HUMOR AS A SOCIOCULTURAL PHENOMENON IN THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

Serghei MARUŞCEAC

CZU: 81`25:398.23=111=161.1 onyxon0007@gmail.com

The suggested research studies and analyzes the terminology, various theories, typology and functions specific to humor, in particular the difficulties encountered in the translation of humorous material, both structurally and semantically. The purpose of the research is to establish the similarities and differences between the cultural features of English and Russian humor and to identify the main methods and strategies used in the process of their translation.

Humor and laughter are a universal aspect of human life, present in all cultures and characteristic of literally every person throughout the world [1, p.3]. Laughter is a distinctive, stereotypical vocalization pattern that is easily recognized and highly visible [2]. Although different cultures have their own norms regarding appropriate topics for humor and the types of situations in which laughter is considered appropriate, the sound of laughter is not distinguishable in all cultures.

There are many theories that attempt to explain what humor is, what social functions it performs, and what can be considered humorous. Among these are psychological theories, which state that humor is a healthy behavior; there are spiritual theories, which state that humor is an inexplicable mystery. Three fundamental theories of humor and laughter are generally accepted in the current academic literature: the theory of superiority, the theory of relief, and the theory of incongruity [3, p.147–167]. There is no consensus among current researchers as to which of these three theories of humor is the most viable. Proponents of each initially claimed that their theory could explain all instances of humor [3, p.147–167; 4, p.310–331]. However, they now acknowledge that while each theory usually covers its own area of focus, many instances of humor can be explained by more than one theory. The theories of incongruity and superiority, for example, seem to describe complementary mechanisms that together create humor [5, p. 221–249].

Being a cultural meaning, humor is defined by value characteristics, i.e. it is interconnected with the main human life orientations. Humor is one of the most expedient ways of human adaptation to changing situations, it is a reaction to unforeseen developments of events, to a certain extent it is reconciliation with reality, with the experience of positive emotions that serve to strengthen human health. Thus, humor is an inherent protective characteristics of the human psyche, a rather delicate and complex emotional phenomenon associated with the survival of man as a species, i.e. humor is associated with the life values of an individual [6, p.156].

The issues of adequate reflection on linguistic stylistic means in translation, as well as the preservation of style in translation, have always been the most difficult and debatable. Since style as a system encompasses all aspects of language, therefore transmitting all its features in translation requires great effort and is associated with a number of difficulties.

The paper focuses on the linguistic (syntactic, morphological, lexical) and stylistic means used in short stories and their translations. The genre of comic texts was not chosen by chance, since it is the short story as a small form, and especially the comic short story, due to its brevity, that abounds in a variety of stylistic, expressive means, in comparison with the lyrical works of the authors mentioned, which allowed to highlight the effect of the category of comic, and also clearly outline of the characteristic features of the short story in general. The category of the comic has various manifestations; it includes such notions as laughter, humor, irony, satire, joke, etc. Almost any text includes a variety of figures of speech and other means of giving expressiveness to a statement, which constitute a special function of pictorial units – stylistic [7, p.78].

Anecdote is one of the few productive genres of modern folklore, which reflects the national and cultural specificity of a particular linguistic and cultural environment. At the level of the text of an anecdote, norm of behavior, traditional worldview and socio-psychological attitudes and ethnic ideas are fixed.

A comparative analysis of English humor (in the form of limericks and jokes) and its Russian translation revealed that the main difficulties in translating such texts are: a) lack of background knowledge; b) identification of the specific nationally-cultural components, and, consequently, transforming them into an adequate verbal form; c) revealing the necessary background knowledge, reflecting national and culturally-historical exclusivity of the given unit; d) the absence of correspondence (equivalent, analogue) in the target language, due to the absence of the object (referent) denoted by the realia; e) the need, along with the subject meaning (semantics) of the realia, to convey "color" (connotation) – its national and historical coloring; f) English words, on average, are shorter than Russian words and contain fewer syllables, so that it is difficult to "squeeze" adequate content into a short, rigidly defined verse form.

Among the large number of possible solutions to the above difficulties, the study highlighted the following productive ways: 1) the analysis of the conceptual content of the original linguistic unit and all its possible variants in the target language in light of the context of a given cultural language pair (i.e. considering the linguistic and cultural communicative characteristics); 2) realia words require the introduction of means of comprehension, if this corresponds to the intention of the author of the translated anecdote; 3) it seems possible to reduce the methods of transferring realia in translation to two main ones: transcription and direct translation. Obviously, the methods of translation are not limited to this, as a descriptive translation, translation with commentary is also possible; the translator must adequately assess the situation in which he has to translate and choose the most appropriate way to convey the re-

alia; 4) sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice secondary details, or to replace them in order to preserve the essence; 5) when translating a limerick, the task of retaining its characteristic verse form is in the foreground, while the translation of the content does not require full correspondence; 6) the presence of word play in jokes, as well as the mismatch of plot and serial dominance of Russian and English jokes necessitates denotative transformations affecting the subject situations as a whole, while preserving the main semantic core; 7) when translating jokes/anecdotes, the transmission of the meta-linguistic function of the utterance comes to the fore, which in some cases leads to a change in the denotative function of the message.

To conclude, the adequacy of a joke is determined by the speech situation, namely the interaction of the translator with the author of the original text and the recipient of the text of translation, changing from the conditions of translation and the recipient's requests, from the translator's ability to decipher and transmit the communicative effect, from his ideas about a real or hypothetical recipient of the speech act.

References:

1. APTE, M.L. *Humor and Laughter: An Anthropological Approach.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985. 320 p. ISBN 0801493072
2. ROD, A.M. & KUIPER, N.A. *Daily occurrence of laughter: Relationships with age, gender, and Type A personality*. Humor - International Journal of Humor Research. January 1999, pp.355-384.
3. BUIJZEN, M., VALKENBURG, P.M. *Developing a Typology of Humor in Audiovisual Media*. Media Psychology, 2004, pp.147–167.
4. NORRICK, N. *Issues in Conversational Joking*. Journal of Pragmatics 35(9), 2003, pp.1333-1359.
5. VANDAELE, J. *Humor Mechanisms in Film Comedy: Incongruity and Superiority*. *Poetics Today*, 2002, pp.221-249.
6. КАРЕЛ, Ч. *Английские письма.* Документальное произведение, 1924. 173 с.
7. ШМЕЛЕВА, Е.Я. *Фоновые знания в русском анекдоте.* Доклады международной конференции “Диалог”, Е.Я. Шмелева, А.Д. Шмелев. Москва, 2003. 220 с.

Recomandat
***Viorica LIFARI**, dr., conf. univ.*