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IRONIC CLUES IN TRANSLATING VERBAL IRONY: THE CASE OF *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST* IN MACEDONIAN

Abstract: Translating irony is unquestionably one of the major challenges of translators. It subsumes detecting irony in the source text, and, then, 'transporting' it in the target text without marring the effects it is bound to have on the readership. Undertaking such an arduous task, translators need to be equipped primarily with excellent linguistic knowledge, but they also need to have a firm grasp of the various social, political, historical and cultural aspects of both the source and the target text. In that respect, *the ironic clues*, whose sole purpose is to subtly signal the ironic nature of a particular statement, are translators' principal 'allies' in the process of recognizing irony in the source text. The ironic clues appear in many different forms ranging from lexical and syntactic to stylistic.

The question this research proposes to put in the foreground is whether translators remain 'loyal' to their 'allies' and preserve them in the target text. The insights presented in this study are drawn on the analysis of the ironic utterances found in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and its Macedonian translation, *Vazno da si Bogumil*, by Dragi Mihajlovski. The results show that with regard to the overall distribution of ironic clues types, there are no major differences between source and target, whereas among the strategies used, there is no discerningly dominant strategy.

Keywords: ironic clues, verbal irony, translating irony, Wilde

1. Introduction

In oral discourse, verbal irony is a very common phenomenon and its use is normally attributed to intelligent and discerning individuals who wish to

make a particular point. Its presence, however, can be spotted quite frequently in written discourse as well.

Considering its subtle nature, identifying and properly interpreting verbal irony can be a very intricate matter in oral let alone in written discourse. Things become even more complicated when one needs to transfer it from one language to another. What makes this transferring task particularly challenging is the fact that verbal irony goes hand in hand with context. In other words, its performance heavily relies on various socio-cultural, political and, even, historical aspects of the context in which it is used. This implies that lack of familiarity with these aspects invariably leads to failure in deciphering the ironic intent of the ironist. Furthermore, even if the translator's perceptiveness of all these factors is quite satisfactory, nevertheless, he has to take into consideration the fact that the readership of the target text might be unfamiliar with them and, consequently, his task is to find a way to contextualize those aspects in the target language and in the target text, and, thus, ensure the preservation of the ironic effect.

What comes particularly handy to translators in that respect is the presence of the so-called ironic clues. Literature review reveals that there is a wide range of ironic clues, both verbal and non-verbal. Since we are dealing with translating irony in literary texts, the non-verbal ironic clues (e.g. ironic tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions) are exempt from the scope of this analysis. As to verbal ironic clues, research has confirmed their abundance and versatility, as well as the fact that they range from lexical (e.g. adjectives, adverbs, etc.), syntactic (e.g. inversion of regular word order, ellipsis, repetition, etc.), to stylistic clues (e.g. metaphors, similes, hyperboles, litotes, etc.) (Löfller, 1975; Clyne, 1974; Barbe, 1995; Mucke, 1978; Hutcheon, 1995).

This paper aims specifically to shed some light on the treatment of verbal clues of irony on the part of translators when they 'transfer' irony from an English source text to a Macedonian target text. More precisely, we seek to investigate the types of ironic clues used, as well as the strategies used by the translator in handling ironic clues identified in the source text. As verbal irony is one of the main pillars upon which comedy as a literary genre rests, this analysis is based on a very well-known English comedy written at the beginning of the 20th century, i.e. Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and its translation into Macedonian, *Vazno da si Bogumil*, by Dragi Mihajlovski.

In the first section we provide some theoretical background on verbal ironic clues and previous research on verbal ironic clues in translation. Then, we formulate our research questions and lay out the methodology we use to investigate them. Finally, we present our analysis, discuss the results and draw conclusions. We also discuss the implications of our study for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Irony in theory

The very first serious scientific attempts to define verbal irony are inextricably linked to the so-called signals, markers or clues of irony (Löffler, 1975; Clyne, 1974; Barbe, 1995; Mucke, 1978; Hutcheon, 1995). Thus, Löffler (1975: 125) acknowledges their importance by noting that every ironic expression consists of the expression itself and the signal of irony (linguistic or non-linguistic), which changes the meaning of the expression (in Stanel, 2006: 33). Löffler (1975: 124) also purports that verbal irony can appear in a single word, a phrase, a clause or several sentences, or even in an entire text. Clyne (1974: 343) states that irony cannot be interpreted if one does not possess an adequate knowledge of the context and if the ironic expression does not contain certain linguistic elements which serve as indicators of ironicalness. According to Clyne, each linguistic aspect (lexical, syntactic and phonetic) can become a signal of irony in an adequate context (in Stanel, 2006: 34).

Attardo (2000: 6), in his research on verbal irony, highlights that it is of paramount importance to distinguish between the signals of irony and the irony itself. Namely, the signals of irony cannot be equated with the irony itself, since an expression can be classified as ironic even if it does not contain a signal of irony. He supports this claim further by stating that the signals of irony can even be removed from the ironic expression without jeopardizing the ironic effect at all.

Muecke's (1978) main line of argument is that verbal irony is a skill, to say the least, but also an art, as saying something ironic means saying something without explicitly saying it. In addition, he points to the existence of a wide spectrum of irony markers, ranging from phonological (intonation, rhythm, etc.) to non-verbal (gestures, movements, etc.).

This trend of investigating the signals of irony continues in the more recent past as well, and quite a few researchers undertake the task of identifying various types of signals of irony (Kreuz, 1996; Utsumi, 2000; Attardo, 2001; Burgers et al., 2013). In fact, some of them direct their efforts towards detecting as many signals of irony as possible, whereas some merely opt for doing a thorough analysis of only a single signal such as, for instance, the ironic tone of voice (Bryant & Fox, 2002; Cutler, 1974, etc.).

Utsumi (2000: 1787) classifies all the signals into two categories: verbal and non-verbal. The category of verbal signals encompasses adjectives (e.g. excellent, fantastic), adverbs (e.g. surely, really, absolutely), metaphors, hyperbole, exclamations (e.g. Oh!, God!), prosodic paralinguistic signals (e.g. accent, intonation, nasalization), etc. The category of non-verbal markers comprises kinesics signals (casting a suspicious glance over one's glasses,

bowing ironically, applauding, nodding and smiling, winking), and orthographic signals (exclamation mark, dash, asterisk, inverted commas, italics, bold). Since our corpus consists of drama texts rather than theater performances, the analysis focuses on verbal ironic clues only, whereas non-verbal ironic clues are disregarded. We recognize that this is a weakness of the study. We also recognize that this is the only reasonable way forward in view of the resources we have available.

2.2 Irony in translation

There are only a few studies that have addressed the issue of irony in translation (Mateo, 1995; Linder, 2001; Pelsmaekers & Van Besien, 2002; Chakhachiro, 2007; Ghazala, 2007; Chakhachiro, 2009; de Wilde, 2010; Haapakoski, 2010; Linder, 2010; Coromines i Calders, 2010). Pelsmaekers & Van Besien's (2002) study on subtitling irony and Chakhachiro's (2007) study on translating irony in political commentary texts are the most relevant for this paper. The former is relevant as it studies ironic clues and how they fare in translation and the latter as it proposes strategies for the translation of English ironic devices.

Studying the relations between humor and irony in the Dutch subtitles from 12 episodes of the "Blackadder" series, Pelsmaekers & Van Besien (2002: 248) find that of the 211 ironic utterances analyzed, virtually all retain the ironic effect in subtitle translation. Their analysis also shows that in about 14% of all cases, the ironic clues found in the source text were reconstructed fairly literally in the target text, whereas in almost two thirds (62%) of the ironic utterances in their corpus, the verbal ironic clues have been influenced by translation in some way, that is, they have been subject to change in the subtitles.

Chakhachiro (2007) moves a step further to formulate strategies for translating ironic devices based on a linguistic analysis of Arabian translations of English political commentary texts. The strategies he proposes are two generic strategies, namely: i. translating by using different form with similar function; and ii. translating by substitution, addition and/or omission (2007: 232). As we have pointed out elsewhere (Kitanovska-Kimovska & Neshkovska, forthcoming), Chakhachiro's classification has some weaknesses, though, as it is too general and does not allow for detailed and systematic analysis. It is also ambiguous in itself because, for example, it is not clear what is meant by substitution. It does not make a clear distinction between "using different form with similar function" and "substitution", and the wording "using different form with similar function" may be understood as "substitution". In addition, subsuming "substitution", "addition" and "omission" under one strategy is too broad and does not serve explanatory functions. "Addition" and "omission" seem to be two extremes which are here put into the same category. Having said

that, we believe the classification can be useful with some modifications. The modifications we have introduced produce the following strategies for translating ironic clues: preservation, modification (equivalent to Chakhachiro's strategy i.), substitution, addition and omission (Chakhachiro's strategy ii. is split into three separate strategies). It is this classification that we base our analysis on.

2.3 Research questions

Building on the findings discussed in the previous section, we set out to investigate ironic clues in translation from two perspectives: ironic clue types and strategies of ironic clues translation. More specifically, the research questions we aim to answer are: What is the distribution of the types of ironic clues used in the source text and those used in the target text? What are the dominant types of ironic clues in both source and target language text? What happens to ironic clues in the translation process? What strategies do translators use to convey the ironic clues in the translation?

3. Methodology

In order to determine the treatment verbal signals of irony receive in the process of translating ironic utterances from English as a source language into Macedonian as a target language, the first act of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde and its Macedonian translation, *Vazno da si Bogumil*, by Dragi Mihajlovski, have been thoroughly analyzed.

The first step in the analysis was to recognize and identify all the ironic utterances used by the characters in the source text.¹ Subsequently, each ironic utterance was further analyzed in order to detect the presence, as well as the type of the verbal signals used in it (lexical, syntactic and stylistic).

In the next phase of our research, attention was turned to the target text, primarily in order to map the translation equivalents of the ironic utterances already identified in the source text. Subsequently, the focus was placed on analyzing the ironic signals present in those ironic expressions in terms of type and translation strategy. In other words, the aim was to determine whether the translator opted for retaining and transferring the same signals in the target text (preservation); whether he introduced some minor (modification) or major changes (substitution) to the signals when he transferred them in the target text, or he simply decided to omit them altogether from the target text (omission) or add ironic signals that are not found in the source text (addition).

¹ The process of determining the ironic nature of the analyzed utterances was based on the conditions for ironicalness presented in Neshkovska (2014)

4. Analysis and results

The analysis of the first act of the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* and its Macedonian translation shows that 60 utterances in the source text and 67 utterances in the target text fulfill the conditions for ironicalness and can be therefore categorized as ironic. The slight discrepancy in the number of ironic utterances in these two texts can be attributed to the fact that the translator at some points, probably due to the general pervasiveness of irony in the entire play, felt compelled to introduce additional instances of verbal irony in the target text which are non-existent in the source text. This finding can be illustrated with example (1) provided below.

- (1) Gwendolen. *Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.*
 Милица: Освен тоа, господинот Соглеа сè уште не свршил.

When Gwendolen protests that Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet, she refers to his marriage proposal which is interrupted by her mother who suddenly enters the room and witnesses "the proposal scene". In the target text, the translator adds a very clear ironic overtone to the same utterance by using the verb 'свршил'. The irony centers around the pun on the verb, where "свршил" means *to finish something*, but in colloquial language it also means *to reach a sexual climax*. Hence, the TT utterance has a covert sexual connotation.

The opposite tendency, i.e. omitting or not transferring ironic expressions from the ST into the TT, was not identified in the analyzed corpus. This indicates that not only has the translator been very successful at detecting the instances of verbal irony, but he has also been very careful at transferring them in the TT.

4.1 Types of ironic clues

The next step of the analysis was to single out the ironic signals in the ironic expressions identified in both texts in order to detect similarities and differences. In that respect, we found that the total number of verbal signals was 75 in the English and 86 in the Macedonian ironic utterances.

Obviously the translator's general tendency was to preserve the ironic signals in the TT. In fact, in the effort to retain the ironic effect, he even opted for enriching some of the ironic utterances in the TT with additional ironic signals.

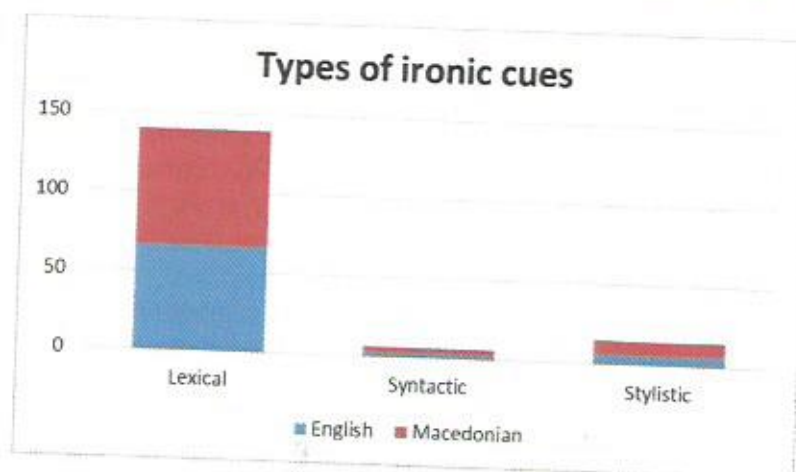


Chart 1: Types of ironic cues in the corpus

With regard to the types of verbal irony, the ironic utterances in both source and target text abounded with lexical signals at the expense of the other two categories, i.e. syntactic and stylistic signals, whose presence was patently much more limited (Chart 1).

The range of lexical signals in the ST varied from adjectives and adverbs, nouns and verbs used out of their normal context, to various phrases and idioms added to the ironic utterances to enhance their ironic effect. The examples below (2 to 7) illustrate this point.

(2) Jack. *I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it.*

In (2), on finding out that his friend Algernon has had his lost cigarette case all that time without informing him about it, Jack is protesting by employing an ironic utterance whose main purpose is to mildly reproach his friend for not letting him know earlier. Namely, he ironically states that he was so desperate that he even felt compelled to turn to Scotland Yard for help and wrote letters to them, which he deliberately describes as *frantic*. The adjective *frantic* enhances the ironic effect as it is incongruent with the nature of the lost product. A cigarette case is not usually something people are extremely worried about.

(3) Algernon. *If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.*

In (3) Algernon voices his opinion about marriage and professes that he is absolutely against getting married. In fact, he is so unenthusiastic about marriage that he claims that if something like that ever happens to him, he will make sure to forget that fact. The adverb *certainly* adds to the ironic nature of this statement.

(4) Algernon: *There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out.*

Algernon is convinced that his friend Jack is not telling him the truth about the real identity of the person who has presented him with the cigarette case with the mysterious dedication note inscribed on it ("*To my dear uncle from little Cecily*"). In the attempt to uncover the truth, Algernon resorts to using irony, enhancing it with the noun "*size*" used out of its normal context, namely to refer to the height of a person, who allegedly, in this case, is Jack's aunt. In other words, *size* is normally used when one discusses proportions of inanimate objects, not human beings.

(5) Algernon. *You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like.*

In (5) Algernon criticizes his friend for being dishonest in claiming that he has got a brother who lives in the town so that he could leave the countryside, whenever he gets bored with it, under the pretext that he needs to see his brother. Algernon's choice to use the verb *invent* in a completely inappropriate context - people do not normally 'invent' other people, let alone family members - simply, serves to further emphasize his ironic intent.

(6) Algernon. *What on earth do you do there?*

Via the ironic question in (6), Algernon actually criticises Jack for spending a lot of time in the countryside mingling with folk people. The function of the phrase *what on earth* in this ironic question is to strengthen the ironical 'flavour' of Algernon's question.

(7) Algernon. *Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow.*

In (7), the idiom *is not your forte* in Algernon's statement directed to his friend Jack, which means *is not one of your strengths*, is also just an ironic signal whose presence overtly points to the ironic nature of the entire utterance.

Unlike lexical markers, there were only several ironic utterances in the ST in which the presence of syntactic (e.g. 8) and stylistic signals (e.g. 9) was detected.

(8) Jack. *Eating as usual, I see, Algy!*

The ironic expression in example (8), in which Jack reprimands his friend for his eating habits, abounds with ironic signals of different types. Thus, the presence of two syntactic signals, ellipsis and inversion, is what primarily captures the attention and calls for ironic interpretation. In other words, not only has the sentence been shortened, as the personal pronoun 'you' and the auxiliary 'are' are omitted, but, also, its word order has been completely reversed. The utterance normally expected here would be "I see Algy, you are eating as usual!"

(9) Lady Bracknell. *You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel?*

Lady Bracknell's ironic remark in (9) is just one tiny segment of her interview with Jack, the young man who has just proposed marriage to her daughter, Gwendolen. In fact, the interview between the mother of the future

bride and this eligible young man progresses very well until Jack discloses that he does not know who his real parents are, as he was found by his foster father in a parcel left in the cloak-room of a railway station. Lady Bracknell finds this absolutely outrageous and will no longer hear of the possibility of having a son-in-law whose parental lineage is unknown. She ends the interview abruptly by posing an ironic rhetorical question which contains two stylistic signals, i.e. two metaphors. In fact, the lady compares Jack and his home with a *parcel* and *cloak-room*, respectively, thus stressing her opinion that the worth of a human being without proper family lineage is the same as the worth of ordinary objects.

After ascertaining all the signals of verbal irony present in the ironic utterances in the ST, the same procedure was repeated once again in order to determine the presence of ironic signals in the ironic utterances in the TT as well. Similarly, in the TT, the lexical signals prevailed over the stylistic and syntactic signals. The range of lexical signals in the TT was quite varied as well, encompassing adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs used out of their normal context, phrases and idioms.

4.2 Strategies of translating ironic clues

The second part of the research focused on determining whether there was any correspondence between the types of ironic signals in the TT and the ST. The analysis in that respect reveals that the translator normally chose from four distinct options: a) to preserve the same ironic signal in the TT (preservation); b) to slightly change the ironic signal in the TT, i.e. the ironic signal is different but belongs to the same type of signals (modification); c) to change the ironic signal completely in the TT, i.e. another type of ironic signal has been used to replace the signal used in the ST (substitution); d) to add a new signal in the TT which was non-existent in the ST (addition) (Chart 2). Interestingly, the translator never opted for the option to disregard and not transfer an ironic signal from the ST into the TT (omission).

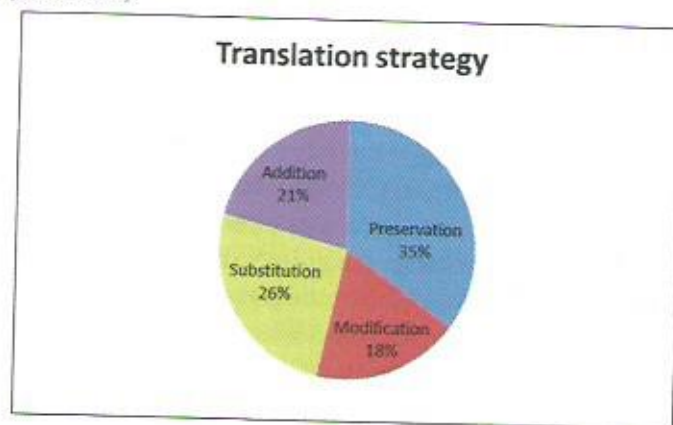


Chart 2: Translation strategies used

The translator evidently employed quite a varied approach toward handling signals in the translation. It seems that his preferred option was to retain the same types of lexical signals and to substitute them with their translation equivalents in the target language. Example (10) clearly illustrates this preservation strategy.

(10) Jack. Well, I won't argue about the matter. *You always want to argue about things.*

Богомил. Добро нема да се расправам со тебе за ова. *Ти секогаш сакаш да се расправаш за работите.*

In (10), Jack does not feel in the mood for arguing and is protesting against his friend's habit to always argue about things. What adds to the ironic 'sting' in his second utterance is the adverb 'always'. The same adverb has been simply transferred in the target language and replaced by its Macedonian equivalent 'секогаш'.

A considerable percentage, namely 25.6%, of the ironic signals in the ironic utterances were preserved in the target language but in a completely new form, i.e. their type was utterly changed and they were substituted with another type of ironic clue (substitution). This is the case with example (11), where Jack is suggesting that his friend's remark, which refers to his treatment of women, was not an intelligent and gentlemanly thing to say. The ironic question that he poses is 'seasoned' with the adjective 'clever' when, in fact, the quality that he wishes to ascribe to his friend's comment is 'stupid'. However, the translator, in this particular case, opted to use another type of lexical signal. More precisely, he replaces the existing adjective with the idiom 'солиш намет', which means 'you are telling somebody what to do when you shouldn't be doing that'. He even intensified the ironic intent of this utterance by adding an extra signal which is syntactic in nature – ellipsis. In other words, the translator shortened the length of the utterance in the TT by omitting the personal pronouns 'mu', 'мене ми', which in English translates into 'you' and 'me', respectively. Namely, the expected syntactic structure of this sentence in Macedonian would be 'Ти мене ми солиш намет?' ('You are telling me what to do?')

(11) Jack. *Is that clever?*

Богомил. *Солиш намет?*

Another rather frequent approach to retaining the ironic intent in the target text on the part of the translator was to use the ironic clues which were used in the ST, but to slightly change them, i.e. to modify them. The modification strategy was detected in 18.6% of the ironic signals.

(12) Jack. *Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual. I see, Algy!*

Манол. *Си го терам кефот! Што друго да правам? Гледам како гиетеш, Тео, наситка немаш!*

The lexical marker 'as usual' in the ironic utterance in (12), which is an adverbial, has been replaced in the TT with another adverb, 'nak', which means 'again'. This implies that although the translator decided to keep the same type of lexical signal, he found it more convenient to replace it with another signal than to preserve the exact same one.

Finally, the fourth alternative open to the translator in the treatment of ironic signals is when the translator adds a signal of irony in the target text which is non-existent in the source text (addition). Example (13) illustrates this strategy.

(13) Jack. *Well, you have been eating them all the time.*

Манол. *Ама ти цело време ги таманиш!*

This exchange appears when Algernon (despite his eating them himself) prevents Jack from taking a cucumber sandwich, saying that he has ordered them for his aunt. The source text here makes use of lexical ironic signals in the form of a filler ('well') and an adverbial ('all the time'). The target text uses a contrast conjunction ('ама') and the same adverbial ('цело време'). Close analysis of the text, however, reveals that the translator adds another ironic clue – the verb 'таманиш'. Rather than using the neutral translation equivalent 'jāde', he uses a colloquialism which bears additional nuances of meaning 'to gorge oneself with' ('to eat enthusiastically and in great amounts'), which cannot be inferred from the source text.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this paper has been to examine how ironic clues fare in translation in terms of ironic clue types and translation strategies used. Our aim has been to find out what the dominant types of ironic clues in both source and target language text are, and to establish the strategies translators use to convey the ironic clues in the translation.

The analysis has provided answers to both research questions. Regarding the first question, the analysis showed that in both source and target text there is equivalent distribution of the different types of ironic clues. Overall, the most dominant type of ironic clues is the lexical type. Out of all ironic clues in the corpus, lexical clues account for 87% of the ironic signals used in both texts (88% in the English text and 86% in its Macedonian translation), whereas syntactic (3.7%) and stylistic (9.3%) signals have only a minor share.

With regard to the second question, the results show that there is no one dominant strategy used to convey verbal ironic signals. The translator resorted to all the strategies to approximately the same extent. If we insist on singling out the strategy used the most, then preservation comes to the fore. The translation has preserved 44.1% of all ironic clues found in the source text. Substitution is

second in terms of frequency with 32.4%, followed by modification with 23.5% of all instances of ST ironic signals. These results are in line with Pelsmaekers & Van Besien's findings (2002). They conclude that verbal ironic clues are not always insurmountable translation difficulties and are often reconstructed fairly literally (in 14% of the cases in their corpus). They have also found that a high percentage of ironic clues (62%) undergo some change during the translation process.

The most striking finding of the present study is that the strategy of omission is not employed at all in our corpus, whereas the strategy of addition has a relatively high share (of all ironic clues identified in the TT, 20.9% are added). These results may not be so surprising given the specificities of verbal irony and its great reliance on interpretation, both of which every competent translator should be aware of. Hatim and Mason (1990 in Linder 2010: 127) recognize that for translators it is not only important to reproduce the propositional content of the source text, but also the clues meant to trigger an ironic interpretation on the part of the TT reader. They suggest that to aid their readers, translators may add items in the TT as "additional cues for recognition of ironic intention" (1990: 99 in *ibid.*). This explains our translator's addition strategy. He has not only failed to omit any of the existing ST ironic signals, but has also put an extra effort in adding additional signals.

Apart from the difficulty of ST irony recognition, Hatim and Mason (1990 in *ibid.*) also recognize the difficulty of reproduction of irony in the TT. The difficulty of reproduction lies in the linguistic and cultural constraints that translators face. As Hutcheon (1994: 155) points out "all markers, of course, are more than likely culture- and situation-specific: what may function ironically in one social context might well gravely offend in another". It is obviously with this in mind that the translator from our study opted for strategies like modification and substitution. Such strategies may be indispensable for a book of the type comprising our corpus, describing situations which are socio-culturally, temporally and spatially distant from the TT reader. The translator seems to have been aware that in this case superior textual level triggering of ironic effect is at play, which affects lower level linguistic units. As we have pointed out elsewhere (Kitanovska-Kimovska & Neskovska, forthcoming), the title of the play centers around a pun (Earnest as a proper name, and *earnest* as an adjective meaning 'very serious and sincere') on which the dramatic irony in the whole play rests. The decision to convey the key pun triggers a chain of decisions that affect the way irony is attained and signaled throughout the play. Conveying 'Earnest' as 'Bogumil' (Bogumil as a proper name and *bogumil* as an adjective meaning 'dear to God') triggers the change of all other names and cultural references. The change of the key ironic clue has led to a change in the socio-cultural, temporal and spatial context too. Thus, the original English society has become

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Macedonian society, English characters have become Macedonian characters, the English language has become the Macedonian language, the English ironic clues have become Macedonian ironic clues. Such a clearly domesticating global strategy (in Venuti's terminology 2008) has led to the many modifications and substitutions of verbal ironic clues we have identified in this study.

6. Conclusions and implications

To summarize, the detailed examination of the first act of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and its translation into Macedonian, *Vazno da si Bogumil*, confirms that ironic signals are vital in achieving an ironic effect, i.e. in conveying an ironic intention in written discourse. This study yields findings which are in line with other researchers' claims that the category of signals of irony is quite prolific. Lexical verbal signals prevail over syntactic and stylistic markers.

As to the treatment verbal signals of irony receive in the translation process, the study found that a range of different strategies are used. It seems that the presence of ironic clues is inevitable in the target text. Depending on the correspondence of linguistic structures between source and target language and the availability of linguistic forms in the TT, as well as a translator's ingenuity and creativity, signals of irony are either completely preserved, slightly modified, substituted or added. In our corpus, there were no instances of omission of verbal ironic signals.

The present study provides empirical evidence for irony in translation between English and Macedonian. The evidence sheds light on the types of ironic clues used and the strategies employed to convey them in another language and culture. Having said that, the study has some limitations in terms of scope and depth of analysis and the findings it presents need to be further tested. Issues to investigate could include: Is there any relationship between the type of ironic clue and the translation strategy used? Is there any relationship between genre type and ironic clue translation strategy? How would the size of the corpus affect these results? Does time period influence the way ironic clues are handled in translation? We leave these questions open for other studies to follow.

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