

**University of Gdańsk**

Faculty of Languages  
Institute of English

**Ewelina Monika Bruździak**  
Register No.: 162602

**Shifts of meaning in humour translation as exemplified  
by the Polish translation of *Shrek***

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of Olga Kubińska, Ph. D.

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## Introduction

Researchers present divergent opinions concerning shifts of meaning. Some scholars regard translation shifts as a negative effect of a translation process and criticize introducing modifications to the source text (ST). Others argue that there are various situations when such shifts are simply impossible to avoid, e.g. in the case of humour translation.

This thesis explores the notion of shifts of meaning in humour translation. The study is based on a popular animated film *Shrek*. The film constitutes a perfect subject for the discussion due to numerous examples of translation shifts that can be noticed between the source and the target text (TT).

The aim of this study is to prove that shifts of meaning in the case of humour translation in *Shrek* are unavoidable and even desirable, and that they result from the specificity of dubbing and humour translation.

My analysis is based on the comparison and description of various differences in meaning between the original English dialogues (in bold face) and the translation by Bartosz Wierzbicka – the author of the Polish version of *Shrek* (underlined). The literal translation of the source dialogues is provided in square brackets.

The thesis is divided into two chapters. In the first, theoretical part, humour and various aspects connected with humour translation are described, and the translation of dubbed films is examined. The analytical part consists of four subsections, in which shifts of meaning in the Polish translation of *Shrek* are discussed and the possible reasons for introducing them are analysed.

# **1. Theoretical part**

## **1.1. Humour**

### **1.1.1. The definition of humour and its types**

Humour is a well known and, at the same time, immensely complicated and difficult to define phenomenon. Generally, it is understood as a tendency to provide amusement and evoke laughter. Vandaele explains that humour is ‘whatever has a humorous effect.’ In his words: ‘humour as a meaning effect has an undeniable, exteriorized manifestation.’ This manifestation may be laughter or smile (2002: 150-153). For the purpose of this paper, humour will be defined as a humorous effect, while translation of humour will be interpreted as a way of achieving this effect.

Humour can be divided into verbal and visual. Based on words, verbal humour can be written or spoken. The most common kind of verbal humour is play on words, for instance puns, riddles and limericks (Vandaele 2002: 155). Visual humour, on the contrary, does not use words in order to produce humorous effect, since it concentrates on what the addressee can see and it utilizes the situational humour, it is for example a comedy film or a farce. Situational humour is based on a humorous situation. One type of situational humour, and at the same time of the visual humour, is a practical joke i.e. a joke that involves a physical action, not words. Some types of humour can be understood both as verbal and visual, e.g. an irony, a parody, a satire and an allusion.

### **1.1.2. Translation theory and humour**

Humour translation can be considered in terms of various theoretical approaches. According to the theory of Nida two kinds of equivalence can be distinguished: formal and dynamic. The formal equivalence concentrates on the message conveyed

by the source text. The message of the target text should be as similar to the ST as it is possible. By contrast, the dynamic equivalence focuses on the effect evoked on the recipient. The translated text should influence the target recipient (TR) in a similar way as the ST influences the source recipient (SR) (Nida 2004: 161-165). The definition of humorous translation given in the first paragraph is consistent with the pragmatic approach and the dynamic equivalence presented by Nida. The pragmatic approach is consistent with the approach of Vandaele who focuses the attention on the final effect. A humorous text should be amusing for the TR in a corresponding way to the SR. In one of the interviews Wierzbicka emphasizes that: 'If for the first five minutes the viewer of the original version of the film laughs loudly, for the next five minutes he is lost in thoughts, then is moved, and laughs again, the Polish viewer should react in a similar way, more or less in the same moments and with the same intensity' (www.film.onet.pl).<sup>1</sup>

### **1.1.3. Difficulties related to humour translation**

A translator may encounter a whole range of problems while translating humour. Vandaele emphasizes that due to numerous difficulties, the humour translation is not an easy process. Cultural and linguistic differences between language communities create probably the most serious problem that a translator of humour has to cope with. For the reason of these dissimilarities a translator may find translating culture-oriented humour immensely complicated or, in some cases, even impossible. In different cultures people laugh from different things. There is a gap between recipients from various cultural systems, which manifests itself in different objects of jokes (Vandaele 2002: 163-165).

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<sup>1</sup> All fragments of the interviews with Bartosz Wierzbicka are my own translation.

#### **1.1.4. Possible translation strategies in humour translation**

While rendering a given text into another language, a translator has to adopt a certain general approach to the text and to a particular translation problem – an appropriate strategy of translation. Translator's choice may be determined by various factors, such as the nature of the text, culture, the target language (TL) and the source language (SL), as well as the relations between them. In order to cope with the above-mentioned problems that emerge during the process of humour translation, a translator may apply various translation strategies, such as: reproducing, substitution, domestication, omission and compensation.

Reproducing a joke is employed when some format of a joke exists in the source culture (SC), yet it cannot be found in the target culture (TC). If such a situation occurs, a translator has to reproduce a joke (Attardo 2002: 186). Reproducing is related to the domestication strategy, which is applied in order to make a certain joke from the ST amusing for the TR. Domestication is a non literal translation aimed to adapt the source text to the knowledge of the recipient and to his way of perceiving the world, determined by his/her language and culture. The aim of domestication is to produce a TT as similar to the non-translated text as possible (Chłopicki 2006: 29).

Substitution is replacing a joke from the SL with a different one that will be comprehensible and amusing for the addressee from the TC. Similarly to reproducing, the reason why this translation strategy is applied lies in the cultural differences. Attardo calls substitution a free translation and emphasizes that even though it is not a translation at the semantic level, it can be successful as long as it 'elicits the laughter that the speaker was seeking.' (2002: 189)

Omission as a translation strategy is used in the most complicated cases, when a translator finds it absolutely impossible to render a joke into the TL. Omission is often

connected with the compensatory strategy. In this case a translator compensates for the loss of a joke that was not translated by introducing another joke, which is not present in the ST, in a different place of the text.

Omission and compensation can be discussed in connection with ‘gain and loss’ in the process of translation. A joke which is not translated into the TT is regarded as a loss in translation, whereas a gain is a joke which is inserted into other part of the TT in order to compensate for the previous loss (Gottlieb 1997: 222). Gottlieb distinguishes three factors that may cause loss in translation. ‘Language-specific’ constraints, connected with the presence of untranslatable elements in the original which fail to have linguistic counterparts in the TL, constitute the first factor. The second type of constraints, ‘media-specific’, is related to language transfer (in the case of *Shrek*, to dubbing). The constraints of the last type described by Gottlieb – ‘human constraints’ result from lack of talent, interest or experience of a translator or the lack of time (1997: 216). Gottlieb does not say anything about culture dissimilarities that may cause problems during humour translation or even make a humorous text untranslatable. For the purpose of this study ‘culture-specific’ constraints should also be differentiated, these will be, for example, culture-bound allusions which in most cases are untranslatable.

#### **1.1.5. Humour untranslatability**

While translating a humorous text, a translator may encounter the problem of untranslatability. Catford distinguishes two kinds of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. The former arises when ‘there is no lexical or syntactical substitute in the TL for a SL item.’ The latter results from ‘the absence in the TL culture of a relevant situation feature for the SL text’ (qtd. in Bassnet 1992: 32). Popovič also describes two

types of untranslatability, however, he does not make a distinction between linguistic and cultural. According to him, the first type is: 'A situation in which the linguistic elements of the original cannot be replaced adequately in structural, linear, functional or semantic terms in consequence of a lack of denotation or connotation.' The second type is referred to as: 'A situation where the relation between the creative subject and its linguistic expression in the original does not find an adequate linguistic expression in the translation' (qtd. in Bassnet 1992: 34).

#### **1.1.6. Shifts of meaning in humour translation**

Due to the above described translational difficulties connected with humour, as well as humour untranslatability, the translation of a humorous text may involve shifts of meaning. The term 'shifts' denotes changes that may occur between ST and TT in the process of translation (Bakker 2000: 226). Popovič explains shifts of translation as 'all that appears as new with respect to the original, or fails to appear where it might have been expected [...]' (1970: 79). Different classifications of shifts exist, however, for the purpose of this study I will focus on probably the most popular differentiation among researchers: the distinction between obligatory and optional shifts. The former are connected with the divergences that exist between two linguistic systems, while the latter are introduced due to ideological, stylistic or cultural reasons. Shifts may be considered in terms of the negative and the positive approach. According to the first one, shifts are unnecessary transformations of a ST that should be avoided by translators. The representatives of the second approach perceive shifts as indispensable changes, constituting a way of dealing with systemic dissimilarities (Bakker 2000: 226-230). In this study a positive approach will be taken.

## **1.2. Dubbing**

### **1.2.1. The definition of screen translation and dubbing**

In recent years the translation studies turned their attention to the practice of screen translation, which is extremely widespread nowadays. Screen translation is the process of translating the audiovisual texts displayed on a screen. Generally, it is referred to dubbing and subtitling. In this paper the attention will be focused only on dubbing. The translation for the purpose of dubbing does not necessarily involve a transfer from one language to another. Nevertheless, this term usually concerns recording and replacing the source language voice track with the voice track in the target language (O'Connell 2007: 123-125).

### **1.2.2. Advantages of dubbing**

The main advantage of a dubbed film is connected with the fact that the viewer does not realize that the movie was produced in a different language. Such an effect can of course be achieved as long as the produced translation is of good quality. Ascheid emphasizes that '[...] the dubbed film appears as a radically new product rather than a transformed old one, a single text rather than a double one' (1997: 40). Wierzbicka says even that: '[...] dubbing in general is a big deception – in some way it is an attempt to persuade the viewer that the film has been produced in Poland' ([www.film.onet.pl](http://www.film.onet.pl)). The same point of view is presented by Danan, who describes dubbing as 'an attempt to hide the foreign nature of a film by creating the illusion that the actors are speaking the viewer's language [...]' (1991: 612).

What is more, good dubbing allows viewers to fully appreciate a film, due to the fact that they do not have to focus their attention on subtitles. As a result, they may concentrate on the visual and sound aspect of the film, their attention is

not distracted, and the visual and sound integrity of a film is not disturbed. O'Connell claims that dubbing 'allows for less concentrated, more relaxed viewing' (2007: 126). Owing to that, if the main aim of a film is to entertain a viewer, dubbing would be a better solution than subtitling.

The advantage for the translator of a dubbed film is that there is no burden of the original (Ascheid 1997: 40). Viewers do not hear the original text in a SL, as it is in the case of subtitling, and consequently, the translator's work is much easier. Translators have greater freedom in the process of translation, because there is no need to adhere to the original as much as in other kinds of translation. They can introduce changes in the text to make it sound more natural and domestic in a TL.

### **1.2.3. Constraints of dubbing**

On the other hand, dubbing imposes on a translator numerous constraints. A translator cannot use footnotes to explain vague issues that may not be understood by the recipient. Moreover, the dialogues have to be short, and there are cases when a translator has to shorten the translated text without losing the sense of the utterance. However, the main restriction is the need of synchronization. In any other kind of audiovisual translation, synchrony is of such a tremendous importance as in dubbing.

Chaves (2000: 114) and Diaz Cintas (2001: 41) describe synchronization as the harmony between the translation and the lip movements. In fact, it is only one aspect of synchronization. In the words of Luyken, synchrony is 'the replacement of the original speech by a voice-track which is a faithful translation of the original speech and which attempts to reproduce the timing, phrasing and lip movements

of the original' (1991: 73). Chaume Varela distinguishes three main types of synchronization: phonetic, kinetic and isochrony (2004: 41).

The phonetic synchrony is also referred to as lip synchrony. This term denotes that the translated dialogues should be precisely synchronized with the lip movements of the screen actors or the characters on the screen. The second mentioned kind of dubbing synchronization is the kinetic or body movement synchrony. Isochrony, called also synchrony between utterances and pauses, consists in matching the translated dialogues and the time of the character's utterances (Chaume Varela 2004: 41).

The success of a dubbed film depends greatly on a good synchronization. In the case when producers fail to provide a good realization of each of the above mentioned types of synchrony, the viewers will certainly realize that a film is a foreign production. The dialogues will sound unfamiliar and unnatural. What is more, viewers will not be able to enjoy a film fully, because their attention will be focused on the negative elements of the film, precisely on the lack of synchrony. As a consequence, the film will not be considered a good one. Kahane emphasizes that in good dubbing all the differences between the character and the dubbing actor become invisible (1990-91: 116).

### 1.3. Shrek as an example of a dubbed comedy film

*Shrek* is a computer-animated American comedy film produced by DreamWorks Animation. Three parts of the film were created: *Shrek* (2001), *Shrek 2* (2004), *Shrek the Third* (2007). The specificity of this comedy production lies in the fact that it is directed both at children and adults. The movie plot is based on the parody of commonly recognized fairy tales and of the modern American pop culture. The plot is relatively simple and humour of the film is appealing to children. However, at the same time the production is saturated with numerous references and allusions, and with adult-oriented humour, e.g. puns, that will be easily understood only by the adult audience.

Due to the above mentioned features of the film, Wierzbicka encountered a wide spectrum of difficulties during the process of translation. Since the addressee of the Polish version comes from a divergent cultural system, he faced the problem of rendering humour of the film into the Polish language. He had to find a solution to the cultural differences and linguistically oriented humour, as well as a way of producing dialogues amusing both to adult and children audience. Taking into consideration the constraints of dubbing and culture-specific humour discussed in the previous chapters, it was certainly not an easy assignment for the translator.

*Shrek* movie is rich in various kinds of humour. Extremely high content of humorous elements can be observed, for example, in the language of the characters, who frequently use irony and puns. The most evident, especially for younger viewers, is situational humour. With the film characters being involved in numerous comic situations, a vast number of practical jokes can be seen during the action. On the one hand, visual humour of the film facilitates the work of a translator to a great extent, since the viewer sees what is happening on the screen and does not need

any commentary to appreciate the humorous aspect of the movie. On the other hand, given that it limits the possibility of dialogue modifications and departures from the ST, visual humour is an impediment for a translator.

The need of the ST modifications in *Shrek* translation may be caused by culture-oriented humour. As it was mentioned above, the movie is a parody of the most popular fairy tales and of the modern culture, which manifests itself in numerous references to well-known films, celebrities and to the social realities of the United States. Language-based jokes, such as puns that are not amusing for the TR, constitute another problematic issue. They may lead to various modifications and sometimes even to omissions. In such cases translators face the problem of cultural and linguistic untranslatability, and they must apply a proper translation strategy.

The use of a certain strategy by Wierzbicka is related to a specific type of humour and to a kind of translational problem connected with it. By virtue of numerous kinds of humour present in the movie, various types of translation strategies were applied during the translation of *Shrek*. In many cases departures from the original were unavoidable. The choice of a certain strategy depended also on the fact that the translator had to take into consideration the constraints of dubbing.

## 2. Analytical part

### 2.1. Shifts of meaning

Comparing the original version of *Shrek* with the Polish translation, one will certainly notice numerous dissimilarities between English and Polish dialogues. Wierzbicka introduces various changes into the film. Some of them are only slight modifications, and the others change the sense of a particular utterance radically. However, all of them are a result of a conscious translation strategy.

In some cases Wierzbicka decides to substitute or reproduce a SL joke, since there is no way of translating it literally and achieving the humorous effect in the TL at the same time. The translator adopts a dynamic approach. He focuses on producing the same effect on the recipient as the ST. Another reason why Wierzbicka changes the ST is the compensatory strategy. In order to compensate for the loss in translation of some jokes, he introduces a witty dialogue in the place where there is no joke in the ST. Modifications are also made when there is a probability that a particular line would be incomprehensible for the TR, due to the presence of an element typical for the SC. In such a case domestication technique is applied.

Dialogues modifications are possible because of the specificity of *Shrek* movie. First of all, what enables the translator to interfere in the sense of the characters' utterances is the fact that *Shrek* is a dubbed film. The TR does not know the original version of the movie, and as a consequence he/she would not notice the eventual dialogue changes. What is next, *Shrek* is an animated film with an abstract plot which is not directed to a particular community. These are dialogues that make the film either American or Polish viewer-oriented (Urbańska n.d.). For this reason a translator can introduce dialogue modifications without changing the essence of the plot. Furthermore, *Shrek* is a humorous film, and its script is a humorous text. According to Chłopicki,

the common feature of humorous texts is the lack of deeper cohesion of threads. For this reason the sense of the original can be modified in order to evoke the intended comical effect (2006:30).

Lewicki notices that 'Because of the fact that the translation functions independently of the original, the equivalence is not a factor that determines the reception of the translated text' (2002: 44; translation mine). He also observes that the majority of recipients of a translation do not know the language of the original and the original itself (2002: 44). For this reason, the TR would not notice the changes of the ST. Moreover, a recipient goes to a cinema in order to enjoy a movie, not to compare the source and the target version of dialogues.

Furthermore, Janikowski argues that in the case of film translation it is immensely difficult to define what constitutes the source text – whether it is the script or the dialogue list. Consequently, it is impossible to specify what the translator should be faithful to (2005: 40).

Of course, dialogues can be modified only to such an extent so as not to be in contrast with the image on the screen. They should also fit the context, the plot and the convention of the film. The translation of *Wierzbęta* meets the above conditions. Please consider the following:

Example 1 (*Shrek 2*)

**I got to get out of here! I got to get out of here! You can't lock us up like this! Let me go!**  
[Muszę się stąd wydostać! Muszę się stąd wydostać! Nie możecie nas tu trzymać w zamknięciu! Wypuście mnie!]  
Błagam, wypuście mnie stąd! Jestem nieletni! Mam chore nerki!

Example 2 (*Shrek 2*)

**You don't exactly smell like a basket of roses.**  
[Nie pachniesz jak koszyk róż.]  
Ty też tam bratków nie hodujesz!

Example 3 (*Shrek 2*)

**That's me: the noble steed. Waiter! How 'bout a bowl for the steed?**

[To ja: szlachetny rumak. Kelner! Co z miseczką dla rumaka?]

Nie róbmy draki, od tego są rumaki. Hej, kelner! Marchew dla bohatera!

Example 4 (*Shrek*)

**All right. You're going the right way for a smacked bottom.**

[Dobra. Jesteś na dobrej drodze do tego, żebym sprzął ci tyłek.]

Słuchaj, jeszcze chwila i otworzę wytwórnę salami.

In the first two instances only slight changes can be observed. They do not affect the sense of the utterance. In order to make the dialogue more interesting and funny for the TR, in example 1 a piece of new information is added: Donkey claims that he is under-age and has renal failure. In example 2 the sense of the line is conveyed less directly and more ironically, which strengthens the humorous effect. In both instances the modifications are introduced in order to make the TT more amusing for the recipient. The same situation occurs in examples 3 and 4, but in these cases the tone of the statements is changed more significantly.

The overtone of the Polish fragment quoted in example 3 differs from the original. The situation is the following: Donkey enters the chamber where Fiona and Shrek eat dinner together with Fiona's parents. When the king sees Donkey, he shouts at him, but Fiona explains that Donkey helped Shrek rescue her from the tower. Then Donkey says the above cited line. In the English version Donkey admits that he is the noble steed, as Fiona named him once, and being proud of this fact, asks the servant for the place setting for him. In the ST, by contrast, Donkey does not call himself 'a noble steed', he even denies it: 'Nie róbmy draki, od tego są rumaki.' Wierzbicka inserts a rhymed witty sentence which changes the sense conveyed by the ST, however, by doing so, he strengthens the comical effect. Another change in this fragment is replacing a bowl with a carrot. That results in increasing

the humorous effect as well, since these are carrots that horses are fed on. A carrot creates an association with a horse, in this case with a steed, and consequently evokes laughter.

In example 4 the line in the SL is said by Shrek who warns Donkey that unless he stops humming, Shrek will become angry and will ‘smack Donkey’s bottom’. The statement is informal, direct and relatively clear, whereas the Polish sentence is much more ironic. Literal translation would not be so comical in this case, but still it is understandable that at first glance the introduced modification seems too drastic. Chuck Mitchell – the president of Voices in the Arts, the company that was responsible for foreign dubbing for *Shrek* productions, had serious doubts about introducing such a change into the TT: ‘I said, wait a minute, I don't think so. I mean, it's one thing to have Shrek say he's going to kick Donkey's butt; it's another to have him dragging him off to the meat house.’ However, when Wierzbicka explained him the meaning of the Polish sentence, he agreed that inserting the above-mentioned modification was a good idea, and he even defended the introduced ST changes: ‘We had a great translator. I trusted him. There were lots of things that had to be changed because a lot of the fairy tales they use in *Shrek* are not known in Poland. So we used dialogue to add some Polish fairy tales’ ([www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com)). In one interview Wierzbicka justifies his translation strategy, emphasizing that ‘There are many ways of saying that the sun sets’ ([www.film.onet.pl](http://www.film.onet.pl)).

The modifications introduced in two last instances are evident, but in fact they do not change the tone of the utterance completely. In example 3 in both language versions Donkey is proud of the fact that he was called a noble steed, but he shows it in a different way. In example 4 the overall sense is not modified, it is just conveyed

by the use of a completely dissimilar mode of expression. In both instances of the TT the humorous effect is evoked by use of different means than in the ST.

In the examples mentioned below the translator introduces the alterations, taking advantage of the fact that a certain line is spoken by a particular character or that the dialogue appears in a specific situation in the movie. Despite the fact that the Polish translation presented in all of the following examples changes the sense of the ST to a smaller or greater extent, in all the cases it fits the context perfectly. Consider:

Example 5 (*Shrek*)

**Oh, gosh, no one invited us.**  
[O rety, nikt nas nie zaprosił.]  
Ej ty, no nie bądź taki drewniak.

Example 6 (*Shrek*)

**He huffed and puffed and he signed an eviction notice.**  
[Chuchał, sapał i podpisał nakaz eksmisji.]  
Dmuchał, chuchał i zarządził, świnia, eksmisje.

Example 7 (*Shrek 2*)

**Pigs und blanket!**  
[Świnki i koc!]  
Podrzucmy jej świnie!

Example 8 (*Shrek 2*)

**Hey. Why the long face?**  
[Ej, czemu macie smutne miny?]  
Co, zrobili was w konia?

Example 9 (*Shrek the Third*)

**Start talkin'.**  
[Zacznij gadać.]  
Mam na ciebie haka.

The first quoted fragment is said by Pinokio to Donkey who is explaining to Shrek that it was not him who invited the fairy tales creatures to Shrek's swamp. Taking advantage of the fact that Pinokio is a wooden doll, Wierzbicka transforms

an unhumorous sentence into an amusing statement: ‘Nie bądź taki drewniak.’ The Polish word ‘drewniak’ comes from the word ‘drewno’ – in English ‘wood’, and it defines a stubborn, uncompromising and not spontaneous person.

In example 6 the overall sense of the utterance is not changed. At the beginning of the SL sentence an allusion to the tale *The Three Little Pigs* occurs: ‘He huffed and puffed’, which is translated almost literally. The information concerning an eviction is also rendered into the TT. The difference between the two language versions lies in the word ‘świnia’ from the TT, which is an insult in Polish, like ‘a pig’ or ‘swine’ in English. The one of three Pigs calls Lord Farquaad ‘świnia’, because he has signed the eviction order. The humorous aspect of this statement is connected with the fact that it is said by a pig itself. Similar situation takes place in example 7. The cited line is said by one of the three pigs when it is thrown into the air on a blanket by two other pigs in order to attack the Fairy-God-Mother. The Polish translation is a transformed Polish saying: ‘podłożyć komuś świnię’ which means ‘to play a filthy trick on somebody’.

The sentence presented in example 8 is said by Doris, the sister of Cinderella, to Shrek, Donkey and Puss who are sitting sad at the bar. After drinking a magic elixir Shrek and Donkey changed into a man and a horse. Taking advantage of the fact that Donkey is now a horse, Wierzbicka inserts a humorous dialogue instead of a neutral literal translation. He uses a Polish saying: ‘zrobić kogoś w konia’ which means ‘to con somebody’. The introduced saying contains a Polish word: ‘koń’, meaning ‘a horse’.

In the last instance the translator creates a connotation with Captain Hook, who says the quoted line, by introducing a well-known Polish saying: ‘mieć na kogoś haka’ – ‘to have something on somebody.’ A Polish word ‘hak’ means in English ‘a hook’. The sense of the utterance is changed, however, the humorous effect, which is evoked

by the similarity of the captain's name and the word spoken by him, compensates for this change.

In some cases Wierzbicka goes even further and he does not modify the ST, but adds the Polish dialogues in the places where no dialogues are present in the original:

Example 10 (*Shrek*)

**Can't we just settle this over a pint?**

[Możemy przedyskutować to przy piwie?]

Może omówimy to przy bezalkoholowym? (Shrek) Idę po precelki. (Donkey)

In the above example Wierzbicka adds an extra sentence to the original. The purpose of this action is to create a more witty dialogue. Introducing additional line is possible due to the fact that in the moment when the sentence is spoken by a Polish dubbing actor, Donkey is shown on the screen in such a way that it is not visible whether he says something or not. The extra sentence fits the context – it is strictly connected with Shrek's suggestion: 'Może omówimy to przy bezalkoholowym?' and it constitutes an answer to it, although Shrek's question was not directed at Donkey.

Some of the instances presented in this subsection are the examples of domestication, e.g. when Wierzbicka introduces a Polish saying: 'podłożyć komuś świnie' or 'zrobić kogoś w konia'. Domestication as a translation strategy will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.2. Domestication

Domestication, which was explained in the theoretical part, as a translation strategy seems particularly appropriate for a humorous text, in this case for a humorous film, owing to the fact that the mere plot of a comedy is not crucially important. The objective of humour translation is to reconstruct the target text in such a way that a reader would discern the humorous potential of the source text and as a result would become amused. As Chłopicki points out: ‘Domestication is [...] an intrinsic feature of the humorous text translation, differing from other translation strategies in putting emphasis on comparing the “strength” (the humorous effect) of the original and the translation [...]’ (2006: 39-40; translation mine). He argues that substitution in the translation of a humorous text is a normal practice.

Chłopicki and Lewicki apply a term ‘adaptacja’, in English ‘adaptation’, which is a broader notion than domestication. However, the definition of adaptation given by Chłopicki and Lewicki is similar to the definition of domestication. For this reason, while discussing their point of view, the term ‘domestication’ will be used. Lewicki defines domestication as a translation strategy that results in obtaining a TT without any elements of foreignness: ‘[...] the recipient receives units and features of a text, which to no extent attract his/her attention and do not go beyond the sphere of his/her normal [...] linguistic experience’ (2000: 144; translation mine).

The most important advantage of domestication strategy is that the TT sounds familiar to the TR and it is not discernible that it is a translated text. Janikowski emphasizes that what viewers value most is the naturalness of the text they hear (2005: 42). Domestication, in the case of such a film as *Shrek*, is justified also due to the fact that *Shrek* is a dubbed movie, and as Danan claims, dubbing ought to ‘hide the foreign nature of a film’ (1991: 611).

What is more, domestication is applied when the TR may not understand culture-bound units of the ST, which in the case of a comedy film may result in the lack of a humorous effect. Please consider the following examples from *Shrek* movies:

Example 11 (*Shrek 2*)

**First there was the time that old farmer tried to sell me for some magic beans. Then this fool had a party and he have the guests trying to pin the tail on me. Then they got drunk and start beating me with a stick, going "Piñata!!" What is a piñata, anyway?**

[Najpierw stary farmer próbował mnie sprzedać za trochę magicznej fasoli. Potem ten głupek urządził przyjęcie i jego goście chcieli mi doczepić ogon. Następnie kompletnie się upili i zacząć bić mnie kijem, krzyząc 'Piñata!!' Co znaczy piñata' tak w ogóle?]

Najpierw jeden farmer chciał mnie sprzedać za ziarna magicznej fasoli, do dziś się nie pozbierałem. Potem niejaki Krzysztof z Prosiaczkiem uparli się, że trzeba mi przeszczepić ogon, kompletnie na bani ganiali za mną z młotkiem, krzyząc „przybijaj, przybijaj.” Byłeś kiedyś w takiej sytuacji?

Example 12 (*Shrek 2*)

**Coffee and a Monte Cristo, now!**

[Kawa i Monte Cristo, ale już!]

Kawa i Torcik wedlowski, ale migiem!

In the above instances the sense of the ST is modified. However, the introduced modifications are fully justified due to the presence of the elements that may not be understood by the target audience. What is more, they fit the context perfectly. In order to evoke laughter, the translator have to depart from the original. In these cases the literal translation can not be applied. The changes in the ST make dialogues comprehensible for the TR, and as a result, enable him/her to appreciate the humorous function of the film.

In the line quoted in the first example Donkey mentions 'piñata', which is a paper container filled with candies or toys, used to celebrate special occasions. In order to collect sweets and toys hidden inside 'piñata', children hit it with a stick and break it. 'Piñata' can have various shapes, there is a Donkey-shape piñata for example. The humorous aspect of the English dialogue lies in the fact that Donkey was mistaken

for ‘piñata’. Polish viewer would probably not understand this joke because the term ‘piñata’ is not widely recognized in Poland. This explains why Wierzbicka introduces Winnie-the-Pooh – ‘Prosiaczek’ and Christopher Robin – ‘niejaki Krzysztof’ into the Polish version. *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a well known book in Poland, and *The Many Adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh* by Walt Disney is even more popular. For this reason the TR would not have any problems with understanding the joke based on the reference to the characters of the above-mentioned book and film, specifically to Eeyore. Eeyore is a donkey who lost his tale, which was then found by Winnie-the-Pooh and nailed back on by Christopher.

By contrast with the preceding instance, the second example represents a situation when the translator decides to substitute an element that would not be understood by the TR with an element strictly bound to the Polish culture. The phrase ‘Monte Cristo’ from the ST is a kind of sandwich often served with fruits or with clotted cream. The name has no equivalent in the TL. Leaving the proper name without any commentary, for which there is no space due to the technical constraints of dubbing, would cause incomprehension and would not elicit laughter, since Monte Cristo is not commonly eaten in Poland. Accordingly, the translator replaces ‘Monte Cristo’ with ‘Torcik wedlowski’ – a name of chocolate covered praline wafers produced in Poland.

‘Torcik wedlowski’ is not an isolated example of culture-specific elements introduced into the Polish version of *Shrek*. Watching the film, Polish audience would hear about ‘Ser Podlaski’ – a kind of cheese (Example 13), about ‘sanepid’ – a Polish state institution which controls the hygienic and sanitary conditions in various places, such as schools, factories, hospitals (Example 14), about ‘spółka z o.o.’ – a limited liability company (Example 15) or about ‘kadra juniorów’ – the Polish football team

consisting of younger players (Example 16). While in example 12 a culture-bound unit in the TL is a substitution of culture-bound word from the SL, in the above cases no such situation takes place. Moreover, no risk of incomprehensibility occurs in the instances described in this paragraph. Wierzbicka applies words specific to the Polish culture in order to create more amusing dialogues. Literal translation would result in not particularly witty lines, that is why the translator uses domestication in order to increase the comic effect. The reason for this is the compensatory strategy.

The above-mentioned examples will not be discussed separately, since the conclusions are similar for all of them. The only difference is that in examples 14 and 15 the sense is changed considerably, whereas in two remaining instances no striking change in the sense of the utterance occurs.

Example 13 (*Shrek*)

**I found some cheese. Blah! Awful stuff.**

[Znalazłem jakiś ser. Fúj! Obrzydliwy.]

Znalazłem ser. Ble! Podlaski.

Example 14 (*Shrek 2*)

**We are from the union.**

[Jesteśmy ze związku zawodowego.]

Jesteśmy z sanepidu.

Example 15 (*Shrek 2*)

**Pray for mercy, from Puss...and Donkey!**

[Proś o wybaczenie, Kota...i Ośła!]

Spółka z o.o. czyli Kot...i Osioł!

Example 16 (*Shrek the Third*)

**How feel Shrek juniors?**

[Jak się mieć małe Shreki?]

Jak tam nasza kadra juniorów?

The instances presented below constitute perfect examples of domestication. The translator achieves the comic effect thanks to transforming the ST

in such a way that it sounds similar to the phrases or sentences which the TR hears every day. In example 17 the translated text: ‘Przed użyciem przeczytaj ulotkę, bądź skonsultuj się z lekarzem lub farmaceutą.’ is identical with the sentence spoken at the end of every TV commercial of medicines in Poland. The second instance refers to the sentence that can be heard while calling automatic customer service in Poland: ‘Niestety wszystkie linie są chwilowo zajęte.’ Two last sentences are commonly used by mobile network operators in Poland: ‘Zapraszam do mojego salonu. Nasi doradcy pomogą Ci wybrać plan taryfowy.’ The familiarity of the created dialogues is the key to the successful joke, because while hearing such well-known sentences in a foreign production, the TR reacts with laughter.

#### Example 17 (*Shrek 2*)

**Warning: Side effects may include burning, itching, oozing, weeping. Not intended for heart patients or those with... nervous disorders.**

[Ostrzeżenie: Działania uboczne mogą obejmować: poparzenie, swędzenie, katar, płacz. Nie stosować u pacjentów z chorobami serca lub... niestabilnych psychicznie.]

Uwaga. Działanie uboczne obejmuje: padaczkę, ślepotę, biegunkę, wymioty. Przed użyciem przeczytaj ulotkę, bądź skonsultuj się z lekarzem lub farmaceutą.

#### Example 18 (*Shrek 2*)

**This is Fairy Godmother. I'm either away from my desk or with a client. But if you come by the office, we'll be glad to make you an appointment. Have a "happy ever after."**

[Mówi Wróżka Chrzestna. Nie ma mnie teraz w biurze lub rozmawiam z klientem. Jeżeli przyjdą Państwo do biura, z przyjemnością umówimy Państwa na spotkanie. Życie „długo i szczęśliwie”.]

Mówi Twoja Wróżka Chrzestna. Niestety wszystkie linie są chwilowo zajęte. Zapraszam do mojego salonu. Nasi doradcy pomogą Ci wybrać plan taryfowy. Życie długo i szczęśliwie!

Another way of creating dialogues that sound natural to the target viewer is introducing Polish proverbs, idioms or sayings. Consider the following examples:

#### Example 19 (*Shrek*)

**She's as nasty as you are.**

[Ona jest tak okropna jak ty.]

Trafił swój na swego.

Example 20 (*Shrek*)

**Okay, here we go.**

[No to ruszamy.]

No dobra, raz kozie wio.

Example 21 (*Shrek the Third*)

**The cat turned into a little horse that smells like feet...What's there to get?**

[Kot zamienił się w małego konia, który śmierdzi jak stopy...Co tu jest do rozumienia?]

Osiół wcielił się w kota i się teraz odwraca ogonem, proste chyba.

The reason why Wierzbicka uses such a translation strategy is the intention to obtain more humorous dialogues, which is also connected with the compensatory strategy. In the first instance the translator applies a Polish proverb in an unchanged form, whereas in the remaining examples he modifies the TL sayings in order to strengthen the comical effect. The Polish line from example 20 is an evident transformation of a proverb: 'Raz kozie śmierć'. In example 21 the alterations introduced are even more complex – in this case Wierzbicka applies a Polish idiom: 'odwracać kota ogonem'. Similarly to all the examples quoted in this chapter, the modified dialogues perfectly fit the context. Moreover, in the last example, the context even strengthens the comical effect – Donkey has been transformed into Puss, but his tail has remained unchanged. For this reason, the idiom that was used in example 21 can be understood both literally and idiomatically.

In the next subsection further examples of applying domestication strategy are presented and discussed. All of them are the jokes based on culture-bound allusions, which frequently cause translational difficulties.

### 2.3. Allusions

As mentioned in the theoretical part, the plot of *Shrek* is based on various kinds of allusions – references to a particular person, thing, event, work of literature or art. Authors of the film made allusions to a great number of fairy tales. Fortunately, the majority of them are well known not only in the United States, but also in Europe. Polish viewers know such stories as *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty* very well, and for this reason, they will be able to understand them and fully appreciate their humorous function. The second type of allusions present in *Shrek* film series are references to the popular film productions, for instance: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *Mission Impossible* or *Spider-Man*, and to TV serials such as: *Baywatch*, which a Polish recipient is also familiar with. Allusions that refer to pop singers, actors and the connotations with other aspects of American culture constitute another category.

As long as a reference is made to such a world-wide known film as *Alien* or an extremely famous pop singer – Michael Jackson, the Polish viewer will not find it difficult to understand it. The majority of such allusions in *Shrek* is based on the visual rather than aural aspect of the film, and as a consequence, they are not of translator's concern. However, some of the references constitute verbal allusions. In this case a translator can render it by the use of literal translation, by introducing small modifications or by replacing it.

A problem occurs when an allusion is strongly bound to the American culture and it is not recognized outside the borders of this country. In the words of Cordero: 'Culture-bound concepts, even where the two cultures are not too distant, can be more problematic for the translator than the semantic or syntactic difficulties of a text' (1984: 473). Furthermore, Leppihalme emphasizes that 'allusions require a high degree of biculturalisation of a receiver in order to be understood across

a cultural barrier' (1997: 4). The gap between American and Polish viewers is a serious problem for a translator of a humorous text. These two audiences come from dissimilar cultures, they have different experience and their way of perceiving reality diverges considerably. The Polish viewer is not familiar with the American culture to such an extent as to understand all the allusions that were originally directed at the American recipient.

Due to the lack of equivalents in the TC, the majority of culture-specific allusions are untranslatable. As a consequence, they cause a loss in translation. In such a situation a translator is forced to find a proper way of compensating for this loss and of rendering the humorous effect of the verbal references into the TL. The strategies applied by Wierzbicka in order to achieve this aim will be discussed below with descriptions of particular allusions. Consider the following example:

Example 22 (*Shrek*)

**Ha, ha! That's right, fool! Now I'm a flying, talking donkey. You might have seen a housefly, maybe even a superfly but I bet you ain't never seen a donkey fly.**

[Ha, ha! Tak jest, głupku! Teraz jestem latającym, gadającym osłem. Być może widziałeś domową muchę, może nawet super muchę, ale założę się, że nie widziałeś nigdy latającego osła.]

A jak ty głupku! Gadam, latam, pełny serwis! Latać każdy może! Czasem lepiej, czasem trochę gorzej, ale niestety, ja mam talent! Ho-ho!

The quoted line is said by Donkey who began to fly after having been accidentally sprinkled with a magic dust. The words are an allusion to the Walt Disney film *Dumbo*, which will be easily recognized in the SC. Unfortunately, the connotation will be incomprehensible for the TR, since the film is not popular in Poland. Taking the above into consideration, the translator decides to adapt the allusion to the TC reality, and he replaces it with a completely different reference. The allusion introduced by Wierzbicka concerns the song of Jerzy Kofta *Śpiewać każdy może* and it is a paraphrase of the lines: 'Śpiewać każdy może [...]' and 'Bo ja się wcale nie chwale,

ja niestety mam talent.’ The humorous effect of the allusion is additionally strengthened by the fact that the song was sang by Jerzy Stuhr, who dubbed Osioł – the Polish Donkey, on the Opole Festival in 1977. What can be observed here is the creation of the character of Polish Donkey based on the connotation with the dubbing actor and his previous roles. Wierzbicka takes advantage of the fact that Jerzy Stuhr is a famous comedy actor and that Polish viewers will recognize the allusion: ‘I tried to make use of the fact that Stuhr is recognizable and people associate him with the famous catchphrases’ (www.dubbing.pl). As a result of the chosen translation strategy, he creates a reference that is amusing to the TR. The same strategy is applied in the second example:

Example 23 (*Shrek 2*)

**Bet your bottom... I'm coming, Elizabeth!**

[Możesz być pewna... idę, Elizabeth!]

W czasie deszczu dzieci się nudzą...panie proszą panów...dlaczego tu nie ma klamek?

The above English line is an allusion to the American sitcom from the 1970's – *Sanford and Son*, which similarly to the first example is easily understood by the SR, but not by the TR. Being aware of this fact, Wierzbicka creates the reference to the song of Kabaret Starszych Panów – *W czasie deszczu dzieci się nudzą* and to the films in which Jerzy Stuhr played one of the main roles: *Seksmisja* – ‘A dlaczego tu nie ma klamek?’ and *Wodzirej* – ‘Panie proszą panów.’ Owing to the lack of equivalent in the TC, Wierzbicka substitutes the English allusion, which will not be understood by the TR, with completely different allusions to the TC.

In examples presented above, Wierzbicka chooses substitution as a translation strategy. The translator replaces an allusion from the ST with another one which is dissimilar, however, comprehensible and comical for the TR. The instances that are provided below represent a different situation – the translator introduces a reference

to the TC, despite the fact that the ST lacks allusions. The reason for such an action is the compensatory strategy. Wierzbicka employs an allusion in order to compensate for the loss in translation – for the references or other kinds of jokes that are present in other parts of the text, but are not rendered into the TT. For instance, in *Shrek 2* different references which were not translated into the TL can be found: an allusion to the famous singer Shirley Bassey or to the Keebler Company, which is the second-largest manufacture in the United States producing cookies and crackers. With the references being absolutely incomprehensible for a Polish viewer, the translator decides to introduce different implications. Since the new connotations do not fit the context in this particular part of the movie, he places them elsewhere. Consider the following examples:

Example 24 (*Shrek 2*)

**See, you're allergic to that stuff. You'll have a reaction.**

[Widzisz, jesteś na to uczulony. Będziesz miał reakcję alergiczną.]

Aha, widzisz. Już masz uczulenie. W tym mogą być promile.

This is the allusion to the popular Polish film – *Seksmisja*, in which Jerzy Stuhr says to Bożena Strykówna: ‘Uważaj, tu mogą być promile.’ Once again the translator refers to the dubbing actor’s previous role and to the words that would be easily associated with him by the TR. As in the case of the allusion to *Seksmisja* and *Wodzirej* described in example 23, the humorous effect lies here in the connotation with the Polish film, the great role of Jerzy Stuhr and the humorous aspect of the line taken from the film. Hearing the cited line, Polish viewers who have seen *Seksmisja* would connect what they see on the screen with the comic scene from the film and with Jerzy Stuhr, playing the role of Maksymilian Paradys. That would increase the comical effect of the introduced reference. Nonetheless, in comparison with example 23, in this case the sense of the ST is not changed completely.

The motif of allergy is retained in the TT, but the connotation replaces the clause focusing on the allergic reaction, strengthening the humorous function of the sentence.

Example 24 (*Shrek 2*)

**Um...Mary! A talking horse!**  
[O...jacie! Gadający koń!]  
Czy jest suchy chleb dla konia?

The majority of Polish adult viewers would easily recognize the allusion to the line spoken by Jeremy Stępowski in the Polish TV serial – *Wojna domowa*. The reference fits the context perfectly. Shrek and Donkey, who has changed into a horse, are standing behind the window. When the God Mother notices them, Shrek says exactly the same sentence as Stępowski in *Wojna domowa*. The literal translation would not evoke the same humorous effect in the TR as the translation of Wierzbicka does.

Example 26 (*Shrek the Third*)

**Good morning...good morning...to you and you and you.**  
[Dzień dobry, dzień dobry...dla ciebie, ciebie i ciebie.]  
Cześć, cześć, czołem, pytacie skąd się wziąłem.

The Polish translation of the example quoted above is almost identical with the fragment of the song sang by Zbigniew Bartosiewicz in the Polish comedy *Miś*: ‘Dzień dobry, cześć, czołem, pytacie skąd się wziąłem, jestem wesoły Romek, mam na przedmieściu domek [...]’. Directed by Stanisław Bareja in 1980, *Miś* met with great popularity among Polish viewers. The film is known even by the younger population. For this reason, the vast number of recipients would easily recognize the reference and fully appreciate its humorous function.

Example 27 (*Shrek the Third*)

**I'm building my city, people, on Rock 'n' Roll!**  
[Ludzie, moje miasto buduję na Rock 'n' Rollu!]  
Wrywam murom zęby krat i Rock 'n' Roll!

The cited fragment is spoken by the future king of Far Far Away – Artie. He is now a teenager learning in a college where he is not a well-liked person. Shrek comes for him in order to place him on the throne. When Shrek explains to him that he is going to be a king, the teenager says the above line. The translator changes the sense of Artie’s utterance, however it perfectly fits the context because Artie is leaving a place in which he does not feel comfortable. The context enables Wierzbicka to introduce an allusion to the well-known Polish protest song *Mury*, more specifically to its fragment: ‘Wyrwij murom zęby krat [...]’. Written in 1978 by Jacek Kaczmarski, the song became a widely recognized symbol of the Polish communist opposition.

All the examples that are presented above constitute allusions to Polish films, cabarets or songs. They are directed at Polish viewers who lived in the 1970s and 1980s, or to the representatives of the younger generation who are familiar with the realities of those days. Nevertheless, the Polish version of *Shrek* movies provides also numerous instances of more recent references. Wierzbicka makes allusions to the world of Polish politics and sport, and to the social advertising campaigns, as presented below:

Example 28 (*Shrek 2*)

**Be good!**  
[Bądź grzeczny!]  
Pij mleko!

Example 29 (*Shrek 2*)

**We are not going and that's final!**  
[Nie jedziemy i koniec!]  
Nigdzie nie jedziemy, a zupa była za słona!

Example 28 is an obvious allusion to the Polish social campaign ‘Pij mleko!’. It was directed to children and their parents, and its aim was to popularize drinking milk

among children. As a part of the campaign various TV advertisements were broadcast and a large number of billboards were placed in many Polish cities. On account of that, the campaign is widely recognized by the Polish society, and consequently, the target audience would not have any difficulties in recognizing the popular slogan ‘Pij mleko!’ and in understanding its humorous purpose. Wierzbicka introduces this reference in order to replace an original allusion to the American science fiction film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* from 1982.

The second cited instance alludes to the words used in the campaign ‘Stop przemocy w rodzinie’ which reads as follows: ‘[...] bo zupa była za słona’. The campaign was organized against violence in families. Similar to the first campaign, it used TV advertisements in order to increase the awareness of the problem in the Polish society. Consequently, the slogan was easily recognizable. Wierzbicka takes advantage of this fact and introduces an allusion which evokes the desired humorous effect.

Another type of the references applied by Wierzbicka are allusions to politics and sport, which come from the third part of *Shrek*:

Example 30 (*Shrek the Third*)

**I see... a rainbow pony.**

[Widzę... tęczowego konika.]

Widzę autostrady i stadiony.

Example 31 (*Shrek the Third*)

**I’ll get it.**

[Ja się tym zajmę.]

No i masz, becikowe.

The first allusion concerns the plans of the Polish government to build new motorways and stadiums before 2012, when the UEFA European Football Championship – Euro 2012 is going to take place. The cited words are spoken by Shrek

when he is asked to say what he can see from the smoke. In order to hide his inner feelings, Shrek says: ‘Widzę autostrady i stadiony.’ Watching an animated film produced in the United States, suddenly the TR hears that the main character dreams about the same things as Polish citizens and hopes that the government will fulfil its promises. Apparently Shrek also waits for the new roads and modern stadiums to be built. Not only does it surprise the TR, but it also amuses him/her.

The second reference is connected with the government family support project. The Polish government pays parents for every new-born baby. This support is called ‘becikowe’. In the original version of the movie, when Shrek hears the cry of his baby, he says to his wife: ‘I’ll get it.’ This situation is certainly not as humorous as the situation presented in the version with the Polish dubbing, in which Shrek says: ‘No i masz, becikowe.’ The context enables the translator to introduce the connotation that elicits laughter from the TR. The humorous aspect of this reference is based on the familiarity of the phrase ‘becikowe’ for the Polish audience and on its meaning in this particular situation.

The last type of allusions that will be discussed are the references to the famous Polish radio speaker – Wojciech Mann:

Example 32 (*Shrek 2*)

**There's only one fellow who can handle a job like that, and, frankly...he don't like to be disturbed.**

[Jest tylko jeden koleś, który może się tym zająć, i wierz mi...nie lubi jak mu się przeszkadza.]  
Kolego, patrz mnie na usta. Jest tylko jeden szpenio co weźmie tę chryję na warsztat i wierz mnie - radia to on słucha w pogodę.

Example 33 (*Shrek 2*)

**Just leave the bottle, Doris.**

[Po prostu zostaw butelkę, Doris.]  
Zostaw całą flaszkę Wojtuś.

In the second part of *Shrek* Wojciech Mann dubbed Doris, who is presented in the film as a transvestite. In the original Doris is dubbed by Larry King, a well known American radio presenter. With Wojciech Mann being a dubbing actor, Wierzbicka could introduce the allusion to his job: '[...] radia to on słucha w pogodę.' The clause is not extremely comical itself, however in the combination with the voice of the famous radio presenter, it would certainly cause the intended humorous effect. What makes the phrase amusing is also the informal language: 'Jest tylko jeden szpenio co weźmie tę chryję na warsztat.' In the ST the language of Doris is also informal, but not to such an extent as it is in the TT. In order to strengthen the comic effect, Wierzbicka inserts into the TT the linguistic mistakes – 'patrz mnie na usta' and 'wierz mnie' are used in the Doris' utterance instead of linguistically correct: 'patrz mi na usta' and 'wierz mi'. In the second example the translator replaces the name 'Doris' with the diminutive form of the name of the presenter: 'Wojtuś', despite the fact that the name 'Doris' is used in every other parts of the Polish version. It is an evident reference to the Polish radio speaker. The introduced allusion and the linguistic ways of humour creation enable the TR to appreciate the humorous potential of the above cited fragments.

All the above presented examples represent a non-literal translation of humour. The translator adapts the culture-specific allusions to the Polish realities or introduces an allusion, although no reference is present in the ST. Employing such a translation strategy may result in differences between the sense of a particular utterance in the ST and its sense in the TT. Nonetheless, all the changes introduced in the TT perfectly fit the context of the movie, and do not change the sense of the film as a whole. They are not in any conflict with the plot. What is more, they help to create dialogues which are more amusing for the TR than dialogues translated literally.

## 2.4. Puns

In the case of the examples provided in the previous subsection, it is the cultural untranslatability that causes most of the translational problems. In this subsection the linguistic untranslatability connected with the presence of puns in the ST is going to be discussed. As it was described at the beginning of this thesis, the linguistic untranslatability occurs when no substitution for a linguistic element from the SL can be found in the TL. The linguistic inequality of the SL and the TL is especially problematic in the case of puns translation.

Puns are the language-based jokes, where a word may be replaced with another that sounds and often looks similar, but has a distinctive meaning (Attardo 2002: 177). In other cases a word which has two different interpretations in a given context may be used. This replacement or ambiguity which is not expected by a reader is the core of this type of word-games.

Hardly ever is it possible to translate puns literally. In the majority of cases the most effective translation strategy is reproduction. However, there are some situations where a translator fails to translate a particular pun. In the first part of *Shrek*, for example, the humorous aspect of the following ambiguous sentences is not rendered into the TT: 'I have to save my ass' and 'You should sweep me off my feet, out yonder window.' In the first instance the phrase 'to save my ass' can be interpreted as 'to save my donkey' or 'to save myself'. The phrase 'to sweep me off my feet' can be understood literally, but it has also idiomatic meaning: 'to make somebody fall in love suddenly'. In the Polish version only one interpretation is possible, and what is more, it lacks the comical effect: 'Czeka na mnie jeden osioł' and 'Powinieneś wziąć mnie na ręce, zjechać po złotej linie.' Wierzbicka compensates for this loss in translation,

inserting other types of jokes or a new pun in a different part of the film, as in the following example:

Example 34 (*Shrek 2*)

**Shrek, Fiona...Will you accept an old frog's apologies?**  
[Shreku, Fiono...Czy przyjmiecie przeprosiny starej żaby?]  
Shreku, Fiono...Czy ujdzie mi płazem, jeśli was teraz przeproszę?

The Polish version is more amusing than the ST thanks to the Polish idiom: 'ujść płazem', meaning 'to get away with something.' The inserted phrase fits the context. What is more, it evokes the humorous effect, since the line is said by a king who is a frog. The Polish word 'płaz', which is a part of the mentioned idiom, means 'an amphibian'. A frog is an amphibian, so the word refers to the king.

Some jokes based on puns are not rendered into the TT by the Polish translator, however, in other cases Wierzbicka skilfully copes with the linguistically oriented humour. Consider:

Example 35 (*Shrek*)

**You handle the dragon. I'll handle the stairs. I'll find those stairs. I'll whip their butt too. Those stairs won't know which way they're goin'. [...] I'm gonna take drastic steps. Kick it to the curb. Don't mess with me. I'm the stair master. I've mastered the stairs. I wish I had a step right here. I'd step all over it.**

[Ty zajmij się smokiem. Ja zajmę się schodami, Znajdę te schody. Skopię im tyłek. Nie będą wiedziały, którą drogą. [...] Podejmę drastyczne środki. Skopię je aż do krawężnika. Lepiej ze mną nie zadzierać. Jestem panem schodów. Pokonam te schody. Żeby tylko miał tu jeden stopień. Rozdeptałbym go.]

Ty zajmij się smokiem, ja biorę na siebie schody. Znajdę je skubane i skopię im poręcz tak, że nie będą wiedziały którą drogą na górę, a co! [...] Bezwzględny będę, zero litości, znam karate czwarty stopień, wtajemniczenia, nie? Rany, ale będzie jatka, no będzie rzeźnia normalnie.

Example 36 (*Shrek*)

- **Men of Farquaad's stature are in short supply. (Shrek)**
- **I don't know. There are those who think little of him. (Donkey)**
- [Mało jest takich ludzi jak Farquaad.
- No nie wiem. Są tacy, którzy nie myślą o nim dobrze.]
- O ludziach takich jak Farquaad mam dość...niskie mniemanie.
- Shrek, ty go po prostu za mało, za krótko znasz.

The whole utterance from example 35 is humorous and contains numerous plays on words. The first half of the TT dialogue is very similar to the original, since the translator found proper equivalents and it was not necessary to introduce strong modifications of the ST. The changes of the sense in this part of the utterance are insignificant. Puns in the second part are more problematic, due to the fact that they do not have equivalents in the TL. The comic effect evoked by the ST is based on the polisemy of words: 'master' and 'step'. They have two different meanings in this context. Both of them are used in the ST as nouns and verbs. The former word means 'a skilled person' and 'to overcome'. The latter can denote 'a stair', but it can also mean 'to tread'. Finding a way of rendering this play on words being extremely difficult or even impossible, Wierzbięta resigns from the linguistically oriented humour and introduces the character humour – the boasting Donkey is comical.

Humour of example 36, as in the previous instance, lies in the polisemy. Describing Fiona's future husband who is an exceptionally short person, Shrek says that 'men of Farquaad's stature are in short supply.' Two different puns can be observed in this sentence. Firstly, the word 'stature' can refer to Farquaad's height and to his good reputation as well. What is next, the phrase 'to be in short supply' means that there are not many such people as Farquaad, and at the same time the word 'short', meaning 'not tall', draws the attention to his height. Furthermore, in the line said by Donkey the word 'little' can refer to Farquaad's stature. Wierzbięta renders the humorous effect of the ST, using different puns. In the TT the phrase 'mieć o kimś niskie mniemanie' – 'not to think well of somebody' is applied. The theme of reputation is present in the translation, however, in contrast with the ST, in the TT Shrek talks about bad reputation. The word 'niski' is also used in Poland to describe somebody's height, so the ambiguity present in the original is retained. Moreover, the translator introduces

into Donkey's line two words that may be used in a description of a man's stature: 'mały' and 'krótki'.

As it can be observed from the examples presented above, puns may cause serious translational problems. Wierzbicka skilfully copes with the impediments created by the word plays in *Shrek* by introducing changes to the original dialogue version. This is how Wierzbicka explains the introduced modifications: 'The dialogues have to be comprehensible for the Polish audience, that is why sticking to the original dialogues is not always a proper solution. If the original linguistic nuances and plays on words are not amusing, they have to be adapted to the Polish realities' ([www.stopklatka.pl](http://www.stopklatka.pl)). Wierzbicka's point of view and argumentation can be supported by words of Attardo, who emphasizes that in the case of puns 'any translation will differ inevitably from its source since it uses items from a different system than the original one which have different relations and hence different meanings/values from the original ones.' (2002: 191).

## **Conclusion**

Translation of such a film as Shrek causes considerable problems. In addition to language-specific constraints, especially puns, there are culture-specific constraints, for example allusions. Owing to this fact, translation of Shrek is not a standard process of rendering a given text into another language, it is a cross-cultural transfer from American to Polish culture.

Moreover, the translation of humour in a dubbed film is subject to numerous restraints. A translator has to take into consideration the constraints of dubbing. Furthermore, the specificity of dubbing translation is that it is connected with the high degree of domestication. In order to achieve a successful dubbing production, a translator has to create the impression that the film was made in the target culture. The domestication strategy entails various modifications of the original, and it may consequently result in shifts of meaning.

Translation shifts are frequently involved in humour transfer due to various difficulties connected with it. In order to maintain a humorous effect, translators have to adapt a certain joke to the reality of a target culture, and accordingly, they have to modify the source text.

Results of the study show beyond doubt that shifts of meaning in humour translation are not a negative phenomenon as long as they result in achieving the same humorous effect as the source text does. They are the consequences of the linguistic differences and of the cultural dissimilarities. That is why, introducing various modifications constitutes a common practice in the translation of humorous dubbed films.

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## **Films under discussion**

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*Shrek the Third*. 2007. Dir. Miller, Chris. Writ. Price, Jeffrey. Voice Perf. Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy and Antonio Banderas. DreamWorks. Film.

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