# Culture-Specific Strategies as a Framework to Reduce English Language Translation Learners' Problem for Translating Humor

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*ABSTRACT: These days humor plays an essential role in societies. Iran is also has many translated humorous books, movies, serials and children stories from English to Persian and Vice versa or in other languages such as, French, Arabic, Germany. But a translator may encounter a whole range of problems while translating humor. However much of the humorous translated texts have been discovered to be faulty as they lacked effective sense lost their meaning and in some cases the sense of the main message in the source language was omitted. Similar problems have surfaced with English Language Translation learners when translating humorous texts in Iran. To successfully translate humorous texts, translators must take the cultural effects into account. Present study which is a survey and a description set out to find out the culture-specific strategies to improve English Language Translation learners' problem for translating humor. Framework of this study was adopted from Newmark (1988) and Yarmohammadi's (1993) points of view for translating metaphor and also the classification of metaphors from Lakoff and Johnson (1978) to find the specific strategies in translating humor from a cultural perspective. Quantitative research was conducted for this study and the instruments were checklists and texts. Subjects of this study were 4 translation experts. A Chi-square analysis was employed to analyze the data. It was found that all of the translators preferred to apply culture of the second language in translation of humor. The findings of this study may be a useful guideline for English teachers, translators, student majoring in translation studies, writers of English text lessons and also program writing of teaching English in Persian context.*

*Keywords: Translation, Translation of Culture, Humor, Translation of Humor, Translation of Metaphor*

## Introduction

Humor seems to be one of the least understood, though thoroughly studied, phenomena because its hermetic structure refuses to open up to some researchers. Investigators from the ancient time of Aristotle and Plato to the present day have strived to discover and define humor. There are almost as many humor definitions as humor theories (Popa, 2005). These days humor plays an essential role in societies. Iran is also has many translated humorous books, movies, serials and children stories from English to Persian and Vice versa or in other languages such as, French,

Arabic, Germany. Translation of humor concerns one of the most complex types of language to translate owing to the fact that it needs to come to terms with the very tenets of the theory of translation, those of equivalence and (un) translatability (Chiaro, 2005).

**Statement of the Problems**

Nowadays, most of the humorous translated texts lack on effective sense in Iran. Moreover, in some cases the meaning and the sense of humor is omitted. Vandaele (2002) "emphasizes that due to numerous difficulties, the humor translation is not an easy process. Cultural and linguistic differences between language communities create probably the most serious problem that a translator of humor has to cope with." One of the problems which are important is cultural variety. Humor and culture cannot be separated and their meanings are based on culture recognition (Yarmohammadi, 2010). Sometimes the translator wonders whether it is important to observe the cultural criterion or it is possible to omit it. Should the text be translated in TL culture or SL culture?

**Significance of the Study**

Lakoff and Johnson (1978) wrote a theory in metaphor and Newmark (1988) suggested some theories in the translation of metaphors. But none of them formulated a theory for the translation of humor. This study tries to formulate some strategies for translating humor that are acceptable to most translators. This study may also help translators and TEFL students who have majored in translation studies to translate well by considering specific strategies that are acceptable to most of the famous translators. Being aware of the strategies in humor translation, the translators can transfer the SL to the TL more easily. In a sense, it could be said that the translation of humorous texts will become more sensible. Writers of English text lessons can also use these methods if they are interested in formulating different methods of translation in different texts. This is why the findings of this study will hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge of translation studies.

**Objectives of the Study**

This study intends to formulate strategies for translating cultural aspects of humor from English to Persian and vice versa.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

1- What strategies do most translators considered in translating cultural aspects in humor?

Based on the mentioned question, the following hypotheses can be presented:

1- There are no certain strategies for translating cultural aspects in translation.

**Literature Review**

Of course translational purists could well argue against a functional attitude towards translation because of the fact that the text loses out in terms of formal equivalence. But such loss is true of

all translation; it is possibly simply more evident in the translation of humor because of the radical changes sometimes involved in the shift from source text to target text. However, without such changes, the humorous function of the text may well be lost and surely that would be a high price to pay for equivalence. Similarly, the issue of translatability refers to the impossibility of equivalence rather than the unfeasibility of translation and that (luckily) humorous texts are indeed translated no matter what (Chiaro, 2005).

As it is highly important that the two languages in question share the same linguistic elements upon which to base the humor, one of the following translational strategies is likely to be adopted:

1-Humor in the source language is substituted with an example of humor in the target language;

2-H in the source language is replaced with an example of humor in the target language elsewhere in the text—in this case the humor is displaced.

Moreover, Eleni's (2004) stated that it is important to regard the audience in translating culture-bound humor. Cultural issues will then be the most significant challenges. He believes that short sentences must be translated into short sentences in the second language as long as they have the same effect on the audience. To him, differences between expectations in abstract issues must be a center of attention; this is more important than the first language or the second language audience. Translators, then, must regard the sub-categories in which the audience exists.


**Framework of the Study**

This study employs the theory of translating metaphor in Newmark (1988) and Yarmohammadi's (1993) points of view and also the classification of metaphors from Lakoff and Johnson to find the specific strategies in translating humor.

Newmark's (1988) theory in translation of metaphor: 1) Reproducing the image in the TL, 2) Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture, 3) Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image, 4) Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense, 5) Deletion, 6) Translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense, 7) Conversion of metaphor to sense.

Yarmohammadi's (1993) theory in the translation of metaphor: 1)The exact metaphor must be transferred from the source language to the target language due to the fact that both languages share a common take on presupposition, 2) A metaphor can be translated as Simile (using simile devices), 3) A metaphor is replaced with a metaphor in the target language in case they are similar in the deep structure, 4) The exact metaphor is transferred to the target language and a sentence is to provide the presupposition, 5) A metaphor is translated to a non-metaphoric expression.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1978) points of view in classifying metaphors:

1) Systematicness of metaphorical concepts, 2) Metaphorical cohesion, 3) Cohesion in single metaphors, 4) Cohesion between two aspects of a single concept, 5) Cohesion among several metaphors, 6) Comparison and contrast of cohesion and consistency of metaphors, 7) Cohesion

of metaphors and cultured values, 8) Comparison and contrast of the structure of metaphors and the sub categorization of concepts.

## Materials and Methods
### Design of the Study
Quantitative research approach was conducted for this study to find strategies for translating humor from cultural perspective.

## Data Collection
The data for this study was collected through document analysis and checklists.

## Documents
1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of Shakespeare (1564 cited in Wells, and Taylor, 1998, p. 311), translated by Aladdin Pazargadi (1940).
3. Obeid Zakani's *The Story of the Cat and Mice* (1942), translated by Abbas Ariyanpur Kashani (1971).

## Checklist
Checklist was based on Peter Newmark (1988) and Yarmohammadi's (1992) approach to the translation of metaphors and classification of Lakoff and Johnson's ideas about metaphor. The researcher adapted theses theories to prepare a checklist which represents some strategies for translation of metaphor.

## Data Collection Procedure
Sampling in this study was purposive sampling. In order to take samples from each book, the researcher observed all the pages and chapters and classified them. Then samples were taken conducting systematic sampling, which is a subdivision of nonrandom sampling. For each sample, a separate checklist was completed. Therefore, 100 checklists were completed for 50 samples to find out the most useful strategies which were used by professional translators to translate humor.

## Data Analysis
To analyze the items of the checklist, information provided by the translators was subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS program. The statistical procedure conducted to analyze the data for the frequency of occurrence and percentage. A Chi-square analysis was performed to check if the differences in frequency were statistically significant.

## Results and Discussion

In the test statistics table, information such as the amount of U (Mann-Whitney), W (Wilcoxon), Z, and the level of meaningfulness are provided. The amount of Z, and its level of meaningfulness are -6.019 and 0.000 respectively.

|  | **No. Used Uncultured Observe Culture of TL** |
|---|---|
| **Z** | -6.019 |
| **Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)** | .000 |

Table 1: Test Statistic

As (p-value=0.001<0.05=α), the hypothesis that the culture has not effect in translation of humor with regard to the number of times certain strategies have been used in them is rejected with a certainty correlative greater than 0.99. Therefore, at the level of meaningfulness 0.05, there is meaningful statistical difference between the culture and uncultured strategies with regard to the number of times certain strategy is used in translation of humor.

**Conclusion**

According to table 1, cultural signs have the greatest effect in translation of humor. In other words, most of the experts in translation, consider cultural elements while translating humor. Moreover, translators conduct cultural strategies for translating humor to decrease the sense of humor through cultural varieties. Strategies which translators conducted for translating cultural aspects were:

1- Cohesion of metaphors and cultured values,

2- Conversion of metaphor to sense,

3- Deletion,

4- Reproducing the image in the TL,

5- Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture.

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