Global meets local: Typographic practices and the semiotic role of subtitling in the creation of parodies in Cypriot dialect on internet texts

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The framework which governs subtitles and viewers’ comments is investigated in this study, through five film clips-parodies of the same movie, which are subtitled in the Cypriot dialect with different linguistic content every time. The study focuses on the semiotic role of subtitling and the examination of text content and meaning. Also, subtitle characteristics and typographic practices for the transcription of subtitles into a language system which lacks an official and widely accepted orthographic system are examined. As for the visual rendering of the Cypriot dialect in subtitling, the study proposes that the use of typography by fansubbers, facilitated by technology proliferation, often results in failure of legibility, cohesion and comprehension of the text, while projecting a sense of orality and improvisation. The main concluding remark is that subtitling is used as a semiotic tool in visual communication as it operates as a “semiotic switch” in the expected production of semiosis by the language of the text and the production of semiosis by the subtitles.

Key words: subtitling, mass culture, parodies, Cypriot dialect, semiotics, typography.

Texts of mass culture and internet

The rapid growth of technology has led to the use of increasingly complex multimodal cultural texts aiming to transfer information to even larger masses, thus allowing researchers to develop the concept of mass culture. Mass culture is the culture addressing the mass and the wide public. It is worth noting that mass culture is not created by the masses but is industrially constructed to be consumed by the masses (Vasiliou & Stamatakis, 1992, 237). One of the media for promoting mass culture is the Internet, whose impact is ever increasing. As Bryant & Miron (2004, 662-663) remark, “newer forms of interactive media, such as the Internet, are altering the traditional mass communication model from that of communication of one-to-many to communication of many-to-many”. For González (2006, 265), “[…] it (the Internet) provides fan communities with the tools and avenues for the appropriation and manipulation of the films or programs in question”. He further elaborates on the importance of internet for fansubbers by defining it as “[…] a technological environment that determines which texts are selected for translation and shapes the subtitling process itself – both in terms of workflow organization and selection of linguistic and cultural mediation strategies” (González, 2006, 266).

González intentionally connects text type with translation. Today’s global culture operates on a system of semiosis where the registers of communication are mixed: they are both pictorial and linguistic at the same time, they incorporate motion and have produced a whole new definition of text. As Uspenskij et al. (1973, 297) mention, “[t]he text has integral meaning and integral function […]. In this sense it may be regarded as the primary element (basic unit) of culture”. They also suggest that “[t]he concept “text” is used in a specifically semiotic sense and, on the one hand, is applied not only to messages in a natural language but also to any carrier of integral (“textual”) meaning – to a ceremony, a work of fine arts, or a piece of music”. Internet texts are semiotic systems, they have structure and a specific function in a
world of signs, interacting each other and cooperating to produce meaning. The text to be examined here is an audiovisual text published five times on the internet with different subtitles in the Cypriot dialect every time.

**Subtitling as a semiotic tool to produce parodies on the internet**

Subtitling has been used as a semiotic tool to produce parody since the first half of the twentieth century. When Charlie Chaplin produced the Great Dictator in 1940, performing Adenoid Hynkel, Hynkel’s incendiary speeches were subtitled with absurd translations. Gilbert (2013: 408) remarks a super-imposition of subtitles following a Chaplinesque style in the Downfall - a film produced in 2004 - parodies, which is the subject of this study. Gilbert (2013, 411) stresses that “ [...] Downfall parodies are simultaneously ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ instantiations of cultural production”. But how can subtitling in a non-diffused local dialect, such as the Greek Cypriot Dialect, become a semiotic tool in parodies, within globalized culture?

For Diaz Cintas & Remael (2007, 51) subtitles can contribute to the semiotic cohesion of an audiovisual text if there is “a form of synchrony between the written target text and the image. Subtitles should never anticipate, or be ahead of visual narration on screen”. But what happens when subtitles are not synchronized with the meaning of the image, thus interrupting the cohesion of the audiovisual text?

As will be observed further in this article, subtitling has an indisputable semiotic role in the five case-studies found on the internet, which were subtitled by fansubbers and published on YouTube. A fansub is a fan-produced translated, subtitled version of any anime program\(^2\). According to Diaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez (2006, 37-38):

> [i]t would be no exaggeration to state that fan subs are nowadays the most important manifestation of fan translation, having turned into a mass social phenomenon on Internet, as proved by the vast virtual community surrounding them as websites, chat rooms, and forums.

What is worth noting is that in four of these cases it is the same clip of the film in German (source language) which appears, though, with different Cypriot subtitles (target language) each time, whereas the fifth case is the continuation of the clip of the same film. Especially for this scene, Dia da Silva and Garcia (2012, 94) state that “[d]espite following the tone and the main lines of action in the scene, the subtitles have little connection with the actual ones”. This element evokes laughter since the same utterances are subtitled with different content each time, thus making this practice a parody.

Attardo (2014, 535) reports that “[p]arody was the principal genre and technique of humorous articulation. Parody, as form of comic imitation, worked through hyperbole or bathos, sending up or putting down, often in ironic or equivocal tandem”. Fansubbers use the visual form of subtitles without transferring oral speech. In other words, they imitate subtitling, thus taking advantage of the semiotic conventions according to which “one or two lines of utterances on the bottom of an audiovisual text in foreign language render visually the oral speech of the text”. As Nash eloquently states (1985, 88) “[t]he parodist takes care as a rule to create notable discrepancies of “fit” between expressions and content and discrepancies of style on the plane of expression itself”. Especially, verbal parody can be a humorous criticism of “anything: events, actions, beliefs, thoughts, individuals and so on” (Asimakoulas, 2004, 833).
The difference of the particular texts under examination is that the language system of subtitles, the Cypriot dialect (target language), does not create notable discrepancies of “fit” but constitutes a discrepancy itself. The reason is that it does not convey the content of oral speech in the source language, but “imposes” its own content. As Androutsopoulos reports (2010, 215) “[t]he heteroglossic contrast between the language heard and the language read is at the core of the trash humor of this spectacle”.

This practice is in stark contrast with the definition of subtitling per se as Lambert & Delabastita (1996, 40) define it, i.e. “repetition of signs that compose the original [text] mediating a partial substitution of verbal signs for visual and non-verbal signs”. Thus, subtitling can be also defined as the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue. So the question that arises in this case is which is the role of subtitling if it does not repeat the content of the audiovisual text? The answer to this question is related to the concept of recontextualization. As Androutsopoulos (2010, 215) states:

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\text{[r]e} \text{contextualization involves the appropriation and the reworking of globally circulated media material into a local code for a local audience. In the case of spectacles, this involves the manipulation of different media and modes, intertextual tensions within popular culture, and heteroglossic contrasts of re-voicing and re-imaging.}
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Androutsopoulos (2010) characterizes this phenomenon as a “local response to global media content”. It is worth noting that besides the cases of parody examined below, the case of surface translation is also classified into this framework. Surface translation is the use of subtitles in a language, which are phonetically approximate to another language. The parodies examined in this study seem to function as local forms of entertainment in Cyprus, a phenomenon related to globalization. As González reports (2006, 263) “over the last three decades, globalization has contributed to the increasing availability of previously ‘local’ forms of entertainment outside the contexts in which they originated”.

However, the selection of YouTube as the internet site to publish the parodies under examination is not accidental. Jenkins (2006, 274, 282), discussing the importance of YouTube “as a key site for the production and distribution of grassroots media”, draws attention to parody as a key mode “for reworking mass media materials for alternative purposes”. For Gilbert (2003, 410), “youtube is a ludic training ground that begets a rhetorical playground in which parodists vie for critical attention, shifting the valences of discourse and promoting civic engagement”. Key site and ludic training are two important YouTube features, but the most important one is that amateur videos constitute “a new form of vernacular speech-speech through the production of original and appropriated images and words” (Strangelove 2010, 156). Let us see below how this attempt is realized and why the specific text (film) in German was selected to be subtitled repeatedly by amateur subtitlers, not only in the Cypriot dialect – which is not the official language in Cyprus – but in other languages and dialects too (Gilbert 2013, 421).

**The background of a special film**

The five texts subtitled in the Cypriot dialect are certainly ideologically loaded as Adolf Hitler is the leading character who initiated the bloodiest war, the Second
World War in the last century. It is worth noting that this specific four-minute clip has been subtitled in other languages too, in a humorous way (Dia da Silva and Garcia 2012, 97). It is a clip of the film “Downfall” (“Der Untergang” is the original title), produced in 2004 by Constantin Film Produktion, a German film production and distribution company, and directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel. In this movie, Traudl Junge, the last secretary for Adolf Hitler, tells of the Nazi dictator's final days in his Berlin bunker at the end of the Second World War.

As mentioned on the Internet the company has taken an “ambivalent” view of the parodies and has asked video sites such as YouTube to remove many of them, much to the disappointment of many “Untergangers”. On 21 April 2010, the producers initiated a massive removal of parody videos on YouTube. However, there has been a resurgence of the videos on the site since the mass removal. On 28 July 2010, Constantin responded by issuing Digital Millennium Copyright Act takedown notices on videos which had countered the blocking of the videos using a Fair Use argument. Constantin Films actions have drawn the scorn of Untergangers from around the world so much so that in the Downfall parody universe, Hitler and Fegelein reluctantly join forces to combat them. Since October 2010, Constantin no longer blocks any parodies and instead puts ads on them.

Despite the end of the parody removal, in mid-February 2012 a series of strange glitches caused many Downfall parodies to be blocked. The glitch was later solved. However, in the beginning of 2013, all parodies that are longer than six minutes are being blocked. Many Untergangers, like Hitler Rants Parodies, have reuploaded the blocked parodies in parts shorter than six minutes to prevent them from being blocked again.

Semantic fields and content of texts

Our study examines five cases of how globally known text (a film) is recontextualized in a vernacular spectacle. The first of the five versions uploaded on the internet is titled “η καθοδος των ομονοιατων” (the “descent” of Omonoia fans) and has a sports–related content. Since interplay is assumed to exist between politics and football in Cyprus, references to other nationalities (e.g. Chinese, Israeli, Russians), economic actors investing in sports (e.g. Ivan Savvidis, Russian tycoon), people in sports from Greece (e.g. Kalamarades (from Greece) referees), important Cypriot sports people and players (e.g. Kostakis Koutsokoumnis, president of the Cypriot Football Association, Takis Antoniou, President of the football club Omonoia, Miltiadis Neofytou, are not surprising. The use of inverted commas in the title, provided by the subtitlers, highlights the special meaning of the word.

The subtitles of the clip refer to the Cypriot team Omonoia. It is worth noting that although German is heard throughout the clip sometimes subtitles translate the visual message intersemiotically. So, the part of the subtitles Hitler is assumed to utter “οποιος νομίζει ότι εννα πιασει η Ομονοια πρωταθλημα φετος να φκει εξω από το γραφειο τωρα!” (Whoever thinks that Omonoia will not win the championship this year should leave the office now!) is intersemiotically translated by the departure of German officers from the office. It should also be noted that subtitle content aligns with the interchange of roles in the clip. That is, subtitling is synchronized with the plot of the film both in terms of sound and image (when the speaker changes, the content of the caption changes too). This is also the finding of Dia Da Silva and Garcia (2012, 94) in the sample they studied.
The second version of the film clip was produced on 23 August 2011 and uploaded on the internet on 12 September 2011. It is titled “APOEL – Hitler Champions League 2nd Time”. In this clip too, Hitler seems to react to the success of APOEL sports club in Champions League for the second time. The use of obscene language “μαλάκα” (asshole), “αρχιδιά μπλε” (bollocks), “ρε γαμότο” (fuck it), “γαμήσουν” (fuck), and sports terminology in English without being translated into Cypriot, e.g. “champions league”, “assists”, “super cup”, manifests an attempt to create a sports atmosphere. Even reference to national origin, e.g. “Zimbabwe”, “Spanish” and “Israeli” is related to the national origin of APOEL’s athletes, and many other names of football players in Cypriot football clubs are mentioned.

Also, local cultural features of Cyprus are mentioned e.g. Kourtounia tea – which is offered to console people after an unfortunate incident. The products of this plant (ricinus communis) were used not only by fascist regimes in Europe but also by the English during the liberation struggle of Εθνική Οργάνωσης Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών (“National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters”) as a means of torture and killing. In semiotic terms, it contrasts with the very popular men’s habit of watching a football game while drinking beer. Moreover, captions include expressions from the local culture of Cyprus, e.g. “που έβρεσχε ο Θεός Αστέρκα εβιστούστε ομπρέλα” (when God was pouring Stars you were holding an umbrella), and the address “koumpare” (best man – an utterance used by men to express solidarity with each other), as well as elements of the Greek culture in general, e.g. the lyrics of a Greek song “and the night, the sweet night”.

The third video titled “Ο Hitler nevriaszei otan mathainnei gia ton apokleismo tis Anorthosis pou to Europa League” (Hitler is pissed off when he finds out about Anorthosis’ exclusion from Europa League) was uploaded on 25 July 2009. This title is a Greek message written in Latin characters. Although the main topic of the video is sports in Cyprus again, there are also references to local infrastructures, such as Cypriot banks, e.g. “Τράπεζα Κύπρου” (Bank of Cyprus), “Ελληνική Τράπεζα” (Hellenic Bank), airline companies, e.g. Cyprus Airways and the Sunmiles Frequent Flyer Programme. Again sports terms remain in English (“Europa League”), and there is a surface translation, a transliteration of “Τσάππιος Χ. Μ.” (Champions League). There are also terms which connote not only military slang language e.g. “ψαρούκλα” (rookie) but also obscene language, e.g. “…να το βάλεις τζιαμέ που ξέρεις” (…put it in your…).

Furthermore, contrastive narrative is evident in this text, too. So, next to world famous singers, e.g. Michael Jackson, and world famous TV shows, e.g. Muppet Show (see “Κκέρμιτ τον βάτραχο” (Kermit the frog)), there are local cultural elements, such as “halloumi”, “frappe” coffee – a Greek patent (remember that in a previous video Hitler is assumed to ask for tea), and proper names with nicknames that manifest the Cypriot identity, e.g. “Πραξούλλα” (Praxoulla). In the same framework, code switching between world-wide hegemonic English and the local Cypriot dialect is not surprising, e.g. “One way ticket να μεν ξανάρτουν” (one way ticket so that they won’t come back). The use of Greeklish, Cyprenglish actually, is the finishing touch for the atmosphere of parody the third video under examination creates, e.g. “Status μου στο facebook ‘en ime kλ…” and “Τζιαστο ημ µου µεστο msm: “ime nevriasmenos mn m milate”” where many incongruous elements coexist.

It is worth noting that the only intertextual references in the audiovisual material of the text are the utterance “God of the Nazi give me strength” and the utterance “Hitler bets football”, which, although it connects directly to the audiovisual material, does not relate to the topic of the captions. Another point of interest is the rendering of a
woman’s sobs as “μυξ, μυξ” (sniff, sniff) – an element not observed in the two previous clips, together with reference to a commercial brand (“klinex”).

In the fourth video clip (Figure 1) titled “ο xitler antidra stin itta tis omonoias me to apoel 0-1(cypriot parody)”12 (Hitler reacts to the defeat of Omonoia by Apoel 0-1) uploaded on 21 January 2011, the topic is also about sports and the title is again a Greek message written in Latin characters. There is use of sports terms in English, i.e. “season tickets”, “back to back”, “Champions league”, “coach”, technology terms “sms”, “mobile”, reference to sports actors, e.g. “Μιλτής” (Miltis) “Sir Taki” and teams “Αποέλ” (Apol), as well as to political actors e.g. “Πρόεδρος” (President), and Cypriot place names, e.g. “Πόλη Χρυσοχούς” (Hrysohous town). Obscene language is used here too, e.g. “Αρ---θκια ξυδάτα!” (fucking shit) “…επίατο του κ%λου” (gone to hell) where parts of the exclamation are substituted for symbols13, as becomes evident in the typographic analysis that follows.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 1. O xitler antidra stin itta tis omonoias me to apoel 0-1

The fifth text is titled “ο xitler antidra akoma perissotero apo tin isopalia tis omonoia me ton ermi”14 (Hitler reacts even more to the tie between Omonoia and Ermi) was uploaded on 19 February 2011 and has a sports content written in Latin characters, as the previous texts do. But it differentiates itself from the previous texts in that it is the continuation of the clip already subtitled four times and is of shorter duration, only 31 seconds. Names of sports clubs in Cyprus are used, e.g. Ομόνοια, Άχνα, Ερμής, Αποέλ (Omonoia, Ahna, Ermis, Apoel), and the film shows Hitler committing suicide because of the score of the game.

It is observed that the five clips studied often contain references to political figures and situations in Cyprus although they have sports content. These topics are not related to the particular film clips but they produce laughter. Dia da Silva and Garcia (2012, 97) explain why subtitling is successful in these clips:

[w]e venture the presumption that the dissonance created by the mixing together of a scene of such dramatic intensity with jocular subtitles is very effective in capturing the attention of video watchers and creators, regardless their knowledge, interest or opinion as to the original work. The clashing of genres, tones, intentions and expectations is a common characteristic of remixes, especially when irony and satirizing disposition are present.

We agree to this finding, and we also highlight the importance of tone for the success of these parodies. As Hitler’s tone rises (Hitler’s reaction to the news he has just heard), a conceptual climax is observed in the parody. We believe that this climax indicates the main message the anonymous fansubber/creator of the parody wants to
transmit to the viewer. However, there are also interesting messages in users’ comments (content and form) on the film clip on YouTube, which we will examine next.

**Typography, spelling and features of subtitling**

Typography, “[t]he ‘dress’ of a text” (Stöckl 2005, 205), should support and highlight its content, whereas “[t]here is no written document without (typo)-graphic qualities” (2005, 205). According to Bringhurst (2004, 24), “[a]s a rule, typography should reveal the tenor and meaning of the text”.

For that purpose, “[…] in order to be read, it (typography) must relinquish the attention it has drawn” (2004, 17). Semantics applies to the relationship between text and typography so that visual information becomes understandable (Jury 2006, 78). As a result, typographic decisions, such as font selection, size, weight and colour, reinforce the relationship between typography and text and contribute to text comprehension. Small, low profile-“silent” and underestimated typographical signs, the punctuation marks, function in the same way. Punctuation marks “dress” the text and replace visually the techniques of oral speech, such as pauses, questions, even qualities that are harder to describe, such as hesitation, enthusiasm or ambivalence. Lupton (2004, 67) comments on punctuation and its role and states that “[T]ypography manipulates the silent dimensions of the alphabet, employing habits and techniques—such as spacing and punctuation—that are seen but not heard”. Besides punctuation marks, and their indisputable contribution to visualizing the general sense and flow of speech, typography also provides other, equally important tools that ensure smooth reading and typographic aesthetics of the text.

**[e]ye movement across the page (side to side and top to bottom) is controlled by column rhythms, typographic weights, and rules functioning as visual punctuation.**

By the manipulation of these elements, the designer groups information according to its role in a given layout and guides the eye methodically through the space of the page (Carter et al. 2007, 55)

During reading “[…] there is a point at which conscious perception becomes an unconscious interaction between text and brain” (Unger 2007, 133). Successful typographic practice, at the level of text design, is “invisible” since the individual elements composing it – the design and form of typographic characters, colour, spelling or the layout – do not preoccupy visually the reader and serve exclusively the reception and comprehension of content. Applying the basic principles of typography plays a decisive role on this issue. When these basic principles are not followed, typography stops being “invisible” and then the pace and flow of reading are interrupted, influencing negatively the legibility of the text. This requires greater processing effort on the part of the reader (Schriver 1997, 285).

In the framework of smooth reading, the verbal content that corresponds to each line of text, and the distribution of words in it, should be taken into account. This ensures smooth meaning transition in the text from one line to the other, as “[t]he typographer’s one essential task is to interpret and communicate the text. Its tone, its tempo, its logical structure […]” (Bringhurst 2004, 20).

In the meantime, as technology growth redefined the function and practices of typography (Bolter 2004, 71), it left space available for more experiments and
allowed the wider public (e.g. fansubbers, in this case) to use, apply and intervene in practices employed only by insiders so far. The spread of the use of typographic practices by the wider public, through new tools, machines and software available to everybody, points to the transmutation of the typographic result. Such transmutation may entail, besides probably interesting and contemporary aesthetic elements, weaknesses in the flow and comprehension of the text or failure of legibility, especially in cases where structure and cohesion are necessary.

As in every individual case of typographic arrangement, in a given space with specific features and visual, technical or other limitations, subtitling holds special sense or illusion of oral speech should remain contributing toure

ks since the text is written without an accentuation system. These features and factors
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se of typographic. These features and factors are differentiated by usual practices and determine specialized rules and specifications. Gouleti (2006) notes that during subtitling “[...] the sense or illusion of oral speech should remain contributing to smooth flow of and naturalness in reading”. Typography in subtitling is required not only to meet the needs of the text at the level of visualization from oral to written form, by keeping the nature and characteristics of the text but also to respect the peculiarities and specifications of the medium where it is projected. It is a difficult task because “[i]n fansubs, different fonts, sizes and faces coexist within the same film” (González 2006, 270).

The medium where typography is projected, i.e. the screen, is a decisive factor. Paper reflects light depending on its colour and brightness, whereas the screen is self-luminous and creates different dynamics in the relationship between text and reading surface. Jury (2006) states that, despite the obvious differences between screen and paper, “[...] general design principles, such as consistency, hierarchy, and structure in graphic presentation, and, of course, accuracy, legibility, and readability, still apply”. (Jury 2006, 108) However, it should be noted that applying basic typographic rules is not always possible since technology itself often imposes limitations in the use of specific typographic elements, as in the case of punctuation in subtitling. Cerón highlights (2001, 175), “[i]ronically, though you would expect the use of computerized systems to open new possibilities, their introduction have impoverished punctuation. We often find full spaces instead of half-spaces, hyphens instead of dashes, and so on[...]”.

Other factors that are differentiated during the typographical arrangement in subtitling are the limited space available and the relationship of the text with moving image on which typography is projected, as well as time restrictions in relation to the image and the flow of exchange/narration and also to the reading process by the reader.

By examining, in typographic terms, the specific subtitling cases in the Cypriot dialect for which there is no official and widely accepted written spelling system (Papadima et al. 2013, 98), a number of inconsistencies were found, together with cases of carelessness or negligence in spelling, punctuation and use of rules, and in the visual representation of its distinct sounds, such as [ʃ], [ʒ], [ʧ] and [ʤ], that “[...] are considered as the most distinctive features of the dialect and differ consistently from the standard language” (Papadima et al. 2011).

In the first case, titled “the descent of Omonoia fans”, it is worth noting that there is lack of punctuation marks since the text is written without an accentuation system. Indifference in spelling is obvious in cases such as “πεζούμε”, “συστήνει”, “τζινους”, “επιραξεν” and “φτεει”. In proper names, the capitalization rule of the first letter of the word, as in the countries “ελλαδά”, “βουλγαρία”, “αγγλια” etc. or in athletes and sports officials’ last names, e.g. “λεμονης”, “παπαδοπουλος” etc. is not followed. The same applies in formal addresses, where words begin by a lower case letter, e.g.
There is inconsistency in the spelling of words repeated in the visual representation of the correct phonetic rendering of the Cypriot dialect, there is only partial attempt to visualize the correct phonetic rendering. The consonants, wherever they are pronounced, are doubled, “ττσποπο” “συλλοι”, or the phonetics of some words are precisely rendered, “φκαλον”, “κοφκα”, even at the expense of correct spelling by replacing a letter of the Greek alphabet which correctly renders the sound, such as letter “ψ”, by the combination of letters “π” in the word “αρκεσαν”. Some of the palato-alveolar GC consonants, like the sound [f], are typographically represented, as in the word “πισσουρκότικο”, by the use of the letter combination “σι”, while others are completely ignored, as in the word “τζε” where the distinct sound [tf], is not represented through typography. In two individual cases, the letter “0” is replaced by number “8”, “8κιω” and “8κιωξο”, a practice usually employed on communication through the computer or cell phone, among Cypriot youths, that “[t]ypically features Latin characters and short hand” (Papadima et al., 2014, 95). At this point, it should be mentioned that the same word appears written in two different ways in the same clip, “θκιωξει” and “8κιωξο”.

In the second case, titled “APOEL-Hitler Champions League 2nd Time”, inconsistencies and spelling errors are observed, e.g. “μήνυμα”, “πιστεύω”, and although words are accentuated the Greek question mark “?” is replaced in all cases by the Latin question mark “τέρμα?”, “Μάστερ μου?” “ομιρέλλα?” etc. There is a strong tendency to typographically render stress in speech through the use of capital letters either in the beginning of the word, as “Γκολάρα”, “Άχρηςτε, Μαλάκα” or in a whole word, as “ΠΑΛΕ”, “ΟΜΑΔΑΡΑ”, “ΑΣΤΕΡΙΑ” etc. Also, there is the phenomenon of numerification of language, e.g. “2nd time” instead of “second time”, “in 3 years” instead of “in three years”. The visual representation of distinct sounds of the Cypriot dialect is only partially realized. The sound [f] is represented typographically with the eccentric letter combination “σχ”, as in the words “έβρεσχε”, “ψυσχή” and “μίσχωμο”, while the sound [tf] is not represented again, as in the words “τξι” or “τξίνος”. In the specific case, there is an excessive and, in most cases, erroneous use of dots. According to the subtitling guidelines of BBC TV channel15 dots are used

[…] to indicate a pause within a sentence” or “[…] if the speaker simply trails off without completing a sentence” or “[i]f a speaker is interrupted by another speaker or event” and “[…] to indicate a pause or an unfinished sentence”. However, there is no need to use them each time a sentence splits “[…] across two or more subtitles (Williams 2009, 25-26).

The number of dots varies from two (1:57 Ο Γιοβάνοβιτς εν μέσο τέχνη κάνει το Μαέστρο…) to six (0:34 Εστελέ μας……) and there is no consistent use of dots. They seem to aim to create a visual impression rather than provide a meaningful function. Finally, the size of subtitle fonts is not the same throughout the clip.

Indifference to spelling is also evident in the third case, titled “Ο Ηλίας Νετραζής ον θαν άποκλείσει που η Ανορθοσία ον Ευρώπα Λέγη”. There are accentuation problems (άνιριον, εγω, μισον, φοραν, εμιά, μεστο), problems in endings (επιτήρειο, πισσουρκότικο) and in cases where correct phonetic rendering of the word is prioritized without taking into account Koine spelling (τζικάτω, Έμπιεςεισ). There is inconsistency in the spelling of words repeated in the text, such as the word στόιχημας-στόιχημας-στόιχημα; here, correct spelling is ignored when the visualization of the correct phonetic representation of the word is attempted. The
distinct sounds [ʧ], [ʧʃ] are represented in writing with the addition of “ι” after the respective letter of the Greek alphabet (έσιε, Τσιάππιος Λικ), while representing visually double consonants wherever they are pronounced (παττίσιες, τπατπατμη, Κκέρμιτ). It is of special interest not only the Cypriotisation of foreign words and their rendering by Greek letters (έαρκνοτισα, κλινεξ) but also the written code switch from the Greek alphabet into Greeklish in the case of social media (3:40-3:50 “en ime kl…” “ime nevriasmenos mn m milate”). When writing in social media there are certain abbreviations used for faster writing and space management since “the principle of least effort” is applied (Papadima et al. 2014, 96).

The fourth clip, titled “ο xitler antidra stin itta tis omonoias me to apoel 0-1(cypriot parody)” seems to be better edited because there are very few spelling errors compared to the others. There are scarce errors in the spaces between words and punctuation, mainly dots. The names of sports actors mentioned in the text have been transformed with a humorous or satiric dimension, e.g. “Αλο Νεύτη”, “Μιχαλάκη-τρέλα” and “ΑσσαΛούα ΓΣΠέσιει οΙοι” since, in typographic terms, upper and lower case characters determine the meaning of words. The distinct sounds [ʧ], [ʧʃ] are represented by the addition of “ι” after the respective letter of the Greek alphabet (χασισισιωμένος εκουτσια, κουτσιώ) while representing visually double consonants wherever they are pronounced (βάλλει, ππουρτού). It is also typical that English words are used with the right spelling in the Roman alphabet (coach, back to back, champions league).

The fifth clip, titled “ο xitler antidra akoma perissotero apo tin isopalía tis omonoia me ton ermi”, is very short and therefore the text is very short too. However, there is negligence (Αποέρλ) and typographic errors, as in the spaces before and after dots.

Currently, we cannot claim that there are some single standard rules in subtitling since “[…] as things go now, each subtitling lab, each TV channel, has different rules” (Cerón 2001, 177). Nevertheless, we made a list of basic guidelines based on guidelines of various TV channels and are directly related to the typographic arrangement and the clips under investigation. In the list, there are guidelines for timing, synchronizing, length, cues and punctuation both for intonation and rendering of emotions. These guidelines, among others, constitute a point of reference for this study. In these texts, fansubbers are observed to have violated one of the basic principles of subtitling. Although Diaz Cintas & Remael (2007, 63) state that “subtitles should never dominate the screen and, therefore, the use of capitalized subtitles should be avoided”, uppercase type is observed in these parodies, e.g. “ΟΜΑΔΑΡΑ” in the first clip, “ΤΣΙΠ” in the fourth clip, etc. Also in the first and second clips, subtitles cover three lines. Furthermore, despite the general guideline that “[…] each subtitle should consist of no more than three lines” (Williams 2009, 20), in the third clip subtitles cover four lines thus reaching the middle of the screen. These observations confirm González’s (2006, 271) suggestion that “[…] amateur subtitles tend to be inconsistent in terms of length, number of constitutive characters or lines and screen-positioning. Whereas some fansubbing groups overly favour long one-line subtitles delivered at a fast pace, others prefer displaying more text (often segmented in more than two lines) during longer periods”.

In the second clip, not enough time has been provided for the reading of cues in two different cases. There, subtitles appear for less than a second whereas according to the general guidelines there should be “two seconds per line of text” or “1.2 sec per one-two words… up to 6 seconds for quite a big subtitle” (de Linde & Kay 1999, 3).
Moreover, Diaz Cintas & Remael (2007, 195) state that “[t]aboo words, swearwords and interjections are often toned down in subtitles or even deleted if space is limited […].” However, in the cases under investigation, vulgar language is stressed since, in semiotic terms, it is an indispensable part of sports events. The appearance of symbols, e.g. the per cent sign in the fourth clip to replace part of the utterance “…επίαν του κ%λου” so as to reduce the impact of this phrase, is against the usual practice in subtitling. Mathematical symbols should normally be avoided in subtitling. However, according to Diaz Cintas & Remael (2007, 117), “there is a limited number of symbols with which audiences are familiar, depending on the cultures and languages, and that can be used sporadically without much problem”. The particular sign is one of these symbols that appear frequently enough. Thus we believe that its use is based on public awareness. Also, selecting this sign may be due to its format as design symmetry and curves connote visually the character missing, i.e. “ό”.

It is worth mentioning that the subtitles examined do not follow any standard procedure since, according to de Linde & Kay (1999, 51), empirical evidence suggests that subtitles contain 43% less text on average than the original. In the cases examined, subtitles do not account not even for 1% of the text because the linguistic content of subtitles is irrelevant to the actual text of the film.

Semiotics of the viewers’ comments

As we have already observed, subtitling in the Cypriot dialect is connected with the production of laughter through a peculiar satire, where iconic system, intertextual relations and language system coexist against the norms of interlinguistic subtitling. The crucial element of such peculiar coexistence is the selection of the language system – the Cypriot dialect. This language system is also evident in the written comments posted on YouTube by the viewers of the particular clips. For Archakis and Tsakona (2012, 79) “[…] humor is a decisive factor for integration in a group, since it brings to the surface the more or less latent values and the explicit or implicit norms of the group”. It is a fact that the mother tongue is a medium to express values, perhaps the most important one. Besides, in which other language could someone express oneself about everyday topics, such as sports and politics in a humorous manner if not in one’s mother tongue? Moreover, how could someone create a successful parody if not by augmenting the incompatibility between image and language?

This section focuses on linguistic utterances-comments uploaded by the viewers of the online texts under investigation. It should be mentioned that the comments are written primarily by Cypriot speakers who have watched these texts in their mother tongue, the Cypriot dialect, which is differentiated from the official state language, Modern Greek. In an attempt to approach the related ideology, the last five comments have been selected. These are the most recent comments uploaded by the viewers of the first four clips since on the last clip there are no comments.

In the comments on the first text (table 1), uploaded on the internet, a wide use of Greeklish in the Cypriot dialect (cyprenglish) is observed. Neologisms, such as “apoelistakia”, as well as vulgar language, such as “malakies”, “flwrakia”, symbols like the swastika (a symbol that aligns with the iconic part of the text, but not with the sports topic), the at sign (@) and numbers instead of letters, such as “8rylos” instead of “θρύλος”, are used. Also there is an alternation of upper and lowercase letters in comments on the first two texts.
In the comments on the second text (table 2) obscene language dominates too, e.g. “πουτάνας” (slut), “μουνόπανα” (mother fuckers), “φασίστες” (fascists), “γαμώ” (fuck), “μαλακίες” (bullshit) and slang “ρε φίλε” (hey man). There is extensive use of punctuation marks, such as dots and the English question mark. Uppercase letters are used for emphasis and the utterance “xaxaxaxaxaxa” is introduced to express laughter. It is worth noting that it is the first text that correlates sports with Nazism, “INTA VALETE TON GIO TIS POUTANAS TON JIRI SAS TON HITLER RE MOUNOPANA GAMO TOUS FASISTESS SAS GATE 9 ANTIFA”.

In the comments on the third text (table 3), Modern Greek is used for the first time besides the Cypriot dialect (“Ωραίο Βίντεο, Καθαρά Χιουμοριστικό... Κρίμα Για Την Ανόρθωση...”), as well as English (“nice subtitles”, “guys”). Actually, it is the first time that commentators mention the format of the text and make a positive evaluation. Punctuation marks, such as dots, colon, exclamation marks, appear too, while the repetition of a letter in order to stress the duration of the utterance is interesting, e.g. “loooooooool”. Eco (2003, 346) reports on such repetition that “[…] in some texts where we recognize aesthetic intentions, differences in essence become exceptionally important”.

In the fourth text (table 4) there is extensive use of punctuation marks too. It is also interesting that there are no predetermined conventions on the rendering of items in cyprenglish. So, although in the second text laughter is represented by...
“xaxaxaxaxaxaxa”, in this text it is represented by another convention “haha!!!”. Instances typical of oral speech, such as “re”, and utterances in English “thank”, “back to back”, and obscene language “Ar****thkia 3ydata!” appear in these comments too. There is also positive evaluation on the video (“pl dinato to video”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Comments on the fourth text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- haha!!! pl dinato to video s re dimitri!!! :)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- @kotsi09fans r filoui m na s po j kti en gaisiz p mappa ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- thank u re! ”einais vasilisino se pragmatika gegovotata...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ee xoxoi piastee mas . ee kotsio intampou se lalun men milas gia dietisia. je proto giro idika isun konta mas me to kounta kounta oute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ...na kamoume to back to back... Ar****thkia 3ydata! ^^</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the study of the comments, a picture is created of a multilingual system where the Cypriot dialect, English utterances and Modern Greek coexist in spontaneous speech, with obscene language and non standardized conventions. The most important remark is that the discourse of subtitles is more or less identified with the discourse of the commentators. Perhaps this is the element that influenced a positive evaluation on the texts by the commentators who actually use Cyprenglish with sports content.

Conclusions

Our study on the above texts indicates that the clips examined are not a typical case of subtitles based on intelingu translation. It is more like pasting a language message in the form of subtitles with the following characteristics:

a) Subtitling is used as a semiotic tool in visual communication as it operates as a “semiotic switch” in the expected production of semiosis by the language of the text and the production of semiosis by the subtitles. The humorous element of parody derives from the incompatibility of the semiosis mentioned. Subtitles are used in our case in the way Kapsaskis (2008, 50) reports, “[...] this globally accepted and constantly used practice is meaningful both as a cultural fact and as a channel for the expression of specific, local considerations and sensibilities”. The creators of the parodies examined here use the semiotic dimension of subtitles as a means of familiarisation. That’s why the linguistic and non linguistic semiotic conventions (lexical, graphic and typographic) opted for by fansubbers are used to express the sensitivities and concerns of the Cypriot people about a number of issues that involve their everyday life, such as football, politics and the economic crisis.

b) Subtitling in the Cypriot dialect seems to be the second part of a bipolar relationship whose first part is the image and the source language, the German language. So, there is this controversial relationship between Nazism (a part of world history) on the one hand and Cypriot sports (a part of Cyprus local history) on the other; on the one hand, an event of world disgust and, on the other, the high ideal of athletics. These clips subtitled in the Cypriot dialect involve sports and indirectly politics. Sports are indirectly related to politics because the two teams mentioned in the parodies and the comments – Omonoia and APOEL – are supported by the political parties AKEL (left wing) and DISY (right wing). Moreover, we can also argue that politics and sports share an important characteristic: they are considered part of a man’s world hence justifying the obscene language in subtitling and viewers’ comments on these parodies.
The typographic representation of the Cypriot dialect in subtitling projects the sense of orality and improvising of the creative and imaginative text examined since emphasis lies on the visual impression conveyed by the typeset, as, for instance, in the use of punctuation, rather than by the proper application of basic typographic rules, spelling and consistency in representing the distinct sounds of the dialect.

d) The cases studied can be considered a pasting of subtitles, promoting what Androustopoulos (2010) calls “[…] a culture of ‘fake’ subtitles (that) seems to have been one of YouTube’s trends in the last two years”.

These findings indicate that the Cypriot dialect is a living language system and does not face language death. This is because it does not present terminal speakers and seems to be a medium of expression for and humour production by the new generation of Cypriots. Also, it is interesting to note that although Modern Greek is considered both the official language and a language of prestige in Cyprus, Cypriots do not seem to raise an issue of language self-deprecation of the Cypriot dialect. The use of a language system, such as the Cypriot dialect, which has not been officially recognized but is an oral language system lacking the language status of Modern Greek, in everyday internet communication shows that the dialect is alive and not treated as obsolete. It is an element that indicates that the Cypriot dialect may have a different treatment in the future in relation to other Modern Greek dialects and vernaculars that tend to be treated as museum exhibits, strictly in the light of tradition aiming to connote a pure and, perhaps, idealistic, lifestyle.

Fansubbers and commentators’ language and typographic options in these clips indicate that both fansubbers and commentators seek different ways to express themselves about issues of everyday life in Cyprus. This seems to be the purpose of producing the specific parodies. The fact that there had already been subtitled versions of the particular film clips in other, more widespread languages indicates globalization in a peculiar form of communication, such as parody fansubs. The Cypriot fansubbers adopted and proved that widespread/global practices can be used successfully as local forms of entertainment and communication.

Notes

1 For O’Halloran (2005: 20), “[…] mode is used to refer to the channel (auditory, visual or tactile for example […] multimodality is used for discourses which involve more than one mode of semiosis”.

2 Although fansubbing originally started for anime programmes eventually it has been widely used for any kind of programmes (see “Fansub”, Anime News Network, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/lexicon.php?id=63, last update 4 January 2014).

3 The Austrian poet Ernst Jandl developed the art of “surface translation”, whereby the sounds of a poem in one language would be rendered into another – using words native to the target language or nonsense words in the target language – without regard to meaning (See Schreiber, 1983).

4 In the Greek speaking part of Cyprus there are two related language varieties, Modern Greek – the official language of state and the Cypriot dialect – mother tongue of Cypriots. Those two varieties coexist and are used at the same time. However, they have a different function and status. Modern Greek is taught in all levels of education as the principal language. It is used in formal communication circumstances, in written discourse and the mass media. The Cypriot dialect is used mainly in oral speech and in informal communication among the Cypriots (Karyolaimou, 2001: 180).

6 See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ens_iHYiOYc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ens_iHYiOYc) (last update 4 December 2013).
7 For the phenomenon of the “intersemiotic translation”, see Jakobson (2001 [1959]: 139).
8 See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_5fjkD5nRw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_5fjkD5nRw) (last update 28 December 2013).
10 It is worth noting at this point that the contrastive relationship has been widely studied by the founder of the French semiotic school Algirdas-Julien Greimas (1966) and is considered a main factor of meaning production in narratives.
11 See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7FHQUJsSeg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7FHQUJsSeg) (last update 2 January 2014).
12 See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U515v5kN9c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U515v5kN9c) (last update 2 January 2014).
13 This rendering of obscene language in subtitles is not frequent. Nornes (2004: 465) mentions that in the subtitling of the Japanese film *Tenamonyya Connection* produced by Yamamoto Maasshi in 1991, “[o]bscene expressions like *Konchikusho!* and *konoyaro!* are translated !%&$#!@!!”.
14 See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8et9YIc7ow](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8et9YIc7ow) (last update 2 February 2014).
19 Last update, 5 January 2014, for all comments on texts.

References


