
TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE MODEL FOR WORDPLAY ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The present article introduces a comparative model for wordplay analysis and translation based on the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* [GTVH; Attardo, 1994; Attardo and Raskin, 1991] and Zhuravleva's (2002) cognitive models of language play. The model is characterized by six parameters: *activation of cognitive structures*; *logical mechanism*; *functional mechanism*; *linguistic mechanism*; *formal structure* and *semantic structure* on both micro-structural (linguistic) and macro-structural (cognitive) levels. These parameters were examined in detail, and illustrative examples were provided. The model can be used for the analysis of the structure of wordplays on both macro and micro-levels. As a result, it can be useful to translators to help them meet the challenges of wordplay translation. The proposed model can also be applied by translation scholars as part of a comparative analysis between source language (SL) wordplays and their respective translations into the target language (TL). Thus, they will be able to define different wordplay translation strategies. Based on the comparative analysis of the source text (ST) and target text (TT) wordplays corpus in relation to the six parameters, four general types of translation equivalence are outlined. The paper concludes that considering wordplay in a broader cognitive context, i.e., as a clash between cognitive structures (scripts), can facilitate the translation process and can assist translators in finding excellent translation solutions for wordplays.

Keywords: wordplay analysis and translation, GTVH, cognitive models of language play, cognitive structures (scripts), children's literature.

Introduction

Wordplay is a very interesting and complex phenomenon. On the one hand, it can be regarded as universal in character because it appears in diverse communicative situations, including everyday interaction, advertisements, newspaper headlines, films, and literary texts. On the other hand, wordplay is unique because it is based on the usage of different expressive means that are specific to a given language and its culture. Wordplay not only exploits the creative potential of language, but it is also inextricably linked to the speaker's/writer's linguistic personality and his/her strive for creativity, playfulness and originality.

The key feature of wordplays is that they function simultaneously on both meta-linguistic and referential levels because their formal structure contributes substantially to the interpretation of their semantic content and to the achievement of the intended communicative effect. Given the above-mentioned characteristic features of wordplays, it is fair to say that they present a significant challenge to translators. This means they cannot simply be evaded or omitted during the process of translation. One should try to deal with them creatively in the best possible way because they often perform multiple functions and are an integral part of the fabric of the text in which they appear.

Considering the complexity and the specificity of wordplay as a stylistic device and as a translation problem, as well as the fact that translation (as a process) involves not only two languages and two cultures but also different cognitive processes, it is necessary to place the analysis of linguistic facts in a broader context, which in turn presupposes the application of a wider and more flexible methodological framework combining approaches from different subject fields. Thus, the aim of the present paper is to introduce an interdisciplinary model for wordplay analysis (and to show how it can be applied in translation) which combines approaches from Descriptive Translation Studies, Cognitive Linguistics, and Humour Studies. The proposed comparative model consists of six parameters on both micro-structural (linguistic) and macro-structural (cognitive) levels and is based on Attardo's (1994), Attardo and Raskin's (1991) *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH) and Zhuravleva's (2002) cognitive models of language play.

Language play, wordplay and pun

At this point, it is necessary to make a terminological and conceptual distinction between the key but somewhat "fuzzy" concepts *language play*, *wordplay*, and *pun* and to describe their hierarchical relation. This clarification is necessitated by the lack of consensus regarding the definition of wordplay. I assume that *language play*, *wordplay*, and *pun* belong to the same semantic field and that *language play* is a superordinate category.

In my view, *language play* is the broadest concept and includes not only wordplays and puns but also any creative language use, for example, alliteration, assonance, palindrome, anagram, etc. Moreover, it sometimes involves deliberate breaking of language norms and conventions. Similarly to Leech (1969, p. 209), I consider *puns* to involve lexical ambiguity only. Thus, they can be the result of either polysemy or homonymy. The following example, taken from Dahl's (1982/1984, p. 28) *The BFG*, contains a pun based on homophony ("Wales" – "whales"):

Example 1:

"For instance, human beans from Wales is tasting very whooshey of fish. There is something very fishy about Wales."

"You means whales," Sophie said. "Wales is something quite different."

I assume that, in contrast to puns, *wordplays* are realized not only at the word level¹ but also at the phrase and sentence levels. Hence, it is possible to make a distinction between phraseological (wordplays based on fixed expressions and idioms) and non-phraseological

1. See Example 1.

wordplays. What follows is an example of a phraseological wordplay based on the playful manipulation of the idiom “skin and bones” which becomes “skin and groans” and the paronymic pair “bones” – “groans”:

Example 2:

“But because I is refusing to gobble up human beans like the other giants, I must spend my life guzzling up icky-poo snozzcumbers instead. If I don’t, I will be nothing but skin and groans.” (Dahl, 1982/1984, p. 50)

Taking into consideration the fact that wordplay is both a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon, the following operational definition, partly based on Delabastita’s (1993, p. 128) understanding of wordplay, can be provided: wordplay is a result of a confrontation between two (or more) linguistic structures which are formally similar or identical but semantically incompatible in the given context which leads to linguistic ambiguity and cognitive incongruity. (p. 128).

The definition above stresses the importance of two key features of wordplays, namely *ambiguity* and *incongruity*. Incongruity is generally considered a necessary condition for humour². It is informally defined as “a clash of two perspectives on an object, situation or idea” (Genova, 2011, p. 81) and usually involves a sense of unexpectedness and surprise. As far as ambiguity is concerned, it is necessary to distinguish between wordplays and other rhetorical devices which involve double interpretation, such as allusion, irony, allegory, etc. The difference between them lies in the meta-linguistic character of wordplays. With wordplays, the focus is on the signifier facet of the linguistic sign, which plays a key role in the interpretation.

The incongruity aspect of wordplays is taken as a starting point for the development of a comparative model for wordplay analysis and translation. The model is based on six parameters: *activation of cognitive structures*; *logical mechanism*; *functional mechanism*; *linguistic mechanism*; *formal structure* and *semantic structure*. Each parameter is described in detail in the following section.

To sum up, the paper presents a new model for the analysis of the structure and functioning of wordplays because wordplays cannot be translated successfully without understanding their nature – this model can help translators understand wordplays. The model, presented below, can be a useful tool for the analysis of wordplays, comparison of ST and TT wordplays and translation of wordplays.

A comparative model for wordplay analysis and translation

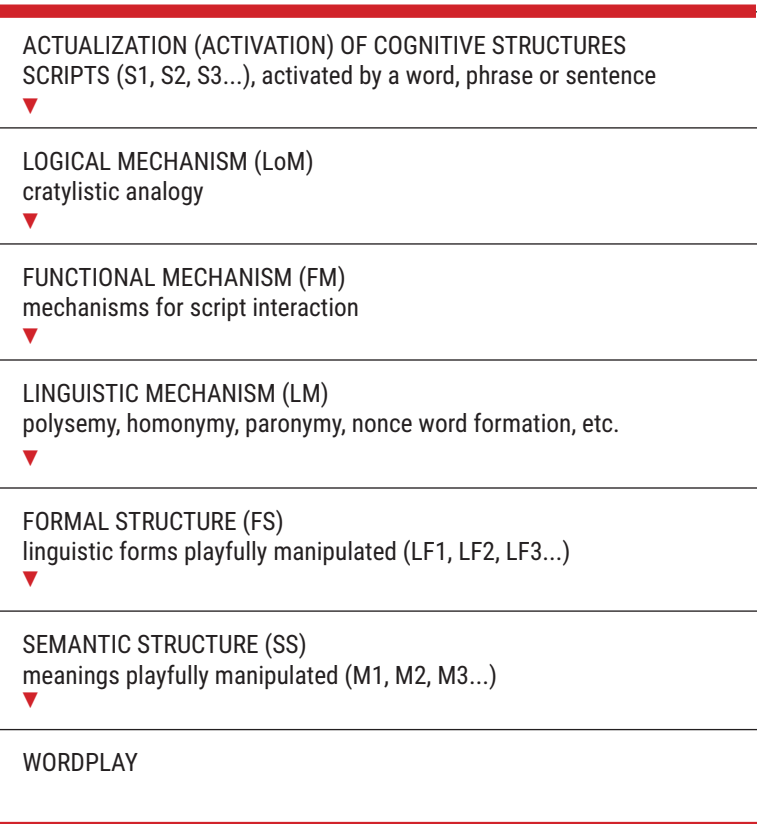
Raskin’s (1985) *Semantic Script Theory of Humour* (SSTH) and its subsequent development, the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH; Attardo & Raskin, 1991) investigate the structural and functional features of jokes, paying attention to puns as well. The GTVH lists six Knowledge Resources (KRs) hierarchically ordered and used for the analysis individual verbal jokes and longer texts (see also Attardo, 2001). The KRs are: *Script opposition* (SO), *Logical mechanism* (LM), *Situation* (SI), *Target* (TA), *Narrative strategy* (NS) and *Language* (LA). They illustrate different aspects that characterize and shape a joke text.

The above-mentioned KRs are used as a basis for the development of a comparative model for wordplay analysis and translation. As Attardo (2002) himself points out: “the GTVH already incorporates

2. See also Vandaele (2011).

a simple theory of humour translation” (p. 185). Hence, in my view, the GTVH can be further broadened or modified, if necessary, to suit the overall aim of the new comparative model – establishing similarities and differences between ST wordplays and their respective TT translations. The comparative model can be summarized as follows:

Figure 1
*Comparative Model for Wordplay
Analysis and Translation*



The model consists of six parameters – three parameters on macro-structural (cognitive) level (activation of scripts, logical mechanism, functional mechanism) and three parameters on micro-structural (linguistic) level (linguistic mechanism, formal structure, semantic structure). It is important to note that the order of presenting the parameters of the model (Figure 1) is flexible and serves purely an illustrative purpose. Each parameter will be discussed separately.

Taking into consideration the principal aspects of wordplay according to the operational definition proposed in Section 2, the first parameter of the comparative model (*activation of scripts*)³, occupying the highest position in the hierarchy, is assigned a primary role. Generally speaking, *scripts* pertain to the representation and structuring of knowledge of events, situations, concepts, or categories in the mind based on personal experience and cultural expectations. Since scripts contain prototypical information of given entities which is more or less equivalent to their lexical meaning, they are evoked by a lexical item, by a phrase or a sentence (Attardo, 2001, p. 3). This statement might lead to the erroneous conclusion that a script is a semantic category. In fact, scripts are mental structures and, respective-

3. See Figure 1 (parameter 1).

ly, cognitive categories. As far as wordplays are concerned, scripts are activated by similarly or identically sounding linguistic structures. Moreover, these scripts interact with each other in a particular way.

The first component of Attardo's (2001) hierarchy of KRs is *script opposition* which is considered to be a source of incongruity in jokes, as well as the necessary condition for the generation of humorous effect. Since wordplays are not by definition always funny the activated scripts may interact with each other in more ways than one. They can be set in opposition, merged, de-actualized, etc. That is the reason why I prefer to name the first parameter of my model on macro-structural level *activation of scripts*. This necessitates the addition of a new parameter on this level – *functional mechanism*⁴, with the aim of describing different mechanisms of interaction between the activated cognitive structures. To this end, following Zhuravleva's (2002, pp. 172-180) classification of cognitive models of language play⁵, I distinguish five functional mechanisms⁶ based on the analysis of a corpus comprising 500 wordplays and their 862 translation variants. The corpus is gathered from sixteen British children's books by Lewis Carroll, Roald Dahl and Terry Pratchett and their twenty-three Bulgarian translations.

The functional mechanisms used for the creation of wordplays are, as follows: *actualization of one script against the background of another*; *alteration of cognitive content of one of the scripts*; *merging of scripts*; *de-actualization of cognitive content of one of the scripts*; and *script opposition*. The proposed classification of functional mechanisms is a slightly modified version of Zhuravleva's (2002) classification to serve the purposes of the model. It is presented in detail below:

Actualization of one script against the background of another script

One of the scripts plays a key role and forms an associative background against which the other script is activated and perceived. The following example from Pratchett's (1990/1998a) *Diggers*⁷ is provided as an illustration of this functional mechanism.

Example 3:

"It's not a cat, Dorcas."

"You're wrong about that," said Dorcas. "See what's painted on it. Just up there, look."

She looked where he pointed. Grimma's brow wrinkled.

"C... A... T," she said. "Cat"? But... but... Dorcas, that can't be right. Not really right. Look, a cat's got, well, whiskers. And hair. And it's a whole lot smaller."

"Dunno," said Dorcas, and he shrugged. "It's written right there. I'm not about to argue with things that are written right there.

Maybe it's a big cat. Maybe all the whiskers dropped out a long time ago. You know? Like some old nomes lose their hair? [...]

When I first found this I thought, oh, it's a sort of truck, well, well, and then I walked up here and I found that it was a truck with—"

"Teeth," said Grimma, softly. "Great big metal teeth. A mouth at both ends?"

"That's right," said Dorcas proudly. "The Cat. A sort of truck. A truck with two heads. A truck with teeth." (pp. 112-113).

The wordplay in the first example is based on the playful manipulation of the homonymous pair consisting of the following components: the proper noun LF1 "CAT" (M1 "a leading manufacturer of

4. See Figure 1 (parameter 3).

5. According to Zhuravleva (2002, p. 13) language play is not a result of a deviation from the accepted norm but is realized by the manipulation of different cognitive models of sense-making.

6. See Demirkova (2015).

7. *Diggers* is the second volume of Pratchett's The Bromelian Trilogy (also known as The Nome Trilogy).

construction and mining equipment”)⁸ and the common noun LF2 “cat” (M2 “a small domesticated carnivorous mammal with soft fur, a short snout, and retractile claws”).⁹ The proper noun “CAT” refers to a single entity, namely the concrete “backhoe” or “truck” (as the main characters – the nomes – call it) described in the excerpt. The wordplay unfolds in this highly entertaining dialogue and functions in the following way: the common noun “cat” activates the first script (S1 ANIMALS), which serves as an associative background against which the second scripts (S2 MECHANICAL EXCAVATORS), activated by the proper noun “CAT”, is perceived. This is evident from the fact that certain physical characteristics of animals (cats) are attributed to inanimate objects (backhoes) – the backhoe found by the tiny creatures in the old rock quarry possesses “a mouth with metal teeth and two heads”. As a result, the first script occupies a central position and plays a dominant role in the perception and comprehension of the second script. Thus, the intended humorous and playful effect is achieved. The second component of the model – the logical mechanism¹⁰ – is not preserved in the TT and the wordplay is lost. The semantic components are translated in the TT but due to the systemic differences between the languages, it is impossible to establish a cratylistic analogy. The type of equivalence achieved by the translator is semantic equivalence and as a result, the pragmatic effect is lost.

Alteration of cognitive content of one of the scripts

The activation of one of the scripts leads to alteration of cognitive content of the other script. As a result, the meaning of a given lexical form is playfully “reconsidered” by adding a new sense different from the sense (senses) already associated with it. This type of functional mechanism is found mainly with wordplays created by means of nonce formations or folk etymology. Example 4 below from *The BFG* by Roald Dahl (1982/1984) is a case in point:

Example 4:

“Bonecrunching Giant will be galloping to Turkey, of course,” said the BFG. “But the others will be whiffling off to all sorts of flungaway places like Wellington for the bootyflavor and Panama for the hattytaste. Every giant is having his own favourite hunting ground.” (p. 34)

Most of the bloodthirsty giants depicted in the novel travel to faraway places to gobble up “humanbeans” (human beings). Except for the BFG, they are all man-eating giants. Some of them go to Wellington, for example, to steal humans because of their “booty flavor”. The paragraph contains two wordplays which are interrelated. Their interpretation depends on two lexical items brought into play, namely “booty” (“resembling a boot”) and “hatty” (“resembling a hat”). The components of the first wordplay are LF1 “Wellington” (M1 “the capital city of New Zealand”) and LF2 “wellington” (M2 „a knee-length waterproof rubber or plastic boot”). The second component LF2 is not present in the wordplay structure but is implied and activated with the help of the lexeme “booty”. Similarly, the lexeme “hatty”, part of the second wordplay, performs the same function. This wordplay is realized by means of the linguistic forms: LF1 “Panama” (M1 “a country in Central America”) and LF2 “panama” (hat) (M2 „a man’s wide-brimmed hat of straw-like material, originally made

8. See also <http://www.cat.com/>

9. All dictionary definitions of words and expressions are taken from the online Oxford English Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>

10. See Figure 1 (parameter 2).

from the leaves of a particular tropical palm tree”). Affixation, one of the word-formation mechanisms in English, is employed in the wordplays to produce the intended effect. Thus, two new adjectives are formed by attaching the suffix -y to the respective roots:

hat + -y → “hatty flavor” (Panama hats) boot + -y → “booty flavor” (Wellington boots)

The two adjectives “booty” and “hatty” are occasionalisms consciously invented for this particular occasion for the purpose of facilitating the analogy made between Panama → panama (hat) and Wellington → wellingtons (boots). However, the adjective “booty”, used as a wordplay trigger mechanism in the cited excerpt, is homonymous with the noun “booty”. The latter exists in the basic word-stock of the English language with the meaning of “valuable stolen goods, especially those seized in war”. As a result, the two activated scripts are: S1 (FOOD/LOOT + BOOTS/FLAVOUR) and S2 (PLACES/COUNTRIES/TOWNS). Consequently, there is broadening of the cognitive content of S1 to include the meaning of the newly formed lexeme “booty”. This is made possible due to a false analogy with the root morpheme “boot”. An interesting wordplay translation is proposed by one of the Bulgarian translators (Dahl, 1982/1996, p. 36). She opted for achieving functional equivalence by preserving the parameters from macro-structural level with regards to one of the wordplays and achieving full equivalence with regards to the second wordplay. The two wordplays play on the two pairs of lexemes: “Hamburg” and “hamburger” (instead of “Wellington” and “wellingtons” – functional equivalence is attained) and “Panama” and “panama hats” (full equivalence is achieved – both macro- and micro-level parameters are preserved).

Merging of scripts

The third functional mechanism is based on the simultaneous functioning and perception of the two activated cognitive structures (scripts) being often included in a common associative field. The example that follows is taken from Lewis Carroll’s (1871/1998b) *Through the Looking-glass, And What Alice Found There*:

Example 5:

“Crawling at your feet,” said the Gnat (Alice drew her feet back in some alarm), “you may observe a *Bread-and-butter-fly*. Its wings are thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body is a crust, and its head is a lump of sugar.”

“And what does it live on?”

“Weak tea with cream in it.” (pp. 153-154)

After the train journey Alice finds herself under a tree where she is introduced by the Gnat to some strange insects from the Looking-glass world. One of these insects – the bread-and-butter-fly – is described in the passage. Its name is based on a wordplay created with the help of a nonce word formation mechanism. The new lexeme is formed by means of blending, i.e., phonemic overlap: *bread-and-butter* + *butterfly* = *bread-and-butter-fly*. The existing phonemic overlap between the playfully manipulated words, i.e. the common sequence of sounds [butter], is a prerequisite for the blending to occur. Thus, there is no need of shortening in between the two blended lexemes because the end of the first word fully overlaps with the beginning of the second. The two scripts activated by the lex-

emes “bread-and-butter” and “butterfly” are: S1 FOOD (bread and butter) and S2 INSECTS (butterfly). They are simultaneously activated and perceived and this effect of joint perception is enhanced by a non-verbal element – an illustration of the bizarre insect from the Looking glass world. “Bread-and-butter-fly” becomes “sladinka-malinka” in Bulgarian. The wordplay is not lost when translated (Carroll, 1871/2004, p. 152) because the translator has successfully activated the same scripts (S1 FOOD – the words “raspberry”/“sweet/jam” and S2 INSECTS – the word “ladybug”). In Bulgarian “ladybug” is also called “kalinka-malinka” (literally: ladybug-raspberry). A new lexeme is formed in Bulgarian – “sladinka-malinka”. It is also based on the blending mechanism: **kalinka-malinka** (“ladybug”) + **sladko** (“sweet/jam”) = **sladinka-malinka** (literally: very sweet raspberry). With the help of the newly formed word “sladinka-malinka” (a term of endearment), the translator has achieved functional equivalence by preserving the logical and functional mechanisms on macro-structural level while changing the parameters of the micro-structural level (the linguistic form). Thus, the same playful effect is produced.

De-actualization of cognitive content of one of the scripts

The next functional mechanism involves the following: one of the scripts gains the upper hand and de-actualizes some conceptual content of the second script. In most cases, this functional mechanism relies on the correlation of ordinarily non-relatable entities to achieve its effect. Example 6 below is from Dahl’s (1982/1984) *The BFG* again. The novel abounds in nonce words and the wordplay the passage contains is also based on this linguistic mechanism.

Example 6:

“It was black with white stripes along its length. And was covered all over with coarse knobbles.

“Here is the repulsant *snozzcumber*!” cried the BFG, waving it about. “I squoggle it! I mispise it! I dispunge it! But because I am refusing to gobble up human beans like the other giants, I must spend my life guzzling up icky-poops nozzcumbers instead.” (pp. 49-50)

To satisfy Sophie’s curiosity about how he provides his sustenance, the BFG shows her the food he is compelled to eat, being a non-man-eating giant. He has to content himself with the disgusting taste of a vegetable called “snozzcumber”. “Snozzcumber” is one of the many nonce words, part of the friendly giant’s “gobblefunk” language, consisting of a large number of funny invented words and expressions. Contamination is the word formation mechanism used in this example – the lexeme “snozz” (informal slang word for “nose”) is added to the ending of the lexeme “cucumber” and the result is “snozzcumber”.

On the one hand, the main concept “cucumber” activates in the reader’s mind a script representing information about a delicious green vegetable with watery flesh: S1 FOOD – WORLD OF HUMANS (vegetables, cucumbers, delicious). On the other hand, the nonce word “snozzcumber” activates another script which conjures up an image of a vegetable similar in appearance to the well-known cucumbers but not in taste: S2 FOOD – WORLD OF GIANTS (vegetables, snozzcumbers, disgusting). The unpleasant associations

evoked by the repulsive vegetable are further reinforced by the noun “snozz”, which bears relation to the veggie’s form and awful smell. These two scripts represent mutually exclusive and non-relatable concepts: (a) something juicy and appetizing; and (b) something horrible tasting of “frogskins and rotten fish”. As a result, the second script prevails over the first and de-actualizes some of its conceptual content. Snozzcucumbers, though similar in appearance to cucumbers, are perceived as something tasting awfully. The described functional mechanism is further enhanced by a visual element which displays the repugnant vegetable. The translation of the “snozzcucumber” wordplay in Bulgarian is equally creative. The Bulgarian translator has also invented a nonce word – “prastavitsa” (Dahl, 1982/1996, p. 52) by activating similar scripts related to food, thus achieving functional equivalence. The same word formation mechanism (contamination) is used – the lexeme “pras” (informal word for “bang”/“boom” in Bulgarian – the vegetable described by the *The BFG* is similar to a baseball bat in appearance) is added to the ending of the lexeme “**k**rastavitsa” (“cucumber”) and the result is the effective wordplay “**pr**astavitsa”.

Script opposition

The key effect of script opposition is surprise, or the arousal of false expectation. The existence of formal similarity or identity between the playfully manipulated linguistic structures highlights the differences rather than settles them.

The next example illustrates the last functional mechanism and is taken from Carroll’s (1865/1998a) *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*:

Example 7:

You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis –”

“Talking of axes,” said the Dutchess, “chop off her head!” (p. 54)

The wordplay in Example 7 is playfully created by means of the homophonic pair: LF1 “axis” (M1 “an imaginary line about which a body rotates”) and LF2 “axes” (pl. of “axe” – M2 “a tool used for chopping wood”). These two lexemes activate two scripts: S1 UNIVERSAL TIME (earth, axis) and S2 CUTTING TOOLS (axe, to chop). Because of the sharp difference, which exists between them, they cannot be merged or included in a common associative field. These scripts are contrasted or set in opposition, and the difference between them is thus made even more profound. Consequently, the surprise effect is achieved. Similar effect is produced by the TL wordplay (Carroll, 1865/2004, p. 52). It is based on the activation and subsequent opposition of the following scripts: S1 UNIVERSAL TIME (“os” meaning “axis” in English) and S2 INSECTS (“osa” meaning “wasp” in English). It is a homophonic wordplay which successfully manipulates the two lexemes – “os” and “osa”, bringing about similar effect – arousal of false expectation.

The functional mechanisms outlined above can shed light on the nature of wordplays, on the ways wordplays function, and on how their intended effect is brought about. They are also part of the comparative model and are a key parameter that can be used for the comparison of SL wordplays and their respective translations in the TL. At this point, it is necessary to call attention to the fact that the different types of functional mechanisms in the classification are not

mutually exclusive. Sometimes more than one functional mechanism can be brought into play in a given wordplay. This means that the interpretation of how the activated scripts function and interact in each example is subjective to a great extent. Moreover, the classification is subject to modification and broadening because it is based on a limited number of wordplays which belong to a specific discourse type.

The *script opposition* and *logical mechanism* components of Attardo's hierarchy of KRs play a key role in the GTVH. The logical mechanism, comprising purely logical categories, resolves the script opposition. Attardo, Hempelmann and Di Maio (2002) propose the most detailed classification of different logical mechanisms – 27 altogether. In my comparative model, I also include a logical mechanism¹¹ component. It is the second parameter on macro-structural level and can be defined as the interpretative mechanism by means of which the relationship between the activated scripts is established. It involves the way two different senses or scripts are brought together. Following Attardo (1994) and his view on resolution in puns, I assume that the logical mechanism in wordplay is “cratylism” or “cratylistic analogy”: “one form = one sense”, i.e., applying the playful logic that the signifier and the signified are phonetically motivated (pp. 143-170). This means that wordplays “carry connotative semantic associations between the two senses involved” and the speaker/reader is well-aware of the fact that these associations are not “real” but playful (Attardo, 1994, p. 150).

Situation, *Target* and *Narrative strategy* are the KRs which are not included in the comparative model. The *situation* component is omitted because, to a great extent, the information related to it coincides with the information provided by the analysis of the context of wordplays and the description of activated scripts. As for the *target* component, Attardo and Raskin (1991) define it as optional. Taking into account the aim of the proposed model, I consider this feature unnecessary since the wordplays from the corpus are not part of joke texts and do not have a “butt” or a target to laugh at. The *narrative strategy* component is also made redundant because it remains unchanged in the process of translation.

In Attardo's hierarchy, the *Language* component occupies the lowest level. Consequently, the decisions related to it depend completely on the decisions taken on the other levels. In contrast, due to the metalinguistic character of wordplays, the most important element in the comparative model is *language*. For this reason, it is further specified and divided into three subcategories¹² – *linguistic mechanism*, *semantic structure* and *formal structure* which, according to Delabastita (1994), “are the key criteria for describing and comparing puns” (p. 232). These are the last three parameters belonging to the micro-structural level.

The parameter *linguistic mechanism*¹³ includes various linguistic means, which are creatively exploited to generate wordplays. Demirkova (2015, p. 119) proposes a detailed classification of different types of wordplays according to the linguistic mechanism used and according to the major levels of linguistic analysis (phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexico-semantic, syntagmatic – idiom-based wordplays – and intertextual – allusive wordplays). A conclusion is drawn that the most frequently employed language

11. See Figure 1 (parameter 2).

12. See Figure 1 (parameter 4, 5 and 6)

13. See Figure 1 (parameter 4).

mechanisms for wordplay formation are: homonymy, homophony, polysemy, paronymy and nonce word formation.

The last two parameters¹⁴ of the model pertain to the structure of wordplays, both formal and semantic. The *formal structure* includes the linguistic forms (LF1 and LF2) that are playfully manipulated to create wordplays. The *semantic structure*, on the other hand, consists of the meanings (M1 and M2) evoked by these linguistic forms. They play a crucial role in the activation of the respective scripts, giving rise to ambiguity and incongruity.

Practical application of the model in the context of translation

Having outlined the six parameters of the comparative model, I will demonstrate how it can be used as a tool for establishing the differences and similarities between ST and TT wordplays and for defining various types of equivalence in wordplay translation. The example is excerpted from the last volume of Pratchett's (1990/1998b) *The Nome Trilogy*, titled *Wings*.

Example 8:

ST: Now there was a rumbling noise. Angalo looked up. "I know that sound," he said. "Infernal combustion engine. We're in a vehicle." (p. 52)

TT: Raznese se taten. Angalo vdigna pogled.

Toya zvuk go poznavam! – vazklikna toj. – Tova e dvigatel s vatrešno gorene! V kola sme! (Komogorova-Komata, 1990/2003) (Literal translation: There was a rumble. Angalo looked up. "I know that sound," he said. "This is internal combustion engine. We are in a car!").

Example 8 consists of two fragments. The first one is from Pratchett's (1990/1998) trilogy (ST), and the second is its translation into Bulgarian (TT) by Svetlana Komogorova-Komata (1990/2003). For the sake of clarity, the comparison on macro-structural and micro-structural levels between the original wordplay and its translation variant with respect to the six parameters is presented in tabular form (see Table 1).

This short passage from the third book of the *Nomes* depicts the main characters Masklin, Gurder, and Angalo on their mission to get to Florida. During their journey, they are compelled to hide in a carry-on luggage unable to see the outside world. They hear strange sounds and try to guess where these sounds come from. It turns out that the nomes are on board of a vehicle that produces a "rumbling noise".

On micro-structural level, the two linguistic forms which are playfully manipulated to generate the wordplay in the passage are: LF2 "infernal combustion engine" (M2 "an engine which generates motive power by burning petrol, oil or other fuel"), which is present in the text; and LF1 "internal combustion engine" (M2 "a hellish engine"), which is not present in the text but its meaning is triggered by the context. This is made possible as a result of the use of the linguistic mechanism paronymy. The paronymic pair, utilized to this purpose, is: infernal ("hellish") ≈ internal ("inner").

On macro-structural level, the two scripts activated are S1 VEHICLES (engine/internal combustion) and S2 HELL (fires of hell/ ceaseless burning). They are related by means of cratylistic analogy. Thus, in addition to the overlap in sound, a semantic overlap

14. See Figure 1 (parameters 5 and 6).

Table 1
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORDPLAY TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH INTO BULGARIAN (example)

(8)	Macro-structural level	(8)	Macro-structural level
ST		TT	
S1/S2	VEHICLES (engine/internal combustion) /HELL (fires of hell/burning)	S1	VEHICLES (engine/internal combustion)
LoM	Cratylistic analogy	LoM	–
FM	Merging of scripts	FM	–
LM	paronymy	LM	–
FS	LF2 (infernial combustion engine)/ [LF1(internal combustion engine) – not present in the text]	FS	LF1 (dvigatel s vatreshno gorene)
SS	M1 (“an engine which generates motive power by burning petrol, oil or other fuel”) M2 (“a hellish engine”)	SS	M1 (“an engine which generates motive power by burning petrol, oil or other fuel”)

is sought. As far as the functional mechanism is concerned, the two scripts are activated and perceived simultaneously. Merging of scripts occurs. It is facilitated by the existing common subscript (burning/combustion). This subscript can be related both to the engines that burn fuel and to the fires of hell, burning ceaselessly and consuming the sinful souls. The use of the expression “infernial combustion engine” can be interpreted as an exaggerated imitation aiming to achieve humorous effect.

With regard to the TT wordplay translation into Bulgarian, the comparative analysis made, reveals significant differences on both macro- and micro-structural levels. Only one of the components of the formal structure of the original wordplay is reproduced in translation, namely LF1 “internal combustion engine” = “dvigatel s vatreshno gorene”. It activates the first script: S1 VEHICLES (engine/ internal combustion). Since the second component of the formal structure is omitted, the second script S2 HELL (fires of hell/cease-

less burning), is not activated. As a result, the logical mechanism parameter – cratylistic analogy – is not present. In this case, only partial semantic equivalence is achieved through translation. This leads to a wordplay loss. The intended punning and playful effect is not achieved in the Bulgarian translation.

At this point, it is reasonable to assume that a preliminary acquaintance with the comparative model will facilitate to a great extent the decision-making process because, as it is demonstrated by the analysis of the Example 8, the TL is unable to provide a corresponding paronymic pair (“internal” → “infernā” ≠ “vatreshno” → “adsko”) due to the existing systemic differences between English and Bulgarian. This means that it will be more productive to view the available linguistic mechanisms and stylistic devices in the context of the activated scripts, which can help the translator to come up with some interesting translation variants. For instance, a similar playful effect in the above example can be achieved by means of the compensatory mechanism of rhyme. The pair that rhymes may be selected in such a way as to ensure the preservation of the scripts: “**gorene**” (“burning”) ↔ “**plamtene**” (“flaming”). As a result, the two components of the formal structure might be: LF1 “dvigatel s vatreshno gorene” (“internal combustion engine”) and LF2 “dvigatel s vatreshno plamtene” (literal translation: “internal flaming engine”), which would activate the same scripts – S1 VEHICLES (combustion) and S2 HELL (flames of hell).

To sum up, a closer look at the structure of a given ST wordplay, particularly on macro-structural level with respect to the activated scripts, can significantly help the translator to carefully examine and analyze the available linguistic resources and to find the best possible solution, thereby minimizing the possibility of translation loss.

Conclusion

The model presented in the paper comprises six parameters and can be used for the analysis of the structure of wordplays on both macro and micro-levels. As a result, it can be useful to translators to help them meet the challenges of wordplay translation. The proposed model can also be applied by translation scholars as part of a comparative analysis between SL wordplays and their respective translations into the TL¹⁵. Thus, based on the similarities and differences found on macro- and micro-structural levels, they will be able to define different wordplay translation strategies.

Based on the comparative analysis of the corpus with regard to the six parameters, four general types of translation equivalence can be outlined:

1. Full equivalence (both semantic and functional) can be achieved when the lowest parameters from the hierarchy on micro-structural level – the linguistic mechanism, the formal and the semantic structure – are preserved and reproduced in translation. This type of equivalence is rare but not unlikely, and is possible when the SL wordplay has an exact counterpart in the TL. This leads to the activation of analogous parameters on macro-structural level and to the preservation of the intended playful effect.
2. If the micro-structural parameters are altered but the logical mechanism (cratylistic analogy) on macro-structural level is preserved, then the so-called functional equivalence occurs. In this

15. See Demirkova (2015) and the practical example in Section 4.

case, the SL wordplay is substituted with a TL wordplay (there is no formal/semantic similarity between them). Despite the dissimilarity on both levels, the TT wordplay fits perfectly into the TT context and fulfils a function similar to the ST wordplay, thus bringing about the desired effect.

3. If the logical mechanism is not preserved in translation, the wordplay is lost as well as its effect. In this case one or both of the ST wordplay semantic components are translated in the TT but due to the systemic differences between the languages it is impossible to establish a cratylistic analogy. Consequently, the type of equivalence achieved during the process of translation is semantic equivalence – the pragmatic effect is lost.
4. The last category can be defined as zero equivalence or non-translation, where the ST wordplay is omitted and is missing in the TT. Quite often, this loss is compensated for by the translators by the addition of new wordplays, non-existent in the ST.

Since translation is a decision-making process, it can be useful for the translators to take into consideration the following guiding principles when opting for one or another of the above-mentioned strategies:

- If full equivalence is impossible to achieve, an attempt should be made at preserving the parameters on macro-structural level – the activated scripts, the logical and functional mechanisms.
- If equivalence on macro-structural level with regard to the activated scripts and the functional mechanism is unattainable, then it is necessary to preserve at least the logical mechanism – cratylism. This will result in creating a new wordplay but will guarantee the achievement of functional equivalence and the maintaining of the “punning balance”¹⁶ between the original and the TT.

Thus, in my opinion, when translating wordplays, creativity and flexibility are more important than strict adherence to their semantic structure.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the translatability of wordplay should be regarded as a relative and not as a binary or absolute category. It is a cline rather than a clear-cut dichotomy. Wordplays are more or less translatable rather than absolutely translatable or untranslatable. To quote Jonathan Swift: “Punning is a talent which no man affects to despise but he that is without it”¹⁷ and, I believe the same is true for pun translation. The proposed comparative model, which considers wordplay not only as a linguistic but also as a cognitive phenomenon which has its own functional mechanisms, can be quite helpful to those translators who do not want to rely on their talent alone.

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16. “Punning balance” is a term introduced by Marco (2010, p. 270).

17. (“Punning is a Talent which No Man Affects to Despise,” n.d.).

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