

# **Czech Subtitles of an American Sitcom: A Translation Analysis**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá překladem titulků audiovizuálních programů, konkrétně sitcomu Taková moderní rodinka. Práce se zaměřuje na tři aspekty, které mohou být problematické kvůli své kulturní specifičnosti, a těmi jsou idiomy, slovní hříčky a kulturní reference. Všechny z nich mohou být matoucí a nepochopené. Cílem této práce je popsat tyto kulturně specifické jevy a definovat metody jejich překladu, aby se shodovaly s tím, co je cílové kultuře známé.

Teoretická část této práce popisuje překlad, jeho jednotlivé typy a metody pro vyřešení neekvivalentnosti. Práce také rozebírá titulky, jejich úskalí a požadavky na ně. Analytická část se skládá z popisu analyzovaného sitcomu a komentovaných příkladů slovních hříček, idiomů, kulturních referencí a slangových výrazů.

Klíčová slova: audiovizuální překlad, titulky, sitcom, idiomy, slovní hříčky, kulturní reference, humor

## **ABSTRACT**

This Bachelor Thesis deals with translating subtitles of audiovisual programmes, specifically the sitcom Modern Family. It focuses on three aspects that tend to cause problems in translation due to their cultural specificity, and those are idioms, puns and cultural references. All of them can be confusing and might not be understood. The aim of this thesis is to describe those culturally specific areas and define the methods for their translation to fit the knowledge of the target audience.

The theoretical part of this paper describes translation, its different types and methods to deal with non-equivalence. It also discusses subtitling and its challenges and requirements. The analytical part consists of a description of the sitcom and commented examples to puns, idioms, cultural references and slang expressions.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, subtitles, sitcom, idioms, puns, cultural references, humour

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## INTRODUCTION

Translation of foreign audiovisual work for the purposes of Czech subtitling has moved over the years from being a marginal activity into a mainstream business. Even though people in the Czech Republic are still more inclined towards dubbing which can be visible mainly on the TV, the subtitles in the movie theatres and on media service platforms like Netflix are often preferred since people like to hear real voices of the actors and sometimes find it even beneficial when learning the foreign language.

Such situation asks for a quality translation that sounds like the original but at the same time respects the target culture and thus does not leave the target audience clueless about what is happening on the screen. Cultural specificity creates a dilemma; it is not always clear what is understandable and what stays hidden to the target audience when not adapted. And that is a job for translators to decide, and when necessary, adjust the text to the knowledge of the target audience.

The theoretical part of this Bachelor Thesis covers more general topics such as what translation is and what is required for being a successful translator. It takes a closer look into the techniques and strategies used when translating, which can help get the best results possible. Types of the translation are mentioned as well.

The following chapter discusses audiovisual translation. The main emphasis is placed on subtitling, its main requirements and different types of subtitles. A short comparison of subtitling and dubbing is included as well. The thesis takes a closer look into humour and its specificity because the focus of this thesis is an analysis of a humorous type of a TV programme – a sitcom. Humour is closely connected to culture and therefore plays a major part in comprehension of translated humorous texts by other cultures.

The analysis is performed on the sitcom *Modern Family*. The first chapter introduces the show and the characters. This Bachelor Thesis deals with tricky areas of translation, and therefore the analysis is devoted mainly to culturally specific aspects, namely idioms, puns and cultural references. All of them are an integral part of sitcoms since they are a source of humour. Idioms, puns and cultural references are described, and examples from the sitcom are demonstrated and commented on to show what translational techniques are used in reality.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 TRANSLATION AS A CONCEPT AND A PROFESSION

As Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová (2010, 14) claim, “translator is a specific user of a text that crosses language and cultural boundaries”. The translator’s main job is to decode the meaning of the source text’s units and structures and transfer the overall meaning to the target text (Baker 2018, 10).

Depending on the type of translation, a translator can be a professional who studied this field or a person who is a specialist or is just interested in the topic translated. However, whoever is in the role of a translator needs to possess specific skills and knowledge to be successful with their translations (Fišer 2009, 28–30). “Translator needs to know the relations of speakers and language means in both the source language and the target language, manage their layering, distribution and system” (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 14). Fisher believes that translators are required to possess three types of competence: language competence, analytical-interpretative competence and text-forming competence. Moreover, since translation is a creative activity, creativity is a great skill to have, but the amount of it needed depends on the situation, and it has to serve the function of the translation (Fišer 2009, 28–30).

### 1.1 What is translation and how to do a quality translation

Translation is a process of transferring words from the source language to the target language. Fišer (2009, 148) defines it as “creating functionally adequate target text with connection to the source text”, thanks to which it is possible to transfer a communication message that would not be understood otherwise by the recipient because of cultural and linguistic barriers.

As Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová (2010, 7) suggest, in the past, texts were translated more with regard to aesthetics. However, nowadays, its purpose shifted more to a pragmatical approach. “Pragmatics can be understood as the role of speakers and addressees in communication, the relation between language means and speakers” (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 11). It is important to focus not only on what is said but also on how it is said and what was the intention.

When translating, we want to overcome intercultural barriers so the target audience understands the meaning of the translated text even with reference to a particular cultural aspect. According to Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová (2010, 14–15), the translated text should look more like an original text than a translation. Quality translation is when the translated text has the same meaning as the source text, or the meaning is as similar to the

source text as possible when the text sounds utterly natural in the target language, and when the text provokes the same reaction as in the source language (it keeps the same dynamics). As is mentioned by Fišer (2009, 19), to reach the quality translation, the translator has to know what the communication function of the translated text will be before the translation process begins.

## 1.2 Translational techniques

There are many strategies that can be used when translating. Some of the translation methods that translators use to deal with the lack of direct equivalents in the target language are, for example:

- Modulation – which means using an expression or phrase that is different in the source and the target language, but it carries the same idea. Example: “elbow of the pipe: koleno potrubí” (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 19).
- Calque – (sometimes also called loan translation) is a literal translation of a word or phrase. Example: “potflower: hrnková květina” (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 19).
- Adaptation – which means replacing the original word or phrase with something that best suits the target audience’s situation concerning cultural background (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 19).
- Transposition – is when grammatical changes are necessary to make while translating because of differences in the language system (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 19).
- Borrowing – is adopting a word from the source language (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 20). Examples: pizza, hacker, tsunami.
- Amplification – is keeping the same meaning but extending the term, phrase or sentence by using more words to explain it to the target audience (Pym 2014, 14). Example: English – Thanksgiving Day, Czech – Den díkuvzdání, svátek slavící se v USA.
- Explicitation – is when the source text is expressed in a more specific, explicit way in the target language (Pym 2014, 14).
- Implication – is when the target text is expressed in a less explicit way than the source text (Pym 2014, 14).
- Reduction - This is a technique that uses less language means in the target language while keeping the meaning (Pym 2014, 14).
- Generalisation – means replacing a specific term from the source text with a more general one in the target text (Pym 2014, 14).

- Domestication – When a concept does not exist in the target language, we use domestication to minimise the foreignness and make it more culturally acceptable and understandable and make it sound local (Munday 2008, 144–145).
- Foreignisation – Using foreign expression to make the target audience intentionally know it is a translated text and give them “a taste” of that culture (Munday 2008, 144–145).
- Equivalence – Used for “cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means” (Munday 2008, 58).
- Omission – It can be sometimes used in translations as well, but not very often because it can be considered a mistake.
- Localisation – is when the translation is linguistically and culturally adapted specifically to the target culture. The adaptation applies to both linguistic and cultural point of view (Munday 2008, 191). Part of this can be considered, for example, degrees (Fahrenheit and Celsius) or measurement system of length, weight and others.

### **1.3 Dealing with non-equivalence in cultural-specific context**

Non-equivalence can occur in many forms, for example, when we have a cultural-specific concept. Such non-equivalence is connected with a term, expression or concept that the target audience is not familiar with (Baker 2018, 19). Furthermore, since there is no equivalent for it in the target language, the translator has several choices how to deal with that: use more general or less expressive word, substitute the term with an expression of the target language that evokes the same emotions but might have different meaning, paraphrasing using related or unrelated words, using a loan word with an explanation and in some cases, we can omit the translation of the expression (Baker 2018, 24–45).

### **1.4 Types of translation**

According to Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová, in general, there are two main types of translation. The first is a meaning-based translation where the main point is to get the same effect on the reader of the target text as it had on the reader of the source text. A form-based translation is more about the form of the message that the text carries and the content (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 16).

When we focus on the types of translation more into detail, we can divide it into four different approaches, out of which two are form-based, and the other two are meaning-based (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 16).

- Interlineal translation – Interlinear translation is an extreme example of a literal translation. It keeps only linguistic information from the source text. However, the grammatical structure can be adequate to the source text when the two languages (the source and the target language) are close.

- Literal translation – Grammatical structures in the literal translation are correct, but the final translation may sound foreign due to using lexical units that are not common for the target language.

- Free translation – Free translation is usually taken as a fallacy except for interpreting. In this type of translating, misrepresentation usually occurs. Such translation can be missing information and loses aesthetical quality.

- Communicative translation/idiomatic translation – Communicative translation is connected with the pragmatic aspect; it focuses mainly on the meaning value of the text. This translation takes into account the context in which the translated unit is.

The ideal translation, according to Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová, is the idiomatic translation. However, in real life, translated texts are usually a combination of all four types. What translation should always be is precise, clear and natural sounding.

(Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 16–17)

## 2 AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Audiovisual programmes, as its name suggests, consists of two elements, sound and image, that are in synchrony. There are three main types of language transfer solutions in audiovisual programmes: subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over. Audiovisual translation is a very specific kind of translation, and therefore it is impossible to place it to one of the three types of texts – informative, expressive, operative – as it is a combination of all. The fourth type created for this reason and where it belongs is called audio-media text type (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 8–10).

Audiovisual translators have to know how to create and what to expect from the media texts and keep their eyes open for indicators conveying cultural information (Orero 2004, 131–132). Words and the visual side of the film or TV shows work together as a whole. Words are not the only means that convey information; *mise-en-scène* is also an important element in communication with the audience. Nonverbal information like costumes, settings, props etc., viewers perceive unconsciously as secondary to words, but together with words are creating a whole (Orero 2004, 132). And what is more, they might have hidden meaning or add meaning to those words spoken/written. Therefore, the visual side, pronunciation and intonation should also be considered during the translating process – it can change the meaning of the words. That is why the audiovisual translation is tricky and is not easily done without seeing the visual.

### 2.1 Language variations in films

According to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 232), “Linguistic variation in film often reflects social class.” Both Díaz Cintas and Remael and Ellender (2015) agree that it is problematic when the language varies from its standard form. And that is the consequence of a higher concentration of different languages in one place than it used to be, and therefore new variations of languages appear (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 230). The more non-standard the language gets, the more complex work it will be. For example, dialects are not easily translated since they are very closely connected to culture and geographical background. There is a possibility to substitute one dialect from the source language with a different dialect from the target language, and yet it will never sound the same. However, these particularities might be essential to keep in mind when translating since they could reflect, for example, the nature of characters (Ellender 2015, 170–171).

## 2.2 Subtitling

Subtitling is a process of translation that transfers an original dialogue of the speakers into written text. The subtitles are usually placed into the lower part of the screen (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 8). However, occasionally we can notice the subtitles changing the position from the lower part to the upper part of the screen and back due to better visibility of the text. As Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 9) claim, the subtitles can have around 32 to 41 characters on one line, with two lines on the screen at maximum. Furthermore, subtitles should be in synchrony with the spoken text and with the action that is happening on the screen (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 9). Therefore, they have to be precisely placed into the video so that the audience can keep up with both the text and the visual.

Subtitles should not be highly demanding on the reader; they should be the opposite because it is already a challenge for the audience to perceive the visual with the text simultaneously without the opportunity to reread the subtitles. Therefore these five attributes should be met by subtitlers: economy (should not write more than the scene requires to be understood because of limited time), effectiveness (the text must correspond to the visual and must be understandable), expressivity (the translation of subtitles is basically a production of new text that according to Orero (2004, 136) should “convey a multitude of meanings and yet simultaneously be straightforward and clear, and go as unnoticed as possible”, accuracy (the text has to be correct from both grammatical and cultural point of view), concision (there is only limited time and limited space for the text) (Orero 2004, 136). From a linguistic point of view, subtitling is divided into interlingual and intralingual (Orero 2004, 53). Intralingual (also called closed captioning) is within the same language, and it is mainly for deaf or hard of hearing people or those who are learning the language, and it is also used for dialects to help the audience understand. The intralingual subtitles contain, besides the dialogues, also other information that contributes to the story or atmosphere like laughter, screaming, different sounds like knocking on the door or phone ringing, etc. (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 14). On the other side, interlingual subtitling is translating between two languages (Orero 2004, 53).

Díaz Cintas also offers a third type of subtitles that can be spotted nowadays, mainly in countries where two languages are spoken, and that is bilingual subtitles. Bilingual subtitling means that at the bottom of the screen are subtitles in two languages available, and for each of them are dedicated two lines (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 18).

From a technical point of view, subtitles can be distinguished as open and closed. Open subtitles are fixed to the image and cannot be removed, whilst closed subtitles can be voluntarily removed or added at any time (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 21).

### **2.3 Differences between subtitling and dubbing**

Dubbing is when the voice-track from the source language is substituted by the voice-track from the target language (Munday 2008, 185). The dubbing process is complex, and it is vital to keep order and rhythm. At first, there is a script sent with a set of instructions stating whether songs and screen inserts are supposed to be dubbed as well. The translator receives that with a copy of the film and translates it. The next phase is proofreading, which should be done preferably by someone else than the translator to spot possible mistakes. After that, a synchronisation follows. At this phase, modifications of the translated text occur to make sure the text fits perfectly with the timing and the visual. However, the text can be altered and modified at any stage after the translation; the director or even dubbing actors can change the text if they have a problem with pronunciation or as a part of improvisation (Orero 2004, 3–6).

With subtitles, the process of modification does not go to such an extent. There is usually two-step verification – native speaker reads it, and then there is simulation when someone watches the film/show with the subtitles and checks it for possible mistakes (Orero 2004, 10). According to Orero (2004, 9–10), there are generally three main phases: pre-translation, adaptation/translation and spotting. These steps can be interchanged or even omitted (like pre-translation); it depends on the translator and his/her judgement (Orero 2004, 9–10). Spotting (also called cuing or timing) is about “determining the precise moment when the subtitle should appear on screen” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 30). Pre-translation is when the translation of the dialogue list precedes the stage of creating subtitles. Adaptation is creating subtitle units from the pre-translated text (Orero 2004, 9).

Pošta (2012, 105) describes the whole process more thoroughly and expands the number of subtitling phases to eight: at first, he suggests watching the audiovisual programme if it is possible, the second phase is a transcription (only if we do not have these materials already), following phase is the translation itself, number three is transferring the translation into caption file, followed by spotting (that can be done in two ways – from what we hear and see), checking whether it is readable from the point of view of time and if there is a problem then adjustments has to be done, final checking and proofreading, and the last phase is to save the whole file.

Subtitles in contrast to the dubbing are still accompanied by the dialogue and, therefore, more judged than dubbing. In terms of subtitles, people perceive both the dialogue and the translated subtitles at the same time, therefore assigning the closest syntactic and semantic correlation as possible to the spoken text is in place. It will not distract from the story and, instead, it will help better comprehension (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 55–56). Also, in dubbing, it is tolerated to have freer translation than in subtitles (Orero 2004, 12). With dubbing, there is more pressure on whether the translation corresponds to the movement on screen (lips synchrony). Synchronisation is a big part of the translation process of dubbing. The emphasis concerns not only the number of words to fit the movement of the actor's lips but also the phonetical side of things, i.e. not every translated word is compatible with the movement of lips of the original text. In contrast to subtitles, there is pressure on dubbing to sound as it is the original (Orero 2004, 35–36). In some countries, dubbing is more common than subtitles and vice versa. In the Czech Republic, dubbing prevails on TV.

## **2.4 Professional subtitling and fansubbing**

Fansubbing is described by Munday (2008, 190) as a “practice of amateur subtitling and distribution of films and TV series online”. The question of legality and copyright is surrounding fansubbing activity – in different words, subtitling by fans of specific films/TV shows to fans for free. Fansubbing can be characterised as more creative than classic subtitling. The creative approach lies in experimenting with the subtitles' colours as different people speak (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 26–27). The colour of subtitles can also depend on the type of situation that is happening in the story; it indicates the atmosphere (Baker 2018, 286). Other differences are the position of subtitles on the screen, a multiplicity of various fonts and the number of lines of subtitles on the screen that can be considerably higher (up to four lines instead of two as it is in the licenced translations). Another way to distinguish professional subtitling from fansubbing is the “translation of opening and closing credits” that is quite common for fansubs (Díaz Cintas and Sánchez 2006, 47).

As the question of quality of the translated subtitles by fans is concerned, we can find both: the quality ones that would not be recognisable as fansubs by an untrained eye, and the ones that can be spotted more often and those are subtitles of lower quality (Díaz Cintas and Sánchez 2006, 46). Mistakes can be the result of mishearing, wrong interpretation of the meaning or as a result of machine translation without proper checking for errors (Díaz Cintas and Sánchez 2006, 49–50). As is mentioned by Díaz Cintas and Sánchez (2006, 51),

“fansubs share some of the characteristics of professional subtitling” and the approaches and subtitling strategies.

### 3 IDIOMS AND THEIR TRANSLATION

Idioms are fixed patterns that do not usually work if we try to modify them. The meaning of idioms usually cannot be deduced from the meaning of the words. To deduce the idiom's real meaning, the expression has to be taken as a whole (Baker 2018, 69–70). According to Baker (2018, 69–70), idioms will not work if we:

- substitute a word from the idioms with a different one,
- delete or add a word,
- change the word order or grammatical structure.

Correct handling of an idiom in translation consists of these steps: spotting the idiom, interpreting it correctly, and transferring it to the target language, which is more often the translator's native language. Spotting an idiom in the source text is especially hard for non-native speakers because some idiomatic expressions are less recognisable than others (Baker 2018, 70–71). Nevertheless, when interpreting an idiom, sound and visual become very helpful since it adds information to the context (Orero 2004, 138). The more challenging part is for non-natives in translation when they translate to the foreign language because at that position, they are usually not as skilled in active usage of idioms, and therefore they might struggle to use it correctly or possibly not use it at all (Baker 2018, 70–71). When not using idioms at all in translations, the text could possibly lack the dynamics that the source text possesses. On the other hand, using idioms can help capture the viewers' attention and adds naturalness to the dialogues.

Translating idioms through literal translation is not an option; it would result in creating nonsense, and due to that, the coherence of the text would be disrupted (Knittlová, Grygová and Zehnalová 2010, 233). Nevertheless, a very useful technique when translating idioms is equivalence. As was mentioned in the first chapter (1.2 Translational techniques), this method lies in describing “the same situation by different stylistic and structural means” (Munday 2008, 58). Another way of dealing with idioms in translations is to find an equivalent idiom to the idiom from the source text (Ellender 2015, 98); however, this is not always feasible. In some cases, omission can be also a workable solution when there is no equivalent and describing it would not work due to the time and space limitations.

According to Orero (2004, 92), idioms “are less frequent in subtitled films than in dubbed films”. The reason for that can be explained as following, imitating an idiom is time

and space consuming, which might not go well with the time frame and space for the subtitles of particular scenes (Orero 2004, 91–92).

Nowadays, translators have a significant advantage, and that is the possibility to check idioms in online dictionaries, which are very often quite comprehensive and so it is not very common not to be able to find an idiom that is being looked for (Gile 2009, 140). Furthermore, idioms can be tricky not only for non-natives but also for native speakers. As Gile (2009, 226) states, “one’s mental lexicon (i.e. the large set of such lexical units stored in a person’s long-term memory) can vary greatly from one individual to the next”. This statement also includes idioms. As one person might use certain idioms nearly every day, another might have never heard such idiomatic expressions. However, the most commonly occurring are rarely unknown to the natives.

## 4 HUMOUR IN AUDIOVISUAL PROGRAMMES

Humour is something that makes particular situations funny, and the effect of such a situation that it has on the viewers is expected to be laughter at best. However, not all humour is always and by everyone perceived as funny (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 212–214). “The ‘fun’ element in humour is very unstable” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 214). How humorous the situation will be also depends on the culture (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 212–214). This thought is shared by Attardo (2017, 9) as well; according to him, social background has a considerable effect on whether the audience will laugh or not.

Different cultures and even individual people in those cultures have a different sense of humour, different standards and different background and hence some things might be considered dull or even inappropriate. Therefore, it is hardly predictable how the viewer will perceive the humour. As Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 214) claim, “some utterances provoke laughter unintentionally, whereas others fail to provoke the laughter they intended, or catch on only with a limited group”. However, people who have something in common will be more likely to laugh at the same concepts and thus, if the people are targeted, they can be better addressed by the humour.

Depending on the possibilities of expressing the source text through subtitling and dubbing in the target language, the content of a joke in both languages can be completely different, and people are practically laughing at different things (De Rosa et al. 2014, 329). Nevertheless, according to research from De Rosa et al. (2014, 329), humour in dubbed and subtitled versions of a film or TV show does not differ much.

When comparing different approaches to humour research and analysis, Díaz Cintas and Remael discuss humour from the point of view of different types of jokes, whereas De Rosa et al. focuses more on the types of humorous elements appearing in the particular jokes. De Rosa et al. (2014, 314) is analysing jokes according to the type of element and number of elements in the joke, which puts jokes into two groups – simple, consisting of only one element, and compound, with two or more elements present.

These two approaches are, however, very similar in content. Both authors agree that jokes are usually based on visuals, sound, community sense of humour and wordplays of the particular language as main elements in creating humour. The types of jokes will be described more in detail in the following subchapter 4.1 called Translating humour.

Superiority and incongruity are part of something called “building blocks” that are aiming at causing laughter. These two elements are an essential part of humour; however,

they do not provoke laughter by themselves (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 213). Incongruity is a contradiction or “a deviation from a generally expected norm” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 212); it is something that the viewer does not expect. In contrast, superiority is not only about laughter but also about the feeling of heightened self-esteem and happiness (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 213).

Irony comes from a particular contrast between what is clear from the situation and what is actually said (De Rosa et al. 2014, 431). In other words, irony is an expression when the literal meaning differs from its intended meaning, and that is where the humour also comes from very often. Thus, humour and irony relate because “incongruity is also considered to be an essential feature of irony” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 213). Irony does not have to be always clear just from the text. The visual side (like facial expressions) or audio side (like intonation) and context can also help to recognise the irony (De Rosa et al. 2014, 431).

#### **4.1 Translating humour**

The process of translating humour consists of recognising jokes, and for that, we need to have an insight into the story and know the context (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 214). This part can be tricky for the translators because, as mentioned before, what is taken as funny by one person does not have to be found funny by someone else, and vice versa, and the same thing applies to the translators. They might not find the situation funny, but understanding the core of the joke (the reason why is it funny and what is funny about it) is key to interpreting it correctly and, after that transfer it to the target language. As Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 214) mention, the aim here is to provoke the same or similar effect as it had in the source language, and for that reason, creativity is essential. Something called “canned laughter”, which is inserted into the humorous parts and occurs in sitcoms can help to recognise a joke (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 216).

When translating humour, it is necessary to consider two elements: the temporary aspect of a joke “(some jokes rely on topical events)” and “linguistic distance (between the language pairs and cultures concerned)” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 214). Humour can also come from different situations: “it can arise from the interaction between word and image, or a play on words, but it can just as well be an integral part of the story plot, reside in experiments with genre features and intertextuality” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 214–215). And therefore, jokes need to be handled carefully not to lose their point and the fun element in them. They are also supposed to be dynamic and not complicated, so describing it in a complex way is not an option because it would make it lose its drive.

To transfer a joke correctly from a source to the target text, the translator can identify the type of the joke first. Types of jokes, according to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 217–228), are following:

1. Jokes relating to a different culture than the recipient is. In this situation, an adaptation of such jokes is required, and the translator comes from the presumptions of the audience's general cultural knowledge.
2. Internationally known jokes are the type that does not need a special modification and adjustments. Such jokes consist of something that is internationally known, and therefore it is expected to be also known by the target audience.
3. Jokes based on the sense of humour typical for a certain group of people, a community. This type of jokes consists of common knowledge for the people in the particular community.
4. Jokes that are conditioned by language are called "Language-dependent jokes", and as its name suggests, these jokes are based on wordplays (like puns). Translating language-dependent jokes is not an easy job since it is usually impossible to translate them literally, and searching for the suitable equivalent is very demanding as creativity is concerned. The best technique is often substitution.
5. Humour in "Visual jokes" is created by "gestures and facial expressions of the actors, or the typical suspense set-up". This type does not need a translation (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 227).
6. "Aural jokes" are linguistic jokes that are hidden in, for example, intonation and accents. These might sometimes need translation as well, but mostly "speak for themselves" (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 227).
7. The last type is "Complex jokes". This type of jokes consists of two or more components of the already mentioned types of jokes. These can be combinations of "culture-bound references, image, sound and/or linguistics" (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 228).

De Rosa et al. (2014, 56–58) mentions a different way of translating humour, and for that, he defines three strategies of transferring humour: smooth humour transfer strategy, visual clue constrained humour strategy, and adaptive humour transfer strategy. The smooth transfer strategy is the most uncomplicated strategy that does not modify the text in any way. Visual clue constrained humour strategy changes verbal elements (like references) "for the sake of the visually bound features" because these cannot be changed (De Rosa et al. 2014,

57). The third strategy – the adaptive humour transfer strategy – is when the source text is fully adapted to the target language and culture. Therefore, all elements that the text possesses (for example, community elements, linguistic elements, sound elements and others) are adjusted to the target audience (De Rosa et al. 2014, 56–58).

However, even when translators can be very creative, sometimes not even that is enough to translate certain jokes. In such a case, it is better to sacrifice the humour so the textual coherence and flow of the speech and the story are not disrupted (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, 215–216).

## 5 TRANSLATION OF PUNS

Pun, also called a wordplay (De Rosa et al. 2014, 435), is a type of a joke where the main part plays a set of sounds (Attardo 2017, 79–85). Also, puns are often based on ambiguity (De Rosa et al. 2014, 436), and these ambiguous words are very often the humorous part. Puns from the point of view of humour belong to the category of language-dependent jokes defined by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 222). In other words, puns are representative of verbal humour, and that means that puns “may play on homonymy, polysemy, homophony, homography and paronymy and may involve morphemes, words or multi-word units” (De Rosa et al. 2014, 69). The connection of ambiguity and incongruity is essential to create a successful humorous pun (Attardo 2017, 80).

The key component of understanding the puns is to have linguistic knowledge (Attardo 2017, 79). Not having linguistic knowledge would mean in these situations to not see ambiguity, and therefore the humorous component would get lost. However, as Attardo (2017, 436) suggests, the number of puns used in audiovisual programmes is not that staggering.

There are four possibilities how to deal with puns in audiovisual translations:

1. “Leave the pun unchanged in the SL.
2. Replace the SL pun with a TL pun.
3. Replace the SL pun with an idiomatic expression in the TL.
4. Ignore the pun altogether.”

(Attardo 2017, 435)

## 6 CULTURAL REFERENCES

According to (Attardo 2017, 69), cultural references are “words that refer to concepts or objects specific to the Source Culture, and that may be unknown in the Target Culture. They may be references to American or internationally known people, objects, brands, institutions, songs or texts, etc.”.

Achieving the comic effect with cultural references is at times more critical than perfectly translating the source text. Nevertheless, this applies to wordplays as well (De Rosa et al. 2014, 110). According to Luigi De Rosa et al. (2014, 110), these three strategies can be used when translating cultural references:

- “The substitution of VEH in the Source Language (SL) with an example of VEH in the Target Language (TL).
- The replacement of the SL VEH with an idiomatic expression in the TL.
- The replacement of the SL VEH with an example of compensatory VEH elsewhere in the TL text.”

## **II. ANALYSIS**

## 7 MODERN FAMILY

The Bachelor Thesis provides an analysis of the American sitcom called Modern Family, a very popular TV series that premiered in 2009 and aired the last season in 2020. Its popularity can be recognized from the fact that there are 11 series in total with around 20 episodes in each series and that the show won many prestigious awards. The TV show debuted on an American TV channel ABC (American Broadcasting Company). The creators of the show are Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan.

A sitcom is an abbreviation of situation comedy which is, according to Merriam Webster dictionary, “a television series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of comedic circumstances”. The whole concept of the show can remind a documentary since each episode is accompanied by insertions where the characters sit on a sofa and comment on specific topics and events more in detail. This type of scenes serves the role of a narrator and helps the audience keep up with the story.

The sitcom is based on the stories and daily lives of a big family. This family clan consists of three nuclear families. Each episode shifts from the struggles and funny stories of one of the families to another. It shows family relations between those families and all the family members and depicts a modern family in the United States.

The family consists of Jay, the oldest member of the family, who is a father to Claire and Mitchell. Jay divorced Claire’s and Mitchell’s mother DeDe and married a much younger woman Gloria, who is Columbian. Gloria is probably the same age as Claire and has a child from a previous marriage, a boy called Manny. Mitchell is a lawyer, and later on he gets married to Cameron – they form a gay couple who adopts a Vietnamese baby girl Lily. As the only one, Claire has quite a traditional family (three children and a husband). Claire is married to Phil Dunphy, and their children are, from the oldest to the youngest, Haley, Alex and Luke.

Phil is an estate agent, and he has specific sense of humour. He represents a weirdo that often uses puns which he believes are funny. His daughter Haley represents a typical teenager; Luke is a weirdo probably taken after his father, and his second daughter Alex is characterized as a smart child. Gloria is a character that very often uses cultural references. However, the references in her case are not to American culture but to Columbia. This is the source of humour connected with her character because she makes these references to her culture that are not understood by other characters very often, and her accent and ability to explain what she means is funny. Her son Manny has a personality of an older man. He acts

responsibly and behaves as an adult, which is depicted in the way he speaks and dresses. In the relationship of Mitchell and Cameron, Mitchell is the more responsible one, whereas Cameron is more for fun.

## 7.1 Language of the sitcom

Informal speech with widespread usage of slang can be observed throughout the show. That indicates the home-like atmosphere that the show is supposed to radiate. An example of a slang expression from a fifth episode can be noticed in the following line:

(1) *ST: These two knuckleheads were fighting each other.*

*TT: Ti dva tupouni se servali. [The two blockheads fought each other.]*

This sentence was a comment about two kids that got into a fight, and so the language was meant to be moderate but still express the nature of the incident and show the informality of the dialogue. This sentence in the Czech version corresponds well to the aspects of the original text (mainly the slang word *knuckleheads* – *tupouni*). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence and the atmosphere that the sentence radiates is similar in both versions of the text.

Another slang expression used in the sitcom is *ax*, which was translated as *kajtra* [*axe*]. Many American slang expressions that appear on the show were transferred into the Czech language using a slang word to keep the same dynamic. However, there were such expressions like *shutterbug* that was not substituted by a similar expression but described as a weakness for photos:

(2) *ST: I guess I'm somewhat of a shutterbug.*

*TT: Mám velkou slabost pro fotky. [I have a big weakness for photos.]*

To summarize, the translator was always first trying to substitute the SL slang expression by TL slang expression. If this option was not available, the SL slang was paraphrased.

## 7.2 Translation of the sitcom

The analysed subtitles were created by professional translator Kateřina Marko (Czech translator whose specialization is mainly in cinema, film, theatre, TV and management translations). The subtitles come from Netflix, a paid media service platform, that has been continuously adding more and more films and TV Shows with Czech subtitles and dubbing since the interest in this service has been rising mainly from the beginning of 2020. However, *Modern Family* sitcom is currently only available in the original English version, a version

with translated subtitles (Czech and Polish) and Polish dubbing. This bachelor thesis is based only on a comparison of Czech subtitles and the original speech script (closed captions).

Translation of sitcom is quite specific concerning the humour throughout the whole show. The difficulties that the translator had to face were slang expressions, puns, cultural references and idioms. These are closely connected to culture and therefore often do not have a direct equivalent and cause a confusion if not adapted to the target culture.

### **7.3 Methodology**

The analysis was done by firstly watching the full episode and making notes of the most obvious expression to analyse and then comparing the ST and the TT files opened next to each other and selecting idioms, puns and cultural references one by one. Then I proceeded to select the most suitable ones for the analysis.

The analysed subtitles are taken from the first 11 episodes of the first series. The following episodes were analysed:

**S01E01** Pilot

**S01E02** The Bicycle Thief

**S01E03** Come Fly with Me

**S01E04** The Incident

**S01E05** Coal Digger

**S01E06** Run for Your Wife

**S01E07** En Garde

**S01E08** Great Expectations

**S01E09** Fizbo

**S01E10** Undeck the Halls

**S01E11** Up All Night

## 8 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

This bachelor thesis is based on the translational analysis of sitcom subtitles. It mainly focuses on potentially problematic translational areas connected with differences in cultures, and those are idioms, puns and cultural references. These are problematic to understand when the translation is not adapted to the traditions, beliefs, and the way of life of the target audience. To do a proper translation, not only linguistic but also cultural aspects have to be taken into consideration.

### 8.1 Idioms

Idioms were the easiest to find because they are a very common and a vital part of everyday speech. They are used in films and TV shows to make the dialogues interesting and more familiar to the viewer. Some idioms are known internationally, and so they have an equivalent in the target language. Rarely, the TL equivalent has the same form as the SL version, and therefore literal translation is possible. However, in such cases, the similar structure of the idioms does not guarantee that they have the same figurative meaning; in each language it might refer to something else. Other times if an appropriate equivalent cannot be found in the TL (either with the same form or different form), this situation has to be dealt with differently. For example, the idiomatic phrase must be translated by non-idiomatic means of the TL (by means of paraphrase) or by omitting the idiom.

Some idioms form a full sentence, some form clauses or phrases and others are individual words. Idiomatic expressions have figurative meaning. Recognizing the idiom is crucial for correct translation. As mentioned earlier, it does not happen very often that idiomatic expression in the source language is identical with an idiom from the target language. Therefore, linguistic and cultural knowledge of the source culture is required. Focusing on what makes no sense when the literal meaning is considered can help recognize an idiom.

The following idiom is frequently used in both languages, so it is not that hard to recognize it and find the equivalent in the target culture.

(3) *ST: What are you, made of china?*

*TT: Co? Jseš z porcelánu? [What? Are you made of china?]*

This scene is from an episode where Jay causes Phil an injury and does not seem bothered by that. The figurative meaning of this expression suggests that Jay thinks that Phil is

overreacting and is not as injured as he seems. This idiomatic expression is substituted by a Czech idiom with the exact same meaning and similar form.

A very similar example is with the use of the idiom *sweep it under the rug*.

(4) ST: *That's the worst thing you could do. Just sweep it under the rug.* –

TT: *To je ta nejhorší varianta. Zamet' to pod koberec. [That's the worst variant. Sweep it under the rug.]*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, such an idiom is used “to hide something damaging or unpleasant and try to keep it secret”. In this case, the unpleasant situation it refers to is between Gloria and Claire. This dialogue occurred between Jay and Gloria. Gloria thinks that Claire does not like her and that she is not welcomed in the family, and she wants to talk to Claire about that. However, Jay does not think it is a good idea; he believes that she should let it go and uses the expression *sweep it under the rug*.

The literal translation is possible because the idioms *sweep it under the rug* and *zamet' to pod koberec* [*sweep it under the rug*] are the same on both the structural and semantic levels. The Czech version of this idiom *zamést pod koberec* [*sweep it under the rug*] is also very frequently used, and therefore it does not pose a problem for the translator.

Among the more complicated idiomatic translations belongs the following example:

(5) ST: *Hold on, Jay. I think we should address the elephant in the room.*

TT: *Počkej, Jayi. Tomu problému se musíme podívat na zuby. [Wait, Jay. We have to look at the teeth of the problem.]*

This idiomatic expression does not have a similar idiomatic equivalent in the Czech language. Therefore, a different solution had to be considered. To keep the dynamics that the idiom provides to the speech, the translator decided to use an idiomatic expression just in another part of the sentence. In this translation, the English idiom *the elephant in the room* is translated as a *problem* in the Czech subtitles, but the word *address* was translated through the idiomatic expression *podívat se tomu na zuby* [*look to its teeth*] instead.

The expression *the elephant in the room* refers to a problem between Manny and Luke. Manny is technically Luke's uncle, even though they are the same age. Luke does not like it, and therefore they argue. Phil wants to calm things down between the two boys and says that they should talk about the obvious problem that they have with each other.

(6) ST: *Do you think Jay thought I was good enough for his little girl? No way. But over time, he realized that I loved Claire as much as he did. And by then, Mitch had brought Cam home, so I was golden.*

*TT: Myslel si Jay, že jsem pro jeho dceru dost dobrý? Ani náhodou. Ale časem zjistil, že miluju jeho dceru stejně jako on. Pak si Mitch přivedl Cama a já byl za vodou. [Had Jay thought that I was good enough for his daughter? No way. But over time he found out that I love his daughter the same as he. Then Mitch brought Cam and I was behind water.]*

Another English idiom that does have a Czech equivalent, in this case, is *to be golden*. In this sentence, it was possible to substitute the idiom with another idiom that is in terms of the meaning and the sentence dynamics, the best option. However, it is not that common that two languages have idioms that are direct equivalents, so this method is not always feasible.

Phil is talking here about the time when he married Claire and was not liked by Claire's father, Jay. For the expression of being on good terms later on with Jay, he uses the idiom *I was golden*, which is similarly translated as *já byl za vodou [I was behind water.]*. The meaning of the two expressions is similar; however, the form is different.

(7) *ST: Listen, I would love to get this thing behind us, but Gloria would never forgive me if I pulled a fast one on her.*

*TT: Rád bych tu záležitost pohřbil, ale Gloria mi neodpustí, když to udělám. [I would like to bury this matter but Gloria never forgives me if I do.]*

This sentence belongs to the group of idioms that do not have an appropriate idiomatic equivalent in the Czech language. Therefore, the idiom is paraphrased into the Czech language.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *pull a fast one* means *to trick someone*, which in this sentence refers to Jay refusing to invite his ex-wife DeDe who wants to apologize for her bad behaviour towards Gloria, to dinner. Jay does not want to trick Gloria into this since she does not know about DeDe being in town.

(8) *ST: I have seen you thread the needle a million times. You never miss.*

*TT: Já tě viděla navlíkat jehlu tisíckrát. Nikdy nemineš. [I have seen you thread a needle a thousand times. You never miss.]*

Thread a needle is an idiomatic expression that is used in various ways and seems not to have a set meaning. However, in this context, it means to do something difficult successfully or get something through a small space – in this case, to get a toy airplane to fly through a hoop while Phil was holding the hoop above his head.

Although it is translated literally, in the Czech language, there is no such idiomatic expression as *navlíkat jehlu*. This might have been misunderstood and translated literally, but the meaning does not correspond to the source language meaning as is required.

(9) ST: *Alex and I can't just disagree. I mean, she has to turn everything into a fight.*

TT: *S Alex se neshodneme. Ze všeho dělá kovbojku. [We never agree with Alex. She makes a western out of everything.]*

There was no idiom in the source text, but the translator added a Czech idiom to the subtitles to describe the situation better to the target audience. The arguments Claire likens to westerns in the Czech version as they are also wild and unexpected. Claire said this sentence about her younger daughter Alex after she refused to wear a dress.

(10) ST: *What do you want me to do – just embarrass myself so we're even?*

TT: *Co chceš, ať udělám? Ať se ztrapním a bude to fifty-fifty? [What do you want me to do? To embarrass myself and it will be fifty-fifty?]*

This dialogue occurred between Claire and Gloria. Claire called Gloria a gold digger, and for Gloria, it was embarrassing, so she wanted to get Claire into a similarly uncomfortable situation which is what the expression *be even* means here.

The phenomenon in this sentence is the translation of *getting even* into the target language. *Fifty-fifty* is originally an English idiom that means being equal in something. Here it was used as an English borrowing because this expression is widely known in the Czech language.

Concerning the translation of idioms in this sitcom, idioms from the source language are often translated by idioms from the target language. In this substitution of an idiom by idiom, these expressions can have both the same form and meaning. In other cases, they can agree just in the meaning. When there is no equivalent in the target language that could be used to transfer the SL idiom, a solution is to either paraphrase the expression or omit it. However, the omission is not recommended in most cases since the idiom is very often an essential part of the text. Also, the omission is not very used and did not appear in this analysis.

## 8.2 Puns

This group of culturally complex expressions in translation has the lowest number of examples. This can be attributed to the fact that puns are used only to liven up the speech, and their excessive use would lead to incomprehensible and overly complicated text. Translating, like creating puns is a very creative activity. The translator has to deal with ambiguity, play with sounds or a combination of both.

The first example of wordplay in the source text is a play of sounds.

(11) *ST: I know what she thinks – a coal digger.*

*TT: Vim, co si myslí. Drátokopka. [I know what she thinks. A wire digger.]*

This pun and the humorous aspect comes from the accent and pronunciation problem. This sentence was said by Gloria, and she is from Columbia, and therefore her pronunciation and accent comes in the way of understanding and, in this case, also pronouncing certain words.

When Gloria says *coal digger*, she means *gold digger*. The expression *coal digger* was first used in the scene by Luke, who, as a child, does not know what it means and therefore does not understand that it is incorrect. However, Gloria repeats it, and nobody knows whether it is just her pronunciation that is wrong or she does not know it is supposed to be a gold digger.

This example is a play of sounds that makes the pun funny. In The Czech translation, the expression was transferred as *drátokopka*, which sounds similar to the Czech equivalent of the gold digger - *zlatokopka*. This was one of the more straightforward pun creations since the only thing to consider is the suitable equivalent that sounds just as funny as the original.

A more complex pun is shown in the following line.

(12) *ST: a) Am I straight?*

*TT: a) Mám to rovně? [Do I have it straight?]*

*ST: b) I'm not sure what you are right now.*

*TT: b) Fakt si nejsem jistý, co to je. [I am really not sure what it is.]*

This dialogue between Mitchell and Cameron contains a homonymous pun - a word that has two different meanings. In this case, it is the word *straight*, meaning a straight line across Cameron's face because he is getting ready for a football match. The second meaning is straight as being heterosexual. However, Mitchell and Cameron are gay, so this mention of *being straight* serves as a provocation.

The second sentence makes the word *straight* ambiguous. Cameron is asking whether he is going straight with the line or if it is crooked. And so, when Mitchell says, *I'm not sure what you are right now*, he points out that he does not even know him anymore because he

does not understand his enthusiasm for this hobby and the painting on his face to support the team.

The ambiguity that is crucial in this sentence was not achieved in the Czech subtitles. The humorous side of it got lost in the translation. The sentence got a completely different meaning in the Czech language. A suggestion of a free translation that partially keeps the joke (but not the ambiguity) could be:

- *Mám to správně? [Do I have it right?]*
- *Nejsem si jistý, jestli je s tebou (ještě) všechno správně. [I am not sure whether is everything all right with you (anymore).]*

The following pun was created as a combination of two words.

(13) *ST: Act like a parent, talk like a peer. I call it peerenting.*

*TT: Chovej se jako rodič, mluv jako vrstevník. Říkám tomu kámošovství.  
[Behave like a parent, talk like a peer. I call it a friendling.]*

This was created by a combination of words *a peer* and *parenting*. This pun in the translation fully kept its meaning and its deviation from the form is only small. Instead of the word *vrstevník* is used word *kámoš* in the pun. This sentence is said by Phil when he is convinced, he can talk to his daughter Haley as her peer about her boyfriend and not sound like an interrogative parent. Phil considers himself to be a parent that is able to communicate effectively with their children, but the opposite is true.

Another pun that belongs to the group of more complex and therefore harder to translate puns is as following:

(14) *ST: a) Looks like I gotta watch the game with Dick Butkus.*

*TT: a) Budu se asi koukat s Dickem Prdousem. [I will be probably watching with Dick Ass.]*

*ST: b) Dad! Dad, come on. That's offensive.*

*TT: b) Tati, no tak, to je hnusné. [Dad, common, that is disgusting.]*

David Butkus, or Richard Marvin Butkus with his full name, is a player of American football. This is a combination of cultural reference and a pun. Jay says the first sentence at the moment when Cameron and Mitchell come into a room. Therefore, it sounds like he is talking about Cameron; in this instance, it is a pun. The pun is created intentionally, and it lies in the pronunciation of the surname *Butkus*, which is pronounced as butt kiss, and together with the first name *Dick* it is supposed to refer to Cameron being gay. To that, Mitchell reacts with the second sentence and words that it is offensive, but he realizes that it is a real name of a football player.

This combination is untranslatable if both the cultural reference and the pun should be maintained in the target language. In the Czech language, the way to translate it is as shown in the dialogue – losing the real surname in order to create humour. This way, the reference gets lost, but it is a question of how many Czech speakers would actually know who the person is with his unchanged name. Here the translator had to decide on the importance of keeping the cultural reference. The answer is that the real name is dispensable here; the crucial point for the scene is to maintain the humorous surname that should look like it refers to Cameron.

Puns are usually more complex than idioms or cultural references. They are created from ambiguous or similar sounding words. A pun intends to be humorous. From the analysed examples it can be concluded that the ambiguous puns are more challenging to translate than those based on play with sounds or connection of two words. Its problematic nature is in the ambiguity that usually does not appear in the equivalent word in the target language.

### 8.3 Cultural references

Cultural references can represent a difficulty for a target audience. In this case, the Czech audience can have problems understanding, and to translator, it might cause a dilemma of how to transfer it correctly into the target language. Cultural references emerge in the subtitles in the form of references to places, people, or pop-culture items, which are typically not household names for most Czechs. References to famous people are the most numerous out of all cultural references in this sitcom. The translator of this sitcom very often assumed that the source culture is not totally unknown to the target audience. Thus, these references were usually kept in their original form and not substituted by more familiar terms.

As an example of names kept in the translation can be an actor *Erik Estrada* to whom there was a reference in the sentence below:

(15) ST: a) *You're seriously asking us if you're attractive?*

TT: a) *Vážně se nás ptáš, jak jsi přitažlivý? [Are you seriously asking us how attractive you are?]*

ST: b) *Well I know I'm no Erik Estrada or anything.*

TT: b) *Vím, že nejsem Erik Estrada. [I know I am not Erik Estrada.]*

*Erik Estrada* is an American actor who was popular mostly in the 1970s and 1980s and at that time was considered to be very good looking. Despite the fact that the reference is not completely clear to the Czech audience because this celebrity is not popular here, the

understanding of the whole sentence is not lost because the rest of the sentence explains the point well.

The following examples are again celebrity names, only here it is not clear from the text who they are or how they look.

(16) *ST: a) Why is our daughter dressed like Donna Summer?*

*TT: a) Proč je oblečená jako Donna Summer? [Why is she dressed like Donna Summer?]*

*ST: b) She is not Donna Summer. Clearly she's Diana Ross from the R.C.A. years.*

*TT: b) Není to Donna Summer, ale jako Diana Ross za éry RCA. [It is not Donna Summer but like Diana Ross in the RCA era.]*

These cultural references point out two American actresses and singers – *Diana Ross* and *Donna Summer*. The reference is there to provide visual humour because in this scene, Lily has a wig on with afro hair, and there is supposed to be a similarity to one of these singers who were both black. From the visual perspective and the context, it is understandable that they are both black American celebrities and so the humour is not lost, and no adaptation of the names is necessary in this case.

Another cultural reference connected with *Diana Ross* is *R.C.A.* which is a record label company, and the *R.C.A. years* is a time when Diana had a contract signed to record her music with this company. From this point of view, the Czech viewer would perceive this as an unknown word. Without any further explanation, it can be considered to be a name of a band or an album. However, there is no joke connected with this reference, so the audience would simply skip this and would not be bothered by not fully understanding it.

In this instance, not adapting it to the culture by using different names more familiar to the Czech audience or further explaining it is not problematic at all. It is simply not important for the story, and it does not represent an obstacle for the viewer to understand both the humorous side and the context.

Nevertheless, there are situations where the absence of the source culture knowledge might represent a problem. When references are used to help the viewer imagine something to get the point, it gets important to find the right way to translate the particular reference. In such circumstances, it is essential to use an appropriate translational technique. The following example represents this problematic area where the audience might be missing the association.

(17) ST: *So my interest in football ended as suddenly and dramatically as the climax of West Side Story.*

TT: *Můj zájem o fotbal opadl tak rychle a dramaticky jako zápletky West Side Story. [My interest in football decreased as quickly and dramatically as the plotline of West Side Story.]*

Cameron reproaches Mitchell that he does not care for the same hobbies as him, and so Mitchell tries to get into one of Cameron's favourites, and that is football. However, Mitchell figures that he does not understand the strategies and, in general, has different opinions on this topic than Cam, and so his interest fades away. On the other hand, Mitchell is a big fan of musicals, which is why he compares his interest in football to the very swift and blunt ending of the famous musical *West Side Story*.

This translation would be better if an explicitation was used in the form of a short one-word description that it is a musical. Even though it is mentioned later on, when Mitchell says he is a fan of musicals, a brief explanation would definitely bring more light into the perception of the text. Another option would be to use, for example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* instead of *West Side Story* because the connotation would be the same, and this would guarantee that majority of people would understand it.

It can be noticed that in some situations, the cultural reference is not kept in its original form in the target text. However, this occurrence cannot be observed on a larger scale in this subtitle translation. One of the few situations where a culturally connected name is substituted by a different term can be spotted in the following example:

(18) ST: *So if I was in one of your bars and Righteous Brothers were on, you know. Would you, uh, I don't know, check me out?*

TT: *Kdybych šel do nějakého vašeho baru a hráli by ploužák, já nevím, zkusili byste to na mě? [If I would go into one of your bars and they would play slow dancing music, I don't know, would you try it on me?]*

This sentence was said when Jay was not sure whether he is good looking enough for his younger wife Gloria, so he asks Cameron and Mitchell, since they are gay, what they think of him. At that point, there was a reference to an American musical duo *Righteous Brothers*.

*Righteous Brothers* was a pop duo originally formed by Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield in the 1960s. This duo was making songs meant for slow dancing. It is assumed here that the target audience would not know this band, and also the name of the band, is not important here, but the type of music they play is. Americans would probably associate the name of the band with their music for slow dancing. However, the Czech audience is not expected to

have such an association. Therefore, the translator decided to omit the name of a band and substitute it with a more general expression denoting the idea of slow dancing.

Another phenomenon occurring in this sitcom's translation is a substitution of a rarely used slang expression by a word connected purely to the Czech culture. This can be seen in the following example:

(19) *ST: Hey, there are the little roustabouts.*

*TT: Hej, vy malí permoníci. [Hey, you little mine dwarfs.]*

In the original text the word *roustabouts* is used when Phil is calling at Manny and Luke, although a completely different word with a different meaning is used in Czech subtitles. This might be because *roustabouts* has no direct equivalent in Czech. The translator eventually decided for the strategy of domestication and replaced the word by a Czech expression *permoníci* [*mine dwarfs*]. Even though the ST and the TT expressions do not denote the same entities, they are both rather infrequent and obscure in the respective cultures.

The word *permoník* as a mythical creature depicts the two wild and energetic boys precisely. Similarly, it is with the word *roustabout* in English where it targets the nature of kids running around from one activity to another.

Most of the cultural references that were used refer to celebrities that are expected to be known in the source culture but not in the Czech Republic. However, the situation does not always require the viewer of the target audience to be familiar with the cultural reference. That can be seen in most of these examples since the references are not adapted to the Czech culture and do not cause problems in understanding. They simply do not bring any added value to the story and therefore leaving them unchanged is not problematic. Nevertheless, when there is a cultural reference that is crucial for understanding the story, substitution is used.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this Bachelor Thesis was to analyse subtitles and define how problematic idioms, puns and cultural references are in audiovisual translation with regard to the culture and how these aspects become transferred into TL. For the analysis of the subtitles, I chose a sitcom called *Modern Family*. This sitcom provides many examples on which the translational methods could be demonstrated. In this sitcom informal speech with the usage of slang prevails. Many idiomatic expressions and cultural references related to celebrities, places and songs were also present. Nevertheless, puns were used just rarely.

The first chapter is dedicated to the qualities and requirements of professional translators and what this profession involves. The translator's job is to understand the text and interpret it correctly to the target language. However, what is more, the translator has to spot the humorous parts and those transfer into the target language as well because that is crucial, especially for sitcoms. Sitcoms are based on jokes, and when they are not translated properly, the intended reaction of the viewer fails, and the scene loses its purpose. The key here is functional adequacy. The text has to be taken as a whole, considering the situation and context to achieve a good translation and the same reaction from the target audience.

The chapter Cultural differences in the analytical part is divided into three subchapters, each focusing on one culturally specific aspect – idioms, puns, cultural references. The analysis shows that the translational decision related to cultural references is, in most cases, to transfer the expression unchanged without adapting it to the target culture. That is rather acceptable because, in most circumstances, the scene where the cultural reference is used is understandable even without being familiar with the expression.

The cultures are very different; however, the analysis shows that in English and the Czech language idiomatic expressions with the same meaning and different form in the SL and TL can be found very often. Sometimes even the form of both the SL idiom and the TL idiom is the same. Therefore, it is only necessary to find the right equivalent. On the other side, if there is no equivalent, a translator paraphrases the idiom's meaning into the TL.

Puns or wordplays are the most problematic when translating out of the three culturally specific aspects. A translator has to be very creative and first consider the humorous side of a pun. Among the most challenging puns for translation are ambiguous puns and puns connected with cultural references. According to the analysis, SL puns are usually substituted by TL puns and sometimes left unchanged. Omission of a pun is usually not used.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SL – source language

TL – target language

ST – source text

TT – target text

## APPENDIX – EXAMPLES OF IDIOMS, CULTURAL REFERENCES, PUNS, SLANG

## IDIOMS

1. Let's *take it down a notch*. – Neprožívej to tak.
3. You *blew it*. You made me look bad. – Zvoral jsi to. Kvůli tobě jsem teď za blbce.
4. Look at those queens. I would have *killed* with this crowd. – Podívej se na ně. Já bych tu válel.
5. Alex and I can't just disagree. I mean, she has to turn everything into a fight. - S Alex se neshodneme. Ze všeho *dělá kovbojku*.
6. I have seen you *thread the needle* a million times. You never miss. – Já tě viděla navlíkat jehlu tisíckrát. Nikdy nemineš.
7. What are you, *made of china*? – Co? Jseš z porcelánu?
8. Somebody's *full of herself*. - Někdo je tu netýkavka.
9. What can I say? *I drive women crazy*. - Co říct? Ženský doháním k šílenství.
10. Guys pull pranks like that all the time. You just gotta prank 'em back. You just gotta show 'em you're willing to *give as good as you get*. – Kluci dělají takové vtípky furt. Musíš jim to vrátit. A to i s úrokama.
11. Well, mom, instead of *gradging up* the whole incident, maybe we should just try and repress it, like a – like a normal family. - Mami, než celý incident oživit, co ho zkusit potlačit...
12. Well, everyone's mad at me. Maybe you could *pave the way* so that I can apologize. - Všichni jsou na mě naštvaní. Možná bys mi mohl otevřít dveře, abych se mohla omluvit.
13. Just let her come to dinner, apologize to dad and Gloria, and she and Chas can *live happily ever after*. - Nech ji přijít na večeři, omluvit se tátovi a Glorii a budou spolu s Chasem žít šťastně až do smrti.
14. Damn it, Manny! – Sakra, Manny!
15. He set a kid's bike on fire. Why? Oh, I might have told him to *get even with some kids*, and he went all Rambo with it. - Zapálil kolo nějakému děcku. Proč? Já mu řekl, ať si to s těma děčkama vyřídí a on si zahrál na Ramba.
16. Listen, I would love to get this thing behind us, but Gloria would never forgive me if I *pulled a fast one* on her. - Rád bych tu záležitost pohřbil, ale Gloria mi neodpustí, když to udělám.
16. *Make a note*, bitches. – Zapište si to za uši, holoto.

18. *Give me a break.* I have to climb a rope today. – Dej mi pokoj. Budu dneska šplhat po laně.
19. She's always had a problem with me. I think I'm gonna find out what it is. That's the worst thing you could do. Just *sweep it under the rug.* - Vždycky se mnou měla problém. Asi zkusím zjistit, o co jde. To je ta nejhorší varianta. Zamet' to pod koberec.
20. Hold on, Jay. I think we should address *the elephant in the room* - Počkej, Jayi. Tomu problému se musíme podívat na zuby.
21. Everybody take a deep breath. Let's think about *getting real.* – Zhluboka se nadechněte. Nalijme si čistého vína.
22. Did you really have to call her that – *a gold digger?* - Tos jí tak vážně musela říkat? Zlatokopka?
23. Do you think Jay thought I was good enough for his little girl? No way. But over time, he realized that I loved Claire as much as he did. And by then, Mitch had brought Cam home, so *I was golden* - Myslel si Jay, že jsem pro jeho dceru dost dobrý? Ani náhodou. Ale časem zjistil, že miluju jeho dceru stejně jako on. Pak si Mitch přivedl Cama a já byl za vodou.
24. What, I'm supposed just to forget about it? What do you want me to do – just embarrass myself so *we're even?* - To na to mám jen tak zapomenout? Co chceš, ať udělám? Ať se ztrapním a bude to fifty-fifty?
25. That's the *oldes trick in the book.* - To je nejstarší trik na světě.
26. You are a cutie pie. Yes you are. You are *a cutie pie.* - Jsi naše malá princeznička. Ano, to jsi. Naše princeznička.
27. Wait. Why don't you make her fix this instead of you doing it as usual. - Proč to zase *žehliš* za ni místo toho, aby to dělala sama.
28. I was out of control growing up. – Já vyrůstala jako kůl v plotě.
29. When we first met, he wouldn't even look at me because I was a hick from the farm in Missouri and he is a *big city mouse.* - Když jsme se poprvé potkali, ani se na mě nepodíval, protože já byl vidlák z farmy v Missouri a on velký městský kocour.
30. I won't freak out. *Shoot.* - Já vyšilovat nebudu. Tak prosím.
31. Makes you realize we're all just hanging by a thread. – Uvědomíte si, že můžete kdykoliv umřít.
32. You need to *loosen up* and have fun. – Hele, uvolni se trošku a se bav.
33. Dance with her. *Put a little boogie in it.* – Zatanči si s ní. Trošku se odvaž.
34. They are *rudderless.* – Ztratí najednou směr.
35. *We dropped the ball* a little bit on that one. - Zpláčeme nad výdělkem.

36. Our house sucks compared to this one. – Náš dům *stojí* v porovnáním s tímhle *za starou belu*.
37. There's the *rainmaker*. – Už jde náš zlatý oslík.
38. So, there's no part of you that wants to *clear the air* with your sister? - Nechceš si to se sestrou vyříkat?
39. She's the one *acting like a pill*. – To ona je jako osina v zadku.
40. You try to *put something over on me*, you're gonna lose. – Ze mně nikdo blbce dělat nebude.
41. *Watch your back!* – Dávejte si majzla!

## PUNS

42. Act like a parent, talk like a peer. I call it *peerenting*. - Chovej se jako rodič, mluv jako vrstevník. Říkám tomu kámošovství.
43. I think concerts are rad. Hello? I was a *Hall-Raiser*. A what? I followed Hall & Oates around the country one summer. - Koncerty jsou krutopřísný. Haló? Já byl Hallovec. Co? Jeden rok jsem objel všechny koncerty Halla a Oatse.
44. Here's your note for Miss *Passwater*. – Vzkaz pro slečnu Čuravou.
45. Am I *straight*? I'm not sure what you are right now. - Mám to rovně? Fakt si nejsem jistý, co to je.
46. Looks like I gotta watch the game with *Dick Butkus*. - Budu se asi koukat s Dickem Prďousem.
47. I know what she thinks – *a coal digger*. - *Vím, co si myslí. Drátokopka.*
48. The last thing Manny needs on his first day of school is you *undermelting* his confidence. – Manny první školní den fakt nepotřebuje, abys mu podkopával jeho sebevědomí.
49. What's that smell? - Co to tu voní?  
*Sloppy jay*. - Hamjaye.
50. Mum is *sinking fast*. - Máma jde rychle ke dnu.
51. Dylan! *D-Money! Chillin' with Dylan the villan!* "D" to the "Y" to the... - Dylane! D-pracháč! Relax s milánkem Dylanem! Dé s Y na...

## CULTURAL REFERENCES

52. This is *Costco*. – Tohle je Costco!  
Yeah, which is where we buy diapers. – Jo, tady kupujeme plenky.
53. And living in *Sedona* has been transformational. – Život v Sedoně je transformační.

54. Thirty-five years we were together, and he couldn't wait 10 minutes to run off with *Charo*. - Byli jsme spolu 35 let a do deseti minut zdrhl za exotikou.
55. Give it time, and see *Banff*. – Dej tomu čas a zajed' si do Banffu.
56. “*Rich Girl*” just spoke to me. – Oslovila mě jejich „Rich Girl”.
57. I gotta tell ya, I'm a little worried about *C.J. Hightower*.- Mám trochu obavy o CJ Hightowera.
58. So my interest in football ended as suddenly and dramatically as the climax of *West Side Story*. - Můj zájem o fotbal opadl tak rychle a dramaticky jako zápletka *West Side Story*.
59. Hey, there are the little roustabouts. – Hej, vy malí *permoníci*.
60. You're seriously asking us if you're attractive? Well I know I'm no *Erik Estrada* or anything. - Vážně se nás ptáš, jak jsi přitažlivý? Víím, že nejsem Erik Estrada.
61. So if I was in one of your bars and *Righteous Brothers* were on, you know. Would you, uh, I don't know, check me out? - Kdybych šel do nějakého vašeho baru a hráli by ploužák, já nevím, zkusili byste to na mě?
62. Why is our daughter dressed like *Donna Summer*? - Proč je oblečená jako Donna Summer?
- She is not Donna Summer. Clearly she's *Diana Ross* from the R.C.A. years. - Není to Donna Summer, ale jako Diana Ross za éry RCA.
63. I just completed a series of photographs of her dressed as various pop icons. Let's see. I've done *Olivia Newton-John*, I've done *Madonna*, the early years, *Stevie Wonder*- Yeah, there are days when Lily has more costume changes than *Cher*. - Zrovna jsem dokončil fotosérii, kde je oblečená jako popové ikony. Co tam máme, Olivii Newton-John. Madonnu na počátku kariéry, Stevie Wondera... Jo, Lily někdy za den vystřídá více kostýmů než Cher.
64. I had a buddy, went to *Woodstock*, believed he could fly. – Já měl kámoše, co jel do Woodstocku, a věřil, že umí létat.
65. Just the *Emerald City* at the end of my yellow brick wall. – Smaragdové město na konci ze žlutých cihel.
66. We're doing it. We're going to *Cabo*. - Jdeme do toho. Pojedeme do Caba.
67. Oh, no way. *The Gunfighter*. I love this movie. – Hele. To je Pistolník. Ten film zbožňuju.
68. I followed *Hall & Oates* around the country one summer. - Jeden rok jsem objel všechny koncerty Halla a Oatse.
69. Looks like I gotta watch the game with *Dick Butkus*. - Budu se asi koukat s Dickem Prdousem.

70. He set a kid's bike on fire. Why? Oh, I might have told him to get even with some kids, and he went all *Rambo* with it. - Zapálil kolo nějakému děcku. Proč? Já mu řekl, ať si to s těma děckama vyřídí a on si zahrál na Ramba.

#### SLANG

71. So, Dylan, see you brought the *ax*. - Dylane, ty sis přinesl svoji kajtru.

72. These two *knuckleheads* were fighting each other. – Ti dva tupouni se servali.

73. Yeah. Nana got totally *wasted*. – Jo. Babi se totálně zrušila.

74. I think concerts are *rad*. – Koncerty jsou krutopřísný.