

English Jokes in Azerbaijani: Not Always on the Same Train

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Abstract

People do not use humour just for the sake of entertainment, it is a part of everyday communication and information processing system. Since it touches many areas of human life, translators will be tasked with translating jokes at the end of the day. However, translating a joke is not a simple task. Maintaining the spirit of jokes requires translator's proper and special skills. The main purpose of the paper is to identify which kinds of jokes are translatable or untranslatable from English into Azerbaijani. The researchers made an attempt to classify jokes according to their translatability extent and translation difficulties. Theoretical information is supported by practical examples. The study reveals that jokes that present unique perspectives can be easily translated; however, the ones that are based on linguistic ambiguity, namely lexical-semantic, structural-syntactic and phonological ambiguity pose essential difficulties for the translator.

Keywords: Translation of Jokes, Translatability, English, Azerbaijani

Introduction

Humour, a universal language that brings joy and laughter, has the remarkable ability to transcend cultural boundaries. However, for translators and interpreters, the task of translating humour presents a unique set of challenges. Every translator or interpreter has undoubtedly encountered situations where they were tasked with translating humour into another language, only to find themselves grappling with the complexities that arise. In such instances, they may have experienced moments of frustration, even resorting to explaining the intricacies of the joke to bridge the gap in understanding. Yet, humour permeates every aspect of our lives, from our everyday conversations to professional interactions, advertisements, and beyond. As a result, whether we acknowledge it or not, the translation of humour becomes an essential requirement. Unfortunately, translating jokes is far from an easy task, demanding additional skills and competencies beyond linguistic knowledge alone.

A successful translation of humour necessitates a translator to possess a keen understanding of cultural nuances, linguistic creativity, and an awareness of the target audience. In this article, we delve into the multifaceted nature of translating humour, exploring the indispensable skills and expertise that enable translators to navigate through this intricate realm and produce translations that retain the essence and comedic impact of the original content.

Moreover, linguistic humour and other types of jokes such as so-called universal humour should be distinguished and it should be mentioned that linguistic humour oftentimes is considered untranslatable due to its linguistic properties. Some scholars still argue that linguistic properties of one language can never be transferred into another one. (But it does not imply that there is no problem in translation of other types of humour). The language of linguistic humor relying on structural and semantic ambiguity which can be devised intentionally or unintentionally, is highly motivated. Translators of humour encounter difficulties inherent in the structural-syntactic, lexical-semantic, cultural-aesthetic and stylistic-pragmatic features of the original text that require the deep knowledge of the source and target language (hereinafter SL and TL respectively) and culture. Unlike cultural and situational humour, linguistic jokes are usually shorter and lexically dense and that is why they tend to be more challenging, if not impossible at all in some cases, to be translated into other languages without losing their humorous effect. Investigation shows that the length of the humorous text is directly proportional to the extent of its translatability, i.e., the shorter is the text, the more difficult is its translation. One more important note is that even a good translation that results in creating a very similar text in a target language may have nothing to do with humorous effect and laughter. Thus, humorous effect and laughter are in the 'fourth dimension' and does not necessarily follow the content, context or co-text in case they are transferred from the source language into the target language. (Taghiyev, 2019, p. 123) This fact distinguishes between the translation of humour and other types of translation. In this regard, an attempt is made to categorize the challenges in translation of English humour into Azerbaijani and match them to the types of jokes aiming at finding out the relationship between them.

Jokes have been studied by a range of academic disciplines, including psychology, linguistics, and sociology, among others. Each of these disciplines has developed different classifications of jokes based on their unique perspectives and research questions. For example, psychologists have focused on the cognitive and emotional processes involved in the experience of humour, and have developed

classifications based on the structure and content of jokes, such as incongruity theories, superiority theories, release theories and so on. Linguists have studied the linguistic structures and functions of jokes, and have developed classifications based on how language is used, such as puns, wordplay, and irony. Sociologists have examined the social and cultural contexts in which jokes are produced and consumed, and have developed classifications according to the social functions of humour, such as bonding, challenging authority, and coping with adversity. Despite these disciplinary differences, all classifications of jokes share the common goal of understanding the mechanisms and functions of humour. By examining the different ways in which jokes are structured, used, and interpreted, we can gain insights into the complex and multifaceted role that humour plays in human communication and social life.

Literature Review

There have been few studies developing a typology of jokes. Laurian (1992) showed how translation difficulties can be classified and how they can be used in a language class. They proposed a possible classification of jokes based on their translation possibilities and difficulties in terms of the French-English language pair. Laurian's approach provides a different perspective on the nature of humour and can be a useful tool for analyzing and understanding different types of jokes:

1. Universal jokes
2. Jokes based on phonetics
3. Jokes based on a double meaning
4. Jokes based on a morphological confusion
5. Cultural jokes

According to Laurian, **universal jokes** which are still funny in other languages are the easiest ones to translate, since they are about daily occasions and can be understood and found hilarious by almost everybody regardless of their country or culture. The following is an example of the universal joke:

Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He's not breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls 911.

"I think my friend is dead!" he yells. "What can I do?"

The operator says, "Calm down. First, let's make sure he's dead."

There's a silence, then a shot. Back on the phone, the guy says, "Okay, now what?"

As you see, the joke lacks any specific elements that may impede the reader's understanding of its intended meaning. The joke is likely to be easily comprehensible to a reader without requiring any additional context or explanation.

In Azerbaijani:

İki ovçu meşədə olarkən onlardan biri yerə yıxılır. Nəfəs almır və huşu özündə deyildi. Digər ovçu mobil telefonunu çıxarıb 911-ə zəng edir.

"Deyəsən, dostum ölüb!" deyə qışqırır. "Nə edə bilərəm?"

Operator: "Sakit ol. Əvvəlcə öldüyünə əmin olaq".

Səssizlik olur, sonra silah səsi eşidilir.

Zəngə qayıdan kişi deyir: "Yaxşı, indi nə etməliyəm?"

The second category is **jokes based on phonetics** and they can pose serious challenges for translators. Most translators and translation scholars argue that they are the most difficult type of jokes to translate. Look at the example:

"I was arrested at the airport. Just because I was greeting my cousin Jack! All that I said was 'Hi Jack', but very loud."

The text is humorous because it contains a pun or wordplay based on the phrase "Hi Jack", which is commonly associated with aero plane hijackings. The pun is created by the double meaning of the phrase - on one hand, the speaker is simply greeting their cousin named Jack, but on the other hand, the phrase sounds like a potential threat or warning that could be taken out of context. The humour comes from the incongruity between the harmless intention of the speaker and the potentially dangerous interpretation of their words. The situation is exaggerated for comedic effect, with the speaker being arrested simply for saying a common greeting in a loud voice.

In Azerbaijani:

Xalaoğlumu çağırdığım üçün hava limanında həbs olundum. Mən sadəcə yüksək səslə 'Atəş' deyə qışqırmışdım.

Another type of joke is one with a **double meaning** of a certain word. As it is clear from the name of the category, these jokes lie on lexical ambiguity. The humour comes from the unexpected and often absurd connections that are made between two meanings of a word. In some cases, the two meanings may be related cleverly or surprisingly, while in other cases the connection may be more tenuous or absurd. Delabastita suggests the following translation strategies for puns: the translation of the SL pun by a TL pun; the rendering of the pun with another rhetorical device; the insertion of a compensatory pun where there was none in the SL (Delabastita in Asimakoulas, 2004, p. 827). But Low claims that, in translation of wordplay, puns should ideally be replicated or compensated in the TL. (Low, 2011, p. 62) Here the dilemma is between priority of witticism and information transfer. Thus, some scholars suggest that it is better to explain the utterance than doing a literal translation of the text. According to Giora, listeners prefer idiomatic interpretations of phrases to literally translated ones. Thus, idiomaticity is more noticeable than literalness (Giora in Partington, 2009, p. 1799). For example:

Take your mother-in-law out back and shoot her (Kodak advertisement).

The humour given above is an example of lexical ambiguity which is found in the verb. The word “shoot” in the example which is taken from ads can be interpreted as both “to use camera to record a video or take a photograph” (Definition of SHOOT, 2023) and “to fire a bullet or an arrow, or to hit, injure, or kill a person or animal by firing a bullet or arrow at him, her, or it” (ibid.). So, we can conclude that, even if the intended meaning of the shoot is to take a photo in the advertisement, the possibility that the reader could interpret the word as to kill is the only reason for the humorous effect.

Another form of humour we will talk about is jokes based on **morphological confusion**. They exploit the similarity between two words that differ in their grammatical or morphological structure. This type of humour often relies on the use of prefixes, suffixes, or inflexions to create confusion or unexpected connections between words. In this case, according to Qvale, translators should decide from the beginning whether wordplay or ambiguity is intentional or unintentional (Qvale in Schröter, 2005, p. 79). In the case of intentional ambiguity, the translator then needs to decide whether it is significant enough to be transferred to the target text (Schröter, 2005, p. 82). To better comprehend, let's look at the following two examples.

1. The book is red.

2. *The book is read.*

The structural difference between the sentences 1. and 2. comes from the morphological features. Hereby [red] is an adjective in sentence 1. However, in sentence 2, [red] must be understood as a verb plus its past participle morpheme (Pepicello & Green, n.d.).

In Azerbaijani:

Kitab qırmızıdır.

Kitab oxunub.

The last joke type set forth by Laurian is **cultural jokes**. As language is a crucial component of culture and is used to transmit and maintain cultural beliefs, values, and practices, language and culture are strongly tied and intermingled. Language is a vital aspect of how people express their identities and affiliations and impacts the way that people think, communicate, convey their feelings and connect with one another. With this regard, Chiaro claims comic situations possessing a high degree of cultural specificity are unlikely to be perceived as amusing beyond the boundaries of their originating culture (Chiaro in Schröter, 2005, p. 62). Consider the example:

Two veterans get into an argument. One says to the other: "While I was at Malaya Zemlya deciding the fate of the war, you were probably just twiddling your thumbs in Stalingrad."

From a first impression, there would not be anything to laugh about, as a joke implies social knowledge. Humour arises from the fact that Soviet politician Leonid Brezhnev participated in World War II before rising to power and becoming the Communist Party's general secretary. Participating in the defence of the Malaya Zemlya (Russian: Малая Земля, lit. "Small Land") bridgehead in Novorossiysk (760 miles south of Moscow) was the culmination of his military career. The struggle for Malaya Zemlya was not thought to have had any strategic significance during World War II, but it was portrayed as one of the war's pivotal conflicts in the autobiography of Brezhnev which was released in 1978 after he had been in the saddle for 12 years. The goal of this interpretation is to explain that particularly Brezhnev won the Great Patriotic War (Yegorov, 2016).

Zabalbeascoa (2005) who claims that translation and humour studies are interdisciplinary fields and they overlap introducing a number of parameters that

may help in developing joke typologies for translators and translation scholars. Zabalbeascoa discusses the complexity of translation and the problems faced by translators. They developed a model for structuring joke types in compliance with binary branching. However, a few studies have been done on the typology of jokes taking into consideration of Azerbaijani translators' difficulties on translating a joke, as far as we know. The present paper aims to identify challenges faced by Azerbaijani translators on translating jokes, to find the reasons of these challenges and classify them to develop a typology of jokes.

To find out why translating humour is difficult, we should take a step back. The answer is so simple: as misunderstanding is the main source of jokes (Taghiyev, 2017), the primary reason of the challenges that the translator or interpreter faces on translating humour is ambiguity. Salvatore Attardo et al., (1994) discovered that 431 out of 441 verbal jokes (approximately 98%) were based on ambiguity in their study of a corpus of two thousand jokes. The ambiguity can arise from several factors and while sometimes a translator can create successful outcomes coping with that ambiguity, on the other hand, some jokes may be impossible to be translated into the Azerbaijani language. In order to deeply understand which kinds of jokes are translatable or untranslatable, we classified jokes in terms of their translation difficulties as well as translation possibilities.

Method

The principal objective of this research paper is to extensively explore the complex domain of joke translation by categorizing jokes based on their degree of translatability and meticulously identifying the accompanying challenges in the process of translation. This study adopts a descriptive and qualitative approach, driven by the goal of offering a profound and all-encompassing comprehension of intricacies entailed in translating jokes between English, serving as the SL, and Azerbaijani, serving as the TL. By undertaking this study, we aim to shed light on the nuances and difficulties encountered in the translation of humour, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the field of translation studies and deepening our understanding of cross-cultural communication in the realm of humour.

In order to establish a comprehensive and diverse dataset, a wide range of jokes was meticulously gathered from a multitude of sources, encompassing both traditional printed materials and modern electronic mediums. The electronic sources, in particular, encompassed a wide array of digital platforms such as online newspapers, magazines, and websites, thereby providing a rich and varied pool of

humorous content to thoroughly analyze and subsequently translate. This meticulous approach to data collection ensures that our research encompasses a broad spectrum of comedic material, enhancing the representativeness and breadth of our findings. By casting a wide net across different sources, we aim to capture the full spectrum of jokes in both their traditional and contemporary forms, enabling a more comprehensive examination of the challenges and strategies involved in their translation.

In order to uphold a consistent and rigorous methodology, a set of grammatical criteria was meticulously established to guide the selection process of jokes to be included in this research paper. Each joke was meticulously scrutinized and handpicked based on its strict adherence to normal grammatical patterns and syntactical correctness. By adhering to this stringent criterion, we ensure that the chosen jokes align harmoniously with the linguistic rules and structures of both the SL and TL, thereby facilitating a more precise and nuanced analysis of the translational challenges they inherently pose. This methodological approach not only guarantees the integrity and accuracy of our findings but also enables a deeper examination of the intricate interplay between language, humour, and translation.

By adopting this systematic approach to joke selection and classification, the primary objective of this research paper is to illuminate the multifaceted nature of humour translation, offering invaluable insights into the translatability of jokes and the precise difficulties encountered specifically in the translation process from English to Azerbaijani. This comprehensive investigation aims to unravel the intricate layers of humour within the context of translation, providing a deeper understanding of the nuances and challenges inherent in transferring comedic elements across linguistic boundaries. The findings of this study hold the potential to make significant contributions to the broader field of translation studies, enriching our collective knowledge and comprehension of the complexities involved in bridging the gap between languages and cultures through the prism of humour. By shedding light on the specific challenges and strategies employed in translating jokes, this research aims to foster a greater appreciation for the intricacies of cross-cultural communication and to enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of future translation endeavors in the realm of humour.

Results and Discussion

Certain jokes that derive their hilarity from offering a unique perspective on an ordinary incident present no significant obstacles when it comes to translation. These jokes are characterized by a universality in the situation being described,

lacking any specific linguistic, cultural, or national traits directly tied to a particular language, country, or culture (Laurian, 1992). They do not rely on linguistic ambiguity, homonymy, homophony, double meanings, or other elements that pose challenges in translation. The primary challenge in translating such jokes lies in capturing and reproducing an appropriate stylistic tone similar to that of the source text. The translator's task is to maintain the sense of style inherent in the original language, ensuring that the translated joke carries the same impact and resonates with the TL audience. Successfully translating this kind of joke requires a translator who possesses a keen understanding of the SL's stylistic nuances and is adept at finding equivalent stylistic devices and techniques in the TL. The ability to replicate the source text's style while adapting it to the TL is crucial in preserving the humour and comedic effect of the joke. By emphasizing the importance of maintaining stylistic coherence during the translation process, this research highlights the skill and expertise required to effectively translate jokes of this nature. It underscores the need for translators to possess a deep understanding of both the SL and TL, as well as the ability to navigate the intricacies of stylistic adaptation, ultimately ensuring that the translated joke successfully conveys the original humour to the TL audience.

For example:

(1) *A man walks into a library and orders a hamburger. The librarian says, "This is a library." The man apologizes and whispers, "I'd like a hamburger, please."*

In Azerbaijani:

Bir kişi kitabxanaya gedərək hamburger sifariş verir. Kitabxanaçı deyir: "Bura kitabxanadır". Kişi üzr istəyir və pıçıldayaraq deyir: "Hamburger, zəhmət olmasa".

(2) *What did the green grape say to the purple grape? "Breathe, man! Breathe!"*

In Azerbaijani:

Yaşıl üzüm qırmızı üzümə nə deyir? "Nəfəs al dostum, nəfəs al!"

(3) *A: For twenty years my wife and I were ecstatically happy.*

B: Then what happened?

A: We met!

In Azerbaijani:

A: İyirmi il ərzində arvadım və mən çox xoşbəxt idik.

B: Bəs sonra nə baş verdi?

A: Tanış olduq!

As we can observe from the illustrative examples provided (1, 2, and 3), it becomes evident that we are confronted with just the usual translation difficulties in this type of joke. These common translation challenges are not limited to jokes alone but are also encountered in ordinary texts. These challenges encompass a range of considerations, including:

- is it required to add or omit certain elements in the TL to ensure the coherence? This carefully entails evaluating the linguistic and cultural context to determine whether any adjustments are required for a seamless translation.
- is impersonalized formulation appropriate or should we convey the same meaning with a personal clause? It involves determining whether personalizing the joke by introducing a specific subject or entity would enhance its impact and resonate more effectively with the target audience.
- do we need another adjective as a modifier? This consideration involves assessing whether introducing another adjective would contribute to the humour, clarify the punchline, or align with the stylistic conventions of the TL. By carefully evaluating the linguistic and cultural implications, we can determine whether the inclusion of an adjective would enhance the joke's humour or potentially detract from it.

These jokes can be considered international or at least binational as the source and target audiences share the same values and knowledge (Zabalbeascoa, 2005). In short, source and target cultures overlap in the above-mentioned examples. Since these jokes are not resistant to translation, they can easily get beyond the limits of the SL and can be expressed in the TL without any extra effort. And there will be no loss of meaning or humorous effect. The target audience will laugh at the same factors that make the source audience laugh.

On the other hand, a significant subset of jokes poses considerable challenges for translators due to their reliance on specific features inherent to the SL. These jokes intricately weave together various forms of linguistic ambiguity, encompassing lexical-semantic, structural-syntactic, and phonological ambiguity.

This complexity arises as these jokes playfully exploit multiple meanings, wordplay, or subtle linguistic nuances that may lack direct equivalents in the TL.

Starting with jokes rooted in phonology, which involve phonological ambiguity, and double meanings encompassing lexical-semantic ambiguity, it becomes evident that these types of jokes pose the most formidable challenges. It is important to highlight this fact that translating these jokes into Azerbaijani can be an exceptionally difficult task, as maintaining the humour and intended meaning becomes exceedingly complex. Furthermore, it should be noted that phonological ambiguity primarily arises in spoken language, rendering phonology-based jokes considerably less humorous when presented in written form.

To illustrate this further, let us examine a few examples:

(4) *What do you call a fish with no eye? A fsh.*

(5) *A man went into a seafood restaurant and asked for a lobster tail. The waitress smiled sweetly and said, "Once upon a time there was this handsome lobster..."*

In Azerbaijani:

Bir gün bir kişi şirniyyat mağazasına gedir. O, satıcıdan "nağıl" istəyir. Bu zaman satıcı gülümsəyərək deyir "Biri var idi, biri yox idi. Uzaq diyarlarda bir tort var idi".

(6) *Why you can't see in the dark? Because there is no "c" in the dark.*

In the example (4), the core of the joke is the similarity between the pronunciation of "eye [ʌɪ]" and the sound "i", so word-for-word translation will sound meaningless. Unfortunately, in Azerbaijani, there is no sound "i" in the word "göz". We have a chance to change the word "eye", as long as to keep style and humorous effect. But it is impossible to find such a phonological situation in Azerbaijani. We encourage readers to offer suggestions for translation.

In example (5), once again, the comedic impact stems from the resemblance between the pronunciation of "tail" and "tale." This phonetic similarity serves as the foundation for the humorous effect. However, when considering the translation of this joke into Azerbaijani, the task becomes exceedingly challenging. In fact, we would venture to say that it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to find an equivalent combination within the target language that captures the same comedic essence.

We see a similar challenge in the example (6). The pronunciation of the word “see ([si:])” and the sound “c” look like each other and this is the only factor for making the joke humorous. To our regret, in the TL, there is no such consonant sound that is the same as the pronunciation of any Azerbaijani word.

These examples prove that word-for-word translation doesn't work for jokes. The relationship between so-called words should remain in order to keep the humorous effect. The factors that make the source audience smile should also make the target audience smile.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge jokes that rely on the double meaning of a particular word or phrase, in essence, jokes grounded in lexical-semantic ambiguity. These types of jokes present another layer of difficulty in translation. Given the inherent challenge of finding equivalent words or phrases with the same dual meanings in the target language, it is safe to say that translating these lexical jokes can be an extremely demanding task.

The essence of these jokes lies in the clever manipulation of language, where a single word or phrase is imbued with multiple interpretations. This linguistic playfulness contributes to the humorous effect. But when it comes to translating these jokes, it might be difficult to find precise translations that preserve the same dual meanings. To gain a clearer understanding, let's examine some examples:

(7) *An attractive young woman was about to enter a church in a topless dress. She was intercepted by the curate.*

C.: “I'm very sorry, but I can't let you go into the church like that.”

*W.: “But I have **a divine right**...”*

C.: “... and divine left too, but you still can't come into the church like that.”

In example (7), there is a difficulty on rendering the double meaning of both “right” and “divine”. Although the young woman meant *of or like God or a god* by saying divine, the curator intentionally implied the second meaning of the word (very pleasing; delightful) to create a humorous situation. On the other hand, in the Azerbaijani language, the meanings that “right” refers to are symbolized by completely different words: “sağ” (of, on or towards the side of the body that is towards the east when a person faces north (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)) and “hüquq” (a moral or legal claim to have or get something or to behave in a

particular way (ibid)). And without producing that double meaning with one word, the joke will be nonsense and will not make the same humorous effect.

(8) *Why shouldn't you write with a broken pencil? Because it's **pointless**.*

Here again, the double meaning of “pointless” is the source of humour. In Azerbaijani, two different words are used for the connotation of the English “pointless”: the first one is the actual designation (“having no point”), while the second one means “having no purpose”. In this case, if we would like to translate the humorous effect of a joke, we should change the situation rather than just translate word-for-word.

There are some fascinating situations in which the structure of a sentence itself, rather than just specific words or phrases, can give rise to multiple interpretations. This phenomenon, known as structural-syntactic ambiguity in the field of linguistics, adds an additional layer of complexity to the translation of jokes. Take a closer look at some examples that highlight this intriguing aspect of language showcasing how the arrangement of words can give rise to different meanings and create comedic effect:

(9) *Customer: Do you have any wallpaper?*

Assistant: Lots of it.

*Customer: Can I put it **on myself**?*

Assistant: Well, yes; but it looks better on the wall.

In example (9), we encounter a sentence that can be interpreted in two distinct ways, owing to structural-syntactic ambiguity. In this instance, the preposition *on* can either form a phrasal verb with *put* or introduce a prepositional phrase containing *myself*. This seemingly small grammatical nuance significantly alters the meaning of the sentence, ultimately resulting in a profound shift in the overall message and eliciting a humorous effect.

(10) - *Your dog's been chasing a man **on a bicycle**.*

- *Don't be stupid! My dog can't ride a bike.*

Here also not any word has two distinct meanings. Ambiguity stems from the phrase *a man on a bicycle*. This phrase can be interpreted in two different ways, contributing to the humour of the situation. It can be understood either as *a man*

who is riding a bicycle, or as the second interlocutor implied, a dog chasing after a man who is on a bicycle.

Navigating structural-syntactic ambiguity in joke translation requires a deep understanding of both the SL and TL, as well as the ability to identify alternative structural interpretations. Translators must employ their linguistic expertise and creative thinking to find solutions that preserve the humour and capture the intended ambiguity within the constraints of the TL's syntactic structures.

According to Popa (2005), in order to translate them adequately, translators must bear the complexity of the phenomenon in mind and focus on the transfer of the linguistic, situational, and cultural context of the joke into the TL while respecting the skopos of the translation. To put it in a different way, these kinds of jokes show us that real reference to a noun is not essential for translating jokes, but a semantic function of the word.

Now consider "target- or victim-related jokes" (Zabalbeascoa, 2005; 9). As every individual has their own beliefs and ideas, victim-related jokes can cause misunderstanding among different individuals, communities, groups and even nations. Therefore, it is crucial to consider such factors while deciding translation strategy. According to Zabalbeascoa (2005), two factors should be taken into account while translating victim-related jokes. The first one is identity, the other is the nature of the attack.

As mentioned above, the identity of the victim can be an individual, a group of people or more abstract notions such as feelings, concepts, ideals or beliefs. The key concern here is that if the readers are not the target (intended audience) of the joke, then how a translation should proceed. Consider the following example:

(11) *A thief stuck a pistol in a man's ribs and said, "Give me your money." The gentleman, shocked by the sudden attack, said: "You cannot do this, I'm a United States congressman!" The thief said, "In that case, give me my money!"*

In Azerbaijani:

Bir oğru tapançanı kişinin qabırğasına dayayaraq "Pulunu ver" dedi. Qəfil hücumdan şoka düşən cənab dedi: "Bunu edə bilməzsən, mən ABŞ konqresmeniyəm!" Oğru deyir: "Onda, pulumu ver!"

In the case of example (11), where the target audience is the people of the United States, a straightforward word-for-word translation may result in the loss of

the joke's humorous effect for the Azerbaijani audience. This highlights the importance of employing an adaptation method to ensure the joke resonates with the intended audience. By simply substituting the phrase *United States congressman* with an appropriate phrase that is relevant to the Azerbaijani context, the issue can be effectively resolved.

The nature of the attack can be used to both criticize or support a victim. It should be known to the translator beforehand in order to understand whether the reasons are valid or not for a target audience. This kind of joke can be used as a weapon to criticize especially political parties and religious groups. Even sometimes we can come across racist jokes which intentionally insult a given race or ethnic group. For instance:

(12) *There was a preacher who fell into the ocean and couldn't swim. When a boat came by, the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?" The preacher calmly said, "No, God will save me." A little later, another boat came by and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?" The preacher replied again, "No, God will save me." Eventually, the preacher drowned and went to heaven. The preacher asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "Fool, I sent you two boats!"*

In Azerbaijani:

Üzə bilməyən bir vaiz okeana düşmüşdü. Bir qayıq gələndə kapitan qışqırdı: "Köməyə ehtiyacınız varmı, cənab?" Vaiz sakit halda dedi: "Yox, Tanrı məni xilas edəcək". Bir az sonra başqa bir qayıq gəldi və bir balıqçı soruşdu: "Heyy, köməyə ehtiyacınız var?" Vaiz yenə cavab verdi: "Yox, Tanrı məni xilas edəcək". Nəhayət, vaiz boğularaq cənnətə getdi. Vaiz Tanrıdan "Niyə məni xilas etmədin?" deyərək soruşdu. Tanrı cavab verdi: "Axmaq, sənə iki qayıq göndərdim!"

The irony is one of the concerns if we talk about victim-related jokes. As its definition says, irony is "the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning", according to the dictionary of Merriam Webster (Definition of IRONY, 2022) and it is not so easy to identify the expressed opinion is the author's real opinion or the exact opposite. In other words, does the joke attack or serve a given item (Zabalbeascoa, 2005)? As a matter of fact, the irony is not a concern of just translation, even native speakers of a language may not get irony time-to-time.

(13) *You are so hilarious; I'm dying of laughter.*

In Azerbaijani:

Çox gülməlisən; Gülməkdən ölüərəm.

The above sentence is an example of verbal irony and without context, it is usually difficult to identify whether an author really finds a target person funny or on the contrary, it is the opposite of the literal meaning.

As you see from the examples, linguistics, cultural, historical and social differences hamper a satisfactory and successful translation of jokes. First of all, a translator should be aware of the linguistic features of a SL, as well as the TL profoundly. At the same time, they should know the history and culture of the country as well as the way native speakers think in equal measures with language, in order to understand unseen humour in a joke. In point of fact, humour is the metric of fluency in a foreign language. You know that you are fluent in a second language when you laugh at jokes in it or, better yet, when you make jokes in it.

Conclusion

After conducting a thorough analysis of the difficulties associated with translating jokes and categorizing them based on their specific challenges, the researcher arrived at several noteworthy conclusions:

Firstly, it was observed that jokes not relying heavily on language-specific elements, cultural references, or country-specific nuances are generally more easily translatable. In these cases, the translation process typically involves addressing the usual challenges encountered in translating any text, rather than confronting unique linguistic or cultural barriers.

On the other hand, jokes that hinge on phonological, lexical-semantic and structural-syntactic ambiguity prove to be the most challenging to translate. These jokes present a formidable obstacle as it is often exceptionally difficult, if not impossible, to find equivalent words and phrases in the TL that possess the same level of ambiguity. The intricacies of preserving the original joke's intended meaning and comedic effect in such cases demand a high level of linguistic creativity and adaptability from the translator.

Furthermore, it was found that a straightforward word-for-word translation approach is inadequate when dealing with jokes that involve victim-related humour. In these instances, a direct translation would likely result in the loss of humour and impact for the target language audience. Translators face the delicate task of not only capturing the linguistic aspects of the joke but also understanding

the cultural sensitivities and sociocultural context surrounding the target audience to effectively adapt the joke while maintaining its comedic essence.

As for future research directions, the scope can be expanded by reversing the SL and TL. By examining the translation challenges and outcomes from this altered perspective, new insights can be gained. It is plausible that the results may vary, highlighting the importance of considering the directionality of the translation process and its impact on the translatability and humour preservation of jokes.

By drawing these conclusions and outlining potential avenues for further investigation, this research contributes valuable insights to the field of translation studies, offering a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in translating jokes and paving the way for future advancements in this fascinating area of research.

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