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A Comparative Study in Relation to the Translation of the Linguistic Humor

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Abstract
Mark Twain made use of repetition and parallelism as two comedic literary devices to bring comic effect to the readers. Linguistic devices of humor, repetition and parallelism seemed to create many difficulties in the translation of literary texts. The present study applied Delabatista's strategies for translating wordplays such as repetition and parallelism in the translation of humorous texts from English into Persian. Material used in this study included the novel "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" written by Mark Twain and its two translations by Najaf Daryabandari and Hushang Pirnazar. According to the categorization of wordplays by Delabastita, repetitions and parallelism in this humorous novel were extracted and analyzed with their two translations according to Delabastita's strategies of translating pun. The results of this research study showed that the two translators used different strategies in translation of the humor. Daryabandari could transfer repetition and parallelism to the target text; however, Pirnazar was not successful in its transference and could not recreate humor in the target text.

Keywords: Hushang Pirnazar, Mark Twain, Najaf Daryabandari, Translation of humor

INTRODUCTION

Humor, in most of European languages, means criticism, which is provided by a humoristic language (Vandaele, 2010). Humor can be in prose or poetry. It challenges the human's mistakes or undesirable behavior, socio-political corruptions and philosophical thoughts. Humor has a significant statue in literature. The humor goes back to the entrance of theatre to Greece and Rome. Nowadays humor as a kind of art has an important statue in literature. Chekhov, Anatole France, George Bernard Shaw, Günter Grassand Edward Albeeare the famous scholars in this field. Also in Iran, the tendency to humor goes back to years ago in Persian prose and poetry. Translating humor is a difficult and complex task. Some elements such as linguistic and socio-cultural differences in two languages make it difficult to choose an appropriate equivalent, which has the same effect in the target language. This study investigated translating humor by exploring the following research questions:

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- *Which translator (Daryabandari or Pirnazar) could recreate the same humoristic features of the source text in the target text by using the presented strategies? Which translator was more successful in transference of humor?*

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The focus of this research study was translation of humor. Salvatore's general theory of verbal humor in 1994 focused on linguistic methods of humor translation. He provided six parameters for providing humor. Using these six parameters helps translators to recreate the humor in target language. In addition, Vandaele (2010) investigated on translation of humor. In his opinion translation of humor is different from other fields; therefore, translators cannot translate the humoristic texts as other text. Broeder (2007) also, in her article, *"Translating Humour: The Problems of Translating Terry Pratchett"*, presented some solutions in translating humor. Her work was divided into two parts. In the first part, she discussed the translation of parody to Dutch in the works of Terry Pratchett. In the second part, she focused on translating satire, then translating pun and after that language varieties. In each of these sections, she gave a model to translate these techniques. She also provided some translation procedures to translate them.

Maher (2011) in her book *"Recreation and Style: Translating Humorous Literature in Italian and English*" explored the translation of literary and humorous style, including comedy, irony, satire, parody and the grotesque, from Italian to English and vice versa. By analyzing translations of works by Rosa Cappiello, Dario Fo, Will Self and Anthony Burgess, the author explored literary translation as a form of exchange between translated and receiving cultures. At the end, she recounted her own strategies in translating the work of Milena Agus.

Types of humor

Humoristic works have an important role in historical studies concerning culture and society. Therefore, humor is a socio-cultural phenomenon in addition to its linguistic aspects. Humor is a quality of being funny (Vandaele, 2002). Broeder (2007) asserts that humor functions as a connector and tries to capture and retain the attention of the audience. As mentioned above, humor can be divided into two categories: linguistic and cultural. The first one is a kind of the humor, which is related to the linguistic aspects of the humor, for example using wordplays such as pun and malapropism in the text.

Humour based on wordplay may have 'silly' or 'witty' undertones, slapstick may strike people as 'simplistic', nonsense talk in an unfamiliar environment may be slightly frightening etc. (Vandaele, 2002). According to the above definitions, it is obvious that among these literary devices there are so many overlapping devices, which lead to more confusion to understand the intention of the author.

In this research, two linguistic games in humor are investigated: Repetition and parallelism.

According to *"The Dictionary of Literary and Rhetorical Terms"* (subject, 2007- 2008) repetition is a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once to enhance rhythm and to create emphasis.

According to *"The Dictionary of Literary and Rhetorical Terms"* (subject, 2007- 2008) parallelism refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased often referred to as parallelism.

Translation of humor

Huang (2011) states that in literary translation, the typical features of the source literary text and the influential elements from the target perspective, such as the linguistic and cultural differences and the target readers must be considered important. Literary texts are characterized by rhetorical and aesthetic values, which are expected to get captured and maintained in a literary translation. One of the main tasks for literary translator is to reproduce the rhetorical and aesthetic

values of the original text (Venuti, 2000). In the literary translation the form links to the content, whereas in non-literary translation the content may be considered detachable from the form or structure. In prose, like poetry, a certain linguistic features can also have a certain textual function. For example, the repetition in Hemingway's *"In Another Country*" is a linguistic feature to express the character's tedious life.

Rener (1989) states that a 'rhetorical' sentence is a carefully and skillfully assembled construction. Venuti (2000) posits that the content and the form affect each other. He believes that the content of a message can never be completely abstracted from the form and form is nothing apart from the content. The linguistic differences, however, pose a great challenge in literary translation. In prose the linguistic differences should also be carefully considered. For instance, the pun is an extremely language-dependent wordplay.

Translation can be a complex and difficult task. A translator needs to pay enough attention to translation of this kind of works. The translator must be sure that the reader can recognize humor in the text (Venuti, 2000). A translator also requires to assure that the function of humor in the target text is the same as its function in the source text. The first problem in translation of humor may be its identification. Humor is usually provided indirectly and it makes the translator unable to recognize it. The lack of socio-cultural equivalence between source and target languages is another problem in translation of humor.

Lei (2010) states that humor is shared by people from every nation. However, different nations have different kinds of sense of humor, closely related to religion, ideology, society, politics and culture. Therefore, although humor has been studied for a very long time, most are from the perspective of literature, art, sociology, psychology pragmatics or linguistics. Some scholars doubt that humor can be fully translated into another language because humor is language-specific and culture-specific.

Attardo (1994) believes that there are two kinds of jokes- referential and verbal jokes. The former are based on the meaning of the text and do not make any reference to the phonological realization of the lexical items (or of other units in the text), while the latter, in addition to the meaning of the elements of the text, it may make a reference to the phonological realization of the text.

Referential jokes refer to humor focused on the pragmatic level. They are humor, which play with language. But verbal jokes refer to humor focused on the linguistic level and are playing through language .Considering humor at the linguistic level Gledhill (2001) assumes that the translation of humor and paronomasia is yet another important neglected field in literary translation theory. Delabastita (1996) considers this area as difficult.

Mark Twain's humor

The case used in this research study is *"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* and its two Persian translations. The reason behind choosing this work as the case study is that Twain is a famous satirist and this novel is a rich resource of satire and humor. According to Nyirubugara (2001), Twain started as a humorist in his brother Orion's magazine. He used to quarrel at the articles to publish with Orion who had no sense of humor. He thought that they need a little humor, things that make people laugh, something which give a little life to the journal. Twain already had the sense of humor, which he developed first as a journalist, then as a lecturer and finally as a novelist and essayist. According to Nyirubugara, Mark Twain was convinced that telling a story without humor is like offering a meal without salt. That story would not be tasty. Thus, humor made him a humorous fictionist. Twain wrote about his personal experiences and the things he knew from first-hand experience. The various characters in "*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* are based on the types Twain had encountered both in his home town and while working on the river boat on the Mississippi river. Many of vices exist in *"The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn" had been witnessed by the author, who was sometimes victim of them. Twain's life and experience provided him with much material, which is estimated at four or five of all his writings. This proves that Mark Twain dealt with a situation that really existed and which he knew very well. He was lauded as the greatest American humorist of his age. Jelliffe (1956) believes that Twain is called "the father of American literature."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Delabastita (2004) studied on translation of wordplays, which are known as the types of linguistic humor. He declares that the wordplays make some problems in translatability of a work because each language is different in form and meaning. Delabastita's (1996) definition of wordplay is dense, but comprehensive. He believes wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings. Delabastita asserts that puns can be labeled in different ways but are often divided into four main categories, based on the level of similarity concerning sounds and spelling:

> (i) 'homonymy' (identical sounds and spelling)
> (ii) 'homophony' (identical sounds but different spellings)
> (iii) 'homography' (different sounds but identical spellings)
> (iv) 'paronymy' (there are slight differences in both spelling and sound)

Chesterman (1993) states that translating without a theory would therefore be a blind translating. He also believes translating without seeing or knowing what one is doing could mean relying entirely on common sense, one might say. Chasterman further states that strategie memes are the most useful sets of professional translation memes. He postulates that these memes are essential conceptual tools of the translator's trade and defines strategy as any well-established way of solving a translation problem. Using this strategies makes a diference between a professional and an amateur translator. Therefore in Chesterman's viewpoint a memetically enlightened professional, then, is someone who can recognize a typical problem, register the relevant contextual conditions, and select an appropriate strategy.

In this study the researchers works on translation of linguistic humor by using some strategies provided by Delabastita (1996). These strategies are about translating wordplays such as pun. It should be mentioned that two humoristic devices, pararellism and repetition, are as linguistic wordplays and can be investigated by strategies provided by Delabastita.

Delabastita (1996) presented the following translation methods for wordplay:

> 1."PUN -> PUN: the source-text pun is translated as a target-language pun, which may be more or less different from the original wordplay in terms of formal structure, semantic structure, or lexical function.
> 2. PUN -> NON-PUN: the pun is rendered by a non-punning phrase which may maintain both senses of wordplay but in a non-punning conjunction, or retain one of the senses at the expense of restraining the other; of course, it may also happen that both components of the pun are translated "beyond recognition".
> 3. PUN -> RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE: the pun is translated into a punoid or pseudo-wordplay through the adoption of rhetorical devices such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony or paradox which also aims to recapture the effect of the source-text pun.
> 4. PUN -> ZERO: the segment of text involving the pun is simply omitted.
> 5. PUN ST = PUN TT: the translator reproduces the ST pun and possibly its im-

mediate environment in its original formulation, i.e. without actually "translating" it.
6. NON-PUN -> PUN: the translator introduces a pun in textual positions where the original text has no wordplay, by way of compensation to make up for source-text.

METHODS

Corpus

To investigate the extent that the translators were successful in transferring humor by using strategies, the book titled *"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* written by famous American writer Mark Twain (Twain, 1884) was chosen by the researchers. The target texts were two translated versions of *"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"*. The first target text (TT1) was translated by Najaf Daryabandari. He was an Iranian translator of works from English into Persian. He also worked in the fields of the literature, the philosophy, and the humor. He discussed the different aspects of the novel in his work such as humoristic aspect, which is the subject of this thesis. The second target text (TT 2) was translated by Hushang Pirnazar. He was an author and translator. He translated *"the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* in 1957. In the preface of his translation of *"the Adventures of Huckleberry*", Hushang Pirnazar declared that it was a story of a homeless boy and a runaway slave and people whose lives were ludicrous because of great sadness.

Data collection

The researchers analyzed different models, approaches as well as quotes and suggestions by the scholars in the field of parallelism, repetition and wordplay translation to create a model for the translation of humor. The unit of investigation in this study was text. The first step in data collection was to recognize and find parallelism and repetition in English text and its translations. Therefore, 496 pages (all pages) of the novel and their translations were studied in order to find 40 examples of repetition and 25 examples of parallelism.

Firstly, the researchers recognized the parallelism and repetition in the source text and found their equivalents in the target texts. Secondly, each translation version was compared and contrasted based on the strategies of Delabastita (1996) to check its application. After specifying the strategy applied by each translator, four tables were drawn as follow:

Table 1
The frequency of strategies used in translation of repetition

Translation of Wordplay	PUN ST = PUN TT	PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE	PUN → NONPUN	NONPUN → PUN	PUN → ZERO	PUN → PUN
TT1	27	0	3	1	1	8
TT2	4	0	26	0	7	3

Table 2

The frequency of strategies used in translation of parallelism

Translation of wordplay	PUN ST = PUN TT	PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE	PUN → NONPUN	NONPUN → PUN	PUN → ZERO	PUN → PUN
TT1	20	0	0	0	1	4
TT2	4	0	16	0	4	1

Table 3

The percentage of strategies used in translation of repetition

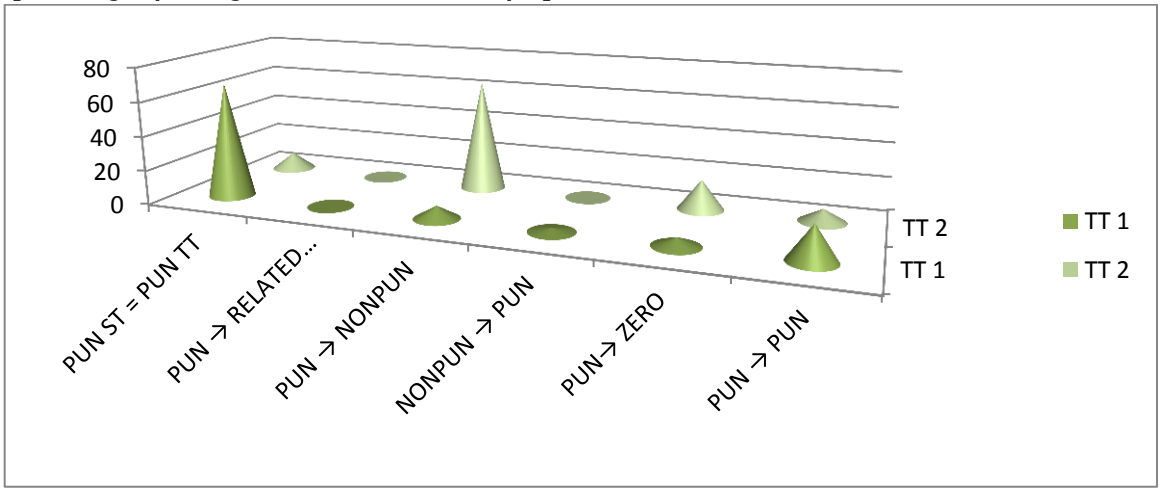
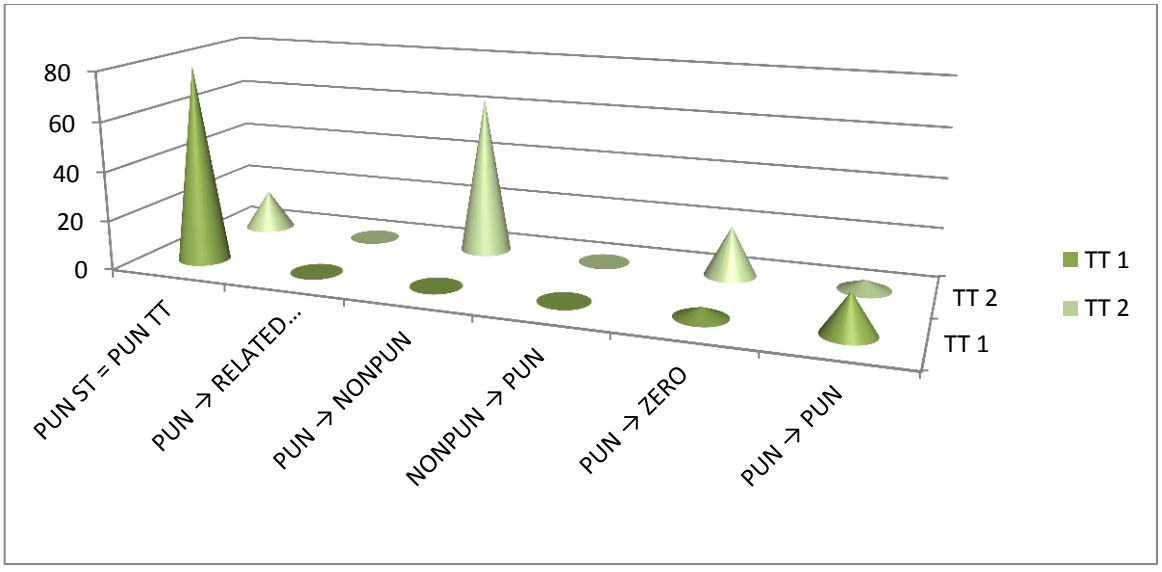


Table 4

The percentage of strategies used in translation of parallelism



FINDINGS

Some examples of parallelism and repetition are provided and discussed in the following sections:

1. NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."(p. 1)

(TT 1): "اخطارنویسنده

هر کس بخواهد موضوع این داستان را پیدا کند تعقیب می شود؛ هرکس بخواهد نتیجه اخلاقی آن را پیدا کند تبعید می شود؛ هرکس بخواهد نقشه آن را پیدا کند تیر باران می شود." (ص. 33)

(TT 2): حذف

This sentence has a special scheme as Parallelism. As we said before, it is the repetition of the same pattern of words or phrases within a sentence or passage to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. Twain used it in his novel as a humoristic device. The structure of three sentences above is repeated and Daryabandari perfectly, maintained the repetition based on the grammatical structure of the Persian language. Based on delabastita's translation of wordplay, the first translator used strategies to translate these sentences. Daryabandari used the first procedure which is PUN ST = PUN TT. It means that the parallelism is preserved. But Pirnazar has completely omitted the sentences and missed the humor of the text. Therefore he used PUN > ZERO.

2. I stood **a-looking** at him; he set there **a-looking** at me, with his chair tilted back a little. (p. 18)

(TT 1): ایستادم **نگاهش کردم،** او هم نشسته بود مرا **نگاه می کرد،** صندلی اش را کمی به عقب داده بود. (ص. 55)

(TT 2): ایستاده به او **نگاه می کردم** و او هم صندلی اش را به عقب برده و مرا **تماشا می کرد**. (ص. 38)

Parallelism exists in two sentences of the ST because the structure of two sentences is the same. Daryabandari has used the strategy of PUN ST = PUN TT. It means parallelism can be (to some extent) preserved. But Pirnazar has used the strategy of PUN > NONPUN. It means that the parallelism is dropped. Also repetition is a device which Twain used to add humor to the text. The verb "a-looking" is repeated two times. Daryabandari translated them as "نگاهش کردم" and"نگاه می کرد" but Pirnazar has translated them once as "نگاه کردن" and the next one as تماشا "کردن". Therefore Daryabandari has used the strategy of PUN > PUN and Pirnazar has used the PUN > NON PUN.

3. They tackled **missionarying,** and **mesmeriz- ing**, and **doctoring**, and **telling** fortunes (p.176)

D: بعد تبلیغ مذهبی و هیپنوتیسم و طبابت و فال گیری را امتحان کردند. (ص. 283)

P: روضه خواندند، مردم را خواب کردن، طبابت کردند، فال گرفتند. (ص. 320)

Parallelism of the ST is more obvious in the second translation. The translator used the strategy of PUN ST = PUN TT and preserved the scheme of the ST in the TT in the second translation. But in the second translation the translator used PUN > PUN as the four bold words in the ST are all verbs but in the first translation they are nouns.

4. Here's a **govment** that calls itself a **govment**, and lets on to be a **govment**, and thinks it is a **govment**, (p. 25)

D: اون وقت این **دولت** اسم خودشو می ذاره **دولت،** می گه من **دولتم،** خیال می کنه **دولته**. (ص. 64)

P: مام **دولت** داریم اسم خودشو گذاشته **دولت** و خیالم می کنه **دولته**. (ص. 49)

"Govment" is repeated four times in the ST. Pirnazar has preserved the repetition but not completely. He used the word "govment" three times so he used the strategy of PUN > NONPUN. But Daryabandari used the strategy PUN ST = PUN TT by using "دولت" four times in his rendition.

5. We got a **licking** every time one of our snakes come in her way, and she allowed these **lickings** warn't nothing to what she would do if we ever loaded up the place again with them. I didnt mind the **lickings** because they didn't amount to nothing; (p. 224)

D: هر بار که یکی از این مارها می خورد به پشت خاله سالی، می گرفت ما را **کتک می زد؛** تازه می گفت اگر باز هم این خانه را پر از مار بکنید یک **کتکی می زنم** که این **کتکها** پیشش هیچ است. من از **کتکش** نمی ترسیدم، چون **کتکش** چیزی نبود. (ص. 347)

P: هر وقت یکی از مارهای ما دم پرش می آمدند **کتک** مفصلی نوش جان می کردیم و تهدید می کرد که حالا این **کتک** چیزی نیست وای به روزی که دو مرتبه مار توی خانه بیاوریم. من از **کتک هایش** بدم نمی آمد چون که درد نمی آورد. (ص. 403)

"Licking" is repeated three times in the ST. Pirnazar repeated it three times and used the strategy of PUN ST = PUN TT. He preserved this humorous device. But Daryabandari has repeated it five times. In the researcher's idea the reason of addition is to emphasis on the humoristic feature. Therefore Daryabandari used the strategy of NONPUN > PUN. He preserved the repetition and even made more emphasis on it.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As it was mentioned above, both translators tried to use different strategies to transfer the humoristic effect of the text. As illustrated in the Table 1, which is the frequency of strategies used in translation of repetition, Darayabandari tried to use strategies, which transfer the humoristic effect more than Pirnazar. And as shown in the Table 4, the percentage of PUN ST = PUN TT is the highest among the strategies that Daryabandari used and the percentage of PUN > NONPUN is the highest among the strategies that Pirnazar used. Therefore, Daryabandari transferred the humoristic effect more than Pirnazar.

As mentioned earlier, translation of humor has a significant status in literary translation. The linguistic features of humor may create some problems in translation though. Because of the unequal structures of source and target language, the translator encounters difficulties in translating linguistic features of humor. Therefore, the investigation on transference of humor is a significant field in comparative literature. According to the findings shown in Tables 1,2,3, and 4, it could be concluded that the two translators used different strategies. Generally, Daryabandari transfered repetition and parallelism to the target language but Pirnazar was not successful in its transference and could not recreate humor in the target text.

In the process of conducting this research study, the researchers encountered some limitations in relation to the limited resources about the translation of humor related case studies. The results of this study fostered several points of discussion for further research studies such as the problems with transferring humor, the amount of creativity a translator can use and different strategies, which can be used in translating parallelism and repetition as two humoristic tools. The findings of this study can be useful for translators interested in the area of literary translation and humoristic works. The results can also be used in the evaluation of a translated satirical work.

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