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A Survey of Strategies Used in Humor Translation in the Novel Named "Alice in Wonderland" and in Several Translated Versions of the Mentioned Novel from English into Persian

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In the Name of God

To My Dear Parents

for their boundless love

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Abstract

The notion of humor and what makes people laugh has intrigued scholars of various disciplines for centuries. Humor is an essential part of everyday communication and an important component of innumerable literary works and of art in general. It is often mentioned as one of the characteristics of texts that are most difficult for a translator to translate. Humor is both a social phenomenon and a cultural one. In translation studies, emphasis has gradually shifted towards cultural issues, which has had profound implications for translating humor as well. Humor is especially tricky to translate not only because different people and different cultures find different things funny, but also because of the fact that languages work in different ways. The present study was an attempt to look into what strategies translators apply while translating humor. To that end, the famous work of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in wonderland" and two Persian translations of the mentioned novel (by: Zoya Pirzad and Saeed Daroudi) have been chosen. The humors according to the definition of humor mentioned in this study were identified and a detailed comparison was made between the humors in the original book and their Persian equivalents. What became evident through conducting this study was the fact that for the purpose of translating humor in "Alice in Wonderland", not all the strategies introduced by Gottlieb which was regarded as the theoretical framework of this study are used in Persian translations of the texts and also there are some strategies that work better than the others. By examining the collected data and investigating the table of the percentage of the usage of these strategies it was concluded that Paraphrase, Transfer and Expansion are the most useful strategies and Dislocation is the least applicable strategy for the purpose of translating humor. As the result of the study implies, there are some special strategies that have more usage in translating humors. On the other hand, there are some other strategies that are not used or they are rarely used in this field. When a translator who is aware of this matter can focus on the strategies that are more useful and she/he will reach a better result.

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CHAPTER I

Background and Purpose

1.1. Introduction

The notion of humor and what makes people laugh has intrigued scholars of various disciplines for centuries. Philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists have attempted to define whys and wherefores of humor and, above all, its essence. Such studies have resulted in numerous theories on the subject, some of which are more convincing than others. (Chiaro, 1992) However humor is commonplace in everyday life, it seems to be rather elusive as a theoretical concept. However, this has not prevented scholars of various disciplines, ranging from psychology to sociology to pedagogy to linguistics, from probing into the topic of humor. One of the difficulties in defining humor derives from the fact that the terminology used to describe it is not explicit. Some scholars, such as Schmit-Hidding (1963, cited in Attardo, 1994), have attempted to clarify the issue by proposing semantic maps of humor. The definition of what humor is ultimately depends on the purpose for which it is used. M.H.Abrams (1971, p.180) states: "humor may be ascribed both to a comic speech and to a comic appearance or mode of behavior." Whereas linguists have often been happy with broader definitions, arguing whatever evokes laughter or is felt to be funny is humor. In other words, humor is whatever intended to be funny, even if it might not always be

perceived or interpreted as such. We can see that humor (usually) involves an Initiator; someone who is pointing out something funny. It also involves some Object that is being proposed as laughable. For example, some humor makes fun of people (the butt of the joke) and they serve as the Object of that humor. Some humor makes fun of language ambiguities (for example), and those would be the Object of the humor. All of this happens within a context that may or may not be conducive to humor. Appropriate topics of humor vary from culture to culture (Chiaro, 1992): What is funny in one culture may be inappropriate or serious in another. As Chiaro (1992) states, many jokes are culture-specific. She emphasizes the importance of socio-cultural information in the appreciation of humor (Chiaro, 1992). One factor that plays a large role in determining humor quality is familiarity with the subject matter. Cetola (1988) calls this experience with the topic of humor and Laurian (1992) defines it as certain knowledge that is needed in order to appreciate a joke. Kinnunen (1994) expands this notion by saying that to see something as humorous is to judge it thus, hinting that individuals have a choice as regards to what they find amusing. Judging something as humorous whether it is because of the culture or because of individual taste, leads inevitably to impartial evaluations. In accordance with this, Kinnunen (1992) says that humor is fundamentally subjective in nature. As individuals, people have their own sense of humor and they hold their own judgment over what is amusing. Humor is often mentioned as one of the characteristics of texts that are most

difficult for a translator to translate. Vandaele (2002), for example, discusses how difficult it is to even define what humor actually is. The discussion of the relationship between humor and translation is perhaps best started by addressing a debate that has dominated much of humor research. One might ask if translating humor is fundamentally different from any other form of translation; after all, it is often agreed that successful translation involves recreating in the TL text those features of the SL text that are relevant for the text to function for a certain purpose. With a humorous text, the purpose, for all practical purposes, is always the same: to elicit laughter. A great deal has been written on the translatability or untranslatability of humor. Although there is not any solution to this problem, there are some strategies that may help. This study aims to determine the strategies employed by translators while translating humorous items from English to Persian in Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland". Lewis Carroll's popularity is due to his famous novel "Alice in Wonderland" in which he tries to create a humorous atmosphere through creative use of humor. This is a book in which humor plays a large role than in any other book. This book was a popular story book among children. This was the story book that the cartoons made based of it were shown on TV and children enjoy reading about it.

It is clear that the reader of a published work is one of the outstanding elements that determine the content of the work.

When it comes to translating for children this issue may seem to be more important because a child's knowledge of the world is more limited than an adult's. Children are a special group in every society with their own feelings, interests, likes and dislikes, and their own needs. They have their own language too. Thus, writing and translating for them is in a special way. As long as it is the reader of a translation that is of the primary importance, the translator who is working for children needs to know children completely. Her responsibility is to consider what they need and to satisfy them through using different strategies (Oittinen, 2000).

Children form a particular group in the society, as other groups in any society they have their own characteristics. There are numerous published materials for this group. One type of these materials is the books translated for children including story and poem books. These books can be considered as samples of children's literature. When reading a book, the only matter that is important for them is whether they can understand and enjoy the book. Thus, translating for them is a highly sensitive job. Thus, special strategies should be applied to accomplish this delicate job.

While translating for children the translator should imagine that there is a child listening to her. So, translation can be considered as a dialogue between the author and the reader. In this respect, the translator will listen to the child inside her and she will consider the child's needs and interests. For example,

if a subject or a picture is not interesting for the translator she is not allowed to omit it. (Oittinen, 2000)

Oittinen's (2000) comments on the purpose of children's literature are of special interest: "all of this suggests a species of literature defined in terms of the reader rather than the author's intention or texts themselves". So, translator of children's books should imagine a child listening to her words and then starts her job.

One of the factors to be considered in translating children's literature is the role of culture. There are various cultures in the world and not all of them are the same. These cultures are different from one language to the other and this matter may cause some difficulties in translation of different works and in particular translation of children's literature.

Culture is a determining factor in writing and translating for children because "according to social scientists, culture consists of shared ideas and concepts (beliefs, values, norms, goals), and material possessions of a society that are passed on from one generation to the next" (Pavlovic, 2003, P: 1). Therefore, it is not just the appreciation of art, theater, music, or literature, it includes the whole way of life of the members of the society. In order to offer an acceptable work, the author needs to consider all these items. So, she/ he should also know how they dress, their habits and customs, family life, their pattern of work, religious ceremonies, and leisure pursuits otherwise the readers may have no understanding of what they are reading.

The relationship between culture and translation according to Bahameed (2008) is strong and durable. He has deemed translation necessary for people to reach cultures of other nations. Therefore, translators are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit in the ST and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects into the TL. These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two languages concerned. This cultural gap increases when the two cultures at work belong to geographically distant locations. When it comes to translate for children this issue may seem to be more important.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

When translating from one language to another, the translator may face different problematic areas. Regarding the translation problems, M. Snell-Hornby (1988) says: "the problem does not depend on the source text (ST) itself, but on the significance of the translated text for the readers as members of a certain culture, or of a sub-group within the constellation of knowledge, judgment, perception they have developed from it". (P. 42)

Every translator attempts to find a way of transferring the content of a word or phrase and faces the problem of finding adequate equivalents for the language due to the cultural differences between the source and target

languages. Therefore, s/he looks for strategies to cope with those problems; such as Paraphrase, Transfer, Expansion, etc.

As mentioned above, translation suffers from many inherent limitations; one of which is translating humor meaningfully in another language.

A great deal has been written on the translatability or untranslatability of humor. Although there is no one solution to this problem, there are some strategies that help. This study aims to determine the strategies employed by translators while translating humorous items from English to Persian.

1.3. Research Question

To achieve the purpose of the study which is to investigate the strategies used by translators in translation of humor, the following question is raised as the ultimate goal of this study:

Q: What inter-lingual translation strategies are employed by translators in translation of humor in Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland"?

1.4. Definition of Key Terms

In order to clarify the researcher's stance and avoid any possible misconceptions, the key technical terms appearing frequently in this study are defined here:

Humor: is person's disposition or temperament, maybe a state of mind: it has the quality that makes something seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous (Garrison, 2009). However, according to Ellis (2010), it is "defined by its

cultural context and thus is accountable to society's permission" (P. 6).

Likewise, in the present study, it refers to whatever intends to be funny, even

if it might not always be perceived or interpreted as such. (Attardo, 1994)

Untranslatability: is a property of a text or of any utterance, in a source

language (SL), for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in a

target language (TL). (Manafi, 2003)

Inter-lingual Translation Strategies: As venuti points out, "strategies of

translation involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign texts to be

translated and developing a method to translate it. Both of these tasks are

determined by various factors: cultural, economic, [and] political." (As cited

in Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, p. 240)

Culture-specific item: "Those textually actualized items in the source text

whose function and connotation involves a translation problem when we are

about transferring it in to the target text (TT), whenever this problem is the

product of nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual

status in the cultural system of the readers of the TT" (Alvarez & Vidal 1996,

P: 58).

Culture: According to Newmark (1988), culture is "… the way of life and its

manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular

language as its means of expression." (p. 94)

1.5. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze many books due to the limitation of time in the present study.

Also other limitations were imposed on this research due to the fact that this work was written for children and teenagers and most of the translations in the market were very simplified and abridged, so there were not enough translations in Iran and it was impossible to gain access to several complete and unabridged translations. Regarding this matter, the researcher restricted the present study to what is mentioned below as delimitation of the study:

The first delimitation of this study was in line with the selection of specific corpus Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland", the researcher chose this book to be analyzed in this research.

The second delimitation of this study was due to the fact that this work was written for children and teenagers and its Persian translations in the market were mostly simplified and abridged and only two complete and unabridged translations were found.

The other delimitation was considering the model and those strategies proposed by Gottlieb for the translation of Humor as the theoretical frameworks of this study.

The last delimitation was that the researcher in order to avoid having a big bunch of humors decided to consider eighty humorous extracts as the examples for the present study to be worked on.

1.6. Significance of the Study

An important aspect of pursuing a study into translated products may be to find out what translators do during the process of translation.

Some writers do not always use explicit language to express their talks; they play with words to make their works more attractive and more influential, if translators cannot comprehend these humorous items, and do not know the strategies in translating them, how could they reproduce a good translation? Translating humor have been always challenging for translators. Yet humorous texts have undeniably been translated all long; therefore, this belief is widely understood to be false.

Lewis Carroll's novel "Alice in wonderland" was selected because of its popularity in containing humor and because this was a book in which humor plays a larger role than in any other book. Carroll's popularity is due to "Alice in Wonderland" in which he creates a humorous atmosphere through creative use of humor. Also this was the story book was popular among children and the cartoons made based of it were shown on TV and children enjoy reading about it.

It is clear that the reader of a published work is one of the outstanding elements that determine the content of the work.

When it comes to translating for children, this issue may seem to be more important because a child's knowledge of the world is more limited than that of adult's. The child may have not enough information about her own culture, let alone know about a foreign culture. Thus, if the translation is not a proper one; in a sense that it is not accessible to children, they may lose their interests in reading books.

Therefore, there should be some strategies that can be taken into consideration as effective and useful ones; consequently, the present study attempts to touch upon some possible strategies in order to deal with various difficulties that the translator encounters when translating humor.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the purpose of this study is to acquire into what strategies translators employ in translating humor. In this chapter, theoretical basis for the analysis of the corpus of this study is to be formed. Children's books are considered as a source of information for them. Children just like other members of the society should be informed and be aware of the things that are necessary for them to know. It should be noticed that children are of different age groups. Each group has a special degree of understanding. Lindgren explains this matter by saying that: "if you are writing for five-year-olds…then you shouldn't use words and expressions which you must be at least ten years old to understand…" (Shavit, 1986, P.62) If books are not translated in a proper way for children; it means that if children don't understand the translated book or don't enjoy it, they won't be interested in reading books anymore and it will affect their life. This chapter is an attempt to put emphasis on the concept of translation, children's literature, translation of children's literature, culture and humor. Then the emphasis gradually shifts toward definitions of humor, theories of humor, culture of humor and finally translation of humor.