The New Norm(al) in TV comedy:
Rendering Culturally-Derived Humour in *The New Normal*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the translation of culturally-derived humour – i.e. humour that is created by means of extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs) – in the US-American TV series *The New Normal* (Adler and Murphy 2013). The data were culled from two episodes that were subtitled into Greek for the purposes of the present study. Both episodes feature a number of instances where assumptions associated with ECRs enhance the intended comic effect. Emphasis is placed on the most indicative examples, where the decision-making process was mainly directed towards facilitating the target audience's understanding of the humour. The article investigates the identification, description and scholarly analysis of certain subtitling strategies that could contribute to a new model of humour translation in audiovisual texts. The employed strategies interact with factors pertinent to: a) the target audience's sociocultural familiarity with ECRs and b) elements of characterization within the bounds of the TV programme.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs), humour, *The New Normal*, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine humour translation in the Greek subtitled version of the US-American TV series *The New Normal* (Adler and Murphy 2013). Contrary to previous research which has mainly focused on verbal aspects of humour in audiovisual translation (Chiaro 1992; Zabalbeascoa 2005), this project aspires to shed light on what can be called culturally-derived humour, i.e. humour that relies on extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs) for its success. For the purposes of the present study, two episodes of *The New Normal* – each lasting approximately 20 minutes – were subtitled from scratch into Greek.[1] Given that the humour in the particular TV show relies on sociocultural knowledge rather than on language *per se* and that the subtitling strategies were selected accordingly, it seems reasonable to assume that the points raised in this article can apply to programmes of a similar genre and nature.

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[1] These subtitles were created as part of my MA project and were evaluated by examiners according to the subtitling criteria stipulated by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007). They have not yet been tested by a target audience. According to a hypothetical translation brief, the show may air on Greek TV in its prime time, i.e. 9pm or 10pm, as it is suitable for viewers over the age of thirteen.

Research regarding the translation of humour in audiovisual texts has mainly centred on the treatment of wordplay and puns, i.e. verbal humour (Attardo 2002; Asimakoulas 2004; Zabalbeascoa 2005), as well as on the reception of such humour in subtitled or dubbed versions of TV programmes (Antonini 2005).[2] According to Graeme (2010:34), verbal humour relies on the very language that is used to express it, while referential (or conceptual) humour uses language to convey a story or event, which is the main core of humour. A similar distinction is drawn by Chiaro (1992:34): jokes that exploit the features of language as such are called poetic, while those that make use of world knowledge are called prosaic. *The New Normal* makes extensive use of the latter type of jokes, a kind of humour which may be characterised as culturally-derived and which has hitherto remained relatively under-researched. More specifically, the series exploits ECRs and the assumptions associated with them in order to achieve the intended comic effect. Díaz-Cintas and Remael define ECRs as "extralinguistic references to items that are tied up with a country's culture, history, or geography" (2007:200). A more extensive definition is provided by Pedersen, according to whom an ECR is:

> [a] reference that is attempted by means of any culture-bound linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process, and which is assumed to have a discourse referent that is identifiable to a relevant audience as this referent is within the encyclopedic knowledge of this audience (2005:2).

From this follows that, when the target audience is not familiar with such references or with the relevant assumptions, the humour may fail to be captured. The paper focuses on how this type of humour is rendered in Greek and which factors determine the decision-making process of its translation.

The New Normal is a US comedy series which was created by Ali Adler and Ryan Murphy and ran for one season from 10 September 2012 until 2 April 2013 on NBC.[3] It primarily portrays two families that break the "norm" of the nuclear type: the homosexual partners, Bryan and David, who are not allowed to get married, but live together and decide to have a baby, and Goldie, who leaves her cheating husband, moves from Ohio to California and tries to bring up their nine-year-old daughter, Shania, as a single mother. To add to this, Bryan and David hire her as the surrogate of their unborn child thus connecting the two families.

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[2] Given that humour reception lay outside the scope of the present study, the theoretical insights outlined here focus on research related to how humour translation is conceptualised and treated in subtitling rather than how it is perceived by viewers.

[3] "http://www.nbc.com/the-new-normal (accessed 13 August 2014)" is the official website of *The New Normal*.

Another important role in these complicated family relations plays Goldie's conservative grandmother, Jane, who is against the surrogacy and, more importantly, against the notion of a gay couple's getting married and having a baby. It is noteworthy that Jane's negative stance creates tension among the characters but also allows for interesting instances of culturally-derived humour, which itself stems from the very ideological differences that separate her from the gay couple.

This TV series relies on a type of humour which does not depend on language for a comic effect but rather holds a strong element of cultural specificity. The humour involves ECRs, and thus cultural assumptions, rather than wordplay, in order to achieve the comic effect. For instance (as will be further elaborated in section 3.1.), constructing a joke around the – to the source audience famous – US-American kids' store "Toys 'R' Us" requires knowledge of what the ECR stands for, not only lexically but culturally as well. Only then can the audience make the appropriate connections and, thus, successfully perceive the humour. As a result, it can be argued that the translation strategies used to render this type of humour are expected to differ to some degree from those traditionally employed in cases of verbal humour.

The theoretical framework used in this paper draws upon *inter alia* concepts from Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995) and Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962). These are complemented by viewpoints pertinent to humour translation in audiovisual texts which are then tailored accordingly to accommodate the considerations informing the decision-making process of the translation – and, more specifically, the subtitling – of culturally-derived humour. In what follows, there is a brief overview of these theoretical viewpoints.

2. Theoretical insights in humour translation

2.1. Relevance Theory and humour

Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986/1995) posits communication as a cognitive process which takes place on the basis of a principle of relevance: people successfully communicate with each other because they believe and expect that what their interlocutors say is somehow relevant to the topic of discussion (Sperber and Wilson 1995). Applying Relevance Theory to humour, Yus Ramos (1996:504) argues that the incongruity that lies in the core of many jokes is resolved by means of a cognitive reasoning geared towards the most relevant interpretation. More specifically, he maintains that, upon encountering information

that is somehow incongruous with his/her encyclopedic knowledge, the receiver of a joke adjusts his/her reasoning and searches for a solution to the incongruity in accordance with the principle of relevance. This in turn allows him/her to reach an interpretation which resolves the cognitive conundrum, thus enjoying the humorous effect intended by the transmitter of the joke.

The notion of incongruity is a concept closely related to humour research. According to Vandaele, humour as perceived incongruity is "a (humorous) effect caused by a departure from normal cognitive schemes" (2002:156). In other words, humour is created when the information provided by the joke-teller is incongruous with information that the addressee expects to receive. Interestingly, Vandaele (2002) subsumes incongruity under another concept that has been given prominence in humour research: superiority. It has been argued that producing and understanding humour is inextricably linked with a sense of self-gratification, while those involved in successful humour-deciphering often enjoy a feeling of superiority (Attardo 2009:323). Vandaele assigns a social dimension to the notion of superiority and points out that it can include "any (anti)social effect, intention or cause that humour may have, either interpersonal and socially visible or 'private' but with reference to the social world" (2002:157). Therefore, feelings such as self-esteem, inferiority, aggression, hostility, disparagement and solidarity are viewed from the overarching perspective of superiority. Put differently, jokes can have a decisive impact on the interpersonal dynamics among those involved, creating boosted confidence and a sense of solidarity, on the one hand, and inferiority and debasement, on the other.

It becomes clear that incongruity and superiority are inter-related as concepts. The specifics of this inter-relation are determined by the context in which humour occurs. Drawing upon Desilla's definition of context in audiovisual texts, this consists of "information entertained by the viewers themselves as well as information conveyed (perceived or inferred) by the various semiotic resources" of the text (2012:34). In other words, the audiovisual context includes both the audience's pre-existing assumptions and beliefs and the information that is progressively transmitted by means of the images and the sounds of the audiovisual text. Vandaele (2002:159) also notes that both incongruity and superiority need to be complemented by elements pertinent to the communicative context, which may include the interlocutors' assumed knowledge and relevant expectations. It follows, therefore, that viewers can perceive humour in audiovisual texts as long as they retrieve relevance between

the audiovisual context and their background (sociocultural and encyclopedic) knowledge. A similar point is made by Gutt (2000), who examined translation from a relevance-theoretic point of view. According to Gutt (2000:210), the way that the target text is intended to achieve relevance is pivotal to the success of the translation. Moreover, Gutt (2000:233) argues that the translator should be aware of the contextual effects that were intended in the original text in order to reproduce them as successfully as possible in the target text.

2.2. Humour translation from a functional perspective

In order to reproduce the comic effect in the target text, it is necessary to take into account the context in which humour is reconstructed in the target text. This means considering the target audience's sociocultural and encyclopedic knowledge. As Zabalbeascoa puts it, it is important to measure – and cover as much as possible – "the cognitive distance between the knowledge required to decode a message [...] and the knowledge one assumes one's audience to have" (2005:191). Applying this statement to the translation of culturally-derived humour, it follows that it mainly involves translating the humorous effect, so that there can be a comparable correspondence between the responses of the source and the target audiences.

Such a functional perspective to humour translation has been put forward by scholars like Vandaele (2002) and Chiaro (2010), while Hickey (1998) has similarly looked into perlocutionary equivalence. The latter term draws upon Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962), according to which speaking constitutes the performance of an action. When a speaker produces an utterance, s/he performs (i) a locutionary act (the very act of producing a meaningful utterance), (ii) an illocutionary act (the speaker's intention to do something through producing the utterance) and (iii) a perlocutionary act (the effect that the utterance has on the addressee) (Austin 1962:101). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007:212) mention that laughter, or at least smiling, is the feature mostly associated with humour. In order, therefore, to achieve perlocutionary equivalence, it can be expected that the source and the target texts should have this sort of amusing effect on the respective audiences.

2.3. Towards a model on the translation of culturally-derived humour in audiovisual texts

When humour relies on ECRs for the successful creation of comic effects, it can be argued that several factors should be taken into account. Jokes that involve ECRs may prove

challenging to translate because, as Zabalbeascoa notes, their translation is likely to entail difficulties that "have to do with the text users' linguistic or encyclopedic knowledge, or their degree of familiarity or appreciation for certain subject-matters" (2005:190). In fact, this links to an issue mentioned in section 2.1., namely that humour can successfully reach the audience provided that relevance is established between the context in which the humour takes place and the audience's assumed knowledge. Furthermore, Zabalbeascoa (2005:197) remarks that the translator should know the interpersonal dynamics among those involved in the joke in order to decide on the most appropriate translation strategy. Applying this viewpoint to humour in audiovisual translation, it is reasonable to argue that the relationships between the fictional characters and the function that such culturally-derived humour may serve within the bounds of the audiovisual text can also influence its translation.

From the aforementioned follows that humour in audiovisual texts can work when relevance is established between the elements of the humour, on the one hand, and the fictional context as well as the audience's background knowledge, on the other. Therefore, a model that may cater for the translation of culturally-derived humour in audiovisual texts needs to take into account (i) the triadic relationship addresser-addressee-audience as well as (ii) the extra-textual and (iii) intra-textual considerations that fuel this relationship. Extra-textual considerations refer to the target audience's sociocultural and encyclopedic knowledge. Sociocultural knowledge involves knowledge emerging from growing up or living in a particular community and culture, while encyclopedic knowledge refers to knowledge of the world and current states of affairs.[4] Intra-textual considerations cover aspects of character construal within the audiovisual text. More specifically, character construal refers to the interpersonal dynamics and the relationships that develop among the fictional characters (e.g. sympathy, hostility, dominance/superiority, solidarity) (Woloch 2003:13).

It should be noted that the distinction between extra-textual and intra-textual rarely seems to be a clear-cut one, as the two often appear to be intertwined with the one influencing and being influenced by the other. Therefore, the examples in sections 3.1. and 3.2. were classified in categories according to whether extra-textual or intra-textual factors prevailed in the decision-making process of their subtitling, without excluding *ipso facto* that elements from both types of considerations played a role in the selection of translation strategies to some extent. For instance, when familiarity with an ECR is deemed necessary for the success

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[4] This knowledge may range from politics and economics to pop songs and celebrity gossip, as will be shown in the data analysis.

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of the joke, there may be some room to manoeuvre and bring the ECR closer to the target audience. In this case, explicitation, substitution or addition might be employed as strategies. On the other hand, when the ECR's obscurity serves a function within the audiovisual text, strategies like loan and calque (or literal translation) may be preferable. The translation strategies used are based on the classification provided by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007:202), which itself relies on Nedergaard-Larsen's taxonomy (1993:219). Apart from those already mentioned, the strategies also included in the classification are: transposition, lexical recreation, compensation and omission.

This section provided a brief overview of the main theories in humour translation and concluded by suggesting how they can be applied to the translation of culturally-derived humour. The points raised in this section are intended to serve as a starting point towards the creation of a model regarding the translation of this type of humour. In what follows, specific examples from the subtitled episodes of *The New Normal* will be analysed so as to indicate how the decision-making process takes into account the considerations mentioned so far.

3. Data analysis

The examples used in the data analysis come from two episodes of *The New Normal* that were subtitled into Greek. The first episode (episode 6 of the series) was broadcast on 9 October 2012 in the USA by NBC and on 14 February 2013 in the UK by Channel 4, while the second episode (episode 7 of the series) was broadcast on 23 October 2012 in the USA by NBC and on 21 February 2013 in the UK by Channel 4. Both episodes touch upon controversial issues. Episode 6 comments upon the issue of gay marriage: a pretend wedding between Shania and one of her classmates, Wilbur, is used as a platform on the basis of which the characters' marriage-related viewpoints are expressed. It can be argued that the humour mainly lies in the incongruity that is created through substituting customs related to marriage with equivalents that are inspired by the spouses' young age. Episode 7 discusses the church's position towards homosexual couples. More specifically, Bryan and David's search for their baby's godmother brings to the fore their own views on religion and how the church's stance on gay issues has affected them. The provided examples were chosen on grounds of their challenging culture specificity which was crucial to creating the comic effect. In what follows, the emphasis is placed on how such challenges were dealt with in the subtitling process, the aim always being the transfer of the intended humour to the target text and audience.

3.1. Extra-textual considerations in humour translation

This section focuses on the way in which the target audience's sociocultural and encyclopedic knowledge informs the translation of culturally-derived humour. This knowledge exists independently, outside, of the audiovisual text and that is why it is assumed to be considered as an extra-textual factor.

In the following three examples, the ECRs were altered in order to comply with the target audience's assumed knowledge. In example (1), taken from episode 6, the pretend bride Shania announces that she and Wilbur will have their wedding gift registry at a toy store:

(1)   Shania: We're registered at "Toys 'R' Us".
        Subtitle: Έχουμε λίστα γάμου στην «Παιχνιδοχώρα».
        Back translation: We're registered at "Toyland".

The ECR "Toys 'R' Us" is a famous source-culture brand of toys, and the humour lies in the fact that it is used as a wedding gift registry in place of a more appropriate store. The comic effect is further strengthened by the image that accompanies the dialogue: Shania is holding up a big, plastic toy ring, supposedly her pretend engagement ring. The combination of the image and Shania's utterance (1) constitutes an instance of what can be called an intersemiotic joke (i.e. a joke created through both the visual and the verbal mode). According to Zabalbeascoa's taxonomy (1996:253), this is a partially visual joke: the ring that Shania is wearing is a toy, which makes imperative the intersemiotic cohesion (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007:171) between the subtitles and the image. In other words, the element of "toy", which appears in the visuals and is embedded in the original soundtrack through the ECR "Toys 'R' Us", needs to be rendered also in the Greek subtitle in order to maintain the comic elements. Given that the American toy retailer does not operate stores in Greece, the target audience cannot be expected to be familiar with the ECR. Consequently, lexical recreation and explicitation were used in order to convey the joke in the target language. "Παιχνιδοχώρα" ("Toyland") is not an actual toyshop, to the best of my knowledge. However, the capitalized noun, used within quotation marks, suggests a toyshop's name and could be considered as a more general and descriptive term than "Toys 'R' Us" (hence the element of explicitation – and more specifically, generalisation). Moreover, it carries the element "toy" which is crucial to the visual cohesion with the image of the toy ring on Shania's finger that contributes to the joke.

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Another intersemiotic joke is provided in example (2), drawn from the same scene. Here, Shania and Bryan humorously comment on the pretend bride-groom Wilbur's proposal:

(2) Bryan: He put a ring on it.
Subtitle: Θα το πάρει το κορίτσι.
Back translation: He'll take the girl.

Bryan's utterance "(He) put a ring on it" alludes to a famous song by the US-American pop-singer Beyoncé, called *Single Ladies*. Shania is visually reconstructing the most typical gesture of the homonymous video-clip, i.e. the hand-twirl move flashing the ring. Bryan's utterance "He put a ring on it", which follows Shania's gesture, shows that Bryan picks up Shania's allusion as a result of their shared knowledge of popular culture. It also completes the joke in a double way: it spells out the connection between the gesture and Beyoncé's song and refers to Wilbur's proposal.

Given that the song is mostly known as *Single Ladies* in the Greek context, the multi-functionality of the interaction between the visual and the aural mode, along with the multiple dimensions of the joke, may not reach the target audience. In this instance, a type of substitution was used as a translation strategy. It could be argued that the substitution in this case concerns mainly the songs involved. The phrase "Θα το πάρει το κορίτσι" ("He'll take the girl") alludes to an old song by Nikos Gounaris,[5] namely *Να το πάρεις το κορίτσι* ("You should take the girl"), which also revolves around marriage. Moreover, it is an expression often employed with a humorous intention in similar contexts, when a proposal has been or is going to be made, and may thus be expected to be familiar to the general Greek audience. As a result, even though the intersemiotic joke is somewhat reduced to a verbal joke, the subtitled version also creates the intended comic effect.

Another example where sociocultural familiarity with the ECR is assumed to contribute to the joke appears in example (3), taken from episode 7. The scene involves Rocky, Bryan's personal assistant, who always speaks her mind regardless of her interlocutor. Rocky, in an effort to explain to her goddaughter, Pam, what happens to people when they die, tells her that her dead grandfather has been reduced to the potato-salad that Pam is about to eat. She reduces the idealistic notion of everlasting afterlife to a matter-of-fact "dust-to-dust" imagery, saying that dead people are used as fertilizer from which vegetables are grown; hence Pam's

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[5] Nikos Gounaris (1915-1965) was a famous Greek composer and musician in the 1950s and 1960s.

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potato-salad. This is a rather shocking revelation to the young girl, of course. However, the audience cannot fail to appreciate the humour in the equally absurd and simple image of life after death. The joke relies on Rocky's referring to a human being as a potato-salad to which one can add hot sauce. Hot sauce is a spicy condiment with a wide culinary use in the US-American context.

> (3) Rocky: Shake a little hot sauce on him.
> Subtitle: βάλε του λίγη κέτσαπ.
> Back translation: Put a little ketchup on him.

In order for the incongruity between the little girl's expectation and Rocky's bluntness to be perceived by the target audience, substitution was employed as a strategy in the following way: the ECR "hot sauce" was replaced by "ketchup" since the latter is arguably more familiar in the Greek context. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the red colour of the hot sauce bottle restricts the spectrum of available alternatives. For example, condiments such as mustard or mayonnaise could not have been used because of their differently coloured package. The alternative ECR of "tabasco sauce"[6] was also considered as a potential translation, but was eventually rejected on grounds of a less widespread culinary use in the Greek culture.

Apart from cases where ECRs undergo changes in the target text, in several instances ECRs are retained because they are equally well-known in the Greek context. Four examples, taken from episode 6, appear in Table 1:

Table 1: ECRs retained in translation.

	Speaker	Subtitle	Target Text	Back translation
(4)	Bryan:	It's Ben Affleck and J. Lo. I predict they're gonna get married and have beautiful, soya latte-complexioned babies.	Ο Μπεν Άφλεκ και η Τζέι Λο./[7] Λέω ότι θα παντρευτούν/ και θα κάνουν μωρά/με σταρένια επιδερμίδα.	Ben Affleck and J. Lo./I say that they'll get married/and have babies/with wheaten complexion.
(5)	David:	Is that Madonna and Guy Ritchie?	Η Μαντόνα κι ο Γκάι Ρίτσι;	Madonna and Guy Ritchie?

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[6] Tabasco sauce is also spicy and its bottle is of a similar shape and colour as the hot sauce bottle.
[7] The slash is used to signpost the subtitle break.

| (6) | David: | I've been reading *People* magazine because of you. | Διαβάζω το *People* πια. | I read *People* now. |
| (7) | David: | I read that Madonna can't die. She had that procedure done. | Η Μαντόνα δεν μπορεί να πεθάνει,/έκανε τη σχετική εγχείρηση. | Madonna can't die,/she had the relevant operation. |

The celebrities in (4), (5) and (7), namely Ben Affleck, Jennifer Lopez, Madonna and Guy Ritchie, are well-known in the Greek context and so are the rumours that accompany them: Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez were believed to be the perfect couple during their two-year relationship (2002-2004) and Madonna has been notorious for having numerous plastic surgeries in order to prolong her youth. As a result, the jokes that rely on such assumptions are easily transferred in the target text because they constitute also part of the target audience's encyclopedic knowledge.

As far as the ECR "*People* magazine" in (6) is concerned, the intended comic effect relies on its use as a source of information – rather than merely gossip. As a result, it is important that the target audience perceive the subtle nuance. The function of the ECR here is to point out a contrast between David's unfamiliarity with celebrities prior to his dating Bryan and his current successful recognition thereof. This contrast is hinted upon in the subtitled version by means of the added adverbial "πια" ("now"); given the spatio-temporal constraints, it is assumed that this translation option implies as closely as possible the same meaning as the phrase "because of you" in the source text. It needs to be noted that *People* magazine is also circulated in Greece and is known for its celebrity gossip-related nature. Thus, both the context and the fact that the magazine exists as such in the Greek market help the target audience perceive the humour. The ECR "*People* magazine" appears after Ben Affleck, J. Lo, Madonna and Guy Ritchie have been mentioned in the episode; given Greek viewers' familiarity with both the magazine and these celebrities, the connection is easily made between the context and the ECR. This in turn facilitates and strengthens the humorous effect.

Strikingly different to this is the context in which the ECR "*Us Weekly*" appears in example (8), taken from the final scene of episode 7. The ECR is used as part of Bryan's confession to a priest:

> (8)   Bryan: Father, sometimes I read *Us Weekly* and...
>   Subtitle: Πάτερ, κάποιες φορές/διαβάζω το *ΕΓΩ Weekly* και...
>   Back translation: Father, sometimes/I read *I Weekly* and...

As regards the ECR "*Us Weekly*", a magazine on celebrity gossip, the humour lies in the fact that it is mentioned in a confession booth, completely out of its usual context. Furthermore, the crucial lexical item "magazine" is not explicitly mentioned; it is taken for granted that the source audience will be able to fill in the gaps on the basis of their sociocultural knowledge. This is why familiarity with the associated assumptions of the ECR is conducive to the successful creation of the humorous effect. In order to make the joke more accessible to the target audience, the translation strategy of transposition was used in the Greek subtitled version. In the case under discussion, *Us Weekly* was replaced by *ΕΓΩ Weekly* ("*I Weekly*") magazine, which exists in the target market and can be considered as an equivalent concept; it mainly addresses female readers and features celebrity news as well.

Another magazine of similar content appears in the same scene, in example (9). Here Bryan finishes the priest's sentence suggesting that he should spend less time reading *Us Weekly* and focus on more spiritual issues. However, the way that the priest's utterance is left incomplete in the form "I think you should read less *Us Weekly* and more..." allows for Bryan's humorous response:

> (9) Bryan: *In Touch*?
> Subtitle: Το *Εξ Επαφής*;
> Back translation: The *In Contact*?

The joke extends the comic effect which was created by the previous reference to *Us Weekly*. As no variant publications of *In Touch* magazine exist in Greece, a different translation strategy, namely calque or literal translation, was employed in the target text and the ECR was, thus, rendered as "*Εξ Επαφής*". The literal translation of the ECR was chosen over a loan word because there is a wordplay based on the magazine's title, as example (10) shows. The utterance in (10) comes as a response to that of (9):

> (10) Priest: Get in touch with your feelings. Yeah, get in touch with real things, you know.
> Subtitle: Να έρθεις σε ουσιαστική επαφή/με όσα νιώθεις.
> Back translation: Get in real contact/with what you feel.

The lexical item "επαφή" ("contact") appears both in the title of the magazine and in the priest's utterance and, as a result, the humorous effect is similar in both the English and the

Greek text. Although no magazine in the Greek context is entitled as "*Εξ Επαφής*", the target audience may be expected to understand that the ECR is indeed a magazine because both "*ΕΓΩ Weekly*" and "*Εξ Επαφής*" appear in italics and capitals. As a result, Greek viewers may enjoy the emerging humorous effect, even though it is arguably weaker than the one in the source text given the *ex nihilo* invention of the "*Εξ Επαφής*" magazine.

The examples (1-9) discussed in this section demonstrate that subtitling strategies need to take into account extra-textual elements, i.e. the target audience's assumed encyclopedic and sociocultural knowledge, in order to attempt to create a humorous effect similar to that of the source text. On the one hand, in examples (4-7), the encyclopedic and sociocultural knowledge can be assumed to be shared by both the source audience and the target audience and therefore, the ECRs were retained in the subtitled version. In the other five examples, on the other hand, the target audience could not be assumed to be familiar with the ECRs in the source text and therefore, various translation strategies had to be employed to convey the humour: a combination of lexical recreation and explicitation (1), substitution (2, 3), transposition (8) and literal translation (9). In the following section, the focus will be placed on elements of the audiovisual text itself, which can play an important role in the choice of translation strategies.

3.2. Intra-textual considerations in humour translation

The translation of culturally-derived humour in audiovisual texts is also informed by considerations emerging from within the text, i.e. intra-textual factors, such as character construal, meaning the portrayal of the fictional characters and the relationships that they develop with each other. This section focuses on seven indicative examples, one of which appears in example (11), taken from episode 6. Bryan asks David whether he wants to get married and David responds in the following humorous way:

> (11)   David: I also want to be a seven-foot tall centre for the Chicago Bulls, but
> that's not gonna happen.
> Subtitle: Επίσης, θέλω να παίξω/στους Σικάγο Μπουλς.
> Back translation: Also, I want to play/in Chicago Bulls.

The Chicago Bulls is a basketball team well-known in the source culture. David uses this ECR ironically to answer Bryan's question. Later on, Bryan asks David to spell out what he means because Bryan fails to recover the implicit meaning in David's utterance due to his

unfamiliarity with basketball. Bryan fulfils the common gay media stereotype or mediatype (Chung 2007:101), according to which gay men are preoccupied with beauty and fashion and show disregard for "manly" activities such as sports. On the other hand, David deviates from the gay mediatype to some degree. His use of the ECR "Chicago Bulls" may be viewed as a sign of discourse management, which, according to Attardo (2009:323), is one of the functions of humour. In other words, it can be argued that David assumes superiority through the humorous use of the ECR: he attempts to convey a message implicitly while well aware that the addressee will fail to decode it because he is not aware of the assumptions that lie within the ECR. This superiority is further established when David is prompted by Bryan to unpack his ironic remark. It is reasonable to assume that the ECR is not meant to be recognised by the fictional addressee, Bryan, but is shared between David and the source audience. This means that the assumptions accompanying the ECR are accessible to both David and source-culture viewers. Therefore, Bryan's sports-related ignorance is the butt of the joke.

In the subtitled version, the ECR was retained for the following reasons. It is possible that some target-culture viewers may not be aware of the ECR, and share Bryan's ignorance. In this case, the triadic relationship addresser-addressee-audience intervenes and disrupts the comic effect to some extent: for those in the target audience that do not know the Chicago Bulls, this subtle comic "conspiracy" between fictional addresser (i.e. David) and audience is not rendered across the linguistic and cultural barrier. However, the presence of the original soundtrack and the spatio-temporal constraints inherent in subtitling do not allow for extensive explanatory comments. The target-culture viewers who are unfamiliar with the ECR "Chicago Bulls" can at least infer that it is a sports team based on the added lexical item "να παίξω" ("to play"). The ECR is retained in the translation primarily because the incongruity on which the joke relies is deconstructed further in the dialogue, which facilitates the target audience's processing as well. Furthermore, David's ironic tone strengthens the intended humour at Bryan's expense, which is then unpacked in the subsequent utterance.

Another example illustrating the important role that characterization plays as regards the selection among translation strategies is example (12), also taken from episode 6. The joke is based on the incongruity that lies in Bryan's preparing complicated dishes for the pretend wedding of Shania and Wilbur. In (12), he mentions several culinary dishes that sound foreign and complicated to his fictional audience, Goldie, as well as to the source audience:

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> (12)   Bryan: Hamachi tartare on crisped wonton, chipotle marinated flank steak, and my favourite, the lamb slider.
> Subtitle: Ταρτάρ χαμάτσι σε γουόν-τον, μπριζόλα/σε τσιπότλ, καναπεδάκια με αρνί.
> Back translation: Tartare hamachi on wonton, steak/in chipotle, lamb sliders.

Bryan aligns with the gay mediatype (Chung 2007:101) once more, flaunting his knowledge of foreign cuisine. At the same time, he asserts his superiority to an amazed Goldie whose gastronomic intellect is less sophisticated. The dishes are transferred as such in the target text with no explanation, generalisation or attempt to unmask their foreignness in the eyes of Greek viewers so that the same humorous effect may reach them. In this way, Goldie's subsequent utterance "These all look so foreign" may appear as a justified remark.

Apart from Bryan, Shania also assumes superiority over Goldie, as happens in example (13), taken from episode 7:

> (13)   Shania: This is my tribute to Annie Leibovitz.
> Subtitle: Είναι αφιερωμένες στην Άνι Λίμποβιτς.
> Back translation: They're dedicated to Annie Leibovitz.

Here, Shania mentions the famous US-American photographer Annie Leibovitz whose technique apparently inspires her own picture-taking. However, Goldie does not know who Leibovitz is and naively supposes she is one of Shania's classmates. Goldie's ignorance indicates a gap in her encyclopedic knowledge and, thus, establishes Shania's intellectual superiority to her mother. The joke is created through the incongruity between Shania's age and her knowledge of Annie Leibovitz. It also draws upon Goldie's ignorance and Shania's outsmarting her mother. In addition, the joke is shared by the fictional addresser (i.e. Shania) and the source audience, who is also expected to recognize Leibovitz's name, at the expense of the fictional addressee (i.e. Goldie).

Similarly to example (11), where the source audience is read into the joke and the fictional addressee is left to wonder, the triadic addresser-addressee-audience relationship has an impact on how the humour is transferred in the target text in this case, too. Target-culture viewers unaware of Leibovitz's identity may fail to capture the joke. However, the spatio-temporal constraints do not allow for any explanatory cues. What is more, the way in which

the ECR is employed and the function it serves within the context of the TV show discourage explaining or substituting the ECR. The implicitness of the joke needs to be preserved so that it can be enjoyed by target-culture viewers who do know of Leibovitz and, thus, can join the dynamics of the triadic relationship in a similar way to the source audience. This is why the target text does not provide any clarifying information with regard to Leibovitz's identity. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the target-culture viewers who do not recognize Leibovitz's name, and, as a result, cannot understand the joke as it unfolds, can infer the incongruity between Shania's utterance in (13) and Goldie's wrongly assuming that Leibovitz is Shania's classmate when Shania subsequently responds that Bryan and David know what she means.

Another instance in which the interpersonal dynamics among the characters influences the translation of culturally-derived humour can be seen in example (14), taken from episode 6. In (14), Goldie's grandmother, Jane, comments on Bryan's disillusionment as he finds out that David does not share his excitement about marriage. Jane rejects same-sex marriage, so the ECRs she employs regularly serve a derogatory or hostile purpose:

> (14)　　Jane: Oh, Cinderfella…
> 　　　　Subtitle: Καημένε Σταχτοπούτε...
> 　　　　Back translation: Poor "Cinderella" + masculine suffix...

The word "Cinderfella" constitutes a lexical parody of the traditional Cinderella story and conveys Jane's negative attitude towards Bryan at the same time. The comic effect is created by the combination of the wordplay on "Cinderella", the ECR's gay connotations and its use in the relevant context. The ECR "Cinderfella" also alludes to a homonymous film (Tashlin 1960), in which the roles of the traditional fairy-tale are reversed: the protagonist is a man who eventually finds his Princess Charming. In the source culture, the allusions to the film may be assumed to be recognized primarily by the older generations, as represented by Jane. The younger viewers are more likely to simply perceive the ECR as a wordplay on "Cinderella".

As far as the target audience is concerned, the majority of Greek viewers will not be aware of the film. Therefore, the humour needs to be somehow recreated in order to reach them. For this reason, the morphology of the word "Σταχτοπούτα" ("Cinderella") was manipulated,

resulting in the wordplay "Σταχτοπούτος"[8] ("Cinderella" + masculine suffix) in the target text. Furthermore, the interpersonal relationship between Jane and Bryan and, more specifically, Jane's disparaging attitude towards Bryan allow for the addition of the adjective "Καημένε" ("Poor"), which enhances the comic effect. The gay connotations are also present in the target text: it can be argued that Cinderella's story is embedded in sociocultural knowledge (of both the source and the target audiences) as a fairy-tale primarily addressed to females; therefore, changing the gender of such a classic figure and calling Bryan "Cinder-f-ella" could be seen as emasculating and undermining him.

Later in episode 6, Jane tries to talk Shania's classmates into ruining the pretend wedding because she thinks that it ridicules the institution of marriage in the same way that gay marriage does. The girls she addresses are shown in consecutive snapshots expressing their disapproval of gay marriage. The humour lies in the sharp contrast between their young age – and the expected undeveloped political inclinations – and their conservative views. These are presented as a result of growing up in homes where their parents support the Republican US-American politician Mitt Romney:

(15)   Jane: I have personally hand-picked each and every one of you, girls, because I've seen the Romney sticker on your parents' car. That and you know how to sit with your legs together.
Subtitle: Σας διάλεξα μία-μία προσεκτικά/γιατί είδα αυτοκόλλητα του Ρόμνι/στα αυτοκίνητα των γονιών σας/και ξέρετε πώς να κάθεστε σταυροπόδι.
Back translation: I chose you one by one carefully/because I saw stickers of Romney/on your parents' cars/and you know how to sit cross-legged.

Although Romney is in general known in the Greek context, some viewers (especially younger ones) may not be familiar with his politics. However, it can be argued that the humour which is created through the use of this ECR reaches the target audience because of the co-text and Jane's characterization. In other words, Jane's explanation "because I saw stickers of Romney on your parents' cars" is absurd in itself and does not require an extensive sociocultural knowledge of the party that Romney represents. The only prerequisite for the success of the joke is the knowledge that Romney is a politician and this is probably accessible to the majority of Greeks. This is why the ECR is retained as such in the target text.

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[8] In fact, this is how the film's title was translated in Greek:
"http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053716/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_dt_dt#akas (accessed 12 August 2014)".

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Continuing her appeal to the young girls, Jane makes a reference to the association "One Million Moms" in example (16). This organization, which favours conservatism and opposes gay marriage, is a branch of the fairly well-known American Family Association.[9]

(16) Jane: I need the help of every one of you future One Million Moms.
Subtitle: Χρειάζομαι τη βοήθειά σας/ως μελλοντικές Μαμάδες Εναντίον Γκέι.
Back translation: I need your help/as future Moms Against Gays.

The girls are presented as carriers of their parents' conservative views. The joke relies on the contrast between the girls' young age – and an expected relevant open-mindedness – and their conservative viewpoints on gay marriage. The sociocultural knowledge associated with the organization "One Million Moms" is crucial to the way that the ECR contributes to humour in the source text. However, the Greek audience may not be expected to know what the association represents and, thus, how the joke is constructed. For this reason, the Greek subtitle employs a combination of lexical recreation and explicitation, so that the sociocultural core of the ECR is unpacked and thus made relevant to the context of the joke. As there are no equivalent organizations in Greece, an association is lexically recreated for the purposes of the joke. The element of explicitation lies in the fact that the translation spells out one of the association's tenets (i.e. the opposition to gays), which also explains why the ECR is used in this instance. The target viewers may recognize the reference to an organization here by its capitalized spelling.

While several of the above examples drew on jokes shared between the addresser and the audience at the expense of the addressee, example (17), taken from episode 7, presents a shared joke between the two characters, which is perceived as such by the audience. David is Jewish and makes a joke based on the incongruity between the biblical punishment of Jews to wander in the desert for 40 years and the retirement of contemporary Jews to Fort Lauderdale, which is a luxurious and prosperous tourist destination in the US-state of Florida:[10]

(17)   David: Why do you think my ancestors wandered the hot desert for 40 years? It's why my people retire to Fort Lauderdale.

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[9] "http://www.onemillionmoms.com (accessed 10 August 2014)" is the online source for the organization "One Million Moms".
[10] More information on Fort Lauderdale can be found on the official website: "http://www.fortlauderdale.gov (accessed 13 August 2014)".

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> Subtitle: Οι πρόγονοί μου έζησαν/40 χρόνια στην έρημο/για ν' απολαύσουν/το πολυτελές Λόντερντεϊλ.
> Back translation: My ancestors lived/for 40 years in the desert/ to enjoy/the luxurious Lauderdale.

Bryan, who is well aware of the associations accompanying the ECR of Fort Lauderdale, takes note of the joke and replies in mock-disbelief: "Is that why?" The source audience is expected to be familiar with the ECR and therefore enjoy the joke as well. However, it is unlikely that the target audience is familiar with the ECR, and therefore the translation strategy of explicitation has been applied to the Greek subtitle. It adds the adjective "πολυτελές" ("luxurious") in order to (i) give the Greek audience some idea of the fancy holiday resort, and (ii) underline the absurdity of the utterance. In this way, the incongruity between David's Jewish ancestors living in the desert and present-day Jews enjoying the luxurious Fort Lauderdale is highlighted and, thus, also the target audience may perceive the humour shared by the two characters.

In conclusion, this section focused on seven examples in which the function of the ECR within the audiovisual text informed the respective subtitling strategies. In five examples (11-13, 15, 17), the source-text ECRs were retained in the target text; in (17), the retained ECR was accompanied by an added modifier, i.e. "πολυτελές" ("luxurious"). In example (14), the literal Greek translation was used with the added modifier "Καημένε" ("Poor"), and in example (16), the ECR was lexically recreated and explicitated.

As the analysis showed, the comic effect can be compromised in the target text when the joke is shared by the fictional addresser and the source audience at the expense of the fictional addressee, as happens in examples (11) and (13). In these cases, the sociocultural knowledge shared by the addresser and the source audience may not be accessible to the target audience. Consequently, target-culture viewers who are unfamiliar with the sociocultural context of ECRs used in the source text may either take more time to understand the joke or lose the joke altogether. Given the spatio-temporal constraints imposed on subtitling, there is little room to manoeuvre in the target text so as to provide hinting cues to the target audience. This was possible to some extent in example (11) with the added verb "να παίξω" ("to play"), which identifies the ECR as a sports team, and in example (17) with the added modifier "πολυτελές" ("luxurious"), which qualifies the ECR. However, there may be a chance to subtly expand on and disambiguate the joke in the immediately subsequent subtitle(s). In this way, the humour may be perceived by the target audience albeit retrospectively, as happens in example (13).

4. Conclusion

This paper examined the audiovisual translation of humour created by means of ECRs in the Greek version of the US-American TV series, *The New Normal*. In section 1, the background to the study and to the specific case study was given. In section 2, humour was explained by drawing on Relevance Theory and the concepts of incongruity and superiority. The concept of context was given as an element specific to audiovisual humour. With regard to translating audiovisual humour, a functional approach was promoted that also seeks perlocutionary equivalence. Drawing on these theoretical insights, three elements were considered as crucial for the subtitling of ECRs in audiovisual humour: i) the tripartite relationship, addresser – addressee – audience, ii) extra-textual aspects, and iii) intra-textual aspects. Going one step further, it was suggested that these three elements would be essential for a future model for the subtitling of ECRs in audiovisual humour.

In section 3, sixteen examples from two episodes (subtitled into Greek) of the *The New Normal* were analysed with a particular view to the three given elements in order to verify the theoretical considerations in section 2. In section 3.1, nine examples were analysed in which the extra-textual aspects – the encyclopedic and socio-cultural knowledge of the target audience – influenced the subtitling choices. In section 3.2, seven examples were analysed in which the intra-textual aspects – the relationships between the characters – influenced the subtitling choices. While the analysis thus considered the two elements separately in order to stress their importance for the decision-making process, it also became very clear that all three elements (and several more) need to be considered together when subtitling ECR-dependent humour. For instance, the humour constructed via the ECR in example (2): the source audience perceives a joke shared by the two characters Shania and Bryan who humorously refer to Wilbur's proposal by both visually and verbally alluding to Beyoncé's pop song *Single Ladies*. Considering the triadic relationship between characters and audience, it is clearly important that the audience perceives the joke as shared between Shania and Bryan. Similarly on the intra-textual level, the way Bryan picks up Shania's visual allusion with a quote from the song defines their personal relationship. While the source audience may be expected to pick up the joke and its various meanings, the target audience may not. Therefore, a substitution was made in the Greek version, in which Bryan instead refers to an old Greek song "*Να το πάρεις το κορίτσι*" ("You should take the girl") by Nikos Gounaris. Although this

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reduced the joke to a verbal joke, it was considered that the target audience may still perceive the other aspects of the joke successfully.

Particularly difficult cases to subtitle arose in those instances, in which the triadic relationship becomes part of the joke: as examples (11) and (13) showed, jokes that are shared by the addresser and the source audience at the expense of the addressee may not always be similarly shared by the target audience. This means that the sense of solidarity enjoyed by the participants of the joke in the source text may not be transferred in the target text. The target audience that does not understand the implications of the use of an ECR due to a sociocultural gap is placed in a position similar to that of the fictional addressee, at the expense of whom the joke is levelled. This case can be posited as a sensitive subtitling situation because the translation needs to function on a double standard, addressing both (i) target-culture viewers who may be familiar with the sociocultural knowledge of the source culture and (ii) target-culture viewers who may lack such knowledge. This is why the target text cannot be explicitly transparent, so that viewers in category (i) can enjoy the same sense of solidarity and superiority as the source audience.

Further to the three already mentioned elements, the data analysis showed that at least two more elements would need to be considered in a model for the subtitling of ECR-dependent humour. The visual context played a particularly important part in examples (1-3), in which the ECRs referred to elements that were visible (1, 3) or alluded to in a visual reconstruction (2). And of course, the spatio-temporal restrictions of the subtitles influenced the decision-making process in several instances (example (13) in particular).

Further collection of data may indicate which other elements need to be included in such a proposed model. Moreover, it still needs to be investigated to what extent the Greek subtitles succeed to generate perlocutionary equivalence, since a study of their reception was not included in the scope of the present study (as stated in the Introduction). In fact, this limitation can invite further research which could establish whether the selected subtitling strategies provide the optimal transfer of the intended humour.

In conclusion, a model that could cater for the translation of culturally-derived humour would need to take into account the factors analysed in this paper as well as more that may arise through relevant research. In this way, humour translation in audiovisual texts could be

systematised with the aim of providing the target audience with as close a comic effect as the one conveyed to the source audience.

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