THE RECEPTION OF IRONY IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

Oana Momiţă (Babîi), PhD Student, "Al. Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi

Abstract: This study aims to present a new approach to translation analysis through the effect that a concept such as irony has on the target readers. It focuses on the receiver of the translated literary works, for the purpose of conducting a comparison of the effect - considered as a direct result of the quality of the translation - of irony on several categories of readers. For this purpose, a survey was carried out which offered numerical findings leading to objective conclusions as regards the reception of irony in translation. In actualizing the translated literary texts, this study shows that an essential mission belongs to the translator who plays a double role: that of reader/interpreter of the original work and writer of the translated literary work.

Keywords: literature, translation, irony, reception, actualization

Introduction:

In the past, it was believed that authors made deliberate use of irony in order to encode a message and interwove just the right amount of clues within the literary work to coordinate the readers on the right path towards assuming his intention. Aware of the literary context in which they were writing, as well as of the reading habits of the audience they were writing for, even the authors complied with the norms of the time and acted as the sole conveyors of meaning by creating liaisons that were clear indicators of their true intention in order to make interpretation possible. But times have changed and nowadays the modern theories have found a much more active use for the readers which has inevitably reduced the authority of the author in the interpretive process. The intentionalist position of the authoritarian ironist, followed by the antithetic position of the authoritarian reader, is now, according to irony theorist Linda Hutcheon (Hutcheon 2005: 114), completed by a third position of "shared responsibility for both in the use and attribution of meaning".

Irony has been studied in the context of reader-response theories before, but in original form, never in translation. My intention in what follows is, therefore, to discuss critically the impact of irony in the translation of literary works, on the basis of the main reader-response theories. The survey carried out for this purpose on two groups of students of different levels of studies, will offer numerical findings that will allow me to draw objective conclusions as regards the reception of irony in translation. I shall start from the hypothesis that if the texts are recognised as ironic and the subjects motivate their decision on the right grounds, the irony in translation has had the same effect as the original.

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

The reception of irony in translation, a process of re-negotiation of meaning:

The reader-response theory is an integral part of the literary theory that focuses its attention on the reader and on the way in which s/he receives the literary work, unlike other more traditional theories that focus primarily on the author or on the structure of the literary work. In this context of reader-response theories, irony widens the scope of the process of interpretation because it inevitably offers the receiver more than one possible meaning in reconstructing the message in the act of reading. Irony is an indirect kind of communication, therefore its interpretation can be regarded as a continuous *negotiation* of meanings between ironist, text and receiver. In translation, however, a fourth actor is involved, namely the translator, who has a very important role in dictating the manner in which the translated ironic text is *re*-negotiated by the receiver. Nevertheless, there has not been carried out any study to date on the reception of irony in translation.

Survey:

1. Aim - The study below aims to verify to what extent irony is opaque or transparent in translation, and how the translation of ironic excerpts from the authors I have chosen are received by the target readers. Based on literary criticism on the authors chosen, I shall start from the presumption that if the texts are recognised as ironic and the subjects motivate their decision on the right grounds, the irony in translation has had the same effect as the original. Given the fact that the area of ironical interaction is "ill-explored, and even less understood as opposed to the traditional analyses of irony, which focus almost exclusively on the ironical utterance itself" (Eisterhold, Jodi 2006: 1240), I shall first describe the sociolinguistic variables of the subjects, i.e. gender, age, setting, education, etc., in order to have a better understanding of the results.

2. Methodology - This study will focus on the receiver of the translated literary works, for the purpose of conducting a comparison of the effect - considered as a direct result of the quality of the translation - produced by the translation of irony on several categories of readers: students in translation studies at undergraduate and master levels. For this purpose, I have applied a laboratory method of data collection in order to test the comprehension of irony in translation, namely creating a survey and observing the participants while completing it. The survey contains titles, short dialogues or ironic passages in translation from the corpus of texts chosen, in order to be analysed by the participants, the latter having full freedom in answering the question *is(n't) it ironic?* and motivating their responses without being conditioned by other criteria than irony. Their comments are written down in the column dedicated to their observations. The numerical results obtained will serve to objectively support the validity of the hypotheses, analyzes and conclusions through the qualitative method.

3. Material - The present survey is based on twenty one texts collected from the translation into Romanian of some of the literary works, originally written into English, the titles and authors of which shall be revealed in the analysis of results. Due to the space limitation imposed upon this

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

article, however, I shall quote only fifteen of the texts. The literary works belong to different authors from different periods of time, and convey different types of irony, in an attempt to study the reception of irony in translation in all its complexity, not particular or limited to one author or literary work.

4. Participants - Thirty students attending "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi have kindly volunteered to take part in this survey. Fifteen of them were at the moment the survey was taken in their second year of LMA English-French studies, aged 20-21, and the other fifteen were in their first year of MA in Translation Studies and Terminology English-French, aged 23-37. Despite the fact that the audience is mixed-gendered, most of the participants are women, in number of 13 (86%) in the first group and 14 (93%) in the second one.

5. Setting - The data was collected in classroom interaction in two separate sessions, one for each group of students. Both meetings, which took place on 16 and 26 May 2014 were, however, designed to take place under very similar conditions to ensure the same level of comfort, intimacy, silence, etc., in order to reproduce a natural reading environment.

6. Survey

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
1.	- Doar așa, ca să vă dau o idee generală, le explică el. Firește că trebuia să capete o idee generală, de vreme ce urmau să-și îndeplinească inteligent munca - deși prea multe nu trebuia să știe; mai bine zis era convenabil să știe cât mai puțin, ca să poată ajunge membri adevărați și fericiți ai colectivității.	Group 1: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. The irony is accomplished by using terms which give a different connotation to the literal meaning as well as subtleties. 2. Being a happy member of the community doesn't really imply knowing less than necessary. Or does it?
		Group 2: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. The less you know, the happier you are; that's an irony. 2. They are supposed to do their job intelligently though they should not know too much. 3. Describing the "intelligent" way they should have worked, while knowing as less as possible, in order to be "true, happy members of the society". 4. I can envision what the original would sound like in English. The use of "firește" greatly contributes to preserving the irony.
2.	DOAMNA PEARCE *(netulburată)*: Nu, domnule Higgins, nu sunteți deloc atent la ce	Group 1: 77.7% yes 22.2% no 0% not sure	1. The antithesis between what he claims (that he doesn't swear) and what he in fact does; as well as the stage directions between brackets ("outraged" and "with emphasis")

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
	spuneți când nu găsiți un lucru sau când sunteți cam nerăbdător. În ce mă privește, nu are nici o importanță, m-am învățat. Dar în fața fetei nu trebuie să vorbiți urât. HIGGINS *(indignat)*: Eu să vorbesc urât! *(Cu emfază:)* Eu nu înjur niciodată. Detest obiceiul acesta! Ce dracu vrei să spui?		2. The irony is accomplished through the fact that Mr. Higgins contradicts his sayings through his deeds.
		Group 2: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. The man swears he doesn't swear, but in fact he does just that. 2. She doesn't accept the fact that he talks the way he does, so she cannot get used to that. 3. The construction conjonctive + exclamation mark. 4. Irony enhanced by the addition between brackets. 5. The irony consists in the fact that the character affirms very convincingly that he does not swear by actually swearing.
3.	În camera ei, domnișoara Fulkes luă loc și începu să citească - pentru a-și îmbogăți cunoștințele. Cartea se numea *Avuția națiunilor*. Știa că Adam Smith e celebru. O carte pe care trebuia s-o citești. O culme a gândirii și a scrisului. Familia domnișoarei Fulkes era săracă, dar instruită. Trebuie să iubim lucrurile înălțătoare când le întâlnim.	Group 1: 33.3% yes 55.5% no 11.1% not sure	1. The fact that she was reading this book only because its author is famous (and in order to "enhance her knowledge"). "Must" from the last sentence may make one think of a half-learned person. 2. The author underlines Mrs. Fulkes' superficiality. 3. Contrast between Mrs. Fulkes's status and her desire to enrich her knowledge.
		Group 2: 50% yes 12.5% no 37.5% not sure	1. It implies that one must do something if everybody else does it, without needing to analyse the situation, and think for oneself. 2. I think the author makes reference to the persons who think they are very intelligent and above everyone just because they have read certain books. 3. The author is ironic with regard to the character's choice of reading and the reasons why she is reading that particular book.
4.	ALGERNON: Adevărul este rareori pur, și niciodată simplu. Altminteri, viața modernă ar fi foarte plictisitoare, iar literatura modernă cu totul	Group 1: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. Very widely spread behaviour, especially in Romania. 2. Algernon is surely against the journalists and considers them very uneducated. 3. The sentence "better leave it..." makes us realize that the next sentence is ironic. 4. The irony is achieved through the contrast be-

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
	imposibilă. JACK: N-ar fi nici o pagubă. ALGERNON: Dragul meu, nu eşti tare în critică literară. Nu te hazarda. Mai bine las-o pe seama celor care nu au dat pe la universitate. Ei critică atît de bine prin gazete.		tween the two characters' opinions. 5. Irony against the intelligence of students.
		Group 2: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. It implies that the ones who always criticize are usually not the right people to do so. 2. Jack doesn't seem to appreciate the modern literature. Obviously they don't believe that the ones who didn't go to university could do better. 3. Irony referring to modern life and literature ("so well"). 4. Algernon uses irony to criticize those who tend to comment and pretend to know everything even though they are not accomplished enough to do that.
5.	- Oricum, de un lucru putem fi siguri: oricine o fi fost, cât a trăit a fost fericit. Acum toată lumea e fericită. - Da, "acum toată lumea e fericită", îl îngână Lenina. Amândoi auziseră aceste vorbe repetate de o sută cincizeci de ori în fiecare noapte, vreme de doisprezece ani.	Group 1: 88.8% yes 11.1% no 0% not sure	1. The narrator's exaggeration; maybe it was a verbal tic. 2. The characters are pretending to be happy; they are part of the same ritual and they are sick of it every single time they mention it. 3. The repetition of a said line in a text gives the impression of slight irony and low level of education at the same time.
		Group 2: 75% yes 25% no 0% not sure	1. He's obviously not happy anymore, as he's no longer alive. Both of them are being sarcastic. 2. The irony comes from the repetition, time related words. 3. Insufficient data.
6.	JACK: Avocaţii familiei Cardew sînt domnii Markby, Markby şi Markby. LADY BRACKNELL: Markby, Markby şi Markby? O firmă cu prestigiu de prim rang în această branşă. După cum mi s-a spus, unul din domnii Markby poate fi văzut din cînd	Group 1: 87,5% yes 0% no 12,5% not sure	1. The repetition of Markby's name. This shows their lack of personality and the fact that they don't stand out through anything. 2. The author could have abbreviate the name or make an allusion to this "treble alliance". 3. The firm's prestige is judged according to its members' presence at parties.
		Group 2: 25% yes 25% no 50% not sure	1. The text is funny, but it doesn't seem to be ironic. 2. One cannot identify the Markby from the three lawyers. 3. It is either Lady Bracknell who is being ironic towards Jack's belief that there are three lawyers

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
	în cînd la serate.		called Markby of the author is emphasizing Lady Bracknell's gullibility.
7.	Ei bine, unul dintre lucrurile pe care *nu le va face* pe timpul şederii în Anglia este o vizită la mormântul scriitoarei. Probabil că a gândit cu voce tare, fiindcă Mary Makepeace îl întreabă dacă Jane Austen e numele bunicii sale. Răspunse că i se pare extrem de improbabil.	Group 1: 33.3% yes 33.3% no 33.3% not sure	1. The fact that it is written with italics. In general, this is a clue of irony in a text. 2. The irony intended in the source text was probably lost in translation. 3. He obviously knows the name of his grandmother. 4. Mary Makepeace did not know that Jane Austen was a famous writer.
		Group 2: 30% yes 30% no 40% not sure	1. The entire conversation seems ironic. 2. One usually knows the name of his/her grand-mother. 3. Perhaps the emphasis on his not visiting the writ-er's grave is ironic because it seems rather over-reacted.
8.	Ce înseamnă să fii onest	Group 1: 44.4% yes 33.3% no 22.2% not sure	1. Probably a rhetorical question. 2. Depending on context, it could have conse-quences. 3. It's a plain sentence. 4. This statement makes me think the opposite.
		Group 2: 12.5% yes 62.5% no 25% not sure 1 - yes and no	1. It depends on the context. 2. There should be an exclamation night as a sign of irony. 3. Lack of context.
9.	Nizar a zîmbit ca să mă liniştească. (Aşa îl cheamă pe consultantul meu ortoped, domnul Nizar. Eu îi spun Ab-dul Rotul. Nu cînd e de faţă, normal. E din Orientul Apropiat, din Liban, Siria, sau aşa ceva şi, din cîte ştiu, nu-l bate gîndul să se întoarcă.)	Group 1: 66.6% yes 11.1% no 22.2% not sure	1. The fact that he calls him names behind his back. But this is a milder, friendlier irony. 2. Using the nickname without Nizar's knowledge. 3. An ironic reference to a bone of a human body, associated with the name Abdul, resulting in a funny construction. 4. The nickname used could give the impression of irony, but I don't believe so.
		Group 2: 50% yes 25% no 25% not sure	1. The nickname, his relationship with the one to which it is attributed and the assurance of the inter-locutor of the fact that the doctor does not know about it. 2. Situational irony / word pun: "ortoped" - "Rotul".

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
10.	- Tată! Tatăl meu!Cuvântul (căci tată nu era chiar atât de obscen- cu conotaţiile sale ceva mai şterse decât scârboşenia şi imoralitatea naşterii copiilor - nu doar ordinar, mai degrabă scatologic decât propriu-zis pornografic), cuvântul comic-porcos făcu să se descarce ceea ce devenise între timp o încordare insuportabilă. Izbucniră râsete, hohote imense, aproape isterice.	Group 1: 22.2% yes 22.2 % no 55.5% not sure	1. Maybe the line "Tată! Tatăl meu!" should be spoken out loud in a play of some sort for it to be regarded as funny or ironic.
		Group 2: 25% yes 25% no 50% not sure	1. I think the narrator really means what he says. 2. An almost grim irony, resulted from the classification of some concepts and ideas - such as "father" and the child birth - as pornographic and disgusting things - the opposite of what they really are. 3. The feelings that the word "father" gives birth to are weird. 4. Unclear from context.
11.	Cuvîntul pe care eu îl traduc prin "insulă zburătoare" sau "plutitoare" în limba lor este Laputa, a cărui etimologie adevărată n-am putut s-o aflu. Într-o limbă veche şi de mult uitată *lap* înseamnă înalt, iar *untuh*, cîrmuitor, deci Laputa – spun ei – vine de la *Lapuntuh*. Personal nu sînt de acord cu această derivare, ce mi se pare cam trasă de păr. Am îndrăznit să le împărtăşesc învăţaţilor o părere a mea şi	Group 1: 33.3% yes 44.4% no 22.2% not sure	1. Informative; the author is being honest which makes him a bit funny. 2. A shade of irony in the unsure origin of the word "Laputa". 3. In the final lines, the game of words reveals the real intention of the author/speaker and his/her irony.
		Group 2: 87.5% yes 12.5% no 0% not sure	1. Jonathan Swift is renowned for his fine irony, and the irony consists in the fact that, during his time, the so-called scientists were very narrow-minded. 2. He thinks that he knows the meaning of Laputa better than those living there, although he has no basis for what he says. 3. He/she just expresses his/her opinion. 4. Explanation which the Lilliputians give to the name "Laputa" is much more plausible than the one suggested by Gulliver. However, he seems the think the contrary and this opposition attracts the irony. The contradiction between what Gulliver says and does provokes humour and irony.

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
	anume că Laputa ar veni aproximativ de la *Lap outed*, *lap* însemnînd, propriu-zis, jocul razelor de soare în apele mării, iar *outed* – aripă, părere pe care totuşi nu vreau s-o impun neapărat, ci doar s-o spun cititorului judicios.		5. The underlined words show the speaker's frustration. 6. What I find ironic is not necessarily the content of the fragment, but the way in which the narrator supports his point of view and in which he wants to influence the reader. 7. Gulliver is being ironic when implying that he did not dare tell the scientists that they could be wrong even though he's sure they are.
12.	Grijuliu, m-am ridicat în picioare. (Ar fi trebuit să spun "în mod grijuliu"? Nu, m-am uitat adineauri în dicţionar, adjectivul şi adverbul au aceeaşi formă.) Grijuliu, m-am ridicat în picioare, mi-am sprijinit greutatea pe un genunchi şi am făcut cîţiva paşi în faţă (ciudat cuvînt, dacă stau să mă gîndesc, n-are nici o legătură cu ghimbirul1; întotdeauna mi-am zis că înseamnă felul cum guşti ghimbirul măcinat, foarte atent, cu un deget umezit şi încercîndu-l apoi pe vîrful limbii, dar nu, cică ar veni din franceza veche, de la *genson*, adica finuţ, sau *gent*, adică de viţă nobilă,	Group 1: 77.5% yes 0% no 22.2% not sure	1. Irony addressed at himself. 2. Not sure, it's funny though. 3. Interruption of ideas by explaining some words in order to emphasize the character's giddy character. 4. Mild forms of irony. 5. I think that he actually knows [that the adjective and adverb have the same form] and means to satirize [by claiming he doesn't].
		Group 2: 87.5% yes 0% no 12.5% not sure	1. The irony points to the etymology of the word "ginger" and its grammatical category, both adjective and adverb, which is not very common inEnglish. 2. He keeps questioning what he's thinking. 3. The character doesn't seem to be noble or highly intelligent and he doesn't even mean to be like that. 4. The reflection on metalanguage produces irony. The pauses in discourse, the brackets, the observations of an unexpected nature. 5. The questions addressed to himself. The construction "nu, cică ar veni". 6. Irony triggered by the addition between brackets. 7. The careful process through which the character chooses his words. 8. He is expressing irony towards himself with his care for correct speech and towards language itself.

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

No	Texts from various authors	Is it ironic?(yes /no / not sure)	Comments [what made you think it is(n't) ironic?]
	dintre care nu mi se potrivește nici unul). 1. În original "ginger", care, ca substantive, înseamnă ghimbir.		
13.	- Fie-mi iertată curiozitatea, revine blonda cu o întrebare. Ați plătit tot tacâmul - călătoria dus-întors, onorariul chirurgului, cinci zile cu asistență medială la dispoziție și excursiile la Stratford-upon-Avon? - Ce legătura are asta cu Stratford-upon-Avon, pentru numele lui Dumnezeu? - Se presupune că-ți reface moralul după operație. Și mai vezi și o piesă. - Totul e bine când se termină cu bine? îi dă Zapp, fulgerător, replica.	Group 1: 88.8% yes 0% no 11.1% not sure	1. The writing in italic and the preconception according to which blondes are not exactly intelligent. 2. I need more context to understand if it is or isn't ironic. 3. The well-known line from the end used as a question is ironic.
		Group 2: 100% yes 0% no 0% not sure	1. Maybe the irony consists in the fact that the girl who asks the question is blonde. But the last line points to a very well known play by Shakespeare, born in Stratford-upon-Avon. 2. Zapp asks if the play is "All's well that ends well" but in fact he's speaking about the outcome of the surgery. 3. The blonde woman doesn't believe that a play could do you well after a surgery. She doesn't believe that all that is worth the money. 4. The last line, from one of Shakespeare's plays fits the dialogue perfectly. It is a hint that the situation hasn't ended too well for the blonde. 5. Zapp is being ironic by not clarifying whether he was referring to the play "All's well when it ends well" or whether he was serious about her idea that Stratford-upon-Avon is therapeutic after a surgery.

Results and discussions:

I shall begin by naming the authors and the literary works from the translation of which I have extracted the excerpts analysed in the survey above: (1), (5) and (10) Aldous Huxley, Brave New World; (2) G.B. Shaw, Pygmalion; (3) Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point; (4), (6) and (8) Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest; (7) and (13) David Lodge, Changing Places; (9) and (12) David Lodge, Therapy; and finally (11) Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels. The results stand thus: in 9.5% of the cases (texts 1 and 4), the irony in the translation of the literary texts chosen has had the same effect on the students at BA and MA level. In almost half of the cases, 42.8% to be exact, there has been a similarity of effect between the two groups. In 23.8%

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

of the cases the results show a different effect and in the remaining 23.8% there has been an incongruity of effect, or else situations in which the discrepancy of effect was much bigger than what I have already rated as "different".

Perfect agreement of effect, therefore, was unrelated to author or literary work, due to the fact that the texts included in this category of results belong to different authors and literary works, respectively, Huxley's Brave New World and Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest. The other excerpts from Huxley's novel were included in the category of "similarity of effect", while the other two texts from Wilde's very same play have been included in the last two categories of "different effect" and "incongruity of effect". In the case of the other novel written by Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, the effect of the irony in translation was equally divided within the last three categories of similarity, difference and incongruity of effect. Moreover, the other two excerpts from Oscar Wilde's second play, An Ideal Husband, which were not presented in this article but which did make part of the survey, were included in the category labeled "similarity of effect". The fact that four out of four texts by the same author have had a different effect of irony in translation proves that the author's style of writing does not influence the reception of irony in translation. The fact that three out of three texts from the same literary play (Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest) and three out of three texts from the same literary novel (Huxley, Point Counter Point) have had a different effect in translation proves, as well, that the literary work alone does not influence the reception of irony in translation.

Among the texts that received similar response as regards the translation of irony, three of them are from David Lodge's novels. Text number twelve from Lodge's novel Therapy, considered ironic by 77.7% of group one and 87.5% of group two, is in my opinion, an example of poor translation of irony. Let us have a comparative look at the original text, in English, and its translation into Romanian for a better understanding:

Therapy , David Lodge 1996, p.4	Terapia, David Lodge 2002, p.12
Gingerly I got to my feet. (Should that be 'gingerlyly'? No, I've just looked it up, adjective and adverb both have the same form). […] funny word actually, nothing to do with ginger.	Grijuliu, m-am ridicat în picioare. (Ar fi trebuit să spun "în mod grijuliu"? Nu, m-am uitat adineauri în dicţionar, adjectivul şi adverbul au aceeaşi formă.) […] ciudat cuvînt, dacă stau să mă gîndesc, n-are nici o legătură cu ghimbirul[1]. 1. În original "ginger", care, ca substantiv, înseamnă ghimbir.

The translation has diminished the ironic effect considerably: the addition of "-ly" to the adjective "gingerly", which already ends in "-ly", to obtain the adverb makes the sound and appearance of the word "gingerlyly" not only humorous, but also an instance of self-deprecating irony. The main character of the novel, Laurence "Tubby" Passmore, is a self-taught man who makes frequent use of the dictionary for complicated words. This particular word, however, shouldn't have caused him trouble, as it does not belong to the category of complicated words which require academic studies. Lodge is attempting, quite successfully, to mock the practice of his character who wants to be sure of the correctness of every word he uses, fact which is lost in the

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

Romanian translation: "în mod grijuliu" is not incorrect in Romanian. Moreover, the difference of sound and meaning between "grijuliu" and "ghimbir" is too extraordinary to allow comparison. Thus, whether or not the translator has made the best choice by going with a literal translation in this passage is, in my opinion, highly debatable.

Conclusions:

All the literary texts in the survey to which I have subjected the two groups of subjects in section five of this article were ironic. The results show that the group of fifteen students of BA level considered 63% of the text as being ironic, while 18% were regarded as not ironic, and 19% were unclear. On the other hand, the second group of fifteen MA-level students recognised 69% of the texts as being ironic, while 15% were deemed not ironic, and 16%, again, ambiguous.

On average, in the process of re-negotiating ironic meaning in translation, the receivers recognised 66 percent of the literary texts as being ironic, in 17.5 percent of the cases they were unsure and in 16.5 percent they did not regard the texts as ironic. Moreover, in 9.5 percent of the cases, the irony in translation has had the same effect on the students at BA and MA level. In 42.8 percent of cases, there has been a similarity of effect between the two groups. In 23.8% of the cases there has been a different effect and in the remaining 23.8 percent there has been an incongruity of effect.

The results of the survey show the fact that irony is not always recognised in translation, but this does not necessarily imply that the translation is poor or that the receivers are the at fault; sometimes they misunderstand the ironical intent or interpreted it differently due to the fact that they are part of a different discursive community than the original author. Even if modern reception theories claim that the reader has full freedom of interpretation and actualization of the literary work, in the case of irony, the survey I have carried out proves that this is not always the case. There are examples of instances of language-based irony that only allow one interpretation, not more, therefore any other interpretation than the one intended by the author is not correct. There have also been cases which, on the contrary, allowed diversity of interpretation, therefore, even if the ironic meaning intended by the original author was misunderstood, the text was nonetheless perceived as ironic, but for a different reason. The readers perceived the ironies on a different layer than those intended by the ironist in cases in which the ironies were strictly culture-related. In order to be understood universally, therefore, across discursive communities, across ages, irony requires background knowledge.

According to the results of the survey, the fact that all the texts written by the same author have had a different effect of irony in translation proves that the author's style of writing does not influence the reception of irony in translation and neither does the literary work, as perfect agreement of effect was caused by texts belonging to different authors and literary works.

To conclude, in actualizing the translated literary texts, an essential mission belongs to the translator as well, who plays a double role: that of reader / interpreter of the original work and that of writer of the translated literary work. Irina Mavrodin (1982: 19) claimed that the reader is the author of the work created in the act of reading and that reading entails, by means of intertextual-

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)

ity, ranging oneself in relation to all the text of which one has previous knowledge. I would like to adapt this claim to the area of translation and to add the fact that, in the context in which the literary work is translated, Irina Mavrodin's "reader" is, first of all, the translator. Thus, the translator becomes the author of the literary work created in the act of translation and the translation entails, by means of intertextuality, ranging oneself in relation to all the text of which one has previous knowledge. The responsibility of reconstruction in order to ensure successful ironic communication is, therefore, shared between all agents involved in the ironic act of creation of meaning: author as ironist, translator as the first receiver of the original literary work and writer of the translation, and receiver.

BIBLIOGRAPHY :

Huxley, Aldous. Minunata lume nouă. Trad. Suzana şi Andrei Bantaş. Iaşi: Editura Polirom, Colecţia TOP 10+, 2011.
Huxley, Aldous. Punct contrapunct. Trad. Const. Popescu. Iaşi: Editura Polirom, 2003.
Lodge, David. Schimb de dame. Trad. Virgil Stanciu. Bucureşti: Editura Univers, 1999.
Lodge, David. Terapia. Trad. Radu Paraschivescu. Iaşi: Polirom, 2009.
Lodge, David. Therapy. London: Penguin Books, 1996.
Hutcheon, Linda. Irony's Edge. The Theory and Politics of Irony. London: Routledge, 2005.
Eisterhold, Jodi, Salvatore Attardo, Diana Boxer. "Reactions to Irony in Discourse: Evidence for the Least Disruption Principle" in Journal of Pragmatics 38, pp. 1239-1256, 2006.
Mavrodin, Irina. Poietica şi poetica. Bucureşti: Univers, 1982.
Shaw, George Bernard. Cezar şi Cleopatra. Ucenicul diavolului. Pygmalion. Trad. Petru Comarnescu. BPT: Editura pentru literatură, 1963.
Swift, Jonathan. Călătoriile lui Gulliver, Povestea unui poloboc şi alte satire. Trad. Leon Levitchi şi Andrei Brezianu. Bucureşti: Editura Univers, 1985.
Wilde, Oscar. Teatru. Lady Windermere şi evantaiul ei, O femeie fără importanţă, Un soţ ideal, Ce înseamna sa fii onest, Salomeea. Trad. Andrei Bantaş. Bucuresti: Editura Pentru Literatura Universală, 1967.

BDD-V1633 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:51:17 UTC)