Nekrasova Anna Vyacheslavovna

Ural Federal University named after the first

President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin

Russia, Ekaterinburg

Academic supervisor: Bozhko Ekaterina Mikhailovna

PECULIARITIES OF TRANSLATING PUNS IN AUDIO-MEDIA TEXTS (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY «FRIENDS» TV SERIES)

Abstract. The article focuses on the peculiarities of translating puns in audio-media texts. The amount of foreign content in Russia to be translated and localized for the Russian-speaking audience has been growing steadily. When being engaged in audiovisual translation, particular attention should be paid to humor, and especially wordplay, as this is one of the most challenging and interesting aspects of translation. This article studies the main techniques of translating puns into Russian and identifies the main difficulties and the most appropriate techniques for translating them as exemplified by the American situational comedy «Friends».

Keywords: translation, pun, wordplay, audiovisual translation, situational comedy.

Некрасова Анна Вячеславовна

Уральский федеральный университет имени первого

Президента России Б.Н. Ельцина

Россия, г. Екатеринбург

Научный руководитель: Божко Екатерина Михайловна

ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПЕРЕВОДА КАЛАМБУРОВ В АУДИО-МЕДИАЛЬНЫХ ТЕКСТАХ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ СЕРИАЛА «FRIENDS»)

Аннотация. *Статья посвящена особенностям перевода каламбуров в аудио-медиальных текстах. Количество иностранного контента, который необходимо перевести и локализовать для русскоязычной аудитории, неуклонно растет. Игре слов следует уделять особое внимание, ведь это – один из самых сложных и интересных аспектов перевода. Рассмотрены наиболее распространённые приемы передачи каламбуров на русский язык на примере американского комедийного телесериала «Друзья», определены основные трудности и наиболее оптимальные приемы передачи каламбуров.*

Ключевые слова: перевод, каламбур, игра слов, аудиовизуальный перевод, ситуационная комедия.

Over the last few decades foreign content has been firmly established in our lives. We constantly consume content of foreign origin, e. g. films, TV series, TV shows video games, etc. In order for all this content to reach its final consumer, it must be translated and localized for the Russian-speaking audience. This is what audiovisual translation is meant for.

Audiovisual translation deals with the translation of audio-media texts, i.e., works in which auditory and visual channels of perception are simultaneously involved. It is also engaged in the localization of content according to the language and culture of the audience. The main and most common types of audiovisual translation are subtitling, dubbing and voiceover [1].

One of the hardest things in localization of foreign content is definitely humor, especially the one that is based on a phenomenon of wordplay which is also known as pun.

Pun is a stylistic figure of speech based on the comic use of words that sound the same but have different meanings, or similar sounding words or groups of words, or different meanings of the same word or phrase [2]. The pun is formed by polysemy, homonymy, homographs, comic etymologization of words, etc.

When translating puns, the interpreter often has to sacrifice one aspect of the pun. It is possible to get rid of it and preserve the content, or keep the wordplay but

change the image and deviate from the original meaning, or even neglect the content completely and only convey a play on words [6].

The American situational comedy «Friends» made for the NBC channel is perhaps one of the most popular TV series in the world. For the examination of translating puns, we decided to take a translation of «Friends» made for the Paramount Comedy channel. The series shows the lives of six friends: spoiled Rachel Green, neatnik chef Monica Geller, self-conscious jokester and an office worker Chandler Byng, simple-minded struggling actor Joey Tribbiani; divorced paleontologist Ross Geller, and masseuse and singer Phoebe Buffay. The series is valuable in terms of research because it is charged with various jokes, including the ones based on wordplay. That is why it was chosen for studying this most interesting linguistic phenomenon.

According to O.V. Troitskaya, the main techniques of pun translation are calque compensation, and omission [5].

Calque is the creation of lexical units on the basis of the corresponding words of a foreign language by means of a precise translation of their meaningful parts or borrowing individual meanings of words [3]. In the season 1 episode 2 we can hear the following dialogue:

Rachel: *Has anybody seen my engagement ring?* **Phoebe**: Yeah, it's beautiful.	**Рэйчел**: *Кто-нибудь видел мое обручальное кольцо?* **Фиби**: Да, оно прекрасно!

In this episode Rachel lost her engagement ring; she was looking for it and asked her friends if anyone had seen it. However, Phoebe took the question too literally and did not quite understand it. Therefore, the wordplay in this example is based on the polysemy of phrase «Has anybody seen my engagement ring?». This phrase can be used in different contexts: it can denote the fact of seeing something or it can be used in terms of searching for something. The usage of calque in this case is appropriate since the Russian phrase *«Кто-нибудь видел мое обручальное кольцо?»* can also have different meanings. Thus, calque can be used in those rare cases when the puns

are basically the same in both languages. Often these are polysemantic phrases that can be easily misunderstood, and the comic effect is based on those phrases as in the example above. In other cases, we usually use a technique of compensation.

Compensation implies the replacement of an untranslatable component of the original with a similar component that replenishes the loss of information and can have a similar effect on the audience [3]. This means that the interpreter creates his own language game, which is reminiscent of the author's pun but can have different basis and be implemented by other means. Let us look at the example, which was found in season 2 episode 2:

Monica: Hello? *Oh, Hi, Ju… Hi, Jew!* **Rachel**: Did you just say Hi, Jew? **Monica**: Yes. Uh, yes, I did. That was my friend, Eddie Moskowitz. He's going through this whole religious thing. Yeah, he likes it. Reaffirms his faith.	**Моника**: Алло? *Привет, Джу.. Привет, жулик!* **Рэйчел**: Ты сказала «Привет, жулик»? **Моника**: Да, да, сказала. Это мой друг и он сидел в тюрьме. Он сам просит, чтобы не забывать ошибок.

In this episode, Monica spends time with Julie, Ross's new girlfriend, and she keeps it a secret from Rachel, who is in love with Ross. Obviously, she is against her best friend hanging out with her rival. When the phone rings and it turns out that it is Julie, Monica is close to give herself away by almost saying the girl's name. However, she finds a way out and replaces the name «Julie» with the similar sounding «Jew», and then explains that it was her friend who got very religious and asked to call him that way. One could face some difficulties when translating this dialogue into Russian. In Russian the words «Джули» and «еврей» sound quite different. Nevertheless, the interpreters came to a good decision and replaced the word «Jew» with the word «жулик» which sounds almost like «Джули». Not only the word «Jew» had to be replaced but also the backstory of Monica's «friend». He has become a former inmate who asks to be called a crook (жулик) to remember the mistakes of his past. This is a

fine example of using the compensation technique because the translators managed to preserve the pun and convey the necessary comic effect. Compensation is perhaps the most frequently used technique for translating puns. In many cases this is the only way to keep the play on words in the process of translation.

When we use omission, the wordplay is lost, and the text is conveyed into another language by simple direct translation [3]. In season 1 episode 9 we can find an example of omission:

Chandler: So, I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm very thankful that all of your Thanksgivings sucked. **Rachel**: That's so sweet. **Ross**: And hey, here's to a *lousy Christmas*. **Rachel**: And a *crappy New Year*.	**Чендлер**: Я хочу сказать, я благодарен за то, что ваши праздники сорвались. **Рэйчел**: Как это мило! **Росс**: Ну тогда сразу за *отстойное Рождество*! **Рэйчел**: И за *поганый Новый год*!

All the characters failed to celebrate Thanksgiving as they planned to, but at the same time this unfortunate situation allowed the friends to celebrate the holiday together. In this case, the pun is based on changing the set expressions used for congratulation on the winter holidays: «Merry Christmas» and «Happy New Year». In the first phrase, «merry» becomes «lousy», and in the second one «happy» becomes «crappy». These expressions are translated in Russian, as «отстойное Рождество» and «поганый Новый год». Surely, the meaning and comic effect are preserved but the pun itself is nonetheless omitted, since the rhythm and the familiar melodic sound of these phrases are lost in translation. The usage of omission is acceptable in puns translation, but it is better to avoid it if possible. When using this technique, ony can leave a comment explaining the original joke, but this is possible only in written texts. An interpreter must do everything possible to preserve the wordplay, especially in audiovisual translation, otherwise the humor and charm of the original are lost. It is also worth noting that, according to some scholars, there is no such thing as untranslatable puns [4].

As it was said before, we do watch a lot of foreign content. Not everyone has the opportunity to watch films or TV series in their original language. And this is where interpreters come in. Whether we can fully enjoy a piece of work, understand all the jokes, realities, references, and so on depends on them only, because things that are difficult to translate or that are just untranslatable are very common. To convey all this into another language, interpreters resort to various techniques and transformations. To achieve the translation of high quality, interpreters must be professionals of their craft, have profound knowledge of both source language and target language, know the cultures of these languages, and, of course, be imaginative, resourceful, and creative.

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