



The process of translating puns and jokes between languages

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Abstract: This article analyzes the process of translating puns and jokes from one language into another from linguistic and cultural perspectives. As puns and humor are deeply rooted in the phonetic, lexical-semantic, and cultural features of a language, their translation poses significant challenges. The study systematically examines the main problems encountered during translation and discusses strategies such as literal translation, cultural adaptation, functional substitution, and explanatory translation. The author emphasizes the importance of preserving the emotional and communicative functions of humor in the new cultural context. This research holds theoretical, methodological, and practical significance for translation studies and may be useful for scholars and professional translators.

Keywords: translation, puns, jokes, humor, linguistic aspects, cultural adaptation, functional substitution, translation strategies.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается процесс перевода каламбуров (puns) и шуток с одного языка на другой с лингвистической и культурной точек зрения. Поскольку каламбуры и элементы юмора глубоко связаны с фонетическими, лексико-



семантическими и культурными особенностями языка, их перевод вызывает множество трудностей. В ходе исследования систематически рассматриваются основные проблемы перевода и стратегии, используемые для их решения: дословный перевод, культурная адаптация, функциональная замена и пояснительный перевод. Автор подчеркивает важность сохранения эмоциональной и коммуникативной функции юмора в новом культурном контексте. Настоящее исследование имеет теоретическое, методологическое и практическое значение для теории и практики перевода, может быть полезно специалистам в области и переводчикам.

Ключевые слова: перевод, каламбуры, шутки, лингвистические аспекты, культурная адаптация, функциональная замена, стратегии перевода.

Annotatsiya: Maqolada soʻz oʻyinlari (puns) va hazillarni bir tildan ikkinchi tilga tarjima qilish jarayoni lingvistik va madaniy nuqtayi nazardan tahlil qilinadi. Soʻz oʻyinlari va hazil unsurlari tilning fonetik, leksik-semantik hamda madaniy xususiyatlariga chuqur ildiz otganligi sababli, ularni tarjima qilish koʻplab qiyinchiliklarni keltirib chiqaradi. Tadqiqot davomida tarjima jarayonida uchraydigan asosiy muammolar va ularga yechim sifatida qoʻllaniladigan strategiyalar — soʻzma-soʻz tarjima, madaniy moslashtirish, funksional almashtirish va izohli tarjima — tizimli tarzda koʻrib chiqiladi. Muallif hazil va soʻz oʻyinlarining emotsional va kommunikativ funksiyasini yangi madaniy kontekstda saqlab qolish muhimligini asoslaydi. Mazkur tadqiqot tarjima nazariyasi va amaliyotiga oid ilmiy izlanishlar uchun nazariy, metodologik va amaliy ahamiyatga ega boʻlib, soha mutaxassislari hamda tarjimonlar uchun foydali boʻlishi mumkin.

Kalit soʻzlar: tarjima, soʻz oʻyinlari, hazillar, lingvistik jihatlar, madaniy moslashtirish, funksional almashtirish, tarjima strategiyalari.



1. Introduction

Humor serves as a powerful tool for social interaction, fostering connections and breaking down cultural barriers. Translating puns and jokes, however, presents an intricate challenge due to the deeply embedded linguistic and cultural features they involve. Unlike technical or literary translation, humor translation requires not only a thorough understanding of the source and target languages but also a keen sensitivity to the cultural and pragmatic context in which the humor operates.

Puns, a subset of humor based on wordplay, rely heavily on polysemy, homophony, and phonetic similarities. Jokes often incorporate references unique to a specific cultural or social milieu. Consequently, the translator must often engage in a creative process that goes beyond the literal rendering of meaning to successfully convey the intended humorous effect.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the main challenges in translating puns and jokes and to propose effective strategies to overcome these difficulties. In doing so, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of humor translation within the broader field of translation studies.

2. Main Part

2.1 Linguistic and Cultural Challenges

Humor operates at multiple linguistic levels:

- Phonetic Level: relying on sound similarities, rhymes, and homophones.
- Lexical-Semantic Level: utilizing polysemous words, ambiguities, and idiomatic expressions.
- Syntactic Level: exploiting grammatical structures to create incongruity.
- Cultural Level: referencing societal norms, historical events, traditions, and cultural artifacts.



Effective humor translation requires the translator to identify and reconstruct these multilayered features appropriately in the target language and culture.

2.2 Translation Strategies

2.2.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation may be employed when the linguistic playfulness of the original can be mirrored in the target language. However, this approach often fails to capture the humorous effect if equivalent wordplays do not exist.

2.2.2 Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation involves substituting the original reference with a culturally equivalent element that retains the humor's accessibility and effectiveness for the target audience.

2.2.3 Functional Substitution

Functional substitution allows the translator to create a different joke or pun that fulfills the same communicative and emotional function as the original, maintaining the humorous tone even if the literal content changes.

2.2.4 Explanatory Translation

Explanatory translation is used when no suitable equivalent can be found. Footnotes or in-text explanations may convey the humorous context, although they can detract from the natural flow of humor.

2.3 Practical Examples

For instance, the English pun:

"You can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish."



Relies on the phonetic similarity between "tune a" and "tuna." A literal translation into another language would lose the humor unless a similar wordplay is recreated through functional substitution.

Similarly, culturally bound jokes referencing specific holidays, traditions, or celebrities must be adapted to ensure comprehensibility and relevance in the target culture.

2.4 The Translator's Role

The translator must assume the role of a creative writer and cultural mediator. Skills essential for successful humor translation include:

- Advanced linguistic proficiency.
- Profound cultural awareness.
- Creative thinking and problem-solving abilities.
- Sensitivity to the audience's humor preferences and expectations.

3. Conclusion

The translation of puns and jokes represents one of the most challenging areas within translation studies. Successful humor translation demands much more than linguistic accuracy; it requires creativity, cultural competence, and an acute understanding of the audience's expectations.

By employing a range of strategies — literal translation, cultural adaptation, functional substitution, and explanatory translation — translators can effectively overcome the barriers posed by linguistic and cultural differences. This study emphasizes the significance of maintaining the emotional and communicative functions of humor in the target language, thereby ensuring that the essence of the original text is preserved.



Future research should focus on developing more sophisticated methodologies for humor translation and exploring its applications in different types of media, such as film, literature, and advertising.

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