



DIFFICULTIES OF THE LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL ASPECT IN THE TRANSLATION OF FOREIGN PROVERBS AND JOKES

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ABSTRACT

The sociolinguistic context is necessary for the understanding of humour, but it is not always valid for all humorous expressions. When the sense of humour resides in a play on words, it is necessary to appeal to a linguistic intelligence to understand the humour. Besides, the translators of humorous films encounter a lot of problem in the translation or the subtitling of puns because the literal translation will not have a humorous effect among foreign spectators, and the translation of the meaning requires a lot of space and time on the screen in which humour loses its effect.

KEYWORDS: *linguoculturology, English language, cultural jokes, proverbs, linguistic units, ethnolinguistics*

Given that humorous phrases are concise statements, often in common use, which sometimes express widespread beliefs, humour would be, in a way, a mirror of the thinking of peoples on many subjects. Jokes never start out of thin air and cartoons have a whole story behind them. Social and political events provide fertile ground for people to create jokes or caricatures.

The deep analysis of humorous phrases, jokes, caricatures of a given society will help a lot to understand the problems that affect this society, even the thinking of people. Humour often reveals the reality of the people and many of their habits and beliefs, as we will see in this study.

We will try in this research to focus on three important axes: the first concerns the sociolinguistic dimension in the birth of humour. We will discuss here the importance of the socio-cultural context in the birth of humorous expressions. Society is the only theatre on which actors can express themselves and revive or create humour. In other words, it is the socio-cultural events that force us to speak in such a way. Secondly, we will talk about the lifespan of humorous expressions. When one invents a humorous proverb or a caricature does it last all the life or good will disappear one day? It all depends on the user people as we will see later. Finally,

we will see to what extent the teaching of humour in foreign language methods could be useful or harmful to language learning.

Nobody contradicts the fact that the birth of humour needs a fertile socio-cultural ground full of social events. Saussure's semiotic triangle of the linguistic sign speaks of the signifier, the signified and the referent. If we want to assimilate this semiotic triangle to the birth of humour, we can say that the signifier would be the linguistic aspect of the humorous locution; the signified would be the concept and the hidden meaning of the locution, while the referent would be the socio-cultural context that gives rise to the humorous phrase. We will therefore try to emphasize, in this part, the third dimension of the linguistic sign "the referent" which is responsible for the richness of the humorous expressions and their understanding.

We will try to explain the relationship between the birth of humour and the socio-cultural referent by using proverbs. Proverbs are often used both to make speakers laugh and to better explain one's point of view. From the following proverbs we will see how close the relationship between the proverb and society is.



Proverb in other languages	Literal meaning	Equivalent in English
Ça ne casse pas trois pattes à un canard (French)	It doesn't break three legs to a duck	It has nothing to write home about
Что написано пером, не вырубишь топором. (Russian)	What's written with pen, cannot be cut with an axe	The pen is mightier than the sword

The genesis, therefore, of a proverb takes place thanks to an experience lived by a group of people or an incident in a given community. Proverbs make it possible to know the wisdom and the soul of a people, and consequently the way in which this people thinks. The natural and cultural elements, existing in the environment where the proverb was born, participate in the construction of the latter. In other words, to give birth to a proverb, the people concerned by this proverb seek, unconsciously, elements of their natural and cultural surroundings to formulate it. From there arises the difficulty of transposing the proverb from one language to another, especially when the elements constituting the proverb are not widespread or little used in the other community.

Using the examples in the table above, we will explain what we mean by “natural and cultural elements”:

The first proverb: “*It doesn't break three legs to a duck*”.

While the direct translation, “it doesn't break three legs to a duck” has a bit of weird flavor to it, rest assured that this idiom means no harm to any duck. Considering that a duck only has two legs, among other things, this is actually similar to the English expression “it has nothing to write home about”. Meaning, there's nothing spectacular about a particular thing.

The elements that make up this French proverb are duck and legs, but in English they are home and write. Why did the English tradition choose home and write in this proverb, while the French or rather Roman tradition used ducks and legs? Thanks to the nature and the hot climate of the England, ducks are less frequent there than in France, having a climate that is not very favourable for ducks. As for the rope, which is not

detached from the Saxon culture where horses occupy an important place, even until today in certain regions, as a means of transport. The horse driver of course uses the rope to tie the saddle and control the animal's neck to steer it in the desired direction.

The second proverb:

- “*Что написано пером, не вырубишь топором*”

- Literally: «What's written with pen cannot be cut with an axe.»

English equivalent: *The pen is mightier than a sword.*

The context of use of this proverb is the same in English and Russian. We use it to say that Persuasion through words is much more effective than coercion, as words, spoken or written, remain in people's minds even if newspapers are burned or a poet is silenced. We notice that the French tradition chooses the sword as an important element in the proverb, while the Russian folklore prefers the axe. Of course, this is not a random choice. The sword is a weapon that was used more in the forests of Europe than in Russia. Though, axe was an important element to survive cold winters and for wood. The use of this term in an Russian proverb therefore would not be strange because it is not part of the cultural and traditional notions of the peoples of Europe who would not understand the value of the weapon.

To conclude, the life expectancy of a humorous expression or a caricature depends mainly on the people who lived the event from which the expression or the caricature was born. Sometimes the event remains in people's collective memory, which gives a longer life expectancy to the humor that was born thanks to this event. On the other hand, if the new generations forget the event, it is quite possible that the phrase or caricature will lose its humorous effect.



Mastering a foreign language requires a good knowledge of the cultural aspects of the people speaking that language. For communication to achieve its goal, being mutual understanding, it is important that the interlocutors not only share the same language, but also the same culture. That doesn't mean you have to be French to speak French, but he wants to know French culture better to better understand and be understood. You can master the English language very well, but not laugh at a "joke" with a cultural reference. To tell the truth, the teaching methods of English as a foreign language avoid the use of humour, because this requires a cultural knowledge which the foreign teacher might not have.

Is it serious not to understand a humorous phrase in a foreign language? Is ignoring the humorous aspect detrimental to learning a foreign language? It is very rare that humour is the main object of true linguistic communication. On the other hand, the interlocutors often use humour as a support either to highlight the subject of discussion by leaving traces in the memory of the other, or to devalue it by using jokes. The most important thing for a user of a foreign language is to understand and make a message understood. If a humorous message escapes him, it will not really affect the good understanding of the main information. On the other hand, we must admit that it is embarrassing for natives to laugh at a joke or a humorous phrase that a foreigner does not understand.

As a native speaker of a given language, we often avoid using cultural humour with foreigners because we know that this requires a socio-cultural knowledge that a native of the same mother tongue would not have, especially when there is an age difference between the interlocutors.

In our opinion, it is not easy to teach humour to a foreign learner for several reasons:

- Firstly because humour cannot be learned. It is an aspect that the person acquires in society and especially in his social environment. In other words, it is a gift.
- We most often use a colloquial language in humour which is difficult and disturbing for the proper learning of a foreign language. He wants to learn the standard language better.
- It is not even easy for a foreign teacher to understand the humour in the language he is

teaching. Even if he understands it, it will be difficult for him to translate it because the translation of humour means "killing" the "laughter".

However, one can always integrate into the methods of English didactics humorous caricatures with international themes that everyone shares. Take for example the cartoon below which speaks of the racist whose humour is flagrant who does not need an explanation from the teacher. It is enough to explain the word "racism" to the learners so that they understand that this character in the cartoon is racist against black people to the point that he wants to shoot his shadow because he is black.

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