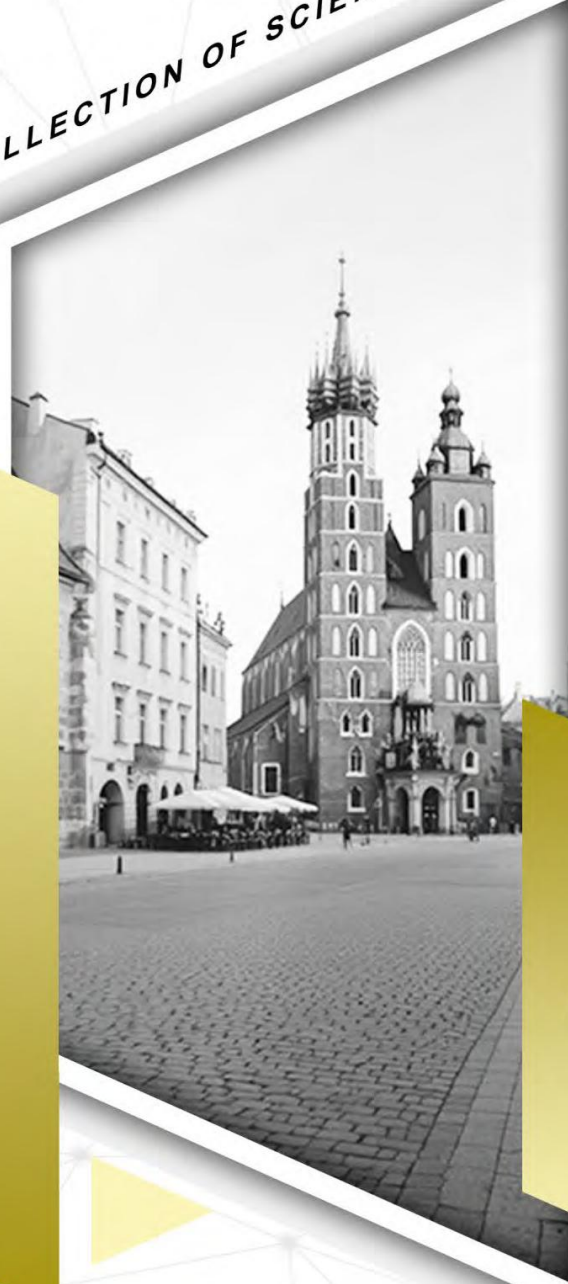




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Жаботинська С.А., Воропай Н.В. СЕМАНТИЧНА КЛАСИФІКАЦІЯ ЛОКАТИВНИХ АДВЕРБІАЛІЙ І ІІ ДИДАКТИЧНА СПРЯМОВАНІСТЬ.....	773
Швед Е., Дацьо О., Яцків О. АРГУМЕНТАЦІЙНА РОЛЬ СТИЛІСТИЧНИХ ФІГУР У Т. ЛІВЛЯ.....	776
Гончаренко А.М., Дятленко Н.М., Юрчук Н.А. ІНТЕРВ'Ю ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ОБ'ЄКТИВІЗАЦІЇ ХАРАКТЕРУ ПЕДАГОГІЧНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА В ЗАКЛАДІ ДОШКІЛЬНОЇ ОСВІТИ.....	780
Гресь О. ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ ДОШКІЛЬНИКІВ ДО ВОЛОНТЕРСТВА В ЗДО ЯК ШЛЯХ ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОЇ АКТИВНОСТІ ТА ВИХОВАННЯ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИХ ЦІННОСТЕЙ.....	782
Hrodskyi I., Ohii S. RENDERING OF HUMOR AND IRONY IN THE UKRAINIAN VERSION OF ALICE IN WONDERLAND.....	785
Деренюк М.П. РОЗВИТОК ЦИФРОВОЇ ОСВІТИ В УМОВАХ ЗМІШАНОГО ТА ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ...	790
Ігнатенко Е.А. ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ЗАСАДИ ТА ДИДАКТИЧНІ МОЖЛИВОСТІ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ВІДЕО.....	793
Дядюра Г.М. РЕКЛАМНИЙ ТЕКСТ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ КОМУНІКАТИВНОГО ВПЛИВУ.....	797
Коваленко К.М. ВИКОРИСТАННЯ МОБІЛЬНИХ ДОДАТКІВ У ПРОЦЕСІ ФОРМУВАННЯ МАТЕМАТИЧНИХ УМІНЬ УЧНІВ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ.....	800
Зажарська Г.П. НАУКОВО-ДОСЛІДНА РОБОТА ЯК ВАЖЛИВА СКЛАДОВА ФАХОВОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ ВИХОВАТЕЛІВ ЗДО.....	802
Кривонос М.П., Яценко О.І. ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ВИКЛАДАННЯ ОСВІТНЬОЇ КОМПОНЕНТИ «ІКТ» В ЗВО СЬОГОДНІ.....	805

RENDERING OF HUMOR AND IRONY IN THE UKRAINIAN VERSION OF ALICE IN WONDERLAND

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The practical part of this research is based on a close reading of humorous and ironic fragments in the dialogue of Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*. In order to analyze the Ukrainian version in a consistent way, the material was first organized through a working taxonomy. Such a step is necessary because "humor in film" is not a single phenomenon: it appears as short situational jokes, as culture-based references, and as irony that depends on context or visual action. Without a clear classification, the evaluation of translation adequacy would remain subjective.

For the purposes of this study, the sample was coded according to three categories: (1) simple jokes, (2) intertextual references, and (3) irony (including wordplay and visual-verbal incongruity). Each dialogue unit in the sample was assigned one dominant category based on what triggers the comic effect in the scene.

The first category includes simple jokes, that is, short humorous lines whose effect is immediate and does not require special cultural knowledge. In the film, such humor often comes from the contrast between "normal" expectations and the illogical rules of *Wonderland*, or from expressive everyday speech used in an abnormal situation. A clear example is the following line [5]:

(1-s) I'm afraid so. You're mad, bonkers, off your head. (00:02:27–00:02:32) [2]

(1-t) Боюсь так. Ти ненормальна, божевільна, одержима.

The comic effect here is created by a fast, escalating series of near-synonyms. The Ukrainian dubbing keeps the same structure and rhythm, which is crucial for this type of humor.

The second category covers intertextual references, where the humorous effect depends on recognizing an allusion or a well-known cultural element. In *Alice in Wonderland*, such moments often refer to Carroll's original texts and their established motifs. The famous riddle illustrates this category [3]:

(2-s) Have you any idea why a raven is like a writing desk? (00:56:14–00:56:17) [2]

(2-t) Ти не знаєш що спільного у ворони та шкільної парті?

The line functions not as an ordinary question but as a literary marker that activates the viewer's background knowledge. From an analytical perspective, it is important that the Ukrainian version signals the same "riddle frame," even though the concrete noun choice may shift the canonical form of the reference.

The third category is irony, understood as a comic effect based on non-literal meaning, contradiction, or tension between speech and the visual situation. In film

dialogue, irony is often supported by context: intonation, the character's behavior, or what is shown on screen. The Red Queen's remark demonstrates a typical visual-verbal incongruity [9]:

(3-s) I love a warm pig belly for my aching feet. (00:48:35–00:48:38) [2]

(3-t) Люблю погріти ніжки на свинячому пузі.

The words describe comfort, while the scene presents an ethically disturbing action, which produces dark irony. This category also includes wordplay-driven irony, for instance the system built around "muchness":

(3-s) You were much more muchier. You've lost your muchness. (00:38:15–00:38:19) [2]

(3-t) Ти була непереможнo можніша. Ти втратила свою можність.

Here the Ukrainian dubbing does not avoid the linguistic challenge but reconstructs the internal word-formation logic through a new base ("можність"), which allows the wordplay to remain consistent in the following lines.

Overall, the taxonomy shows that humorous material in the film is heterogeneous and often layered. However, coding each unit as (1) a simple joke, (2) an intertextual reference, or (3) irony makes the analysis manageable and transparent. This classification is used in the next subsection to identify typical translation solutions and to measure adequacy and loss within the selected sample [4].

Quantitative overview of the sample. The analyzed material comprises 24 dialogue fragments extracted from Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*. The distribution across the three categories is as follows: simple jokes account for 9 instances (37.5%), intertextual references for 3 instances (12.5%), and irony for 12 instances (50.0%). This distribution reflects the film's stylistic profile: the narrative relies heavily on ironic contrasts and absurdist wordplay, while direct cultural allusions remain relatively limited. The dominance of irony is consistent with Burton's visual and narrative aesthetics, which frequently juxtapose whimsical surface content with darker undertones. In terms of translation adequacy, 22 out of 24 fragments (91.7%) were assessed as adequate, meaning the Ukrainian dubbing successfully preserved the intended comic or ironic effect. Only 2 fragments (8.3%) showed partial loss of the original mechanism, primarily due to English-specific phonetic patterns that could not be directly reproduced in Ukrainian [11].

After the taxonomy has been applied to the selected dialogue units, the analysis can focus on how the Ukrainian dubbing recreates comic effects in real scene conditions. The central criterion used in the sample is adequacy: a fragment is marked as adequate when the Ukrainian line keeps the same function in the scene and produces a comparable humorous or ironic effect for the target audience. This approach is especially relevant for dubbing, where the translation must sound natural, fit timing, and remain compatible with the visual context [7].

Simple Jokes: Directness and Rhythm

In the group of simple jokes, the Ukrainian version most often succeeds through directness. When the humor comes from the situation itself, the key task is not to "invent" a new joke but to keep pace, tone, and clarity. This is visible in short, rhythm-based lines where the comic effect is built through a quick sequence of labels.

For instance, "You're mad, bonkers, off your head" becomes "Ти ненормальна, божевільна, одержима" (00:02:27–00:02:32) [2]. The structure remains parallel, and the Ukrainian line sounds idiomatic, which supports the same immediate reaction. A similar principle works in formulaic commands such as "Off with his head!" rendered as "ГОЛОВУ ГЕТЬ!" (00:26:56–00:26:58) [2], where brevity and performative force matter more than lexical detail. Another example demonstrates register adaptation: when the Dormouse says "You're all late for tea!" the Ukrainian version "Ви спізнилися на чай!" (00:34:27–00:34:28) [2] preserves the absurd logic while maintaining natural phrasing. In the scene with the Red Queen demanding "I need a pig here!", the Ukrainian dubbing renders it as a question: "Свиню мені підкласти?" (00:48:28–00:48:29) [2], which adds a subtle comic nuance through modulation while keeping the absurd demand intact [1].

Intertextual References: Balancing Recognition and Accessibility

Intertextual references require a different kind of decision. Their effect depends on recognition, so the translator must keep the "reference frame" clear. In the riddle "why a raven is like a writing desk" the Ukrainian version keeps the riddle format but changes one element ("письмовий стіл" → "шкільна партя", 00:56:14–00:56:17) [2]. This shift can be interpreted as an accessibility-oriented move: the line remains easy to process as a cultural hint, even though the canonical wording is altered. As a result, the translation preserves the scene's function—signaling a Carroll-style allusion—while slightly reshaping its literary precision [10].

Similarly, the intertextual parody "Twinkle twinkle little bat" is adapted as "Щось у небі мерехтить! То кажанчик десь летить!" (00:34:42–00:34:44) [2]. The Ukrainian version preserves the playful nursery-rhyme effect through rhyme and rhythm, ensuring that the parodic intent remains recognizable even when the exact wording diverges from the original [5].

Wordplay and Irony: Creative Reconstruction

The most distinctive achievements of the dubbing are observed in wordplay and nonsense-based irony, where literal transfer is often impossible. Here the Ukrainian version frequently chooses creative reconstruction rather than simplification.

The chain built around "muchness" demonstrates this strategy: "muchier / muchness" is rendered through a consistent Ukrainian formation "можніша / можливість" (00:38:15–00:38:19; 00:38:21–00:38:23; 00:45:03–00:45:04) [2]. Instead of replacing the idea with a neutral paraphrase, the dubbing creates a new internal system that can continue across several lines, which is precisely what makes the original wordplay work.

A comparable creative solution appears in the dance term "Futterwacken", re-created as "Бриги-дриги" and supported by expressive colloquial verbs ("вшкварю... викаблучно", 00:33:20–00:33:22) [2]. In such cases, the Ukrainian version preserves not the surface form but the playful logic and the character's comic identity. The neologism is maintained consistently across the dialogue: when the Mad Hatter asks "Futter what?", the Ukrainian dubbing replies "Бриги що?! – Бриги-дриги!" (00:33:09–00:33:11) [2], preserving the metalinguistic joke [6].

Visual-verbal irony is also effectively preserved. The Red Queen's line "I love a warm pig belly for my aching feet" becomes "Люблю погріти ніжки на свинячому пузі" (00:48:35–00:48:38) [2]. The colloquial Ukrainian phrasing keeps the verbal irony that contrasts sharply with the visual cruelty shown on screen.

At the same time, the sample also contains points where the humor is harder to maintain because it is tied to a specific sound pattern or a fixed cultural form. When the original relies on subtle phonetic play, the Ukrainian version may choose a scene-compatible alternative, which protects flow but can weaken the precise mechanism [12].

A typical example is the rhyme-like exchange at the tea party ("tea tray in the sky"), where the Ukrainian line "Понад світом пролітає. – Наче цілий чайник чаю" (00:35:00–00:35:01) [2] becomes a different rhythmic solution. The scene remains playful, yet the original phonetic trigger (ray/tray) is not reproduced in the same way. Similarly, the neologism farewell "Fairfarren" is replaced with a conventional "Прощавайте! Ясно?" (00:36:42–00:36:45) [2], losing the Underland lexical flavor. These cases are best treated as partial losses of mechanism rather than overall failure, because the audiovisual context can still support a humorous interpretation [4].

The quantitative overview of the sample supports these observations. Out of 24 analyzed fragments, 22 (91.7%) receive an adequacy score of 1, which means that the Ukrainian dubbing generally preserves the intended comic or ironic impact. Only 2 fragments (8.3%) show partial loss of the original mechanism [8].

In terms of technique choice, the data reveal the following distribution: adaptation is the most frequently used technique, accounting for 7 instances (29.2%), followed by discursive creation with 6 instances (25.0%). Compensation appears in 4 cases (16.7%), typically in wordplay-driven passages where the original mechanism cannot be replicated directly. Established equivalents are used in 3 instances (12.5%), primarily for culturally fixed formulas. Modulation (2 cases, 8.3%), amplification (1 case, 4.2%), and literal translation (1 case, 4.2%) account for the remaining techniques [7].

The data show a clear tendency toward direct rendering in straightforward situational jokes, while creative procedures become more visible in nonsense and wordplay-driven passages. Where losses occur, they are concentrated mainly in mechanisms that depend on English-specific sound patterns (such as phonetic puns) or fixed cultural forms (such as neologisms with no Ukrainian equivalent). Overall, the sample confirms that the dubbing prioritizes functional effect: it aims to keep the scene's humor "working" for the viewer, even when the original mechanism cannot be reproduced literally [9].

In sum, the Ukrainian dubbing of *Alice in Wonderland* shows a stable tendency toward functional rendering. It preserves comic timing and character voice in simple jokes, maintains the interpretive frame in intertextual moments, and uses creative reconstruction for nonsense and wordplay. The resulting effect is coherent with the film's style: the Ukrainian version sounds lively, expressive, and stylistically compatible with Burton's mixture of the whimsical and the dark.

The practical analysis demonstrated that the Ukrainian dubbing uses different solutions depending on the type of comic effect. In simple humorous fragments, the

best results are typically achieved through clear and direct rendering that preserves rhythm and expressive force. In intertextual moments, the translation tends to keep the recognizability of the reference frame, even when the wording is adjusted for the target audience. In wordplay and nonsense-based passages, the dubbing often relies on creative reconstruction, including context-based coinages and expressive colloquial choices, in order to preserve the playful logic of the original [11].

The overall result of the sample indicates a high level of adequacy: in most cases the Ukrainian lines keep the same role in the scene and produce a comparable humorous or ironic effect. When losses occur, they are mainly connected with mechanisms that depend on English-specific sound patterns or fixed cultural forms. However, these losses do not prevent the Ukrainian version from maintaining the film's general tone, because the dubbing frequently restores the intended impact through context, performance, and creative language choices.

In conclusion, the Ukrainian dubbing succeeds because it prioritizes the function of humor and irony in the scene rather than literal replication of individual words. As a result, the Ukrainian version sounds natural, expressive, and stylistically compatible with Burton's mixture of the whimsical and the dark.

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