

**TRANSLATION CHALLENGES: STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING HUMOROUS
DIALOGUES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGE SYSTEMS**

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Introduction

Humor is one of the most captivating yet most delicate and difficult-to-translate aspects of any culture. It is inextricably linked not only to language but also to deep cultural, historical, and social contexts. "Transferring" a humorous dialogue from a film, book, or series into another language is not just about replacing words but transforming an entire emotion, intention, and laughter into a new cultural code. This process poses an extremely complex task for the translator: to preserve the text or its effect? This article explores the main strategies used in translating humorous material from different language systems (e.g., English, Uzbek, Russian), their applications, and their effectiveness.

Main Challenges in Translating Humor

The main obstacles in translating a humorous text are:

- Linguistic barriers: Puns, homonyms, homophones, idioms, proverbs, and riddles. Many of these are specific to a particular language system and cannot be translated directly.
- Cultural barriers: National stereotypes, historical and political allusions, local realities (realia), jokes about figures or events in popular culture. Making these allusions understandable to people from another culture is very difficult.
- Pragmatic barriers: Cross-cultural differences in speech techniques such as irony, sarcasm, and understatement. Something funny in one culture may be considered literal or even offensive in another.

Main Translation Strategies

1. Direct translation (borrowing/literal translation)

This strategy implies a word-for-word, literal translation. It is effective only in the simplest cases, for example, with universal humor or situations explained clearly by the context.

Application: If the humor is situational, not linguistic.

Limitations: Often loses the comic effect of the original or makes the text incomprehensible.

Example (English -> Uzbek):

Original: "I'm on a seafood diet. I see food and I eat it." (Wordplay: seafood and see food sound similar).

Direct translation: "Men dengiz mahsulotlari dietasidaman. Men ovqatni ko'raman va uni eyaman." – NO HUMOR. The translation loses the pun and thus the entire joke.

2. Replacement with an equivalent (cultural substitution)

This is one of the most frequently used and effective strategies. The translator replaces the cultural element in the source text with a understandable and humorous equivalent from the target culture.

Application: When translating cultural allusions, stereotypes, proverbs, jokes about famous

people.

Advantages: Makes the text natural, understandable, and funny for the new audience.

Disadvantages: Can sometimes lead to a loss of the original cultural flavor.

Example (Russian -> Uzbek):

Original: Russian joke "Ну, ты и Плюшкин!" (an image from Gogol's "Dead Souls" – a miser).

Equivalent replacement: "Voy, naq bir Xo‘jamshukurovsan-ku!" (An image from Uzbek culture that conveys the same meaning, is understandable). – HUMOR PRESERVED.

3. Adaptation (recreation)

This is the freest strategy, where the translator, based on the content and purpose of the original joke, creates a completely new, but functionally equivalent, joke.

Application: For puns, complex idioms, cases of very strong cultural dependency.

Advantages: If successful, it completely restores the comic effect of the original.

Disadvantages: Very labor-intensive and risks straying far from the accuracy and style of the source text.

Example (English -> Uzbek):

Original: "Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything!" ("Make up" has two meanings: 1. to constitute, 2. to fabricate).

Adaptation: "Olimlar nega elektronlarga ishonmaydi? – Chunki ular hamisha *zaryadlanib* ketadilar!" – Here, "zaryadlanish" means both a physical phenomenon and "getting overly emotional/excited." HUMOR PRESERVED.

4. Adding a note or explanation (explication)

In this strategy, the translator translates the joke directly but provides a brief explanation in parentheses for understanding.

Application: Used mainly in textual publications (books, articles); difficult to use in audiovisual translation (film).

Advantages: Preserves the completeness and cultural accuracy of the original text.

Disadvantages: * Disrupts the flow of speech and almost destroys the humor, as the joke needs to be explained.

Example: If the English phrase "Thanks, Captain Obvious!" is translated directly, the audience might not understand. Therefore: "Rahmat, Malumotdon Kapitan! [– mocking someone for stating the obvious]".

5. Translating the general sense (functional equivalent)

This strategy focuses on conveying the general function of the joke (e.g., mocking someone, lightening the mood) rather than its exact words. The translator may find another joke in the target language that fits the situation and sounds natural.

Application: Widely used in audiovisual translation, especially dubbing.

Example (English -> Russian): When translating wordplay in the "Shrek" cartoon, translators often used funny Russian phrases to achieve a similar comic effect rather than translating word-for-word.

Conclusion

Translating humorous dialogues is a subtle fusion of art and science. There is no single "best" strategy that is always effective. Effective translation always depends on the context, the type of text (film, literary work, meme), the cultural level of the audience, and the purpose of the translation.

Often, the best result is achieved through a mixed approach—combining different strategies. For example, one pun in a film might be replaced with an equivalent, while another might be adapted. The key is that the translator must have a deep knowledge of both languages and both cultures, understand the essence of the humor, and strive to recreate its comic effect for the new audience. Translating humor is not fidelity to the original text, but fidelity to its spirit.

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