

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Negotiating Cultural Transfer: A Case Study on Turkish and French Dubbing of Netflix's *Emily in Paris*

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Abstract:

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) has been drawing scholarly attention due to the proliferation of streaming platforms that offer subtitles, closed captions, audio description, and dubbing across multiple languages. This article examines how multilingualism is negotiated in the French and Turkish dubbed versions of Netflix's *Emily in Paris*, as it provides us with an intriguing case study offering an opportunity to examine the nuances of dubbing in two distinct linguistic and cultural contexts: French and Turkish, a Western language and a non-Western language. With dialogues in both French and English, this bilingual and hybrid production provides an unusual opportunity to examine cultural transfer in dubbing. This case study focuses on Season 3, Episode 2, entitled "What is it all about...?" (in English), "Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?" (in French), and "Ne olacak..." (in Turkish). Including bilingual dialogues and references to both American and French cultures in the source language, this episode exemplifies the complexities of cultural transfer. The primary focus of this study is to investigate the role of multilingualism in the cultural transfer within the dubbing in both the French and Turkish versions of the episode. On the whole, this study demonstrates the challenges and culturally adaptive solutions involved in dubbing a bilingual series like *Emily in Paris*. The article argues these versions restructure multilingualism in ways shaped by linguistic proximity, target audience expectations, and audiovisual constraints.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, dubbing, cultural transfer, multilingualism

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has revolutionized the way audiences access and consume media while media companies and translators produce it across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As globalization and technological developments have intensified the circulation of multilingual audiovisual content, translation has become increasingly central to mediating linguistic and cultural difference. In our digitalized world, there is an increased demand for digital content localization which is possible through audiovisual translation (AVT) as the dependence on the "affordances offered by digitization to share information and communicate with our peers [...], exchanges have become more multimedia and audiovisual than ever before" (Diaz Cintas et Massidda, 2019). Valdeón (2022) highlights the growing importance and consolidation of AVT and its research, quoting Zanotti who states that the audiovisual content and the proliferation of streaming platforms, TV channels, programs and social media have originated the high demand. In other words, viewers of Video-on-demand (VOD) services such as Amazon Prime, HBO, Netflix and Disney Plus have been augmented astronomically.



AVT can be defined “as a practice, a product and a discipline [...] linked with a twentieth-century cultural and visual product” (Perego & Pacinotti, 2020, p.33). The acknowledgement of AVT as an academic discipline goes back to the 1990s, despite the fact that it has a lengthy history dating back to the development of cinema and the advent of silent films, in which the very first examples of subtitling appear. AVT has existed as a professional practice since the early 20th century, nevertheless, its “well-deserved visibility” by academics can be considered quite recent. (Cintas, 2008, p.1-9). Remael (2012) observes that although AVT entered Translation Studies relatively late, it has increasingly moved from the margins of the field to a more central position. There might be a lot of reasons that can explain this delay in the development of AVT as an academic field in the history of Translation Studies. Compared to the development of other omnipresent fields in Translation Studies, AVT has been neglected until this age of digital transformation, or it has gained more and more visibility and accessibility since the proliferation of on-demand services such as Netflix, Disney Plus, HBO etc. as Chaume, one of the most well-known researchers of AVT, claims in his articles. The difficulties facing a researcher working on an AVT analysis of a source, such as gaining access to movies with subtitles and dubbing at the same time, seem ridiculous today. Thanks to the internet, everything is just a click away in the third decade of the 21st century. In his article entitled “Audiovisual translation comes of age”, Cintas (2008) considers this as a “practical difficulty of having to deal with multimedia texts together” and a cause of the academic underdevelopment of AVT in comparison to the print-text orientation in Translation Studies (TS). Almost one and a half decades after the release of this article, one can readily state that the rise of VOD-type audiovisual materials has paved the way for more sophisticated research techniques, practices, and opportunities in TS.

The effects of new technological practices have a wide range of implications for the subfields of TS. For AVT, this technological turn in TS is even more important given that audiovisual materials are altered by technology more quickly than any other type of translation material. As Taylor (2020) states: “many advances in media communication that have revolutionised our ways of constructing and interpreting meaning over the last few decades [...] but debate continues as to what exactly is entailed in AVT, as the scene shifts so rapidly” (p. 84). It is important to keep pace with the latest developments in the field. Indeed, technological developments have significantly shaped AVT, as multilingual audiovisual content has become more accessible and therefore more open to detailed comparative analysis.

Dubbing and subtitling are two of AVT's most widely used techniques through which linguistic and cultural borders are negotiated. Frederic Chaume draws a comparison between the growth of research in dubbing and AVT in general “ushering in a wide array of work on professional and sociological studies, linguistic studies, descriptive studies, ideological studies, cognitive studies and case studies in the new field of audiovisual translation.” (2020). Dubbing and subtitling are receiving more scholarly attention, which is indicative of their crucial function in facilitating cross-cultural communication and influencing international media flows.

According to Christopher Taylor (2020), AVT, “like translation in general, should ideally be focused on the constant attempt to find the right balance between equivalence with the source text and fidelity to the culture of the target language, always bearing in mind that the product must sound natural and credible to the reader.” Therefore, AVT is not much different from the whole process of translation,



which “is a communicative activity that involves the transfer of information across linguistic boundaries” (Bassnett, 2011). As its academic history witnesses, TS has travelled far from such simplistic thoughts about the process of translation. The emergence of the “cultural turn” in TS coined by Bassnett and Lefevere (1998) as opposed to the linguistically oriented approaches in which fidelity and equivalence concepts translation have the uttermost importance, help us make connections between the cultural context of the texts and their translation. Undoubtedly, the development in sociological aspects in TS has also paved the way for a better understanding of the process of translation and translation as a cultural and political product. No translated work, whether audiovisual or otherwise, can be examined or evaluated in isolation from its social, cultural, and political context. This brief historical overview shows us that contemporary AVT has been increasingly dealing with multilingual audiovisual texts whose linguistic plurality poses specific challenges for dubbing. One might wonder to what extent the dubbing process of a VOD-series anchored in multicultural elements seeks fidelity and equivalence. In this qualitative comparative study, following a short discussion of dubbing practices in France and Türkiye, this paper is going to focus on the second episode of *Emily in Paris* Season 3 streamed on Netflix in order to analyse how multilingual and cultural elements are negotiated in the French and Turkish dubbed versions. Rooted in a cultural lens as a supporting analytical concept to investigate how multilingual features are preserved, adapted and neutralized in dubbing, the case study will examine how dubbing negotiates between linguistic fidelity and cultural adaptation when a bilingual, French-English series is translated into Turkish, a non-Western language.

This study thus adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach. Three excerpts were selected based on their representation of key AVT challenges. In the case study, three specific instances from the episode in question have been selected for close analysis based on the different dimensions of dubbing related to cultural and linguistic transfer: code-switching, intertextual reference, diegetic interpreting, sequences of subtitled parts, and wordplay. The first instance involves a hybrid English–French expression, anchored in the show’s recurring strategy of code-switching and its function as a marker of identity and cosmopolitanism. The second instance concerns the multimodal translation of a British-American song reference, which exemplifies the challenges of transferring culturally specific musical elements along with intertextual elements across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Finally, the third instance focuses on a pun, in other words, a form of wordplay that often resists direct translation and therefore provides valuable insight into how humour, taboo, and cultural norms are negotiated in the dubbing process. All together, these examples allow for an intense examination of how the Turkish and French dubbed versions mediate between linguistic creativity, cultural specificity, and target audience expectations, in an attempt to discover the ideological and pragmatic decisions underlying AVT in a globalized multicultural media environment.

2. Dubbing and Multilingual Audiovisual Texts

According to Chaume (2020), dubbing can be defined as “a linguistic, cultural, technical and creative team effort that consists of translating, adapting and lip-syncing the script of an audiovisual text”. The proliferation of media types such as VOD platforms is bound to change the popularity of dubbing. In Europe, where dubbing is the most widely used form of AVT, different macro- and microtextual practices are still omnipresent (Chaume, 2021). Dubbing, a crucial aspect of AVT, entails a delicate



balance between cultural adaptation, linguistic accuracy, and technical synchronization to create an audience-friendly target language rendition. The history of AVT and dubbing which remains an uncharted ground “is also essential to understand current practices.” (Chaume, 2020). Scholars have abandoned the archaic debate of the superiority of dubbing or subtitling as advances in technology have “evolved and is changing the AVT atmosphere (Bosseaux, 2018). According to Chaume, dubbing is more popular in cinema although it is widespread in TV and VOD platforms (2013). He adds that it has started to gain “popularity in the localisation of high-quality videogames and some commercials for historical, economic, and cultural reasons” (2013). Given that it is a ten-year-old article, it is possible to say that the new modalities in audiovisual localisation have changed the popularity of dubbing. Localisation, in this context, can be defined as “the processes whereby digital products and content developed in one locale are adapted for sale and use in other locales” (Dunne, 2018). Therefore, in today's global multimodality, dubbing may be seen as both a classic AVT mode and a dynamic part of the larger process of localising digital information.

Dubbing consists of a collaboration of translators, dubbing directors, dialogue writers, dubbing actors, and sound engineers that results in a dubbing output. (Chaume 2020). Typically, dubbing businesses give their text to translators first, who then create a preliminary translation and occasionally help write the dialogue. (Chaume, 2020). The process continues as follows: Dialogue writers are responsible for delivering the lip-sync, incorporating symbols, planning takes, and making the text sound like conversational discourse when translating and dialogue writing are done by different people (ibid.). This collaborative nature of dubbing demonstrates that the translation choices are not the decision of a single translator. A collective negotiation of linguistic, cultural, technical and ideological constraints is also at stake.

2.1 Translating multilingualism in dubbing

The issue seems to become more complex in multilingual audiovisual media where language difference is part of characterization, narrative structure, and cultural representation. As Pavesi (2021) highlights, increased multilingualism and multiculturalism in cinema have encouraged research on linguistic realism and the representation of otherness. In polyglot cinema, languages perform both diegetic and extra-diegetic functions, contributing to storyline, character portrayal, point of view, and authenticity (Pavesi, 2020). However, dubbing may sometimes efface, flatten, or stereotype ethnic and non-ethnic voices, hence reducing the representation of otherness. Studies on multilingual films further show that while strategies such as exoticization, compensation, and subtitling may help preserve linguistic diversity, normalizing and reductive solutions often dominate and are applied inconsistently.

This framework goes hand in hand with the series *Emily in Paris*, where the coexistence of English and French is central to the series' construction of cultural difference, humour, and identity. The present study therefore approaches the French and Turkish dubbed versions as cases of multilingualism in dubbing, while using cultural transfer as a supporting concept to examine how multilingual elements are preserved, adapted, and neutralized.



2.2 Dubbing in France

France is considered a dubbing country (Antonini, Chiaro, 2009). According to Bosseaux (2019), dubbing has been used since the early 1930s, and its usage was reinforced during the Second World War under the Vichy government. This fascist regime also led to the creation of the National Centre of Cinematography in France. She adds “it was decided that only foreign productions that are dubbed would be accepted in the French market” [as cited in Bosseaux] (Nouvel, 2007). Bosseaux also underscores that the dubbing process in France has witnessed more than eighty years, hence it is quite developed today (ibid.). Furthermore, it is fair to say that the Francophonie, a group of countries where French is a common language, makes dubbing look like the most natural and legitimate form for the French.

Dubbing has historically been associated with nationalist language policies and, in some contexts, with censorship and ideological control (Forbes & Street, 2000; Mereu Keating, 2016, as cited in Valdeón, 2022, p. 33; Sisto, 2013). However, the distinction between dubbing and subtitling in countries in Europe cannot be explained solely through censorship or nationalism.

As dubbing allowed control over the content, authorities could have an influence over alterations and censorships to align with national ideologies. Through dubbing, it is possible to change the meaning tone and cultural references to adapt it to the target audience. Even if there is no political censorship at stake, it can be a matter of cultural domestication, in other words, a process in which the foreign content sounds authentic in the target language. As a country deeply rooted in its traditions, France seems set to continue as a dubbing nation for many years to come.

2.3 Dubbing in Türkiye

The situation of the reception of AVT is very different in Türkiye due to the lack of socioeconomic resources, as opposed to France where the whole concept of cinema was invented. As Okyayuz (2017) rightly mentions, “the country had neither the resources nor the accumulation, both artistically and socially, to set up a cinema sector at the time of its establishment” (p.132). From this perspective it would not be wrong to state that AVT had no chance but to evolve rapidly as only foreign AV products were entering the market. Right after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, there were both examples of Turkish and foreign films in the Turkish cinema but led by the official state (Okyayuz, 2017). Similar to the example of France, the distribution of AV products was quite restrictive in the 1930s as the cinema was ruled by the state. Okyayuz also states that “AVT allowed the transfer of the culture of the West” (ibid.) into the country. This transfer was likely threatening and fascinating at the same time for the new republic which sought to be Western-focused with the implementation of new Western practices after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, while being on the verge of developing a new identity. The new republic opted for dubbing because there was no other alternative since the “literacy rates were lower than 10% throughout the era, subtitling was not an option. Neither was it desirable as it would not fully integrate the Western culture into the Turkish setting as it would foreignize the product in that audience would not hear Turkish” (ibid., p. 133). After five decades, there was a “switch from dubbing to subtitling in movie theatres” (Gül 2009, p. 83 as cited in Okyayuz 2017, p. 142). In the 21st century, “the politization of dubbing” is at stake (ibid., p. 143) for conservative audiences since “dubbing [...] can be widely used in circumstances and channels when products need to be fashioned



in line with societal concerns” (Okyayuz 2017, p. 141). Today, it could be interesting to investigate the preferences of the Turkish audience through the algorithms, given the development of streaming services that provide both subtitles and dubbing simultaneously.

In her article entitled *Netflix likes it dubbed: Taking on the challenge of dubbing into English*, Sánchez-Mompeán (2021) argues that the rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix has paved the way to the globalization and normalization of dubbing, even in markets that traditionally preferred subtitling. The bilingual challenges observed in *Emily in Paris* might resonate with broader industry tendencies shaped by high-quality localisation and the demands of the target audience. In this respect, assuming that Netflix continues to market dubbing across markets including English-speaking ones (Sánchez-Mompeán, 2021), the case of *Emily in Paris* demonstrates the extent to which cultural and linguistic negotiation remains central to ensuring both domestication and authenticity in bilingual audiovisual content.

3. A Comparative Case Study: Multilingualism in the French and Turkish Dubbing of *Emily in Paris*

3.1 Netflix and *Emily in Paris* as a bilingual audiovisual text

Netflix is a US production firm and streaming service with headquarters in Los Gatos, California. It has become one of the most mainstream and multinational VOD platforms since it offers dubbing in 34 and subtitling in 37 different languages. In 2021, Netflix dubbed five million minutes of programming, subtitled seven million minutes and detected that the consumption of dubbing increased 120% in comparison to the previous year (NBC Universal News Group, 2022).

Created by Darren Star for Netflix, *Emily in Paris* (2020-present) is a romantic comedy with American-French characters, starring American and French actors. Lily Collins plays the protagonist, an aspiring marketing executive called Emily Cooper. The series is set and shot in Paris. Emily Cooper is an American from the Midwest who relocates to France in order to offer an American perspective to a French marketing agency called *Savoir* (B.T. meaning learning/knowledge in French). The series is based on Emily’s cultural shock due to her traditional American background, in which she tries to be successful at work while looking for love. The whole series takes place in the Parisian region. Due to its stereotyped depiction of the French and Parisians, the series is frequently criticized. The series not only gives an unrealistic outlook of the French, but it also shows a stereotypical vision of the Americans embodied by Emily and her American boss, Madeline. This series’ original language is both English and French, which makes it a fascinating study for AVT.

In Season 3 of the series that has been released in December 2022, the protagonist Emily Cooper tries to adapt more fully to the Parisian environment than she did in previous seasons. French phrases are increasingly integrated into her English dialogues, rendering the series more multilingual. This case study would focus on the second episode entitled “*What is it all about...?*” that refers to the lyrics of the British-American song “Alfie” performed by a famous US singer Dionne Warwick and also to Emily’s British boyfriend named Alfie. In French, the name of the episode is translated as “*Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire?*” [B.T. “What does it mean?”] probably to evoke Emily’s linguistic and emotional troubles with the setting. In Turkish, the episode is translated as “*Ne olacak...*” [B.T. *What is going to*



happen...] The episode is dubbed in 18 languages and subtitled in 38 languages (as observed in January 2023). I would analyse the Turkish dubbing along with the French dubbing.

3.2 Code-switching and accent performance

In this episode, when Madeline, Emily's boss, an English-speaking native of the United States, converses with Emily in English in the original, the content is dubbed in Turkish (4:41 min). The Turkish dubbing does not resume when she speaks in French with a faint American accent, and the dialogue is then subtitled in Turkish. The audience hears the original English dialogue together with French subtitles when the French dubbed version is switched.

The dubbing begins when Madeline begins speaking in French. To conjure up stereotypes of Americans speaking bad French, the French dubbing actor uses grammatically perfect French while speaking with a strong American accent. A Turkish-dubbed version of this dialogue with a French accent could have been selected by the director and dialogue writer, but that would not have the same impact as the cliché of an American speaking French. Talking about Antoine, a French character talking fluently in English with Madeline and Emily, one can say that the Turkish dubbed version resumes. In the French version, the fact that the actor is speaking English is ignored; we only hear the French dubbed version of his cues. The only way to know that he is speaking in English in the original version is the bad synchronization. The French dubbing is not realized by the actor himself and there is a synchronisation problem: kinesic and lip. In dubbing, there are three types of synchronisation: lip (phonetic), kinesic, and isochronic synchronisation (Bosseaux, 2018). The lip synchronisation consists of "adapting the translation to the articulatory movements of the on-screen characters" (Chaume, 2012 as cited in Bosseaux, 2018). The kinesic synchronisation is about adapting the body movements to the translation. (ibid.). The latter is about "synchronisation of the duration of the translation with the screen characters' utterances" (ibid.). The imperfect synchronization can be considered as a strategy to highlight the unnaturalness of the scene as a French man is speaking English with English speakers.

Table 1. Switching from one Language to another in the Original Version

Original	French Dubbing	Turkish Dubbing
An American character having a dialogue with another American in English	Does not usually resume, the dialogue is given through subtitles, if it occasionally resumes, the American accent is evident	Resumes without any particular accent
An American character trying to speak in French with an American accent	Resumes, the French dubbing actor imitates, even exaggerates the American accent	Does not resume, the dialogue is given through subtitles
A French actor talking in English with a French accent or not	Resumes without accent, but the dubbing actor might not be the same as the actor playing the role. Some synchronization limitations	Dubbing Resumes without any particular accent
A French actor speaking French with other French-	The original is kept. Dubbing does not resume	No dubbing, only subtitles



speaking actors. (English subtitles)		
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The protagonist Emily occasionally uses some simple French words and phrases in her English interactions in the original. The French dubbing actor speaks throughout the entire conversation, which is initially filled with French vocabulary, with a strong American accent to maintain the atmosphere, to remark the difference. What is unusual is that her French dubbing does not exhibit any American accent during the phases when she talks in English without any indication of French words in the original version. As for the Turkish dubbing, the phrases in French such as “Bonjour, merci, salut” are retained and the dubbing actors utter them with a Turkish accent. The aim is probably to make the audience familiar with some basic French words. There is no dubbing, only Turkish subtitles, when the French actors converse to one another in French without an English speaker around, such as Emily or Madeline. This decision appears to serve the purpose of preserving the Parisian atmosphere and authenticity of the setting.

In the original version, there are many hybrid phrases in which code-switching appears such as “what a bonne idée” (B.T. What a good idea) (16:22), given that the word idea is originally a borrowed word in English from French (albeit its Greek origin). Code-switching refers to the use of language variety within the same audiovisual material. In multilingual films and series, code-switching may have several functions, such as a marker of different social and cultural identities, humour and realism. However, code-switching might be a challenge in dubbing since the dubbing directors must decide whether to adapt, subtitle or efface the existence of such hybrid markers. In this study, it refers to the alternation between English and French within the same audiovisual text. In French dubbing the hybrid phrase is translated directly into French “Quelle bonne idée!” however, the audience hears a change of accent when Emily utters it (16:15). But in Turkish dubbing, there is no way of making a cluster with the lexical word “idea”, “ide” or “fikir” in Turkish as the Turkish audience would not grasp it easily as this lexical blend would not be immediately accessible in the target language. So, the dubbing continues as such “İyi bir fikir” [B.T. It is a good idea], thereby eliminating the hybrid structure. Since a similar English–French lexical blend involving “idea,” “idée,” or “fikir” would not be immediately accessible to Turkish viewers, the Turkish dubbing seems to prioritize semantic clarity over multilingual play. This contrast reflects what O’Sullivan (2011) describes as the monolingualising pressure exerted on multilingual texts in translation. While the French version re-performs multilingual difference through accent, the Turkish version manages it more selectively in order to stabilize target language coherence. O’Sullivan (2011) explains that a “third language” refers to a language that is “neither the ostensible primary language of the source text nor that of the target text” (p. 184). In this sense, French functions as a “third language” in this Turkish dubbing example: it is neither the main source language nor the target language, and therefore its visibility remains unchanged (*ibid.*, p. 184). In a similar vein, the case study shows that the visibility of French in the Turkish dubbing is selectively reduced in order to render the dubbing more accessible to the target audience.



Table 2. The Dubbing of Some French Phrases

Original	Turkish Dubbing	French Dubbing
Emily: “What a bonne idée”	“İyi bir fikir!” no sign of bilingual blend	“Quelle bonne idée” with an American accent

3.3 Song reference and intertextual transfer

When it comes to the dubbing of the scene (11:27-11:57) which gives the episode its name “What is it all about?”, another dimension of cultural and multilingual transfer once again appears. In this scene, Emily gets confused with her feelings for Alfie and she expresses that she does not understand his behaviour towards her. Emily’s confusion about her cross-cultural relationship with Alfie is at stake. Her roommate Mindy, another American character starts to hum the song’s lyrics “What is all about...”. Initially composed by renowned composer Burt Bacharach to promote the eponymous British film entitled “Alfie” (Lewis Gilbert, 1966) recorded first by Cilla Black, a UK singer and then popularized by Dionne Warwick, a famous American singer, the song emerges as a cultural element and a narrative device through which Emily’s emotional confusion is expressed. Both versions became hits in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1960s. In this specific episode, the song represents the relationship between the UK and the US, two cultures historically close to one another, at the same time as the love affair between Emily and Alfie. In the episode, the reference operates on several levels: it alludes to Emily’s boyfriend Alfie, evokes a shared British-American cultural memory, and anticipates the later scene in which Emily sings the song publicly during the *Fête de la Musique* in Paris, where free concerts take place in Parisian streets. In the French version, Mindy’s cues are not dubbed, and we hear the actor sing the song in English. Since the song is sung at the end and it is a cultural component, keeping the original tune appears as a logical approach. Mindy’s line and the song remain in English, anchored in the idea of preservation of cultural authenticity. In the Turkish dubbing, the song is translated completely into Turkish in the sequence as a sign of localisation. This scene is significant because it combines dubbing and subtitling in ways that reflect the challenges of translating multilingual audiovisual content. As O’Sullivan (2011) observes, dubbing and subtitling have historically been treated as separate AVT modes, yet their combined use has become increasingly common in multilingual film contexts, partly because filmmakers and distributors must carefully consider audience resistance to subtitles (p. 198). In the French version, Mindy’s sung lines remain in English and are not dubbed, which preserves the song’s intertextual and cultural specificity. By contrast, the Turkish dubbing translates the song into Turkish, suggesting a stronger orientation toward accessibility and localization. The contrast demonstrates two different strategies for managing multilingual and intertextual material. The French version preserves the foreign-language musical reference, whereas the Turkish version adapts it for immediate target language comprehension. In this respect, the French version relies on retention and partial subtitling, while the Turkish version favours vocal translation and localization.



Table 3. Transferring an American song into a Western and a Non-Western Language

English Original	French Dubbing	Turkish Dubbing
Mindy: [singing] “What’s all about Alfie?”	Mindy: [singing] What’s all about Alfie? Subtitled / not dubbed	Mindy: [singing with the song’s melody] “Sorun nedir Alfie?” dubbed [B.T.: What is the problem, Alfie?]
Emily: “Huh?”	Emily: “Hein?” dubbed	Emily: “Hıh?” dubbed
Mindy: “The Dionne Warwick song, Alfie Come-on, What is all about when you sort it out Alfie?”	Mindy: “La chanson de Dionne Warwick, vas-y”, dubbed [singing] “What is all about when you sort it out” not dubbed	Mindy:” Dionne Warwick şarkısı. [singing] Her şeyi halledince neler oluyor Alfie? dubbed [B.T.: The Dionne Warwick song, what happens when you sort everything out Alfie]

3.4 Wordplay, humour, and cultural configuration

Finally, the scene from *Emily in Paris* (14:00-14:30 minutes) demonstrates the complexities of translating humour and sexual connotations based on linguistic ambiguity. In the English original, Luke’s statement, “I am usually like a big cock,” revolves around the polysemy of the pun *cock*, which simultaneously denotes a male rooster and carries an overt sexual connotation. The word “cock” is a pun, “a textual phenomena” [...] that “contrasts linguistic structures with different meanings on the basis of their formal similarity” (Delabastita, 1996). Emily’s puzzled reaction (“What?”) and subsequent clarification (“A rooster”) create a moment of humorous misunderstanding derived from wordplay, which is intriguing for cultural translation.

Table 4. Dubbing of a Pun

English Original	French Dubbing	Turkish Dubbing
Luke: I am usually like a big cock	Luke: Moi, d’habitude, je suis comme un coq. [B.T. I am usually like a big cock.]	Luke: Ben genelde büyük bir horozum. [B.T. I am usually a big cock]
Emily: What?	Emily: Cock?	Emily: Ne? [B.T. What?]
Luke: You know, proud, tall, protector of the flock.	Luke: Tu vois, le poulet en chef, protecteur des poules. [B.T. The chicken in chief, protector of the hens.]	Luke: Bilirsin, gururlu, uzun boylu, sürünün koruyucusu. [B.T. You know, proud, tall, the protector of the flock]



Emily: A rooster Luke: Yes! The rooster The cock or the rooster is a symbol in France, able to sing even when their feet are in the shit. That is me	Emily: Rooster Luke: Oui! On dit “coq” en français. – oui [B.T. Yes, we say “cock” in French. Yes] Tu vois le coq, c’est un des symboles de la France [B.T. You see the rooster is a symbol of France]. Parce que même avec les pattes dans la merde, ils continuent à chanter. Ça c’est tout moi: [B.T. because they are able to sing even when their feet are in the shit. That is exactly me.]	Emily: Haa erkek tavuk. [B.T. Ah, the male rooster] Luke: Evet. Horoz. İşte bu. Yani horoz. Fransa’da bir semboldür. Ayakları bok içindeyken bile şarkı söylebilir. O benim. [B.T. Yes, the cock, that’s it. It is a symbol in France. They’re able to sing even when their feet are in the shit. That is me.]
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According to Delabastita (1996), wordplay translation often involves “formal or semantic interplay between two or more linguistic structures,” posing significant challenges when transferred across languages with differing lexical systems. He adds “when the wordplay is non-significant or unintended, translators are generally expected to do the writer of the original a service by ridding the text of it – and of course by avoiding any clumsiness themselves in the formulation of their end-product.” (ibid.). However, this wordplay is not non-significant and the translators compensate through cultural and symbolic reinforcement as Luke’s depiction of the *coq* as “a symbol of France, able to sing even when their feet are in the shit,” shifts the humour from sexual innuendo to national self-irony. The French dubbing neutralizes this ambiguity, as *coq* lacks the sexual undertone present in English. According to Delabastita’s taxonomy of pun translation strategies, the French dubbing strategy is pun to non-pun, as the sexual ambiguity in cock disappears because *coq* in French has only one meaning (rooster). The humour is oriented towards cultural symbolism, which is also omnipresent in the English original. On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that the pun might still be apparent to French-English bilinguals even in the French dubbing, who are likely familiar with the word “cock” and its shared etymology with *coq*. As for the Turkish dubbing, it follows the same strategy pun to non-pun, shifting the focus to Luke’s self-description and the symbolic meaning of the rooster’s resilience, all by prioritizing cultural appropriateness. Nevertheless, the translation strategy in the Turkish dubbing differs slightly. The word “cock” is translated literally as “horoz” (rooster), whereas the double entendre is completely omitted. The elimination of sexual humor is at stake when it may not conform to target cultural norms, clarity and audience expectations are taken into consideration.

Ultimately, each version demonstrates how humour and cultural identity are negotiated differently in AVT. The English original exploits this polysemy in order to create comedic and interpersonal tension and to keep it in line with the English original, whereas the French dubbing recontextualizes humour through national symbolism. As the non-Western version, the Turkish dubbing neutralizes the pun in favour of cultural accessibility.



4. Discussion

As dubbing in general permits the manipulation of meaning and the suppression of aspects of foreign culture, it can be viewed as a form of censorship. The dubbing still seems to influence the dynamics of AVT today as a cultural and ideological practice, remembering that the past practices of censorship and manipulation first appeared under authoritarian regimes looking to establish linguistic and ideological authenticity. It is also important to bear in mind sociocultural factors, particularly the expectations of the target language audience, which also shape the choices of translation. This observation evokes once again the “cultural turn” in TS proposed by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), which shifted attention from questions of linguistic equivalence to the broader power relations and cultural negotiations inherent in any act of translation. In the context of contemporary streaming platforms such as Netflix, dubbing and subtitling do not operate as linguistic transfers but as acts of cultural mediation anymore. Therefore, my analysis shows that the dubbing of a VOD-series such as *Emily in Paris* itself is a production anchored in multicultural representations and linguistic humour, which invites us to reflect on how translators navigate through cultural stereotypes, humour, and identity markers for different linguistic audiences. This case illustrates that even within global and liberal media environments, the ideological and cultural filters of translation persist along with the historical role of dubbing as both a site of adaptation and control.

It is also observable that tracking the dubbing process of a bilingual series like *Emily in Paris* is not as easy as it seems. The choices of the French dubbing directors obviously differ from those of the Turkish, a non-Western language that does not have any linguistic similarity. The choices made by the French dubbing directors evidently seem to differ from those of the Turkish team, whose work is constrained by linguistic distance and cultural differences. The French dubbing is anchored in a more harmonious domestication process, which is obviously facilitated by the show’s original bilingual format. The decision-making is far from the process of finding an equivalence or maintaining fidelity. It aims at increasing its understandability by the target audience in a limited time, restricted by the motion of pictures and other multimodalities. Especially, it seems that the Turkish dubbing opts for fewer subtitles as the material is already bilingual and embedded within a profusion of American-English and French cultural elements. The main strategy of the Turkish dubbing directors seems to be to reduce the foreignness of the material and reduce the amount of subtitles. In other words, they tend to domesticate the material without effacing the traces of bilingualism. Getting rid of the subtitles altogether would alter the content of the series, as the main theme of *Emily in Paris* is embedded within culture shock and the difficulties of a foreign language. As almost half of the original episode is in French, the French dubbing directors have less difficulty with the domestication of the product. On the whole, dubbing decisions in *Emily in Paris* are not merely driven by equivalence. The content is rendered accessible and culturally resonant for the target audience. Particularly in the Turkish version, domestication strategies are employed to make the material intelligible while maintaining the show’s core themes of bilingualism, culture shock, and intercultural negotiation. The study of such dubbing choice through moments of linguistic ambiguity and pun reveals the extent to which translation serves not only as a bridge between languages but also as a mirror of differing cultural sensitivities and the expectations of target audiences.



5. Conclusion

This article has examined how multilingualism is negotiated in the French and Turkish dubbed versions of *Emily in Paris Season 3 Episode 2*. Through three scenes involving code-switching, musical reference, and wordplay, the analysis has shown that the two dubbed versions manage the bilingual structure of the source text quite differently. The French version tends to preserve the multilingual texture more visibly, while the Turkish version more often redirects multilingual elements toward coherence and accessibility. These findings suggest that dubbing bilingual audiovisual texts reorganizes the social, cultural, and humorous functions attached to linguistic difference.

6. Further Study

Since this study is based on three examples from a single episode, its conclusions remain exploratory rather than generalizable. Further research could examine a larger corpus of episodes or compare official dubbing with fan subtitling and fandubbing in order to explore how multilingualism is managed across different translations. As official AVT platforms such as Netflix, HBO and Disney+ are guided through a lot of regulations, it might be interesting to probe into fan subtitling and fandubbing which have become increasingly common in the age of VOD platforms, beyond official dubbing and subtitling practices. It would be worth analysing how these cases of non-professional translation might discard the censorship, formal constraints, and audience expectations, prioritising authenticity and alternatives to humour and bilingual interaction.

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