

# Application Cultural Linguistics to a New Model for Humor in Translation

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**Abstract** - This study aims to show how cultural linguistics, a newly created multidisciplinary field of inquiry, can contribute to translation studies and the translation of humor as a culturally constructed feature. The study begins by outlining the research's goals and objectives and the fundamental principles that make up our model of analysis by implementing the General Verbal Theory of Humor (GVTH). Then, as the study's major goal, we offer a new model for humor translation that includes a typology of conceptual structures for humor translation analysis, a significant step forward in translation studies that contributes to ongoing research in translation theory and practice. Later, we show how the suggested model and its typology of conceptual structures can be used in studies to analyze samples selected from novels in translation into English. The data was obtained from 50 data points from five selected audio books from three novels: Jane Eyre, The Adventure of Tom Sawyer, and Ivanhoe. Six parameters were used to analyze the data: script opposition (SO), logical mechanism (LM), situation (S), target (T), narrative strategy (NS), and language. The findings showed that the most important contributions and implications of LM are varied and simple narrative strategies combining dialogue study.

**Keywords:** Humor, GVTH, Jane Eyre, The Adventure of Tom Sawyer, Ivanhoe, Six Parameters, Cultural Linguistics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

For the first time in translation academic history, we will apply the innovative field of inquiry of cultural linguistics to translation studies and the translation of humor as a created feature. To show the benefits of our cultural linguistics method for the translator's everyday task, we employ the analytical framework of cultural conceptualizations, which is a specific attribute of cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). In brief, we want to show how the cultural linguistics approach might help translate humor in narrative texts, such as novels and fiction. The study's major goal is to offer a novel translation model to contribute to ongoing translation theory and practice research. As Attardo (2017) emphasizes, the interplay of underlying cultural layers in humor translation (a)

is complex, and (b) is unexplored. As Sharifian points out, there are two main reasons for this long-standing translation problem: (a) scholars investigating the relationship between language and culture as manifested in the translation of humor have encountered at least two significant challenges regarding the notion of culture: (1) its abstractness, and (2) the various multifaceted, multilayered, and complex assumptions often associated with it (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). And (b) that, while translators have had various tools at their disposal, what they have lacked is an analytical model for breaking down cultures and examining their components (Sharifian, 2015, 2017), so that the constructed conceptual aspects underlying humor can be reconstructed into the target text's new linguistic reality, a significant step in translation studies.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Humor links cultural characteristics

Humor is a feature of normal language use and a component of many literary works in any linguistic community, and it is profoundly ingrained in the specific cultural environment in which it is produced. The way people use humor reveals their ability to have fun with words, their shared beliefs and culture, and their conversational conventions and style (Stankic, 2017). Similarly, translators have no greater problem than culturally dependent humorous allusions, especially when their working languages are from different cultures, and the handbook of translation studies emphasizes this point by claiming that humor is relatively untranslatable due to its underlying, indivisible, and linked cultural characteristics. Furthermore, as long as linguistic translation is the dominant method of translation, the successful translation of culturally dependent humor references will be elusive (Stankic, 2017). "Nonetheless, the specialized literature devoted specifically to the topic of humor translation is strikingly lacking," implying that humor translation is a promising field that deserves greater study. As a result, humor translation is anchored in the unique interaction between language and culture, which has piqued the interest of many academics. However, these researchers have faced at least two key obstacles when it comes to the concept of culture: (1) its abstractness and (2) the multiple

multidimensional, multilayered assumptions commonly linked with it (Sharifian, 2017).

“Cultural conceptualizations are the instruments that cultural linguistics employs to investigate features of cultural cognition and how it manifests itself in language” (Peeters, 2016, p. 1). Thus, cultural linguistics (a) assumes that aspects of human languages transmit and embody conceptualizations, and (b) focuses on the examination of culturally generated conceptualizations, according to Sharifian (2017). According to Sharifian (2017), the emergence of this multidisciplinary field of study “has shifted focus from the relationship between individual cognition and language, as highlighted in cognitive approaches to language, to the relationship between language, cultural conceptualization, and cognition” (Sharifian, 2017).

The term “patterns of distributed knowledge across the cultural group” (Sharifian, 2017) is used in this study, which also includes schemas and categories and metaphors, which are particularly important for the analysis of the translation of humor as a culturally constructed element, such as cultural categories, cultural metaphors, and cultural schemas, which are collectively called cultural categories, cultural metaphors, and cultural schemas, by moving beyond current cognitive and linguistic theories and analyzing the relationship between language and cultural conceptualizations for describing embodied and culturally embedded phenomena such as humor.

In addition, as Sharifian (2017) argues, cultural conceptualizations encompass all aspects of human life, from conceptions of life and death to conceptions of emotion, body, and humor, all of which are encoded and conveyed through linguistic features (Sharifian, 2017). These language features are particularly important for the translator, such as lexical items that may or may not have equivalence in the target language, semantic and pragmatic meanings of culturally constructed elements like humor, morph syntactic features of embodied and culturally embedded phenomena like humor, and other language features such as the use of specific dialects, for example, as a typical mechanism of creating humor, which may pose significant problems.

What's important here is that (a) the cultural context that underpins language features is shared by all members of a linguistic community, and (b) there are traditional and accepted ways of saying things within a certain linguistic community. As a result, understanding and translating humor is highly dependent on cultural particulars in terms of humor and function within a given culture. The reason for this is that, as Sharifian (2017) points out, language is profoundly anchored in group-level cognition that evolves from interactions among members of a cultural group. Because

language and culture are inextricably linked, it is obvious that language is one of the tools for storing and transmitting cultural concepts that originate from group-level cognition over time and space. When it comes to verbal humor, it's important to remember that “cultural conceptualizations mark not only humorous discourse itself in terms of different levels and units of language (e.g., speech acts, idioms, metaphors, grammar, etc.), but also language use and community practices (e.g., when it's (in) appropriate to joke and which form of humor to use in a given situation” (Stankic, 2017, p. 100).

Because the current study analyzes two languages and cultures via the lens of translation studies, it appears appropriate to define the tritium cooperationist in this comparative analysis at this point. This relational unit does not exist a priori because they are only valid for the texts being compared and argues, “The fact that these translation units are established a posteriori does not mean that we cannot formulate a general hypothesis that serves as “tritium cooperationist” in the analysis.” Thus, bearing in mind that the current study is concerned with the translation of humor as a culturally constructed element, the hypothesis that serves as “tritium cooperationist” between the source text and the target.

Cultural conceptualizations are analytical frameworks such as cultural categories, metaphors, and schemas that exist at the individual level of cognition and at the level of cultural group cognition and are negotiated over time and location within a cultural group. Although translators have had various tools at their disposal, they have lacked an analytical model for breaking down cultures and examining their components (Sharifian, 2015, 2017), which would allow the culture-reliant conceptual aspects underlying language features and linguistic expressions to be rendered across the source language to the target language (Sharifian, 2015, 2017; Dore, 2019a, 2019b; Munoz, 2012).

## **2.2 Sharifian’s framework and theory-based framework**

We will first situate our research in a theoretical framework that facilitates an approach to translation, specifically the translation of humor, before describing our proposal for such a model. We'll start by expanding on Sharifian's concept of cultural linguistics, which will serve as the foundation for this study's language and culture theory. Then we'll look at humor theories before diving into one of the most important translation theories, translation functionalism, and lastly, our suggestion for a new humor translation model that takes cultural and linguistic components into account. Our suggested model will be shown with examples from recent research that highlights the challenges of translating humor.

The authors of the Handbook of Translation Studies series frequently discuss “from the very origins of translation studies, the discipline expressly refers to numerous influences from other fields, both methodologically and content-wise”. As a result, this section will first describe the study's methodological framework and then propose a new model, including a typology of conceptual units, for example, analysis. Second, we'll go over the essential principles that make up our analysis model. Third, we will detail the model's implementation, beginning with the selection criteria for our corpus. After that, we'll go through the data analysis approach employed in this model and the procedure for comparing the source and target texts with three features:

#### ▪ Cultural categorie

Cultural categories are a subset of cultural concepts that are based on cultural cognition. They are conceptual categories that are culturally formed and represented in the lexicon of human languages (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). Cultural categories, such as emotion categories, event categories, color categories, age categories, food categories, and kinship categories, are rooted in people's cultural experiences gained from their situatedness in a particular culture, and they mirror the structure of attributes perceived in the world that inevitably shape people's thoughts (Polzenhagen & Xia, 2014; Sharifian, 2015, 2017).

#### ▪ Cultural metaphors

According to Sharifian (2015, 2017), cultural metaphors are “cognitive constructs that allow us to grasp one conceptual domain in terms of another”. Cultural metaphors influence how people think and act in intracultural and intercultural communication, and they are considered fundamental to human thought and activity (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). For example, in Vietnamese culture, the cultural metaphor for marriage is “hôn nhân” [literal translation: “house-of-fate”], which refers to marriage. It's worth that in Vietnamese cultural conceptualizations, a marriage is two birds coming together to make a nest, which is conceptually different from the English cultural metaphor “Marriage is a journey,” which should be taken into account during the translation process.

#### ▪ Schemas of culture

The concept of schema has a lot of explanatory power for explaining its subject matter (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). Schemas, in particular, are “cognitive building blocks that aid in the organization, interpretation, and communication of information”. Cultural schemas are a type of schema influenced by culture and serve as a basis for conveying and comprehending cultural meanings (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). They include culturally embedded event schemas, role

schemas, image schemas, proposition schemas, or emotion schemas, which are explained as follows:

- **Event schemas**, such as the Vietnamese wedding celebration event schema, are “abstracted from our experience of certain occurrences”.
- **Role schemas**, such as the role schema of a university professor, are “knowledge about social roles that defines sets of behaviors that are expected of people in particular social positions” (Sharifian, 2015, 2017).
- **Image schemas** are “intermediate abstractions between mental images and abstract propositions that are readily imagined, perhaps as iconic images, and clearly related to physical or social experiences” (Sharifian, 2015, 2017). For example, in a humorous utterance like “He has gone off the rails,” we are using the image schema of the “path” to capture the conceptualization of the domain of “thinking”. The application of the “path” picture schema to the domain of “thinking” is demonstrated in this phrase.
- **Proposition schemas** are “abstractions that operate as models of cognition and behavior and specify concepts and the relationships that hold among them” such as the Vietnamese cultural conception of happiness as a predestined fate.
- **Emotion schemas**, such as the Vietnamese cultural emotion schema of happiness, which is multilayered and overlaps with three different cultural emotion schemas in English, namely embarrassment, shyness, and shame, help us “define, explain, and understand emotions primarily by reference to the events and situations in which they occur” (Sharifian, 2015, 2017).

Our method requires that hilarious instances in the data be first identified using the General Theory of Verbal Humor framework (GTVH) to translate humor (Attardo, 2017). This set of parameters known as Knowledge Resources can model particular instances of linguistic humor found in books. They incorporated Raskin's Script Opposition (SO) notion, which he established in his Semantic Script Theory of Humor (Raskin, 1985), as one of the General Theory of Verbal Humor's six layers of independent Knowledge Resources (KRs) (Lew, 1996). Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (S), Target (T), Narrative Strategy (NS), and Language (L) are examples of knowledge resources. The framework proposes that these six parameters (described below) can be used to identify verbal humor, with Script Opposition (SO) being the most determining parameter and the Language Knowledge Resource (LKR) being the least determining parameter in this model.

### III. DATA AND METHODOLOGIES

#### 3.1 Data

We chose novels as the corpus for creating a framework for the humorous novel translation of our analysis because novels and literary texts emphasize the relationship between language features and the cultural environment in which they are formed, and this research focuses on the translation of humor as a culturally generated element (Chiaro, 1992, 2010a, 2010b). Furthermore, we prioritized humorous discourse because humor is a rich source of culturally constructed elements and cultural problems in translation (Stankic, 2017), and as previously stated, how people use humor reveals not only their ability to play with language but also their shared beliefs and culture, as well as their communicative norms and style (Stankic, 2017).

The survey shows the general framework of verbal humor, and the study analyzes the research design. A total of 50 data points were processed from five selected audio books from three novels: *Jane Eyre*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *Ivanho*, in the forms of speeches, utterances, dialogue, and transcription. The data were analyzed using the general theory of verbal humor framework and some parameters: SO, LM, S, T, NS, and L as one of the six layers of independent Knowledge Resources (KRs) (Lew, 1996; Lopez, 2002).

#### 3.2 Methodologies

##### ▪ Translational unit

A single conversational turn, being the smallest unit in the dialogue of the novels, serves as the basic translation unit for our study. In narrative texts, novels, and literary works, a conversational turn is defined by Dynel (2011) as an analytical unit that can vary in size and contains the flow of speech of an interlocutor, followed by a pause and the turn of the next interlocutor (cf. Stankic, 2017). Thus, the conversational turn is equivalent to one utterance in our corpus (cf. Stankic, 2017).

##### ▪ In translation, context is important

According to Martin (1995), context is the mental contribution of the person who interprets a speech, and cognitive context, from the perspective of cultural linguistics, is the culturally produced conceptual frameworks that exist in the speaker's mind (Sharifian, 2017). It comprises data from the physical world and data that can be retrieved and inferred from our mental archives. Language is important because it is a primary mechanism for storing and disseminating culturally built conceptualizations, serving as both a memory bank and a fluid vehicle for the transmission of cultural conceptualizations underpinning culturally constructed aspects

like humor (Sharifian, 2017). Nash (1985, p.12) states that "humor characterizes the interaction of people in cultural situations, and our response to it must be understood in that broad framework". As a result, because the hilarious instances in this study's corpus are context-bound and often cannot be translated without their context information, they will be interpreted in their proper context.

##### ▪ Equivalence in terms of function

Before going over the data analysis approach, it's important to go over functional equivalence in translation, which is crucial to the method of analysis provided in this work. Functional equivalence is the type of equivalence mirrored in a target text that seeks to adjust the function of the source text to meet the unique context for which it was generated. In other words, when translators come across a culturally constructed feature in the source text, such as an instance of humor, they assign it a role within the overall scope of the translation process (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014) and use that function to identify solutions they deem suitable. However, such solutions may or may not be acceptable to the translated text's target readers. As a result, we're not dealing with a complete equivalency here but rather with correspondence that may or may not be acceptable to the target text's readers. The important question, from this perspective, is not whether the target language instances' semantic import is or is not total equivalent to that of the source language instances, but whether their textual function as cultural conceptualizers is or is not equivalent to that of the source text instances. Based on the assumption that the translation of a humorous element should be compared to the "cognitive profile" of the source text's humorous element, that is, to the cultural conceptualizations it activates, the next step is to investigate the function of the source text's element within the source culture. In this sense, the "conceptual profile" of the source text element serves as a foundation for determining the appropriateness of the target text's element based on the cultural concepts it activates inside the target culture.

We created a table to help operationalize the data analysis approach. The data analysis will be carried out in several stages. The first part involves locating and analyzing textual content, such as instances of humor, using the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) Knowledge Resources framework. Each parameter of the GTVH framework in each example is indicated by the GTVH Knowledge Resources.

Finally, the researchers discussed which cultural categories, cultural metaphors, or cultural schemas. These examples show readers in their minds, whether they are similar or not, and what their similarities and differences mean

in terms of the cultural values preserved in each language and society. This resulted in patterns and cultural conceptualizations underlying the translation of humor as a culturally constructed element, allowing the researchers to describe how translators dealt with the challenges posed by these cultural conceptualizations and the translation methods used to address these challenges.

The three aspects of the last step of the analysis in our model are the Translator's Approach, Translation Method, and Functional Equivalent. Next, we discuss the translator's approach and the method used in each case in the last step of the analysis and whether or not the translations are sufficient functional translations. Finally, we'd like to comment on the translator's involvement in the translation of humor as a culturally formed aspect before moving on to the next sections, where we examine the theoretical and practical implications of adopting the model.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Despite the problems associated with the model's novelty, the model based on cultural linguistics makes some significant contributions to Translation Studies. In the following sections, we briefly outline some of the most important contributions and implications.

- **Providing a comprehensive strategy**

As demonstrated in this study, a cultural linguistics analysis, such as the one proposed here, provides an overarching, coherent multidisciplinary approach to translation studies by allowing us to link a series of translation problems to cultural conceptualizations systematically underpinning language features. The approach proposed in this study relates culturally constructed elements to their underlying cultural conceptualizations that capture all aspects of human life, such as the very conceptualizations of life and death, to conceptualizations of emotion, body, religion, gender, marriage, politics, and humor (Sharifian, 2017), encoded and communicated through language features that are of particular importance to translators in their daily task. Thus, the technique offered here presents a consistent, coherent, and systematized explanation of the translation issues that arise when translating between two languages from distinct cultures.

- **Organizing the aspects that are culturally built**

Regardless of the methodological novelty of the analytical tools for cultural conceptualizations, a framework such as the one proposed here is extremely useful for translators as a framework to explicitly systematize cultural conceptualization problems that arise when translating from

source to target language. Although the proposed model does not ensure that all translation problems will be solved, it gives the translator a cohesive multidisciplinary analytical framework that can be used to analyze translation concerns explicitly. For the first time in Translation Studies, it also enhances awareness of the cultural conceptualizations that underpin linguistic aspects. A phenomenon "that, perhaps more than ever in the history of human contact," "desperately needs attention and research" (Sharifian, 2015, p. 1). We also feel that a cultural conceptualization-based translation analysis advances translation studies beyond the current language-focused analyses.

- **Associating language characteristics with underlying cultural concepts and cognition**

One of the most significant achievements of this research is the use of Cultural Linguistics in Translation Studies for the first time and its capacity to explain translation problems beyond the word and sentence level analysis of purely language-oriented techniques. Cultural conceptualizations have been overlooked in modern translation methodologies; however, cultural conceptualizations are vital for the translator's everyday duty in our globalized world society.

The findings revealed that LM in this article is varied, such as word repetition and false reasoning; NS is combined with dialogue style.

#### V. CONCLUSION

As a last note, we would like to point out that cultural linguistics is a new topic of study that is still in its infancy; therefore, it is critical to continue investigating. Cultural Linguistics gives a theoretical view of "language as a cultural form, and that conceptualizations underlying language and language usage are largely created by cultural systems," which is perfectly consistent with contemporary findings concerning human cognition.

As previously said, this translation work necessitates the translator's knowledge of the language and, more crucially, the culture of the source text. Thus, they must dismantle cultures and analyze their constituents in the source text to reconstruct both the language and the culture into the target text's new language. To put it another way, the translator must be aware not only of the differences between the source text's audience's cultural conceptualizations and the target text's audience's cultural conceptualizations but also of how textual and procedural knowledge are "conceptualization-based-knowledge," or the link between linguistic expressions and the cultural conceptualizations they invoke.

The current research aims to facilitate the translator's task by using a new model based on the interaction between the text and the text interpreter's cultural conceptualizations by proposing Cultural Linguistics as a model of Translation. The translator's role in this model is to mediate their analysis to the comprehension process, keeping in mind that to translate cultural conceptualizations onto the target language, linguistic elements that invoke a cultural conceptualization that is semantically, pragmatically, and stylistically equivalent to that activated as much as possible. Only if the target text-linguistic elements activate the relevant cultural conceptualizations for text interpretation in the necessary cultural contextual inferences based on their cultural conceptualization system. From this perspective, the translator is a cultural linguistics "editor" between two separate cultural conceptualization systems.

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