Wordplay-based humour: to leave it or to translate it, that is the question

Kateryna Pilyarchuk
European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder (Germany) & University of Klagenfurt (Austria)
pilyarchuk@europa-uni.de

Abstract

Translating humour is comparable to working with poetry: one has to make sacrifices for the sake of equivalence. The task is further complicated when humour is anchored in multiple communication channels, such as the verbal and visual ones. The data of this article is complete Season 5 of The Simpsons animated sitcom and its Ukrainian, Russian, and German translation versions. Selected instances from the larger corpus of 526 humorous acts are discussed in light of Attardo’s (2001) General Theory of Verbal Humour and Zabalbeascoa’s (1993) concept of faithfulness in translation. They are then evaluated according to Chiaro’s (2008) typology for wordplay translation, which is expanded with concrete techniques. The findings suggest that the translator’s creativity may play a more important role than the proximity between the source and target languages.

Keywords: humour translation, wordplay, translation strategy, equivalence, General Theory of Verbal Humour, The Simpsons.

1. Humour in The Simpsons

The interplay between semiotic systems (or channels) is what distinguishes a screen product from a written text and turns it into a “double-layered entity”: the horizontal space is language-based, and the vertical space is devoted to the non-verbal domain (Chiaro, 2008, p. 196; Gottlieb, 2001; Desilla, 2012, 32; Tsakona, 2009, p. 1171). With screen products, the translator must beware of content synchrony of all the involved channels (Mayoral et al., 1988, p. 356; Chaume, 2004, p. 22). These are verbal acoustic (lyrics, dialogue and so on), verbal visual (banners, headlines, letters, and so on), non-verbal acoustical (background music and noises), and non-verbal visual (for example, setting, colours, movements; see Gottlieb, 1997, p. 210; Chiaro, 2006, p. 198).
As complex as multimodal products are for translation, they become even more challenging when humour is at stake. First, humour cannot be described by means of a universal formula or signalled by a conventional phrase (Vandaele, 2002, p. 151; cf. Fuentes-Luque, 2003). Second, there is still some confusion regarding what to consider as humour and how to convey it (e.g., Nash, 1985; Schröter, 2005; Attardo, 2020). The blurred nature of verbal humour and a variety of its shades are incorporated into the definition by Attardo et al. (2002): “A joke text (T) is funny if T contains one or more incongruous elements any of which may or may not be fully or in part (playfully or not) resolved by the occurrence of the punch line, which may or may not introduce new incongruities” (p. 27; cf. Rothbart & Pien, 1976, p. 38). Third, translation of humour, especially wordplay, is often compared to working with poetry as it also hinges on the language’s structural potential. There is little to no possibility that the source language (SL) and target language (TL) will share the same homophonic or homographic words (Chiaro, 2008, p. 570). This challenge has been addressed in, for instance, Ambrosiani (2010), Kovalenko and Martynyuk (2021) and Rebrii et al. (2022). The translator is also bound by references of a humorous act: its derivation (“genus”) in attitudes, practices, and culture (cf. Ritchie, 2011, p. 483); its design and verbal formulation that facilitates recognition of the author’s intention; and its locus that signals the discharge of humour (Nash, 1985, pp. 9-10; Yus, 2016, p. 111).

Although a detailed analysis of the type and reference of every humorous act may seem as a too copious endeavour, it is a prerequisite of effective translation. Without a ubiquitous strategy to follow, the translator is still expected to make the target text (TT) sound as natural as the original, as if concealing the fact that it even is a translation (cf. Yus, 2016, pp. 237-238). Therein, a detailed analysis of two cultures needs to be made. More so, contextual restraints and anticipated audience’s perceptions need to be considered in order to deliver a functionally equivalent text (Chiaro, 2005; Schröter, 2005; cf. Kovalenko & Martynyuk, 2021). Such a TT orientation (domestication) largely emanates from Vermeer’s (1996) skopos theory and may be seen as a functional manipulation (Dore, 2019). It involves a degree of extemporisation and reliance on one’s background knowledge and skills (Martinez-Sierra, 2006, p. 294; Pilyarchuk, 2023, p. 134; cf. Yus, 2016, e.g., p. 29).

The goal of the present research is to discuss wordplay from The Simpsons and evaluate its translation from English into German, Ukrainian, and Russian in order to a) examine the (un)translatability of this complex language phenomenon per se and b) investigate the specific translation techniques in each language under consideration. At this point, it will be helpful to explain what this research will (not) cover. The major focus lies on verbal as opposed to visual humour; yet, the visual component is taken into account as a potential contributor to meaning-making (e.g., Yus, 2016, p. 201). As the concept of verbal humour is too extensive to cover in one article, it is only wordplay that is scrutinised here. Wordplay is, by its very nature, a textual phenomenon (Delabastita 1996, p. 129) and may be understood as a “humorous exploitation on of the surface structure, such as puns and rhyming” (Dynel, 2009a, p. 1284; cf. Dore, 2019, p. 107). Its key characteristic is pinpointed by Norrick (2003, p. 1352): it targets the language structure more than people or events. In that respect, the frequently misunderstood distinction between a wordplay and a pun (as well as a malapropism, spoonerism, etc.) is one of a hypernym and hyponym (Chiaro, 1992, p. 4; Delabastita, 1996; 2014, p. 5). While it seems useful to have a clear-

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1 To avoid misunderstanding between the terms humour and joke, the term humorous act will be used for a singular instance of humour in this paper. It was proposed by Raskin (1984) as an analogy to Searle’s (1969) speech act to mark a single occurrence of a humorous stimulus (cf. Martinez-Sierra, 2004, p. 172).
cut definition for the terms one engages with, we should beware of multiple blurred cases where one humour category flows into another, making any strict typology invalid (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 208; Norrick, 2003; Dynel, 2009a). Adopting the general consensus of viewing wordplay as a blanket concept, this research proposes the following operational definition: an exploitation of structural language features and an ensuing clash between their similar forms and conflicting meanings.

As the author makes a few comments on ambiguity and incongruity later in the article, it is also worth specifying what these terms suggest. The quality of being ambiguous refers to a lexical unit’s potential to trigger two or more different meanings (due to its polysemic nature), serving as a basis of verbal humour. In turn, incongruity emerges when a punchline\(^2\) clashes with a set-up, leading to a surprising resolution (Sherzer, 1985, p. 216). It may sometimes be a jab line\(^3\) that introduces a script opposition. In such cases, it is paramount that this opposition differs from one elicited by a punch line; otherwise, the element of surprise risks being lost (Tsakona, 2003, p. 326).

As the analysis applies to a polysemiotic product (Gottlieb, 2004, p. 80), we need to consider what Delabastita (1996, p. 129) calls a situational context, triggering additional implications of a wordplay. To demonstrate this challenge, Rebrii et al. (2022) engage with multimodal humorous discourse and examine its potential translation strategies. Their findings pinpoint a number of omissions, which the scholars see as a “translator’s defeat” and attribute them to the apparent difficulty of tackling two modes simultaneously without compromising either (cf. Pilyarchuk, 2023, p. 127). Such studies elicit the perennial question of humour (un)translatability. While the latter concept is arguably even more obscure than wordplay, I rely on Schröter’s (2005) broad definition: “translation is what has actually been done when a text has been rendered in another language” (p. 108). His argument is largely supported by colleagues in humour research. Thus, Delabastita (1994; 1996) and Chiaro (e.g., 2005) claim that formal equivalence should never be prioritised when working with wordplay. Instead, the translator should be ready to compromise the ST’s structure, setting, and other formal elements for the sake of maintaining the alleged pragmatic impact (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 216).

In the sections that follow, I will first present my corpus and approach, then discuss the most common types of wordplay, and later on discuss a few illustrative cases along with the translation strategies applied to them.

2. Data and approach to analysis

2.1. The data

*The Simpsons* is an animated sitcom featuring a prototypical, heteronormative, middle-class U.S. family with three children. This product may arguably be equally enjoyed on a superficially entertaining level and appreciated for its multi-tier satire (Cantor, 1999, pp. 734–735; Irwin & Lombardo, 2001, p. 81; Lorenzo et al., 2003, p. 275). It fits par excellence into Zabalbeascoa’s

\(^2\) A punchline may be defined as the final part of the humorous act that results in incongruity. Refer to Jodłowiec (2008) for a detailed discussion of what constitutes a punchline.

\(^3\) A jab line, while semantically identical to a punch line, is neither located at the end of a humorous act nor invites a reevaluation of the whole text. See Tsakona (2003) for an extensive discussion of jab lines and their interaction with punch lines.
(2000) understanding of texts created for children but valued by adults (p. 21). A case in point is the Homer Simpson’s job – devoid of any technical qualifications, he serves as a safety inspector of Springfield nuclear plant. The plant itself is owned by a highly corrupt and immoral man and is in a deplorable condition. This scenario, *inter alia*, stands for the problems of pollution, waste disposal, and lack of accountability, portraying the constant zero-sum game of environmental and economic gains (Todd, 2002, pp. 70-71). While such symbolical ideas do not require translation, they should be carefully considered as they frame many meaningful details and add connotative layers to verbal humour.

Example (1) showcases a situation where young viewers will supposedly be amused by the primitivism of the visual setting, while well-read adult viewers will gain an intellectual pleasure by recognising the incongruity. It derives from a sophisticated allusion to Coleridge’s poem, uttered by an outwardly unintelligent character. The last line alludes to “*Water, water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink*”4 (see also Desilla, 2012, p. 43; Yus, 2016, p. 88; Pilyarchuk, 2023). For a larger audience, this case is lost even in the original, let alone translation.

(1)  

**Context:** The Flanders and the Simpsons are in the middle of a sea; Homer thinks that sea water is potable.

Homer: What do you think we're floatin' on? Don't you know the poem? *Water, water everywhere, so let's all have a drink* [5; 8; 15:38]5.

### 2.2. The corpus and framework

The research corpus is the complete Season 5 of *The Simpsons*6 aired in the U.S. in 1993 (22 episodes or approximately 500 minutes of footage). The project examines the translation strategies of wordplay in the Ukrainian translation by the *Pilot* studio7, the Russian one by the *Kiparis* studio8, and the German one by the *TaurusMediaTechnik* studio9. The cognitive-pragmatic approach toward humour with a focus on detailed, descriptive analysis (e.g., Yus, 2016; Dynel, 2009b) is employed along with methodological frameworks from translation studies. More specifically, the study is informed by Zabalbeascoa’s (1993; 1996) concept of faithfulness in translation, which prioritises contextual consistency over verbal consistency, dynamic equivalence over formal equivalence (cf. Nida, 1964), oral language over written language, and audience needs over formal elements (cf. Yus, 2016, p. 239). Then, Attardo’s General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) – a revisited version of Raskin’s (1984) script-based theory of humour – is applied to humorous acts.

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4 From Samuel Coleridge’s poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”.

5 The time indicator: the first number is the season (here: 5), the second number is the episode (here: 8), and the last number is the exact time frame of the humorous act (here: minute 15; second 38).


In GTVH, a humorous act is a pyramid with six knowledge resources (KRs), listed in the order of significance below:

1) SO (script opposition) or overlap of two scripts (Attardo, 2020, pp. 136-150).
2) LM (logical mechanism) or a resource behind the “faulty logic” (Attardo & Raskin, 1991, p. 305; Ritchie, 2004: pp. 50-56; see also Rothbart & Pien, 1976, 38);
3) SI (situation) or context (for example, participants, setting, or activities) (cf. Schnurr, 2010, p. 319);
4) TA (target) or the object of humour (cf. Vandaele, 2002; Schnurr, 2010, p. 318);
5) NS (narrative strategy) or organisation (e.g., a dialogue or riddle);
6) LA (language) or wording;

SO is on top and LA is on bottom, and Attardo’s (2002) rule of effective translation is to respect all the KRs but sacrifice the lower levels if required (p. 183). According to the GTVH, the receiver of a joke is expected to arrive at a punchline and then return to the beginning of the joke to realise that a different interpretation is invited and that the newly interpreted script opposes the original one (cf. Viana, 2010).


The original version was watched episode by episode. Every episode was re-watched at least twice; some scenes were re-wound for closer analysis. The same was repeated for every translation version, albeit with a specific focus on the already selected time slots. The resultant was the corpus of 526 humorous acts, 65 of which were based on wordplay. As a disclaimer, some instances of humour may have been omitted given that the researcher was guided by her subjective experience and intuition, which are albeit justified in such cases (Attardo, 2001, p. 33; Zabalbeascoa, 2005, p. 199). As the scope of this project does not allow for a detailed description of all the scenes, only a few examples will be used as illustrations.

3. **The Simpsons wordplay**

Wordplay occurs when some elements of the language structure are used to form a “communicatively significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings (signified) and more or less similar forms (signifier)” (Delabastita, 1993, p. 57; cf. Heibert, 1993). A pun is the most complex type of wordplay. Following Raskin (1994), it appears when a phrase that normally bears one message is represented in a way that signals a different content (cf. Solska, 2012; Yus, 2016, p. 84). Dynel (2009a, p. 1291) specifies the definition as

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10 A script for complete Season 5 was retrieved from *The Simpsons* archive ([http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/episodes.html](http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/episodes.html))

11 There are no scripts available for the translated versions, so the examples were noted down manually.
a humorous verbalisation which has (prototypically) two interpretations couched in purposeful ambiguity of a word or a string of words (collocations or idioms), dubbed the punning element, manifesting itself in one form (or two very similar ones) but conveying two different meanings.

If the humorous intention behind such a wordplay is recognised, a new script emerges, as in (2).

(2) Context: Announcement by the church:

“What a F_IEND we have in God” [5; 1: 05:46].

This pun is enabled by the phonetic and graphic resemblance between the lexemes friend and fiend. The two scripts converge, creating humorous incongruity. Such cases are challenging in that they rely on structural features and are bound by the visual similarity between lexemes. In (2), the Russian and Ukrainian translations omit the pun, while the German version sounds as follows: “Was für einen Feind – Freund wir in Gott haben”12. It is one of few instances in this corpus where the closeness of two Germanic languages is of benefit.

Many instances of verbal humour are enabled due to phonological similarity (Alexander, 1997): homographs (e.g., adjective fair/noun fair) or homophones (e.g., son/sun) (Ross, 1998, p. 9; Seewoester, 2011)13. What is of key importance is that the phrase triggers the recipient’s associations between two concepts (Schröter, 2005, p. 207). It may be illustrated by e.g., [5; 21; 15:21]14. Puns can also emerge out of semantic ambiguity (lexical puns) facilitated by different readings of the same phrase (Bucaria, 2004). In English, it often happens owing to phrasal verbs (e.g., [5; 14; 12:38]), idioms (e.g., [5; 3; 18:41]), or polysemy (e.g., [5; 5; 09:47]). On a lower level, morphology contributes to punning (Ross, 1988, p. 14-16; Seewoester, 2011). Replacements of affixes and new compounds serve this purpose, as in (3), where Brad Goodman uses the gerundial -ing ending to allude to transiting states: from just being to doing (as being active). When Bart decides to leave, he calls himself a human going, extending the pun.

(3) Context: Brad Goodman is holding his seminar; Bart enters with a witty pun-remark.

Brad Goodman: And as soon as you're not a human being you're a human doing. Then what comes next?
Bart: A human going! [gets up to go away] [laughter] [5; 7; 11:14]15.

The corpus also features instances of syntactic ambiguity (e.g., [5; 19; 02:27]), enabled by sentence order or parts of speech (Bucaria, 2004, pp. 282-283; Dynel, 2009b, pp. 128-129; Seewoester, 2011). In English as a non-synthetic language, nouns, adjectives, and verbs may be mutually replaceable for the sake of a humorous effect (e.g., left as the opposite of right or as past simple of leave) (cf. Oaks, 1994, p. 384). Graphological punning was earlier illustrated by the billboard example (2). A similar case is (4): depending on the mouse’s position, the content changes (also e.g., [5; 22; 03:03]).

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12 What a friend – fiend we have in God [my back translation].
13 For an illustration, see [5; 21; 18:13] in Appendix A.
14 All examples are listed in Appendix A.
15 Refer to Appendix A for the translation versions and back translation.
(4) Context: A mouse is standing in front of a billboard. When it moves away, the verb *pay* turns into *spay*:

“We (s)pay your pet $75” [5; 2; 03:13].

Finally, homophones and homographs are found across languages. Example (5) demonstrates how interlanguage homography contributes to punning:

(5) Context: Sideshow Bob is tried in court. He has a chest tattoo that says *Die Bart, Die*.

English:
Parole officer: What about your chest tattoo? Doesn’t it say “*Die Bart, die*”?
Sideshow Bob: No, that’s German for “*The Bart the*”.

German.
Beamter: Was ist mit der Tätowierung auf Ihrer Brust? Steht da nicht ’Stirb Bart, Stirb’?
Sideshow Bob: Nein, das ist Deutsch und heißt: „*Die Bart, Die*”.

Ukrainian.
Службовець: У вас на грудях тату і там написано «*Смерть Барту, смерть*».
Сайдшоу Боб: Ні, це німецька: «*Die Bart, die*».

Russian.
Служащий: А что значит татуировка на твоей груди «*Умри Барт, умри*»?
Сайдшоу Боб: Это немецкий артикль. Там просто написано «*Барт*», и всё.

In (5), to understand the humorous implicature, the SL audience is expected to know that *die* in German is the definite article. However, even German viewers may find this play confusing: they see a close-up and hear “*Stirb, Bart, stirb*”, but discrepancy is created by the line *das ist Deutsch*. Neither Ukrainian nor Russian versions boast of an effective solution as they lose the double entendre.

Last but not least, the current corpus features a few examples of malapropisms (where a similar sounding word replaces another word, as [5; 7; 13:22]), spoonerisms (where similar words are intermingled by transposition of initial sounds, as [5; 2; 20:29]), portmanteau words (where two words are blended, as [5; 13; 11:07]), and (near)-rhymes, as [5; 19; 13:52]). They seem to be devoted unfairly scarce attention in works on humour and translation (e.g., Zabalbeascoa, 1996; 2005; 2008; Chiaro, 2006; Yus, 2016). I will provide a few illustrative examples as a humble attempt to start filling this gap.

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16 Refer to Appendix A for (back) translation.
17 German: Parole officer: *What is that with your chest tattoo? Doesn’t it say ‘Die, Bart, die?’*
Sideshow Bob: *No, it’s German and means “Die Bart, die”* [my back translation].
18 Ukrainian: Parole officer: *You have a chest tattoo, and it says ‘Death to Bart, death’.*
Sideshow Bob: *No, it’s German: “Die Bart, die”* [my back translation].
19 Russian: Parole officer: *And what does your chest tattoo ‘Die Bart, die’ mean.*
Sideshow Bob: *It’s a German article. It just says “Bart”, that’s it* [my back translation].
4. Discussion

4.1. Homonymy: The tap case

Although puns are created by structural means and are usually condensed to a phrase, context is paramount for their adequate translation (Yus, 2016, pp. 5-6). The following example (6) is a case in point where spotting the pun requires familiarity with Barney’s character (a town’s drunkard).

(6) Context: Kent Brockman, a reporter, is interviewing people at the employment centre.

English:
Barney: I haven’t been able to find a job in six years.
Kent Brockman: Hmph. And what training do you have?
Barney: Five years of modern dance, six years of tap.

German:
Barney: Seit nun schon sechs Jahren ist es mir nicht gelungen Arbeit zu finden.
Kent Brockman: Oh! Und welche Ausbildung haben Sie?

Ukrainian:
Барні: Хочу сказати, що я без роботи уже 6 років.
Кент Брокмен: Яка ж у Вас кваліфікація?
Барні: 5 років танців і 6 років літрболу²¹.

Russian:
Барни: Я не могу подыскать роботу уже 6 лет.
Кент Брокман: По чему учились?
Барни: 5 лет современного танца и чечетки²² [5; 10; 03:33].

A viewer with no previous experience with this sitcom may lose the pun assuming that tap is a dance associated with special shoes for percussion. In turn, one familiar with the contextual implications may succeed in linking six years of tap to Barney’s addiction (tap of a beer barrel) and, subsequently, grasp the sort of training that he connotes.

The humorous act appears quite complex from the GTVH perspective in that it has two targets (TAs):

²⁰ German: Barney: I have not been able to find a job for six years now.
Kent Brockman: Oh! And what education do you have?
Barney: Over five years of expressive dancing and six years of step dancing [my back translation].
²¹ Ukrainian: Barney: I’d like to say that I have been unemployed for 6 years.
Kent Brockman: What qualification do you have?
Barney: 5 years of dancing and 6 years of literball [my back translation].
²² Russian: Barney: I haven’t been able to find a job for 6 years now.
Kent Brockman: What did you study?
Barney: 5 years of modern dancing and 6 years of tap dancing [my back translation].
SO – the man has relevant qualifications / the man has no relevant qualifications
LM – cratylism
SI – a reporter is interviewing a man at the unemployment centre
TA – dancers / drunkards.
NS – dialogue
LA – English

Following Attardo et al. (2002), higher-order KR s should be prioritised. In the three translation versions, the NS and SI are easy to retain as they pose no language-bound difficulties. Even the fact that the Russian and German versions omit the tap pun altogether does not hinder them from maintaining SO since the opposition draws on either having or not having qualifications. On the other hand, the original script is more multi-faceted – its TA is both dancers and drunkards. From this standpoint, only the Ukrainian translator manages to express the ambiguity by coining a novel term літрбол [literball: liter + ball], hinting at an imaginary sport that involves heavy alcohol consumption. Although the strategy hinges on blending (rather than homonymy) and the ensuing Ukrainian lexeme is no longer associated with dancing, this is the only version that maintains the TA and alludes to a competition. While the scene still appears as humorous across the three scripts owing to the SI and SO, punning is only present in Ukrainian. Then, Chiaro’s (2008) umbrella strategies for wordplay translation can be further expanded (as suggested in square brackets) to offer more specific techniques. When applied to (6), they will look as follows:

German: leaving the pun out [translating only the explicit script];
Ukrainian: finding a respective TL pun [retaining the imagery; coining a blend-word with similar implications];
Russian: leaving the pun out [translating the explicit script].

4.2. Malapropism: The Wiggum case

Unless the translator understands what triggers humour in the first place, they risk to either lose it completely or fail to retain some implicature. An illustration thereof may be found in (7), a par excellence example of malapropism:

(7) Context: An overweight police chief Wiggum speaks in the courtroom.

English:
Wiggum: This man has no decency. He called me chief Piggum.

German:
Wiggum: Wissen Sie wie er mich nennt? Bullenschweinchen?\(^24\)

Ukrainian:
Wiggum: У цієї людини немає совісті – він назвав мене шефом Фіггамом\(^25\).

\(^23\) N.B.: GTVH is applied to the original (English) version here.
\(^24\) German: Wiggum: Do you know what he called me? A piggie cop [my back translation].
\(^25\) Ukrainian: Wiggum: This person has no decency. He called me chief Figgum [my back translation].
Dissecting this act with the GTVH model, we arrive at the following:

SO – the Chief Police Officer is respected / the Chief Police Officer is not respected
LM – cratylism
SI – The Chief Police Officer is accusing a man in court
TA – the police officer / the obese
NS – aside (in court)
LA – English

In this case, the phonological similarity of Wiggum–Piggum is reinforced by the visual presentation of an overweight man in the frame. This bi-modal interplay places restrictions onto the choice of language structures in translation – there are obvious asymmetries that call for different mechanisms of wordplay production in two languages (cf. Rebrii et al., 2002, p. 91). The ideal solution would be to find a structurally functional TL wordplay while maintaining the connotation of being obese. In the German text, Piggum is replaced by Bullenschweinchen, aligning with Chiaro’s (2008) descriptive translation. Hereby, the visual component is still emphasised, but it is now supplemented by an ironically affectionate diminutive moniker. The phonological wordplay is lost. In turn, the Ukrainian translation prioritises the phonological resemblance and offers the Piggum–Figgum pair. While Figgum has no implication of excessive weight and is instead associated with someone who does not care, it aims to achieve the humorous effect based on the audience’s alleged background knowledge: this police chief is indeed one who takes his duties non-seriously. Thus, the priorities set forth by the Ukrainian translation are diagonally opposite from ones in German and fit into Chiaro’s (2008) strategy of finding a respective TL pun. Finally, the Russian version is a failed translation case: the descriptive шеф свиней (the chief of pigs) signals an unjustified change of the TA as it ridicules the chief’s subordinates. It creates some contextual verbal-visual discrepancy as the two police officers in Wiggum’s team are slim; however, it still connotes a degree of disrespect. The NS, SI, and SO of (7) are maintained in all the translation versions, but the same LM is only kept in Ukrainian. Following Zabalbeascoa (1993), the Ukrainian and German versions are dynamically equivalent as they potentially reach the audience’s appreciation of the insulting moniker, be it Wiggum’s weight (German) or attitude (Ukrainian). Chiaro’s (2008) strategies then look as follows:

German: finding a TL idiom [using descriptive translation and retaining the imagery];
Ukrainian: finding a respective TL pun [losing the imagery];
Russian: leaving the pun out [failed translation].

26 Russian: Wiggum: He is so rude! He called me the chief of pigs [my back translation].
27 He serves as a cultural stereotype of an average U.S. police officer, following Davis’ (1998) understanding of ethnic jokes and cultural scripts.
4.3. Rhyming: The Skinner case

An interesting case of wordplay in *The Simpsons* is a rhyme (or half-rhyme) that serves a humorous purpose of pretending to not hear something correctly or disguising another word (e.g., [5; 19; 13:52]; [5; 19; 07:41]). Example (8) is grounded in the phonological resemblance between the former principal’s surname and its possible paronymic counterparts.

(8) Context: Ex-principal Skinner, who has Bart as a barbecue guest, asks the boy whether people mention him at school

*English.*
Principal Skinner: Nobody's mentioned me, have they?
Bart: Er, I thought I heard someone say your name in the cafeteria, *but they might have been saying* "skim milk".

*German.*
Rektor Skinner: Und niemand hat von mir gesprochen?
Bart: Äh, ich glaub' ich hab' Ihren Namen mal in der Cafeteria gehört, *aber vielleicht hat auch nur einer gesagt* „Ich hau die gleich eine vors Kinn her.“

*Ukrainian.*
Директор Скіннер: А про мене ніхто не згадував?
Барт: Начебто я чув Ваше прізвище в їдальні, *але то могло бути «з кремом».*

*Russian.*
Директор Скиннер: Никто обо мне не вспоминал?
Барт: Кажется, Вас помянули в кафетерии, *но,может, я ослышался.*

In the GTVH model, this humorous act may be represented as follows:

- **SO** – people mentioning the surname “Skinner” / people not mentioning the surname “Skinner”
- **LM** – cratylism
- **SI** – Bart and his former school principal are discussing the school without Skinner.
- **TA** – Principal Skinner
- **NS** – dialogue
- **LA** – English

In this example, the NS, TA, and SI are again maintained across the three languages. As to the LM, it persists in German and Ukrainian, where these languages’ phonological structures are utilised to create similar rhyming. The difference, however, consists in how the opposition is reached. In

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28 German: Principal Skinner: And nobody’s mentioned me?
Bart: Ah, I think I have heard your name a few times in the cafeteria, but maybe someone was just saying “I’ll hit them right in the chin” [my back translation].

29 Ukrainian: Principal Skinner: And nobody’s mentioned me?
Bart: I might have heard your surname in the canteen, *but it could be “with cream”* [my back translation].

30 Russian: Principal Skinner: Nobody’s mentioned me?
Bart: One might have mentioned you in the cafeteria; but maybe *I just misheard it* [my back translation].

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German, it is only the rhyme that is prioritised, while the Ukrainian translation attempts to account for the context too: the set-up of a cafeteria and the word play around a food-related item (cream). The Russian case, unfortunately, loses the LM. In terms of Chiaro’s (2008) framework, this case looks as follows:

German: finding a respective TL pun [losing the imagery];
Ukrainian: finding a respective TL pun [retaining the imagery];
Russian: leaving the pun out [using blurred description].

The above case again reveals that even outwardly similar strategies to approach the verbal component of humour (in German and Ukrainian) may differ contextually and have distinct degrees of faithfulness to the original, i.e., either losing or retaining the same contextual image.

4.4. Summary of translation strategies

Due to space limitations, the strategies and ensuing techniques are listed without a detailed discussion. Nevertheless, the examples are fully presented in Appendix A.

1) Rendering the SL wordplay (almost) unchanged:
   - playing on the same words in the TL (the pun is based on the same word pair, e.g., the German translation of [5; 1: 05:46]);
   - borrowing the original version without translation (English wordplay is copied without changes, e.g., the German translation of [5; 9; 14:47]);
   - playing on the same metaphor in the TL (the original metaphorical expression is used, e.g., three translated versions of [5;15; 05:38]);
   - playing on a similar blend word in the TL (the TL morphological structure is explored, e.g., German translation of [5; 16; 04:00]).

2) Finding a respective TL wordplay:
   - using a wordplay with the same imagery (the TL’s contextual imagery coincides with the original one, e.g., the Ukrainian translation of [5; 3; 03:43]);
   - using a wordplay with different imagery (the TL’s contextual imagery differs from the original, e.g., the Ukrainian translation of [5; 2; 07:58]).

3) Finding a TL idiom (descriptive translation):
   - descriptive translation with the same imagery (the SL wordplay does not become the TL wordplay and is only described with a reference to the intended imagery, e.g., the German translation of [5; 2; 07:58]);
   - descriptive translation with partially the same imagery (a part of the SL wordplay is conveyed, while its other part(s) is lost, e.g., the Russian translation of [5; 9; 09:15]);
   - descriptive translation with different imagery (the SL wordplay is conveyed descriptively, and the original imagery is lost, e.g., the Ukrainian translation of [5; 4; 04:09]).
4) Leaving the wordplay out:
- **omission** (wordplay – typically graphically presented on screen (Martinez-Sierra, 2006, p. 290) – is omitted, e.g., all the three translations in [5; 2; 03:13]).
- **repetition** (the same line is repeated and there is no script overlap, e.g., all the three translations in [5; 2; 20:29]);
- **translating the explicit script** (the implicit details are left out, e.g., the Ukrainian and Russian translations of [5; 3; 01:30]);
- **blurred description** (loose descriptive translation that does not capture the incongruity, e.g., the Ukrainian version of [5; 19; 07:41]);
- **failed translation** (the translator misunderstands the wordplay, e.g., the Russian version of [5; 3; 08:03]).

The first two strategies are the most intricate and effective from the point of Zabalbeascoa’s (1993; 1996) faithfulness. Distributed by languages, the first strategy is represented by 26 German, 16 Ukrainian, and 11 Russian cases, and the second strategy is applied in 20 German, 11 Ukrainian, and 7 Russian cases. The third strategy – a compromise between losing a humorous act and retaining at least the content thereof – is applied to 7 German, 8 Ukrainian, and 5 Russian cases. The last, least desirable, strategy is observable in 12 German, 30 Ukrainian, and 42 Russian cases. It is only the Russian version that suffers as many as 10 cases of failed translation, while the German and Ukrainian scripts feature the compensatory strategies of repetition and blurred description in the most complicated humorous acts.

Overall, the German translation boasts of both the lowest number of lost puns and the highest number of translated puns. The Russian translation presents the opposite case – it suffers the most extensive loss of puns among the languages under analysis. The findings suggest that generically similar languages do not necessarily share the same unresolved translation issues – some puns lost in Russian are successfully conveyed in Ukrainian. Although the present corpus does not allow for generalisation, it hints at the possibility that the translator’s skill is among the major contributing factors in translation of humour. This finding aligns with Martinez-Sierra’s (2006) observation in the Spanish translation of The Simpsons that humour may be largely seen as translatable if the translator disposes of sufficient background knowledge and holds valid assumptions about both the SL and TL audience’s perceptions. At the same time, one should keep in mind that translating wordplay per se is different from translating humour in general; the latter implies nuanced understanding of the morphological and syntactical structure of the language, as argued elsewhere in this article.

5. Conclusion

This research looked into the (un)translatability of verbal humour structured as wordplay. Focusing on The Simpsons, it aimed to showcase the dominant strategies preferred by the German, Ukrainian, and Russian translation teams and to evaluate their effectiveness. By and large, a translated animated film is considered successful if it is perceived as the original in the target culture. To make it happen, one should seek what Chiaro (2008, p. 578) calls “linguistic compromise”. In this context, the classic concept of equivalence rarely works with humour. The present article also sides with Zabalbeascoa (1993, p. 298) in that a change of lexemes and even subject matter may be
justified to convey the humorous impact and with Yus (2016, p. 238) in that humour is translatable as long as it maintains its pragmatic function in the target language and culture. Starting with the hypothesis that a larger distance between the SL and TL invariably results in a more wordplay losses in translation, it was presumed that the German version would bear the highest resemblance to the English script. However, the detailed analysis of 65 humorous acts in the three TLs illustrates that it is rather the translator’s creativity and ability to predict both the original inferences and the target audience’s interpretation that play a crucial role in the translation process. Where a few failed cases spotted in Russian clearly testify to the translator’s failure to recognise the humorous instance as such, it may be argued that the crucial step to translate humour efficiently is to identify the intention and understand the mechanism behind it. The analysis further reveals that The Simpsons sitcom requires a well-read viewer with vast socio-cultural knowledge to gain an intellectual satisfaction from multi-layered humour.

Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>UKRAINIAN</th>
<th>RUSSIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>[5; 1; 05:46] – <em>pun</em> Announcement by the church: <em>friend</em> and <em>fiend</em>: What a fiend we have in God”. Also: The Be Sharps.</td>
<td>No voiced text</td>
<td>[voice over]: Was für einen Feind – Freund wir in Gott haben</td>
<td>&lt;no translation&gt;</td>
<td>Голос за кадром: Первая церковь Спрингфилда.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Back translation [voice over]: What a fiend – friend we have in God.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Back translation: [voice over]: The first Springfield church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>[5; 2; 07:58] – <em>wordplay, ridicule</em> Chief Wiggum is being tried in court.</td>
<td>Wiggum: Slideshow Bob has no decency. He called me chief Piggum’</td>
<td>Wiggum: Wissen Sie wie er mich nennt? Bullenschweinchen!</td>
<td>Віггам: У цієї людини немає совісті – він назвав мене шеф свиньї</td>
<td>Виггам: Вот нахал! Он обозвал меня шеф свиньи</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Back translation: Wiggum: Do you know what he called me? A piggie cop.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Back translation: Wiggum: This person has no decency. He called me chief Figgum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>[5; 2; 03:13] – <em>pun, outwitting</em> Depending on where the mouse stands, the message on the billboard changes (“We pay your pet” versus “We spay your pet”)</td>
<td>No voiced text</td>
<td>Voice over: Wir zahlen für Ihr Haustier 75 Cent.</td>
<td>&lt;no translation&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;no translation&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Back translation: [voice over]: We pay 75 cents for your pet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of Bart Simpsons and is being interrogated about the tattoo on his chest (‘Die Bart, Die’). He comes up with a witty response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bart: Take him away, boys.</th>
<th>Bart: Schafft Ihn weg, Männer!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wiggum: Hey, I’m the chief here. Bake him away, toys.</td>
<td>Wiggum: He, ich bin hier der Boss - schafft ihn weg, Männer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou: What’s you say, Chief?</td>
<td>Lou: Was haben sie gesagt, Chief?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiggum: Do what the kid says.</td>
<td>Wiggum: Hm, tut was der Junge sagt!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Back translation:

Bart: Get him out of here, guys.

Wiggum: Hey, I’m the chief here. Get him out of here, guys!

Lou: What have you said, Chief?

Wiggum: Hm. Do what the boy says.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bernie: Duh, Homer, why are we down here?</th>
<th>Bernie: Hey, Homer, was sollen wir denn hier unten?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Oh, geez! I told ya, Bernie – to guard the bee!</td>
<td>Homer: Ach red’ nicht Bernie, ich hab dir doch gesagt wir sollen auf die Biene aufpassen!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Oh, you guys are pathetic. No wonder Smithers made me head bee guy……..</td>
<td>Homer: Du liebe Zeit, ihr seid vielleicht vertrottelt! Kein Wunder, dass Smithers mich zum Bienenboss ernannt hat…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Back translation:

Bernie: Sluchay, Gomore, a ya mi t ut robimyo?

Homer: Gospodi, Berin! Ya vse kazav – ohoynemo bjdholu.

Berin: Naviço?

Gomore: Yej’ v vi tupli. Smicher nedaremo priznachiv mene starshim.

6. [5; 3; 01:30] – wordplay, conceptual surprise

Homer Simpson and two other employees are locked in the basement when the nuclear plant safety is being controlled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bernie: But why?</th>
<th>Homer: Ach red’ nicht Bernie, ich hab dir doch gesagt wir sollen auf die Biene aufpassen!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Oh, you guys are pathetic. No wonder Smithers made me head bee guy……..</td>
<td>Homer: Du liebe Zeit, ihr seid vielleicht vertrottelt! Kein Wunder, dass Smithers mich zum Bienenboss ernannt hat…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Back translation:

Bernie: Duh, Homer, why are we down here?

Homer: Oh, you guys are pathetic. No wonder Smithers made me head bee guy……..
## 7. [5; 3: 03:43] – wordplay, absurdity, satire

Mr. Burns: Is that so? Well, I have the feeling you’ll be dropping the charges [presses the button]

Smithers: The painters moved your desk, sir.

Mr. Burns: Ach, tatsächlich? Ich hab’ so ein Gefühl als würden sie die Vorwürfe fallen lassen!

Smithers: Die Maler haben ihren Schreibtisch verrückt!

Back translation:

Mr. Burns: Oh, really? I have a feeling you’d be dropping the charges.

Smithers: The painters moved your desk.

Homer: Whoo-hoo! I’m a college man! I won’t need my high school diploma anymore! I am so smart I am so smart. S-M-R-T. I mean S-M-A-R-R-T.

Homer: Juhu, ich bin Universitätsstudent. Ich brauch mein High-School-Abschlusszeugnis nicht mehr! Ich bin so klug! Ich bin so klug! Ich bin so klug! Ich bin so klug! K-L-U-K, ich meine K-L-U-G!


Homer: Я студент колледжа! Мне не нужен больше диплом о школьном образовании. Я хитрый, я такой хитрый! Говорю по буквам хит-рый.

### Back translation

Mr. Burns: That’s not true! How high would you be dropping the charges?

Smithers: The painters have moved your desk, sir.

Mr. Burns: Believe me, you won’t press charges.

Back translation:

Mr. Burns: Believe me, you won’t press charges.

Smithers: The painters moved your desk, sir.

### Mr. Burns and Homer

Mr. Burns: Is Homer Simpson here?

Safety inspector: Is Homer Simpson present?

Smithers: No, Mr. Burns. Homer Simpson is not here.

Mr. Burns: Well, I have the feeling you’re going to be dropping the charges.

Smithers: The painters have already moved your desk.

Mr. Burns: But why?

Smithers: The painters have already moved your desk.

Mr. Burns: But why?

Smithers: The painters have already moved your desk.

Mr. Burns: No, he has a responsible task.

### Homer

Homer: Oh my, you must be dumb! No wonder Smithers made me the bee boss.

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

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Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

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Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?

Homer: You’re so dumb! No wonder Smithers put me in charge.

Homer: My God, Bernie! I have told you – we are guarding the bee!

Smithers: What for?
9. [5; 3; 18:41] – **wordplay**, Dr. Hibbert, known for his dark humour, shows his patient a hip supplement, playing with the lexeme go.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back translation:</th>
<th>Back translation:</th>
<th>Back translation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Hibbert: This is what your new hip is going to look like [breaks down, the doctor chuckles nervously]. You’re gonna have to go easy on it.</td>
<td>Dr. Hibbert: So sieht ihr neues Hüfsgelenk dann aus! Sie sollten lieber vorsichtig damit umgehen!</td>
<td>Лікар Гіберт: Це ваше майбутнє стегно. Ха-ха-ха. Треба обережніше.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back translation:</td>
<td>Back translation:</td>
<td>Back translation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Hibbert: that’s how your new hip looks like. You should be careful with it.</td>
<td>Dr. Hibbert: Verdirb’ uns nicht den Spaß.</td>
<td>Back translation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Now I’m not saying Mr. Burns is incontinent…</td>
<td>Homer: Ich will nicht behaupten, dass Mr. Burns inkontinent ist.</td>
<td>Back translation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Lisa, don’t spoil our fun.</td>
<td>Homer: Don’t kill our fun.</td>
<td>Back translation:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. [5; 4; 04:09] – **wordplay**, **ignorance, infantilism** Homer is preparing a stand-up joke but struggles with complex words.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back translation:</th>
<th>Back translation:</th>
<th>Back translation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa: Does either of you know what “incontinent” means?</td>
<td>Lisa: Wissit ihr überhaupt was inkontinent bedeutet?</td>
<td>Ліса: Ви хоч знаєте, що це слово означає?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: I don’t claim that Mr. Burns is incontinent.</td>
<td>Homer: Verdirb’ uns nicht den Spaß.</td>
<td>Гомер: Лісо яка різниця?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: Lisa, don’t spoil our fun.</td>
<td>Homer: Don’t kill our fun.</td>
<td>Гомер: Я не кажу, що містер Бернс некомпетентний…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer: I don’t even know what incontinent means?</td>
<td>Homer: I don’t claim that Mr. Burns is incompetent...</td>
<td>Гомер: Я не говорив, що мистер Бернс страдає недержанням.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. [5; 5; 09:47] – **wordplay**, **malicious pleasure, conceptual surprise** Lisa asks children to be nice to Bart  

| Lisa: Bart’s a little upset this morning so could everyone please be extra-nice to him? [everyone’s laughing] | Lisa: Entschuldigt, aber Bart ist heute Morgen nicht gut drauf. Tut mir den Gefallen und seid besonders nett zu ihm? | Ліса: Вибачте, Барт сьогодні трохи на нервах, тому прошу вас не чіпати його. |
| Lisa: Don’t kill our fun. | Lisa: Do you even know what this word means? | Ліса: Дощік нашого забави? |

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12. [5; 7; 11:14] – *wordplay, infantilism*  
Brad Goodman: And as soon as you’re not a human being you’re a human doing. Then what comes next?

Bart: A human going! [gets up to go away] [laughter]

Back translation:  
Brad Goodman: Da Wir sind also nicht nur menschliche “Wesen”, sondern viel mehr menschliche “Täter”! Und wie geht es weiter?

Bart: Mit dem menschlichen “Sich-Verdrücker”!

Back translation:  
Brad Goodman: So, we are not only human ‘species’ but more of human ‘doers’? And what comes next?

Bart: There comes ‘human turn-arounders’!

Brad Goodman: Köln, Frauen im Publikum nicht nur menschliche, sondern viel mehr menschliche “Täter”! Und wie geht es weiter?

Bart: Mit dem menschlichen “Sich-Verdrücker”!

Back translation:  
Brad Goodman: When a human being not only lives but also does something, what happens to them?

Bart: The human being goes away.

Brad Goodman: Коли людина не просто живе, а щось робить, що з нею відбувається? Як ви гадаєте?

Барт: Людина йде.

Back translation:  
Brad Goodman: When we obey to others, we lose ourselves. And what’s next?

Bart: Losing others.

Brad Goodman: Коли ми безвольно, подчиняючись осталим, ми теряем себе. І чим же дальше?

Барт: Терять остальных.

13. [5; 7; 13:22] – *wordplay, taboo, conceptual surprise, malapropism*  
The older attendees of a seminar mis-chant due to hearing problems.

Ladies: Be like boy! Be like boy!

Brad Goodman: Now, the seniors in the back.

Seniors: We like Roy! We like Roy!

Back translation:  
Frauen im Publikum: Wir sind wie der Junge! Wir sind wie der Junge!

Brad Goodman: Nur die Senioren dahinten!

Die Senioren: Leid in der Lunge! Leid in der Lunge! ...

Back translation:  
Ladies: We are like the boy! We are like the boy!

Brad Goodman: Only the seniors in the back!

Seniors: Sorrow in the lung! Sorrow in the lung!...

Back translation:  
Ladies: We are like Bart! We are like Bart!

Brad Goodman: Now the pensioners!

Seniors: Point to quart! Point to quart!

Back translation:  
Ladies: Like the boy! Like the boy!

Brad Goodman: And now in the back rows.

Seniors: Like the boy! Like the boy!

Brad Goodman: Терять остальных.

Старушки: Как мальчик! Как мальчик!

Brad Goodman: А теперь задние ряды.

Старушки: Как мальчик! Как мальчик!

14. [5; 9; 09:15] – *taboo topic, wordplay, infantilism*  
Homer finds himself together with a lady whom

Mindy: I guess we’ll be going down together. - I mean, getting off toge - I mean—

Back translation:  
Mindy: Ich glaube, wir werden zusammen spüren. - Ich meine, heraus gehen - Ich meine—

Mindy: Sieht aus, als fahren wir aufeinander ab und kommen zusammen!

Mindy: Полетимо взаимно разом. Тобто, спустимося взіг разом, тобто.

Mindy: Выходит, мы спустимся вместе, то есть выйдем. То есть…
he fancies in an elevator.

Homer: That's okay. I'll just push the button for the stimulator - I mean, elevator.

Homer: Schön gut, ich drücke nur mal schnell den Simulationsknopf, ich meine den Etagenknopf.

Back translation:
Mindy: It looks like we bump into each other and come together!

Homer: Ok, I’ll only press the simulation button real quick. I mean the elevator button.

Homer: Calm down. I'll press the bed button, I mean the evaluator button.

Gomer: Спокойно. Я натисну кнопку ліжка, тобто поверху.

Back translation:
Mindy: We'll go down together. I mean we’ll go down together. I mean…

Homer: Ok. I’ll only press the bra button. I mean the evaluator button.

15. [5; 9; 14:47] –

cultural reference, wordplay, taboo

Mindy, a new employee, mixes up the city euphemisms Big Apple and the Windy City

Smithers: Simpson, Simmons, you two have been chosen to represent us at the National Energy Convention. Congratulations. You'll be spending two nights together in glamorous Capital City.

Mindy: Oh Mann! In der Hauptstadt, im Windy Apple.

Back translation:
Smithers: Simpson, Simon, you both were selected for the National Energy Conference. Congratulations. You will spend 2 nights in our romantic capital city.

Mindy: Oh my! In the capital city, the Windy Apple.

Mindy: Oh my! In the capital city, the Windy Apple.

Mindy: Oh Mann! In der Hauptstadt, im Windy Apple.

Back translation:
Smithers: Simpson, Simon, you will represent us at the National Energy Conference. Congratulations. You will spend two nights in our famous capital city.

Mindy: Wow! Capital city! The Windy Apple!

Mindy: Wow! Capital city! The Windy Apple!

Mindy: Bay! Столица! Вітрине Яблуко!

Back translation:
Smithers: Симпсон, Сіммонс, ви представлітимете нас на з'їзд енергетиків. Вітаю! Ви проведете дві ночі у нашій славетній столиці.

Mindy: My God! Capital city! The Paradise Apple!

Mindy: My God! Capital city! The Paradise Apple!

16. [5; 13; 11:07] –

wordplay (portmanteau)

Cranberry sauce bottles get spilled in the supermarket. An employee is swimming around in the sauce.

Employee: Help me! Help me! Mmm! It's cran-tastic!

Employee: Help! Help! Mmm! It's cran-berrystic!

Back translation:
Employee: Help! Help! Mmm! It's cran-berrystic!

Back translation:
Employee: Help! Help! Mmm! It's cran-beerstisch!

Employee: Help me! Help me! Mmm! It's cran-tastic!

Back translation:
Employee: Рятуйте! Рятуйте! Фантастична.

Employee: Рятуйте! Рятуйте! Фантастична.

Back translation:
Employee: Рятуйте! Рятуйте! Фантастична.

Employee: Help! Help! What a satisfaction!

Employee: Рятуйте! Рятуйте! Фантастична.

Employee: Рятуйте! Рятуйте! Фантастична.

17. [5; 14; 12:38] –

wordplay, taboo

Mr. Burns: Hallo, Smithers. You're

Mr. Burns: Hallo, Smithers. Ich muss sagen, fabelhaft, wie Sie mich anturnen.

Mr. Burns: Hallo, Smithers. Я такий сором'язливий.

Mr. Burns: Вітаю, Смізерс. Я такий сором’язливий.

Mr. Burns: Айо, Смізерс! Как ты меня подводишь.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18.</th>
<th>[5; 15; 05:38] – conceptual surprise, wordplay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wissenschaftler: Sir, möchten Sie höher schweben, als Sie je im Leben waren?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Scientist: Sir, would you like to soar higher than ever in your life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barney: Astronauten werden? Klar doch!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Scientist: Sir, would you like to get higher than other people?</td>
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<td>Barney: To become an astronaut? Sure!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Barney: To become an astronaut? I do!</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>[5; 16; 04:00] – spatial (visual) metaphor, portmanteau, incongruity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homer: Oh, ich weiß ich sollte Euch nicht essen, O Herr, aber... Mmm..., sakrilösterlich!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Homer: It’s just a waffle that Bart catapulted to the ceiling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merge: Homer, it’s not God. It’s a just waffle that Bart glued there.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Homer: I know I shouldn’t be eating Thee, but...Mmm..., sacrilicious.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marge: Homer, that’s not God. That’s just a waffle that Bart tossed up there.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Marge: Homer, das ist nicht Gott. Das ist blob ’ne Waffel, die Bart an die Decke geschleudert hat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marge: Homer, it’s not God. It’s a waffle that Bart tossed up there.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Marge: Homer, das ist nicht Gott.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>[5; 19; 02:27] – wordplay, ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bart: What has four legs and ticks?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Bart: Was hat vier Beine und dreht sich?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Milhouse: A walking clock?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Milhouse: Eine Uhr, die läuft!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nelson: A walking clock!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back translation: Nelson: Ja, ‚ne Uhr, die läuft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin: I’d wager he has some variety of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Back translation: Martin: Wette, der hat irgendso ‚ne Abart von</td>
<td></td>
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| 21. | **walking clock in that box!**

**Edna:** Bart, is it a walking clock?

‘ner laufende Uhr under der Schachtel.

**Edna:** Bart, ist es, ‘ne Uhr, die läuft?

Back translation:

Bart: *What has four legs and turns around?*

**Milhouse:** A clock that is running.

**Nelson:** Yeah, a clock that is running.

**Martin:** I bet he has there some sort of a clock that is running, under that box.

**Edna:** Bart, is that a clock that is running?

Back translation:

Bart: *What has four legs and it ticks?*

**Milhouse:** A walking clock?

**Nelson:** A walking one?

**Martin:** Let’s bet he has a walking clock in his box?

**Edna:** Bart, is that a walking clock?

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| 22. | **wordplay (rhyme)** Superintendent Chalmers wants to fire Principal Skinner, who mishears him.

**Superintendent Chalmers:** You’re fired!

[Bart gasps]

**Skinner:** I’m sorry, did...did you just call me a liar?

Oberschulrat Chalmers: Sie sind gefeuert!

**Skinner:** Verzeihen Sie bitte, Sir. Haben Sie eben gesagt, ich sei beschuert?

Back translation:

Superintendent Chalmers: *You’re fired!*

**Skinner:** I’m sorry, did...did you just said I was stupid?

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| 22. | **wordplay, rhyme** Ex-principal Skinner asks Bart whether people mention him at school.

**Principal Skinner:** Nobody’s mentioned me, have they?

**Bart:** Er, I thought I heard someone say your name in the cafeteria, but they might have been saying “skim milk”.

Rektor Skinner: Und niemand hat von mir gesprochen?

**Bart:** Äh, ich glaub’ ich hab’ Ihren Namen mal in der Cafeteria gehört, aber vielleicht hat auch nur einer gesagt „Ich hau die gleich eine *vors Kinn her*?"

Back translation:

Principal Skinner: And nobody’s mentioned me?

**Bart:** Ah, I think I have heard your name a few times in the cafeteria, but maybe someone was just

Back translation:

Principal Skinner: And nobody’s mentioned me?

**Bart:** I might have heard your surname in the canteen, but it could be “*with cream*”.

---

*Back translation:* Superintendent Chalmers: *You’re fired!*

**Skinner:** I haven’t heard that. Have you insulted me?

**Director Skinner:** Excuse me, have you called me a liar?

---

*Back translation:* Principal Skinner: *And nobody’s mentioned me?*

**Bart:** One might have mentioned you in the canteen, but maybe I misheard it.
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<th>saying &quot;I’ll hit them right in the chin&quot;.</th>
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| 23. | [5; 21; 15:21] – **wordplay** Homer is so taken by the idea that his mother-in-law might marry a billionaire that he cannot shape a sentence. | **Marge:** He’s an awful, awful man! I guess if he makes Mom happy, that’s all that really matters. **Homer:** That’s right, *money*. Your *money’s* happiness is all that *moneys*.  
Back translation: **Marge:** Er ist abstoßender, widerlicher, ekliger alter Mann. Aber lass uns endlich sehen, wie er Mom glücklich macht. **Marge:** Він жахливий, будь-який чоловік. Але ж мама з ним щаслива.  
Back translation: **Marge:** He is a repulsive, disgusting, old man. But let us finally see that he makes mom happy. **Homer:** That’s right, the money. Your golden luck is the only thing that makes money.  
Back translation: **Marge:** Он ужасний, ужасний чоловік. Але ж мама з ним? **Homer:** Не огорчайся, дорогая. Дело не в деньгах, а в их количестве. |
| 24. | [5; 21; 18:13] – **wordplay, taboo topic, misunderstanding** Grandpa Abe is walking down the street after his beloved left him. He finds a condom and mixes up the nouns *condom* and *condominium*.  
No voiced text | **Abe:** Now I’ll have more time to read things I find on the ground. [picks something up] "La...tex...con...do"...boy, I’d like to live in one of those!  
Back translation: **Abe:** Jetzt habe ich endlich mehr Zeit, um Alles zu lesen, was ich so auf dem Boden finde. "La-tex Kon-dom". Ah, so was würde ich auch gern’ mal tragen!  
Back translation: **Abe:** Now I finally have more time to read everything I find on the ground. "La-tex Con-dom". Oh, I’d like to wear one of these one day.  
Back translation: **Abe:** Jetzt habe ich endlich mehr Zeit, um Alles zu lesen, was ich so auf dem Boden finde. "La-tex Kon-dom". Ah, so was würde ich auch gern’ mal tragen!  
Back translation: **Abe:** Now I finally have more time to read everything I find on the ground. "La-tex Con-dom". Oh, I’d like to wear one of these one day.  
Back translation: **Abe:** Now I’ll have time to read everything I find under the feet. "La-tex Con-dom". What is it even?  
Back translation: **Abe:** Jetzt habe ich endlich mehr Zeit, um Alles zu lesen, was ich so auf dem Boden finde. "La-tex Kon-dom". Ah, so was würde ich auch gern’ mal tragen!  
Back translation: **Abe:** Now I’ll have time to read everything I find under the feet. "La-tex Con-dom". What is it even?  
Back translation: **Abe:** Now I’ll have time to read everything I pick up. "con-dom". How do you eat it? |
| 25. | [5; 22; 03:03] – **wordplay** The sign on the school for adult education: *Adult education annex*. We take the dolt out of a-dolt education. | **No voiced text** |

**References**

Textual and linguistic aspects (pp. 30–63). Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis Stockholm Studies in Modern Philology


