FROM SHAKESPEARE TO SITCOMS: TRANSLATING THE BAWDY WORDPLAY

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Abstract: The present paper attempts to override the classical synchronic vs. diachronic approach to the idea of "cultural bumps" in translation, and approaches the issue from a novel perspective. The underlying idea is that source culture wordplay and allusions (as instances of culture-bound issues) will be a challenge both to SL readers/viewers and (or particularly) to translators. In order to prove this idea, we have chosen texts that illustrate temporal, geographical and typological extremes: excerpts from Shakespeare's plays and sequences from an American sitcom, along with their translations. The common denominator of these texts is the fact that they contain bawdy wordplay. The reason behind our choice is related to the idea of perpetuity and universality that the notions of wordplay and allusion display, and it supports the logical demonstration of the fact that these textual phenomena transcend all sorts of barriers, and their translation encounters similar sorts of obstacles, no matter the time, place or genre the source texts pertain to.

Keywords: translation, wordplay, bawdy, sitcom, Shakespeare

1. Introduction

Starting from the assumption that the translator's approach to wordplay is universal, in this paper we intend to apply this idea to bawdy wordplay through the analysis of examples extracted from texts that illustrate temporal, geographical and typological extremes: excerpts from Shakespeare's plays and sequences from the American sitcom *The Nanny*, along with their translations. The choice of such a topic was motivated by the fact that the translator is faced with the actual linguistic problem of translating the wordplay and, at the same time, with the challenge of rendering the bawdy in an indirect way, most often in a cultural-bound context.

In the first part of our paper, we will attempt to delimit the object of our interest, namely the field of wordplay and that of proper name allusions, and to highlight the functions and treatment of the bawdy wordplay in the two types of texts mentioned above. Then, we will refer to various factors which might influence their translation, such as the linguistic component, the translator's training and his/her attitude to untranslatability or the constraints operating in the audiovisual medium, and we shall tackle the treatment of bawdy wordplay in the translation from English into Romanian of the selected examples, namely the strategies and solutions translators resort to when faced with such instances of text.

2. The wordplay: a textual phenomenon

As far as the concept of wordplay or pun is concerned, Delabastita (1993, 57) describes it as "the general name indicating the various textual phenomena (i.e. on the level of performance or *parole*) in which certain features inherent in the structure of the language used (level of competence or *langue*) are exploited in such a way as to establish a communicatively

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significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings (signifieds) and more or less similar forms (signifiers)". We will be using the terms *wordplay* and *pun* interchangeably in this paper, as they refer to the same linguistic phenomenon.

The above definition underlines important features of wordplay such as the fact that it is contextually-bound, which means that the different interpretations of the same element cannot be triggered outside a context; or that it is intentional, which differentiates it from the misuse of a word, from unintentional ambiguities or unplanned repetitions; or that it must have a communicative function. In addition to emphasis or humour, which are regularly quoted, the author identifies several other functions of wordplay such as animating characters – the presence or absence of wordplay, its frequency can act as "markers of character" or "can help to bring to life the character" (Delabastita 1993, 139); supporting witty dialogue; supporting rhetorical monologue or manipulating audience response. Delabastita also quotes "tricking the censor" as a wordplay function in the case of taboos encountered in different areas of human experience, the main ones being aggression and sexuality (1993, 150). When talking about sexual taboos, the author notes that wordplay affords the speaker to transgress the social decorum in an indirect manner, which is more acceptable, and most of the time produces a comical effect.

Some of the examples of bawdy wordplay that we intend to examine can also be classified as allusive, which is not surprising considering Leppihalme's (1997, 6) view that the category of wordplay and that of allusions are related, although "precisely in what relationship such terms stand to one another is seldom made clear".

Most definitions of allusion refer to it as a literary phenomenon: "an indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader's familiarity with what is thus mentioned" (Baldick 2001, 7). However, from the more general perspective adopted by Leppihalme, the term can refer to "a variety of uses of preformed linguistic material (Meyer, 1968) in either its original or a modified form, and of proper names, to convey often implicit meaning" (1997, 3). In our corpus the allusive bawdy wordplay includes the category of proper-name allusions, in other words, we are dealing with indirect references to the bawdy achieved through the mechanisms of wordplay, which may occasionally involve the use of a proper name. It is also worth mentioning that in the examples discussed below, we have approached instances of bawdy wordplay as "translation problems requiring problem-solving and the use of appropriate strategies" (*ibid*. 1997, 3), in an attempt to explain the way they function and the role they play in both the ST and the TT.

3. Bawdy wordplay: Shakespeare vs. sitcoms

In what follows, we will be considering the role of bawdy puns, in two very different sorts of texts: a literary, classical text type, and a subtitled, modern text type, along with their respective translations. The underlying assumption is that no matter how different the text types, the translator's options will always be shaped by the linguistic/cultural potential of the TT as well as by the extent to which (s)he takes this task in his/her own stride.

As far as Shakespeare is concerned, there is no wonder that the playwright made (sometimes) excessive use of wordplay since this linguistic device suddenly emerged during

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the Elizabethan period and rapidly declined before the middle of the succeeding century, due to the fact that, by then, appropriateness of expression started to be valued to the expense of the ornate vocabulary.

As far as the bawdy allusions are concerned, Shakespeare worked out an outstanding number of 3000 such allusions in his plays, among which 700 on sex and more than 400 on genitals (Kiernan, 2007). From mere innuendoes to blatant phrasings, Shakespeare's wordplays make up a vivid image bearing precise functions: to clarify the conflict of incompatible truths and help establish the final equipoise (Mahood 1956, 56). While his kings, queens and aristocrats are as foul-mouthed as his clowns, and his women are expert dealers in the raciest double-entendre (Kiernan 2007), the bawdy wordplay serves as a means of entertainment, characterization and unification of the entire play.

In modern times, as opposed to Shakespeare's epoch, the sexual allusion tends to be rather concealed, even though claims are continuously being made of the necessity to preserve language transparency and to honestly speak of everything that pertains to our "indecent" reality. Instead, our instinctive reaction is to frown upon anyone who dares speak bluntly about such topics. Therefore, concepts of the sort beget the quality of allusions, and emerge particularly in highly humorous discourse instances, wherever they might be somehow excused for appearing, such as in sitcoms.

The ultimate function of bawdy wordplay in sitcoms is, just like in Shakespeare's plays, to stir laughter, but, unlike in Shakespeare's case, allusions in the sitcoms produced in the 1990s (such as *The Nanny*) seem very carefully controlled, sometimes even censored, because of their immediate impact on the target audience, on the background of a false sense of prudishness that modern cultures exhibit. Although in many sitcoms, relationships, love and sex are constant themes, explicit or overt references to taboo issues are usually avoided, the screen players resorting to bawdy wordplay and allusions.

4. Translating the bawdy wordplay

In what follows, we will be considering a few instances of puns in both Shakespeare's plays and in sitcoms, and we will attempt to make several notes on the translator's manner of approaching such instances, which, we hypothesize, will lead us to the conclusion that, in translation, bawdy wordplay and allusions tend to be leveled out, they tend to incur a lesser degree of intensity than that in the SL, and will sometimes function as effaced replicas of their originals. We will start with a general discussion of the factors which have to be taken into account by translators when rendering bawdy wordplay.

4.1 Translatability constraints

From a strictly linguistic point of view, a pun is an expression that overtly or covertly derives its effect from a contrast between its form and its range of meanings, being "a characteristic combination of differences of meaning and likenesses of form" (Delabastita 1993, 57). But then, the pun is also one of the most culture-bound instances of language manifestation. The language in wordplays seems to be the instrument for conveying a higher, profoundly cultural message. Hence, the first challenge that a translator faces is recognizing the pun for what it is. As Delia Chiaro aptly asserted, the pun "has to play on knowledge which is shared between sender and recipient" (1992, 11). Whenever the sender and the

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recipient happen to find a mutual ground for relishing in the witty atmosphere created by the wordplay, we might assume that the pun has been recognized as such, and the entire credit is given to the competence assumed by the translator as intercultural mediator.

Even though the TL is built on totally different structures than the SL, what the translator can and should do is to "depart from source text structures for the sake of recreating certain effects" (Delabastita 1994, 229). In other words, the translator must be skilled enough to be able to divorce textual means from textual function. Once he has established the textual function of the pun in the SL, the translator should pursue what is called functional equivalence between ST and TT. As seeker of equivalence, the translator should then be striving to produce in the target audience the same effect that the original text produced in the source audience.

Therefore, the structural asymmetry between languages should by no means be a constraint in translating the allusive pun. Since it is essentially rooted in extralingual reality, the first concern that the translator should have is to accurately decode the culture-bound function of the pun, and to re-encode it as closely as possible in the TL with a view to achieving the same effect on the TL audience. Therefore, as far as the translation of allusive puns is concerned, we clearly favour a target text-oriented approach, with functional equivalence as the principal aim. In Gottlieb's words, "translation means being aware of the intent of the original as well as of the target audience's common pool of allusions" (2009, 22-23). It is only then that the pun actually starts being a pleasure and not an ordeal.

Along with the limitations imposed by language and culture, in the case of audio-visual translation, there emerges a whole new set of media-related constraints, that add to the translator's responsibility towards the languages and cultures (s)he deals with. Given the polysemiotic nature of the audio-visual product, the challenges of translating puns increase. The strategy that underlies all subtitling products, condensation, is the one that often runs counter to an accurate translation of the allusion. Thus, the translator needs to confine himself to a limited number of characters and a limited amount of time during which the translation is available for the readers on the screen, consequently fewer words might mean fewer chances to obtain equivalent effect. Secondly, there is this tension between the image on screen and the uttered dialogue. The subtitler will need to correlate the two, and preserve the same amount of congruity or lack thereof as in the original. Thirdly, whenever the TL audience happens to be in the least familiar with the SL, the pressure upon the translator increases, as (s)he is forced to find translation versions that comply with the TL audience expectations.

Compared to translations that are printed products, audiovisual translations will not cover the entire range of translation strategies available to translations in printed form. For instance, omissions of wordplay are more often then not excluded from among the allowed subtitling strategies in the case of sitcoms, given the fact that the background laughter of the original audience in the soundtrack compels the subtitler to preserve the humorous hints and make them matter in the TT.

4.2 Strategies and solutions

When it comes to translating allusions, either in Shakespeare or in sitcoms, things get rather complicated. The translator needs to avoid being engulfed into the ideological framework of the time, place, and culture he lives in. As Lefevere points out, whenever

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linguistic considerations enter into conflict with ideological considerations, the latter will certainly prevail. The result will be euphemistic translations which are "to no small extent indicative of the ideology dominant at a certain time in a certain society" (Lefevere 1980, 56), and which seem to be stealing the entire original suggestions, while depriving the TL audience of simply enjoying the pun. Fact is that both in the SL and in the TL, the wordplay in general, and the bawdy wordplay in particular could and should be a tool for seriously exploring the discrepancy between surface and substance and for supplying the audience with a special kind of intellectual pleasure.

The examples of bawdy wordplay discussed in this section are grouped into wordplay based on polysemy, on homonymy and on homophony, according to the linguistic mechanism that triggers them. Moreover, for the written texts, there is also wordplay based on homography, category which was not included because it does not apply to sitcoms where the information is conveyed through the oral code. As previously mentioned, we have additionally identified instances in which the wordplay based on the above mentioned mechanisms can also be classified as proper name allusions. These allusive puns will be highlighted in the analysis.

As for the available translation strategies, we have opted for Delabastita's (1993: 192-220) classification which includes: *pun > pun* (rendering the ST pun through a TT one, which may be formally or semantically different); *pun > non-pun* (explaining the ST pun in the TT); *pun > punoid* (translating the ST pun through other stylistic means in the TT); *pun > zero* (completely eliminating the wordplay in the TT); *direct copy: pun ST = pun TT* (copying the ST pun in the TT without translating it); *transference: pun ST = pun TT* (copying the meaning, not the form of the ST pun in the TT); *non-pun > pun* or *zero > pun* (compensating the deletion of a pun by inserting one somewhere else in the text); and *editorial techniques* (using footnotes, endnotes, translator's comments etc., to explain the pun or the translation strategy). The last strategy cannot be used in the case of audiovisual products because of the medium-specific constraints.

4.2.1 Bawdy wordplay based on polysemy. In this case, the pun is built on words which are pronounced and spelt in the same way and have related meanings. This is the case of the following examples. The first makes reference to sexual behaviour by means of the adjective "fast" which, in addition to its regular meaning of "involving high speed", can also refer to a promiscuous woman, who has sexual relationships with a lot of people, when used to modify the noun "woman".

(1) Context (*The Nanny*, season 3, ep. 1)	**English dialogue**	**Romanian translation (Mihaela Cristea)**
Fran is talking about the lies she told her pen pal. Among them, the fact that she presented herself as the fastest runner in the world and an Olympic gold medallist.	*Fran:* You wouldn't believe I'm the **fastest woman** on earth? *Maxwell (looking at her short and tight dress):* In that outfit, I would.	*Fran:* Nu m-aţi crede că sunt **cea mai rapidă** femeie din lume?// *Maxwell:* În costumul ăla, te-aş crede. //

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The comment is triggered by the context, Fran is about to meet her pen pal, a convict to whom she had presented herself in letters over the years as being an athlete, an astronaut, a billionaire and Miss America. In expressing his disapproval of her conduct, Maxwell resorts to a pun, thus avoiding a direct confrontation with Fran or a possible offense. Unfortunately, the Romanian translation preserves only the first meaning, as no Romanian adjective that could cover both meanings is available, thus the wordplay is lost. However, the translator exploits the image (Max looking at Fran's dress), and moves the accent to another interpretation: dressed like that, Fran is so sexy that she would manage to convince anyone of anything. In other words, the sexual connotation is preserved even if the wordplay is not.

The second example refers to sexual intercourse, employing the taboo and slang meaning of the transitive verb "to do", i.e. (of a male) to have sexual intercourse with. The wordplay is triggered by the reply to Fran's perfectly innocent question. Fran's mother is known for her racy comments, so her reaction comes as no surprise to the audience.

(2) Context (*The Nanny*, season 3, ep. 16)	**English dialogue**	**Romanian translation (Mihaela Cristea)**
After she learns that her parents want to get a divorce, Fran tries to bring them together. She goes to talk to her father and finds him in the bathroom.	*Fran:* Daddy, come out of there! What **are** you **doing** in there? *Sylvia (coming out of the bathroom):* **Me**.	*Fran:* Ieşi de acolo, tată. **Ce faci?** // *Sylvia:* **Ce facem**… //

In the subtitles, the wordplay is replaced by an indirect reference to sex, which means that the translator manages to convey the bawdy dimension of the reply to the target audience, and thus, just like in the previous case, the effect is preserved, although the wordplay is lost.

On the other hand, quite noticeable in Shakespeare's plays would be the occurrence of entire scenes permeated with polysemic puns. A case in point is the scene in progress within the brothel depicted in *Pericles*. Here follow several illustrative instances:

(3) *Pericles*	**Taşcu Gheorghiu, 1990**
Bawd: When she should do for clients her **fitment** (IV,6,6)	*Codoaşa*: În loc să-şi facă **datoria** faţă de muşterii
Bawd: never **plucked** yet (IV,6,43)	încă **neculeasă**
Bawd: My lord, she's not **paced** yet (IV,6,63)	Stăpîne, nu-i încă **dată pe brazdă**
Lysimachus: If she'd do the **deed of darkness**… (IV,6,31)	Dacă-ar voi să facă **fapte pe-ntuneric**…

All translations above are circumscribed within the same euphemistic borders designed by the English text, fact which might be indicative of the richness of polysemic terms in specific areas, in both languages. It may also be that the puns are so well-decoded because of the actual place where all these exchange of retorts takes place – the brothel.

Another play which actually competes with *Pericles* in the number of euphemistic puns referring this time to the idea of a morally decayed woman is *Henry IV, Part 2*:

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(4) *Henry IV, Part 2*	**L. Leviţchi, 1985**
Prince Henry: What **pagan** may that be? (II,2,154)	Ce **podoabă** o mai fi şi asta?
Prince Henry: This Doll Tear-sheet should be some **road** (II,2,168)	Doll Tear-sheet asta pesemne e un fel de **stradă mare**?
Falstaff:…and sung those tunes to the **overscutched huswives** that he heard the carmen whistle (III,2,340)	le cînta **fleoarţelor** cîntece pe care le învăţa de la surugii

Our translator has the chance here to exploit the polysemic potential of the Romanian language, and provides versions that both structurally and semantically relate back to the original version.

Interesting enough, as far as polysemic puns are concerned, we notice in subtitling a certain detachment that the translator adopts, while s/he is no longer forced to rely on words exclusively - having the image at his/her disposal. On the contrary, all translations from Shakespeare are highly elaborated, as the translator searches equivocal terms to recuperate as much as possible from the original semantic load. As for the TL audience, the humorous hints seem to be more readily available in the Shakespearean translations, while in subtitling extra effort is required to associate the image with the less suggestive puns.

4.2.2 Bawdy wordplay based on homonymy. The wordplays in this category exploit the relationship between words pronounced and spelt the same, but with unrelated meanings. In example (5) the pun makes reference to sexual orientation and it involves two meanings of the same form: the first – one of the five boroughs of New York City, and the second – homosexuals, the plural form of the common noun "queen", used depreciatively and pejoratively. This is also an example of a proper name allusion, since it includes a reference to a famous location, which is preserved in translation, at the expense of the wordplay and, unfortunately, of the humorous effect.

(5) Context (*The Nanny*, season 2, ep. 23)	**English dialogue**	**Romanian translation (Mihaela Cristea)**
Mr. Anthony is talking to the young woman he has just hired. The latter asks him if he knows a hotel or shelter nearby where she could spend the night. Mr. Anthony's assistant, Claude, presented to the public as being homosexual, intervenes.	*Actress (to Mr. Anthony):* I don't really know **Queens**. *Claude:* Well, I know **one**! *(shaking has with the actress)*	*Actress (către dl. Anthony):* Nu prea cunosc **Queens**. *Claude:* Te ajut eu! //

Although it would have been difficult to preserve the wordplay, given that there is no one Romanian homonymic noun in this semantic area, the subtitler could have attempted to convey at least some of the effect to the target language audience, which might be puzzled by the laughter they hear. A possible comical solution might be obtained by insisting on the sexual orientation of Mr. Anthony's assistant, and thus exploiting the visual feedback:

Actress: I don't really know **Queens**. *Claude:* Well, I know **one**!	*Actress:* Nu cunosc pe nimeni în zonă. (I don't know anybody in this area.) *Claude:* Eu cunosc (doar) bărbaţii. (I know (only) the men.)

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We believe that this might have been a valid translation solution even if it eliminates the form *Queens*, because, in this case, the impact of the image on the audience is stronger than that of the original dialogue.

Still in the same sphere of allusive homonymic puns based on proper names, there is in Shakespeare, the phrase *"Dead Men's Fingers",* a proper noun which apparently bears no tinge of wordplay; however, viewed in context – namely Queen Gertrude's words addressed to Ophelia, already passed away – the secondary meaning of this homonymic phrase becomes obvious:

(6) ***Hamlet*** (IV,7,170)	**D.R. Economu, 1855**	**A. Stern, 1922**	**L. Levițchi and D. Duțescu, 1964**	**Vl. Streinu, 1970**
…long Purples, That liberal shepherds give a grosser name; But our cold maids do **Dead Mens Fingers** call them	Acolo împletind ea nişte cunune visare (sic), vru să se atîrne de crăcile răsfrînte…	Şi floarea roşie cărora păstorii Îi dă **un nume ruşinos**, dar fete Curate, degete de mort îi zic	Şi ciucuri purpurii pe cari păstorii Cu **nume de ruşine** îi numesc, Dar fetele mai sfiicioase spun Că-s degete de mort.	…păstiţe roşii, Tulpini cu **nume de ruşine**, căror, Copile le spun degete-de-mort;

"Dead Men's Fingers" seems to be *"a herb associated with chastity"* (Crystal & Crystal, 2002, 331) or the purple orchid, which in Latin appears as *"orchis mascula"*. All Romanian translations choose to operate the substitution of the SL phrase with a superordinate term, thus a highly general one, which actually back-translates as *shameful name*. There is however a popular name for this flower in Romanian too, *poroinic*, the use of which would have probably resulted in the complete effacement of the original suggestion, since the TL readers would not have deciphered the intended meaning at first sight.

Then a much debated upon instance of homonymic pun is the term *"tailor"* frequently used to mean [bottom] as in the indecent retort belonging to Puck:

(7) ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** (II,1,51-57)	**Şt. O. Iosif, 1913**	**D. Grigorescu, 1984**
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale, Sometime for three-foot stoole, mistaketh me, Then slip I from her bum, down topples she, And **tailor** cries, and falls into a coffe And then the whole quire hold their hips, and loffe, And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and sweare A merrier hour was never wasted there.	Ades, cea mai sfătoasă din bunici, Cînd e rugată de nepoţii mici Să spuie-un basm, mă ia drept scăunel Cu trei picioare: vrea să stea pe el, Atunci alunec, baba se trezeşte Jos pe podele, **blastămă**, tuşeşte, Iar toţi ceilalţi fac haz, se ţin de şale De rîs, pufnesc, strănută în basmale Şi jură că de cînd sînt ei pe lume N-au pomenit aşa poznaşe glume.	Altă dată, Cînd deapănă-o poveste-nfricoşată, Mătuşa crede că-s un scăunel, şi cată să se-aşeze-ncet pe el; Eu fug, ea pe podea se prăvăleşte, **ţurloaiele** îşi saltă şi tuşeşte. Ceilalţi, înveseliţi de-aşa năpaste Icnesc de rîs, ţinîndu-se de coaste, Şi jură că nicicînd n-au petrecut Un ceas atît de vesel şi plăcut…

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The translations conceal to a larger extent the original suggestions, particularly the earlier translation, where the sexual hints are almost erased, and thus, what results, strictly at pun level, is a complete neutralization of the SL meaning (in the first translation) and a decrease in intensity (in the second translation). Nevertheless, the overall impact of the pun on the entire phrasing is made up for with the help of the humouristic tinge that both translations benefit from.

However, most frequently, in Elizabethan English, the meaning of this same *"tailor"* used to be [male sexual organ]. This specific sense is apparent in the following instances:

(8) *The Tempest* (II,2,55)	*Stephano*: Yet a **tailor** might scratch her where-e're she did itch	Dar pe-un **croitor** vezi că-l lăsa Să o scarpine unde-o mînca… (L. Leviţchi, 1990)
Henry IV, Part 2,(III,2,165)	*Falstaff*: But if he had been a mans **tailor**, he would have pricked you	Dar dacă ar fi fost **croitor** de haine bărbăteşti, ţi-ar fi pus el semne cu creta. (L. Leviţchi, 1985)
King Lear, (II,2,56)	*Kent to Oswald*: A **tailor** made thee	Te-a meşterit un **croitor** (M. Gheorghiu, 1988)

Although the meaning of *"tailor"* is taken over by the letter in all three instances, without any symbolical allusive transfiguration, the enlarged context contributes to the semantic recovery of the entire original textual area. As compared to the English version, the Romanian translations prove to camouflage sexual references to such an extent that only a previously informed reader might be able to identify them.

What comes out clearly from the examples above is that puns based on homonymy are rather challenging in both situations; what Shakespeare's translators or the subtitlers can best do is to preserve one meaning (thus effacing the pun), replace the SL term with a more general one in the TL, or remove the pun altogether and rely on a larger context - be it the entire retort or the image – to make up for the loss.

4.2.3 Bawdy wordplay based on homophony. This category includes wordplay built on words pronounced the same way, but spelt differently and having no meaning relationship. The two following examples are built on the homophones *abroad – a broad*, and *silicon – silicone.*

(9) Context (*The Nanny*, season 3, ep. 12)	**English dialogue**	**Romanian translation (Mihaela Cristea)**
Max wants to send his daughter Maggie to Switzerland for the holidays to keep her away from boys.	*Max (to Fran):* I don't want Maggie spending her holiday with that boy. So I'm sending her **abroad**. *Fran*: Are you sure you want to **swing that way**?	*Max:* Nu vreau ca Maggie să-şi petreacă vacanţa cu băiatul ăla. // Aşa că o trimit **în străinătate**. // *Fran*: Sunteţi sigur că vreţi să o **apucaţi în direcţia asta**? //

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In example (9), the formal resemblance between *abroad* and *a broad* determines Fran to choose the second interpretation: Max would like his daughter to stay away from boys and to spend her holidays with a woman. In addition to her intonation and mimics, the audience is aware of the sexual connotation she gives to Maxwell's words because she uses the expression *swing that way* which resembles *swing both ways*, refering to sexual orientation. The Romanian translator opts for a neutral interpretation, preserving only the meaning of *abroad* and completely eliminating Fran's (mis)interpretation and, thus, the humorous effect.

The next example of wordplay based on homophony is, at the same time, a proper name allusion, as in example (5).

(10) Context (*The Nanny*, season 2, ep. 23)	**English dialogue**	**Romanian translation (Mihaela Cristea)**
Fran returns home with the children to find the house full of young actresses waiting for their audition with Max.	*Fran:* Fasten your seatbelts, kids! We are about to enter **Silicone Valley.**	*Fran:* Legaţi-vă centurile de siguranţă, copii! // Intrăm în **Valea Siliconului**. //

The source wordplay is built on the homophones *silicon* and *silicone*, used in the context of *Silicon Valley*, the southern region of the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California, where several important technology corporations are located. The name originally referred to the large number of inventors and producers of silicon chips working in the region. Fran modifies the name, turning it into *Silicone Valley* in the context of a house full of actresses, suggesting that she suspects they underwent cosmetic surgery, including silicon implants. *Silicon Valley* can be considered an accessible cultural reference, although there is no way of knowing whether the Romanian audience makes the connection between the translated form *Valea Siliconului* and the original *Silicon Valley* (which normally is not translated into Romanian). Even in this case, the form is humorous as it is supported by the image.

By exploiting the same idea of similarity between words, Shakespeare's text provides a wonderful instance of homophonic wordplay:

(11) *The Merchant of Venice* (V,1,237)
Gratiano: Well, do you so; let not me take him, then; / For if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's **pen**.

P. Solomon, 1984
De l-aş prinde,
I-aş frânge **pana**, să se-nveţe minte!

Gratiano uses a double entendre based on the similarity of pronunciation between *pen* (the writing instrument) and *penis* (the genital organ). Clerks write with pens, but Gratiano also means that he will hurt the clerk's genitals if he has intercourse with Nerissa. The TL audience will certainly be able to correctly decode the double meaning of *pana*, given their familiarity with the secondary, indecent meaning evident in several slang set-phrases involving the term.

Even though the challenges of translating homophonic puns are certainly at least that many as in the case of homonymic puns, in the examples (purposely selected to show that

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rendition is possible), the translators have quite remarkably resorted to strategies that are filled with (double) meaning, humour and bawdy innuendoes.

5. Conclusions

The analysis above led us to several findings. Firstly, as far as bawdy wordplays in the SL are concerned, they are highly transparent and upfront in Shakespeare's case whereas in film scripts they are quite opaque and elusive. The reasons most likely pertain to the real thrill theatre audiences used to get while listening to such sort of speech in the Elizabethan time, and, on the contrary, the exaggerated care to avoid public offensive formulations in modern scripts.

Secondly, for a listener or reader, it is often difficult to grasp that a pun is involved at all, because of pronunciation changes (in Shakespeare's case) or because hints are well-dissembled (in sitcoms), particularly if the pun is confined to one rather than two or more words.

Thirdly, if the pun is successfully detected, the translation may raise certain problems: the Romanian language, much less homophonic and polysemic than the English language, decreases the number of translational options and, more often than not, records significant loss in humour and emphasis.

Fourthly, the temporal gap between the original and the translations does not result in toning down the intensity of the original Shakespearean phrasing, while in subtitling it is exactly the immediacy of translation that appears to neutralize more than expected from the original wordplay or racy comments. The reasons may in part be related to the difference between the two translation types: while the literary translator is a writer himself, he feels compelled to elaborate a translation, not just to issue it; the subtitler, on the other hand, is a professional translator subjected to media constraints (related to time and space), and, sometimes relying more than s/he probably should on the image to speak louder than his/her words.

All in all, our analysis highlighted the perpetuity of wordplay occurrences, and, at the same time, of wordplay translation strategies with a view to achieving functional equivalence, which suggests that, in general, translation issues seem to transgress any barriers, not just linguistic ones.

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