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Translation Today:
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Comic Means Translation in Feature Films

Abstract: The chapter considers the division of comic means in film discourse into transformations and intensifiers of the comic. The use of transformation of the comic creates the deviation from linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic norm or simultaneous actualization of norm and antinorm (antiphrasis as a kind of irony), or two norms (puns or double entendre) that reveal contrast, results in conflict between implicit and explicit plan of the joke, story or other form of comic discourse, turning the serious norm into profanation or carnival and unexpected funny closing. Linguistic intensifiers of the comic imply the secondary means of creating comic effect that often, however, not always act as emotional triggers and enhance the comic perception of the joke. The study also considers three levels where the comic is verbalized: lexical, stylistic and discursive in the comedies *Big Momma's House* and *Dr. Dolittle* as well as the problem of translatability of comic means in general and in the mentioned films in particular. It emphasizes the principles to which Ukrainian translators resort to achieve the adequacy of translation.

Keywords: the comic, comic means, transformations, linguistic intensifiers

1 Views Toward Comic Means and Their Translatability

The text which is involved in the situation of funny communication serves as a comic means in film discourse. The presence of target audience and its response, in the view of Iryna Shukalo (2013), are the main factors in tracing the comic in film discourse. The comic is perceived by the audience depending on social stereotypes (Shukalo 2013:171–173).

Comedy as a film genre presents the highest concentration of comic/comic means in film discourse. Video-verbal comic discourse, from the perspective of Oleh Kharchenko (2010a, 2010b), is characterized by volume, figurativeness, polyinformativity, multilayered character as well as the use of various comic means of both linguistic and extralinguistic character since it is combined by the only plot, situational context with its space and time characteristics and characters as well as cohesion, integrity, the same interior laughter intentions of acting and profanation, humorous and satirical coloring (Kharchenko 2010a).

Comedy reveals the high level of figurativeness, emotivity, presence of stereotypical characters, whose roles usually play charismatic stars of American cinematography. Their appearance in film serves as emotional intensifiers since

almost every actor of comic genre has its own cocktail of emotions, associations and evaluative concepts (Kharchenko 2010b:335–343).

There exist three different approaches to studying of the category of the comic. The first approach – the theory of predominance, proposed by Olha Chornovol-Tkachenko (2010) – is based on the fact that one acquires an advantage of the situation over the others through resorting to humor. In this case, laughing is the response of our body to realization of such an advantage (Chornovol-Tkachenko 2010:75–79). The second approach – the theory of relaxation – defines certain psychological functions of the comic: mental relaxing, rest, abreaction. Non-compliance theory, introduced by Arvo Krikmann (2006), is based on studying humour itself, i.e. studying something that makes the object funny (Krikmann 2006:27–28). Those public phenomena that lose their reasonability, necessity but pretend to historic being, weight and worthiness strive to make themselves out to be what they are not – these are those phenomena that become the object of laughing (Ostrowska 2007:164). Therefore, the basis of creation the comic in all the presented forms is not only the contradiction that is expressed through the opposition of certain social, moral, ethical, and generally-accepted norm, or some demonstration of a contrast, but also evaluation.

The main linguistic comic means we, after Oleh Kharchenko, divide into transformations and intensifiers of comic. The linguistic transformation of the comic suggests linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms of logical-semantic plan that lead to change of one stylistic coloring of the message (neutral, pompous, lyric, serious, argumentative) into comic coloring and cause unexpected change of the fragment of world picture in the mind of the recipient of the message into a distorted fragment (possibly Gestalt) of the comic world picture and result in the comic effect.

The use of transformation of the comic creates the deviation from linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic norm or simultaneous actualization of norm and antinorm (antiphrasis as a kind of irony), or two norms (puns or double entendre (ambiguous expression)) that reveal contrast, results in conflict between implicit and explicit plan of the joke, story or other form of comic discourse, turning the serious norm into profanation or carnival and unexpected funny closing.

For example, the epistrophe – a kind of irony, based on the situation when the speaker allows the intended recipient to do something or even orders, however, ironically: ‘OK, OK, have it your own way! Bang your head against a brick wall!’ Explicitly, the speaker gives an advice to the addressee to follow his way (+) and bang his head against a brick wall (-). Implicitly, he does not want the addressee to do this. The conflict between explicit and implicit contexts of the message creates comic effect.

Linguistic intensifiers of the comic imply the secondary means of creating comic effect that often, however, not always act as emotional triggers and enhance the comic perception of the joke. Figures of speech, connected with repetition (anaphor, alliteration, anadiplosis (repetition of the last word at the beginning of the next sentence), epistrophe, tautology), building emotional tension (climax, asyndeton, anticlimax), violation of grammatic norms (anthimeria (change of parts of speech), enallage (use of neutral gender instead of feminine, Future tense instead of Present), malapropism, herewith all these figures of speech can play the role in transformation of the comic), structural figures of speech (isocolon (frequent repetition of the same words), rhetoric question), figurative figures of speech (prosopopoeia, zoomorphism, displaced epithet) and others. For example: 'I'm not afraid to die. ... I'm not afraid to live. I'm not afraid to fail. I'm not afraid to succeed. I'm not afraid to fall in love. I'm not afraid to be alone. I'm just afraid I might have to stop talking about myself for five minutes.' In this joke paraprosochian (unexpected ending) serves as a transformation of comic, whereas anaphor (figure of speech – characterized by the same beginning, repetition of beginnings of lines, sentences, similar or consonant words, syntactic constructions so as to emphasize the key concept of the text or message) plays the role of intensifier (Kharchenko 2010b:335–343).

The comic can be created on all the linguistic levels: phonetic (homonym, homophone, homograph, shibboleth (linguistic peculiarity of certain group), sound metathesis (transposition of syllables)), morphologic (separation of the word in the other word, malapropism), lexical (puns, oxymora (combination of opposite notions: cold flame), zeugmas (combination of two words that are connected with each other through a predicate)), syntactical (repetitions), stylistic (allegory, allusion, antithesis, hyperbole, gradation, mixing of styles, irony etc.), genre-text and discourse (violations on the level of compositional structure, introduction of intertextual elements, failure of time plans and mixture of styles).

Translatability of comic means in the film is not only limited to the problems of translation of cultural and linguistic aspects but also to the specificity of audiovisual product. The translator has much fewer strategies to render culture-specific vocabulary, non-equivalent lexis, intertextual elements. The format of the film product eliminates the use of translator's comments and the needs for synchronization of video material exclude the use of descriptive translation. The elimination or substitution of the culture-specific word to the equivalent from the recipient's country is not always the way out. To achieve the adequacy of translation, Ukrainian translators often resort to the principle of domestication

that takes leading positions recently since it has got positive feedback from the audience.

2 Verbalization of the Comic in the Comedies *Big Momma's House* and *Dr. Dolittle* and Its Rendering into Ukrainian

In the process of our investigation we have analyzed 100 comic means (represented by word combinations and sentences) taken from the comedies *Big Momma's House* (58 means) and *Dr. Dolittle* (42 means) as well as their translated equivalents taken from the dubbed Ukrainian versions of the films: *Dim Velykoi Matusi and Doktor Dulitl*. In these comedies the comic is verbalized on three levels: lexical, stylistic and discursive. On lexical-stylistic level the comic was verbalized through the use of epithets, irony, sarcasm, pun and repetition.

The example of irony from *Big Momma's House*: having lost the clothes and makeup of Big Momm's, Malcolm was bound to come back to the house being himself, and Shelli noticed him. So as not to out himself he decides to pretend a man, whom Big Momm asked to repair a doorbell. Accounting for the fact that he is not able to do this, he is given an electric shock several times in full view of Shelli. Having talked to Malcolm and understood that he is a pleasant person, though fails to do what he has to, Shelli says: 'OK, I'm gonna go inside now. I'll come back and check on you in a while just to make sure you haven't killed yourself.' She did not try to offend him, however, threw out a hint concerning how she estimates him as an electrician. In translation we noticed the use of omission, grammatical substitution and generalization: 'Але я ще вийду, подивитися, чи Ви тут не вбилися.' Sarcasm of the phrase is translated to the whole extent.

The example of a sarcasm is revealed in the film in situation when the lover of Big Momm Ben asks her to guess what present he prepared for her birthday: 'I guess you're wondering' what I got you for your birthday.' Malcolm in the role of Big Mom answers: 'Don't tell me your momma had more jewelry.' Her sarcastic reply owns to the fact, that Ben has already tried to present her something, in particular the watch of his dead mother. Malcolm tries to avoid Ben's attention and replies sarcastically, to show that he does not need any presents. In this example the comic is adequately translated with the help of addition, omission and complex transformation: 'Вгадай, який подарунок я тобі приготував. Тільки не кажи, що знову коштовності твоєї матері.'

The use of repetition can be followed in the next context from *Dr. Dolittle*. Because of some extreme situation with a patient John Dolittle is called to the hospital where he works. However, it appears that a patient is a woman that has a testaceous/shellfish allergy yet eats them regularly. Being tired of her behavior

Dr. Dolittle is trying to explain her that she should not eat all the kinds of shellfish but not the certain ones:

'Mrs Parkus. Have you eaten shellfish again?

Just soft-shell crab.

And what's the middle word?

Shell'

The woman is trying to find an excuse, emphasizing that crab's shell was soft that is why she could eat it. The comic effect in this situation is created by the repetition of the word shell in the dialog and misunderstanding because of its functioning in different word-combinations. The dialog was translated with the help of compensation and complex transformation:

'Місіс Паркус. Знову їсте равликів?

Ні, я перейшла на крабів.

Що їх об'єднує?

Панцир'

The word-combination *soft-shell crab* stands for the kind of crabs with regard to the time of fishing out (when their shell is soft). Not to give the long and detailed explanation of that fact that is not well-known to the Ukrainian viewer, the translator compensates it by the verb *перейшла*, that according to the context testifies to the change of the diet of the allergy person. Since the word connecting two phrases is lost in translation of question part of the dialog, the translator chooses complex transformation, according to which the answer to the question should be logical and not just based on the analysis of the components of the word: 'And what's the middle word? – Що їх об'єднує?' Consequently, the noun *shell* is translated by the equivalent *панцир*. The comic situation based on the repetition in original sentence is translated by logical compensation.

Therefore, the analysis of lexical-stylistic means of creating the comic in two films has shown that epithet was used in 3,8 %, irony in 15,4 %, sarcasm in 15,4 %, pun in 15,4 % repetition in 3,8 %. Whereas epithets create the comic on the level of word-combination, the means such as irony, sarcasm, and pun demand understanding of the whole context of dialog, and the use of repetitions occurs through introduction of the same word in different contexts of phrases. The common feature of all the comic means is that they are distinguished in the context by their form. Hence, their translation requires both preserving of meaning and form in translation in a way that would be the closest to the original ones.


On discourse level the comic was realized through the use of such devices as paraprozdokian and introduction of intertextual elements.

By means of intertextuality we, after Olena Selivanova, imply recursive connection with texts (that already exist), immersion of the text to the continuum of other texts as well as procursive connection as the connection with something to be created in the future. Prognostic impact of the text on certain evolution of the texteme, genre, semiosphere to which the text belongs (Selivanova 2010:209–210). Intertextuality was considered in 19, 2 % analyzed cases. While declaring his speech in the church, Malcolm as Big Momm at first does not know what to say. Being the agent of FBI, the law-enforcement officer, Malcolm, by tradition, starts speaking about drugs, however he recalls that he is playing the role of an old woman and tries to change the topic: ‘Big Momma don’t know nothin’ about no drugs! Unless y’all talkin’ about Harry Belafonte. Whoo! Lord knows I was addicted to that man for about ten years!’

Thus, the work of famous singer Harry Belafonte, the king of the pop music calypso is compared with drugs. In 1956 his album *Calypso* held the top spot in Billboard 200. Moreover, for the first time in the history more than million copies were sold, therefore, it is obvious that many of his contemporaries were his supporters and Big Momm was among them. And the sentence: ‘Lord knows I was addicted to that man for about ten years!’ justifies this thought, emphasizing that his music caused real “addiction” in his fans. Comic effect was preserved in translation by means of transliteration, transposition, antonymic translation and omission: ‘Велика мамця нічого не знає про наркотики. Хіба що йдеться про Гаррі Белафонте. Господь свідок, я десять років не могла позбутися залежності від нього!’ The name of the singer is transliterated. Transposition is used to emphasize the duration of Big Momm’s period of addiction. Antonymic translation is revealed through the use of formal negation, reinforcing its expressiveness: ‘I was addicted to that man for about ten years – я десять років не могла позбутися залежності від нього.’

Paraprozdokian was used in 26,9 % cases. Paraprozdokian is a stylistic figure in which the last part of the sentence, phrase is strange and unexpected. It makes the reader or the viewer reconsider, interpret the second part in a new way (Ament 2004). The example of paraprozdokian is taken from film *Dr. Dolittle*. John Dolittle started to hear and understand animals and he thinks; he is running mad. Thus, he phones his friend at midnight, trying to get an appointment:

‘Is it really? Wow! I didn’t realize it was that late. I’m sorry. I’m on my way into town. I wondered if you wanted to get together for a drink or a CAT scan or somethin’.’

Misunderstanding is based on the fact that phoning his friend John ttle is trying to find a pretext for coming, and the usual thing is to ask for a drink (‘I

wondered if you wanted to get together for a drink'), however, being nervous reveals his true intentions ('a CAT scan'), and in fact puzzles his friend.

The translator used modulation, grammatical substitution addition and omission while rendering comic effect: 'А я й не знав. Не знав, що так пізно. Я їду до міста і хотів спитати, може ми вип'ємо чогось чи проскануємо мені мозок.' The contrast of typical meeting of friends and brain scan of two doctor-friends despite some lexical-grammatical changes is adequately rendered in translation.

Surprisingly, the biggest number of transformations connected with rendering of the comic in comedies occurred due to grammatical changes (parts of speech or types of sentences changing, sentence integration and fragmentation). The need for conciseness in film translation explains the great number of omissions (26,1 %). Addition and transposition comprise a bit more than 20 % of translations. The use of modulation and generalization (12 %) helped to adapt translation to the Ukrainian viewer.

Complex transformation was caused by the use of culture-specific words in humorous phrases as well as the requirements to dubbed film translation.

Thus, the practical analysis of the means of creating the comic in the comedies *Big Momm's House* and *Dr. Dolittle* allowed us to differentiate them in accordance with three language levels: lexical-stylistic, discursive and non-verbal. Lexical-stylistic means are the most widespread means among the verbal means of creating the comic. They include epithet, irony, sarcasm, pun, and repetition. Since these means are distinguished in the context by their form, their translation requires both the preservation of a meaning and the highest possible approximation of the translated utterance form to its original version. They should be translated with relevant means.

Discursive means, such as intertextuality and paraprosookian were not so often used for the creation of the comic. While translating these means one has to remember that the process requires the rendering of semantic aspect of the utterance.

Non-verbal comic means should also be taken into account while translating so as to avoid contradiction between the verbal component and the intention of the author of the comedy in each separate moment. This aspect will be in detail discussed in further research.

Therefore, the analysis conducted reveals that complete adequacy in translation is achieved in 65,4 % cases of films *Big Momm's House* and *Dr. Dolittle*. This situation is explained by the dominance of discursive and stylistic devices of creating the comic. In almost 30 % of cases the translators managed to achieve partial adequacy that was observed in translations of intertext, puns and irony.

Almost 8 % of the cases translated lost their comic effect, the reason for this is in the use of puns as a means of creating comic effect.

The conducted research opens broad perspectives for further investigations. In this regard it would be useful to clarify the notion of comedy as a genre and to distinguish it from other genres in terms of linguistic characteristics. The other problem consists in differentiating laughing situation in Ukrainian and English cultures so as to define common and different features in two various environments. It is still necessary to conduct further research in the aspect of translation. In particular, the author's occasional words and barbarisms in film translation as well as variation in translation of the comic in comedies.

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