
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Humor and Vulgar Language in Spanish Subtitling: A Case Study of Contemporary Hollywood Comedy

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| ABSTRACT

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is, essentially, a form of "subordinate translation," in which the text coexists with the spatial and temporal constraints of the screen, sound, and image. Within this difficult context, one of the greatest challenges for the translator is the transfer of colloquial language and humor, since these elements not only carry a strong cultural weight but also require maintaining a specific perlocutionary force: laughter or transgression. This challenge is particularly acute in the case of the film *Liar, Liar* (1997). Subtitling faces a dilemma between remaining faithful to the vulgar register and the need for concision, due to Jim Carrey's performance, which is distinguished by frenetic verbosity and the constant use of dysphemisms to drive the plot. The aim of this article is to examine how these tensions are resolved using the strategies of Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), investigating whether semantic loss is, in fact, the unavoidable cost of preserving the illocutionary force and comic rhythm in the target language. This research falls within the framework of corpus-based translation studies, which implies a descriptive and qualitative perspective. The purpose of this study is to examine the behaviour of translation strategies applied to the translation of humorous elements and vulgar language in subtitling. Key fragments of the film that contain humorous situations and vulgar language were selected. An analysis matrix was used to examine the subtitling of these fragments. The results of this research show a predominance of Condensation and Omission strategies, due to Jim Carrey's fast speech rate and character-per-second (CPS) constraints. Furthermore, there is a noticeable substitution and neutralization of vulgar language with milder terms. Regarding wordplay and jokes, lexical recreation and compensation occur; some effects are lost in certain lines, though they are recovered in others. It follows that the translator acts as a creative adapter who reconfigures the register to accommodate the technical constraints of time and space. The success of the translation lies in preserving the perlocutionary power of humor, even across linguistic barriers.

| KEYWORDS

Audiovisual Translation; Humor; Subtitling; Vulgar Language.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Audiovisual translation (AVT) has become an essential component of contemporary media consumption, particularly in the context of streaming platforms, where multilingual content is distributed instantly to global audiences. In this environment, AVT not only helps overcome linguistic barriers but also promotes accessibility and cultural exchange. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) argue that the rise of online viewing has significantly expanded subtitling practices, generating the need to continuously update both theoretical perspectives and professional practices in response to an increasingly globalized and technologically driven industry. Consequently, the quality of audiovisual translations plays a decisive role in preserving the essence of a production and ensuring meaningful engagement with audiences from different cultural backgrounds.

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Likewise, AVT contributes significantly to shaping the viewer's experience by balancing fidelity to the source text with cultural adaptation. Current audiovisual industries no longer prioritize linguistic equivalence alone, instead, they seek translations capable of preserving the rhythm, tone, and communicative intention of the original product. As Chaume (2020) explains, the expansion of screen-based media consumption has transformed audiovisual translation into a dynamic and multimodal practice that includes professional dubbing and subtitling, integrating both acoustic and visual elements to maintain coherence in audience perception. In this sense, audiovisual translation functions as a bridge through which culturally specific narratives can reach global audiences while maintaining the author's intended message.

Among the many challenges of AVT, the transfer of humor and vulgar language in subtitling remains particularly complex because it requires translators to preserve pragmatic meaning and communicative impact under strict spatial and temporal limitations. Vulgar humor often extends beyond the literal meaning of words, relying heavily on social context, emotional tone, and audience perception. As a result, subtitling practices frequently involve omission or neutralization due to technical restrictions, which may reduce the expressive force of the original dialogue. In this regard, *Liar, Liar* (1997) constitutes a particularly relevant case study, as the film's narrative largely depends on Fletcher Reede's compulsive honesty, verbal excess, and uninhibited language. Examining the Spanish subtitling of this film offers insight into how translators manage fast-paced dialogue in which insults and vulgar humor are central narrative devices rather than secondary comedic elements.

Based on this premise, the present study aims to analyze and categorize the translation decisions employed in the Spanish subtitling of *Liar, Liar*, with particular attention to their effect on humor reception. More specifically, it seeks to identify the translation strategies proposed by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) that appear most frequently in the selected corpus, while evaluating whether technical condensation prevails over creative compensation. Through this analysis, the study intends to demonstrate how a rigorous taxonomic framework can contribute to understanding the balance between academic translation standards and the functional role of vulgar humor on screen, as well as the effectiveness of these strategies in addressing tensions between vulgar register and commercial acceptability.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Subtitling: Characteristics and Limitations

Before addressing subtitling as a modality of audiovisual translation (AVT), it is necessary to establish an understanding of translation as a broader concept. Translation, understood as the process that links a source text to its target version, has existed since ancient times and has continuously been examined and redefined across cultures (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Over time, translation has evolved from being perceived as a mere transfer of words into another language to being recognized as a complex process of cultural and communicative mediation. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), pioneers of comparative stylistics, proposed that translation involves the application of specific procedures, such as borrowing, calque, and transposition, to achieve equivalence while respecting the structural conventions of the target language. Similarly, Hurtado Albir (2001) defines translation as an interpretative and communicative process in which a text is reformulated through the resources of another language within a particular social context and communicative purpose. From this perspective, translation competence extends beyond linguistic knowledge and requires both extralinguistic awareness and transfer skills. Inevitably, translating entails expressing in one language ideas originally formulated in another while attempting to preserve both meaning and stylistic intention (Bell, 1992, as cited in Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

From a more descriptive and functional perspective, Gideon Toury (2012), a central figure in Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), shifted attention away from prescriptive notions of translation toward the role translation plays within the receiving culture. Toury (2012) introduced the concept of translation norms, arguing that translators' decisions are influenced by social and cultural regularities that shape the acceptability of the final product within the target system. Consequently, whereas earlier approaches focused primarily on technical fidelity, scholars such as Toury (2012) and Hurtado Albir (2001) reinforce the view of translation as an act of interlinguistic mediation in which contextual and sociocultural norms determine communicative effectiveness.

Since every act of translation involves the interaction of two languages and two cultural traditions, each governed by distinct norms, these elements must be considered throughout the translation process (Toury, 1995, as cited in Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Within this framework, audiovisual translation may be understood as the process of adapting texts and communicative environments that combine both auditory and visual components, encompassing a wide range of products, including films, television series, and video games (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). The primary objective of AVT is to create the impression of a coherent and natural interaction that facilitates comprehension and narrative progression, regardless of whether the content is fictional or non-fictional (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Both dubbing and subtitling aim to remain largely unnoticed, allowing audiences to engage with the narrative without being constantly aware that they are accessing a translated version. Likewise, modes of audiovisual translation refer to the different technological and translational techniques through which verbal and paraverbal elements are represented in the translated product (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Subtitles refer to the translated verbal content that viewers access through written text accompanying audiovisual material, thereby becoming an integral part of the viewing experience. In this process, linguistic adaptation requires collaborative

adjustments involving textual content, rhythm, and articulatory synchronization, making subtitling both a technical and creative practice shaped by linguistic and cultural considerations (Chaume, 2020, as cited in Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

A central feature of subtitling is isochrony, which involves adjusting the duration of translated utterances so that they begin and end in coordination with the original dialogue, ensuring synchronization within the audiovisual product (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Subtitles are typically positioned at the bottom of the screen, a placement determined by both technical and cognitive considerations. Their purpose is to remain visible without excessively distracting viewers, which is why their lower-screen positioning facilitates horizontal reading while minimizing interference with visual content (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). In subtitling, the most relevant form of synchronization is the alignment between subtitle appearance and the timing of the original utterance. In addition, subtitles must comply with production requirements specific to films or episodes, including timing restrictions, scene transitions, camera cuts, and readability standards designed to optimize audience comprehension (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

At the microtextual level, all translation operations from source text (T1) to target text (T2), including words, clauses, and phrases, must be addressed through translation techniques (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Since no universally accepted consensus exists regarding terminology in translation studies, these techniques may also be described as procedures, shifts, or strategies, sometimes with subtle distinctions between them (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). In the present study, translation techniques are not understood as prescriptive rules, but rather as flexible tools intended to encourage translators' creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving capacity.

2.2 Translating Humor: Humor as a Challenge of Cultural and Linguistic Equivalence

The translation of humor and irony constitutes one of the most demanding areas within translation studies, as it involves not only transferring meaning between languages but also recreating an intended communicative effect. In humorous discourse, the translator must preserve the illocutionary force of the original text, that is, its ability to provoke laughter, criticism, or satire, within a target culture that may not necessarily share the same linguistic or cultural references.

The scope of humor translation (HT) extends far beyond cinematic jokes, encompassing diverse audiovisual genres such as parody, satire, hidden-camera programs, and television sitcoms. Humor and irony frequently involve communicative risks, as their interpretation may lead to successful audience engagement, misunderstanding, or even offense depending on cultural reception and contextual expectations (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

The translation of humor and irony therefore requires an integrated translation competence that exceeds simple linguistic transfer. According to Hurtado Albir (2001), translation competence includes a pragmatic dimension capable of interpreting communicative intentions and decoding complex illocutionary meanings. To address these challenges, translators frequently rely on adaptation procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), which facilitate the replacement of culturally specific references from the source text with functionally equivalent situations in the target culture, thereby helping preserve the intended humorous effect.

Nevertheless, the selection of these strategies is not arbitrary. As Toury (2012) explains through the concept of operational norms, translators' decisions are shaped by the degree of creativity and acceptability permitted within the target system. Consequently, translators are often required to negotiate between preserving fidelity to the original wordplay and ensuring that humor or irony remains effective for a new audience.

Specialized scholarship on humor translation (HT) emerged in the mid-1990s as a result of growing audiovisual translation (AVT) research on feature films, sitcoms, and television comedies (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Both theoretically and practically, the relationship between humor and translation has often been considered problematic or controversial due to the highly contextual and transient nature of humor, which depends on specific situations, cultural assumptions, and communicative circumstances (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Furthermore, humor may target highly specific audiences and depends considerably on communicative intention. In some cases, humorous discourse may provoke discomfort, offense, or rejection among particular groups or individuals, while in others it functions primarily as entertainment without necessarily conveying explicit informational content (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Like many textual features, humor is often ephemeral and culturally situated, meaning that not all humorous texts are intended to remain relevant over time. Humor also encourages audiences to avoid excessively literal or solemn interpretations. A joke or humorous textual element may appear in multiple formulations, versions, or adaptations, which may gradually obscure authorship or even result in the content becoming anonymous or reassigned to different sources (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

To be translated effectively, humor requires a considerable degree of creativity capable of preserving its communicative function as a form of human interaction. However, some perspectives argue that successful humorous translation is nearly unattainable due to the cultural specificity of comedic effects. Moreover, humor does not always serve positive or friendly purposes; it may also function as a vehicle for negative emotions, including anger, frustration, hostility, or even threats (Zabalbeascoa, 2025).

Within audiovisual translation, the transfer of humor and irony is particularly influenced by the spatiotemporal constraints inherent to subtitling, requiring translators to develop highly refined strategic competence. Hurtado Albir (2001)

argues that this competence allows translators to prioritize pragmatic load over literal meaning, thereby ensuring that target audiences experience an illocutionary effect comparable to that of the original text.

In this regard, Nida (1964) introduces the concept of dynamic equivalence, which may be evaluated according to the reactions generated among source-text (T1) and target-text (T2) audiences (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Similarly, the procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) become essential when recreating wordplay, sarcasm, or culturally dependent humor that would otherwise lose meaning within the receiving culture.

However, the omission, condensation, or substitution of humorous elements is not determined solely by technical constraints. According to Toury (2012), such decisions are also regulated by operational norms governing the acceptability of audiovisual products within the target system, shaping the balance between fidelity to the original script and the fluency of audience reception.

In addition to these approaches, the proposals developed by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), together with those of Santamaria Guinot (2001), provide what may be understood in subtitling practice as a practical “toolbox” for managing spatiotemporal limitations without sacrificing humorous or ironic meaning. Ultimately, the translation of irony in subtitling depends not only on translation competence (Hurtado Albir, 2001), but also on the strategic application of procedures that enhance the target text’s acceptability within the receiving system (Toury, 2012).

According to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), when translators encounter humor based on cultural references, they may rely on procedures such as borrowing or calque to preserve the foreignness of the original text, although these strategies often require explicitation to prevent the loss of double meanings or cultural implications. However, when humor is predominantly linguistic, local substitution or lexical recreation, through the creation of humorous neologisms, becomes essential to maintaining the original illocutionary effect.

Similarly, Santamaria Guinot (2001) emphasizes that the nature of subtitling inevitably requires condensation and omission due to restrictions related to character limits and reading speed. Nevertheless, in the case of irony and humor, such losses may sometimes be compensated through reformulations or compensatory strategies introduced in subsequent segments. While transposition contributes to preserving the rhythm and natural flow of humorous discourse, addition remains considerably more limited because of screen-space restrictions. Ultimately, these strategies operate under the assumption that translational fidelity resides not exclusively in linguistic form, but in the successful transfer of wit, humor, and communicative intention.

The present study adopts the procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995), together with the subtitling taxonomies developed by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) and Santamaria Guinot (2001). These scholars identify eleven major translation strategies relevant to subtitling practices:

1. Borrowing (BORR) refers to the use of the same word or expression from the source language (SL) in the target language (TL), preserving the original linguistic form.
2. Calque (CAL) involves a literal translation of a word or expression, reproducing the structure of the source language as closely as possible.
3. Explicitation (EXP) consists of adapting a reference to make it more accessible to target audiences by employing either a hyponym (a more specific term) or a hypernym (a broader term), thereby clarifying or generalizing meaning. For example, replacing his wife and children with the broader category his family.
4. Substitution (SUBS) represents a variation of explicitation and constitutes a common subtitling strategy, even when the original term may already exist in the target language. In these cases, the translator opts for a more culturally or contextually effective alternative.
5. Transposition (TRAN) occurs when a culturally bound reference is replaced with another reference originating from a different cultural framework in order to maintain communicative relevance.
6. Lexical Recreation (LR) involves the creation of neologisms or newly coined expressions considered acceptable within the target language, particularly when the source text itself introduces invented or playful lexical forms.
7. Compensation (COM) is a common subtitling strategy through which translators creatively compensate for unavoidable translation losses elsewhere in the text, preserving pragmatic or humorous effects.
8. Omission (OMS) refers to the removal of certain elements of the message when technical limitations make full transfer impossible. Omissions frequently affect proper nouns, adverbs, conjunctions, or secondary information.
9. Addition (ADD), understood as a form of explicitation, may occur when a cultural reference is unlikely to be understood by the target audience and therefore requires additional explanation to ensure comprehension. Due to spatial restrictions, however, this strategy is relatively uncommon in subtitling.
10. Condensation (CON) involves the partial reduction of textual material while retaining the essential communicative meaning of the original utterance.
11. Reformulation (REF) consists of expressing meaning through alternative wording. Since subtitlers are often required to condense and paraphrase expressions according to audience reading speed, reformulation becomes a frequent strategy in audiovisual translation.

2.3 Vulgar Language: The Functions of Dysphemisms and Cacophemisms in Film and Their Treatment in Subtitling

Vulgar language and dysphemistic expressions constitute some of the most recurrent resources in audiovisual translation (AVT), particularly in genres such as comedy, where insults, taboo expressions, and sexual references contribute significantly to humor construction and character development. According to Natalías (2009), dysphemism refers to the use of pejorative or degrading expressions intended to ridicule, criticize, or emphasize negative characteristics associated with a person, situation, or social reality. Similarly, Quevedo (2019) argues that this type of language may also fulfill a humorous function by exaggerating offensive, grotesque, or socially inappropriate traits.

Within cinematic discourse, vulgar language performs multiple pragmatic functions, including intensifying emotional expression, generating comedic effects, reinforcing power relations between characters, and contributing to the creation of colloquial and realistic speech patterns. However, the translation of vulgar language presents considerable challenges due to cultural differences and the sociolinguistic weight attached to insults and taboo language across linguistic systems. In this regard, Mona Baker (1992) emphasizes that translators should prioritize communicative function and emotional impact rather than relying exclusively on literal equivalence.

Subtitling, as a modality of audiovisual translation (AVT), consists of incorporating written text onto the screen, typically positioned at the bottom, in order to translate or transcribe spoken dialogue and auditory narration. According to Jorge Díaz Cintas (2003), one of the leading scholars in AVT, subtitling is considered a "subordinate" or "constrained" form of translation because translators must work under strict technical limitations, including restricted screen space, character limits per subtitle and line, as well as temporal constraints related to subtitle duration and synchronization with the actors' speech.

Within subtitling practice, spatiotemporal constraints frequently require translators to condense, neutralize, or omit vulgar expressions. Díaz Cintas (2003) notes that subtitlers operate within technical restrictions that necessitate reducing redundancy and selecting only the most essential information in order to preserve readability. As a result, many offensive expressions in English are often softened in Spanish through strategies such as substitution or reformulation.

Likewise, Venuti (1995) suggests that the treatment of vulgar language may fluctuate between domestication and foreignization. In some cases, translators adapt insults to expressions that feel more natural within the target culture, whereas in others they preserve the harshness of the original discourse in order to maintain its pragmatic force. In films such as *Liar, Liar* (1997), where humor relies heavily on verbal excess and the protagonist's spontaneous vulgarity, these translational decisions become particularly relevant for preserving both comedic impact and character construction.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research approach focused on analyzing the translation strategies employed in the subtitling of humor and vulgar language in *Liar, Liar* (1997). Directed by Tom Shadyac, the film tells the story of Fletcher Reede, a successful lawyer whose personal and professional life is shaped by his habitual reliance on deception. His behavior gradually damages his relationship with his family, particularly with his son, who, frustrated by his father's repeated broken promises, wishes for Fletcher to be unable to lie for twenty-four hours. As a result, the protagonist becomes involved in a series of comedic situations triggered by his inability to conceal the truth. This narrative context makes the film a particularly relevant corpus for examining humor, irony, vulgar language, and linguistic play in audiovisual subtitling.

The analysis is grounded in the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) proposed by Gideon Toury (2012), which allows translational decisions to be examined within their sociocultural and functional context rather than through prescriptive perspectives. Likewise, a top-down approach is employed to identify the preliminary, operational, and structural norms regulating the transfer of the corpus into the target culture.

Following the proposals of Mona Baker (1995), the study makes use of a parallel corpus composed of the original English script and its corresponding Spanish subtitles. Corpus selection was selective and representative, prioritizing scenes in which humor, dysphemistic expressions, vulgar language, and wordplay perform a significant narrative function within the film's comedic construction.

For data treatment, the methodological criteria proposed by Saldanha and O'Brien (2014) were considered, as these authors argue that qualitative corpus-based analysis should rely on the close examination of recurring meaning patterns and pragmatic functions. Accordingly, the analysis focused on identifying recurrent patterns related to humor transfer, the intensity of vulgar language, and the preservation of the discourse's perlocutionary force. In addition, technical constraints inherent to subtitling, particularly characters per second (CPS), were considered as a determining factor influencing the translational decisions observed.

The study corpus consisted of a selection of key dialogues from *Liar, Liar*, analyzed through a comparative framework that included the original script, the Spanish subtitle, the identified translation strategy, and its corresponding translational analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1.

Audiovisual Translation Analysis Matrix

Time Code (TC)	Original Script (English)	Subtitle (Spanish)	Identified Strategy	Analysis
00:54:27	"I'm kicking my ass, do you mind?!"	"¡Me estoy dando una paliza! ¿Le importa?"	Substitution / Omission	The subtitle mitigates the vulgar expression <i>ass</i> by replacing it with <i>paliza</i> ("beating"), thereby reducing the offensive tone while preserving the humorous intent of the scene.
00:28:57	"The pen is blue! The goddam pen is blue!"	"¡La pluma es azul! ¡La maldita pluma es azul!"	Calque / Reformulation	The translation largely preserves the grammatical structure and repetitive emphasis of the original utterance. The adjective <i>goddamn</i> is rendered as <i>maldita</i> , maintaining the emotional intensity and comedic absurdity that characterize the scene.
00:21:33	"New in the building?"	"¿Hace poco vive aquí?"	Reformulation	The subtitle reformulates the original structure by replacing the adjective <i>new</i> with a temporal expression (<i>hace poco</i>) and omitting the explicit reference to the building. Despite these modifications, the conversational meaning and implied intention of the question remain intact.
00:21:34	"Yeah, I just moved in Monday."	"Me mudé el lunes."	Condensation / Omission	Two elements of the source text are omitted: the affirmative marker <i>yeah</i> and the adverb <i>just</i> , which conveys immediacy in English. The subtitle retains only the informational core of the sentence, prioritizing economy and readability.
00:21:36	"Oh. You like it so far?"	"¿Le gusta?"	Condensation / Omission	The interjection <i>oh</i> and the temporal modifier <i>so far</i> are removed. The subtitle preserves only the central communicative function of the question, producing a more concise version suitable for subtitling constraints.
00:21:38	"Mm-hmm. Everybody's been real nice."	"Todos son muy amables."	Condensation / Omission	The phatic confirmation <i>mm-hmm</i> is omitted, while <i>been real nice</i> is simplified into the present tense (<i>son muy amables</i>). Although the subtitle preserves the positive evaluation, the temporal nuance associated with the present perfect is reduced.
00:21:41	"Well, that's because you have big jugs."	"Porque tiene tremenda pechuga."	Substitution / Omission	The subtitle replaces <i>big jugs</i> , a slang term with sexual connotations, with <i>tremenda pechuga</i> , an expression that maintains the vulgar and humorous undertone of the original while sounding natural in the target language. The discourse marker <i>well</i> is omitted, as it contributes little to the communicative core of the utterance.
00:21:44	"I mean, your boobs are huge."	"Digo, ¡qué tetonas tiene!"	Reformulation / Substitution	The structure shifts from a declarative statement (<i>your boobs are huge</i>) to an exclamatory construction (<i>¡qué tetonas tiene!</i>), intensifying the comedic and spontaneous effect of the dialogue. <i>Boobs</i> is substituted with <i>tetonas</i> , a colloquial and equally direct term that preserves the vulgar register of the character.
00:21:46	"I mean, I wanna squeeze 'em"	"Digo, quisiera apretarlas."	Calque / Condensation	The translation remains largely literal, preserving both the verb and the communicative intention of the original utterance. However, the colloquial contraction <i>wanna</i> is slightly formalized as

				<i>quisiera</i> , resulting in a minor reduction of the informal tone.
00:21:51	"Mama."	Se omite.	Omission	The expression is entirely removed from the subtitle, most likely due to spatial or temporal constraints, as it contributes minimally to the progression of the scene.
00:46:34	"Pardon me for interrupting your meeting."	"Perdone la interrupción,"	Condensation / Reformulation	The subtitle condenses the original utterance by nominalizing the verbal phrase <i>for interrupting</i> into <i>la interrupción</i> , while omitting the explicit reference to <i>your meeting</i> . This reformulation produces a more concise and formal expression suitable for subtitle readability.
00:46:36	"Mr. Allan, you remember Fletcher Reede?"	"Sr. Allan... ¿se acuerda de Fletcher Reede?"	Calque	The subtitle constitutes an almost literal translation that preserves the syntactic structure, tone, and communicative function of the original utterance without significant omissions or cultural adaptations.
00:46:41	"Oh yes. Nice to see you again, Fletcher."	"Sí. Me alegro de verte, Fletcher."	Condensation / Omission	Two minor elements are omitted: the interjection <i>oh</i> and the adverb <i>again</i> , which in the original signals a prior acquaintance between the characters. <i>Nice to see you</i> is reformulated into the more idiomatic Spanish expression <i>me alegro de verte</i> , prioritizing naturalness and fluency over literal equivalence.
00:46:43	"And by the way, I'll be observing you in court this afternoon."	"Esta tarde voy a ir a verte al juzgado."	Condensation / Reformulation	The discourse marker <i>and by the way</i> is omitted, removing the conversational transition that softens the underlying warning in the original dialogue. Additionally, <i>I'll be observing you</i> is reformulated as <i>voy a ir a verte</i> , which reduces the evaluative and supervisory connotations associated with <i>observing</i> in a professional context.
00:46:46	"I've been hearing some good things about you."	"Me han hablado muy bien de ti"	Reformulation	The subtitle preserves the overall meaning while restructuring the sentence in a more idiomatic way. The active construction <i>I've been hearing</i> becomes the impersonal <i>me han hablado</i> , shifting the emphasis away from the speaker and aligning with more natural Spanish usage.
00:46:49	"Well, Fletcher has just been telling me how much he thinks of you."	"Fletcher me estaba comentando cuánto lo aprecia."	Condensation / Omission	The subtitle omits both the discourse marker <i>well</i> and the adverb <i>just</i> , which in the original contributes immediacy to the utterance. Furthermore, the present perfect continuous (<i>has just been telling</i>) is reformulated into the imperfect tense (<i>estaba comentando</i>), a more natural and fluid construction in Spanish.
00:46:54	"Why don't you tell Mr. Allan?"	"Dile al Sr. Allan."	Reformulation	The rhetorical question of the source text is transformed into a direct imperative. In English, <i>why don't you...</i> often functions as an indirect suggestion rather than a genuine question; therefore, the subtitle adopts a more concise and communicatively efficient structure in Spanish.

00:46:56	"Well, what do you think of him?"	"¿Qué opinas de él?"	Condensation / Omission	The discourse marker <i>well</i> is omitted, while <i>what do you think of</i> is condensed into the more compact expression <i>qué opinas de</i> . The translation successfully preserves the communicative purpose while sounding more natural in Spanish.
00:47:06	"He's a pedantic, pontificating, pretentious bastard."	"Es un pendejo, pedante, pomposo y presumido."	Lexical Recreation / Substitution / Compensation	The original dialogue relies on alliteration through repeated <i>p</i> sounds (<i>pedantic, pontificating, pretentious</i>) as both a rhetorical and comedic device. The subtitle successfully recreates this phonetic effect by incorporating additional words beginning with <i>p</i> (<i>pendejo, pedante, pomposo, presumido</i>). Although some semantic precision is sacrificed, the translation prioritizes stylistic impact and humorous rhythm. In particular, <i>pontificating</i> is compensated through <i>pomposo</i> and <i>presumido</i> , while <i>bastard</i> is repositioned as <i>pendejo</i> to strengthen the insult in a culturally appropriate manner.
00:47:09	"A belligerent old fart, a worthless, steaming pile of cow dung--"	"Un miserable mojón de mierda..."	Condensation / Omission / Substitution	The original utterance accumulates multiple exaggerated insults that contribute to the comedic escalation of the scene. The subtitle condenses these insults into a single, more direct vulgar expression. As a result, nuances associated with <i>belligerent old fart</i> and <i>worthless</i> are omitted, while <i>steaming pile of cow dung</i> is substituted with <i>mojón de mierda</i> , preserving the scatological register despite a reduction in descriptive detail.
00:47:15	"figuratively speaking."	"en sentido figurado."	Calque	This example reflects a direct and largely literal translation. The subtitle preserves both meaning and register without requiring cultural adaptation or structural reformulation.
00:47:38	"That's the funniest damn thing I've ever heard."	"En mi vida había oído nada tan gracioso."	Reformulation / Omission	The sentence is substantially restructured from an affirmative superlative (<i>the funniest damn thing</i>) into a negative hyperbolic expression (<i>en mi vida había oído nada tan gracioso</i>), a formulation that sounds highly natural in Spanish. Although the intensifier <i>damn</i> is omitted, the emphatic force of the utterance is preserved through the hyperbolic construction.
00:47:41	"You're a real card, Reede."	"Qué cómico eres, Reede."	Substitution	The idiomatic expression <i>you're a real card</i> , which refers to someone amusing or entertaining, lacks a direct equivalent in Spanish. Consequently, it is replaced with <i>qué cómico eres</i> , a natural and communicatively effective alternative that preserves the humorous intention of the original dialogue.
00:47:44	"I love a good roast."	"Me encanta el sentido del humor."	Explicitation / Substitution	In this context, <i>roast</i> refers to a culturally specific form of entertainment in which humorous insults are directed toward an individual. Since no direct equivalent exists in the target culture, the subtitle generalizes the concept through the hypernym <i>sentido del humor</i> , preserving the intended humorous tone while sacrificing cultural specificity.

00:47:47	"Do Simmons!"	"Hazlo con Simmons."	Explication	The original utterance is elliptical, omitting the direct object and relying on contextual understanding that the speaker refers to impersonating Simmons. The subtitle introduces <i>lo</i> and <i>con</i> , explicitly clarifying the intended action for the target audience.
00:47:50	"Simmons is old."	"Simmons está senil."	Substitution	The adjective <i>old</i> is replaced with <i>senil</i> , a considerably more specific and loaded term. Rather than maintaining literal equivalence, the subtitle intensifies the insult, reinforcing the brutal honesty and offensive tone characteristic of the protagonist's speech.
00:47:53	"He should have been out of the game years ago, but he can't stay home 'cause he hates his wife."	"No quiere jubilarse para no tener que ver a su esposa."	Condensation / Reformulation	The original utterance contains two connected clauses with an explicit cause-and-effect relationship. The subtitle condenses both ideas into a single reformulated sentence that implies the same meaning more economically. Expressions such as <i>out of the game</i> and <i>he can't stay home</i> are omitted, while the central humorous implication is preserved.
00:47:59	"You've met her at the Christmas parties. She's the one that gets plastered and calls him a retard."	"La que se emborracha en la fiestas y le dice cretino."	Condensation / Omission / Substitution	The subtitle omits the opening sentence, thereby removing contextual information about the Christmas parties and the audience's familiarity with the character. <i>Christmas parties</i> is generalized into <i>fiestas</i> , while <i>gets plastered</i> is functionally rendered as <i>se emborracha</i> , reducing the exaggerated nuance of intoxication. Finally, <i>retard</i> is substituted with <i>cretino</i> , preserving the offensive tone without relying on a direct or potentially more problematic equivalent.
00:48:05	"And you, Tom. You're the biggest brownnose I've ever seen!"	"¡Y tú, Tom, eres el lameculos más rastrero del mundo!"	Substitution / Compensation	<i>Brownnose</i> , an idiomatic insult referring to excessive flattery or servility, is translated as <i>lameculos</i> , a culturally natural equivalent that effectively preserves the vulgar register of the original. Additionally, <i>I've ever seen</i> is reformulated as <i>del mundo</i> , introducing a different but equally emphatic hyperbole that compensates for the stylistic shift.
00:48:09	"You've got your head so far up Mr. Allan's ass, I can't tell where you end and he begins!"	"Le has lamido tanto el culo a Allan que se te trabó la cabeza."	Reformulation / Compensation	The original dialogue employs a grotesque and spatial metaphor to intensify the insult. Rather than translating this imagery literally, the subtitle reformulates it into a humorous consequence of excessive flattery, creatively connecting it with the previous insult <i>lameculos</i> . Although the visual metaphor changes substantially, the vulgar and comedic effect remains effective.
00:48:18	"You have bad breath caused by gingivitis."	"A ti te apestan las encías."	Condensación / Reformulación	El original especifica la causa médica del mal aliento, el subtítulado reformula la idea directamente como "te apestan las encías", fusionando ambos elementos en una sola expresión.

00:48:21	"You couldn't get a porn star off."	"A ti ya no se te para."	Reformulation / Compensation	The original utterance explicitly identifies the medical cause of the bad breath (<i>gingivitis</i>), whereas the subtitle condenses the information into a direct colloquial expression. By merging cause and effect into a single statement, the subtitle achieves greater economy while preserving the insulting intent.
00:48:22	"Your hairpiece looks like something that was killed crossing the highway."	"Esa peluca parece un animal aplastado."	Condensation / Reformulation	The original line develops a vivid and humorous visual image of an animal killed while crossing the highway. The subtitle condenses this description into the shorter expression <i>animal aplastado</i> , sacrificing some narrative detail while preserving the grotesque visual humor and offensive intention.
00:48:25	"I don't know whether to comb it or to scrape it off with a shovel and bury it in lime!"	"No sé si peinarla o darle sepultura."	Condensation / Omission	The original dialogue builds humor through cumulative absurd imagery, contrasting grooming with violently removing and burying the hairpiece. The subtitle preserves the binary structure but drastically reduces descriptive detail, replacing the second option with the concise phrase <i>darle sepultura</i> . Consequently, much of the original comedic accumulation is lost in favor of textual economy.
00:48:31-00:48:35	"Loser!" "Idiot!" "Wimp!" "Degenerate!" "Slut!"	"¡Fracasado!" "¡Idiota!" "¡Culón!" "¡Degenerado!" "¡Perra!"	Calque / Substitution	<i>Loser</i> and <i>degenerate</i> are translated through relatively direct equivalence, preserving both meaning and insulting force. <i>Idiot</i> functions as a near-direct borrowing due to lexical similarity between both languages. However, <i>wimp</i> , which typically refers to cowardice or weakness, is substituted with <i>culón</i> , a culturally different insult that diverges semantically from the original. Likewise, <i>slut</i> is rendered as <i>perra</i> , preserving aggression while reducing the explicit sexual connotation associated with the source text.

5. RESULTS

The analysis of the Audiovisual Translation Analysis Matrix reveals a predominance of condensation and omission strategies throughout the subtitling of *Liar, Liar* (1997). These strategies appear primarily due to Jim Carrey's rapid speech delivery and the technical constraints inherent to subtitling, particularly those associated with characters per second (CPS). Because of the fast-paced rhythm of the dialogues, the subtitler is frequently required to reduce secondary information in order to ensure subtitle readability and synchronization with the audiovisual text.

This tendency can be observed in fragments such as "Yeah, I just moved in Monday", translated as "Me mudé el lunes", where both the initial confirmation marker *yeah* and the adverb *just* are omitted, preserving only the essential informational content of the utterance. Similarly, in "Oh. You like it so far?", rendered as "¿Le gusta?", the subtitle removes the interjection and simplifies the syntactic structure to accommodate spatial limitations. Likewise, "Mm-hmm. Everybody's been real nice" becomes "Todos son muy amables", eliminating discourse markers and reformulating the sentence in a shorter and more natural way in Spanish. These examples demonstrate how condensation enables the preservation of communicative functionality without visually overloading the screen.

At the same time, the analysis reveals a recurring tendency toward the partial neutralization of vulgar and offensive language. In several instances, expressions carrying a high colloquial or vulgar load are softened to better fit Spanish usage and subtitling restrictions. One example appears in "I'm kicking my ass, do you mind?!", translated as "¡Me estoy dando una paliza! ¿Le importa?", where the vulgar term *ass* disappears entirely and is replaced with a less explicit expression. This translational choice preserves the humorous tone of the scene without reproducing the original vulgarity verbatim.

Nevertheless, despite occasional neutralization of offensive language, the subtitler also employs strategies such as lexical recreation and compensation to preserve both the humorous effect and the exaggerated personality of the protagonist.

This can be observed in the translation of "Well, that's because you have big jugs" as "Porque tiene tremenda pechuga", where the sexual double meaning of the original is adapted through a colloquial expression that performs a comparable communicative function in Spanish. Similarly, "I mean, your boobs are huge" becomes "Digo, ¡qué tetonas tienen!", successfully maintaining the vulgar and humorous tone of the interaction.

One of the clearest examples of lexical recreation appears in the line "He's a pedantic, pontificating, pretentious bastard", translated as "Es un pendejo, pedante, pomposo y presumido." In this instance, the translator partially modifies the precise semantic meaning of certain lexical items in order to preserve the alliterative pattern centered on the letter p, a stylistic device that contributes substantially to the comedic effect of the original discourse. This example illustrates that translational priorities do not always rest on literal fidelity, but rather on preserving the humorous and pragmatic impact of the scene.

Likewise, reformulation emerges as a recurring strategy for adapting idiomatic expressions and English syntactic structures into forms that sound more natural in Spanish. For example, "Why don't you tell Mr. Allan?" is translated as "Díle al Sr. Allan", replacing the rhetorical question of the source text with a more direct imperative that functions more efficiently within subtitling conventions. Similarly, "That's the funniest damn thing I've ever heard" is reformulated as "En mi vida había oído nada tan gracioso", preserving the emphatic intention of the original despite substantially altering its syntactic structure.

Additionally, several cases demonstrate how compensation allows translators to recover humorous effects that may be lost elsewhere in the subtitled discourse. A representative example appears in "You've got your head so far up Mr. Allan's ass, I can't tell where you end and he begins!", translated as "Le has lamido tanto el culo a Allan que se te trabó la cabeza." Although the grotesque visual imagery of the original is abandoned, the subtitle constructs a new exaggeration that remains equally offensive and humorous, thereby preserving both the irreverent characterization of the protagonist and the comedic tone of the scene.

Overall, the findings suggest that the subtitling of *Liar, Liar* prioritizes communicative intention, humor preservation, and discursive naturalness over strict literal equivalence. Although certain semantic losses appear unavoidable due to the technical limitations of audiovisual translation, strategies such as condensation, compensation, reformulation, and lexical recreation prove effective in preserving a substantial portion of the humor and irreverent tone embedded in the source text.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis conducted on the subtitling of *Liar, Liar* (1997), it can be concluded that the most frequently employed translation strategies were condensation, omission, and reformulation. The predominance of these strategies is directly associated with the technical constraints inherent to subtitling, particularly limitations related to characters per second (CPS), subtitle display time, and Jim Carrey's rapid speech delivery. Due to the accelerated pace of the dialogues, the subtitler was consistently required to synthesize information in order to guarantee readability and facilitate audience comprehension of the audiovisual text.

The findings indicate that a substantial portion of the lexical losses identified in the subtitles cannot necessarily be attributed to censorship, but rather to functional decisions shaped by the spatial and temporal limitations of the medium. In numerous examples, interjections, repetitions, discourse markers, and secondary elements of speech were omitted to prioritize essential information. Likewise, several vulgar or offensive expressions underwent partial neutralization through the use of less aggressive terms in Spanish. This tendency is particularly evident in fragments where expressions such as *ass* or more elaborate offensive utterances were replaced by shorter and comparatively neutral formulations.

Nevertheless, although certain expressions experienced a reduction in semantic intensity during the translation process, the study demonstrates that the subtitler frequently relied on compensation, functional equivalence, and lexical recreation to preserve the humorous effect of the source text. In scenes where humor depended on double meanings, exaggeration, or creative insults, the translator adapted the content through colloquial expressions capable of performing an equivalent communicative function within the target culture. Similarly, in several cases, priority was given to maintaining comedic tone and pragmatic intention rather than strict literal fidelity, thereby preserving the exaggerated and irreverent personality of the protagonist.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the central role of reformulation within audiovisual subtitling. Numerous idiomatic structures and English-specific expressions were transformed into more natural and functionally appropriate formulations for Latin American Spanish, enabling viewers to maintain a fluent reception of the content. This finding reinforces the notion that audiovisual translation extends beyond the transfer of linguistic meaning and also involves the adaptation of cultural references, discourse registers, and pragmatic effects to the receiving context.

Regarding the perlocutionary force of the discourse, the study concludes that the humorous effect and communicative intention of the source text were largely preserved despite the unavoidable semantic losses associated with subtitling constraints. The comedy, discomfort, and verbal exaggeration characteristic of the protagonist remain perceptible to target audiences through the combined use of strategies such as equivalence, compensation, and lexical recreation. Although certain cultural nuances and linguistic wordplay could not be fully retained, the subtitles successfully convey the humorous and chaotic tone that defines the film.

Finally, this research highlights the role of the audiovisual translator as a creative mediator who must constantly balance fidelity, naturalness, and communicative functionality while operating within multiple technical restrictions. The translational decisions identified throughout the corpus reflect an ongoing negotiation between preserving source-text content and adapting it to the reading and comprehension needs of target audiences. The analysis of *Liar, Liar* demonstrates that humor, vulgar language, and dysphemistic expressions represent significant challenges for subtitling, requiring creative strategies capable of preserving the pragmatic and emotional impact of the original discourse without compromising readability or linguistic naturalness in the target text.

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