The Translatability of Humor with Particular Reference to English Jokes and Riddles

by

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Abstract

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This study aimed at (a) discussing and analysing different types of jokes concentrating on the difficulties that translators face while translating them, and (b) analysing the different translating strategies adopted by the subjects of the study showing the negative and positive sides of each strategy.

The data in this study were drawn mainly from joke-books, TV shows and people.

The subjects of the study were twenty M.A. translation students who were asked to translate one hundred English jokes.

The related literature was reviewed and to my knowledge it was found that not much has been written on the translation of jokes especially studies that deal with languages such as English and Arabic.

Then the study was provided with a classification for the different problems that translators face when translating English jokes i.e., the cultural and linguistic problems. After that, the researcher discussed
each of these problems separately introducing a number of examples on each part of them.

Then an analysis was carried over the different translating strategies adopted by the subjects of the study i.e. literal translation and free translation showing the cases where each strategy was successful and the cases where they failed to convey the intended purpose.

Finally, the study introduced some recommendations and conclusions. It was found that in minor cases literal translation was successful. Paraphrase is the proper strategy when the aim of the translation is the SL text but this strategy led to losing the humorous effect of the joke while free translation was adopted for the opposite purpose which is making an equivalent humorous effect despite the fact that certain changes took place in the SL text.