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A STUDY OF TRANSLATOR'S CREATIVE STRATEGIES USED IN HUMOR TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at comparative analysis of translators' adaptation of creative strategies within humor transference and also evaluation of the creative degrees of these strategies in that process. To achieve these purposes the researcher applied Holst's (2010) model of creativity. The data was purposefully extracted from various types of humor from the novel entitled as "Adventures of Huck finn" by Twain (1884). The statistical data used for evaluation include frequency tables and chi-square test. Chi-square test, used for comparing the micro-strategies between two translators, was significant which revealed disparate adaptation of creativity by both translators. The result of rank distribution's tests of micro-strategies confirmed a higher rank for the first translation. Thus, it was concluded that humor translation required some degree of creativity and that the ability to utilize the right amount of various creative strategies would help translators produce equivalent humorous effects.

**Key terms:** creativity, humor translation, creative strategies, chi-square test, frequency data, rank distributions.

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INTRODUCTION

Translator's creativity is embroiled within the process of humor translation. Humor translation is considered as a problematic issue for the experts and researchers within the field, and for the translators as well. Translator's creativity has a major function in the humor translation. As cited in Ojha and Holmes (2010), humor is a biological, psychological and cross-cultural phenomenon and that each specific cultures with their unique norms and constrains determine content, styles and targets of humors. Hence, various cultures possess particular sense of humor which considers specific items to cause laughter and to be humorous. Considering such multi-dimensional features of humor, the function of creativity with in humor translation is apparent. Translators are required to adopt their own creativity to be able to produce somewhat equivalent humorous effects. In translation of humor within literary works, this creativity may be used to maintain authors' creative

writing style or their creative adaptations of various types and methods of humor, or it may be in a way which it disregards authors creativity and utilizes translators own creativity in the production of humorous effects. When dealing with creativity in translation, Creativity can be defined in various form considering the situation and the text (Kemble, 2006). It was defined by Zawawy (2008) as "the novel strategies used and applied in the translation process" which is a definition used as the point of reference for this research.

The following questions were analyzed in this research:

- 1) Do translators of both versions of the novel have used creativity in a similar way?
- 2) What are the degrees of the application of creative strategies in the transference of the ST's humor by both translators?

The researcher hypothesizes that:

- a) Both translators have used creativity in a similar way.
- b) Both translators have applied the same degrees of creative strategies in the transference of the ST's humor.

The researcher attempted to identify whether or not humor translation foster different degrees of adaptation of creative strategies and whether translators' creativity is the same across two versions of the same novel. If these hypothesis are rejected, it would reveal that adaptation of creative strategies were conditioned by various factors.

#### **A brief review of works on Creativity and Humor**

Experts in the field of translation studies have conducted their enquiries on the concept of creativity and considered its relevance to the field of translation. A handful number of research on the relationship between creativity and translation studies was conducted in this country but they were mainly interested in measuring the correlation between creativity and quality of the translation of university students of translation major by using tests of creativity and translation production.

History of creativity research can be divided in to two era's. Research which were conducted prior to the 1950's and those conducted after 1950's. In the first era creativity research was not extensive. It was only after 1950 that the research on this particular concept increased and it became a subject of research for many fields of studies, because its relevance to the variety of areas became more apparent. Simonton (2014) provided a comprehensive history of research on the concept of creativity some of which is presented below.

Kaufman (2009) reviewed developments of several creativity measures which are presented in sum below. "CAT" short for the "Consensual Assessment Technique", is a standard method modified by Amabile (1982-1996, as cited in Kaufman, 2009) to measure creativity. It involves getting the opinions of competent and knowledgeable experts. The adaptation of the "CAT" method for measuring creativity is becoming increasingly popular over the years.

Torrence (1974-2008, in Kaufman, 2009) generated the "TTCT" short for "Torrence Test of creative thinking". This test is frequently used to identify creative and gifted individuals because it is considered to have a high reliability and validity.

From among extensive reviews which exists on the topic of humor, in the following section Attardo's (1994) reviews of humor from a linguistic perspective were selected to be presented in parts. The first trace of humor research can be seen within Grecian's works such as Plato (427-348 BC, in Attardo, 1994) who provided the first theory of humor.

Aristotle (384-322 BC, as cited in Dutton, 1984), was another major contributor of humor research, through his writings on comedy which he defined as representation of "men as worse than they are". Aristotle's theories of humor which considered humor to be the result of "exciting the emotions of fear and pity (Dutton, 1984)", the same as plato's view, is a type of "superiority" theory (Attardo, 1994). His further works on this topic inspired humor theorists till the 20<sup>th</sup> century (To see the extensive review refer to Attardo, 1994).

With the developments of various disciplines and fields which considered humor as a relevance subject of study, these theories no longer could embrace all aspects of this phenomenon. Thus, there was a

need for extensive humor research. Modern theories of humor were classified in to the following categories (Attardo, 1994):

- 1) Incongruity theories, which are the result of cognitive approach.
- 2) Hostility/disparagement theories which are the result of social approach.
- 3) Release theories which are the result of psychoanalytical approach.

Some of the related studies of two separated concepts of humor and creativity and relationship between these two topics were reviewed and presented below.

The problems associated with the translation of the cultural specific humors are discussed by Kostovcik (2014) in his paper. One of the problems that he mentioned to be associated with the translation of humor is that it is usually culturally bound. He also argued that meaning-based translation of humor done in order to evoke laughter is a huge problem for translators, and compared translation of humor with poetry which requires translators' poetic creativity. He further concludes that researchers should be after finding effective strategies in the translation of humor.

Whether the translation of humor of subtitles are associated with the source culture or not and whether the strategies that are used in their translations are based on translator's personal choices or they are determined by the source culture, are tackled in the research carried out by Saba (2004) "problems of translating humor in subtitling". In this paper she analyzed the relationship between the norms and translations of subtitles by referring to the Toury's and Delabastita's theories. She came to conclusions that the translation of humor in the subtitles is bound to the recipient's culture, as well as the strategies used. These strategies were not based on translator's personal choice and were determined by the target norms. In the analyses of the "Ethics of Aristocrates" by Zakani, Akmal (2014) aimed at determining the strategies that transferred the significance of the humorous segments from source text to the target text. He randomly chose the humors and applied Newmark's framework to determine those strategies. He also used Schmitz' model to categorize the humors. The frequency showed that literal translation and modulation were among the most applied strategies, transference and addition were from the least applied strategies. He concluded that different types of humor required application of different strategies in their translations and resulted in different levels of loss and gain in the translation of humor.

Zabalbeascoa (2005) in his paper considers the humor translation as an interdisciplinary area and introduces a model for identification of different types of jokes which was combined with Attardo's model. He argues that the theoretical models and descriptions of humor studies, the same as translation studies, are drawn from among variety of disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology and sociology. This make both field of studies intertwined with each other in the areas of translatability of humor, how humor is received after translation in to another language, and also the cultural issues involved in their translation. He concluded that equivalence effect in the translation of humor doesn't produce laughter. This dilemma regarding the translation of humor requires translators to be able to incorporate different creative strategies in order to produce target texts with humorous effects.

Gall (2014) in her paper scrutinized the strategies that were used in Romanian's subtitling and Hungarian's dubbing, and argued that translators usually are oriented toward the source culture, the target culture or they find a compromise between the two extremes. She concluded that for the case of culturally bound humors, translators' innovative and creative decisions result in the successful translations.

This research process applied Holst's (2010) model of creativity in order to determine the degrees of the creative strategies used in the translation of humor.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of determining translators' adopted creative strategies in humor translation and, to identify the degrees of this creativity, Holst's (2010) model of creativity was applied. In this model Holst (2010) categorized Schjoldager's micro strategies from slightly creative to very creative. These twelve strategies respectively from the highest to the lowest degrees of creativity are: (Substitution, Permutation, Adaptation, Paraphrase, Addition, Deletion, Condensation, Explication, Oblique translation, Direct translation, Calque and

Direct transfer). She believed that translations that merely contain the last four strategies, (Oblique translation, Direct translation, Calque and Direct transfer), are not creative translations, because they do not change the meaning of the target texts either "semantically" or "linguistically". The other strategies create semantic or linguistic change in the target text by changing the source text completely, adding to its meaning or leaving out some of the meanings in the TT. Schjoldager's (2008) definitions of these micro-strategies are as follows. Direct transfer: transfers something unchanged, Calque: produces a very close translation, Direct translation: is a word for word translation, Oblique translation: is a sense for sense translation, Explicitation: makes implicit information explicit, Condensation: produces a shorter translation, it can also involve explicitation, Deletion: leaves out a unit of meaning, Addition: adds a unit of meaning, Paraphrase: is a rather free translation, Adaptation: produces the effect, either the entire or part of the effect, Permutation: translates in a different place, Substitution: changes the meaning.

#### Data for the study

The novel entitled "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by the famous American author Mark Twain (1884) was used as the material of this study.

The target texts that are used by the researcher are two translated versions of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". The first target text (TT<sub>1</sub>) was translated by Najaf Daryabandari. The novel was published by Kharazmi publications in 1987 in Tehran. Daryabandari born in 1929 is a well known Persian translator/author who began his career at the age of 17, and had a significant contribution to Persian translation through his major translated masterpieces such as "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Farewell with Arms". When he was an editor of Franklin's Publishings, he translated "Huckleberry Finn". He received "Tornton wilders" award from university of Colombia for his translation of American literature.

The second target text (TT<sub>2</sub>) which was translated by Mohsen Soleimani is slightly a shorter version compared to the original. The novel was published by Ofogh publications in 2007 in Tehran. Soleimani who was born in Tehran in 1959, began his education in translation studies but received his degrees on English literature, is a Persian translator, an author as well as a literary critic. He is the author and translator of 70 novels and books on the principles of story writing and literary criticism. He was also a professor at Tehran University for several years.

#### Data collection procedure

The data chosen for this analysis consisted of 41 pages. These humorous instances were chosen purposefully from among 42 chapters of the source text along with their counterparts from 43 chapters of the first translation (TT1), and their counterparts from 42 chapters of the second translation (TT2). These examples were taken from various types of humor presented in the novel, 11 examples of satire, 20 instance of verbal, dramatic and situational irony, 3 instances of sarcasm, 7 instances of hyperbole and 2 examples of understatements, were extracted. Following table present frequency of micro-strategies used in the translation of these instances.

**Table 1 frequency of Micro-strategies used in both translations**

The micro-strategies used included non-creative strategies of (oblique translation, direct translation, calque and direct transfer), and creative strategies of explicitation, condensation, deletion, paraphrase, adaptation and substitution.

Micro-strategy	Translation	Translation 1	Translation 2	Total
non-creative	Freq.	37	30	67
	Percent	32.7	26.5	29.6
explicitation	Freq.	3	2	5
	Percent	2.7	1.8	2.2
condensation	Freq.	1	25	26

	Percent	0.9	22.1	11.5
deletion	Freq.	0	27	27
	Percent	0	23.9	11.9
paraphrase	Freq.	11	4	15
	Percent	9.7	3.5	6.6
adaptation	Freq.	61	23	84
	Percent	54.0	20.4	37.2
substitution	Freq.	0	2	2
	Percent	0	1.8	0.9

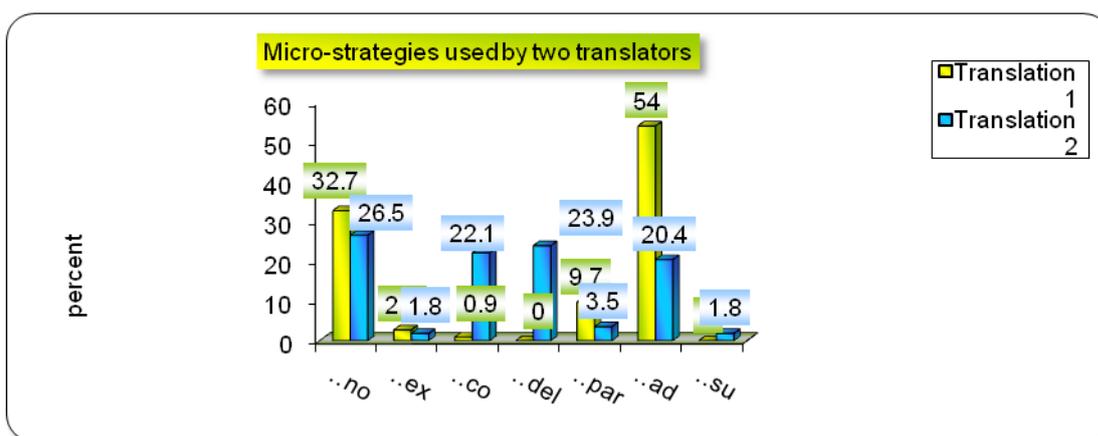


Figure 1 Micro-strategies used by two versions of translation

**FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

**Application of creativity in two translations**

The result of the chi-square test which compared the frequencies of micro-strategies was significantly different. This revealed a disparate application of creativity between two translations. Thus, based on these results first hypothesis was rejected. The results are presented in the following table.

**Table 2: The results of chi-square test for the micro-strategies between two translators**

Chi-Square	df	Sig. (p)
72.54	6	0.001

To compare each of the micro-strategies frequencies between the two versions, the chi-square test was used as indicated in the following table.

**Table 3:**

Expression	Statistics Version	Observed N	Expected N	Chi-Square	df	Sig. (p)
non-creative	Translation 1	37	33.5	0.73	1	0.392
	Translation 2	30	33.5			
explicitation	Translation 1	3	2.5	0.20	1	0.655
	Translation 2	2	2.5			
condensation	Translation 1	1	13.0	22.15	1	0.001
	Translation 2	25	13.0			
Deletion	Translation 1	0	13.5	27.00	1	0.001

	Translation 2	27	13.5			
paraphrase	Translation 1	11	7.5	3.26	1	0.071
	Translation 2	4	7.5			
adaptation	Translation 1	61	42.0	17.19	1	0.001
	Translation 2	23	42.0			
substitution	Translation 1	0	1.0	2.00	1	0.157
	Translation 2	2	1.0			

#### Degrees of applied creative strategies

To investigate which translated version contained more creative micro-strategies, the micro-strategies ranks between two versions were compared. Ranks were defined to be from 0 for non-creative to 8 for substitution micro-strategies. Firstly the rank distributions were examined by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results are presented below.

**Table 4: The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of normality for micro-strategies ranks**

Version	Z	Sig. (p)
Translation1	3.484	0.001
Translation2	2.055	0.001

The statistics were significant which means that the distributions of micro-strategies ranks were not normal. Thus, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to compare ranks between two versions.

**Table 5: The Mann-Whitney test for comparison of micro-strategies ranks between two translated versions**

Statistics Group	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig. (p)
Translation1	113	125.21	5061.0	-2.809	0.005
Translation2	113	101.79			
Total	226				

Results of the Mann-Whitney test showed that the micro-strategies ranks were significantly different between two translated versions ( $p=0.005<0.05$ ). The mean rank of the first translation was higher than the second translation, so it shows that the first translator used more creative micro-strategies than the second translator. These results rejected the second hypothesis.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results confirmed the close association that exists between humor translation and translator's application of creativity, these results rejected the first hypothesis thus, creative application of both translators was not similar and it was conditioned by factors effecting translators' creative decisions. These factors may include specific genre, situation, function or skopos, author's style of writing, author's degrees of creative writing, TT's values and conventions, reader's interests, and etc. Determining the specific reasons/factors behind translator's decisions went beyond the scope of this study, thus this issue remained untouched by the researcher.

It was illustrated that various types and methods of humor of the novel required some degree of creativity and creative writing from the translators. In order to produce a version which contained the same humorous effects of the original, the translator should be able to utilize various creative strategies. Translators had two options, maintaining the author's creativity and as a result transferring the humors directly (in a word for word procedure) or disregarding the creativities and utilizing their own free creative strategies in the transference of humors. At least for this particular case of humor translation certain degrees of creative strategies were justified by both translators.

The result of Mann-Whitney test revealed that humor translation foster different degrees of adaptation of creative strategies and translators' creativity is not the same even across two versions of the same novel. It can be concluded that creative application in the humor translation is a two edged sword and there should be a limit to the translators' application of creativity.

Likewise, Mateo (1995) argued that "humor based irony" as well as "satires" which are usually found in literary works, require application of a technique of recreation (p.174). Since humor translation depends on the level of the association of source culture and target culture, social, and cultural background knowledge are also required factors.

Balci (2010) also cited that a creative translator is able to transfer humor (such as those created by wordplays) by utilizing literary strategies which include "using all of the stylistic and historical features of the target texts, changing the meanings or condensing them into a word or words, or changing their types and locations". He also cited that translation of some literary devices of humor involve creating a new text while rewriting the text (which can be considered as one of the most creative procedures) and this recreation depends on various factors such as unfamiliarity of the source culture for the receivers of the target culture.

Akmali (2014) also came to the conclusion that many creative strategies such as additions and deletions were used in the translations of Persian humor of "Ethics of Aristocrats" by Zakani. These strategies were applied to convey the humorous effects and create the least loss in translation.

The results of this study fostered several points of discussion such as the appropriate amount of creativity a translator is allowed to resort to and problems with too much of creative application.

Translators in making creative decisions should consider "typology, structure, denotation, connotation, traditions and conventions" of both ST's and TT's languages; thus creative "strategic decisions" should not exceed their limits (Knittlova, 2000, p.10). So, it can be argued that translators are required to use creativity to the degree that they maintain the characteristics of texts. By referring to Knittlova's (2000) presentation of the characteristics of texts, the followings can be considered by translators' in making creative decisions. Author's and translator's intentions should be correlated in texts; text should be acceptable to the genre conventions of the target culture; it should be appropriately adopted to the situations and readers of TT; the information within TT should be in agreement with the "function and type" of the source text; also the TT should be produced considering ST's coherence; ST's cohesion should also be considered; and finally translators should consider other similar texts in their process of decision-making.

Knittlova (2000) argued that creativity of styles and adopted-strategies became more widespread in modern translations; and these new inventive and highly stylistic translations are sometimes even more creative than the original version and are well-received and highly evaluated by the audience. But the question still remains that how creative a translation should be to at the same time satisfy the reader's interests and author's intentions?

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### Appendix

The following tables present some examples of extracted humors and the strategies used in their translations.

#### satire

ST: so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair to keep witches away."

این بود که ترسیدم، و از بس که می لرزیدم لباسهایم داشت از تنم می افتاد. بلند شدم سه بار دور خودم چرخیدم و هر دفعه روی TT1 : سینه ام صلیب کشیدم، یک حلقه مویم را هم با یک تکه نخ بستم که جادوگرها را از خودم دور کنم.

#### Adaptation (6)

برای همین آن قدر ترسیدم که سه بار دور خودم چرخیدم و هر بار روی سینه ام صلیب کشیدم. TT2 :

#### Condensation (2)

ST: But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horseshoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.

: اما دلم قرص نبود. این کار مال وقتی است که آدم یک نعل اسب پیدا کرده باشد و به جای آنکه نعل را بالای در خانه بکوبد گمش TT1 : کند، اما هیچ وقت نشنیده بودم که اگر آدم عنکبوت کشته باشد برای دفع بدشگونی فایده ای داشته باشد.

#### Adaptation (6)

TT2 : اما چون نشنیده بودم کسی بگوید از یک راهی می شود بدشگونی کشتن عنکبوت را رد کرد، هنوز می لرزیدم.

#### Condensation (2)

#### Irony

ST: You've put on considerable many frills since I been away.

گفت: " برای من بلبل زبونی نکن. چشم منو دور دیده ی، خیلی دم در آورده ی TT1 :

#### Adaptation (6)

گفت: " فضولی موقوف! از وقتی ازت دور بودم زبانت دراز شده. TT2 : Adaptation (6)

ST: I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you.

: خیلی دم در آورده ی. حالا حسابتو می رسم TT1 :

#### Paraphrase (5)

: TT2 : اما من نوکت را قیچی می کنم. Paraphrase (5)