response (or deliberately sabotage the study by doing the opposite). The researcher then explained the order of the proceedings and answered all questions that the audience had, before darkening the room and commencing with the screening. In order to create a setting as similar as possible to a genuine cinematic experience, the film was projected onto a screen or a white wall, which participants were facing. They were not given any additional information regarding the research. After the end of the film, the blinds/curtains were opened and each person in the audience was handed a questionnaire and a pen. Participants then proceeded to fill in the questionnaires at their own pace, which they then handed over to the researcher. Participants were not offered any compensation, financial or otherwise, for taking part in the experiment.

Chapter 6: Data analysis

In this section I will outline my hypotheses and detail the process of how the data obtained from the submitted questionnaires was processed, analysed and tested for statistical significance. The role of the different relevant variables will be explained, as will the way they have been treated in the data analysis. In this section I will also discuss the relevant statistical tests used for the different types of data which were collected in the experiment.

6.1 Hypotheses

It is the aim of statistical analyses to establish whether the null hypothesis is rejected by the results or whether the dataset fails to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between two variables or that a treatment has no effect. It is rejected when the results of a statistical test show a relationship between two variables to be significant, which is the case when the p-value does not exceed the significance level of 0.05. My experiment contains a number of variables which will be outlined below together with my hypotheses regarding these variables.

6.1.1 Independent Variables

The independent variables in the experiment are constituted by the three different groups for the test screenings. These were heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, and – in the case of the German-speaking groups – level of English knowledge. Therefore, the variables *Age*, *Gender* and *Level of English* are extraneous variables. Due to the fact that the selection of participants was random, my hypothesis is that the groups were balanced for all three extraneous variables, which means that there are no significant differences regarding the variables *Age* and *Gender* in all three groups, as well as regarding *Age*, *Gender* and *Level of English* in the two German-speaking groups.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the distribution of age across groups.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the distribution of *Gender* across groups.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the distribution of *Level of English* across Group Alt and Group Ex.

6.1.2 Dependent Variables

1. *Humour Reception*

As described in the Methodology chapter, Group Alt and Group Ex were exposed to two versions of the same film which only differed in the approach which was applied for wordplay translation. After viewing the film subjects were required to answer questions which assessed the extent to which they considered the film to be humorous and enjoyable. In order to present the results as a continuous variable a system was developed according to the same principles applied to the quantification of the responses adding up to the *Level of English* score (see section 5.4 “Quantifying Responses”). *Humour Reception* is therefore a dependent (or outcome) variable.

In order to answer the central research question of the experiment, which is whether reception differs according to the translation approach employed, it must be established whether there is a significant difference in humour reception between the Control Group, the group which watched the version of the film that included the existing translation (Group Ex), and the group which was exposed to the alternative translation solutions (Group Alt). The null hypothesis is that any difference between the groups regarding the variable *Humour Reception* is the result of chance. If a difference in reception between the Control Group, Group Alt and Group Ex is shown to be statistically significant, the null hypothesis is rejected. As the English-speaking group is probably more familiar with the series, it might be expected that they respond

more positively to the film. The great number of culture-specific references could also contribute to this factor. The following are therefore my hypotheses with regards to this variable:

Hypothesis 4

The values for the variable *Humour Reception* in the Control Group are significantly different than those in Group Alt and in Group Ex.

Hypothesis 5

The values for the variable *Humour Reception* in Group Alt are significantly different than those in Group Ex (reject null hypothesis).

As it is possible that the extraneous variables *Age*, *Gender* and *Level of English* affect the dependent variable *Humour Reception*, it is also necessary to test for correlations between these factors and the dependent variable. This means that tests must be conducted which determine whether there is any significant relationship between the variables *Gender* or *Age* and the variable *Humour Reception*. My hypotheses are the following:

Hypothesis 6

There is no correlation between *Age* and *Humour Reception* in either group.

Hypothesis 7

There is no correlation between *Gender* and *Humour Reception* in either group.

Another central question which this study investigates is whether humour reception is affected by source text comprehension, and therefore the participants' ability to understand the English language. My hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis 8

There is no correlation between *Level of English* and *Humour Reception* in either group.

2. Subtitle Reception

Another independent variable for the German-speaking groups is their reaction to the subtitles as such, as expressed in the relevant question (*Subtitle Reception*). This relates directly to the common assumption in the industry as well as the academic field of Audiovisual Translation that the large language communities in Europe (Spain, France, Italy, Germany) are “dubbing countries” and viewers are therefore unable to accept subtitles as a method of language transfer since they are unaccustomed to seeing them on the screen (see also section 2.2 “The Situation in Europe regarding AVT”). It is also considered important to test for a difference in subtitle reception between the groups, as this determines whether or not the viewers’ reaction to this method is influenced by the translation approach used in their production. The subtitle-specific question in the questionnaire gave participants four distinct, non-scalar answers representing four possible reactions to a subtitled film, from which they were asked to choose one. They could express whether they had been distracted by the subtitles or whether they had in fact not taken any notice of them at all. Option three gave viewers a chance to differentiate between the method itself and the functional quality of the subtitles by acknowledging their necessity while also expressing dissatisfaction with the translation. Option four presents a positive reaction to both the method of linguistic transfer and the translation itself. The two (subtitle technology and translation quality) are evaluated separately as they represent different requirements for the subtitler, yet they are intrinsically linked in the audience’s minds.

To analyse the response from the two German-speaking groups, firstly the results from Groups Alt and Ex will be compared. The null hypothesis states that any difference in subtitle reception between the groups is due to chance. It is my hypothesis that the two different groups answered this question in a significantly different way, due to the influence of the translation approach on subtitle reception as a whole. This hypothesis is presented formally below:

Hypothesis 9

There is a significant difference between *Subtitle Reception* and *Group*.

Given that the two different groups contained people of different genders and ages, it is necessary to consider whether these variables were also influential in the way people received and viewed the subtitles. My hypothesis would be that there is no significant difference in the way both men and women answered the question and also there was no significant difference depending on the age of the viewer. Regarding level of English, however, I do think that this variable would influence the way that viewers received the subtitles because those viewers whose English is good enough so that they do not require the subtitles for comprehension are more likely to be distracted by the subtitles or ignore them completely. These hypotheses are formalised below:

Hypothesis 10

There is no significant relationship between *Age* and *Subtitle Reception* in either group.

Hypothesis 11

There is no significant relationship between *Gender* and *Subtitle Reception* in either group.

Hypothesis 12

There is a significant relationship between *Level of English* and *Subtitle Reception* in both groups.

The following section will detail the results of the statistical tests on the basis of the response as obtained from the questionnaires and in relation to the hypotheses outlined above.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Comparison of groups for extraneous variables

Variable Age

My hypothesis (No. 1) is that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of age. Due to the scalar nature of the data for the variable *Age*, a Mann-Whitney test was run in order to check whether this hypothesis holds. The test showed a p-value of 0.547, which means that there is no significant difference and therefore a balanced distribution of age exists across all three groups of participants (Group Alt, Group Ex and Group CG). The hypothesis can be retained.

Variable Gender

As far as this variable is concerned, the hypothesis (No. 2) states that *Gender* is distributed evenly between the groups. The crosstabulation below shows the different numbers of males and females in each group, which are similar across groups. Since the data for the variables *Group* and *Gender* is binary in nature, a chi-square test was carried out to determine if there was a significant difference between groups with respect to the variable *Gender*. The result of the statistics ($p=0.833$) supports the hypothesis that gender is not a significant variable across groups.

Treatment * Gender Crosstabulation

Count

		Gender		Total
		female	male	
Treatment	Group Alt	12	17	29
	Control Group	14	16	30
	Group Ex	15	15	30
Total		41	48	89

Table 1 Treatment * Gender Crosstabulation

Variable *Level of English*

Hypothesis 3 states that for the variable *Level of English* there are no significant differences between the groups. Below are two histograms, for the groups Alt and Ex respectively, which display participants' English knowledge scores and also include information as to the mean level of English and the standard deviations. From these histograms it is clear that there is a difference in average scores between the groups: Group Ex has a higher average level of English (mean score 13.93 compared to 10.1 in Group Alt). Note, however, that the standard deviation (divergence from the mean) is similar in both groups (4.769 in Group Alt, 4.968 in Group Ex).

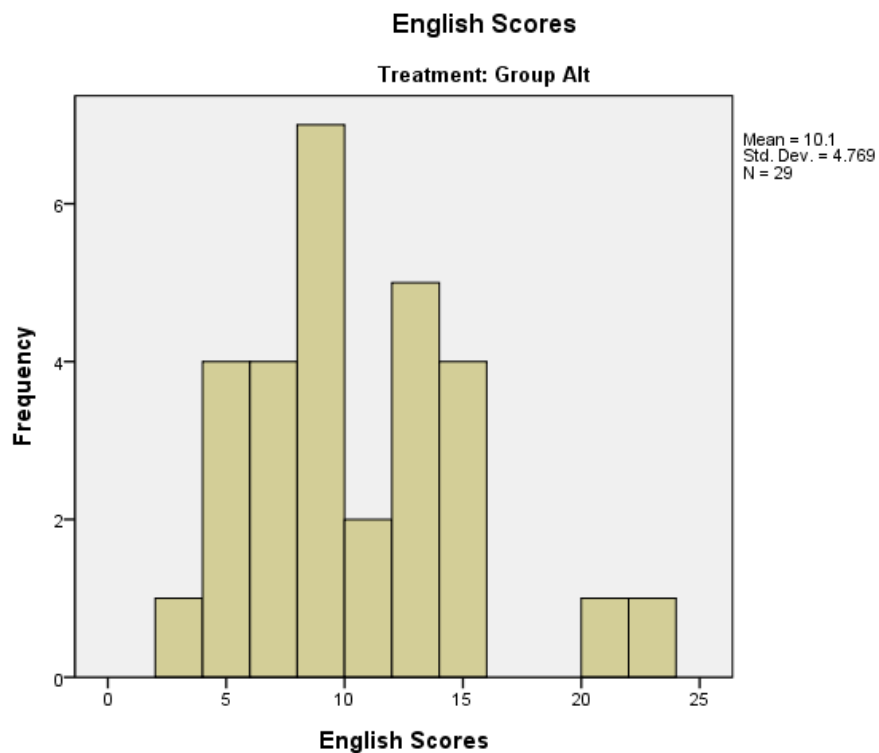


Figure 3 English scores Group Alt

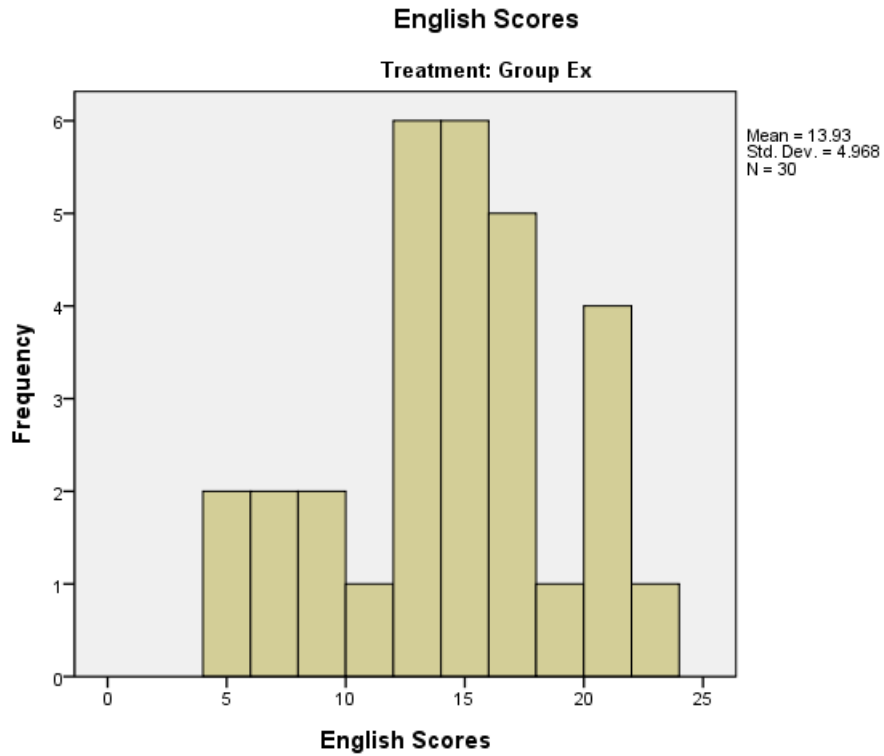


Figure 4 English Scores Group Ex

A t-test was used to test the different datasets for statistical significance. The result ($p=0.0038$) shows that there is a significant difference in the level of English knowledge between the two German-speaking groups, with Group Ex having the higher level. This suggests that we should reject my hypothesis, which was the null hypothesis.

6.2.2 Comparison of groups for *Humour Reception*

My hypothesis is that there is a significant difference between groups Alt and Ex in terms of the variable *Humour Reception*, caused by the different sets of subtitles. Below are histograms for the groups Alt, Ex and CG which show the humour reception scores as well as the mean and standard deviation. The histograms display a difference in average reception scores between the groups (a mean score of 15.9 in Group Alt compared to 13.83 in Group Ex), while at the same time displaying a divergence in distribution. The distribution in Group Alt is relatively homogenous, with a standard

deviation of 2.425, while the range of responses in Group Ex is more varied, with a standard deviation of 4.921.

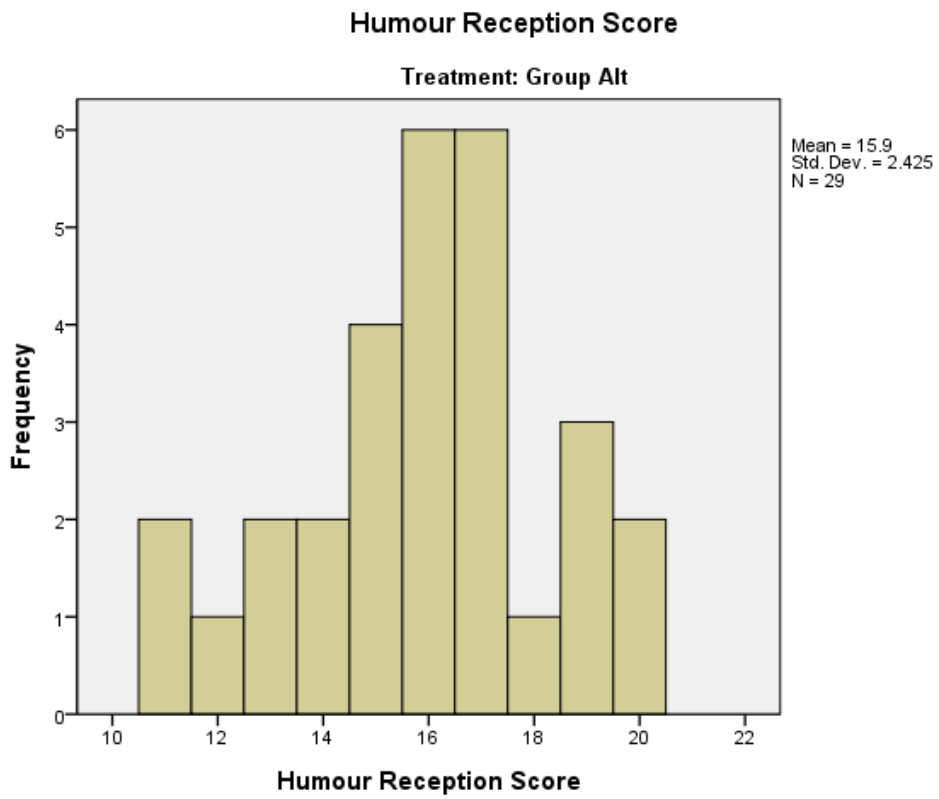


Figure 5 Humour Reception in Group Alt

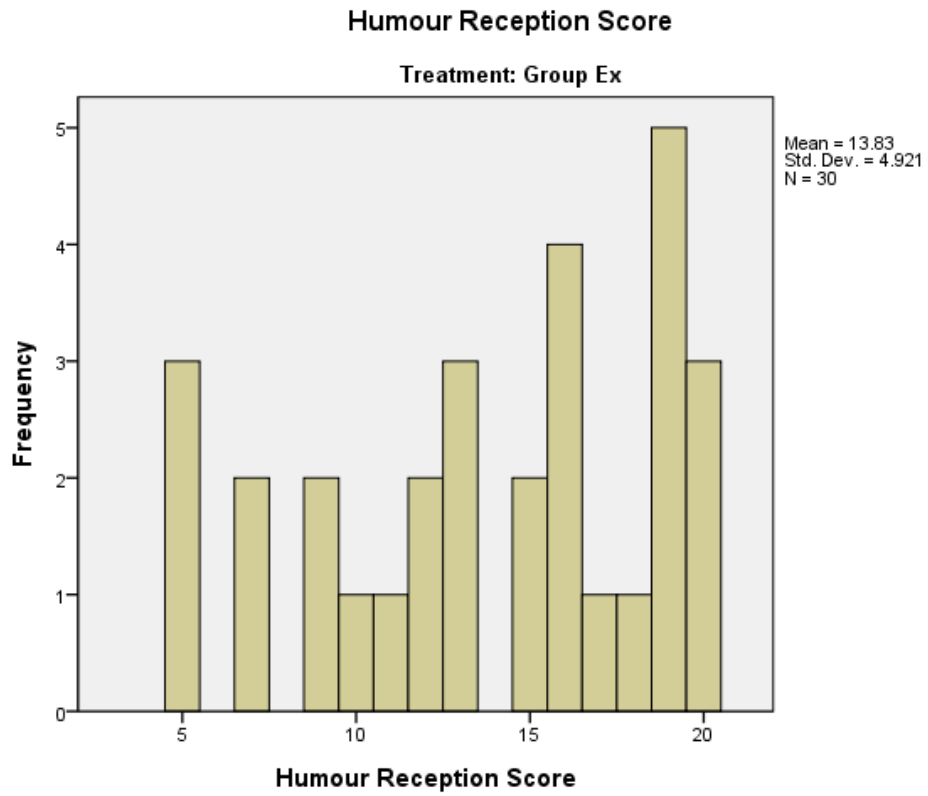


Figure 6 Humour Reception in Group Ex

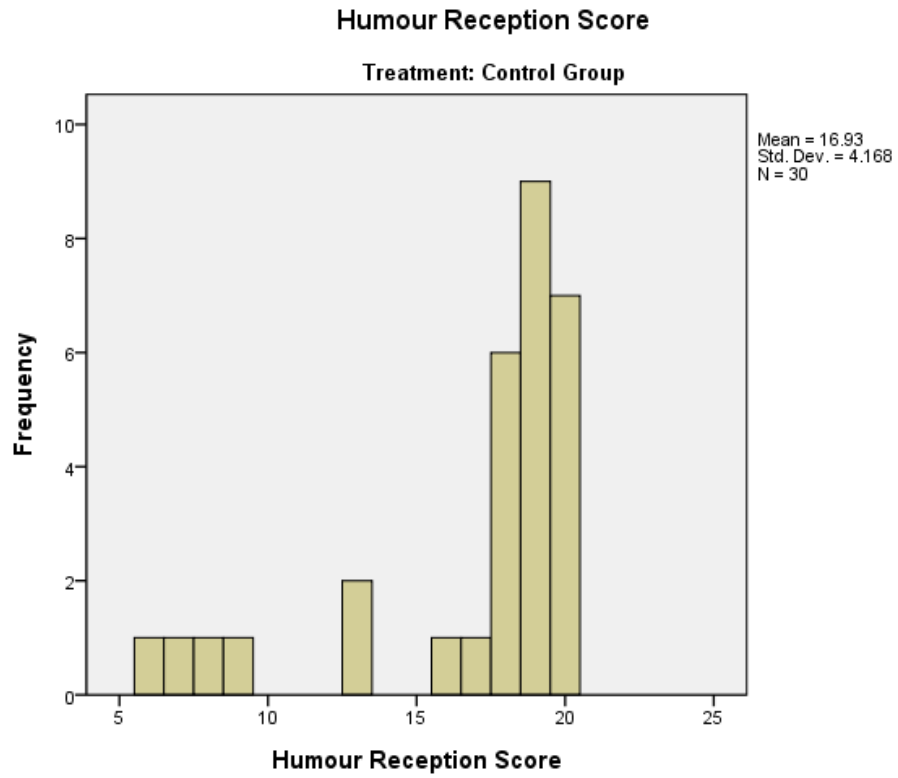


Figure 7 Humour Reception in Group CG

The English-speaking control group obtained the highest mean score (16.93) with regards to *Humour Reception*, followed by Group Alt (15.9) and then Group Ex (13.83). Due to the scalar nature of the data, t-tests were conducted between all groups. The result shows a significant difference in humour reception between the two German-speaking groups, with a p-value of 0.04624. With respect to the control group there is a significant difference between the average score for the humour reception of this group and that of Group Ex ($p=0.0109$) but there is no significant difference between the means of the Control Group and Group Alt ($p=0.2469$). Not only was there a significant difference in humour reception between the experimental groups, one of them was similar in response to the control group while the other one was significantly different. This means that the linguistic humour in the film had basically the same effect on the audience with one translation approach, but a significantly different effect with another approach.

Thus, the humour inherent in the test film received a significantly more positive reaction in Group Alt than in Group Ex and my hypothesis is retained. The translation approach based on equivalence of effect evoked a more positive reaction on the whole, in comparison to the approach based on the transfer of information.

6.2.3 Within-group analysis for *Humour Reception* and extraneous variables

The next section presents the results for the relationships between different extraneous variables within the same group with respect to the independent variable *Humour Reception*. Depending on the type of data involved, a range of tests were performed in order to determine whether there were any correlations.

Relationship between *Age* and *Humour Reception*

Hypothesis 6 states that there is no significant correlation between *Age* and *Humour Reception* in either group. Given that *Age* is a scalar variable, a Spearman's correlation test was carried out. The result from the test shows a p-value of 0.217 for Group Alt

and a p-value of 0.225 for the Control Group, meaning that there is no significant relationship between the variables *Age* and *Humour Reception* in those groups. In Group Ex the two variables are correlated ($p=0.000$), meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected. In this group, as age increases, the humour reception score decreases. The fact that this is only the case in one group suggests that this correlation is not due to filmic elements such as the animation technique (which might have been less appealing to older viewers), but rather to group-internal factors.

Relationship between *Gender* and *Humour Reception*

This part of the analysis tests hypothesis 7 which states that there is no significant relationship between the variables *Gender* and *Humour Reception*. Since Gender is a binary variable, a Mann-Whitney test for *Gender* and *Humour Reception* was run in order to test the above hypothesis. The results are:

Group Alt: $p=0.875$

Group Ex: $p=0.061$

Control Group: $p=0.702$

The Mann-Whitney tests therefore show that there is no significant relationship between the two variables *Gender* and *Humour Reception* in any of the groups. This means that a participant's gender did not exert an influence on their reception of the film and any difference between the groups in terms of humour reception is not due to this variable.

Relationship between *Level of English* and *Humour Reception*

This is one of the central questions of the experiment: Is a viewer's reaction to the comic elements inherent in the film influenced by the extent to which he or she may be able to comprehend the original dialogue? A significant positive correlation in either or both of the groups would show that as source text comprehension increases,

humour reception increases, while a negative correlation would suggest that viewers who were less able to follow the original dialogue and therefore more reliant on the translation enjoyed the humour in the film to a greater extent. The hypothesis (No. 8) states that there is no significant correlation between the two variables, as the reception of linguistic humour is not affected by the degree to which a viewer can understand the SL dialogue.

A Spearman's correlation was conducted for both groups. The correlation coefficient of 0.570 shows that there is a positive correlation between Level of English and Humour Reception in Group Ex (enjoyment of humour increases while knowledge of English increases), while the p-value of 0.001 proves that this correlation is significant. This is not the case in Group Alt (correlation coefficient 0.089, $p=0.310$), which means that in Group Ex, the viewing experience was influenced significantly by viewers' ability to understand English, while in the case of the alternative translation approach this was not the case and enjoyment of the film was more independent of source text comprehension. In addition to the non-parametric Spearman's correlation, a parametric test was run in order to support this result. A linear model for the variables Humour Reception and Level of English obtained the following results: in Group Alt there is no correlation between the two variables ($p=0.669$). In Group Ex, however, the linear model produced a significant positive correlation between the level of the English of a person and the extent to which they found the film funny ($p= 0.008$). Below are two scatter graphs, along with a line of best fit, for the variables Humour Reception and Level of English for both groups.

Group Ex:

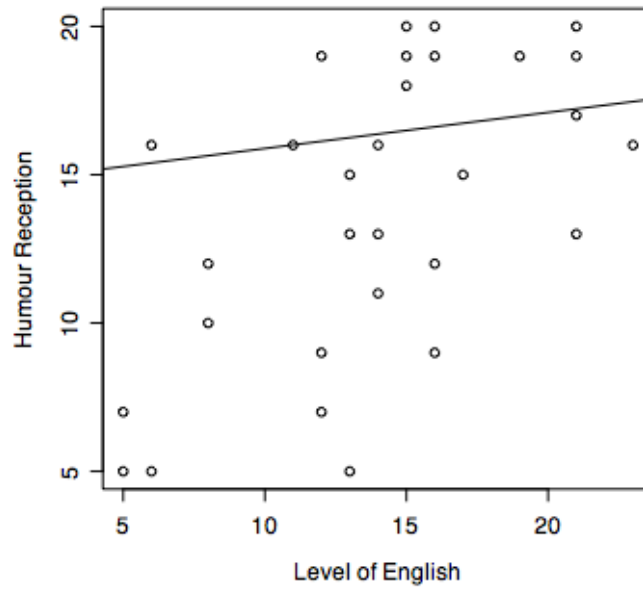


Figure 8 Humour Reception and English Group Ex

Group Alt:

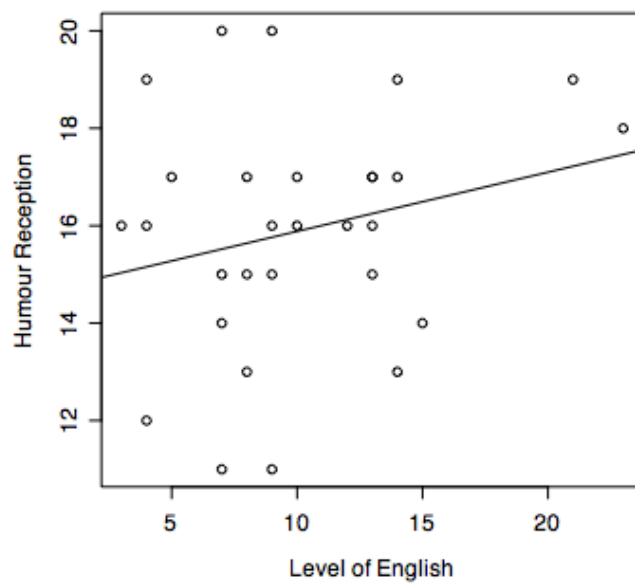


Figure 9 Humour Reception and English Group Alt

Consequently, the result from the parametric test confirms the result from the non-parametric Spearman's correlation: the relationship between the variables *Humour Reception* and *Level of English* is significant only in Group Ex. The hypothesis for this group – that there is no significant relationship between the variables *Humour Reception* and *Level of English* – is therefore rejected.

6.2.4 Comparison of groups for *Subtitle Reception*

It is my hypothesis that the participants in the two German-speaking groups answered differently to the question which relates directly to the subtitles used in the screenings. As the data resulting from this question is nominal in nature (the different options are not related), a crosstabulation is used below to illustrate the differences between Alt and Ex in answering this question. Subsequently, a chi-square test was carried out on the data to test for statistical significance between the variables *Group* and *Subtitle Reception*.

Subtitle Reception * Treatment Crosstabulation				
		Treatment		Total
		Group Alt	Group Ex	
Subtitle Reception	Count	0	1	1
	% within Subtitle Perception	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
distracting	Count	1	5	6
	% within Subtitle Perception	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
not noticed	Count	3	5	8
	% within Subtitle Perception	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
necessary but unsuccessful translation	Count	4	11	15
	% within Subtitle Perception	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%
successful translation	Count	21	8	29
	% within Subtitle Perception	72.4%	27.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	29	30	59
	% within Subtitle Perception	49.2%	50.8%	100.0%

Table 2 Subtitle * Group Crosstabulation

The crosstabulation shows that in Group Alt, the majority of viewers (21 out of 29) found the translation to be successful, while only one viewer was distracted by the subtitles as a method of linguistic transfer. In Group Ex, the majority of participants (11 out of 30) assessed the translation as unsuccessful, regardless of the fact that subtitles were found necessary for comprehension of the film. In the same group, 5 viewers were distracted by the subtitles in a negative way (German word “gestört” in the questionnaire). In order to determine whether this result is statistically significant and my hypothesis can be retained, a chi-square test was used. The result shows a p-value of 0.004, which means that the difference in response between Group Alt and Group Ex is statistically significant and the hypothesis can be retained.

6.2.5 Within-group analysis for *Subtitle Reception* and extraneous variables

The following section will detail the statistical tests which were conducted in order to rule out any significant influence from the extraneous variables *Age*, *Gender* and *Level of English* on the variable *Subtitle Reception*.

Relationship between *Age* and *Subtitle Reception*

A one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used to test for Hypothesis 10 which states that there is no significant relationship between the variables *Age* and *Subtitle Reception* in either group. Nominal data will not be normally distributed but is also unlikely to be severely skewed (the situation that causes most problems to ANOVA tests), therefore as a basic way of analysing independent and extraneous variables, an ANOVA was used. The table below details the results of this test (the descriptive tables can be found in their entirety in the Appendices):

Treatment		N	Mean
Group Alt	distracting	1	2.00
	not noticed	3	2.33
	necessary but unsuccessful translation	4	3.00
	successful translation	21	2.76
	Total	29	2.72
Group Ex	distracting	5	2.60
	not noticed	5	2.20
	necessary but unsuccessful translation	11	2.55
	successful translation	8	3.13
	Total	29	2.66

Table 3 Age and Subtitle Reception - Descriptives

The “Descriptives” table above, which gives the mean values for Age separated by the different multiple choice options for the question regarding subtitles, gives the impression that the difference in mean age for every option is relatively similar (values ranging from 2.0 to 2.76 in Group Alt, and from 2.2 to 3.13 in Group Ex). An ANOVA test determines if this difference is statistically significant. The result of the ANOVA shows that there is no significant relationship between age and subtitle reception in either group (Alt: $p=0.721$; Ex: $p=0.427$).

Relationship between *Gender* and *Subtitle Reception*

Similarly, a test was required to test Hypothesis 11 that there is no significant relationship between the variables *Gender* and *Subtitle Reception*. Due to the type of data involved (binary and nominal), a chi-square test was conducted. The p-values resultant from this test are 0.358 for Group Alt and 0.257 for Group Ex, which means that there is no significant relationship between the two variables in either group. Any difference in subtitle reception between the groups can therefore not be attributed to gender.

Relationship between *Level of English* and *Subtitle Reception*

In the next stage of the analysis, a one-way ANOVA explores whether there is a correlation between the variables *Subtitle Reception* and *Level of English* in either group. The hypothesis is that the ability to understand the English dialogue and the resulting dependence on subtitles for comprehension has a significant effect on viewers' evaluation. The table below gives the mean English scores for each different option provided by the subtitle question:

Treatment	N	Mean
Group Alt		
distracting	1	23.00
not noticed	3	14.33
necessary but unsuccessful translation	4	11.00
successful translation	21	8.71
Total	29	10.10
Group Ex		
distracting	5	17.60
not noticed	5	18.60
necessary but unsuccessful translation	11	13.73
successful translation	8	8.88
Total	29	13.90

Table 4 Level of English and Subtitle Reception - Descriptives

This table shows that the participant in Group Alt who was distracted by the subtitles has a high English score (23), while the mean score for viewers who did not pay attention to the subtitles is 14.33. The subgroup of participants in Group Alt who found the subtitles satisfactory and the translation successful is relatively low (8.71). In Group Ex, the mean score of those distracted by the subtitles (17.6) is lower than in Group Alt, but still more than twice as high as the mean score of viewers who appreciated the subtitles (8.88). A one-way ANOVA test delivered the following results:

Group Alt: $p=0.003$

Group Ex: $p=0.000$

The ANOVA therefore shows this relationship between the variables *Level of English* and *Subtitle Reception* to be statistically significant.

6.3 Preliminary conclusions and further hypotheses

The data analysis thus far has shown that there is a significant difference between the groups for the variables *Level of English*, *Humour Reception*, and *Subtitle Reception*. Tests have also shown that the extraneous variables *Age* and *Gender* are distributed evenly across groups. Significant relationships between variables have been determined in Group Ex, where *Humour Reception* and *Level of English* are negatively correlated, but also *Humour Reception* and *Age*. It seems necessary to investigate further the reasons why, in this group only, as age increases the humour reception score decreases. It is assumed that there is a general negative correlation between age and English, meaning that younger participants are generally more proficient English speakers than older people. I therefore predict that there is a correlation between the variables *Age* and *Level of English* in both groups. A Pearson's correlation was run for Group Alt and Group Ex in order to establish this, with the following results:

In both groups there exists a negative correlation between the two variables *Age* and *Level of English* – Group Alt: $p=0.006$; Group Ex: $p=0.001$. This means that as age increases, level of English decreases, which is consistent with research discussed in section 5.2, according to which English knowledge is on average higher in younger people. Although age is distributed evenly across groups, Group Ex shows a higher average level of English, which must be attributed to a chance occurrence related to the relatively small dataset.

After the first stage of data analysis it also seems necessary to test the data for group effects under circumstances where one extraneous variable is controlled. This is to ensure that any differences between groups are not related to the age, gender, or level of English of the participants. More specifically, since it was shown that Group Ex had a statistically significant higher level of English than Group Alt, it needs to be established whether the group effect in relation to *Humour Reception* and *Subtitle Reception* are due to the alternative subtitles or merely due to the different levels of English in both groups. In order to address this question, a two-way ANOVA was used. This statistical test analyses the effect of more than one independent variable (or

“factor”) on an outcome variable, by adjusting the data in such a way that one factor is controlled. It is therefore used to show how different variables interact with each other. Consequently, the next step will be to use a two-way ANOVA in order to test the following further hypotheses:

1. When the data is adjusted for *Age*, there is still a significant group effect for *Humour Reception*.
2. When the data is adjusted for *Gender*, there is still a significant group effect for *Humour Reception*.
3. When the data is adjusted for *Level of English*, there is still a significant group effect for *Humour Reception*.
4. When adjusted for *Age*, there is a significant group effect for *Subtitle Reception*.
5. When adjusted for *Gender*, there is a significant group effect for *Subtitle Reception*.
6. When adjusted for *Level of English*, there is a significant group effect for *Subtitle Reception*.

Finally, it seems necessary to investigate whether the difference between groups in terms of subtitle reception is affected by the variable *Humour Reception* since both these variables were significant only in one group, Group Alt . Thus, it is necessary to establish whether there is an interaction between the two factors – whether the evaluation of subtitles as a transfer method is affected by how funny the viewer finds the film. The question must be investigated whether the group effect still holds if the data is adjusted for this variable. The hypothesis is:

7. When adjusted for *Humour Reception*, there is a significant group effect for *Subtitle Reception*.

6.3.1 Comparing for more than one variable between groups

Humour Reception

The question to be investigated in this section is whether any extraneous variables were responsible for the difference in humour reception between the groups.

Therefore, the data was tested to see whether the variable *Group* was still significant if the data is adjusted for the extraneous variables *Age* and *Level of English*. Firstly, a two-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that if adjusted for *Age*, the variable *Group* is still significant. The result ($p=0.003$) shows that in a scenario where age is even in all groups, there would still be a significant difference in humour reception ($p=0.003$). Similarly, a two-way ANOVA explores whether *Group* is still significant if the data is adjusted for the variable *Gender*. The result again shows that when the data was controlled for *Gender*, the variable *Group* is still significant ($p=0.01$). Thirdly, the same test was conducted with the variable *Level of English* as a covariate. The results from this two-way ANOVA show that when adjusted for English, *Group* is still significant ($p=0.001$). This means that if the variable *Level of English* is disregarded, the difference in humour reception between Group Alt and Group Ex is still statistically significant.

Subtitle Reception

In this section, the data will be tested for group effects for the variable *Subtitle Reception* in a situation where one extraneous variable is adjusted, using a two-way ANOVA. First, the test was run with a dataset which was adjusted for *Age*. The ANOVA result shows that the hypothesis is retained: there is still a significant group effect ($p=0.003$), when the data is adjusted for *Age*. Secondly, the same was done with the variable *Gender*. Again, the group effect holds when the data is controlled for the variable *Gender* ($p=0.002$). Thirdly, the same procedure was run for the extraneous variable *Level of English*. Here, the ANOVA shows that when adjusted for the variable *Level of English*, the variable *Group* is NOT significant ($p=0.127$). This means that if an equal level of English was assumed for all participants across groups, there would **not**

be a significant difference between Alt and Ex as far as subtitle reception is concerned. Therefore, due to the significant relationship between *Level of English* and *Subtitle Reception*, if the extraneous variable *Level of English* is ruled out, the different reaction to the subtitles is no longer statistically significant. Therefore, the significant difference between Subtitle Reception and Group is a consequence of there being a significant difference in the Level of English between the different groups and, thus, if we rule out this extraneous variable (the level of English) then the different reaction to the subtitles in the two different groups is no longer statistically significant.

Finally, a two-way ANOVA tested the significance of group effects for *Subtitle Reception* when the data was adjusted for *Humour Reception*. When adjusted for *Humour Reception*, *Group* is still significant ($p=0.000$). This means that the response to the subtitling question was unaffected by how funny participants found the film.

Summary of results

The data analysis showed that the skopos-oriented translation, shown to Group Alt, was received significantly better than the existing version which prioritised formal equivalence. This is the case regardless of the viewer's age, gender, or level of English knowledge. Consequently, the appeal of the translation which aimed to maintain the multi-layered nature of the linguistic humour in the film is broader. Older viewers (including people over the age of 65) were able to appreciate the film to an equal extent as younger members of the audience. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that the official German translation of the feature was broadcast on a children's channel and marketed as appealing to a young audience only. At the same time, source text comprehension was not required for the enjoyment of the humour in this group (Group Alt). Participants who relied on the subtitles found the film no less humorous than those viewers whose English was good enough so they could follow the original text. Also, there was no significant difference between this group and the control group as far as humour reception is concerned. This means that humour

reception was uninfluenced by source language comprehension in this group, but also and especially that the reception of the subtitled version did not differ significantly from the reception of the original film by a native English audience.

On the other hand, when the translation approach was one of formal equivalence, as in Group Ex, the reception was significantly more negative. Furthermore, there was also a positive correlation between humour reception and level of English in that group, meaning that those viewers who were more proficient at English enjoyed it more than those who had only a basic or poor understanding of the original dialogue. It follows from this result that the appreciation of the linguistic humour required the ability to understand the English text. Also, the results from the statistics suggested that this version of the film was considered funnier by younger members of the audience than by older viewers (the variables *Humour Reception* and *Age* are negatively correlated in Group Ex), suggesting that the more sophisticated, adult-oriented humour is not transferred as well into German as this was the case in the alternative version. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the humour reception in this group and the control group of English speakers.

A further question to which this study was seeking an answer was one of subtitle acceptance. The results from the experiment provide evidence to support the view that an audience's acceptance of interlingual subtitles as a practical method is directly linked to a person's ability to understand the original dialogue. The acceptance was greater (fewer participants felt disturbed by the subtitles), and the reception significantly more positive in the group where the translation approach was one which prioritised the transfer of humour over the transfer of information; however, when the data was adjusted for *Level of English*, the analysis showed that this difference in subtitle reception was in fact due to the difference in English knowledge between the groups.

6.3 Qualitative comments

Participants had the opportunity to give comments in addition to their multiple choice answers for a number of questions. All comments given in all the groups will be discussed in the following section.

Recommendation

Control Group

The question which rounds up the questionnaire and sends people on their way consists of a simple yes-or-no choice regarding whether or not the viewer would recommend the film to other people, to which participants in the English-speaking group unanimously answered “yes”. Viewers were also given the opportunity to give extra information along with the question. A number of them took the opportunity to express their general appreciation for the Wallace and Gromit films:

- *Already have previous films on video.*
- *It's great! I think I've seen all the Wallace and Gromit films.*

One comment referred to the qualities of the test film in the viewer's mind:

- *Short and entertaining*

The most relevant comments from the perspective of this research are those which refer to the multi-layered appeal of the feature:

- *This is the perfect film for anyone wanting a light comedy that can be enjoyed on many levels by lots of people.*
- *A great example of an apparently simple form of film that provides a sophisticated humour allied to great skill, writing, performance and production*
- *I really like the 'home-made' feel of the animation and the countless puns. It works on a lot of levels so appeals to a wide age range*
- *Can be enjoyed by all, but I think more adults because the double entendres and puns were better than plot*
- *I enjoyed it – I think the humour can be enjoyed by adults and children. It is mostly visual humour, especially the expressions in Gromit's eyes.*

- *I think the film aims for people of many different ages, with jokes or tricks that are designed to entertain younger kids (the crocodile, throwing the bread, showing Wallace's bum, and references that only adults will get (such as the names on the records, some of the puns, and the use of stereotypical romance scenes). As such it would appeal to a lot of different people. That said if you don't appreciate that style of humour, such as puns, then you probably would not like the film.*

These comments show that at least a portion of the English-speaking test audience recognised and acknowledged the fact that there is more than one layer of comprehensibility inherent in the film, and that this adds to its appeal to a wide range of viewers. The first comments also underline once more that the film series enjoys great popularity and publicity in the UK. This is compliant with official statistics, as the feature was highly successful as a television production.

Group Alt

For the German-speaking groups, I will give a translation of the comments, while the original German wording can be found in the footnotes. The qualitative comments in Group Alt are used to further specify their answer to the recommendation question. In the one case that this answer was *No* (all other participants in this group answered *Yes*) the commenter gave the explanation *"I don't think you can recommend this film generically. You need to know the people you are recommending it to, as it probably won't be to everyone's taste"*.²⁵ This indicates that the response might not reflect a personal dislike of the film as such but merely a reluctance to give a generic recommendation. Other qualitative comments also specify the viewer's motivation for giving a positive answer (*"yes, but only to people who speak sufficient English"/ "because it's funny and you can always laugh"*²⁶), or refer to the particular occasion for

²⁵ „Pauschal kann man den Film denke ich nicht weiterempfehlen. Man muss die Menschen kennen um ihn zu empfehlen. Trifft sicher nicht jeden Geschmack.“

²⁶ „Ja, allerdings nur den Menschen, die ausreichend Englisch sprechen“/ „weil er witzig ist und weil man immer lachen kann“

which the film is deemed suitable (*“for entertainment purposes at small dos. Also to lighten up the atmosphere among groups”*²⁷). All in all the almost unanimously positive response from Group Alt supports the results from the quantitative analysis, which showed a significantly more positive response from this group compared to Group Ex.

Group Ex

Comments given to explain further a participant's decision to recommend (25 viewers) or not to recommend the film (5 viewers) almost exclusively cite one reason for not recommending the film to other people:

- *for the animation technique alone; I would recommend the film more without the subtitles, even if this means people don't understand everything*²⁸
- *because the subtitles are annoying*²⁹
- *only to people who speak enough English so they can ignore the subtitles in parts*³⁰
- *not with these subtitles*³¹

This is especially relevant as the subtitles were identical in both groups apart from the humour translation strategies – yet participants in Group Ex cite these subtitle-specific reasons for not recommending the film. This supports the result that there is a connection between the translation strategy and the acceptance of subtitles, but also the fact that the film was more positively received in Group Alt.

²⁷ „Zur Unterhaltung bei kleineren Feiern. Auch zur Lockerung der Atmosphäre in einer Gruppe“

²⁸ „Allein schon wegen der Tricktechnik; ohne Untertitel würde ich den Film mehr empfehlen, auch wenn man nicht alles versteht“

²⁹ „Weil die Untertitel nerven“

³⁰ „Aber nur, wenn man genug Englisch kann um die Untertitel teilweise zu ignorieren“

³¹ „Nicht mit diesen Untertiteln“

Humorous Content

Group CG

A total of 9 participants gave additional comments referring to this question. Some of them are relatively general in nature and address the appeal or quality of the *Wallace and Gromit* adventures as such:

- *The Wallace and Gromit films are so cleverly done with imagination and skill linked together*
- *Really like Wallace and Gromit films*

Additionally, there are comments which refer to the specific instalment within the series and its relative humorous appeal:

- *I've seen the film a couple of times and always spot new things.*
- *It was the second time I'd watched it, it was funny but not as funny as I remember from the first time.*
- *Wonderful animation – particularly non-American Hollywood, with a definite feel for nostalgia. My favourite character is Gromit – it typifies the power of cartoons and the subtlety of non-verbal communication that help to transcend cultural and all boundaries.*

Furthermore, there are comments which give more detailed information regarding specific elements that make the film funny (or detract from its comedic potential).

Interestingly, wordplay is mentioned here:

- *I don't think it was as funny as some of the other Wallace and Gromit I have seen before. It's not a laugh out loud sort of humour for me. It's more of a chuckle and groan style, probably because of all the puns. I found the most entertaining part of the film was all the bits on the side, like posters on the wall or writing on the truck. That's where some of the best puns were I think.*
- *Overall plot not very funny but lots of good puns and little bits of attention to detail*

- *The use of slapstick, linguistic and other types of comedy creates a film that appeals on several levels.*

This last comment also mentions the much-discussed layers of appeal so common to animated films, of which linguistic humour is an integral part.

One of the comments in this category points out the visual-only wordplay which is so characteristic of this type of production:

- *I like the way old adverts are used in the plot but have changed the names.*

Group Alt

Qualitative comments which were given alongside the answer to this question give rather general feedback concerning the film as a whole, for example specifying why the viewers thought the film was funny in particular:

- *Some scenes were really great but others weren't³²*
- *Classic: love is blind. Thank God for Gromit the dog³³*
- *I liked that it is obviously possible to play with serious matters in a very humorous way³⁴*

Group Ex

As far as qualitative comments are concerned, the only two remarks given with this question were the following, both of which are generic evaluations:

- *[funny], but also quite cruel³⁵*
- *I thought the other Wallace and Gromit films were funnier³⁶*

³² „Manche Szenen waren echt toll aber andre wiederum nicht“

³³ „Klassisch: Liebe macht blind. Gott sei Dank war da Gromit der Hund.“

³⁴ „Fand toll, dass man mit ernstern Themen doch sehr humorvoll spielen kann.“

³⁵ „...aber auch ganz schön heftig...“

³⁶ „Die anderen Wallace and Gromit-Filme fand ich lustiger“

These additional comments do not provide any detailed information as to why viewers did or did not find the film to be amusing.

Subtitle Reception

Group Alt

The qualitative comments given with this question partly referred to the translation, or even to specific examples of the translation, such as the following:

- *Were necessary in parts, but the combination was partly difficult.*³⁷
- *Certain translations were dodgy, for example 'fruitcake' was translated wrongly or very liberally. The same applies to the translation of 'Marzipanschweinchen'.*³⁸

Interestingly, one commenter confirms the suspicion that a formally liberal translation could be taken to be "incorrect" by a viewer with insufficient English knowledge to grasp the figurative level of wordplay. However, as this is only one comment (with the other one pointing towards a similar reaction but being altogether more generic in nature), while at the same time the quantitative data shows a significantly more positive response, this opinion seems to be an exception.

Others gave more information regarding the importance of having subtitles as a guide to understanding this film:

- *I only took notice of the subtitles when I had difficulties understanding the English dialogue. Apart from this I did not really pay attention to them.*³⁹
- *[I didn't take notice of the subtitles] except book titles, which were shown too quickly to read them in English.*⁴⁰
- *Without subtitles, comprehension would have been much more difficult.*⁴¹

³⁷ „Waren teilweise notwendig, Kombination teilweise schwierig“

³⁸ „Gewisse Übersetzungen waren schief, z.B. „fruitcake“ wurde meiner Meinung nach schlichtweg falsch oder sehr frei übersetzt. Das selbe gilt für die Übersetzung von „Marzipanschweinchen“.

³⁹ „Die Untertitel habe ich nur dann beachtet, wenn ich Schwierigkeiten hatte den englischen Dialog zu verstehen. Sonst blieben sie eigentlich unbeachtet.“

⁴⁰ „...außer bei Titeln von Büchern, die zu kurz gezeigt wurden um sie auf Englisch zu lesen.“

Finally, there were two positive comments referring to the method with which this film was brought to their language community:

- *I don't usually like subtitles! But this one was good because it was slow and easy to read.*⁴²
- *I liked the fact that there were subtitles, as I would not have understood the film otherwise.*⁴³

The comments given in Group Alt suggest a generally positive response to subtitles as a transfer method (except in cases where viewers ignored them), and the overall quality of the translation. As the statistical analysis showed a difference in subtitle reception between the groups, with Group Alt showing a more positive response, the qualitative comments support the result gained from the quantitative data.

Group Ex

The qualitative comments which accompany this question specified further the kind of experience viewers had with this method of audiovisual translation. One participant remarked on the challenging intricacies of the source text (*"lots of untranslatable wordplay, such as 'cereal killer'" or "some wordplay cannot be translated into German, i.e. flower-flour"*), while others evaluated the translation and/or the method in a negative way:

- *[subtitles distracted me] but without them I wouldn't have grasped some of the bakery items*⁴⁴
- *Subtitles generally bother me. They distract me from the film.*⁴⁵
- *It was difficult to ignore them – I felt a few inappropriate translations were a bit inappropriate.*⁴⁶

⁴¹ „Ohne Untertitel wäre die Verständigung wesentlich schwerer gefallen“

⁴² „Ich mag Untertitel allgemein nicht! Aber an diesem war es gut, dass er langsam war und man gut mitlesen konnte.“

⁴³ „Ich fand gut dass es Untertitel gab, weil ich den Film sonst nicht verstanden hätte.“

⁴⁴ „...aber ohne hätte ich einige Backwaren nicht verstanden“

⁴⁵ „Untertitel stören mich grundsätzlich. Sie lenken mich vom Film ab.“

- *Really badly translated, sometimes even wrong*⁴⁷
- *Unfortunately I always read them even though I don't need to. Also, the subtitles often give away the punch line before its time.*⁴⁸
- *Necessary only for certain words or sentences. As one compares what one hears (and understands) with what one reads, it is noticeable when things are translated similar in essence, but not literally.*⁴⁹

None of the additional comments regarding subtitles gave a positive response in this group. Again, one commenter describes the problem of translations which are formally different from the source text. This is interesting, as this version focuses on formal equivalence and should therefore be expected to prevent this effect from occurring. Nevertheless, like in Group Alt, one participant mentions the problem, meaning that in this respect there is no difference between the responses from both groups. The higher number of negative comments on subtitles as such, as well as the quality of the translation, however, supports the result obtained from the quantitative data.

The qualitative comments support the findings from the quantitative analysis, as they suggest that the subtitles were the main reason why participants showed less appreciation for version Ex compared to version Alt. Also, they confirm the impression that the sophisticated linguistic humour in the piece was acknowledged and appreciated by English-speaking viewers, and that the audience is aware of the resulting wide appeal to a range of ages. It follows from this that in order to achieve equivalence of effect the translated version would ideally achieve the same in the target audience. As the statistical analysis showed, this was the case in Group Alt, where there was no difference in reception to the control group, but not in Group Ex.

⁴⁶ „Es fällt schwer sie auszublenden – einige Übersetzungen empfand ich als etwas unpassend“

⁴⁷ „Ganz schlecht übersetzt, z.T. sogar falsch“

⁴⁸ „Ich lese leider immer mit, obwohl es nicht nötig wäre, außerdem nehmen die Untertitel oft die Pointe vorweg“

⁴⁹ „Notwendig- nur für einzelne nicht verstandenen Wörter oder Sätze. Da man Gehörtes (und Verstandenes) immer mit dem Untertitel vergleicht, fällt es auf wenn Dinge sinngemäß, aber nicht wörtlich übersetzt sind.“

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion

The central issues investigated in this thesis were the intersemiotic dependency inherent in a filmic text type, in combination with the linguistic specificity of a particular stylistic device: the use of wordplay. Where the two come together, the options available to the translator are limited, while the expectations from film-makers and viewers are high. The question was asked whether the approach which is predominantly employed in Europe for the translation of wordplay is indeed received favourably by the audience. Also, it was explored whether source language comprehension amongst viewers would stand in the way of a successful transfer, should an alternative approach be pursued in the classic dilemma of form versus effect. Cultural and lingua-specific factors must be accommodated in order to ease the transfer of humorous elements into a target language and therefore evoke a positive reception by the target audience. Markets in the industry are international and linguistic barriers might too often be the reason why successful productions are not exported to other territories. Principally, the intention of the research project was to find out how a target audience would receive the result of a skopos-oriented translation compared to a rendering which focussed on formal equivalence. Would a translation based on equivalence of effect be perceived as 'wrong' by viewers who are able to comprehend (parts of) the original dialogue? In terms of the statistical evidence, the question remained as to whether there is a causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the study, i.e. whether reception is influenced by translation (variables *Group and Humour Reception*).

In order to attempt to find answers to these questions, an experimental study was conducted which was also intended to contribute to a more receptor-oriented approach in translation studies research. The animated short feature *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death* was chosen as a test film, primarily due to its length and density of wordplay. Animated films provide relevant and interesting material for research into AVT because of their often multi-layered structure which appeals to viewers of all ages and which frequently includes sophisticated linguistic

humour on the adult-oriented level of appeal and comprehensibility. The study was conducted with German participants who had varying levels of English knowledge, amongst them people with a degree in English, but also viewers with only a very basic understanding of the language. It is worth remembering at this point that the comprehension of wordplay requires a high proficiency level in a second language. The question was investigated whether this would have an influence on the way viewers receive the two translated versions of *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*.

The data analysis showed that the skopos-oriented translation was received significantly better than the existing version which prioritised formal equivalence, but, for the skopos-oriented translation only, there was no significant difference in reception to the English-speaking audience. This is the case regardless of the viewer's age, gender, or level of English knowledge. Consequently, the appeal of the translation which aimed to maintain the multi-layered nature of the linguistic humour in the film is broader. Older viewers (including people over the age of 65) were able to appreciate the film to an equal extent as younger members of the audience. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that the official German translation of the feature was broadcast on a children's channel and marketed as appealing to a young audience only. At the same time, source text comprehension was not required for the enjoyment of the humour in this group. Participants who relied on the subtitles found the film no less humorous than those viewers whose English was good enough so they could follow the original text.

When the translation approach was one of formal equivalence, on the other hand, the reception was significantly more negative than in both other groups. Furthermore, there was also a positive correlation between humour reception and level of English in that group, meaning that those viewers who were more proficient at English enjoyed it more than those who had only a basic or poor understanding of the original dialogue. It follows from this result that the appreciation of the linguistic humour required the ability to understand the English text. Also, this version of the film is funnier to

younger members of the audience than it is for older viewers, suggesting that the more sophisticated, adult-oriented humour is not transferred as well into German as this was the case in the alternative version.

Although this study involves the official, publicised translation of only one test film and could therefore be considered to be centred on a singular phenomenon, the approach which was seemingly pursued in the production of this translation is not an exceptional occurrence. Schröter (2005: 366) found in his analysis of dubbed and subtitled films across various European languages that the most common translation approach for language play in films is direct translation, i.e. the maintenance of formal equivalence. The test film and its official translation into German is therefore symptomatic in certain respects, which also means that the results from this study are important for other films as well, as the liberal approach which focussed on equivalence of effect received an overall more positive reaction from the audience.

One of the results which is particularly interesting is the varying degree of proficiency of German-speaking viewers with regards to the English language. This reflects the notion that a certain part of the population is exposed to English in spoken or written form on a regular basis. This is a significant development which should be noted by the AVT industry – when English is the source and German the target language, one can rely on an ever-increasing pre-exposure to the linguistic and cultural intricacies of the source language amongst the target audience. A strengthening of subtitling as a mode of language transfer in the German-speaking countries would arguably reinforce this effect.

It is also highly relevant in the context of considerations regarding AVT in general, that German-speaking viewers were relatively undisturbed by the subtitles as a method of language transfer. This finding proved to be uninfluenced by the extent to which they enjoyed the film otherwise and confirms the hypothesis that the classification of the German language community as a “dubbing” one, with an added concern that audiences in this region are unaccustomed to subtitles and therefore reject them, does not hold in the current situation revealed by this research.

The main finding, however, to come forth from this project is the difference in audience reception depending on the approach employed by the translator. If we concur that for a translation to be successful the reaction from its receptor should be as similar as possible as that from the original receptor, this means that the approach used for the translation of wordplay in Group Ex is less successful than the translation approach used in Group Alt. Any feedback effect from the source text dialogue, potentially caused by the relative divergence between SL and TL in humour translation, was not strong enough to affect viewers in their enjoyment of the film. The results from both the quantitative analysis and the qualitative comments show that the adult-oriented humour and appeal were acknowledged and appreciated more if the translation approach was one of creative freedom and a focus on humour transfer.

The other highly relevant difference between the reception in both audiences is that the more positive reaction occurred regardless of English knowledge, whilst the formally equivalent translation resulted in a reception which was affected by source language comprehension. This suggests that an approach which prioritises equivalence of effect will receive a better reaction from a diverse audience, of which some parts will be highly proficient English speakers, while others concentrate mainly on the German subtitles. Both will appreciate the linguistic humour in a film, meaning that there is no interference from SL comprehension and therefore no valid reason for foregoing this positive reaction by choosing a more conservative approach for the translation of humour.

Díaz Cintas (2005: 12) argues that, in the same way that there are highly different viewers and publications, there should be different approaches to subtitling. Based on the findings from this research, it seems appropriate that the AVT industry should adopt more flexible translation strategies, in conjunction with a more genre-specific assignment of translation work. Increased specialisation amongst audiovisual translators could mean that time pressure and lack of humorous talent and affinity are less likely to prevent a successful linguistic transfer of humour. If a commissioner decides to invest the time and financial effort in making this happen, while at the same

time allowing those specialised translators the time and artistic freedom to produce such solutions, this study suggests that the resultant appeal and range of target market will increase in turn.

The results are relevant for other scenarios and could for example be applied to other language communities where subtitling is traditionally more widespread, such as the Scandinavian countries. Equally, the findings can apply to more exclusively adult-oriented films as opposed to family-aimed animated features. An animated film was chosen for its great density in terms of wordplay; however, other films within the comedy genre which rely on linguistic humour to appeal to their audience can also benefit from a translation approach which has been received favourably by test audiences. Also, there is an extensive and increasingly global market for television comedy series, such as sitcoms, which are produced in English-speaking countries, and whose linguistic and cultural transfer is potentially problematic and could be facilitated by a greater awareness and more developed specialism on the translator's part. It remains evident that there is a need for further experimental, receptor-oriented research in the field of audiovisual translation. In view of the constant change and rapid development of both the media landscape and patterns of consumption amongst its users, it is crucial for AVT research to not be removed from the requirements and preferences of its audiences.

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Appendices

A. Translation Overview

Wordplay depending on the visual sign system

Original	Existing translation	Alternative translation
Well done, lad. Very well done.	Sieht knusprig aus. Sehr knusprig sogar...	<i>Gut gemacht, Junge. Und gut getoastet.</i>
We're bang on...target.	...damit haben wir unser...Ziel erreicht.	<i>Darauf sollten wir ab...zielen.</i>
Here, Gromit. Take the wheel!	Hier, Gromit! Übernimm' du das Steuer	<i>Hier, Gromit! Nimm' du das Steuer!</i>
Oh! Err..Crumbs.	Oh! Err...Krümel.	<i>Oh! Äh...Krümelchen..</i>
We'll get on like a house on fire!	Unsere Herzen werden füreinander entflammen!	<i>Ich bin schon Feuer und Flamme!</i>
You're so brave, Wallace. My minced pie.	Du bist ja so mutig, Wallace. Mein Hackfleischpastetchen.	<i>Du bist ja so mutig, Wallace. Mein gestürzter Apfelkuchen.</i>
Are you alright, my flower? Flour, get it?	Ist alles in Ordnung, mein Blümehlnchen? Mein Mehlchen..siehst du, alles voller Mehl.	<i>Oh, da bist du wohl direkt in meine Mehlbox gefallen, hihi. Siehst du, „Mehlbox“...</i>
You can't be everybody's cup of tea, can you?	Man kann nicht mit jedem gut Kirschen essen, oder?	<i>Naja, am besten erstmal abwarten und Tee trinken.</i>
Strike a light!	Na das ist doch...Geh schon endlich an!	<i>Na das ist doch...Der Funke will nicht überspringen!</i>
This has put a spanner in the works!	Heißt das, du willst mir nen Strich durch die Rechnung machen?	<i>Da will wohl einer Sand ins Getriebe streuen!</i>
Bomb voyage, Wallace.	Bomb voyage, Wallace!	<i>Bomb voyage, Wallace!</i>
Your buns are as good as toasted!	Du altes Brötchen wirst gleich richtig getoastet!	<i>Gleich kriegst du Feuer unterm Hintern!</i>

Verbal wordplay

Original	Translation	Alternative
Piella Bakewell	Piella Backleicht	Pralina Backfisch
I'm in bread myself.	Ich bin auch im Brotgeschäft.	Ich mache auch in Backwaren.
Are you still ballooning,	Kann man noch häufiger	Gehen sie noch häufig in

Miss Bakewell?	ihren Ballon bewundern, Fräulein?	die Luft, Fräulein?
Back to the grind, as it were.	Dann zurück auf den Boden der Tatsachen	no alternative needed
This isn't going to put bread on the table.	Man soll kein Brot übers Knie brechen.	Tja, der Mensch lebt eben nicht vom Brot allein...
Careful with the sausage, you greedy thing! – Don't mind if I do! – You've got quite an appetite!	Möchtest du noch ein Würstchen, mein Schleckermäulchen - Gerne, wenn's nichts ausmacht. - Und noch ein Sößchen dazu, mh?	Immer langsam mit dem Würstchen, du frecher Kerl! -Nun gib's mir schon! – Du bist ja heute besonders hungrig!
Our final bakery is nicely buttered up.	Dann wird unser letzter Bäcker hopsgehen.	Da haben wir unserm letzten Bäcker richtig was aufs Brot geschmiert.
What a complete fruitcake!	Du total verbrannter Napfkuchen!	Du angebrannter Windbeutel!
I don't know what came over me! Apart from the flour.	Ich weiß nicht, was über mich gekommen ist, abgesehen vom Mehl natürlich.	No alternative needed
Getting back together again, you gooseberry fool!	Ja, lass uns feiern, dass wir wieder zusammen sind, mein Stachelbeertörtchen	Lass uns feiern, dass wir wieder zusammen sind, du Quarktasche!
It'll go off with a bang!	Das wird ein Bombenerfolg!	No alternative needed
My baker's dozen!	Bäcker nummer dreizehn!	no alternative possible
We've both been through the mill this week.	Wir sind diese Woche ganz schön durch die Mühle gedreht worden, was?	No alternative needed

Wordplay depending only on visuals

Original	Possible Translation
A Matter of Loaf and Death	Auf Leben und Brot
Bake-o-Lite	Backleicht
Flour to the People!	Alle Macht dem Vollkorn!
Dough to Door Delivery	Für Laib und Seele
DOH NUTS	BR-OT-123
Cheesy Jet	Lusthansa
12a Pastry Rise	Bäcker-Weg 12a
B.A. Lert	Miss T. Rauen
Sponsored by Superb Snaps	Präsentiert von Schnappi

B. Information Sheets

English Information Sheet

Information

Firstly, thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my project, which is part of my PhD research at the University of Sheffield. This study investigates the reception of subtitled English-language films by German-speaking audiences. Your participation as an English speaker is very important as it will let me compare the reactions of the two different groups of viewers, with the German-speaking participants watching a subtitled version of the film.

So what exactly is going to happen? I will screen the 30-minute long animated film *Wallace and Gromit in A Matter of Loaf and Death*. This film was given a Parental Guidance rating in the UK, which means that it is suitable for children from the age of 6. All you have to do is watch this film, just like you would for your own entertainment.

Afterwards, I will give you a short questionnaire to complete. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions you might have. Any information you give in the questionnaire will be anonymous and will be treated confidentially. You won't be asked for any contact details or personal information other than your age and gender.

If you change your mind, you can of course leave the study at any point in the proceedings. By handing in the completed questionnaire, you consent to the use of your answers for research purposes.

Thank you!

German Information Sheet

Informationen zur Studie

Zunächst einmal vielen Dank für Ihre Mitarbeit an meinem Forschungsprojekt, das ich im Rahmen meiner Promotion an der Universität Sheffield durchführe. In dieser Studie geht es darum, wie deutschsprachige Zuschauer englische Filme wahrnehmen. Deshalb werde ich ihnen den britischen Kurzfilm *Wallace und Gromit – a Matter of Loaf and Death* zeigen, der in Deutschland *Wallace und Gromit - Auf Leben und Brot* heißt und ab 6 Jahren freigegeben ist. Schauen sie sich den Film einfach ganz normal an, wie sie es in ihrer Freizeit tun würden.

Danach werden sie einen Fragebogen zum Ausfüllen erhalten. Sie können jederzeit Fragen stellen, wenn sie etwas nicht verstanden haben.

Selbstverständlich werden alle ihre Angaben anonym und vertraulich behandelt, und sie werden nicht nach Kontaktdaten oder persönlichen Informationen gefragt.

Natürlich können sie die Teilnahme an der Studie jederzeit abbrechen, sollten sie ihre Meinung ändern. Mit der Abgabe des Fragebogens erklären sie sich damit einverstanden, dass die Angaben aus dem Fragebogen zu Forschungszwecken verwendet werden dürfen.

Vielen Dank!

C. Questionnaires

English Questionnaire

Part A – General Information

1. I am...

female.

male.

2. I am in the following age group:

0-11

12-19

20-31

32-49

49-64

65 or older

Part B – Questions regarding the Film

1. I had seen this film before.

Yes

No

2. I would assign this film to the following category:

Children's Film

Comedy

Detective Story/Murder Mystery

Thriller

Other: _____

3. In my opinion, the film was made for the following age group (more than one answer possible):

- 0-6 years
- 6-12 years
- 12-18 years
- 18 years and older
- No particular age range

4. For me, the appeal of this film is its... (more than one answer possible)

- ...animation technique.
- ...story/plot.
- ...humour.
- ...dialogue.
- ...characters.
- ...other: _____

5. I thought the film was...(more than one answer possible)

- ...very funny – I laughed several times
- ...quite funny – I couldn't help but chuckle
- ...maybe funny for others, but it didn't hit my sense of humour.
- ...quite entertaining, but not particularly funny.
- ...not funny at all.

Comments: _____

6. I would recommend this film to others.

Yes

No

Comments: _____

German Questionnaire

Teil A – Allgemeine Angaben

1. Ich bin...

weiblich.

männlich.

2. Ich gehöre zu folgender Altersgruppe:

0-11

12-19

20-31

32-49

50-64

65 oder älter

3. Während meiner Schulausbildung...

Ich studiere oder habe einen Studienabschluss in
Englisch/Anglistik/Amerikanistik/Übersetzen/Dolmetschen.

...hatte ich 8-10 Jahre lang Englischunterricht.

...hatte ich 5-7 Jahre lang Englischunterricht.

- ...hatte ich bis zu fünf Jahre lang Englischunterricht.
- Ich hatte nie formellen Englischunterricht.
- Ich habe seit meinem Schulabschluss einen oder mehrere Sprachkurse in Englisch belegt.

4. Wie oft kommunizieren Sie aktiv, schriftlich oder mündlich (z.B. telefonisch, per Email, auf Facebook etc.), in englischer Sprache?

- täglich
- mehrmals in der Woche
- mehrmals im Monat
- mehrmals im Jahr
- so gut wie nie
- nie

5. Wie oft machen Sie passiv von ihren Englischkenntnissen Gebrauch (z.B. beim Lesen von Büchern oder Anschauen von Filmen)?

- täglich
- mehrmals in der Woche
- mehrmals im Monat
- mehrmals im Jahr
- so gut wie nie
- nie

6. Wieviel Zeit haben Sie in einem englischsprachigen Land oder Umfeld verbracht?

- ein Jahr oder mehr am Stück
- alles in allem bis zu einem Jahr
- alles in allem bis zu sechs Monaten
- alles in allem mehrere Wochen
- einige Tage

keine

7. Wie schätzen Sie ihre Englischkenntnisse selbst ein?

- hervorragend
- sehr gut
- gut
- grundlegend
- eher schlecht
- nicht vorhanden

Teil B – Aussagen zum gezeigten Film (Bitte kreuzen sie zutreffendes an.)
--

1. Ich hatte den Film zuvor schon einmal gesehen.

- Ja
- Nein

2. Ich würde den Film folgender Kategorie zuordnen:

- Kinderfilm
- Komödie
- Krimi
- Thriller
- sonstige: _____

3. Der Film spricht meiner Meinung nach folgende Altersgruppe an

(Mehrfachantwort möglich):

- 0-6 Jahre
- 6-12 Jahre
- 12-18 Jahre
- ab 18 Jahre

keine bestimmte Alterszielgruppe

4. Besonders reizvoll an diesem Film finde ich... (Mehrfachantwort möglich)

die Tricktechnik

die Handlung

den Humor

die Dialoge

die Charaktere

sonstiges: _____

5. Die Untertitel bei diesem Film...

haben mich gestört.

habe ich nicht bewusst wahrgenommen.

waren notwendig, aber die Übersetzung war nicht gelungen.

fand ich sehr gelungen, auch die Übersetzung.

Anmerkungen: _____

6. Meiner Meinung nach war der Film...

sehr lustig – ich musste einige Male lachen.

ganz witzig – ich konnte mir das Schmunzeln nicht verkneifen.

vielleicht lustig für andere – meinen Humor hat er nicht getroffen.

ganz unterhaltsam, aber nicht besonders lustig.

überhaupt nicht lustig.

Anmerkungen: _____

7. Ich würde den Film in dieser Version weiterempfehlen.

Ja

Nein

Anmerkungen: _____

C. Tables

Descriptives

Age

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
					Group Alt	distracting			1
	not noticed	3	2.33	.577	.333	.90	3.77	2	3
	necessary but unsuccessful translation	4	3.00	1.414	.707	.75	5.25	1	4
	successful translation	21	2.76	.944	.206	2.33	3.19	1	4
	Total	29	2.72	.960	.178	2.36	3.09	1	4
Group Ex	distracting	5	2.60	.894	.400	1.49	3.71	2	4
	not noticed	5	2.20	.447	.200	1.64	2.76	2	3
	necessary but unsuccessful translation	11	2.55	.934	.282	1.92	3.17	1	4
	successful translation	8	3.13	1.356	.479	1.99	4.26	2	5
	Total	29	2.66	1.010	.188	2.27	3.04	1	5

Table 3 Age and Subtitle Reception - Descriptives

Descriptives

English Scores

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
					Group Alt	distracting			1
	not noticed	3	14.33	6.110	3.528	-.84	29.51	9	21

	necessary but unsuccessful translation	4	11.00	4.690	2.345	3.54	18.46	4	14
	successful translation	21	8.71	3.408	.744	7.16	10.27	3	15
	Total	29	10.10	4.769	.885	8.29	11.92	3	23
Group Ex	distracting	5	17.60	4.450	1.990	12.07	23.13	12	23
	not noticed	5	18.60	2.510	1.122	15.48	21.72	16	21
	necessary but unsuccessful translation	11	13.73	3.690	1.113	11.25	16.21	6	21
	successful translation	8	8.88	3.643	1.288	5.83	11.92	5	14
	Total	29	13.90	5.052	.938	11.97	15.82	5	23

Table 4 Level of English and Subtitle Reception - Descriptives