

## Translating the implicit

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*'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.  
'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least — at least I mean what I say —  
that's the same thing, you know.'  
'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. (Carroll 1866:97)*

### Abstract

Translations will always involve a loss of meaning because of the translator's interpretation of the source text and because of differences between the source language and the target language. Such a loss is inevitable and becomes perhaps even more significant when the translator has to transfer implied information such as irony. This article will examine how to translate implied information in literary texts. To illustrate some of the linguistic challenges facing the translator, some examples from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) will illustrate how irony can be translated into Danish. Is the loss of meaning in translation a question of linguistic impossibility or is it a question of the translator's personal interpretation?

### 1. Introduction

Translating what is implicit in a text might seem impossible, and yet the main focus of this article is how to translate implicit information. By *implicit*, I understand what is implied or understood though not directly expressed by the speaker/author in a text or a discourse. Implicit information is often part of the original author's intended meaning, and therefore it is up to the reader to interpret and understand this intended meaning if the communication is to succeed. When it comes to translation, the translator's task is not only to understand and decode the speaker's intended meaning,

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but also to transfer it correctly to the new target readers/hearers so that they may have the same – or at least almost the same – experience as the readers/hearers of the original source text.

The aim of this article will be to shed light on some of the problems that translators are faced with when they translate implied information such as irony. Irony is traditionally regarded as a stylistic figure which often can be used rhetorically. In recent years, irony has been studied in argumentative, pragmatic or enunciative approaches. What is common to these different approaches is to consider irony as having communicative effects. Such effects can be realized by e.g. antiphrasis or hyperboles that transfer an echoing or polyphonic effect. However, it is important to stress that the effect of irony has to be combined with certain non-linguistic phenomena such as gestures, mimics and intonation in oral language. In written language, it is possible to find some linguistic *irony-triggers*, but several linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena have to collaborate, i.e. the linguistic form, the co(n)text, the discourse and the interrelations between the author and the reader and pragmatic phenomena. In this article I will focus especially upon linguistic triggers of irony and the main questions that I will examine here is first whether it is possible to translate what is implicitly said in a source text and second, if such a translation is possible, whether it is possible to achieve the same effect on the target language readers as the original text had on the source language readers.

My hypothesis is that irony can be translated. In this sense, the translator has a central role as (s)he is responsible for the decoding and the transfer of the intended irony. In order to guarantee the translator's decoding of irony, it is important that (s)he is aware of possible linguistic markers of the implied ironic meaning, i.e. (s)he has to know when the language itself, by linguistic means, points out the speaker's implied meaning.

Of course, instead of expressing her/himself implicitly, the speaker could have chosen an explicit expression. An explicit and unambiguous alternative is always at his disposal if (s)he wants to follow Grice's maxims faithfully but, as we know, hardly anybody ever expresses himself explicitly, for many reasons, e.g. because of politeness, for political or argumentative reasons, etc. In most situations of communication, we intuitively choose an indirect expression in order to achieve all the additional effects that a direct and explicit expression would not allow.<sup>1</sup> In this context, irony seems to

<sup>1</sup> E.g. many expressions of politeness are examples of indirect and implicit information and very often violate Grice's cooperative principle and the maxims of quantity and quality, see Brown & Levinson (1987).

be a good illustration of the speaker's implied information being left to the hearer's understanding and interpretation.

When it comes to translation of irony and the implicit, the translator's role is very important: The translator is a hearer, a 'hearer to the highest degree', in so far as he is the one who must understand and interpret the speaker's implied intentions before even beginning the translation. Only when (s)he has done that is (s)he capable of translating and transferring the speaker's intentions to the target language readers. But perhaps even more important is the fact that the translator is also a second speaker, i.e. (s)he is in the same position as the original author, only in a different language with a different set of readers. The translator thus becomes a central figure and acts like a mediator between the source language and the target language.

## 2. Irony and translation

I have chosen to take a closer look on the linguistic challenges that translation of irony represents for translators when it comes to the transfer of the text and its author's intentions. I have chosen to study only written literary examples, although the examples examined below often represent dialogues.

Most of the examples in the following are from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, first published in 1813 and translated into Danish in 1929, again in 1952 by Lilian Plon and finally, in 2006, by Vibeke Houstrup. The reason for the choice of Jane Austen is that she is renowned for her use of irony, verbal as well as situational, cultural and dramatic. She is famous for her descriptions of figures who sometimes turn out to be caricatures/parodies of social classes, attitudes and positions and norms in society. She uses irony in order to criticize the hypocrisy and the pretentiousness of her main characters so that the contrast between appearances and reality becomes obvious to the reader. In her writing, she makes use of free indirect speech. Her personal critical comments on some of her main characters are often loaded with an implied ironic ambiguity which only can be interpreted as irony if you are able to decode the author's original intentions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Just a few words about the main plot in the novel : We follow the Bennet family and their five unmarried daughters. They live in the countryside and the mother's main interest in life is to have her daughters married to a wealthy man. Especially the description of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy, who is characterised as a proud and rather disagreeable man, is central in the novel. The love story between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy is essential to the description of the characters in the novel in which Jane Austen criticizes the typi-

Many studies have been dedicated to the analysis of the phenomenon of irony, its pragmatic characteristics, its rhetorical, cognitive and psychological effects, etc., but very few studies have been dedicated to the challenges of translation of irony. The lack of linguistic analyses might be explained by the fact that irony is traditionally considered to be an isolated pragmatic and/or cultural phenomenon with no special linguistic interest. It is considered to be a phenomenon of thinking and therefore not a phenomenon of any special linguistic interest, because irony is not ONLY a linguistic phenomenon, it affects many paralinguistic phenomena as well. I will here try to show, by means of literary examples, that irony poses a linguistic challenge to the translator and to the choices made in a translation.

### **3. Irony and gains and losses in translation**

Irony is here considered to be a phenomenon which concerns the ambiguity of linguistic expressions, the implicit information as well as the contextual and situational relations between the speaker and the hearer who most often is the target for the speaker's ironic comments. The question which is important to the translator is whether (s)he should employ specific strategies in order to maintain the same discourse effects in the target language as those used in the source language. As the original author's intended ironic meaning is hidden and implied, the translator has to find out if it is possible to convey it in an equivalent way in the translation or if the implicit meaning has to be made more explicit in the target language text. Newmark states the importance of being aware of the differences that exist between source language and target language and also the fact that when you translate, you can never achieve total equivalence:

The translator and the text-writer have different theories of meaning and different values. The translator's theory colours his interpretation of the text. He may set greater value than the text-writer on connotation and correspondingly less on denotation. ... The resulting loss of meaning is inevitable and is unrelated, say, to the obscurity or the deficiencies of the text and the incompetence of the translator, which are additional possible sources of this loss of meaning, sometimes referred to as 'entropy'. (Newmark 1988:8)

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cal class society in England at the beginning of the 19th century. She often does this by employing a narrative voice which reflects both the inner thoughts of the figures and her own critical attitude.

If we agree with Newmark's point of view, all translations will involve a loss of meaning. This loss could then be even more important when the meaning is hidden or implicit.

As irony very often exploits 'otherness', the understanding and interpretation of it become central for the reader's reception. Even though irony violates Grice's maxims, especially the maxim of quality, such a violation is not a distinctive feature of irony. We know that it is hardly ever possible to achieve full explicitness in verbal communication because of our constant violations of Grice's maxims, but the amount of implied ironic information which has to be inferred by the hearer can be even harder to understand than in a situation of normal verbal communication.

The transfer of this otherness is crucial, and it is frequently a more delicate enterprise than might seem to be the case at first sight. The intended effects of irony will only succeed if the hearer is capable of comprehending the implicit, often antiphrastic, message in the verbal expression and of interpreting it according to the speaker's intention. Sometimes the implied information will be intensified in the target language text, in an attempt to respect the original author's intentions. In fact, it is often stated that the translation of implied informations in a source text demands an explicitation in the translated text. In general this statement is said about all kinds of translations as stated by Blum-Kulka, who says that:

The process of translation, particularly if successful, necessitates a complex text and discourse processing. The process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a TL text which is more redundant than the SL text. This redundancy can be expressed by a rise in the level of cohesive explicitness in the TL text. This argument may be stated as « *the explicitation hypothesis* » which postulates an observed cohesive explicitness from SL to TL texts regardless of the increase traceable to differences between the two linguistic and textual systems involved. It follows that explicitation is viewed here as inherent in the process of translation.

(Blum-Kulka 2009:292)

It is often claimed that translation of irony is impossible because it's a phenomenon very closely related to the culture of the source language and to the contextual situation in which it is expressed. However, I would like to claim that it is possible to translate irony inspite of its implied meaning. In fact, you find many examples in literature where the ironic

effects in a source text have been transferred with equivalent effects into a target language text. When looking for correspondances between stylistic and formal effects of irony, you intuitively look for gains or losses in a translation. Some of the questions to be raised in this context is whether or not the ambiguity of irony is maintained in the translation and whether the target text has become more or less ironic? One way to find an answer to these questions is to compare translations in order to find out if irony can be transferred from one language (the source language) to another (the target language) and if the intended effects are possible to keep as Adams states:

Looking at translations and originals with a critical eye makes us immediately aware of differences, [...]. We have to discriminate between a translation that creates, deliberately or otherwise, wholly different effects than its original; and a translation that makes use of different means toward a similar “ultimate” effect. That involves distinguishing means from ends in a way that, within the frame of literary work, is certainly not automatic or easy, and may not necessarily be possible. (Adams 1973:20)

#### **4. Translation strategies and irony**

If irony is considered to be a specific cultural phenomenon with a special linguistic expression, the translator’s task is to find another corresponding linguistic expression in the target language. One strategy might be to find an intermediate between the two cultures which will, so to speak, weaken the strength of the original expression. Another strategy might be to maintain and reproduce the cultural characteristics as closely or as literally as possible which will challenge the reader’s intelligence and understanding of the source culture. And yet another strategy could be to assist the new target reader in, as Schleiermacher puts it:

obtaining the most correct and complete understanding and enjoyment possible of the former [the author] without, however, forcing him out of the sphere of his mother tongue (...)  
(Schleiermacher 1992:41, in Bartscht’s translation)

According to Schleiermacher, only the last two strategies seem to be possible choices for the translator, i.e.

Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader. Both paths are so different from one another that one of them must definitely be adhered to as strictly as possible, since a highly unreliable result would emerge from mixing them, and it is likely that author and reader would not come together at all. (1992:42)<sup>3</sup>

It is not my purpose here to discuss whether one or the other of these strategies is more or less ‘correct’. I will merely examine a few examples and their translations in order to see how irony can be translated and provoke an equivalent effect in another language and culture.

When the translator has to decode and transfer the implicit ironic meaning of a written discourse, he will not find any support in non-linguistic means like e.g. intonation, gestures or mimics which often accompany the use of irony in an oral context.

However, sometimes his task is less difficult, especially when it is possible to find explicit linguistic expressions such as *he said ironically and smiled / he said in an ironic tone*. In such cases the translation will not cause any major trouble for the interpretation nor for the translation itself. An example of this strategy is the following example from Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice*:

- (1) Elizabeth saw what he was doing, and at the first convenient pause, turned to him **with an arch smile**, and said,

“You mean to frighten me, Mr. Darcy, by coming in all this state to hear me? But I will not be alarmed, though your sister *does* play so well. There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me.” (Austen 1813:150)

- (1a) [Elizabeth] lagde mærke til det, og ved den første pause sagde hun til ham **med et ironisk smil**:

”De har i sinde at gøre mig nervøs, Mr. Darcy, ved at stille Dem op på den måde, det er jeg klar over, men jeg lader mig ikke forskrække, selvom Deres søster spiller meget bedre. Jeg er stædig

<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher’s ideas are found in more recent approaches to translation, e.g. in Venuti (2002:15-16). Venuti talks about *foreignization* (Schleiermacher’s leaving the author in peace and moving the reader towards him/her) vs *domestication* (Schleiermacher’s moving the writer towards the reader).

og vil ikke lade mig kue af andre. Jeg bliver altid dobbelt så modig, når nogen prøver at skræmme mig.” (Austen/Plon, 1952:145)

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000), the adjective *arch* means that a person “deliberately shows amusement because [he/she] knows more than other people often with a disapproving attitude”. The Danish translator has chosen *ironisk* as her solution, probably because of Elizabeth Bennet's general ironic attitude. At any rate, in this case, the text itself explicitly informs the translator about the solution to be made.

Without explicit linguistic indications, the translator must normally recontextualise the ironic effect: The message of the source text must not only be given a new form in another language but it also has to be integrated in a new context which has other – and different – values with regard to conventions for communication, social and cultural norms and values, expectations, etc.

At first sight no specific strategies have to be used in the translation of irony. The translator can use strategies as adaptation which opens up for a free and equivalent translation or (s)he can choose a ‘close’ and literal translation as long as the linguistic typology allows such a strategy.

The translator's decoding and interpretation of irony seems to be just as easy or just as difficult to him/her as it is for the source language reader. The translator is not wearing and transferring a specific ironic ‘voice’ but (s)he is just constrained by the typological, morpho-syntactic and semantic characteristics of the language in question.

#### 4.1. Irony triggers and markers

As different means, linguistic as well as non-linguistic, can carry irony, we might ask if it is possible to single out particular markers which allow an immediate decoding and interpretation of irony.

As already mentioned, the occurrence of irony depends on the context and the situation. Probably, you cannot find particular explicit linguistic markers of irony; most often it will be a question of the understanding of implicitness. But it seems possible to decode some so-called *irony triggers* which, together with other signs, linguistic as well as non-linguistic, may lead the reader towards the intended irony of the source text. The presence of such triggers leads to a reading of a certain text or discourse as being ironic.

Though irony is intended, the speaker's intention is most often implicit and the message therefore ambiguous. Nevertheless, it seems

possible to find some indications which can release and trigger an ironic effect. Such indications are always closely related to the enunciation and its context. It is possible to distinguish at least five different kinds of triggers which are often combined and interrelated:

- 1) specific linguistic expressions
- 2) co-text
- 3) paralinguistic phenomena
- 4) supposed common and shared knowledge
- 5) type of situation/genre of discourse

In spite of the interrelations of these possible irony triggers, they will not be discussed systematically in this study which will be limited to the first category, i.e. linguistic expressions

Probably no single – linguistic, paralinguistic or situational – form or expression can be ironic *per se*, but there are some so-called *irony polarities* like the French expression *Un petit saint* ('A little angel'), the Danish expression *Her går det godt!* ('Things are going well!'), the latter often used when a situation is not good at all – and there might be even more. Such irony polarities are probably the only explicit indications of the sender's intended irony.

A whole situation can function as an irony polarity, e.g. if the context reflects a funny, or even tragic-comic situation like example (2a) and (2b) which is from an old French song from the 1930s translated into English (and other languages):

<p>(2a)</p> <p>Allô, allô James ! Quelles nouvelles ?            Absente depuis quinze jours,            Au bout du fil je vous appelle;            Que trouverai-je à mon retour ?</p> <p>Tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise,            Tout va très bien, tout va très bien.            Pourtant, il faut, il faut que l'on vous dise,            On déplore un tout petit rien:</p> <p>Un incident, une bêtise,            La mort de votre jument grise,            Mais, à part ça, Madame la Marquise            Tout va très bien, tout va très bien.            [...]</p>	<p>(2b)</p> <p>'Allo 'allo, Jean? What is the news Jean?            I've been away two weeks today.            While on the phone, I'd like to know, Jean,            What happened since I've been away?</p> <p>All's going well, Madame la Marquise,            All's going well, yes, going fine!            Of course, Madame, there's just the merest trifle,            That is, if you can spare the time!</p> <p>A little news, it could have waited,            Your favourite mare was suffocated!            Apart from that, Madame la Marquise,            Yes, everything is going fine!            [...]</p>
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The song<sup>4</sup> goes on, insisting on even more and more miserable incidents, but still with the semantic contrast, the antiphrasis, as its fundamental structure. The song is an example of one of the classic expressions of irony, the antiphrasis, that is a figure of speech where a word or – as in this example a whole situation – is used in a way that is opposite to its literal meaning. It is the use of the phrases in the opposite sense of the real situation that creates the ironic effect. In this example, the miserable situation and the comment *All's going well* are in clear contrast. The English translation is very close to the French original source text. Such a strategy has been possible because of the universal understanding of the tragi-comic effect that is created between the unhappy circumstances and the butler's comment *Tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise / All's going well, Madame la Marquise*; it's the whole situation with all its contrasts that must be considered to be an irony polarity. If you consider the real situation in which the song was originally written, i.e. as a critique of the growing nazism in Europe in the 1930s and a certain optimism from some of the French governments at that time, the irony that the writer expresses becomes even stronger.

As for the chosen strategy of the translation, the close translation can be explained by a very simple syntactic structure in the source language which can be transferred quite easily in spite of the typological differences between French and English. The universality of the antiphrasis as a rhetoric figure explains why the translator does not need to search for an adaptation to a different cultural context. The situation can be understood even without knowledge of the historical background.

Judging by this example, it seems likely that when irony is expressed by means of the antiphrasis, this classic rhetoric figure of speech can be translated literally without searching for cultural – or linguistic – adaptation. You can explain this ease by the fact that contradiction is neither a social nor a cultural phenomenon; it is a universally acknowledged phenomenon. The translator does not need to recreate or adapt the phenomenon to the target language.

Probably irony polarities must be considered to be more or less fixed phrases/situations which are often used in conventionalised situations. Still the context and the situation have to be appropriate in order to provoke the sense of irony.

<sup>4</sup> Text and music are written by Paul Misraki in 1935. The English lyrics is by Jack Hughes (1936). The refrain *Tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise / All's going well, Madame la Marquise* has the status of an irony polarity that says that you close your eyes to the facts of a bad situation.

Several of the abovementioned indications may support each other in a complex relationship which allows the intended irony to flourish.

#### 4.1.1. Linguistic irony triggers

Even though irony is intended by the speaker, there are few explicit linguistic signs at the hearer's disposal. However, it seems that some linguistic forms can advance an ironic reading without, so to speak, provoking it. Such linguistic forms can be called *irony triggers*.

Some suggestions of linguistic irony triggers<sup>5</sup> could be:

- Lexical: semantically loaded adjectives, the use of words that denote an extreme or an exaggeration, intensifiers
- Morphological and syntactic: word order, repetition, neologisms, superlatives and incongruity between complex construction of sentences and simple, banal content, topicalizations
- Semantic: understatement, hyperbole, antiphrasis
- Pragmatic: violation of Grice's maxims

Even though many of these categories are relevant, none of them can be considered to be absolutely certain indicators of irony. The importance of the context, the general situation of communication, the relationship between the speaker and the hearer have to be taken into account.

#### 4.1.2. Some examples

The co-text and shared knowledge are supposedly the most important indications for the reader's / the translator's correct interpretation and decoding of ironic effects. Consequently these indications should be easy to translate and transfer from a source language to a target language. And yet, the ironic intention might get lost or be misunderstood. Consider the introductory sentence in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*:

- (3) It is a **truth universally acknowledged** that a single man in possession of a good fortune **must be in want of** a wife.  
(Austen 1813:1)

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<sup>5</sup> See Müller (1995) for further suggestions for a classification of such linguistic elements that can – under certain circumstances – be considered to be candidates for irony triggers.

As it is the very first sentence in the novel, there is neither any context nor any co-text, so there is no possibility for the reader to share any knowledge with the speaker (author/translator). And as Austen's novel takes place at the beginning of the 1800s, we cannot suppose that a reader nowadays will be familiar with society and its norms and habits at that time. But with our knowledge of Austen, we must presume that the introductory sentence is a kind of echoic information<sup>6</sup> about the general attitude in British society at that time. It is an example which in fact says the opposite of its literal meaning: It is the women who indeed 'acknowledge' the truth while men with a fortune do not necessarily need to get married. It's only after finishing the whole novel that the ironic intention becomes clear by means of the co-text and the knowledge, the reader has acquired by reading the novel.

When we take a closer look at the semantic and syntactic elements in the phrase, there are some triggers, i.e. the noun *truth* can be interpreted as a hyperbole which often is an indication of irony; the adverb *universally* is a strong indication of exaggeration, so the meaning is that everybody knows this truth and they all agree about its relevance. The modal verb *must* indicates deontic modality, i.e. a necessity and the expression *be in want of* is a formal way of saying 'to need something' or 'to have desire to possess something'. The irony goes on in the next phrase:

- (4) However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the surrounding families that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. (Austen, 1813:1)

where it is stated that it is obvious – at least to the 'neighbourhood' – that a man who is well-off needs a wife, and so the 'neighbourhood' is in fact doing him a favour by trying to convince him to marry one of their daughters.

In the Danish translation from 1952, Plon chooses the following solution:

- (3a) Det er en **almindelig udbredt opfattelse**, at en velhavende ungtkarl absolut **må mangle** en kone. (Austen/Plon 1952:5)

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<sup>6</sup> See Sperber & Wilson (1992:57-62).

In the Danish translation, the noun *truth* has been translated by *opfattelse* which means ‘opinion’ or ‘point of view’, so the chosen translation into Danish seems to be a weakened semantic solution in comparison with the English noun *truth*, i.e. something that cannot be discussed. In the later translation from 2006 by Houstrup, the same solution is used:

- (3b) Det er en **almindeligt udbredt opfattelse**, at en enlig mand med en passende formue **må have brug for** en hustru.  
(Austen/Houstrup 2006)

Both translators agree upon the solution of *almindelig udbredt* (*widespread*) instead of *acknowledged* so the original hyperbole which was further intensified by the adverb *universally* in the source language has been neglected by both translators and consequently, the ironic tone somehow disappears.

The modal verb *must* is translated in two different ways: Plon chooses the Danish modal verb *må* in italics in order to maintain the deontic modal value, i.e. an absolute necessity and she opts for the verb *mangle* (*be short of* or *lack*), whereas Houstrup just uses *må* without any indication of a strong or weak modal meaning; for *be in want of* we here find the translation *have brug for*, an equivalent of *need* in English – just as you need food and drink.

In the suggested translations into Danish, the hyperbole is weakened and loses some of its ironic force, and we see that the translation of the nouns do not have exactly the same semantics as in the source language. This means that even though both of the Danish translations work rather well, the ironic intentions disappear or are weakened.

Another example where the ironic effect is weakened in the Danish translation is the translation of the description of Mr Darcy who is disliked by many of the other main characters in the novel:

- (4) The whole of what Elizabeth has already heard, his claims on Mr. Darcy, and all that he had suffered from him, was now openly acknowledged and **publicly canvassed**; and everybody was **pleased** to think how much they had always **disliked** Mr. Darcy before they had known anything of the matter. (Austen 1813:120)

Mr. Darcy is here described according to the general critical opinion of him, but at the same time it is also an ironic and critical comment on the behaviour and conduct of this particular social class where the use of gossip is a frequent entertainment in daily life. The verb *canvass* is used as a strong indication of the author's criticism of the social class. Normally to *canvass something* means to discuss an idea thoroughly. With the adverb *publicly*, the author points out that it is a general discussion in this social group of people where all of them are *pleased* to talk about scandals in their close neighbourhood. The semantics of the verb *please* and the semantics of the verb *dislike* indicate an antiphrasis. The ironic tone is the author's hidden ironic and critical comment on her figures who love to discuss Mr. Darcy and his life without knowing anything about it. The example illustrates an implicit voice or point of view (the author's) in the text with which the translator has to cope in the translation.

In the Danish translation by Plon, the translation of the verb *canvass* seems less critical than it was in the source language version; the chosen solution in the target language just recalls that the subject was a generally well-known subject to be discussed everywhere. The antiphrasis has been preserved quite literally as this rhetoric figure does not cause any real troubles because an antiphrasis is generally recognizable in spite of the culture concerned:

- (4a) Alt, hvad Elizabeth havde hørt – hans krav til Mr. Darcy og alt, hvad han havde været udsat for – blev nu **åbenlyst fremsat** og var et yndet diskussionsemne overalt. Man **glædede sig** over, at man allerede **havde afskyet** Mr. Darcy, før man kendte noget til sagen.  
(Austen/Plon 1952:118)

There are only a few differences between the two Danish translations. Houstrup's translation says :

- (4b) Hvad Elizabeth allerede havde hørt [...] blev nu **åbent erkendt** og indgående drøftet i al offentlighed, og alle **glædede sig** ved tanken om, hvor **lidt** de hele tiden **havde brudt sig om** Mr. Darcy, allerede inden de vidste noget om sagen. (Austen/Houstrup 2006:149)

The verb *canvass* has in Houstrup's translation been interpreted in a perhaps more general way as *erkende* which means *recognize*. The original sense has almost disappeared as well as the critical ironic intention in the source text. So in the Danish translations, Austen's intended irony

looses some of its original force and becomes less critical of the attitudes of the characters because of the translators' lexical choices and semantic solutions. The ironic dissociation from the figures which was present in Austen's text has not been transferred exactly in any of the two Danish translations. Both of them express the denotative meaning of the verb *canvass* and somehow lose the ironic and connotative meaning which was originally intended.

In example (5), the irony triggers have to be found in the combination of the co-text and the semantics of the chosen nouns, i.e. *delight vs rattle of the chaise*:

- (5) Her fellow-travelers the next day were not of a kind to make her think him less agreeable. Sir William Lucas, and his daughter Maria, a good-humoured girl, but as empty-headed as himself, had nothing to say that could be worth hearing, **and were listened to with about as much delight as the rattle of the chaise**. Elizabeth loved absurdities, but she had known Sir William too long. He could tell her nothing new of the wonders of his presentation and knighthood; and his civilities were worn out like his information. (Austen 1813:131)

The protagonist Elizabeth is bored to death by her two 'fellow-travelers' and their company which is as entertaining as the creaking of the carriage. The implied irony is to be found in the unusual combination of the noun *delight* which have positive connotations and the the noun *rattle* which gives negative associations to unpleasant sounds. In Plon's Danish translation the same effect is achieved as the connotations of the nouns are the same in Danish as in English:

- (5a) Hendes rejsefæller den næste dag var langt mindre behagelige. Sir William Lucas og hans datter Maria der var en godmodig pige, men lige så tomhjernet som sin fader, havde intet at sige, som var værd at lytte til, og **Elizabeth havde lige så megen fornøjelse af deres konversation som af vognens raslen**. Hun elskede originale mennesker, men havde kendt Sir William for længe. Hun havde hørt alle hans vidunderlige beretninger om præsentationen ved hoffet, og hans høfligheder var lige så forslidte. (Austen/Plon 1952:128)

A similar exemple is found in (6) where the father, Mr. Bennet, makes use of an antithesis-strategy when he says that he is pleased by the daughter's

unhappy love story. What triggers the ironic effect here is the combination of the co-text, the father's congratulations because of the betrayal of his daughter, the use of the verbs *congratulate* and *be crossed in love* whose semantics are opposite to each other and, last but not least, the fact that the reader at this moment in the novel has some knowledge of Mr. Bennet's personality, i.e. a man who is very ironical. This is thus an example of knowledge shared between the author and the reader (and also the translator). The reader will therefore be able to easily interpret the intended irony:

- (6) Mr. Bennet treated the matter differently. "So, Lizzy," said he one day, "your sister is crossed in love, I find. I **congratulate** her. Next to being married, a girl **likes to be crossed in love** a little now and then. It is something to think of, and gives her a sort of distinction amongst her companions. When is your turn to come? You will hardly bear to be long outdone by Jane. Now is your time. Here are officers enough at Meryton to disappoint all the young ladies in the country. Let Wickham be *your* man. He is a pleasant fellow, and would jilt you creditably."

"Thank you, sir, but a less agreeable man would satisfy me. We must not all expect Jane's good fortune." (Austen 1813:119)

- (6a) Mr. Bennet så helt anderledes på sagen: "Nå, Lizzy," sagde han en dag, "din søster er blevet skuffet i kærlighed, hører jeg. ***Det glæder mig***. Næst efter at blive gift er det en ung piges **største fryd nu og da at lide af ulykkelig kærlighed**. Hun har noget at spekulere på, og det gør hende interessant i venindernes øjne. Hvornår er det din tur? Du skal ikke lade dig overgå af Jane. Din tid er kommet. Der er officerer nok i Meryton til at skuffe alle landets unge damer. Lad det blive Wickham. Han er en rar fyr og skulle nok kunne holde dig grundigt for nar."

"Mange tak, fader, men jeg ville være tilfreds med en mindre rar mand. Vi kan ikke alle vente at være lige så heldige som Jane."

(Austen/Plon 1952:117)

The Danish translation by Plon follows very closely the source text, except for one thing: the use of italics in '*Det glæder mig*,' which explicitly transfer Mr. Bennet's ironic tone to the target reader. This

example illustrates that the translation of implied information in a source text sometimes takes place by means of an explicitation in the translated text.

### 5. Conclusion

When translating irony, the translator must be capable of distinguishing the literal meaning from the author's intended meaning in order to achieve equivalent effects in the translation. As this study has tried to illustrate, it seems possible to find some so-called *irony triggers*, e.g. semantically loaded adjectives, semantic and/or pragmatic phenomena, e.g. antiphrasis, hyperboles and violation of the conversational maxims. This study has illustrated that irony can be translated, especially when the connotations of e.g. nouns in the source language text are more or less the same as in the target language text. However, the comparison of the source language text and the target language text has shown that the force of irony in translation is often weakened although some of the ironic effect still remains. When it comes to stylistic figures such as hyperboles and antiphrasis, the translator's task is less difficult because (s)he can transfer the ironic effect into the target language text. In spite of the presence of irony triggers, we have seen that different translators do not translate the same text or discourse in exactly the same way because of differences in understanding and interpretation of lexicon, semantics and culture. In some cases, the translator does not respect the source language or the original expression. In other cases, the translator prefers a close, almost literal translation in order to maintain the author's intentions. As illustrated by the translation of some examples of irony from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, understanding and interpretation of implied information often depends on the translator's interpretation, and there will always be some traces left of the translator's personal linguistic preferences in a translation of implicit meaning.

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