TRANSLATING PUNS

A Study of a Few Examples from British Series, Books and Newspapers

MEMOIRE DE MASTER 1

ETUDES ANGLOPHONES

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1. Introduction

By and large, comedy aims to induce laughter. At its most basic level, it is at the very least meant to amuse, to entertain, and perchance to teach a lesson at the expense of something or someone. But in order to do so, it employs a number of devices and strategies without the help of which it can be reduced to little more than an accident, the involuntary cause of a comical outcome.

Revered by most, denied by some – such as British comedian Eddie Izzard who stated, in an article published in *The Guardian* on the 5th of February 2015, that "'British' humour does not exist", – *British Humour* is surrounded by a certain aura. Innuendo, satire, parody are but a few of the comedic devices British comedy is famous for and many generations of comedians have tapped into, while scholars have been studying their mechanics. One major characteristic of humour in general – as we will see – and of British humour in particular is that it is highly contextual, more effective when it appears to be spontaneous, and relies on a set of references which can often be culture-specific.

In order to translate a text in an efficient way, a translator may use a number of devices ranging from grammatical re-categorisation to cultural adaptation. These tools allow for the creation of a translation in which the meaning of the source text – its message – is retained, but the form of the target text is better suited to the many subtleties inherent to the target language. There exists a wide array of possibilities to translate sentences which do not require the rendering of any particular effects – even though it could be argued that any given sentence has the potential to have an effect on its reader. However, can the same be said about puns, which both rely on very specific constructions – quite often even on language manipulations – and aim to provoke a humorous reaction? When translating such restrictive textual elements, does the translator have all of the traditional translation devices at his or her disposal? Should the same methodology be applied? How can the effectiveness of the translation be measured? Through the study of a few contemporary examples of puns taken from British TV series, books and newspapers, I aim to determine whether similarities can be established and whether such similarities can constitute a basis for a consistent translation approach.

I developed a personal interest for the translation of puns over the course of my experience as a translator, but also as I came into contact with more and more comedic masterpieces such as the works of the Monty Pythons, those of Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie, Rowan Atkinson

or Douglas Adams, to only name a few. Wondering, one encounter after another, how English puns could be translated into French became more than an interesting and challenging exercise and turned into a genuine will to find out whether the strategies one uses to solve such puzzles rely on the basic set of skills that comes involved in more *regular* translations, or if there was something else, something deeper. Between claiming that an expression is untranslatable and proposing a solution by asserting that it *just works*, there had to be an applicable method, a way of looking at the problem that could offer a consistent reasoning to tackle it. After trying my hand at a few examples taken from *Mrs Fry's Diary*, by Stephen Fry, such as the name of a perfume made up by Fry: "Hulking Great Brut from More Money Than Scents" and, using the empirical method to come up with "Brut de Décoffrage de chez L'Argent de Fait pas l'Odeur", I wanted to reflect upon the thought process that led me to believe that such a proposition was efficient and functional.

2. Theoretical Background

In order to study how translation devices can be applied to humorous expressions, it is first necessary to establish what we intend to consider as humour. The most obvious difficulty is that, in many regards, humour may be viewed as a highly subjective mechanism, as humorous responses vary from one individual to another, and are triggered by entirely different catalysts. For the purposes of the present study, we will therefore abstain – at least in some measure – from taking the subjectivity of humour into account by using a theoretical approach and focusing on the linguistic and cultural workings of a few examples of puns. Our basis for establishing what constitutes a joke will be some of the most renowned theories on humour and the focus will be on linguistic humour in general, and puns in particular.

2.1. What is Humour?

The first formal theory on humour was formulated in the 20th century, following the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Quintillian and then Hobbes and Descartes. It is based on the notion that laughter comes from a feeling of superiority over that which is being laughed at (other people, a former state of ourselves, etc.). It is called Superiority Theory. The second one, Relief Theory, is based on the works of 19th century philosopher Herbert Spencer, but was then explained further by Freud in his book *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, where he shows that laughter is used as a mechanism to relieve and discharge energy, thus inducing pleasure. The third theory, which was first developed by Francis Hutcheson in *Reflections Upon Laughter* is that of Incongruity. It was then studied by other philosophers, among which Kant, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, but also by Romantic poet James Russell Lowell or, more recently, by British comedian Rowan Atkinson who explains that "an object or person can only become funny by behaving in an unusual way, being in an unusual place or being the wrong size" (*Funny Business*, Episode 1, 1992), thus defeating our expectations. A more recent theory that humour, or more specifically laughter, relies on a *Pleasant Change of State* was proposed by John Morreall and incorporates elements from all of the three previous models.

Another great contributor to the field of humour theory is Henri Bergson. In *Laughter, an essay on the meaning of the comic*, he wrote not about the effects of the comic, but about its

process from a scientific point of view. To him, laughter is a social phenomenon, a truly collective behaviour which also requires a certain level of detachment. In *Laughter* (129), he explains, for instance, that language only "becomes ridiculous because it is a human product modelled on the forms of the human mind."

Paul Lewis, in *Comic Effects: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Humor in Literature* (9), explains that the appreciation of humour is often based on the resolution of a perceived incongruity while Dominic Cheetham writes, in *Written Humour and Humour Theory* (76), that "most explanations of humour stress the suddenness of the humorous response", even though, in the written form, this "humorous response tends to a lower intensity". As put forward in *Developments in Linguistic Humour Theory* (15, 370), "'Incongruity' is to be understood as any kind of disruption from what is socially accepted and approved of or as any deviation from the norm". Deviation from the norm alone, without even any need to resolve it, is a very strong basis for humour. In *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (323-324), Salvatore Attardo writes that humour can be understood as a social management tool that the user can resort to as a means of conveying social norm.

It appears that humour possibly reaches the heights of effectiveness when the person experiencing it can relate, in one way or another, to one or several elements of the joke, be it on a sociological level, on a situational one, on a metaphorical one or otherwise. When a relation can be established, superiority can be felt, psychological release can be experienced, incongruity can be sensed and, finally, a change of state can occur, to the point that the humour operates a change in the recipient, in his or her outlook on life. This notion can be traced back to Aristotle's concept of catharsis, as humour, by playing down some of the most difficult aspects of our lives, provides us with a way to rationalise our irrational emotions.

Stephen Fry's *Mrs Fry's Diary* provides many interesting examples to illustrate the theories briefly exposed above. For example, in Edna's account of *26 Tuesday* (189), she describes what seems like a somewhat recurring event:

> The sparrows have been at the milk again. I don't know how they do it now we have those plastic cartons. And I always keep the fridge door shut.

Upon first reading, such unusual happenings could be considered trivially amusing, particularly as Edna expresses her bewilderment in the face of the birds' persistence. The thought of sparrows trying to steal milk from the fridge – and succeeding – is quite incongruous and can therefore be, in itself, considered amusing. But a deeper level of

understanding creates a much more effective reception of the joke, through which Fry clearly pokes fun at Sparrows Offshore, a multinational oil and gas company based in Aberdeen, Scotland, for implementing a ban for their employees who used the free milk provided by the company to pour over their morning cereal, instead of strictly using it for their tea and coffee. Through a very skilful metaphor, Fry achieves an incongruous adaptation of reality, which also has the effect of distancing Edna from reality, thus putting her in a position of superiority from which she can confuse Sparrows Offshore management with actual misbehaving sparrows. In reading Edna's diary, the reader experiences a phenomenon of association, as he or she is let in on her every thought and consideration. The situation of superiority that allows Edna to consider the people at Sparrows as animals is thus transferred on to the reader who, in turn, can be amused both by the metaphorisation itself and by fact that the metaphor, in the text, goes as far as becoming an incarnation which interacts with the narrator's life. In the example the text presents us with, the allusion creates an "incongruity of expectation" (82), as Cheetham puts it, through an "extension of metaphor beyond its usual range" (83). In this passage, Stephen Fry definitely uses his text to attract attention to unacceptable behaviours, clichés and social taboos, but he also lets his own opinions shine through Edna's comments by showing a certain degree of involvement. This particular aspect, also described by Attardo, is well illustrated by the *26 Tuesday* entry, in which a big company's attitude towards their employees is pointed at. Throughout his book, in writing about important social issues such as antisocial behaviour, paternity (or maternity) and fatherhood (or motherhood), unfair treatment of a company towards their employees, lack of professionalism, husband/wife relationships or punishment, Fry also aims to play down the many complicated situations day-to-day life brings about and uses common ground to engage the reader.

2.2. Linguistic Humour: Culture and Metaphor

According to Cheetham, "most humour is language based" (80). He indeed explains that since "language is the most powerful communicative tool available", humour, as an interpersonal phenomenon which is "very much an element of communication", exists almost solely within its confines. As a communication device, language is naturally made up of a set of rules but, as more recent theories have construed, it is mostly based on the set of common habits shared by its users, not in the sense of what is possible or correct, but in the sense of what they are most *likely* to say. (80) Therefore, Cheetham sees it as a consistent system

which relies on structural as well as conceptual likeliness of utterance. Any variation from the expected pattern, be it in the register, in the grammar, or in the point of reference, will either lead to incomprehension or, if the deviation is adroit, to humour.

Using a very contemporary metaphor, cognitive linguists Tony Veale, Geert Brône and Kurt Feyaerts describe humour as "the '*killer-app*' of language". In their book *Cognitive Linguistics and Humor Research*, they indeed demonstrate that if language itself is "the ultimate *killer-app* of the human mind, it can often seem that humour – as a powerful conceptual, communicative and social application – is the *killer-app* of language". Humour, at its core, is a thought-provoking tool that enables us to put everything we might take for granted into question, thereby pointing out the very *framework* of language (or any other concept). For incongruity, superiority or relief – to name a few of the theoretical reasons put forward as a means of explaining the phenomenon of humour – to become the result of such comic processes as wit, sarcasm, imitation or exaggeration, a common ground must first be established. No rule may be broken if it has not first been laid down, be it a conceptual, a cultural, a metaphorical or a linguistic rule. Thus, the authors of *Linguistics and Humor Research* explain: "There is no automatic process in language that, with sufficient cleverness, humour cannot force us to de-automatize" (2) and "linguistic humour subverts utterly the idea that any part of our linguistic apparatus has any real autonomy" (2).

Language allows its user to convey highly conceptual notions but, if these concepts govern our thoughts and intellect, they also "govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details", as is explained by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (3). Because its primary function is to serve as a basic communication system, language normally works within a certain logic and is used to express *logical things*, based on the users' expectations. However, Lakoff and Johnson also argue that "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical", and therefore, to a degree, an interpretation of reality rather than a perfect description of what we can observe or a faithful rendering of what we can feel. Indeed, saying 'This story has holes' does not imply that the story itself holds any actual physical properties, but that the utterer operates a visualisation of it in order to offer a description that better fits their conceptual paradigm. Such metaphorizations are commonplace and, above all, known to most of the users of a given language. Therefore any change which operates a shift between expectation and utterance can be humorous, particularly when contextualised. For instance, if the story in question is about gardening issues, an interesting pun could be: 'This story has moles'. The original idea of the holes in the story is somewhat retained since moles typically dig holes in gardens, but the word 'mole'

itself only differs from 'hole' by one letter, which allows for a play on words that is also phonetically close to the original expression. The change allows the original metaphor to become more evident because the expectations are not met, and one could then picture a physicalized (and highly personal) version of a mole-ridden *story*, with excellent reasons for being full of holes. In that, humour should also perhaps be seen as a means of bringing out and rationalising the metaphors which underlie everyday expressions.

2.3.   Puns: a very specific humorous device

As Richard Alexander explains in *Aspects of Verbal Humour in English*, metaphor is a linguistic mechanism whose activation, based on a "presumed or actual connexion" (100) with the object described, can create a humour-inducing allusion. In puns, a common strategy is to set up the joke by starting the utterance with a reference to a well-known saying or expression. The allusion therefore creates an "incongruity of expectation" (82), as Cheetham puts it, which is exposed when the second part of the utterance diverges from what one would normally expect, based on their initial knowledge of the saying. The effectiveness of this strategy is reinforced by the fact that the comical part of the utterance closely resembles the original.

If such recursive puns are particularly common, they are not the only type of paronomasia. Indeed, ambiguity can also arise from the use of homophones, homographs, polysemic words, compounds formed using the syllables from two or more other words and sometimes even purely visual elements. Creating a pun is therefore very much an exercise in style, often consisting in combining several cultural references and linguistic variations. An interesting example of particularly skilful pun can be found in an article from the *New York Times* entitled "Pun for the Ages" (Joseph Tartakovsky, 28th March, 2009), which reports that Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin between 1831 and 1863, once said: "Why can a man never starve in the Great Desert? Because he can eat the sand which is there. But what brought the sandwiches there? Why, Noah sent Ham, and his descendants mustered and bred." This compound pun is comprised of four separate puns based on the correlations between *sand which is there/sandwiches there*, *Ham/ham*, *mustered/mustard*, and *bred/bread*. Such a pun plays on several levels and the three homophonic puns constituting the punchline of the joke can only be understood if the introductory one – *sand which is there/sandwiches there* – is. Additionally, understanding the recursive element, which is a biblical reference, is

also a prerequisite. Once the second part of the joke is understood, an ellipsis unravels and gives the Great Desert and the sand an even more comical reason to be mentioned. Once processed by the person who hears or reads the jokes, its different elements converge and transcend the sum of its individual components.

Even though puns have been used by some of the most renowned writers and indisputably require a certain amount of wit to be created (at least for the most part), they have also been – and continue to be – highly denigrated. According to Sally Davies in her article entitled "The Pun Conundrum" (BBC website, 13th January 2013), this "neat little linguistic device […] is considered by its detractors to be as irritating as it is irrepressible." Indeed, even a simple browse through the Internet will never fail to reveal many a *pun not intended* mention acting both as a means to make sure that the expression the writer used will not be misinterpreted and as an apology for apparently not having found another way to convey their idea. However, as Davies also points out, "the efflorescence of punnery on social networking sites like Twitter, Tumblr and Reddit, which bulge with the fruits of meme generators, suggests that puns have become acceptable as part of the online conversation."

2.4.   Humour theories applied to translation

The General Theory of Verbal Humor by Attardo and Raskin (1991) is, as Attardo describes it in *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, "supposed to account, in principle, for any type of humorous text" (222). As such, it is widely used as a basis for the study of the translation of humorous texts. He explains that the GTVH is a "linguistic theory 'at large'" which includes other areas of linguistics, among which textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity and pragmatics. The theory takes into account five other "*Knowledge Resources* (KR)", all of which are essential elements, in addition to *Script Opposition*, introduced in the *Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor* by Raskin in 1985 in *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. *Script opposition* (SO), as defined by Raskin himself, puts forward that a text can be characterised as humorous if it is "compatible, fully or in part, with two overlapping scripts", when the scripts in question are opposite (99). This is in line with the idea, developed above, that humour can derive from a gap between expectation and actuality. Raskin indeed explains that "SO and incongruity are different conceptualisations of the same phenomenon" (401). In *Developments in Linguistic Humour Theory*, Villy Tsakona gives the following explanatory list of the other KR (28):

1. The *Script Opposition* (SO)

2. The *Logical Mechanism* (LM), namely the distorted, playful logic the script opposition is based on;

3. The *Situation* (SI), namely the objects, participants, settings, activities, etc. of the humorous text;

4. The *Target* (TA), namely the persons, groups, ideas, institutions ridiculed in the humorous text;

5. The *Narrative Strategy* (NS), namely the genre which includes humour and/or the speech act performed by the humorist; and

6. The *Language* (LA), namely the actual wording of the humorous text, the verbal encoding of humour.

However, Tsakona also puts forward that "neither the reception and interpretations of a humorous text nor the actual context in which both the text and its reception occur can be accommodated within the GTVH framework" (28).

Such a system provides a highly effective means of assessing how and why a text is humorous. The downside, however, is that it is of a somewhat strict nature. Thus, if applied to translation as is, the GTHV may offer an excellent way to understand how the humour functions in the source text, but also hinder the translation process. Such is the position of David Bellos who states, in *Is That a Fish in Your Ear* (135), that:

> Humorous remarks, shaggy-dog tales, witty anecdotes, and silly jokes are untranslatable only if you insist on understanding 'translation' as a low-level matching of the signifiers themselves. Translation is obviously not that. The matches it provides relate to those dimensions of an utterance that, taken together, account for its principal force in the context in which it is uttered.

In addition, recognising the various components of a humorous statement is certainly not sufficient to provide an acceptable translation. An article posted on the website "dhctranslation.com" on the 13th of January 2015 and entitled "What Are The Issues With Translating Humour And Cultural References?", illustrates this by referring to W. D. Hart who, in *The Philosophical Review* (523) takes the example of self-reference to explain that certain statements cannot be translated verbatim, as they would then become self-

contradictory. Hart's example – "This sentence is in English" – is perfectly valid in English in that it is both self-referential and true. The article then shows what happens when it is translated into Italian: "Questa frase è in inglese". Immediately, the sentence loses what Hart calls its "truth value", aside from becoming utterly nonsensical. The same can occur when translating a humorous statement which, as per the GTVH, would rely on a set of *Knowledge Resources* in order to be functional – or funny. In a pun such as "England doesn't have a kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool", humour is attained because the sentence is inherently true, but also plays on the homonymy between "Liverpool" and "liver pool". This double meaning may be understood as the *sense* for the joke, its particular logic. Translating such a statement by "Londres n'a pas de banque de reins, mais elle a bien un Liverpool (or, conversely, une réserve de foies)" could not possibly work because there would be neither logic – in this case, a double meaning – nor truth to the nonsensical statement. Should it therefore be considered untranslatable? It depends on one's definition of a *translation*.

The exact role of the translator, their rights and their duties have been a divisive question throughout the ages and the consensus – provided one was ever actually achieved – is ever-changing. From the "simple translator" with no opinion or prejudice Montesquieu presented himself as when he published his *Lettres persanes* to the infamous *traduttore tradittore* who embodies the notion of untranslatibility, there exists a world of subtly different degrees of precision. Compensation, paraphrase, calque, borrowing, adaptation and other translation devices may be used but, ultimately, it is up to the translator to decide how faithful they want to be to the source text and how much liberty they are willing to take with it in order to produce a convincing target text. In *Vade-Mecum de version anglaise*, François Gallix explains that "a translator may go back and forth between the two approaches […] but must necessarily make a choice"[1] (15). Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud and Sébastien Salbayre, in *La version anglaise: lire, traduire, commenter*, propose a very insightful account of what a translator should purport to be today (10):

> […] le rôle du traducteur n'est en aucun cas limité au domaine purement linguistique dans lequel on a parfois tendu à l'enfermer, considérant que la traduction n'était autre que l'établissement d'une sorte de correspondance terme à terme entre deux systèmes linguistiques donnés et négligeant par là même la distinction, pourtant fondamentale, entre langue (en tant que système collectif et permanent) et discours (en tant que production

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[1] Our translation

individuelle et contingente, faisant état d'orientations stylistiques et de résonances intersubjectives particulières).

Supporting the conclusion that a translator should be as source-oriented as possible while remaining as target-oriented as necessary, Attardo writes, in *Translating Humour*, that "pragmatics wins over semantics" (185). For instance, if a particular format is unique to a given culture, the translation should certainly make the most of whatever format the target culture/language employs in the same situation. The GTVH should therefore be seen as a means of identifying the structural elements of a humorous line. A decision can then be made for each particular KR – other than the LA which will invariably be changed – in an attempt to try and "respect the internal structure of the *Knowledge Resource*". To Attardo, "a strategy for translation would look for the closest match within the taxonomy of *Narrative Strategies* and only fall back on a completely unrelated *Narrative Strategy* when a closer match is unavailable" (*Translating Humour*, 2.2). In other words, when translating a pun from English into French, the format must be retained as it is a NS the target culture is perfectly familiar with. He also adds that since "no taxonomy of *Narrative Strategies* exists, [the] translator would have to rely on intuition." (186) This gives the translator the necessary leeway the re-create the joke by making the best of the cultural and linguistic codes at their disposal without falling into the trap of simply transposing a perfectly humorous statement into an inappropriate language and culture.

3. Case study

By studying the translation – or attempting our own translation – of a few examples of puns taken from various British sources through the lens of humour theories, the present work aims to explore the possibilities of applying a systemic approach when translating humorous statements.

3.1. Method of analysis

In order to try and determine whether or not puns may be translated in a consistent, systemic manner, the same method of analysis needs to be applied to the study of the different choices that professional translators made in their own translations, as well as to a few examples of our own design. Using elements from the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* to observe how the puns under study are constructed should be the first step in our analysis. As recommended by Salvatore Attardo, we will then focus on how the distinct *Knowledge Resources* may be translated individually before attempting a re-construction in French. Finally, we will establish a comparison between the results obtained from the various examples in question in order to bring to light any possible correlation which would allow us to by-pass the de-construction process and directly apply the correct translation devices to paronomasia.

3.2. Analysis

Examples from 2 British books

Mrs Fry's Diary, by Mrs Stephen Fry

Mrs Fry's Diary is a book written by English comedian, actor, presenter and writer Stephen Fry in 2010. More specifically, it was written by Stephen Fry's fictitious wife, Mrs Edna Fry, a very popular Twitter user who claims to be his "poor, downtrodden wife & mother of his five, six or possibly even seven kids", all of whom are fictitious as well. But through social media, Stephen Fry has built an almost tangible life for Edna, going as far as to make her strenuously deny being his own creation and call upon her many followers to write to *The Daily Telegraph* en masse to confirm that she is "none other than Edna Constance Bathsheba Fry" after the paper put forward such conjecture even though the fact that Stephen Fry recently married his partner Elliott Spencer definitely proves – if ever proof were needed – that he does not have a wife. Edna's active social life is therefore quite incongruous, but the character can be seen as the comedian's alter ego, an outlet through which he can express himself differently.

Throughout the book, one of Edna's go-to strategies to create humour is the use of word play in general and puns, phonetic mix-ups and double-entendres in particular. One such example can be found on page 272, under the section entitled *16 Sunday*. The whole entry consists of two sentences which provide, in two short lines, the build up to the joke as well as its release.

> Honestly, I told Stephen not to eat Spanish food in the bath. Now he's got his toe stuck in the tapas.

This particular pun both rests on a cultural dimension and on a linguistic one. To understand the pun, the reader needs to be familiar with two cultural elements. The first one is quite accessible to a British person – constituting the primary readership of Fry's book – as it refers to a well-known Spanish entrée, tapas. The second one, on the other hand, may be a little more obscure, though missing this particular reference would not impede understanding. Indeed its practicality is, in and of itself, sufficient to be amusing. The scene described by Fry refers to a recurring joke about getting one's toe stuck in the bathtub spout, which can be traced back to British comedian Eric Sykes who first introduced this comic routine in 1961 in a *Sykes and a…* episode entitled *Sykes and a Bath*. In fact, it was even meant to be featured in

The Seven Year Itch (1955) with Marilyn Monroe needing the help of a plumber to get her toe back out of the faucet. But the scene was deemed shocking by the censors and taken out of the film. Later, the routine was featured on the *Dick Van Dyke Show* (1965), *Love American Style* (1972) and *iCarly* (2012). The presence of a contextual element – the warning not to eat Spanish food in the bath – provides an effective introduction to the joke and allows for the term 'tapas' to immediately be associated with a tap.

From a linguistic perspective, the joke relies on a semantic mechanism playing on the paronymy between 'tap' and 'tapas'. The word 'tapas' constitutes the release of the joke as it is a variation on the theme of Spanish food which is also reminiscent of bathrooms. Pragmatically speaking, this pun is highly effective as the context in which the joke is set provides the perfect backdrop.

All the cultural elements are, if taken out of context, perfectly translatable. Indeed, Spanish food is ubiquitous enough for most French people to have heard of tapas and, even if the reference to a recurring joke involving people getting their toes stuck in taps may be unknown to the reader, the amusing accident described is a practical one, which anyone can easily imagine or relate to. Difficulties arise when trying to translate these cultural elements and retain the comic effect. Indeed, as the French language does not offer any kind of semantic, phonetic or syntactic connection between 'tapas' – or any other Spanish food for that matter – and a bathroom, let alone a bathtub spout, the direct translation of these elements would not produce an effect even remotely similar to that of the original segment.

In order for the translated joke to fall within a similar paradigm, I found that the importance of the incident happening exactly as described in the original could not be ignored. However, the exact type of food being consumed does not seem to have any other role than to allow the pun to exist. Therefore an alternative element may be used, so long as it can lead to the same practical results and provide the basis for a similar pun. My own attempt at the translation of the joke is:

> Franchement, j'avais bien dit à Stephen de ne pas manger de sucreries dans le bain. Maintenant, il s'est coincé le nougat dans le robinet.

By resorting to a reference to sugary treats instead of Spanish food, the presence of a 'food element' – and therefore the *situation* – is retained. Conversely, the pun itself, as well as the

delivery of the joke, is shifted from the tap to the toe, here substituted by a whole foot and translated by a popular slang word which also happens to be a ubiquitous sweet in the French culture: *nougat*. As the metonymy between *toe* and *nougat* plays on the same level as the malapropism that is the use of *tapas* for *tap*, the impact of the joke is highly comparable to that of the original, as it includes similarly effective semantic and pragmatic dimensions.

Equal Rites*, by Terry Pratchett*

Sir Terry Pratchett was an English author of fantasy novels whose works are considered to be particularly comical. Best known for his *Disc World* series which includes forty one novels, he published *Equal Rites* as its third opus in 1987. Even though he opted for a very interesting title in the form of a play on words which ties in with the subjects addressed in the book – fantasy clichés and gender equality – the French version is called *La huitième fille*. Perhaps such a choice was made as an oblique reference to the two previous books, the titles of which had been translated by *La huitième couleur* and *Le huitième sortilège*, respectively from *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic*.

Without the possibility to ask the translator – or perhaps even the publishers, who may have found that such a title would be better suited to a French readership – we can only speculate as to the reasons behind this decision. However, using the GTVH, we can attempt to determine whether the various KR which come into play in the structure of the pun *equal rites* may be translated individually.

In this example, the *logical mechanism* that supports an opposition is only noticeable in writing, as the pun on *rites* – which is a perfect homonphone of *rights* – cannot be understood without the word being spelled out. The play on words itself exposes both the *situation* and the *target* of its own humorous scheme, since it is the title of the book and, as such, practically constitutes a concise summary of the story itself. In the linguistic sense of the terms, it also refers to a number of conceptual notions involving participants, objects and activities, namely persons of both sexes and their respective status in society as well as the institutional (rights) and traditional (rites) habits of the said society. Thus, culturally speaking, such a pun only works if these concepts have a place within the readership's socio-cultural background. This particular element would not need to be altered in order to provide a functional translation. Even if gender equality and the general attitude towards traditions may somewhat differ between Great Britain and France, such questions are widely

acknowledged by the entire *Western World*. The *narrative strategy*, as is the case for all puns, is also perfectly compatible with the French language, even though this particular humorous device is perhaps less ubiquitous in French where – to use the example of the Internet again – there is not even a true equivalent to the expression "no pun intended". A quick search on Linguee.fr reveals that, in many cases, it even gets omitted altogether in translated text.

Since the basic elements of the pun *equal rites* all fall under the scope of perfectly transposable concepts, this is not where the difficulty lies when it comes to translating the expression.

In order to produce a functional (both humorous and accurate) translation, it is necessary to encompass the notions of gender equality – or inequality – as well as tradition, going as far as ritualistic practices. An interesting pun could therefore perhaps have been *L'égalité des sectes*, based on the common expression "l'égalité des sexes" and religious groups whose practices may include rituals. The downside, however, is that sects are negatively connoted and unrepresentative of traditions. An additional drawback to the expression is that sects have no place in Pratchett's story. Such a translation would therefore be contextually inaccurate.

The expression *L'égalité des transes* – playing on the almost homophonous relation between "chance" and "transe" – presents similar issues. Indeed, even though trances may be classed as ritualistic practices, they do not play a significant part in the book. There are, however, occurrences of trances in the story (instances of *Borrowing*, when the character of Granny Weatherwax – and then her granddaughter – possesses the body of an animal while leaving hers in a catatonic, death-like state of trance), making this option less objectionable than "sectes".

In both propositions, the notion of equality is, as in the original, placed first, but modified from being an adjective to being a noun, thus shifting the focus of the expression. In *equal rites*, the focal point is "rites", whereas it becomes "equality" due to the recategorisation in French. In both case, the perfect homophones that are "rites" and "rights" are replaced with more approximate solutions. Finally, *Equal Rites* being the title of the book, it is of greater importance that its translation reflect the major themes addressed in the story than to opt for a solution which, even though it might retain the nature of the pun, would be too far off topic. As the context is the story itself rather than a situation within it, this particular pun serves no true narrative purpose. This may therefore explain the translator/editor's choice with regard to the official translation.

Examples from 2 British TV series

Red Dwarf Season II – Episode 3

Red Dwarf is a British comedy franchise which comprises ten series and aired on BBC Two between 1988 and 1993 and then from 1997 to 1999 before becoming the main program featured on Dave, a British channel named after *Red Dwarf*'s main character, Dave Lister. Created by Rob Grant and Doug Naylor, the original concept also gave rise to four novels, two pilot episodes for an American version, a radio version produced for BBC Radio 7 as well as tie-in books, magazines and merchandise. Two new seasons are also in the works. The whole premise of *Red Dwarf* rests on an eponymous, huge red mining spaceship lost in deep space. Having misbehaved once again, Lister is placed in suspended animation. When he awakes, he finds out that an accident occurred during his slumber which caused the entire crew to be wiped out and the ship's computer, Holly, to wait for three million years, drifting aimlessly in space, before re-animating him when the environment on board was finally deemed safe again. The plot therefore involves very few characters: Dave Lister (who has become the las known human alive), a life-form descended from the cat he had smuggled on board (which is also the explanation behind his punishment), Arnold J. Rimmer, a hologram of the dead crewmate with whom he exchanged the greatest number of words and who is therefore assumed to be the most logical choice to keep Lister from going insane as the computer can only sustain one hologram, the ship's computer (who is virtually present in the form of a head on the computer screens and interacts with the crew) and Kryten who is a service mechanoid. The backdrop is a pastiche of science fiction which provides an excellent context to this very well thought out character-driven comedy.

The dialogues are filled with puns and other language-based comic devices that also tie in with the actions shown on screen. An interesting example from Season II, Episode 3 (12:52) may be studied, in which the protagonists realise that they have no idea what happened over the four previous days. They find that two of them have a broken leg, that pages are missing from Lister's diary and that a jigsaw puzzle that had barely just been started is now completed. Rimmer has a theory for these illogical findings: aliens have boarded the ship, wiped their memories and are now trying to communicate in a language that can only be comprehended by "thinking alien" as "aliens do alien things… things that are alien". Following this logic, he explains:

"Breaking your leg hurts like hell. Ok? HELL. They do it below the knee: LOW. HELLO. Get it? They do it twice: TWO. HELLO TO. And jigsaw must mean YOU. HELLO TO YOU."

Though this is not strictly speaking a pun, the humour-inducing devices at play are of a similar nature. Here, the comedic effect does not stem from the puns themselves, but rather from Rimmer's entirely English-centric logic, and from his creating completely arbitrary syllable-based plays on words. The assumption that a language may simply be based on a different way of expressing syllables from Standard English words (whose meaning would still be retained) is not simply flawed: it is absolutely preposterous. The very notion of rebus implies that the system can only function within the paradigm of a single language. The incongruity of Rimmer's hypothesis derives from the fact that it is utterly contradictory: if 'aliens' are attempting to communicate in a language that is assumed to be so profoundly different from English, then their language is unlikely to be based on using syllables from English words in order to convey other English expressions. In like manner, the joke can only be understood by an English-speaking audience. Even though the references are quite universal, the English language itself, on top of being the *language* element of the *knowledge resources* of the joke, becomes one of the objects of it, the *logical mechanism* being the premise that Rimmer's English-centric logic can only be understood by English speakers.

The practical element that was added to the 'tap pun' is replaced with visual ones. The characters' attitudes as well as the obviousness of their predicament – for instance, both Lister and Cat have a cast and Rimmer is constantly emphasising his words with gestures – create a solid base for Rimmer's argument. The other characters' reactions also create a conversational implicature which contributes to the impact of the joke from a pragmatic perspective. However, these elements are so indubitable that they become part and parcel of the joke itself which, once translated, would make absolutely no sense if the translation did not take the visual dimension into account.

This certainly creates an added difficulty for the translator who needs to transpose Rimmer's logic and create a French language rebus based on imperative visual elements while conveying a meaning similar to what he came up with: "Hello to you".
The solution the translators of the series came up with is the following:

Se casser une jambe, c'est con, ok? CON. C'est juste sous les tendons. TEN. CONTENT. D'accord? Ils l'ont fait à vous deux. DEUX VOUS. CONTENT DE VOUS. Et puzzle, c'est VOIR. CONTENT DE VOUS VOIR.

They naturally transposed Rimmer's logic into French, and therefore needed to construct a solution to emulate his rebus-based alien language using physical actions to refer to French expressions whose syllables could then be arranged differently in order to contextually create sound words. Even though they resorted to an adaptation, since "hello to you" cannot be directly translated as "content de vous voir", the statement is pragmatically quite close, and can very well serve as an introduction. They even went as far as to maintain register consistency.

The individual elements constituting the rebus, however, could not be treated with such exactitude. Having managed to retain the *narrative strategy*, the *target*, the *situation* and the *logical mechanism* underlying the *script opposition*, the translators still had to make a few lexical substitutions, such as "tendons" instead of "knees", "c'est con" instead of "hurts like hell" and in the final expression. But these variations on the expressions are still contextually applicable and, as such, are viable substitutes.

Other possibilities could have perhaps been envisioned to take fewer liberties with the end message, but would have made for an even higher amount of lexical and situational modification. One such example could be "BONJOUR A VOUS", with the explanation being:

"Se casser une jambe, c'est pas bon, ok ? BON. Ça s'est passé pour vous deux le même jour : BON JOUR. Quand on se fait aussi mal, on crie Ah ! BONJOUR A. Et puzzle veut sûrement dire vous. BONJOUR A VOUS.

Blackadder, *Season II, Episode 5* **– Beer**

Blackadder II is the second series of the eponymous British television sitcom written by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton which first aired in 1986. All four seasons of *Blackadder* revolve around the same premise: the main character is always Edmund Blackadder (played by Rowan Atkinson), but is a different member of the Blackadder dynasty present at different periods in British history. Generation after generation, his family's social status erodes as he

himself becomes increasingly witty and calculating. He is accompanied, in his tribulations, by his servant Baldrick, whose wit – unlike his master's – decreases over the course of the seasons. In *Blackadder II*, the plot is set during the reign of Elisabeth I and puts anti-hero Blackadder in many hilarious situations. In episode 5 (*Beer*), for instance, he is set to inherit a large sum of money which is supposed to be granted to him by his aunt, who also happens to be an extremely severe, religious woman. Her considerations are quite straightforward: anything other than complete and utter devotion to the Lord is highly condemnable and any aspiration other than penitence and an ascetic way of life is inspired by the Devil. Naturally, it just so happens that the day of her visit is also the one Blackadder and his friends have chosen to have what can only be described as a drinking contest, the venue also being Blackadder's house. Incurring his aunt's disapproval and therefore her refusal to give him his due, he attempts to appear beyond reproach. All the while, he is entertaining a drinking bout in the next room. Eventually, a drunken character stumbles into the dining room where the sanctimonious aunt is having lunch and exclaims: "Great booze up, Edmund!" (20:39), which is sub-titled "Viens lever le coude, Edmond". Shocked, the austere woman turns to her nephew for an explanation who, against all odds, manages to come up with one and stammers:

> My friend… is a missionary and, on his last visit abroad… brought back with him the chief of a famous tribe… His name is Great Boo. He's been suffering from sleeping sickness and… he's obviously just woken. Because, as you heard: Great Boo's up!

In this example, the pun *Great Boo's up*, playing on the homophonous expression *Great booze up*, is highly contextualised. It is indeed so obscure that Edmund has to build an entire story around it and create a proper noun in order for it to make any sense at all. While conventional puns usually rely on well-known words and expressions, Blackadder stunningly successes at creating one from scratch. The humorous response thus comes not only from the pun itself, but also from the set up that surrounds it, which creates a very effective build-up as one has to wonder where his explanation is taking him and how he could possibly re-interpret such a monosemic expression. The very skilful pun fits into a highly elaborate *narrative strategy* which, if applying the GTVH, should be replicated in the translation. Unlike in *Red Dwarf*, the joke is not supported by any visual elements which means that, theoretically, so long as the effect remains the same, the story fabricated by Blackadder could be somewhat altered in the translation for the purposes of preserving a pun centred around the notion of

binge drinking. The translators of the series, however, truly stepped up to the challenge and provided a translation which reproduces each knowledge resource absolutely brilliantly, only modifying the proper noun which, even though it may be argued that its lexical significance played a part in the writer's choice, can perfectly be altered for the sake of the translation. The only requirement was for it to sound *exotic*. The story Blackadder comes up with is identical, and the pun highly effective.

> Mon ami est… missionnaire. Lors de son dernier voyage aux colonies, il a ramené le chef d'une très fameuse tribu… qui s'appelle Le Kood. Il a été frappé par la maladie du sommeil… et il vient sans doute de se réveiller car, vous l'avez entendu, je dois aider à lever Le Kood.

A recategorisation is called upon for the translation of *booze up*, which becomes an action verb. The culture-specific element which is a reference to a party involving alcohol is shifted to the action of drinking alcohol itself. There is also a slight modification in the state of the supposed chief, who is described as up in the original version, but who Blackadder claims needs to be helped up in the French version. The reference to an Indian chief, which is a *situational element*, is maintained to the point that the pun also focuses on his name in the translated version. Since the *situation* is preserved, at least for the most part, the same may be said about the *target* and the *logical mechanism*. The latter, in both versions, is dependent on the lack of adequacy between the idea of a drinking contest and the story one could possibly come up with in order to make the expression used to describe it pass for misinterpreted. The new interpretation is presented gradually to finally reveal the pun: a different spelling, justifying the similar phonetic value of the expression, which is orally rendered by a slightly adjusted pronunciation on the part of Rowan Atkinson, who includes distinctive pauses between the words: "Great. Boo's. Up." The subtitles cannot possibly make up for this particular oral element, but seeing the different spelling – as opposed to hearing the altered pronunciation – does arguably provide a comparable experience.

Had the translators preferred to modify the nature of the explanation Blackadder provides, the expressions "charger la mule" or "se péter la ruche" could have also been used successfully without having to come up with an invented proper noun. But as this was the strategy used in the original, the solution *Blackadder*'s translators came up with is immensely more faithful.

Examples from 2 British newspapers

As Christine Develotte and Elisabeth Rechniewski write in their article "Discourse analysis of newspaper headlines: a methodological framework for research into national representations",

> "headlines are a particularly rich source of information about the field of cultural references. This is because titles 'stand alone' without explanation or definition; they depend on the reader recognising instantly the field, allusions, issues, cultural references necessary to identify the content of the articles."

Journalists therefore need to *assume* that their readers will be familiar with the references they use, relying on presupposition. The authors then demonstrate that, pragmatically speaking, headlines can intrigue the co-enunciator and awaken an interest before providing a *reward* "through the intellectual satisfaction gained in successfully decoding them". In his article entitled "On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers", Daniel Dor quotes Bell (1991), who says that headlines are a "part of news rhetoric whose function is to attract the reader" (p. 189). He also writes that Nir (1993) claims that the headline has "to attract the attention of the reader and provoke the reader to read the whole story."

In the case of puns, the readers need to be familiar both with the actual political or general knowledge elements the headline actually purports to introduce, but also with the second *layer* of knowledge required to get the second reference which is key to the double meaning. According to Develotte and Rechniewski, puns in headlines "help to create and maintain a sense of shared community and collective identity." According to Bell (1989: 189), "headline structures appear to be very regular across languages". For the English language, Develotte and Rechniewski quote Ingrid Mardh, who offers "an exhaustive study of the characteristic features of the headlines of a range of English newspapers":

> She (Ingrid Mardh) identifies the following linguistic features as typical of headlines in English newspapers: the omission of articles; the omission of verbs and of auxiliaries (the verb 'to be' for example); nominalisations; the frequent use of complex noun phrases in subject position (in theme position); adverbial headlines, with the omission of both verb and subject (an example from our corpus: French ?... non merci); the use of short words ('bid' instead of 'attempt'); the widespread use of puns, word play and alliteration; the importance of word order, with the most important items placed first, even, in some cases, a verb; and

independent 'wh' constructions not linked to a main clause (an example from our corpus: Why the French don't give a damn), a form not found in standard English.

Develotte and Rechniewski conclude by writing that "[headlines] also reinforce the sense of belonging to a community, both through the references to one's own society and nation, and through stereotypical representations of other nations and peoples."

Day-to-day headlines are filled with examples of notoriously uninspired puns. And British tabloids often produce particularly insipid examples of paronomasia, sometimes even reaching the heights of tastelessness. But while some papers' attempts at composing what can most likely account for the terrible image puns suffer from, some highly interesting – and sometimes even brilliant – specimens can also be stumbled upon from time to time. *La version anglaise: lire, traduire, commenter*, written by Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud and Sébastien Salbayre, provides us with many examples of interesting headlines. As these have been translated by the authors, they are particularly interesting to study as the translation choices are explained and defended in a didactic manner.

One such example is the following, taken from an article published in *The Sunday Times*, on the 3rd of September 2006.

Taking a Bite out of Apple

It's crunch time for Apple as its competitors threaten to eat into the download music market.

The *narrative strategy* at play in this example is highly representative of newspaper headlines in that it is concise and to the point, but creates a phenomenon of attraction which entices the reader to want to find out more, even if only to verify whether their suppositions regarding the contents of the article are correct. As the authors explain, the -ING structure has no explicit subject and refers to an action performed by all the individuals that fall under the category *its competitors*, introduced in the chapeau of the article. *Situationally*, this element is particularly important and, in application of the GTVH, should not be replaced in the translated version. The other *participant*, Apple, which is a very famous corporation, cannot be omitted either as it is the subject of the article itself. Neither can the notion of Apple being eaten away at by other actors of the downloadable music market. However, as the latter idea

is a metaphorisation, it could, in theory, be replaced with any other image evocative of a similar result, though the contingent *apple* somewhat restricts the possibilities.

Vincent-Arnaud and Salbayre offer no less than three possible translations for the above title.

Apple: la pomme va se faire croquer
Apple : qui va croquer la pomme ?
Apple : qui va manger un morceau de la pomme ?

They explain their choice of isolating *Apple* from the rest of the segment by pointing out that, in the absence of a functional pun, the sole mention of *pomme* is not sufficient at setting a significant context. In English, such a context is generated by the fact that the company in question bears the name of the ubiquitous fruit which, of course, cannot be carried across as is. The strategy of expanding the notion of *Apple/apple* in an explanatory way clarifies the reference for the French readership, but still preserves the 'guessing work' on the part of the reader, as the performing agent is not revealed in the first option, and the existence of an indeterminate number of agents is posited by the pronoun *qui* in the two other propositions. Though the syntax is less concise in the translations, all of the *knowledge resources* are present. And since the term *competitors* implies uncertainty as to which company might eventually take precedence over the giant Apple, the use of the conjugated form *va* – as opposed to an action which is either hypothetical or already taking place expressed by the verb in -ing – in all three proposed translations is also justifiable despite its future tense expressing value.

Other possibilities could have perhaps included "Apple s'en prend plein la pomme" or "Apple: la pomme a des pépins", but the allusion to the apple being eaten would then be lost.

In another example, taken from an article in *The Observer*, 31st of August 2003, the authors of *La version anglaise* tackle a single nominal group whose double interpretation is particularly creative.

Raw Talent
There's a fine art to carpaccio, says Nigel Slater…
No wonder it's named after a Venetian painter

Vincent-Arnaud and Salbayre point out that this highly laudatory expression is the result of the combination of *talent* and *raw*, the semantic fields of which encompass the notions of purity and absolute, intertwined with that of the rusticity of a food presented in its natural state. The presentation of the food in question is being praised here, alluding to simplicity at its finest. The example itself is perhaps not particularly humorous, but constitutes a pun nonetheless, as it relies on a very clever double entendre. Indeed, the expression *raw talent* is widely known all by itself, but using it to describe a raw dish has the effect of revealing the metaphor behind the term, in much the same way as our mole-ridden story does. Thus, instead of considering the term as the expression of something particularly admirable in its rawness, the emphasis is put on the uncooked state of a food. Decontextualised, the metaphor itself can be considered amusing, reminiscent of a talent which is certainly undeniable, but might benefit from a little more experience.

Applying the GTVH to this example is therefore a valid approach, as the *script opposition* and its *logical mechanism* stand out particularly well. The *narrative strategy* is that of a pun, and, as a newspaper headline, takes on the pragmatic role of attracting the reader's attention and emphasising their sense of belonging in a society codified by cultural references, the understanding of which constitutes a validation of their status within it. *Situationally*, the participants are not obviously mentioned, but the chapeau of the article provides the context. The expression, however, presupposes something to be admired, as well as a co-enunciator to whom this quality is pointed out.

The proposed translation for this example is:

Un excellent cru

 If the original relies on different interpretations of the adjective *raw*, the translated version, as the translators concede, makes use of the homophony between the adjective *cru* and the noun *cru*, which constitutes an important lexical modification. Using the noun in this particular expression and as the basis for a play on words brings out the common denominator between the two words, which is the idea of a natural product possessing innate qualities. *Excellent cru* is by no means a direct translation of *raw talent*, but both expressions can be linked to the underlying allusion of a raw dish. This particular translation choice respects the *narrative strategy* of the play on words in the form of a nominal group and is *situationally* equivalent. The *logical mechanism* is somewhat modified but, through the

double interpretation of *cru*, manages to re-create the original double entendre perfectly, as the *opposition* occurs as one understands that the title actually refers to a dish.

Another possibility could have been attempted using the expression "Qui l'eut cru?", but even though it can be, in a certain context, understood as a positive exclamation, it lacks the immediate allusion to excellency that the first proposition provides.

4. Interpreting the Results

Our research has evidenced the existence of a number of theories on humour which can be used as a basis to guide a reflection on the translation of puns. The most prominent theory used to translate humour, the *General Theory of Verbal Humour*, provides invaluable insights as to the manner in which a humorous text functions by breaking it down into six distinguishable *knowledge resources*, which can be construed as structural elements. Though these constituting elements can rarely be translated individually in order for the joke to be subsequently re-constructed, they allow the translator to take on an effective reference point and to be mindful of how their choice of translation devices will affect then end result.

4.1. What kind of translation devices are used the most in the translation of puns?

In the six examples under study, we have encountered the following translation devices and alterations of the original form in the proposed translations:

- **He's got his toe stuck in the tapas / Il s'est coincé le nougat dans le robinet**
  adaptation / lexical modification / alteration of cultural reference

- **Equal Rites / L'égalité des transes**
  recategorisation / lexical + referential modification / change of focal point

- **Hello to you / Content de vous voir**
  adaptation / lexical modification / syntactic modification

- **Great Boo's up / Viens lever Le Kood**

  adaptation / recategorisation / situational modification / syntactic modification

- **Taking a Bite out of Apple / Apple: la pomme va se faire croquer / Apple: qui va croquer la pomme? / Apple: qui va manger un morceau de la pomme?**

  isolation of key element and split of the two meanings of *apple* / expanding / syntactic modification / tense modification

- **Raw Talent / Un excellent cru**

  lexical modification / recategorisation

Conversely, the following elements identified using the GTVH have been retained:

- **He's got his toe stuck in the tapas / Il s'est coincé le nougat dans le robinet**

  logical mechanism and script opposition / situation / target / narrative strategy

- **Equal Rites / L'égalité des transes**

  logical mechanism / situation partly preserved / target partly preserved / narrative strategy

- **Hello to you / Content de vous voir**

  logical mechanism and script opposition / situation / target / narrative strategy

- **Great Boo's up / Viens lever Le Kood**

  logical mechanism and script opposition / situation / target / narrative strategy

- **Taking a Bite out of Apple / Apple: la pomme va se faire croquer / Apple: qui va croquer la pomme? / Apple: qui va manger un morceau de la pomme?**

  logical mechanism and script opposition / situation / target / narrative strategy partly preserved

- **Raw Talent / Un excellent cru**

  logical mechanism and script opposition / situation / target / narrative strategy

Over the six examples, adaptation has been used three times, lexical modification four times, referential modification twice, syntactic modification three times and recategorisation three times. Five other translation devices have also been used once each.

No single translation device has been used consistently over all six examples.

However, the *knowledge resources* used in each segment have been retained quite consistently. Only a few instances of partial modification occur within the translated propositions for the corpus.

4.2. What is the impact of these choices? Could other choices have been made?

As the results above clearly show, the choice of translation devices is not consistent over the various examples. The corpus perhaps needs to be re-considered, taking the GTVH into account, to only include examples of puns which share *knowledge resources* of exactly the same nature in order to establish whether the same translation devices can be applied.

Rather than directly impacting the translated segments, the translation devices used in the examples under study appear to be the product of an attempt to maintain consistency at the level of the *knowledge resources* rather than a choice based on the fact that the examples are puns. As we found out, the 'pun format' only accounts for one of the six *knowledge resources* which need to be taken into account – the *narrative strategy* – and plays a part in the others as it participates in the *logical mechanism* and conditions the *situation* and *target*. Even though the role of this *narrative strategy* is central to the humorous segment, it is merely one of its constituents and, as such, cannot justify all of the translator's decisions in and of itself.

As we uncovered, different lexical and strategic choices could have been made which would have impacted the end result to a higher or lower degree. In the case of *Equal Rites*, for instance, the translators even decided not to make any attempt at re-creating the pun at all. Indeed, a translator may choose to give precedence to one *knowledge resource* over another, in a decision that will have a higher impact on the end result than if a different translation device were used in order to find a *closer match* for the expression.

4.3.   Can puns be translated using a systemic approach?

The number of examples under study in the present work is of course quite insufficient to allow for general conclusions to be drawn. However, our findings are consistent with the principles posited by the *General Theory of Verbal Humour*. Even though the primary object of our work was to determine whether there existed consistent elements allowing the translator to operate a choice in translation devices when translating a pun, it appears that, if puns cannot be translated using a specific system based on translation devices, they are, conversely, part of a system upon which the translator can rely. As the GTVH can be applied to any humorous text and paronomasia is typically an aspect of a humorous segment, it becomes an element that the translator needs to take into account to re-create the joke of which it is a part instead of being itself considered as the joke. The system applicable to the translation of puns is not based on the type of humorous text in question, but rather on the actual humorous character of the text and on determining all of the *knowledge resources* which account for this effect, with the *narrative strategy* of punning being merely one constituting element. If the translator's aim is to provide a faithful translation, they will attempt to bring across every single *knowledge resource*, and thus should not fail to re-create the pun.

5. Conclusion

The object of the present work was to determine whether a systemic approach could be applied to the translation of puns from British English into French. As it has been demonstrated, the corpus under study did not reveal any consistency as to the translation devices used in order to translate the segments effectively. However, it did shed some light on an already existent system widely used in the field of humour translation: the *General Theory of Verbal Humour*.

Though this discovery had the initial effect of leading me to think that my research was utterly inconclusive, I soon revised my deliberation. Indeed, the question of whether there exist systemic strategies one can use to solve such a puzzle as the translation of puns has been answered, thus ascertaining that a deeper level of understanding of the initial text can be attained, consequently allowing for a more educated choice regarding the translation devices that can be used. Further study on the subject could include the analysis of a different corpus which would be constituted according to the principles of the GTVH. A greater number of examples would also be necessary.

The research undertaken for the present work has opened new horizons and paved the way for many more lines to be written on a vast and fascinating subject. What I have learned over the course of the few months during which I worked on the subject of translating puns will most certainly influence my work going forward and has constituted a wonderful opportunity to question everything I thought I knew about the art of translation.

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