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# MULTIMODAL TRANSLATION OF SARCASM IN THE SERIES *FRIENDS*

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# ABSTRACT

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Sarcasm is a phenomenon which can incorporate a variety of different modes, including linguistic, aural, and gestural modes. In audiovisual translation, all these features can be present in the source text, but it is the translator's decision to determine how they are considered in the translation. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse how sarcasm is translated in an audiovisual work and how the different multimodal aspects are addressed within the translation to preserve sarcasm. The analysis is based on the sarcastic expressions delivered by the character Chandler Bing in the first ten episodes of the popular 90's television sitcom *Friends*.

After collecting the sarcastic expressions from the data, I categorized the multimodal aspects presented as a part of the expressions based on the classification of communicative modes by Dordevic and Stamenkovic. The analysis was limited to the two most prevalent mode groups: aural and gestural. The most frequent modes used in delivering sarcasm were tone of voice, emphasis, body language, and facial expressions, representing a total of 82 percent of all analysed modes used. Following the categorization, I evaluated the preservation of sarcasm in the Finnish translations according to strategies for translating irony introduced by Marta Mateo. A vast majority of the Finnish translations managed to preserve the original sarcasm. Out of the 29 sarcastic expressions, in 26 cases the sarcasm was fully preserved, in two cases partially preserved, and in one case the sarcasm was lost.

Based on the findings of this study it is evident that sarcasm has been considered in the Finnish translation of *Friends*. In the translations there are indications of deliberately used linguistic structures that have been applied to accommodate for the delivery of sarcasm in the translation: enclitic particles, exclamation marks, and function words. Through these strategies sarcasm can be preserved, but the impact of aural and gestural modes on the translation remains unclear. As the modes are strongly intertwined it is difficult to ascertain what the effect of the individual features is and whether there are specific translation strategies for each, and this calls for further research on the topic.

Keywords: multimodality, audiovisual translation, translation strategies, sarcasm, irony

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# TIIVISTELMÄ

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Sarkasmi on ilmiö, joka voi sisältää useita eri moodeja, kuten kieltä, ääntä ja eleitä. Audiovisuaalista lähdetekstiä käännettäessä nämä kaikki ominaisuudet voivat olla samanaikaisesti läsnä, mutta kääntäjän on päätettävä, miten ne huomioidaan käännöksessä. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella, miten sarkasmia käännetään audiovisuaalisessa kontekstissa ja kuinka multimodaalisuus huomioidaan sarkasmin säilymisen kannalta. Analyysi pohjaa 90-luvun suosittuun tilannekomediasarja *Friendsin* Chandler Bingin hahmoon ja hänen käyttämiinsä sarkastisiin ilmauksiin sarjan kymmenessä ensimmäisessä jaksossa.

Kerättyäni sarkastiset ilmaisut datasta luokittelin ilmaisuihin liittyvät multimodaaliset osa-alueet Dordevicin ja Stamenkovicin kehittämän viestinnällisten moodien luokittelun mukaisesti. Sisällytin analyysiin kaksi merkittävintä moodiryhmää: äänet ja eleet. Sarkasmin välittämiseen eniten käytetyt moodit olivat tooni, painotus, kehonkieli ja ilmeet, jotka muodostivat yhteensä 82 prosenttia kaikista käytetyistä moodeista. Luokittelun jälkeen arvioin sarkasmin säilyvyyttä sarjan suomenkielisissä tekstityksissä Marta Mateon esittämien ironian käännösstrategioiden pohjalta. Suurin osa käännöksistä onnistui säilyttämään alkuperäisen sarkasmin. 29 sarkastisesta ilmaisusta 26 tapauksessa sarkasmi säilyi kokonaan, kahdessa tapauksessa osittain, ja yhdessä tapauksessa sarkasmi ei säilynyt lainkaan.

Tämän tutkielman löydösten pohjalta on selvää, että sarkasmi on otettu huomioon *Friendsin* sarjan suomenkielisissä käännöksissä. Käännöksissä on selviä viitteitä kielellisistä rakenteista, joita on tarkoituksenmukaisesti käytetty sarkasmin välittämiseksi. Näitä rakenteita ovat liitepartikkelit, huutomerkki sekä funktiosanat. Näiden strategioiden avulla sarkasmi on onnistuttu säilyttämään, mutta ääni- ja elemoodien vaikutus käännöksiin on edelleen epäselvä. Koska moodit ovat niin tiukasti toisiinsa kietoutuneita, on yksittäisten moodien vaikutusta käännöksiin sekä moodeihin mahdollisesti liittyviä käännösstrategioita vaikea arvioida. Näiden osa-alueiden analysoiminen ja ymmärtäminen vaatii lisätutkimusta.

Avainsanat: multimodaalisuus, audiovisuaalinen kääntäminen, käännösstrategiat, sarkasmi, ironia  
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# 1 Introduction

While humour and pun translations have been studied extensively from various angles, sarcasm as a type of ironic humour has not enjoyed similar attention. In fact, sarcasm is not always considered humoristic, but sometimes hurtful or criticizing. This dualistic nature of sarcasm is evident in the body of literature written on the topic. As an example, Blasko et al. (2021, 114) found in their pragmatic study that sarcasm is most often used for humoristic purposes between friends, whereas Pelsmaekers and Van Besien (2002, 263) define sarcasm as “a more overtly critical form of irony”, which is closer to the definition found in many dictionaries. What is a characteristic trait of sarcasm, though, is that the sarcastic nature of an utterance cannot be distinctively determined based on just the utterance itself (Matsui et al. 2016, 75). To be able to determine whether something was said sarcastically or directly, we need to carefully analyse the visual, aural, and narrative context of the utterance, and this is what makes sarcasm such a challenging linguistic aspect to translate into another language.

Similar translation challenges that are present with sarcastic expressions are also present in the increasingly popular category of audiovisual products. As the term suggests, audiovisual products are inherently multimodal: there is both the aural and the visual level. This makes the translation of audiovisual products such as television series and films a challenging task. To successfully communicate the source text in another language, the translator is expected to translate not only the textual, but all the other modes present in the product to be translated as well (Dordevic and Stamenkovic 2023, 265). This requirement both increases the complexity of the translation process and introduces a level of context sensitivity that the translator needs to consider.

There is a distinct gap in the research of multimodal translations and translation of irony and sarcasm which the present thesis aims to address. While there have been previous studies on multimodal markers of irony and sarcasm (Attardo et al. 2003), subtitling verbal irony (Pelsmaekers and Van Besien 2002), and multimodal translation errors (Dordevic and Stamenkovic 2023), there seem to be no studies combining the translation of sarcasm and multimodality. This intersection poses an interesting research gap. Sarcasm cannot be fully translated without considering its multimodal character, which coincidentally is only truly present in a multimodal setting, such as a television series. That is why the goal of this thesis is

to analyse how sarcasm is translated in an audiovisual work and how the different multimodal aspects are addressed within the translation to preserve sarcasm. To answer the key research questions, the following supporting research questions will also be answered through the theoretical overview (question 1) and empirical analysis (questions 2 and 3):

1. In addition to the utterance itself, what related multimodal aspects comprise a sarcastic expression?
2. How do gestural aspects, such as body language and facial expressions, impact the translation?
3. How do aural aspects, such as tone and emphasis, impact the translation?

For the analysis I have used data gathered from the Finnish translations of the popular 90's television sitcom *Friends*. The series features a focal character, Chandler Bing, who is renowned for his sarcastic personality and thus provides an excellent subject for this study. First, I gathered the sarcastic expressions uttered by the character in the first ten episodes of the series and categorized their multimodal aspects according to the classification of communicative modes proposed by Dordevic and Stamenkovic (2023). Second, I analysed if and how the multimodal aspects contributing to the delivery of the sarcastic expression are considered in the Finnish translations. Finally, I evaluated how the sarcasm is preserved in each translation based on the Finnish subtitles.

In section 2, based on a theoretical overview, I first describe the developed working definition for sarcasm to distinguish it from the often synonymously used term 'irony'. Then, in section 3, I discuss the theory behind multimodality in relation to audiovisual translation and how the different communicative modes can be classified and used in analysing the translations of sarcastic expressions. In section 4, the data and methodology used for the analysis are introduced in more detail. Section 5 is dedicated to the application of the classification of the communicative modes to the context of the studied data, and I introduce the key findings of the study. Finally, the results are discussed in light of previous research, and the applicability and relevance of the outcome as well as the potential for any future research are examined.

## **2 Irony and sarcasm**

Despite their original differences in meaning, in general language, irony and sarcasm have for long been used almost interchangeably (Attardo 2003, 243). In more specialised language, such as in the field of language studies, there can nevertheless be seen some critical differences

between the two terms. To study sarcasm and its surrounding aspects in detail it is important to first outline a working definition of sarcasm for the purposes of this study. After narrowing down the definition based on existing literature, I will further discuss the theoretical aspects of translating sarcasm.

## **2.1 Defining irony and sarcasm**

Looking at the various dictionary definitions of both irony and sarcasm in Table 1 it is easy to notice a rather unanimous distinction between the two: irony is saying what you do not mean, sarcasm is saying what you do not mean *to mock or insult someone*. What is noteworthy, though, is the inclusion of humour in the Oxford English Dictionary and Collins Dictionary definitions. There are studies on the linguistics of irony and sarcasm which follow this notion of humour versus mocking. Linder (2011, 122), for example, distinguishes irony and sarcasm only based on the hearer's "humorous" or "injurious" interpretation of the utterance. Blasko et al. (2021, 114), on the other hand, studied the pragmatics of sarcasm and found that "the most common reasons to use sarcasm ... were to be funny and have fun with friends". Like Linder (2011), they also see that sarcasm is nevertheless a matter of the hearer's interpretation (Blasko et al. 2021). If person A criticizes person B with an utterance softened by sarcasm, but person C overhearing it finds the utterance amusing, is it considered hurtful or humorous? According to Blasko et al. (2021, 114) it depends on the studied context, which brings us to the essence of sarcasm – the important role of context. To fully understand the meaning of sarcasm and to be able to translate it successfully, the translator needs to recognise who is speaking to whom, who the subject of the joke is and what the subject's interpretation of the utterance is, humoristic or hurtful.

To help analyse the translations of sarcastic utterances in the empirical data of this thesis I will use a simplified definition of sarcasm derived from the discussion above. For the purposes of this study, sarcasm is defined as saying what you do not mean through making a remark that can potentially hurt the target of the remark on a personal level, even if only slightly and even if a humorous effect is intended. In essence, sarcasm then becomes a type of irony where the fundamental factor remains the same: the literal and intended meanings are the opposites of one another. Sarcasm only attains a higher level of specificity with the potential to hurt the recipient. By limiting the analysis on sarcasm specifically, I can examine this lesser studied phenomenon

in more depth while maintaining a narrower scope on the contextual aspects of sarcasm, which are in the focus of this study.

**Table 1. Dictionary definitions of irony and sarcasm**

	<b>Irony</b>	<b>Sarcasm</b>
<b>Oxford English Dictionary</b>	“The expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect”	“A sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark; a bitter gibe or taunt.”
<b>Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary</b>	“Irony is a subtle form of humour which involves saying things that you do not mean.”	“Sarcasm is speech or writing which actually means the opposite of what it seems to say ... usually intended to mock or insult someone.”
<b>Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary</b>	“The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning”	“A sharp and often satirical or ironic utterance designed to cut or give pain”

## 2.2 Translating irony and sarcasm

Due to the interrelation between irony and sarcasm it is possible to argue that the translation strategies utilized for both can be alike. If the only distinguishing factor between the two terms is the outcome or intention of the utterance, but the basic principle of incongruity remains, the translation is unlikely to be considerably affected. This would on the other hand explain the scarcity of theory relating to translation of sarcasm, as the literature on translating irony is more notable.

The first key question in translating irony (and thus also sarcasm), according to Barbe (1995), is the commonness of the ironic utterance in both languages. Barbe sets the commonness of an ironic utterance between two extremes: nonce irony, which, by definition, is coined for a specific purpose and is more infrequent in language and thus harder to understand, and common irony, which is irony that is commonly understood within a language group and leaves only little room for interpretation (1995, 148). Both nonce and common irony have their own features which make them challenging to translate. Nonce irony might be difficult to understand as irony

due to its novelty, but as Barbe (1995, 149) states, common irony can be even more difficult to translate as what is common in one language can be nonce in another. It is up to the translator then to identify the irony in the source text and whether it has a linguistic counterpart in the target language or not.

The second key point for translating irony proposed by Barbe (1995) is the background knowledge required to understand the irony. She divides the background knowledge further into three categories: personal, situational, and cultural knowledge (Barbe 1995, 149). Personal knowledge includes all the personal level information participants have about the speaker, situational knowledge includes the spatial and temporal context shared by the participants, and cultural knowledge the possibly shared cultural background of the participants (Barbe 1995, 149–151). Considering this from the perspective of translating a television show, the personal knowledge is often shared with the viewers through character development, and the situational aspects are evident from the context of the scene. The cultural knowledge on the other hand poses a great challenge: television shows are often set in a culture that is close to one in which they have been produced. The translated version of the show is most likely watched in a culture different from the original. This means that the lack of shared cultural background between the show and the viewer needs to be compensated by various translation techniques to avoid misunderstandings (Barbe 1995, 151).

Based on corpus data of English comedies and their Spanish translations Mateo (1995) identified 12 different strategies used for translating irony. The strategies can be grouped into three main categories based on the preservation of irony: a) ironic effect fully preserved, b) ironic effect changes, and c) ironic effect lost. Most of the established strategies presented in Table 2 are applicable to the data of the present study. The exceptions are strategies 5 and 9, because the data consists of sarcasm in the source text to begin with, and strategy 8, because the data is audiovisual and as such does not have footnotes. The remaining 9 strategies and their respective groupings will be utilized to evaluate the preservation of sarcasm in the translations of *Friends*.

**Table 2. Strategies for translating irony (Mateo 1995), grouped by author.**

Ironic effect fully preserved	Ironic effect changes	Ironic effect lost
1) ST irony becomes TT irony with literal translation.	4) ST ironic innuendo becomes more restricted and explicit in TT.	10) The hidden meaning of ST irony comes to the surface in TT (no irony in TT)
2) ST irony becomes TT irony with 'equivalent effect' translation.	5) ST irony becomes TT sarcasm.	11) ST irony has literal translation with no irony in TT
3) ST irony becomes TT irony by means of different effects from those used in ST.	6) The ironic ambiguity has only one of the two meanings translated in TT	12) Ironic ST is completely deleted in TT
	7) ST irony is replaced by a 'synonym' in TT with no two possible interpretations	
	8) ST irony is explained in footnote in TT	
	9) No irony in ST becomes irony in TT	

### 3 Multimodality in audiovisual translation

There are various ways to study multimodality in audiovisual translation. Dordevic and Stamenkovic (2023) studied multimodal translation from the perspective of translation errors and identified various communicative modes as potential sources of errors. In their study, Attardo et al. (2003) do not discuss translation specifically, but their analysis builds on situation comedies to identify distinct multimodal markers of irony and sarcasm, which serves the field of translation as well. Bryant and Fox Tree (2005) have similarly studied the ironic cues specifically trying to identify if there exists any evidence of an ironic tone of voice. The multimodal cues of irony have also been studied by Pelsmaekers and Van Besien (2002) from the perspective of subtitling, making a distinction between verbal and non-verbal cues of irony. Taking all these different perspectives into consideration, I will discuss the multimodal markers of irony and the communicative modes of multimodal texts to develop a framework for categorizing and analysing irony within the scope of the present study. I will also briefly outline the constraints and best practices related to subtitling audiovisual products.

### **3.1 Multimodal markers of irony**

The multimodality of irony is especially prevalent in the non-verbal cues of irony. Attardo et al. (2003) found in their study that there seem to be two clear multimodal markers of irony: a contrastive pitch, and a facial expression called the ‘blank face’, which is markedly expressionless in relation to the context. The markedness of these features in the surrounding context is what makes them ironic cues, not the acts themselves. In other words, there seems to be no ironical intonation or tone as such, but if the intonation suddenly drops or rises relative to the surrounding speech, it can be perceived as a cue for irony (Attardo et al. 2003, 253). A similar finding was made by Bryant and Fox Tree (2005), who found, studying the acoustics of ironic expressions, that there seems to be no specific ironic tone of voice that the listeners would utilize to identify verbal irony. The listeners attempting to recognize irony are more likely to rely on other non-verbal cues, such as gestures either before or after the ironic statement (González Fuente et al. 2015). The ‘blank face’ suggested by Attardo et al. (2003) could be considered as one kind of gesture that is likely to follow an ironic or sarcastic phrase, especially in situations where the speaker is expected to show emotion but is showing an expressionless blank face instead.

Other types of gestures highlighting the ironic intent of the speaker have also been proposed. In addition to marked intonation, Pelsmaekers and Van Besien (2002, 245) list nasalization, slow and emphatic speech, and snorting sounds as some of the non-verbal signs of irony. The results from González Fuente et al. (2015) suggest that speakers use gestures to accompany verbal irony for two reasons: a) conveying the speaker’s own attitudes to the listener, and b) explicitly, but non-verbally, checking if the listener understood the real intention of the ironic remark. The speakers in their study used facial expressions, laughing, and head movements to achieve the former, and directing gaze towards the listener to achieve the latter (González Fuente et al. 2015, 38).

### **3.2 Communicative modes in multimodal texts**

In their study focusing on creating a classification for multimodal translation errors, Dordevic and Stamenkovic (2023) divided the communicative modes of multimodal source texts into five main categories: linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial. As shown in Table 3, each of these five is divided into further subcategories, which more accurately describe the potential

sources for translation errors. Based on the discussion in chapter 3.1, the categories which are most likely to play a role in the delivery, and hence the translation of the sarcastic expressions, are the aural and gestural categories. From the aural category, silence, tone of voice, volume, and emphasis are the four distinct features that a sarcastic speaker could potentially employ in their speech. Additionally, facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, and behaviour are some of the most prevalent personal activities from the gestural category that could be performed alongside speech. These eight categories, four aural and four gestural, form the basis of analysis that will follow in chapter 5.

While all the categories in Table 3 are significant for studying communication in terms of multimodality, the aural and gestural categories are the ones which include most features that can be attributed to the sarcastic delivery of the character that is studied in this thesis. The linguistic features are inherently present in the subtitles to the extent that the translator has chosen to utilize them. The translation of said features may require a change of mode in translating without the source script, but if the script is available, then the mode of translation remains. Even though visual and spatial features of the source text contribute to the audiovisual delivery, they are not directly relevant to identifying uttered expressions as sarcastic. Due to the limited scope of this study the focus of the analysis has been set on the more distinguishing aural and gestural features and their potential implications on the translations.

**Table 3. Communicative modes in multimodal source texts (Dordevic and Stamenkovic 2023, 273)**

Linguistic	Visual	Aural	Gestural	Spatial
word choice	colour	music	<b>facial expressions</b>	arrangement
delivery	layout	sound effects	<b>hand gestures</b>	organisation
organisation	style	ambient noise	<b>body language</b>	proximity
structure	size	<b>silence</b>	interaction	geographic meaning
coherence	perspective	<b>tone of voice</b>	<b>behaviour</b>	architectonic meaning
modality		<b>volume</b>		
transitivity		<b>emphasis</b>		

### 3.3 Subtitling of audiovisual products

When audiovisual products are translated into another language, the target language is most frequently presented through subtitling. Translated subtitles consist of pieces of text that are one or two lines long, easily understandable, and are designed to serve viewers who do not understand the source text language in an audiovisual product (The Finnish Association of

Translators and Interpreters 2020, 1). One of the great challenges in subtitling is the timing. People cannot read as fast as they can hear, and thus, in many cases, it is necessary to make the subtitles shorter than the source text. According to the Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters (SKTL), the recommended reading speed for Finnish subtitles is 12–14 characters per second, including spaces (2020, 6). Together with the duration of the original speech the reading speed then determines how much text can be included in a single caption. In the same guidelines SKTL recommends that one caption should remain visible for 1.8–7 seconds (2020, 5), which means that the length of a single caption should not exceed 98 characters. With these considerations in mind, the translator needs to carefully evaluate which information can be preserved from the source text and whether there is something that should be left out to ensure the legibility of the subtitles.

## 4 Data and method

The data for this research consists of the 10 first episodes of season 1 of the popular television situation comedy *Friends* and its Finnish translations. The duration of each episode is approximately 23 minutes apart from episode 6, which is only 21 minutes long. The episodes analysed are available in the HBO Max streaming service and they were all translated by the same translator, Minna Nuutinen. The series features six focal characters, one of which is Chandler Bing. Chandler is known for his sarcastic humour and as such his character and lines are well-suited for the purposes of this study. The collected data consists of every sarcastic line uttered by Chandler during the 10 episodes. Based on the working definition of sarcasm introduced in chapter 2.1, any ironic utterances that were not considered hurtful were omitted from the analysis as not being sarcastic. The remaining sarcastic lines were then transcribed with the help of fan-made transcriptions (“Crazy for Friends” 2025). The subtitled translations for each were collected alongside the transcription. After transcription I categorized the sarcastic utterances based on the aural (silence, tone of voice, volume, emphasis) and gestural (facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, behaviour) communicative modes introduced by Dordevic and Stamenkovic (2023).

In this study, an utterance is categorized as part of a communicative mode if the feature in question is clearly present in the production of sarcasm. The context of each utterance can include any number of the analysed features, so the sum of frequencies of the modes can be larger than the number of lines analysed. The contrastive use of both the aural and the gestural

modes is a key determining factor in the categorization of the sarcastic utterances. In other words, if the messages delivered by the aural and gestural modes significantly differ from what would be expected in a direct manner of communication, the mode is determined to be a significant factor in delivering the sarcastic utterance.

After the categorisation, I evaluated the preservation of sarcasm in the Finnish translations of the lines delivered. The evaluation was based on the strategies for translating irony proposed by Mateo (1995). Each translation was assigned to a group based on whether the sarcasm was fully preserved, preserved with changes, or not preserved. Then the analysis continues to cross-reference the preservation of sarcasm and the communicative modes to answer the below research questions.

- How do gestural aspects, such as body language and facial expressions impact the translation?
- How do the aural aspects, such as tone and emphasis, impact the translation?

## **5 Multimodal translation of sarcasm in *Friends***

In the 10 first episodes of season one of *Friends*, there is a total of 34 ironic lines delivered by Chandler Bing, 29 of which are interpreted as sarcastic according to the definition of sarcasm applied for the purposes of this study. In other words, the five remaining instances of irony do not include any hurtfulness or criticism towards any other characters. The categorization of these 29 sarcastic instances (Table 4) reveals that there is even distribution between the aural and gestural modes employed in delivering the sarcasm with 50 and 49 instances of each, respectively. Each of the eight categories included in the analysis are represented, but there are four categories, two aural and two gestural, whose frequencies are much higher than the others': tone of voice, emphasis, body language, and facial expressions. These most common categories represent 43 and 39 percent of the aural and gestural modes, respectively, and thus a total of 82 percent of all analysed modes in the data. It is also worth noting that none of the modes were employed alone to deliver sarcasm: every sarcastic expression included at least one aural and one gestural feature. On the other side of the spectrum, the expression with most multimodality in this respect included six features in total. Additionally, no more than three features of the same mode are present alongside one utterance.

**Table 4. Classification of sarcastic utterances based on the aural and gestural modes employed.**

Aural modes		Gestural modes	
Tone of voice	23	Body language	21
Emphasis	20	Facial expressions	18
Silence	4	Hand gestures	8
Volume	3	Behaviour	4
Total	50	Total	49

Sarcasm is well preserved in the Finnish translations of the expressions (Table 5). The classification, based on the translation strategies by Mateo (1995), indicates that in only two instances is the preservation of sarcasm affected by the translation, and only one translation was found where the sarcasm was lacking altogether. The preservation of sarcasm and the translation strategies employed are analysed in more detail in the following sub-chapters, where their connection to the occurrence of aural and gestural modes is also discussed.

**Table 5. Preservation of sarcasm in the Finnish translations.**

Preservation of sarcasm	Number of instances	Share of total
Sarcasm fully preserved	26	90%
Sarcasm partially preserved	2	6.7%
Sarcasm lost	1	3%

## 5.1 Translating aural and gestural modes

While sarcasm indicated by aural and gestural modes in *Friends* has been translated in various ways, there are a few strategies that are more prominent than others: the use of enclitic particles, exclamation marks, and function words. Finnish is known for the productivity of its affixes, and they can be used, for example, to indicate tone (Suominen 2013). Using enclitic particles is one of the ways in which the translator has added emphasis in the sarcastic utterances of Chandler Bing. In examples (1)–(3), there are three different particles used to highlight the original emphasis delivered aurally in the utterances: *-hän*, *-pä*, and *-kin*. In example (1), Chandler and the other members of the group are offended when Monica breaks up with her

boyfriend whom everyone loves. Angrily and loudly Chandler delivers the line with emphasis on the underlined words. In the Finnish translation the first sentence is omitted altogether, and the second sentence is changed in form to literally mean something along the lines of ‘Well, that makes it better’. The *-hän* particle adds a layer of emphasis on the otherwise brief exclamation, which works in delivering the tone set by the character. Example (2) is Chandler’s response to Rachel, who is asking why Chandler and Joey have so many keys, when they are in a hurry trying to enter Monica’s apartment with a spare key that they are unable to find. In this situation the translation could work without the particle *-pä* to deliver approximately the same message, but the addition of the particle is well in line with the smirk Chandler gives during this utterance and enforces the sarcastic nature of the comment. The underlined emphasis accompanied by Chandler’s spread-out arms and bobbing head in delivering the line in example (3) is on the other hand translated with the particle *-kin*. In this example Chandler is shocked by how easy Phoebe’s breakup ending with a hug looked like, although Phoebe claimed it was extremely tough. While the expression *brutal hug* is already conveying a sense of sarcasm, the added emphasis makes the meaning even clearer. In the Finnish translation, *brutal* and *hug* are translated literally, but the enclitic particle *-kin* emphasises the unnatural combination of these words and draws additional focus to the expression.

- (1) Oh, she's sorry! I feel better! (*Friends* S1E03)  
*Sehän helpottaa!*
- (2) For an emergency just like this? (*Friends* S1E09)  
*Ehkäpä tällaista tilannetta varten.*
- (3) Oh, yeah, the hug looked pretty brutal. (*Friends* S1E05)  
*Se halaus olikin raaka veto.*

The second prominent translation strategy used for conveying sarcasm in the translations is the use of exclamation marks. While exclamation marks are generally used in a similar way in Finnish and in English, the translations of the sarcastic utterances in *Friends* deviate from this norm at times. Examples (4)–(6) present cases where the original line by Chandler was delivered without a notable increase in volume, but the phrases have nevertheless been marked with exclamation marks. This choice to add exclamation marks to utterances that are not exclamations seems to underline the sarcastic quality of the expressions that they relate to. In example (4), Chandler asks his friends what is it that makes him appear gay to other people, and they all agree that it is due to some ‘quality’ he has. Chandler clearly expresses his discontent with their response and delivers a sarcastically relieved expression. While his volume remains on a standard level, the sarcasm is conveyed through his emphasis on the

underlined words as well as his body language: he stands up and leaves the scene while shaking his head, looking at his friends. The stressed section in the beginning of the sentence is turned into a separate exclamation in the translation, which emphasizes his mock-satisfaction with the outcome. Both (5) and (6) include a similar structure: the exclamation in Finnish is concise and models the fake emotion conveyed with the sarcasm. In both examples Chandler supports the verbal expression with his body language and unusual use of voice. In (5) he employs a staccato-like stress on the underlined words while shaking his head again, whereas in (6) he lowers his volume, saying the line almost under his breath while leaving the scene.

- (4) Oh, oh, a quality, good, because I was worried you guys were gonna be vague about this. (*Friends* S1E08)  
*Siis piirre! Minä kun luulin, että sanotte jotain epämääräistä.*
- (5) Yes, and we're very excited about it. (*Friends* S1E01)  
*Olemme tohkeissamme!*
- (6) Oh, Satan's minions at work again... (*Friends* S1E03)  
*Pirun kätyrit asialla!*

The third strategy employed for translating the aural and gestural modes of sarcasm in *Friends* is the use of function words. Function words appear regularly in any language and text, but in the case of previously discussed example (4) we have the Finnish conjunction *kun*, which is used in the sentence optionally. The conjunction is most often used to start a subordinate clause, which it is not doing in this instance. The word *kun* is not required in this construct, but it does have a certain markedness to it, which aids in translating the non-verbal modes. If we translate the latter Finnish sentence in (4) more literally, it would be translated roughly as 'Here I was thinking you would say something vague (as opposed to what you did say)', which on the surface would communicate that they friends were not being vague at all. The context and accompanying multimodal features on the other hand make the sarcasm and Chandler's true intention more explicit. The addition of *kun* makes this meaning more explicit in the translation as well. Another example of using function words to communicate sarcasm is presented in (7). This example is from a scene where Chandler sarcastically comments on the friends' Thanksgiving dinner that ends up in a heated exchange with yelling and arguing. The adverb *jo* found in the Finnish subtitles is most often translated as 'already', but it can also serve as an emphaser meaning 'now'. The original line does begin with 'now' and as such the translation can be perceived as literal, but regardless of whether the translation is literal or not, the Finnish adverb *jo* does add an emphasis that improves the delivery of sarcasm to the Finnish audience as well.

- (7) Now this feels like Thanksgiving. (*Friends* S1E09)  
*Tämä tuntuu jo kiitospäivältä.*

## 5.2 Preservation of sarcasm in the Finnish translations

The sarcasm in Chandler's utterances has for the most part been preserved well in the translated subtitles with relatively few translation strategies employed. As shown in Table 5, sarcasm has been fully preserved in 26 of the 29 lines, partially preserved in two lines, and sarcasm was lost in only one of the translated lines.

**Table 5. Employed strategies in the translation of sarcasm based on classification by Mateo (1995).**

Sarcasm fully preserved	
Translation strategy	Count
ST irony becomes TT irony with literal translation	17
ST irony becomes TT irony with 'equivalent effect' translation	9
Sarcasm partially preserved	
Translation strategy	Count
ST ironic innuendo becomes more restricted and explicit in TT	2
Sarcasm lost	
Translation strategy	Count
ST irony has literal translation with no irony in TT	1

The strategies used in successful translations included the first two strategies listed by Mateo (1995), in which the irony (or sarcasm) is preserved with literal or 'equivalent effect' translation. The literality has in some cases been taken to great lengths by, for example, including a transcribed lisp as in example (8) where Chandler mockingly impersonates Monica's ex-boyfriend. The lisp is of course an integral part of Chandler's sarcastic joke, which is fully preserved by taking the lisp into consideration in the subtitles. In the 'equivalent effect' translations the lines can be significantly shortened due to the constraints set by subtitles while still conveying the sarcastic expression the same way as in the original text, as in example (9). The lines can also be translated as phrases more fitting in the target language, as in example (10), where the Finnish line '*unelmista totta*', literally translated to 'a dream come true', has a

slightly theatrical tone, which contrasted with the previous sentence highlights the sarcastic point Chandler was making.

- (8) What are you talking about? We love Schhteve! Schhteve was schhexy! (*Friends* S1E03)  
*Mehän rakastimme Steveä! Shteve oli sheksikäs.*
- (9) Oh no, it's terrific, it's... it's... y'know, you deserve this, after all your years of struggling, you've finally been able to crack your way into showbusiness. (*Friends* S1E06)  
*Olet oikeassa. Kaiken ponnistelun jälkeen löytyi oikea rako.*
- (10) Dehydrated Japanese noodles under fluorescent lights... does it get better than this? (*Friends* S1E08)  
*Kuivia japanilaisia nuudeleita loistevalon alla. Unelmista totta.*

The two cases where sarcasm was not fully preserved were both employing the same strategy, where the sarcastic innuendo becomes more explicit in the translation. In example (11), Rachel is feeling proud of herself for making coffee for the first time in her life. As making coffee is something that people in their mid-20's typically have experience in, Chandler sarcastically repeats Rachel's words but with an emphasis that indicates his different interpretation of why it is amazing. The Finnish translation of Chandler's line fails to convey the same dual meaning of the sarcasm involved, making it seem more like Chandler would be uninterested in the matter rather than making a stinging remark. In a similar way, the translation in example (12) makes the original 'hidden' sarcastic meaning more explicit weakening the sarcasm. In the original line, Chandler does not explicitly state that he prefers co-dependent or self-destructive partners but only implies it in a humoristic manner. The translation on the other hand makes the implication explicit, thus losing some of the sarcastic effect in the process.

- (11) **Rachel:** Isn't this amazing? I mean, I have never made coffee before in my entire life.  
**Chandler:** That is amazing. (*Friends* S1E01)  
*Rachel: Eikö olekin ihmeellistä? En ole ennen keittänyt kahvia.*  
*Chandler: Ihme juttu.*
- (12) **Shelley:** Question. You're not dating anybody, are you? Because I met somebody who would be perfect for you.  
**Chandler:** Ah, you see, perfect might be a problem. Had you said 'co-dependent' or 'self-destructive'... (*Friends* S1E08)  
*Shelley: Et kai sinä seurustele? Löysin täydellistä treffiseuraa.*  
*Chandler: Täydellisyys on hankala juttu. Suosin läheisriippuvaisia, itsetuhoisia...*

While there are arguments for and against the preservation of sarcasm in example (13), it is the one translation in the analysed data that can be interpreted as having fully lost its sarcastic effect. The context for this line comes from Monica's obsessive tidying up her apartment before her parents are visiting. She is fluffing the pillows on the couch several times and argues that she does not want her parents to have anything to complain about, to which Chandler gives his

sarcastic remark. The sarcasm becomes highlighted in his unusual stress on the prepositions underlined in (13) and in his eye-rolling. The translation on the other hand does not convey the same sarcasm that is delivered either verbally or non-verbally. The Finnish translation is a simple declarative sentence, which is most likely to be interpreted as a statement of fact. It does not include enclitic particles or any other means of conveying the sarcasm that were used in examples (1)–(7). Although, it can be argued that the sarcasm can emerge from the context instead: even in its declarative form it can be understood that parents in general are not cruel about the flatness of their children’s pillows. As shown in the previous examples, there are methods that could have been used to highlight the sarcasm even more, but at its current state the sentence remains rather ambiguous. The use of enclitic particles or additional function words could have potentially assisted in delivering the sarcasm, as the provided translation is well within the recommended length described in chapter 3.3. With the approximately 5-second on-screen time that is allotted for this caption, 14 more characters could be added before reaching the recommended maximum length of a single caption.

- (13) Yes, and we all know how cruel a parent can be about the flatness of a child's pillow.  
(*Friends* S1E02)

*Vanhemmat ovat armottomia lastensa tyynyjen pöyhyydestä.*

## 6 Conclusion

Translation of sarcasm, while a popular form of ironic humour, has not been extensively researched to this day. Sarcasm makes an interesting translation subject in that an utterance cannot be distinctively interpreted as being sarcastic or true without the surrounding context (Matsui et al. 2016, 75). So, to successfully translate sarcasm one must consider the linguistic, visual, and aural modes. This multimodal nature of sarcasm becomes an important part of translation especially in audiovisual products, such as television shows. There all the multimodal aspects of sarcasm are presented in a combination of visual and aural cues, and in translating a television show, these can be expected to influence how the lines are eventually subtitled. Based on this background, the aim of this study was to analyse how sarcasm is translated in an audiovisual work and how the different multimodal aspects are addressed in the translation to preserve sarcasm.

To answer the research question, I first did a theoretical overview to define which multimodal aspects are used to deliver sarcasm, after which I conducted a further analysis on how related

visual and aural aspects impact the translation of a television show. Based on previous research on multimodality by Dordevic and Stamenkovic (2023), I chose to analyse four gestural features (facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, and behaviour) and four aural features (tone, emphasis, volume, and silence), which can be directly attributed to the speaker. The collected data comprised of the first ten episodes of the 90's television sitcom *Friends* and their Finnish subtitles. In the analysis I found a total of 29 sarcastic expressions made by the character Chandler Bing. In these 29 sarcastic expressions, each of the eight features of multimodality were present to some extent while tone of voice, emphasis, body language and facial expressions were the most prominent features. The analysis on the preservation of sarcasm revealed that the 26 of the translated lines fully preserved the sarcastic effect, two translations resulted in a partial loss and one translation a complete loss of sarcasm. Thus, it is evident that sarcasm has been considered in the Finnish translation of *Friends*. While subtitles can solely rely on text to convey the message, there are indications of deliberately used linguistic features that have been applied to accommodate for the delivery of sarcasm in the translation: enclitic particles, exclamation marks, and function words. The use of these features in the analysed translations is optional, and without them the key messages would have been conveyed, but not necessarily the meanings associated with them. The linguistic features used add a degree of markedness to the translated lines and emphasise the sarcastic intention behind them.

In this study it was discovered that sarcasm does occur multimodally and that these multimodal features can be considered in subtitling a television show, but the specific impact of aural and gestural modes on the translation remain unclear. As the modes are strongly intertwined with one another and there were no instances where only one set of modes would have been employed, it is difficult to ascertain what the effect of the individual features is and whether there are specific translation strategies for each. This is an area that would require more data to be analysed and deeper analysis, thus posing an interesting question for further research. Larger samples from different sources and translations from a variety of translators could further reveal whether there are strong patterns in translating sarcasm from the perspective of multimodality. Finally, another angle to validate the results of this study would be to assess the preservation of sarcasm in more detail. The present study utilized a theoretical framework from previous research to assess the preservation of sarcasm, but the same question could be investigated by surveying viewer perceptions on the sarcastic expressions and their translations, which would allow the practical implications of translations to be assessed in greater detail.

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