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TRANSLATION OF HUMOUR: LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS

Humour is a fundamental aspect of human communication, deeply rooted in culture, language, and shared experiences. As a cultural phenomenon, it reflects societal values, traditions, and linguistic nuances, making it a challenging subject for translation. What is considered humorous in one language or culture may not evoke the same reaction in another, creating significant obstacles for translators. These challenges arise from the use of wordplay, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and even differences in delivery. As such, successfully translating humour from one language to another requires more than just linguistic accuracy – it demands cultural sensitivity, creativity, and an understanding of the target audience's worldview.

The purpose of the work is to explore the main difficulties encountered in translating humour into Ukrainian and to analyse strategies that help overcome interlingual and intercultural barriers.

One of the most significant challenges in translating humour is preserving wordplay, such as puns, homophones, and double meanings. Many jokes rely on phonetic similarities or multiple meanings of a single word, which may not exist in the target language. For example, English wordplay involving homonyms like “*knight*” and “*night*” cannot be directly translated into Ukrainian due to differences in phonetic and morphological structures.

Similarly, idioms, which are fixed phrases with meanings that often cannot be deduced from individual words, frequently appear in jokes and humorous discourse. Since idioms are deeply tied to specific languages and cultures, translating them directly often results in confusion. For example, an English phrase like “*kick the bucket*” (meaning “to die”) may not have a direct equivalent in another language, requiring the translator to find a culturally appropriate alternative that maintains the comedic or ironic effect (Baranova & Trofymenko, 2019).

Another challenge is that humour often draws upon cultural references, historical events, or social norms that may not be familiar to foreign audiences. For instance, jokes about British royal traditions, American pop culture, or Western political satire may require some adaptations to ensure that they resonate with Ukrainian readers. If a joke references a well-known foreign figure who is not widely recognized in Ukraine, the humorous effect may be lost.

Humour is also deeply influenced by traditions and cultural values. While some of its forms, such as irony and satire, are universally appreciated, others, such as black humour or absurdist comedy, may be received differently depending on the target audience. Ukrainian humour has a strong tradition of folk satire, wordplay, and irony, which means that jokes adapted for a Ukrainian audience must align with local comedic sensibilities.

Thus, to effectively translate humour, translators use various strategies that help ensure that it remains accessible and relevant in the target language. Since direct translations of puns and wordplay often do not work, translators frequently create completely new puns that function in the target language. This process involves finding word combinations that carry a similar comedic effect. For instance, if an English joke relies on a play on the words “*whale*” and “*wail*”, a Ukrainian translator might come up with a pun “*китати*” involving “*кит*” and “*кричати*” / “*волати*”, creating a different but equally humorous effect.

A common method of translating culturally specific jokes is replacing cultural references with similar elements from the target culture. This approach, known as localisation, ensures that the joke retains its intended effect without requiring extensive background knowledge from the audience (Karachun & Boyan, 2023). For example, if a joke in English references a not well-known American fast-food chain, the translator may substitute it with an equivalent that is more familiar to local readers.

However, translators must strike a balance between staying true to the original text and making necessary adaptations for the target audience. While excessive adaptation may alter the original author`s intent, a too-literal translation risks making the humour incomprehensible. The key is to preserve the spirit of the joke while ensuring it remains effective in another language.

The translation of J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" into Ukrainian by Viktor Morozov is widely praised for its creative adaptations. The humorous names of locations, magical objects, characters, etc. were localised while maintaining their playful nature. For example, the joke in "*Diagon Alley*" (a play on "diagonally") was adapted into Ukrainian as "*Косий провулок*" (meaning "Oblique Alley"), preserving the intent of the wordplay, while the name of the Weasley twins' shop "*Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes*" was adapted as "*Відьмацькі витівки Візлів*" (meaning "Weasleys' Wicked Tricks"), which also preserves the alliteration and rhythm of the original (Rowling, 2017).

In conclusion, it can be said that translating humour into Ukrainian is a complex process that requires careful handling of linguistic and cultural differences. The key challenges include preserving wordplay, adapting cultural references, and ensuring the humour aligns with the target audience's perception. To overcome these difficulties, translators use various strategies such as creative wordplay adaptation, localisation, and balancing authenticity with necessary modifications. Through these approaches, they ensure that humour remains an effective and engaging part of translated literature.

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