Humor in Translation

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Odjel za anglistiku
Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2017.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Zadar, 15. rujan 2017.

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1. Introduction

Humor is an everyday phenomenon and an integral part of every person's behavior. As such, it has found its place in multiple aspects of human interaction. But besides communication, humor has been recognized as a beneficial medium of self-expression intended to amuse and attract. This is the strategy used by writers in literature, scriptwriters in TV and film industry and even by public speakers in their rhetoric. And while its benefits have been widely recognized, defining it has proven to be an issue on its own focused on providing answers to questions such as what is funny, what makes something funny and how can humor be produced, in order to explore whether there is a universal recipe for humor.

Regardless of this, it can be said for a fact that humor is a universal experience. It is a phenomenon present in all cultures. However, this means that in order to understand humor, and its universality, cultural influence and role in shaping humor should not be neglected. Consequently, in terms of different cultures, the main question is whether humor is also a universal language. This issue can be seen through relationship between humor and translation. Since humor can be conveyed in various ways, the translation of humor faces multiple issues such as what can be translated in humor and what cannot, why is sometimes humor resistant to translation and what strategies could ease the transposition of such complex structure of ideas such as humor between different languages and, therefore, cultures.

In the following chapters of this thesis I will try to discuss said questions in order to gain deeper understanding of humor and humor translation and in my attempt, try to present the theoretical background of humor, the issues connected with defining humor and what should be considered when translating humor and strategies that can be applied in the process.

2. Discussing Humor

When writing about humor, it is important to emphasize that a single definition of humor does not exist. The multi-facetedness of humor can be reflected in the fact that so many branches of the humanities approached humor in their own respective way and have tried to define it or provide fundamental theories about humor. "The serious study of it (humor) is 'part of the field' (if only marginally) in a great many academic disciplines, including at least anthropology, the classics, communications, education, linguistics, literature, medicine, philosophy, psychology, religious studies and sociology" (Veatch 161). Therefore, most commonly humor is not conveyed in a single definition and it is rather defined through theories which are "actually descriptions of conditions under which humor may be experienced rather than attempts to explain humor" (Keith-Spiegel 5).

2.1 Historic Theories about Humor

When defining humor, it is important to mention three major historic theories about humor. Said theories have attempted to define what exactly makes us laugh or what makes a certain situation humorous. In her essay "Early Conceptions of Humor: Varieties and Issues", Patricia Keith-Spiegel refers to these theories as ideas that writers, namely philosophers and literary critics, have expressed on the subject of humor (5). Therefore, these theories could be seen more as compilations of ideas about humor, grouped together according to their similarity.

According to Keith-Spiegel, the first is the superiority theory. She states that the main principle of this theory is that people laugh at those whom they feel superior to: "The roots of laughter in triumph over other people (or circumstances) supplies the basis for superiority theories. Elation is engendered when we compare ourselves favorably to others as being less

stupid, less ugly, less unfortunate, or less weak" (6). The theory also emphasizes that "mockery, ridicule, and laughter at the foolish actions of others are central to the humor experience" (Keith-Spiegel 6), therefore one of the early conceptions about humor has a quite contemporary feel to it, since satirizing, mocking or ironically approaching certain topics, events or situations in order to emphasize them or draw attention to them is a modern-day practice.

The second theory, according to Keith-Spiegel, is the incongruity theory (7). As its name states, it is a theory that humor arises when two contradictory things with nothing in common, are joined together: "Humor arising from disjointed, ill-suited pairings of ideas or situations or presentations of ideas or situations that are divergent from habitual customs form the basis of incongruity theories" (Keith-Spiegel 7). Unlike superiority theories, incongruity theories are focused more on the cognitive aspects of the humor and less on its social aspect. Furthermore, incongruity theories emphasize the role of expectations in humor. In his book, *Taking Laughter Seriously*, John Morreall provides Aristotle's thoughts on this subject: "one way for a speaker to get a laugh is to set up a certain expectation in his listeners and then to hit them with something they did not expect" (16).

The third theory is the surprise theory. It is somewhat similar to incongruity theory because they both involve the emergence of something unfamiliar and something that was not present before: "The elements of 'surprise', 'shock', 'suddenness', or 'unexpectedness' have been regarded by many theorists as necessary conditions for the humor experience" (Keith-Spiegel 9).

2.2 How is Humor Conveyed?

The incongruity theory has been broadened by Henri Bergson. He states that the comic or humorous effect arises when mechanical automatism is joined with human nature: "We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing" (Bergson 20). He further explains this when questioning why we find imitations funny. He provides the explanation that the comic effect produced by imitating someone is due to the fact that it is only possible to imitate someone's unnatural mechanical gestures and movements: "We begin, then, to become imitable only when we cease to be ourselves (…) To imitate anyone is to bring out the element of automatism he has allowed to creep into his person. And as this is the very essence of the ludicrous" (Bergson 12).

In further exploration, at the beginning of his book written in 1911 titled *Laughter*, Bergson debates on what is and can be funny. He states that "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly HUMAN" (Bergson 4). He proceeds to emphasize this with an example of a landscape and how it can be attributed with many qualities but none of them being the quality of humorous. Thus, everything that evokes humor or laughter, does so because it bears some sort of resemblance to human behavior or human quality: "You may laugh at a hat, but what you are making fun of, in this case, is not the piece of felt or straw, but the shape that men have given it, the human caprice whose mould it has assumed" (Bergson 4). This comparison presents the core of his thought: we laugh at human action, appearance and imperfection. This can be connected to one of the three previously mentioned theories about humor: superiority theory.

In his further writing about humor, Bergson states that the fertile ground for humor is the absence of emotion or the indifference to a certain situation that might appear as humorous. He further explains that this does not mean that we cannot laugh at someone for whom we feel something, but rather that we shut down our emotions towards that person for a

brief humorous moment. He exemplifies this by saying: "It is enough for us to stop our ears to the sound of music, in a room where dancing is going on, for the dancers at once to appear ridiculous" (Bergson 4). This comparison paints a picture of a situation which becomes humorous when approached with disinterest.

Another characteristic of humor, as Bergson states, is that it is a group activity: "Our laughter is always the laughter of a group" (5). We laugh when we have something in common to laugh about. This is important to mention for the topic of this thesis because in continuation of his essay, Bergson expands the term group and talks about social groups, and even cultural differences: "how often has the remark been made that many comic effects are incapable of translation from one language to another, because they refer to the customs and ideas of a particular social group!" (Bergson 5).

2.3 Visual Humor – Rowan Atkinson's *Funny Business*

In his 1992 documentary about the art of comedy, Rowan Atkinson discusses how visual comedy is conveyed and where its place is in the domain of comic. He introduces the topic by highlighting the fact that even though the visual comedy is thought to be a part of the past, it is infiltrated and contained in all the media that surround us.

Atkinson introduces three basic principles of visual comedy, first applied to objects, and then to human beings. The first principle is that an object or a person can become funny if they behave in an unusual way. The example provided is humor evoked by an adult man behaving like a dog; inversely the dog behaving like a human also becomes funny. The second principle is that an object or a person can become funny if they find themselves in an unusual place. And the last principle is that an object or a person can become funny by being the wrong size. Therefore, he concludes, funny is contained where natural laws are undermined or eliminated.

Further on, he talks about one of the oldest methods in comedic creation, the slapstick comedy. According to Atkinson, in slapstick comedy, the comedic effect is caused by violence and regardless of its nature as being self-imposed or caused by others, the outcome is funny. However, he states that in recent years, slapstick has changed in a way that people find it funnier if it is contained within real life. Therefore, the more real situation appears the funnier effect it has. Accordingly, in order to use slapstick as their medium, the comedian has to make sure that the situation is believable. This will produce shock effect which will consequently enhance humor. Finally, besides meeting all of the mentioned requirements, the comedian must avoid presenting the reality of the pain to the audience. According to Atkinson, this can be achieved by an exaggerated reaction to violence or by compressing it to a non-existent proportion. In both situations, Atkinson concludes, the comedian is a victim of his own comedy.

Furthermore, Atkinson talks about imitation as one of the primary sources of comedy. If the imitation is performed with exaggeration then it is referred to as parody. On the other hand, if the target of the parody represents some kind of power, the parody becomes a satire. He also emphasizes that recycling existing jokes while performing them with different attitude is a productive comedic tool. Here, the importance lies in the character with which the joke is being executed because the comedy will essentially be contained not in the joke itself but in the character with which it is executed.

Atkinson divides comedy of the character into few categories, the first one being the comedy of stupidity. In the comedy of stupidity the humorous effect is in that the audience is more aware of the situation it observes than the character who participates in it. The second category Atkinson mentions is the comedy of aggression in which the crucial element is character's lack of consideration for others. Finally, the last category Atkinson analyzes is the

crude attitude, or the comedy of vulgarity in which character provokes laughter with vulgar actions.

In reference to presented attitudes, Atkinson questions whether one attitude is funnier than the rest of them or is it a matter of a subjective opinion. He claims that we laugh at things that we can relate to. This is where he mentions Charlie Chaplin and why he fails to make the new generation laugh. Aside from the fact that his movies are silent movies in black-and-white, Atkinson states that the main reason for this is because newer generations cannot relate to his attitude or his character anymore.

Furthermore, he stresses the fact that there are certain universal qualities that are shared by various comedians. These universal qualities are contained within the character of the physical comedian. When discussing the character of the physical comedian, Atkinson compares the comedian to an alien, stating that even though the comedian appears to be like everyone else, he is different. And while the verbal comedian is wittier, quicker and smarter, he refers to the physical comedian as being born yesterday: an adult with the intellectual and emotional characteristics of a child. This immaturity lies in comedian's difficulty in handling objects, what makes him constantly susceptible to accidents. Furthermore, Atkinson states that the immaturity is also contained within comedian's inability to follow social conventions and norms and his lack of moral, stating that if the comedian were to fit social norms he would not be funny anymore. Therefore, a physical comedian makes fun of all authority, politeness and pretention. This is what constantly brings the physical comedian in trouble, but regardless of the danger he gets himself in, Atkinson states that the final characteristic of the comedian is that they always live to walk away at the end of the story.

2.4 Verbal Humor

As it has been previously mentioned, Henri Bergson used a great variety of examples to show how humor is conveyed. He based his examples on incongruity theories about humor. But besides Bergson, many others drew parallels with the theory of incongruity. Here, it is important to mention Victor Raskin who explored verbal humor in his book *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. He provided a semantic formula for humor: "Raskin posits that humor occurs when two scripts that shouldn't be in the same place, are put in the same place, and somehow made to make sense within that place" (Triezenberg 534). According to Triezenberg, these scripts are "stereotypical understanding of an object or an event" (534).

In his example, he provides the basic script for 'doctor'. Such script involves ideas like "intelligent, serious, studied for a long time, can be trusted to do no harm" and he opposes this script to ideas like "greedy, careless and cold-hearted". With this in mind, he states that the following line is funny: "Doctor to patient: 'Well, Mrs. Jones, you're not quite as sick as we'd hoped" (Triezenberg 534). This is the core thought of Raskin's script semantic theory of humor, two opposing ideas which are contrasted in their content and present at the same time create a humorous effect.

Furthermore, Raskin expanded his script semantic theory of humor along with Salvatore Attardo in their 1991 article titled "Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model" in which they presented the general theory of verbal humor. In their newly coined theory "the script opposition is only one of six possible dimensions of a joke" (Triezenberg 536). Even though these theories have been widely accepted as having contributed to studies and understanding of humor, many agree that said theories are not the "be-all and end-all of humorous expression, especially not of humorous literature, which combines the craft of humor with the craft of storytelling" (Triezenberg 537). Therefore,

Triezenberg explored the ways in which writers can help the readers appreciate the humor within the text.

Triezenberg named these techniques humor enhancers. "A humor enhancer is a narrative technique that is not necessarily funny in and of itself, but that helps an audience to understand that the text is supposed to be funny, that warms them up to the text so that they will be more receptive to humor, and that magnifies their experience of humor in the text" (Triezenberg 538). She enlists word choice, shared stereotypes, cultural factors, familiarity, repetition and variation as useful humor enhancers in written texts.

The first enhancer is word choice. Basically, it states that if we are to tell a joke using a particular script (e.g. politicians) we should do so by using words and themes that fall into domain of that script (e.g. being familiar with the terms such as 'congress'). She provides an example: "a joke about lawyers will benefit from being prefaced by legal jargon, and a joke about farmers will benefit from being prefaced by rustic idioms" (Triezenberg 538).

According to Triezenberg, another useful humor enhancer could be shaping scripts on the basis of shared stereotypes. This means that if we use something stereotypical as a script, something that is already familiar to the audience, then the audience will be more receptive of the joke because an already existing reference is being used, as opposed to making up a completely new script what could possibly kill the joke. But in reference to this, Triezenberg emphasizes that: "the humorist must be very careful first to make sure that the stereotype he is using really is a stereotype that is immediately recognizable by the majority of the audience" (538).

3. Humor and Translation

As it has been presented in the previous chapter, humor is a complex field of study with many theories and issues stacked behind it. Accordingly, the relationship between translation and humor depends on various factors which affect the translation and its comprehension. This subject is discussed in one of the chapters in Jeroen Vandaele's book *Handbook of Translation Studies* in which he discusses subjects of humor and humor translation.

In the context of translation, Vandaele refers to humor in terms of relative or absolute untranslatability due to cultural and linguistic aspects which are often intertwined and inseparable (149). The cultural aspects of humor translation are tied to questions such as what is funny in a particular culture. On this note, Vandaele states: "Humor occurs when a rule has not been followed, when an expectation is set-up and not confirmed, when the incongruity is resolved in an alternative way" (149), but when this is put in the context of translation, said rules, expectations and solutions become culture-specific. Here, Vandaele gives an example of parody and imitation. Parodied text can be translated with the same effect only if the target culture is acquainted with the subject of the parody. Similarly, imitations are funny only to those who know the subject being imitated (149).

According to Vandaele, another problem tied to humor and translation is that humor is built on implicit knowledge, especially about whom or what can be targeted by humor, which varies among groups and cultures. If the translator is not aware of the implicit knowledge of a certain culture, their translation could end up being inappropriate (150). For example, some countries allow ridiculing political figures, while others censor it. This topic will be discussed more in the next chapter of this thesis.

When it comes to linguistic aspects of translating humor Vandaele points out a few problems previously recognized by scholars. These problems are "rooted in linguistic

denotation and connotation, so called 'lectal' varieties of language, and metalinguistic or metalingual communication in which the linguistic form matters" (150).

The first linguistic issue in translating humor stems from the denotation a word can carry. Vandaele states that the main problem when it comes to denotation is when a humorous effect is contained within a concept which is specific to a certain language (150). Therefore, similar effect is very difficult to reproduce in another language without losing too much of the original meaning.

Similarly, connotation poses a problem due to the difference between meanings which are connected to equivalent words from target source language. In this case, humorous effect can be lost because it relies on a connotation a word has in the target language, and due to inability to reproduce it with an equivalent word in the target language. Here, Vandaele presents an example from Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation* that talks about ironic effect based on register discrepancy between English word 'Sir' and French word 'Monsieur' when translating from French into English. Namely, for French people, addressing a cab driver with 'Monsieur' is an indication of politeness and, while an equivalent word to 'Monsieur' in English language would be 'Sir', using it in New York would produce an ironic effect, since the meaning of 'Sir' indicates a very formal speech and not politeness (Eco qtd in Vandaele 150). In the opposite situation, translating from the English to French language the ironic effect would be lost and harder to reproduce because the use of 'Monsieur' is common for French people, and therefore, not ironic.

3.1 The Issue of Equivalence

According to Vandaele, the relationship between humor and translation becomes even more complex because humor has a tendency towards wordplay and culture-specific terms and expressions which contribute to the untranslatability of humor between cultures (150). In

her essay "Verbally Expressed Humor and Translation", Delia Chiaro discussed these culture-specific expressions and wordplay in terms of equivalence.

According to Chiaro, equivalence raises the issue of fidelity of the translation, or as she puts it: "The question regarded how much formal freedom a translator could exercise in the TT (target language) with respect to the ST (source language)" (574). The question of fidelity, although said to be outdated, has polarized scholars and translators for a long time, shaping two opposing views on the issue of fidelity. On one hand, there are translators who lean more towards being faithful to the source language, and on the other hand, there are translators who see being faithful to the target language as more important. However, current situation is not as conflicted: "nowadays there is a greater realization that neither fidelity or freedom are mutually exclusive" (Chiaro 575).

Furthermore, in order to explain why the notion of equivalence is important for the translation of humor between cultures, Chiaro states:

> The issue of equivalence is especially significant with regard to the translation of verbally expressed humor because the nature of these texts tends to be such that the source text is either so language-specific or culture-specific that the translator is compelled to make radical changes. (575)

To illustrate changes that the translator has to make and the application of equivalence as a useful translation tool, she provides an example of a riddle that is translated from English to French language. The question is: "What has fifty legs and cannot walk?" to which the answer is: "Half a centipede" (Chiaro 575). The French translation will only make sense if the translator changes the question in the riddle to "What has five hundred legs and cannot walk?" because the French expression for centipedes is mille-pattes, which translated literally, means 'thousand-pedes' (Chiaro 576).

This is where Chiaro references Eugene Nida and his notion of dynamic equivalence in translation as a "closest natural equivalent of the source language message" (576). Moreover, the translation such as in the previous example is bound to lose, or have some of its content adjusted, but the most important thing is that the translation creates the same effect as the original: "translational sacrifice is frequently inevitable and the concept of dynamism can be quite useful" (582).

3.2 Issues in Humor Translation between Cultures

Aside from the issue of equivalence, Chiaro examined the sociocultural issues tied with humor translation. On that note, she states that the translation is a process that involves restructuring of ideas, schemes and thoughts from the target language and rebuilding them in the source language:

> Each language is inextricably linked to the culture to which it belongs, thus the process of interlingual translation, while being a primarily linguistic activity, also involves the transposition of a series of extra linguistic features inherent to the source culture. (585)

Chiaro also provides a number of examples to show how exactly humor is rooted in culture and how it affects its translation from culture to culture. The first example is the translation of the following British underdog joke into Italian language: "What do they write on the bottom of Guinness bottles in Ireland?" to which the witty answer is: "Open other end" (583). Chiaro states that the joke, translated literally, fails to be funny in the Italian language. This is because Italians are unlikely to know that in British culture "Irish are the butt of English stupidity jokes" (583). Therefore, in order to translate the joke properly, it needs to be "localized" for the Italian culture. This can be done by replacing the Irish butt of the joke with the group targeted by humor in Italian culture. According to Chiaro, the translator can

transform the joke into a "carabiniere" joke: "the peripheral group in Italy is not an ethnic group but a professional one – the 'carabinieri', one of Italy's police forces" (583).

The next issue is that the joke targets the Irish people because of their stereotypical tendency towards alcohol consummation by using a reference to beer, national drink of the Irish. Since Italians are not stereotypically known for their drinking habits, just replacing it with an Italian type of an alcoholic drink would not suffice (583). Therefore, an alternative needs to be found. Chiaro sees the solution in replacing the alcoholic drink with a name of a soft drink or a juice, since it is a more suitable option in the context of Italian culture. Lastly, the joke needs to be put into a context of a place which is typical for "carabinieri", because unlike in the original, it does not target all the Italian people, and a suitable replacement would be a police station (583). The final product contains Italian police forces instead of the Irish, a can of soft drink instead of a beer, and a vending machine placed in a police station instead of no context. Thus, the references from British culture are adjusted in such way that the joke can function within Italian culture and have the same effect as the original despite going through a process of transformation (Chiaro 583). Chiaro also states that the joke could be left in its original form, but in that case it would not be joke anymore, but a lesson about British humor (584).

Much like all of the issues examined in the Irish underdog joke, from different targets of a joke to different contexts, Chiaro states that every translation "involves the careful consideration of the world in which the language is produced" (586). Moreover, in some cases even if two words from different cultures are completely synonymous, each can have a different set of meanings connected with it. Therefore, translation requires analysis of a language as a representation of a unique social reality (Sapir qtd in Chiaro 586).

Chiaro examined this by analyzing the difference between associations connected with the English word "tea", and the Italian word "tè", both of which essentially refer to "a product

derived from the chopped leaves of a tea plant" in their respective cultures (585). In England, tea is traditionally referred to as "cuppa", boiled in a teapot and served in large quantities as an antidote for stress and emotional distress whereas in Italy, it is prepared in mugs by pouring boiling water over a teabag and is not as consumed as in England. Therefore, English expression derived from tea "to offer tea and sympathy," which means to offer consolation to someone, would not make sense if translated literally in Italian language since it does not evoke the same associations in Italian culture. Similarly, in England a small crisis is referred to as a "storm in a teacup", an expression which does not exist in Italian language (Chiaro 585).

After examining the examples, it can be concluded that even though two words refer to the same thing, they are reflections of two different social realities. On this note, Chiaro states that two words from different cultures can never be completely the same in their meaning: "between languages meanings tend to be approximate, not necessarily because of the absence of a particular term in one of the languages, but simply because the signification of a term may not coincide in the two cultures" (586).

4. Humor in Translation

As it has been stated, translating humor between cultures requires the adjustment of references, ideas and structures which are culture-specific and therefore, add to humor's resistance to translation between cultures. But besides strategies that may be employed in order to achieve equivalence, there are other translation techniques that should be mentioned, in particularly, the direct translation. The direct translation is a translation technique introduced by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet in their book *Comparative Stylistics of French and English.* According to Vinay and Darbelnet, within the direct translation, there are three procedures useful for overcoming gaps in translation: borrowing, calque and literal translation (31).

Borrowing is the simplest method and it is used to translate source language concepts that are unknown to target culture. It presumes taking a word directly from the source language and incorporating it into target language (Vinay and Darbelnet 32). According to Vinay and Darbelnet, an example of such borrowings can be American English words such as 'dollars' and 'party'. Moreover, some words have become so widespread that they are barely recognized as borrowings anymore. In English language, examples would be words such as 'menu' and 'hangar', and expressions such as 'déjà vu' (32).

The second procedure is calque. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, calque is "a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements" (32). Calque can be divided into lexical calque, in which syntactic structure of the original is preserved, while its components are translated, and a structural calque, which brings a completely new construction into another language (Vinay and Darbelnet 32).

The third procedure is literal translation. Literal translation is also referred to as a word for word translation or "the direct transfer of a source language text into a grammatically and

idiomatically appropriate target language text" (Vinay and Darbelnet 33). According to Vinay and Darbelnet, literal translation is a process which is completely reversible. It is most commonly used when two languages belong to the same family (e.g. French and Italian). What is more, this technique is most efficient when two languages share similar or same culture, or when concepts or ideas are shared between two different cultures (34).

In her article about translating humor "On the Feasibility and Strategies of Translating Humor", Debra Raphaelson-West compares translating humor to the translation of poetry. She discusses how in both instances there is more to communicate with the translation than just the content of the text, such as form or the style. Without its form, she states, poetry would lose its content. Therefore, the best way to translate both humor and poetry is the direct translation, moreover "in the case of similar cultures and languages, it is often possible to do an effective translation" (Raphaelson-West 128).

Further on, when discussing various problematic areas of humor, Raphaelson-West emphasizes that a very important aspect of humor is its subjectiveness. On the macro-level, humor varies among cultures. This variation determines its translatability from one culture to another. The more similar cultures are, the easier it is to translate a joke. On the micro-level humor differs even among the participants of the same culture, this makes it even harder to translate: "Among family members around the same dinner table, there will be disagreement about what is funny. A harmless joke could be interpreted as an insult or worse" (Raphaelson-West 129). This aspect of humor dictates what should and what should not be translated. In Russia, it is strictly prohibited to humor the political head. For example, considering Russians' negative attitude towards humor in the context of business, sometimes it is best to not translate the joke at all when it is found in such context (Raphaelson-West 130). Therefore, such norms and implications determine what kind of humor becomes widespread.

In an opposite situation from the one in Russia, in America, people are encouraged to joke in whatever ways they want. This has resulted in tasteless and derogatory side of American humor which is, according to Raphaelson-West, untranslatable due to the fact that translating such type of a joke to a different culture, even when an instruction about the American tendency towards such humor is provided, does not mean that humor will be recognized (130).

4.1 Strategies for Translating Different Types of Humor

According to Raphaelson-West, the first step to translating a joke is the analysis. It should be determined what makes the joke funny and what type of humor the joke contains in order to decide how and whether we should translate the joke (130). Furthermore, she divides jokes into three groups: linguistic jokes, cultural jokes and universal jokes, linguistic being the hardest to translate and universal jokes the easiest.

As an example of linguistic jokes, she enlists puns. According to Oxford dictionary, pun is defined as "A joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings". Her example of a pun is the sentence: "Linguistic jokes are punny as hell" (Raphaelson-West 130). The core of the joke is created in accordance with both parts of the Oxford definition: 'punny' rhymes with 'funny' making them similar in their sound, and the word 'punny' replaces 'funny' in the idiomatic expression 'funny as hell' giving it a slightly different meaning. She states that in order for this pun to be translated with the same effect into another language, one must find "an idiomatic expression about humor which contained a word which rhymed with a word which means something about puns or language" (Raphaelson-West 130), and adds that the word containing some kind of reference to puns or language has to be similar to the word it rhymes with in its meaning and pronunciation.

Furthermore, when talking about language-based joke, the problem can arise in the way the joke is constructed in one language and the impossibility to repeat the same strategy in another (Raphaelson-West 131). Raphaelson-West provides an example of a linguistic joke in Russian language in which the humor stems from the ambiguity of the phrase it is used in (131). The ambiguity of the phrase is impossible to translate into English without altering the meaning of the phrase therefore such altercations are sometimes the best solution to preserving the humorous effect of the text in translation.

The subject of puns was also discussed by Clifford E. Landers in his book *Literary translation: A Practical Guide* and he expanded the subject onto wordplay. He refers to puns and wordplay as metalanguage or "a language talking about itself" (Landers 109), and warns that most puns are very difficult, if not impossible to translate. But, although with difficulty, some puns are translatable to a certain degree in a sense that the same effect of a pun can be achieved in translation if the pun is used, if possible, in a different place in the text. Therefore, the key is to find a suitable context in which the pun could make sense and be funny, independent to whether it is used in the same place or the same context as in the original the important thing is to create the same humorous effect (Landers 110).

Landers also discussed the translation of the humorous verse. In reference to this, he provided a few principles one should follow in order to produce a good translation. The first is that the humorous verse must rhyme and that its rhyme must be unmistakable: "the rhyme can't be on a word with two equally acceptable pronunciations (bow, either, row, route, envelope) because a portion of the readership will choose the alternative and fail to see the humor" (Landers 102). Moreover, the second principle implies that the verse has to be short and concise. The third principle is that the humorous rhyme, or the punch line has to come last; the joke should be built up to the last verse where it is resolved, magnifying the humorous effect. And the last principle is that the sound is always the priority compared to the

meaning. This means that the translator has the freedom to insert anything in his translation, even if the translated word does not match the word from the original in its meaning, as long as the rhyme and thus the humorous effect is preserved (Landers 101).

To continue on Raphaelson-West's classification of jokes, the next category she mentions are the jokes that contain references to culture. She states that such jokes are easier to translate, due to similarity between some cultures: "if both nations A and B had relations with nation C, it would be possible for A to make jokes about nation C which could be translated into the language of nation B" (Raphaelson-West 130).

Moreover, understanding and translating cultural jokes, presumes understanding the culture that is contained within the joke. This complicates translating such jokes because even if all the words in a joke are easily translated from one language to another, the connotation they bare in one culture is harder to reproduce in the other without being familiar with the former, and as a result the humorous effect can be missed out on. Raphaelson-West provides an example of a joke about New York paratroopers showing the Californian their native city. New Yorkers decided that the best way for the Californian to see the city without dealing with traffic is to jump out of the plane. Before the jump, they instructed him that he should count to ten before pulling the cord of the parachute. After the Californian made the jump, he fell to the ground before pulling the cord. When the New Yorkers landed, they still heard the Californian counting. In order to understand and appreciate the joke one must be familiarized with the following stereotypes connected to New Yorkers and Californians: the stereotypical New Yorkers speak very quickly while the stereotypical Californian speaks slowly (Raphaelson-West 132).

On the other hand, similar to cultural jokes, ethnic jokes do not presume the understanding of cultural references as they are interchangeable, meaning that the jokes are quite universal in their meaning, only the subjects of the joke who are being mocked by it are

different within cultures. "All that is necessary is a display of stupidity, and there we have an ethnic joke" (Raphaelson-West 132). For example in England they are Irish jokes (Wilde qtd. in Raphaelson-West 132). These are quite easy to translate since the only thing that the translation of such jokes needs is the adjustment of the characters in it, but despite their easy translatability, Raphaelson-West instructs that it is best to leave these jokes as they are with the addition of footnotes explaining crucial parts for understanding, in this way: "the joke could be instructive about American culture, and might even produce a chuckle" (Raphaelson-West 133).

Furthermore, when translating satire, Raphaelson-West states that it is important to define what the satire mocks. If something is mocked in one culture it is not necessarily mocked in the other. Given the fact that the main instrument of satire is the exaggerated imitation, the satire therefore has an allegorical meaning. The problem here is that such allegorical meaning could be overseen by the reader in the target culture, especially if the topic of the text is not satirized in his culture. Raphaelson-West claims that the possible solution to this problem is to find something the target culture ridicules, and replace it with that in the translation but emphasizes that "there is a good possibility that exaggeration is only humorous in a cultural context" (133). In that case, we may leave the content of the text unchanged if the moral of the text is still conveyed by applying such strategy.

On the other hand, when translating parody different difficulties arise. Raphaelson-West refers to parody as "the mockery of a specific work and it is among the most difficult things to translate. Besides the cultural and linguistic similarities necessary, the piece of literature being parodied needs to be commonly known in order for parody to be effective" (Raphaelson-West 134). Therefore, sometimes the only way to translate parody is to rewrite it completely while adjusting it to the ideas from the target culture.

4.2 General Theory of Verbal Humor as a Translation Template

In order to simplify the translation of humor, Trajan Shipley Young tried to develop a checklist about translating and analyzing humorous texts in his work titled *Towards a Humour Translation Checklist for Students of Translation*. He based his checklist on Attardo's and Raskin's general theory of verbal humor. According to this theory, any joke can be divided into six parameters, or 'Knowledge Sources'. They are the internal factor of the translation.

The first parameter is language. Language as a knowledge source is defined as containing the information which determines the wording of the text and the placement of its functional elements. When this is applied to the translation of humor, the parameter of language determines translation in the following way: "The concept of paraphrase is essential for understanding the type of variation that this Knowledge Resource accounts for: as any sentence can be recast in a different wording any joke can be worded in a number of ways without changes in its semantic content" (Attardo qtd. in Young 983). Therefore, according to Attardo, the best way to translate the language parameter is to substitute target language with source language.

The second parameter is the narrative strategy. This parameter refers to the fact that every joke has its narrative. It can be verified as a joke with a simple narrative, or in the form of the dialogue, etc. Another example would be a joke structured as a riddle. In reference to this, Young quotes Attardo explaining that the narrative strategy usually does not call for change since the narrative itself does not depend on language (984). On the other hand, if the narrative cannot be translated into another language, then the translator needs to reproduce a joke by using a different narrative strategy.

The third parameter is the target. This parameter determines who is ridiculed by the joke and reveals the stereotypes connected with the subjects of the joke which evoke

humorous effect. As previously mentioned, Raphaelson-West refers to these as ethnic jokes which are relatively universal in their meaning and only the subjects in the joke are different among cultures (132), therefore, the translation of the target "can be done by substituting the appropriate group in the target culture" (Attardo qtd. in Young 983). An example of this has been presented on Chiaro's British underdog joke targeting the Irish people.

The next parameter is the situation. Situation of the joke refers to the setting of the joke, its objects, participants, instruments and activities. If a situation cannot be translated into target language, whether it is because it does not exist or does not create a humorous effect in the target language, then said situation should be replaced with another one while preserving all the other parameters intact (Attardo qtd. in Young 983).

The fifth parameter is logical mechanism. Logical mechanism refers to "the resolution of the incongruity", it represents the logical outcome or the resolution of the joke, but since not all jokes have an ending, as it is the case in absurd humor, this is considered an optional parameter (Attardo qtd. in Young 983).

Finally, the last parameter is the script opposition. This parameter is the characteristic of "the single-joke-carrying-text" (Attardo qtd. in Young 983). It refers to two scripts overlapping or being opposed one to another, thus making the text ambiguous, metaphorical or allegorical, but at the same time, not necessarily funny. The problem with the script opposition is that "each culture will have a certain number of scripts that are not available for humor (i.e. about which it is inappropriate to joke)" (Attardo qtd. in Young 983). Therefore, the translator should replace the script that cannot be translated with a suitable alternative in the target language. This presumes rewriting the whole text with the new script. The outcome of this is that the joke in the translation will be completely different from the joke in the original (Attardo qtd. in Young 984). This can be connected with previously mentioned Raphaelson-West's view on translating the satire and parody in which allegorical meaning is

difficult to convey in the target language culture in the same way it is conveyed in the source language culture (Raphaelson-West 133).

However, Young expands Attardo's guidelines with some other, external factors, the first one being the time frame consideration. It refers to considering time frames from source culture and their impact on the translation and comprehension in the target culture: "If the Source Text contains references to events that are very recent, the question arises as to whether the receiver in the Target culture will be aware of that information as a real event (…) and thus be sufficiently prepared to grasp the humorous intention of the text" (Young 985).

Furthermore, the next factor is the social-class and educational consideration. Here, it is important to remember that every text has its audience, a target audience which reacts to the joke based on its knowledge about the subject. For example: "A joke about Freudian psychology might be said to have a limited target audience, and one which would necessarily require some educational underpinning to understand humor" (Young 985).

Moreover, Young states that there are translations in which all of the mentioned criteria will be met in the target culture, the only thing left to the translator is to change the language. In such instances, Young talks about a judgment call for the translator who needs to decide whether some parts of the text should be left as they are because they contain some kind of reference, synonymous only to certain culture (985). Here, Young talks about the translator counting on audience's cultural awareness about the meaning of those words or phrases and gives an example of 'siestas', a term which the translator may choose to preserve in the translation because of their assumption that most people are aware of the meaning of "siestas" (985).

And, the last factor he mentions is the publication background information. It refers to the influence media exert on the translation and the translator based on their political and

ideological commitments. With all the information provided, Young states that the combination of all of the mentioned factors, both internal and external, results in a prototype of a checklist whose aim is to help a humor translator in his process (985).

5. Conclusion

Taking everything into consideration, it can be said the translation of humor is a complex task accompanied with issues that require detailed knowledge about both humor and translation. Humor is a diverse phenomenon, evasive to definition, which has perplexed scholars for a long time. In superiority theories, for example, humor stems from feelings of superiority over others, in incongruity theories from contradiction, and in surprise theories from unexpectedness, and the very fact that these theories have different outlooks on this matter, proves the subjective character of humor and affirm its undefined status. Drawing inspiration from incongruity theories, Henri Bergson deems humor as an incongruous combination of mechanic and natural in which human beings act as machines, and inanimate resembles humane, the only requirements being distance from the situation and the quality of shared experience. Similarly, Rowan Atkinson defined humor through violation contained within three basic principles: a person can become funny by behaving in an unusual way, being in an unusual place or being the wrong size.

However, even though said authors have found universality in humor, the translation studies have focused more on what is not universal in its expression, namely, cultural manifestations in humor, and degree to which it has to be altered in translation between languages. Since every culture is a universe of its own, structures, concepts, and ideas on which humor is built require restructuring, reshaping, and reinventing for the purposes of translation. What is funny in one culture is not in the other and vice versa. Therefore, as much as humor is a universal experience, it is unique in its expression. Bearing this in mind, humor translation should be approached with detailed knowledge about both source and target culture humor in order to reproduce the funny in another language.

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7. Humor in Translation: Summary and Key Words

The main subject of this thesis is humor in translation. In order to elaborate this topic, the first part of this thesis focuses on humor and ways in which humor can be defined. Accordingly, the theoretical background of humor containing the basic principles of humor has been explored. Furthermore, theories by contemporary authors, namely Henry Bergson, have been presented with the aim of understanding ways in which humor can be constructed. In order to show diversity of humor, aside from verbal humor and humor in literature, the subject of visual humor has been explored based on Rowan Atkinson's documentary style television series, *Funny Business*. After looking into theoretical background of humor, the issues tied with the translation of humor have been presented, in accordance with the theoretical hypothesis. Firstly, linguistic issues in translating humor based on language, and then humor translation between cultures and its rootedness in culture displayed in culture-specific references and structures. Finally, some general strategies for translating humor have been presented, especially those important for humor translation, and a template for easier translation of humor.

Key words: humor, constructing humor, translating humor, cultural rootedness, culture-specific, translation issues, translation strategies

8. Humor u prijevodu: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Glavna je tema ovog završnog rada humor u prijevodu. Kako bi se problematika mogla bolje razraditi, prvi dio rada orijentiran je humoru i načinima na koje možemo definirati humor. Sukladno tome, istražena je povijesna teorijska podloga humora koja sadrži najosnovnije pretpostavke o humorističnom. Zatim su prezentire postavke humorističnog na temelju rada suvremenijih autora, s naglaskom na Henrija Bergsona, s ciljem razumijevanja načina na koje se humor konstruira. Kako bi se prikazala raznovrsnost humora, osim verbalnog i pisanog, obrađena je i tema vizualnog humora na temelju Atkinsonove televizijske serije dokumentarnog karaktera, *Funny Bussines*. Nakon teorijske razrade o humoru, sukladno postavkama koje su predstavljene, prezentirani su problemi povezani s prevođenjem humora. Ponajprije lingvistička problematika prevođenja humora temeljenog na jeziku, a zatim i prijevod humora iz kulture u kulture, odnosno njegova kulturalna utemeljenost, posebice utemeljenost referenci i struktura koje su specifične samo za određenu kulturu. Naposljetku, iznesene su općenitije strategije prevođenja s naglaskom na one koje su vezane za prijevod humora i predložak koji bi trebao olakšati njegov prijevod.

Ključne riječi: humor, konstruiranje humora, prevođenje humora, kulturalna utemeljenost, kulturalne specifičnosti, problemi prevođenja, strategije prevođenja