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The Importance of Being Earnest: Strategies for Translating Irony from English into Macedonian

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Abstract

Irony has significant stylistic function in texts. Given that in many cases it works in a certain linguistic, cultural, social and political context, irony may present a major challenge for the translator. The challenge involves not only recognizing and understanding it, but, perhaps, more importantly, conveying it in the target language so that all its stylistic effects become accessible for the target language reader. The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategies used to translate irony from English into Macedonian as well as to identify if there is any correlation between the type of irony and the translation strategy used. The results are based on an analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and its translation into Macedonian. The study focuses on ironic utterances and their rendition in translation. The method combines qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Key words: translating irony, strategies, Oscar Wilde

1 INTRODUCTION

Irony has significant stylistic function in texts. Given that in many cases it works in a certain linguistic, cultural, social and political context, irony may present a major challenge for the translator. The challenge involves not only recognizing and understanding it, but, perhaps, more importantly, conveying it in the target language so that all its stylistic effects become accessible for the target language reader.

In this paper we set out to examine the strategies used to translate irony from English into Macedonian as well as to identify if there is any correlation between the type of irony and the translation strategy used. To this end we will first explain what we mean by irony and present the classification of irony we use in the study. Then, we will briefly give a background of some of the existing studies of irony in translation and irony translation strategies. After that, we will present the purpose of the paper and the methodology employed. We will next sketch a general quantitative picture of the results and discuss instances from the corpus to illustrate the qualitative analysis. Finally, we will draw conclusions and give suggestions for future research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Irony

The issue of irony has a very long history. Irony as a concept dates back to Aristotle's time when it was interpreted as a type of an offensive pretense and deceit, i.e. a special type of lying (Stanel, 2006: 14; Knox, 1989: 51).

In the course of time, understandably, the term irony has evolved and become a very broad and complex concept. Thus, today the term irony refers to several distinct but closely related phenomena such as: Socratic irony; situational irony; dramatic irony and verbal irony. What they all have in common is the existence of a discrepancy between the mental state and the real situation in relation to something, whereas what distinguishes them all is the way in which these discrepancies are manifested (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993: 98).

Socratic irony is normally defined as a rhetorical skill which is used when the speaker pretends to be simple-minded for pedagogical purposes, i.e. to discover a flaw in his interlocutor's mode of thinking. The origin of this type of irony is attributed to Socrates and his habit to pretend that he does not know the answer to a question only to make his interlocutors understand their own shallowness and ignorance.

Dramatic irony is a complex theatrical means which implies that the audience knows something more than the protagonist himself, namely the audience has a

specific piece of information which is unknown to the protagonist, who as a result of that acts contrarily to what is expected or what is deemed normal.

Situational irony, is in fact very closely related to verbal irony, as "both of them include opposing and contrasting some incompatibilities/incongruities, but in verbal irony that is caused by an expression uttered by an individual; whereas, in the case of situational irony a particular situation is simply perceived as ironic" (Gibbs, 1994: 363). In other words, situational irony appears when there is an incongruity between the reality and the expectations, for instance, when a fire station has burnt to the ground (Kreuz and Roberts, 1993: 99).

In the case of verbal irony, which is principally defined as a discrepancy between what the speaker says and what he/she believes (e.g. "What a lovely day!" – uttered during a terrible storm), the fact of the matter is that there exists no single definition which manages to account for all the instances of this extremely complex linguistic phenomenon (Cutler, 1974; Grice, 1975, 1978; Sperber & Wilson, 1981, 1986; Clark & Gerrig, 1984; Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995; Attardo, 2000; Utsumi, 2000; Colston, 2000; Anolli et al., 2002; Partington, 2007, etc). Nevertheless, what can be inferred on the basis of all principal definitions of verbal irony offered so far is that an expression is ironic if it meets certain *conditions* (semantic negation, i.e. saying one thing but meaning the opposite; echoic mention/interpretation of somebody's thoughts, expressions, beliefs in order to express disapproval; pretending that we do not judge or notice anything when that is exactly what we do, etc.) (not all ironic expressions meet the same conditions) and if under the influence of certain *socio-cultural factors* (e.g. status of interlocutors, distance, gender, age, etc.) the expression could:

- perform certain *pragmatic functions* (criticism, humor, surprise, etc.),
- be realized in *various forms* (ironic questions, ironic compliments, ironic criticism, jocularity, etc.),
- contain (usually but not mandatorily) *ironic signals* which point to its ironic nature (verbal and non-verbal signals) and
- provoke certain *reactions* (ironic or non-ironic) on the parts of the interlocutors who have been addressed ironically (Neshkovska, 2014).

2.2 Basic notions in translation

Venuti's (2008) notions of domestication and foreignisation are used to discuss the findings of this analysis. Therefore, a brief discussion of these notions is in order. Domestication and foreignisation are two types of translation strategy Venuti uses to describe the general translation method and the choice of texts to translate in the contemporary Anglo-American translation culture. Domestication generally

refers to the strategy where the source text is assimilated in the target text culture and is translated following target text norms and expectations. Foreignisation, on the other hand, is the opposite strategy whereby the translator aims to reveal the foreignness of the source text in the target text culture so that the translator's presence is visible. Venuti's dichotomy does not seem to be new and is largely built on Schleirmacher's translation methods of "naturalizing" and "alienating" translation (Munday 2001: 146). In Schleirmacher's own words "either the translator leaves the author as peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader as much as possible and moves the writer toward him" (Schleirmacher 1813/2004: 49). Venuti uses the terms primarily to criticise the dominant domesticating translation strategies in Anglophone countries and to discuss issues such as the translator's (in)visibility, authorship, cultural dominance and the call for action (Munday 2001: 145). Nevertheless, the notions are useful for our study mainly due to their great explanatory potential and their prevalence in recent theoretical and empirical discussions on translation.

2.3 Irony in translation

When it comes to translating irony, there are a few studies (Mateo, 1995; Linder, 2001; Pelsmaekers & Van Besien, 2002; Chakhachiro, 2007; Ghazala 2007) that have addressed the issue. However, the most relevant for our purposes are Mateo (1995), Pelsmaekers & Van Besien (2002) and Chakhachiro (2007): Mateo (1995) and Pelsmaekers & Van Besien (2002) because they have both analysed a corpus of drama comedy texts (while the former studies a corpus of three English comedies[1] and their translations into Spanish, the latter analyse a corpus of ironic utterances produced by Edmund Blackadder in 12 parts of the BBC *Blackadder* series[2] and their subtitled versions into Dutch); and Chakhachiro (2007) because, apart from Mateo (1995), he also identifies translation strategies for irony translation.

The strategies Chakhachiro (2007: 232) proposes are two generic strategies, namely:
i.   translating by using different form with similar function
ii. translating by substitution, addition and/or omission.

The strategies Mateo (1995: 175-177) proposes are:

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1   Her corpus consists of: Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest", Richard Brinsley Sheridan's "The School for Scandal" and Ben Jonson's "Volpone".

2   Their corpus consists of ironic utterances produced by Edmund Blackadder in Blackadder II and Blackadder III series.

a) ST[3] irony becomes TT[4] irony with literal translation;
b) ST irony becomes TT irony with "equivalent effect" translation;
c) ST irony becomes TT irony through means different from those used in the ST (e.g. verbal irony becomes kinetic irony, the use of intonation is replaced by lexical or grammatical units, etc.)[5];
d) ST irony is enhanced in TT with some word/expression;
e) ST ironic innuendo becomes more restricted and explicit in TT;
f) ST irony becomes TT sarcasm (criticism is now overt, no feeling of contradiction at all);
g) The hidden meaning of ST irony comes to the surface in TT. No irony in TT therefore;
h) ST ironic ambiguity has only one of the two meanings translated in TT. No double entendre or ambiguity in TT therefore;
i) ST irony replaced by a "synonym" in TT with no two possible interpretations;
j) ST irony explained in footnote in TT;
k) ST irony has literal translation with no irony in TT;
l) Ironic ST completely deleted in TT;
m) No irony in ST becomes irony in TT.

The comparison between the two classifications shows that Chakhachiro's strategy i. is equivalent to Mateo's strategies b) and c), whereas Chakhachiro's strategy ii. encompasses Mateo's strategies c), d), e), f), g), h), i), j), k), l) and m). Mateo's strategy a) is not covered by any of Chakhachiro's strategies. Chakhachiro's classification is too general and does not allow for detailed and systematic analysis. Besides, it is ambiguous in itself. For example, it is not clear what is meant by substitution. Also, there is no clear distinction between "using different form with similar function" from strategy i. and "substitution". Namely, "using different form with similar function" may be understood as "substitution". For these reasons, we do not employ this classification in our analysis.

Mateo's classification has its own weaknesses too. As Pelsmaekers & Van Besien (2002: 251) note, it is not clear from Mateo's study how relatively important these strategies are in her data and there is also no explicit discussion of the categories as there are just examples given. Nevertheless, it is the only existing classification of strategies for the translation of irony we have come across. It is also the one Pelsmaekers & Van Besien (2002) use for the preliminary analysis of their corpus. Therefore, it is the one we have chosen for this study.

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3   ST stands for "source text".
4   TT stands for "target text".
5   This strategy is not relevant for our study because we do not analyse other elements than linguistic.

3 PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to examine how irony fares in translation. More specifically, the study aims to provide answers to the following questions: What strategies do translators use to convey the source text irony? Is there any correlation between the type of irony and the translation strategy used?

We have also formulated initial hypotheses for the two questions. Based on Pelsmaekers & Van Besien's results[6] (2002: 248), our hypothesis for the first question is that irony will be preserved in the translation with the majority of the ironic utterances being conveyed by one of the strategies a) through e). Regarding the second question, our hypothesis is that dramatic and situational irony, due to the fact that they do not rely on the verbal elements but rather on the dramatic and situational context, will be conveyed by strategy a), whereas verbal irony will be conveyed by different strategies.

The corpus of the study consists of Oscar Wilde's comedy "The Importance of Being Earnest"[7] and its translation into Macedonian by Dragi Mihajlovski. More precisely, the results are based on the analysis of the first and the second act of the play. According to Mateo (1995: 175), comedies bring out the complex nature of irony, particularly because performance can always enhance the irony on stage. She, however, states that, apart from dramatic irony, the play relies a lot on verbal irony and is, therefore, a solid source for an analysis of irony. We have chosen this play for our corpus for the same reasons.

The study focuses on ironic utterances and their rendition in translation. The method combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. The steps we have taken in our analysis are: identify ironic utterances in the source text (ST); classify ST irony; identify ironic utterances in the target text (TT); identify translation strategy; make quantitative and qualitative analysis; draw conclusions. It is fair to note that a methodological limitation is the fact that we have worked with a text and used the textual/verbal hints as the only source of information for the identification of irony rather than the hints that stage performance may bring to the surface. This is a weakness that may be remedied by other studies wider in scope than ours.

4 ANALYSIS

Following the steps outlined above, we have identified 39 ironic utterances in our English corpus and 36 in its Macedonian counterpart. Regarding the types of

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6   Their results show that of the 211 ironic utterances they have analysed, 209 retain the ironic effect in translation.

7   We have used the Penguin Popular Classics 1994 edition of the play.

irony in the source text, 56.4% is verbal irony, 28.2% is dramatic irony, around 13% is situational irony and there are no instances of Socrates irony. The translation, as predicted, keeps almost all instances of irony. More precisely, 92.3% of ironic utterances retain their ironic effect in the translation. It is interesting to note that utterances carrying situational and dramatic irony are conveyed 100%.

Chart 1: *Ironic utterances in the corpus*
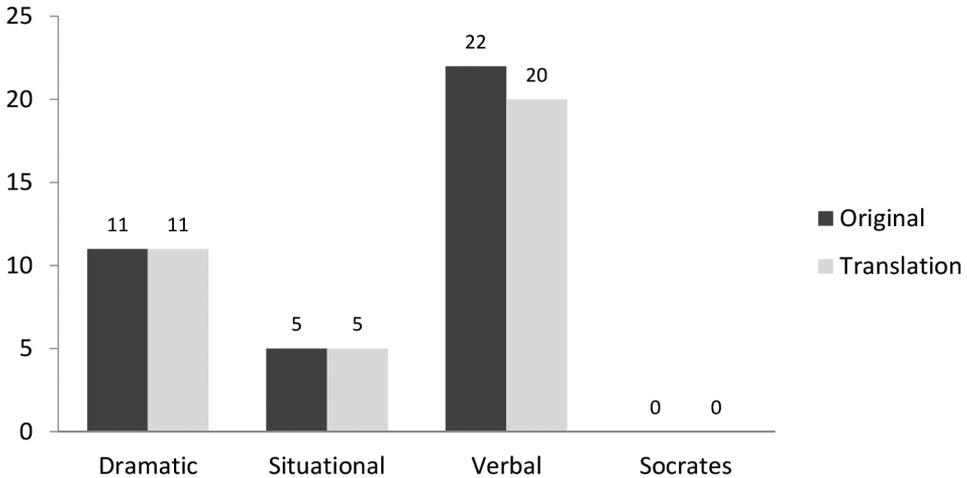
Regarding the translation strategies used, the analysis shows that a) and b) are the strategies used the most. The figures show that a) (literal translation) is the dominant strategy with 58.3% of the TT ironic utterances following that strategy. b) ("equivalent effect" translation) is used for 36.1% of the TT ironic utterances, whereas of the other strategies, there are instances of only d) (2), h) (1) and k) (1).

Chart 2: *Correlation between irony type and translation strategy*

When it comes to the correlation between irony type and translation strategy, the most general conclusion that can be drawn is that there is correlation between type and strategy. Situational irony presents the clearest case. 100% of the utterances with situational irony are translated literally (strategy a). For dramatic irony, literal translation (54.5%) and "equivalent effect" translation (45.5%) are used. As can been seen from Chart 2 above, for the translation of utterances carrying verbal irony, a range of different strategies is used. But, here too, the most predominant strategies are a) and b).

What follows below is an illustration of the qualitative analysis and the different translation strategies.

The strategy *literal translation* is the most prominent strategy in our corpus. It is used for the translation of all types of irony. Below we discuss examples illustrating each irony type.

> (1) Algernon:...[*Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich. Algernon at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]
>
> <div align="right">Act I, pp. 9</div>

> Теодосие. ...(*Манол сака да земе кифличка. Теодосие веднаш го спречува.*) Те молам, не гибај во кифличките. Специјално ги нарачав за тетка Теодора. (*Зема една и ја јаде.*)
>
> <div align="right">Чин први, стр. 20</div>

Example (1) illustrates situational irony. Here what happens is contrary to what is expected in the situation. Algernon's action contradicts the audience's expectations, which are created by what he says. Notably, when he asks Jack not to touch the cucumber sandwiches because he has ordered them specially for Aunt Augusta, the audience expects that no one is supposed to eat them. But, right after saying these words, Algernon contradicts himself and takes one sandwich and eats it. Since situational irony is based on the situation rather than the verbal elements, it is expected that it would be conveyed literally in the target text. This is exactly what the translation provides. Although the translator changes the cultural references and the "cucumber sandwiches" become "кифлички со кашкавал" (cheese rolls) in the Macedonian translation, the situation around which irony is created remains the same.

> (2) Algernon [*picking up empty plate in horror*]: Good heaven! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially?
> Lane [*gravely*]: There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.
> Algernon: No cucumbers!

Lane: No, sir. Not even for ready money.
Algernon: That will do, Lane. Thank you.
Lane: Thank you, sir. [*Goes out.*]
Algernon: I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

<div align="right">Act I, pp. 15</div>

Теодосие. (*Ја зема празната чинија ококорен.*) Господе боже! Трајче! Каде се кифличките со кашкавал? Оние специјално што ги нарачав?
Трајче. (*сериозно*) Немаше кашкавал по продавниците, господине. Двапати барав утрово.
Теодосие. Немало кашкавал!
Трајче. Не, господине. Дури ни за кеш.
Теодосие. Толку, Трајче. Ти благодарам.
Трајче. Ви благодарам, господине. (*Излегува.*)
Теодосие. Длабоко сум потресен, тетка Теодора, што немало кашкавал дури ни за кеш.
Чин први, стр. 28-29

Example (2) is an instance of dramatic irony. What creates the irony is the fact that the audience knows something the characters do not. Specifically in this case, the audience knows that Algernon and Lane lie about there being no cucumbers on the market because they have witnessed in the previous scenes that there were cucumber sandwiches and that it was Algernon himself who ate them. Aunt August, on the other hand, is not aware of that. So, the fact that Algernon now pretends before Aunt Augusta that he is deeply distressed about there not being cucumbers on the market contradicts what the audience knows and makes this exchange ironic. The translation follows the original text closely and conveys the irony literally.

(3) Algernon: …Where have you been since last Thursday?
Jack (*sitting down on the sofa*): In the country.
Algernon: What on earth do you do there?

<div align="right">Act I, pp. 8</div>

Теодосие. ….Кај си од четвртокот?
Манол. (*седнува на каучот*). На село.
Теодосие. Што правиш таму, жита мајка?

<div align="right">Чин први, стр. 19</div>

Example (3) is an example of verbal irony where what is said contradicts what is meant. Algernon asks Jack what he does in the country not because he is

genuinely interested in finding out what Jack does there, but because he wonders what a member of the high society can possible do in the countryside. Using verbal irony, he criticizes Jack for keeping company with the low classes. The translation follows suit. The translator uses an ironical question, too, to convey the ST irony.

The *"equivalent effect"* translation is second in importance in our corpus. It correlates with the dramatic and verbal irony types. Examples (4) and (5) below illustrate this strategy.

> (4) Cecily: …I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.
>
> <div align="right">Act I, pp. 31</div>

> Љубица. ...Не си водел веројатно двоен живот? Да не само си се преправал дека си лош а цело време си бил добар? Тоа е лицемерие.
>
> <div align="right">Чин втори, стр. 52</div>

This example demonstrates dramatic irony. Here, too, the audience knows something that the character, in this case Cecily, does not. The audience knows that Algernon does exactly what Cecily hopes he does not. He is leading a double life pretending to have an invalid friend so that he can escape social events he does not find interesting and pursue his own pleasures instead. The audience knows that he has even invented a special word for the action ("Bunburying"). Thus, the fact that Cecily tells him that leading a double life would be hypocrisy while she is totally unaware that it is precisely what Algernon does, being a hypocrite, creates the irony in this exchange. The translation conveys the irony, but the strategy employed is "equivalent effect" rather than literal. Notably, closer analysis of the text indicates that the translator has chosen different means to convey the ironic effect. Instead of using declarative sentences, he uses interrogative ones ("You haven't possibly been leading a double life? Have you pretended to be wicked while being good all the time?"). Although the form is different, the utterances preserve their ironic effect.

> (5) Algernon: Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers.
>
> <div align="right">Act I, pp. 13</div>

> Теодосие. Не си го пикај носот, брат, во книжевната критика. Таа не е за тебе. Таа е за луѓе што не знаат каде е Универзитетот. Растур прават по весниците.
>
> <div align="right">Чин први, стр. 25</div>

Example (5) is another example of verbal irony where words contradict the speaker's real intention. Algernon says that people who haven't been at a University are very good at literary criticism and they do it very well in the daily newspapers. He also tells Jack that he shouldn't try it. He implies that Jack is educated and as such he cannot write good literary criticism. Nevertheless, what Algernon really means is the opposite. His remark is meant to be social criticism for how society values education, what newspapers publish and who they admit as their contributors. The translation creates the same ironic effect through different means. Rather than translating it literary, the translator uses target language idioms and expressions to convey the irony. Thus, "Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow" is translated as "Не си го пикај носот, брат, во книжевната критика" using the idiom "ne si go pikaj nosot" (don't mess around) and the word "брат" (brother) as a colloquial way of addressing a close friend. "They do it so well in the daily papers" is translated as "Растур прават по весниците" using the idiom "rastur pravat" (a colloquial expression used to say someone is very successful at something). The use of idioms and phrases typical of the informal style indicates that the meaning should not be taken literally and emphasizes the ironic intention of the speaker.

The strategies we discuss below are proportionally insignificant in our corpus as there is only 1 instance of each (only strategy d is used twice), but it is useful to illustrate them. Examples (6), (7) and (8) demonstrate strategies d), h) and k), respectively.

> (6) Algernon:...[*Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich. Algernon at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]
> Jack: Well, you have been eating them all the time!
>
> Act I, pp. 9

> Теодосие. ...(*Манол сака да земе кифличка. Теодосие веднаш го спречува.*)
> Те молам, не гибај во кифличките. Специјално ги нарачав за тетка Теодора. (*Зема една и ја јаде.*)
> Манол: Ама ти цело време ги таманиш.
>
> Чин први, стр. 20

Example (6) illustrates strategy d) - *ST irony is enhanced in TT with some word/ expression*. In this example, Jack states a true state of affairs (Algernon has been eating the cucumber sandwiches indeed), but the way he expresses it makes it obvious that he is irritated. His irritation results from the lack of congruence between Algernon's actions, on the one hand, and Algernon's words, on the other hand. Whereas Algernon has explicitly asked Jack not to eat the sandwiches,

he himself does not obey his own "rule" continuously helping himself to Aunt Augusta's sandwiches. The translation conveys the same meaning and style. In addition, the translation enhances the ironic overtone of the utterance by using the word "тамани" ("tamani") as a translational equivalent of "eat" (rather than the non-marked word "jade"). "Tamani" is a colloquialism meaning "to eat ravenously" and used in this context enhances the ironic effect.

> (7) Jack [*in a very patronizing manner*]: My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about a way to behave to a woman!
>
> Act I, pp. 24

> Теодосие. Слушај брат, вистината не е работа што се кажува на една убава, мила, префинета девојка. Ама имаш откачени идеи за односот кон жените!
> Чин први, стр. 41

This example illustrates strategy h) – *ST ironic ambiguity has only one of the two meanings translated in TT* (*there is no double-entendre or ambiguity in TT therefore*). Jack says that truth is not supposed to be told to young girls and qualifies Algernon's ideas as extraordinary. The ST verbal irony centers around the ambiguity created by the word *extraordinary*. Namely, *extraordinary* is something unusual or surprising, but also something which is very much greater or impressive than usual, something incredible[8]. Hence, Jack's utterance may be understood as meaning "impressive ideas" and "unusual ideas" at the same time. This contradiction creates the irony where Jack says Algernon has impressive ideas and means he has unusual ideas. The translation, however, conveys only one meaning of the word *extraordinary* ("откачени" means "unusual", "crazy"), thereby failing to preserve the ambiguity contained in the ST.

> (8) Algernon: ....Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?
> Jack [irritably]: Oh! It is always nearly seven.
>
> Act I, pp. 24

> Теодосие: ...А сега, брат, ако сакаме да фати добра маса во „Лав" треба да брзнеме. Занеш дека ближи седум?
> Манол: Секогаш ближи седум.
> Чин први, стр. 43

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8   Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English - http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/extraordinary

Sometimes, although rarely, in the case of translating verbal irony, the translator evidently opts for strategy k), i.e. literal translation of ST which eventually generates no irony in TT. This is illustrated well in example (8). In this exchange, Jack responds ironically because he is evidently not at all pleased with the situation he is in (he has to dine with his friend at Willis's), or, perhaps, because of his friend's conduct towards him (Algernon, in a way, forces him to go out to dinner with him). The fact that his response is ironic could be confirmed by the side comment "irritably" provided in brackets, and Jack's exclamation "Oh", both of which are omitted in the translation. Thus, Jack's comment in the translation comprises only the literal translation of "It is always nearly seven", "Секогаш ближи седум", and, consequently, loses its ironic appeal almost entirely.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this study has been to examine how irony is translated in terms of irony types and translation strategies. Notably, our purpose has been to find out what strategies translators use to convey the ST irony and to establish if there is any correlation between the type of irony and the translation strategy used.

The analysis has provided answers to both research questions. Regarding the first question, the analysis has proved our initial hypothesis. Overall, irony is preserved in translation and the majority of the ironic utterances are conveyed by strategies a) and b), that is, ST irony is preserved either with literal translation or with "equivalent effect" translation. Both these strategies account for 94% of the translation strategies used.

With regard to the second question, the results show that there is correlation between the irony type and translation strategy. Situational irony is conveyed by literal translation, dramatic irony is conveyed by literal and "equivalent effect" translation, whereas verbal irony is conveyed by different strategies, the most dominant ones being literal translation and "equivalent effect" translation. Our initial hypothesis has been confirmed to a great extent. The analysis indicates that the variation in translation strategy is greater in verbal irony than in dramatic and situational irony. More precisely, we have identified 5 different strategies used in the translation of verbal irony, whereas only 2 in the translation of dramatic and situational irony.

The analysis has, however, brought to the surface a surprising result. Whereas situational irony is translated using strategy a) (literal translation) as expected, dramatic irony, contrary to our expectations, is translated not only using strategy a) (literal translation), but also strategy b) ("equivalent effect" translation). This may be due to the specificities of the play comprising the corpus as well as

the translator's awareness of the importance of dramatic irony in the play and his efforts and creativity employed to preserve it in the translation. Having said that, this result may not be so surprising in view of the fact that dramatic irony in this play depends on the pun in its title (the name Earnest, and the adjective *earnest*, meaning very serious and sincere[9]) to a large extent. Puns are usually considered to be difficult to translate because of their semantic and pragmatic effects in the source text which arise from the structural features of the source language for which the target language often fails to find a suitable equivalent (Delabastita, 1994:223). Since English and Macedonian have different structural features and lexical systems, the strategy a) literal translation for the dramatic irony around the `Earnest` pun would not be useful and it is necessary for the translator to find alternative ways to solve the issue. Therefore, to preserve the dramatic irony in the translation of this play the translator opted for an "equivalent effect" translation. He has used the proper name Bogumil ("dear to God") and, using the same root of the word, derived a suitable adjective ("bogumil") that allows for preserving the pun. With this ingenious solution for the pun, he has managed to create an equivalent effect in the translation and succeeded in keeping the dramatic irony, which is central to this play. This is a global strategy the translator uses for this translation.

As he elaborates in the preface to the play, in order to preserve the key pun contained in the title (where Earnest is not only a proper name, but it also contains other references), which is untranslatable, he had to replace the name. This, in turn, meant that all other names and cultural references should be replaced. Thus, the action of the play in translation happens in Macedonia rather than England, all the characters are given Macedonian names, all cultural elements are replaced with suitable Macedonian equivalents (Mihajlovski, 1999: 13). In Venuti's terms, the translator has used a pervasive domesticating strategy completely moving the action to the target language culture. The strong prevalence of "equivalent effect" translation allows for this interpretation. Driven by the central pun in the title, the translator has opted for a complete cultural shift, the result being that Wilde's characters in the translation have, in fact, become Macedonians. Not only do they speak Macedonian, but they also speak about Macedonian habits, customs and events in a typical contemporary Macedonian context. The irony they use is the irony a typical Macedonian would use in the same situation. The society of the translation is a typical Macedonian society. Apart from the original author's name, the Macedonian reader or viewer has no indication whatsoever that he is reading a text about the English culture and society that Wilde describes. Domestication is clearly the overall strategy

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9   Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English - http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/earnest_1

driving the translator's work in this case. Having said that, in view of the fact that this study is based on a very small corpus of only 1 play, our findings need to be further tested. Future research may include additional factors such as: different genres, different translators, different time periods. The more factors are analysed, the more insight can be provided into the nature of irony translation.

To sum up, given its significant stylistic function, irony is one of the stylistic devices that should be preserved in the translation. Our analysis has shown that this is the case in our corpus. The analysis has provided further information both on the most prevalent strategies used to convey irony in translation and on the correlations between irony type and translation strategy. Literal translation and "equivalent effect" translation are the most dominant strategies used. Regarding irony type and translation strategies employed, correlations were found for situational and dramatic irony, whereas no correlation was found for verbal irony. Literal translation strategy is used to convey situational irony; literal and "equivalent effect" translation to convey dramatic irony, whereas verbal irony is translated through a range of different strategies.

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The Importance of Being Earnest: strategije pri prevajanju ironije iz angleščine v makedonščino

Cilje tega prispevka je raziskati strategije pri prevajanju ironije iz angleščine v makedonščino, kakor tudi identificirati morebitne korelacije med tipom ironije in uporabljeno strategijo prevoda.

Ključne besede: prevajanje ironije, Oscar Wilde