

**THE CHALLENGES OF RENDERING HUMOUR
IN „A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES”
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Obiectivele acestei cercetări constau în definirea conceptului de umor în contextul literaturii, studierea dificultăților de traducere a umorului din limba engleză în limba română, analizarea cu atenție a tehnicilor de traducere folosite în interpretarea umorului dintr-o cultură în alta. Într-o analiză amplă a lucrării din limba engleză și versiunii traduse în limba română sunt evidențiate procedeele și strategiile de evitare a conceptului de „netranslatabilitate”.

Humour plays an important role in the context of intercultural communication. Partly universal, partly individual, and at the same time rooted in a specific cultural and linguistic context, humour possess a real challenge for translators. When translating humour a number of factors need to be taken into consideration. Translators' ability to make creative decisions is often tested by culturally bound elements and language-specific devices.

Humor establishes communicative relationships and expresses a certain attitude. So, humor can only be effective for the recipients, who have the same collective, socio-cultural image, and becomes discreet for the audience of another language-culture. Thus, we can reasonably assume that humor can become an obstacle in intercultural communication and becomes a translation challenge. The sense of humor is influenced by the traditions, culture, history of a people, or differs from the position on the social hierarchy or age scale.

The translation of humor has long been considered to be an impossible task. There are many studies that show that a good translator can create the same comic effect for the target audience, despite the cultural differences. Humour has always been one of the major

challenges for translators, especially when it comes to translating extra linguistic elements such as culture. Therefore, the translator needs to understand a specific culture and decide what can be translated and how to translate it in order not to cause offense in the target culture. Even though humour is said to be universal, each culture has its own, and sometimes one culture's humour is hard to understand for others. This research is focused on understanding how humour should be translated, which are the difficulties, and what elements are involved in translating humour.

„A Confederacy of Dunces” was in the attention of the novelist Walker Percy, who had ushered the book into print. The story of loneliness and dissimilarity is written incredibly funny, and this combination of sagacity and satire makes the book simply brilliant. In 1981 Toole was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Speaking about the practical part of the research, here we can see the analysis of several humour translation examples, as the following:

Source text: “— *Bring that **old bag** here?*”

Target text: “— *S-o aduc pe **băbătia** aia aici?*”

The English informal word combination „old bag” is an insulting address for an old or ill-tempered woman who is an unpleasant person. By this description the author introduced to the readers the color of sarcasm. Into Romanian language „old bag” was translated as „băbătia”. This is a Romanian regionalism, which means „grumpy old woman”. Also, it is a typical name of old witches. So, the translator has chosen the suitable Romanian version of translation using the technique of modulation in order to preserve the humour, and especially the sarcasm, outlined in this informal word combination.

Another example of humour translation is the addressing:

Source text: „*Oh, hush, you **big thing**.*”

Target text: „*Ia taci, **malacule**.*”

The Romanian word “malac” means in English “calf”, it is used as derogatory epithet for a fat, slow and lazy man. The technique that was used here is modulation, for “big thing” was find a word that emphasizes the same meaning. As a technique, modulation in translation helps to illustrate the difference between literal translation and coherent meaning translation.

Another interesting example of humour translation is the following

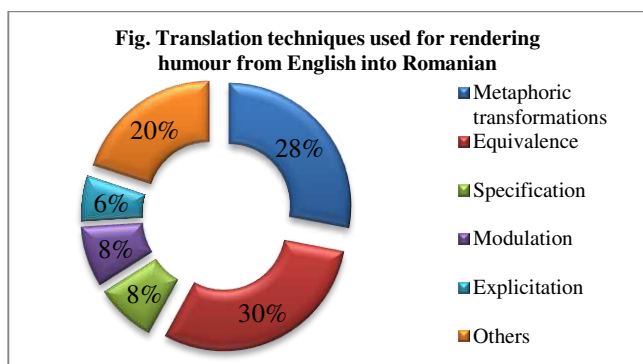
affirmation:

Source text: „*Let that old man alone, you **dirty cop**.*”

Target text: „*Lasă-l în pace pe bătrân, **curcan** împuștit ce ești.*”

The English word „cop” was translated into Romanian language as „curcan”. What is interesting here is that English word „cop” has two meanings: 1. a police officer and 2. a large domesticated game bird native to North America, having a bald head and red wattles. The English word „cop” was also assimilated in Russian language, where „kon” has only one and direct meaning, being universally a slang denoting police officer. So, „cop” could be translated without any doubts into Romanian language as „polițist” meaning „*police officer*”. Despite of this fact, the translator has chosen to use for the English „cop” the meaning of turkey, emphasizing the humour.

Creating a statistics regarding translation techniques used for rendering humour from English into Romanian, we see that the most used were metaphoric transformations and equivalence in order to transpose the humour and the meaning of the jokes, whether it was sarcasm, irony, satire or others. Here, we are noticing the fact that humour usually implies metaphorical meaning, thus the translator many times resorted to metaphorization, demetaphorization or remetaphorization. In the case of equivalence, mostly it was possible to use this technique in rendering idioms, thus preserving the style and the humour for the target audience. Equivalence is regarded as a perfect match between two languages, thereby we can strongly affirm that the translation was performed faithfully and transparently, implying increased attention and professionalism (Fig.).



The novel has been a huge international best seller, capturing the hearts and minds of millions of readers swept up into the world of 1960's New Orleans and into the paws of its leviathan hero, Ignatius J. Reilly. Today, there are more than two million copies in print. The book has been published in 35 languages, including Romanian language. Toole's book traveled to book shelves and into the hands of readers all over the world.

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