

TRANSLATING IRONY IN MEDIA TEXTS: A RELEVANCE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The focus of the paper is on ironic statements in Ukrainian media texts and their English translations. The theoretical framework underpinning the text analysis is Sperber and Wilson's account of verbal irony as echoic allusion to an attributed proposition from which the speaker dissociates himself/herself, implicitly expressing a critical attitude (Wilson and Sperber 1992). The corpus of the present study consists of a series of ironic statements selected from three opinion articles published between 2010 and 2014 in a quality Ukrainian magazine having both Ukrainian and English versions. The paper explores how the ironic interpretation in each particular instance is consistent with the principle of relevance, and discusses implicatures communicated by the ironic statements. Then the focus shifts to the choices made by the translators in reproducing the irony in the target text. The study undertakes to assess how much the irony along with the implicatures is accessible to the target readers of the English translations, considering their cognitive environment. The results suggest that implicatures of ironic statements in the source and target texts do not coincide completely, with irony often being more pronounced in the English translation than in the Ukrainian original. At the same time, the value judgments communicated by the source ironic statements remain basically unchanged in the target text.

Keywords: irony, relevance theory, evaluation, translation, media text

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM

A significant body of translation studies research draws on pragmatics (e.g. Hatim and Mason 1990, 1997; Baker 1992; Leppihalme 1997; Strikha 2006; Munday 2012, among others). In the introduction to the collection of essays *The Pragmatics of Translation*, Leo Hickey, the editor, notes that

pragmatic approaches attempt to explain translation – procedure, process and product – from the point of view of what is (potentially) done by the original author in or by the text, what is (potentially) done in the translation as a response to the original, how and why it is done in that way in that context. (Hickey 1998:4)

The present study is to be located within this research framework. Its aim is to discuss implicatures communicated by ironic statements in the selected Ukrainian media texts to identify the elements of the cognitive environment that are crucial to the recognition of those implicatures and to see how the irony is reproduced in the English translations of the texts.

In recent years, there has been a significant rise of interest in mass media studies. At the same time, as Schäffner and Bassnett observe, research that studies translation in mass media has been scarce (see Schäffner and Bassnett 2010:4). The media play an important role in the transfer of information between countries thus influencing public opinion and, as Schäffner points out, it is through translation that information crosses linguistic borders and quite often reactions in one country to statements made elsewhere “are actually reactions to the information as it was provided in translation” (Schäffner, 2004:120). Schäffner and Bassnett note that in reporting about politics, information gets recontextualised: “If we compare different language versions of the ‘same’ text in different media, we can notice changes which cannot be explained purely with reference to stylistic reasons” (Schäffner and Bassnett 2010:17).

One prominent example of research into the role of translation in journalistic text production is Bielsa and Bassnett’s vanguard publication *Translation in Global News*, which “examines how news agencies, arguably the most powerful organizations in the field of global news, have developed historically and how they conceive of and employ translation in a global setting” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009:10). Other studies have focused on the translation of interviews in printed media (e. g. Hernández Guerrero 2010). The present research deals with a different genre of media texts, namely with opinion articles covering politics.

The text analysis in this paper draws on Sperber and Wilson’s description of verbal irony as echoic allusion to an attributed opinion from which the speaker dissociates himself/herself. In doing so, one aim is to explore the relevance for translation studies of such a theoretical model taken from monolingual English work.

I will begin by giving a brief overview of Sperber and Wilson’s account of verbal irony and by explaining how it can be relevant to translation studies before describing the material of the research. Then I will discuss the implicatures communicated by ironic statements in the selected material and the choices made by the translators in reproducing the irony in the target text. I will assess how much the irony along with the implicatures is accessible to target readers of the English translations, considering their cognitive environment. Finally, I will discuss other findings obtained through the use of Sperber and

Wilson's theory of verbal irony in a translation studies analysis and suggest possibilities for further research.

2. IRONY IN RELEVANCE THEORY AND TRANSLATION

The analysis of irony in this paper draws on the theoretical model proposed by Sperber and Wilson, who argue that when being ironic the speaker is echoing an opinion he/she attributes to someone else, simultaneously dissociating him/herself from it, tacitly expressing a disapproving attitude – “from mild ridicule to savage scorn” (Wilson and Sperber 1992:60; see also Sperber and Wilson 1981, 1982, 1995, 1998; Wilson and Sperber 2012).

Sperber and Wilson note that quite often the speakers dissociate themselves from a certain proposition because they believe it to be false. In that case, the speaker actually means that the opposite is true; simultaneously the speaker expresses an attitude to those who might be holding that proposition. However, not all cases of irony are like that. For example, in ironic quotation the speaker usually dissociates himself/herself from an opinion echoed not because it is false but “because to express it or to hold it under the circumstances would be patently absurd” (Wilson and Sperber 1992:61). Or, to be more exact, the essence of ironic quotation may be explained in the following way: a quotation takes on an ironic ring in a new context when its meaning and connotations from the previous context come into play with the new context, thus giving rise to irony (see Kamyanyets and Nekriach 2010:30). Actually, Sperber and Wilson's analysis suggests a similar conclusion (see Wilson and Sperber 1992:55).

In irony, there is always some discrepancy between the literal meaning of a proposition and the author's real communicative intention. In other words, ironic utterances convey certain pragmatic implicatures that always include an evaluation of attributed opinions and often also of the people who hold such opinions (see Wilson and Sperber 1992:72, 2012:33; Sperber and Wilson 1995; see also Attardo 2000; Kotthoff 2003; on the definition of pragmatic implicature, see also van Dijk 2011:27). Consequently, irony is an evaluative device and is linked to values.

Irony is not always easily recognizable. For a proposition to be understood as ironic, it must be recognized by the addressee as echoing some opinion that is implicitly attributed to some source. Sperber and Wilson argue that the addressee recognizes irony and recovers implicatures of ironic utterances because of the principle of relevance. “Any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys a presumption of its own relevance” (Wilson and Sperber

2012:88) – that is, its potential to modify the addressee’s cognitive environment. In Sperber and Wilson’s terms

the cognitive environment of an individual is a set of assumptions that are *manifest* to him; an assumption is manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it conceptually and accepting that representation as true or probably true. (...) To modify the cognitive environment of an audience is to make a certain set of assumptions manifest, or more manifest, to him. (Wilson and Sperber 1992:71, emphasis in the original)

The addressee intuitively searches for an interpretation that is relevant to him/her in the particular context and, as Sperber and Wilson argue, there is always only one such interpretation.

Hatim and Mason, in their discussion of the translation of irony, note that retrieving the appropriate implicatures of ironic propositions is achieved by “matching the view apparently expressed with any discordant view expressed co-textually; and/or matching the view apparently expressed with what is assumed to be the case (mutual cognitive environment)” (Hatim and Mason 1990:99). Actually, in this way, Hatim and Mason explain how the principle of relevance works with ironic propositions in practice. When it comes to translation, Hatim and Mason rightly observe that what is inferable for a source text reader may not be so for a target text reader, since they “operate in different cognitive environments” (ibid.:93) and “are not equally equipped for the task of inferencing” (ibid.:93). What is generally assumed to be the case in the source culture may not be so in the target culture. Therefore, the translator has to make assumptions about the cognitive environment of the target text reader to make sure that the author’s communicative intention is realized in the target text. And sometimes “the translator may feel the need to provide additional cues” (ibid.:99) for recognition of irony.

On the other hand, since irony is an evaluative device, its translation can be viewed also from that perspective. Puurtinen points out that “the translation strategies applied to source text evaluations are ultimately determined by the purpose of the translation – neutral reporting or intentional manipulation of opinions – and the larger context” (Puurtinen 2007:221). Munday, while observing that translation is normally produced for a different communicative purpose than the original, or at least directed at a different audience, concludes that it is the evaluation at the so-called ‘critical’ points in a source text that may be most crucial for translation. The ‘critical’ points include, among other things, invoked evaluation that may be culturally located (Munday 2010:91). The respective choices in the target text, triggered consciously or unconsciously, are

prompted, as Munday argues, “by shared social values in the target culture and the translator’s own individual evaluations” (ibid.:92, see also Munday 2012).

3. RESEARCH MATERIAL

The material of this study consists of three opinion articles published between 2010 and 2014 in *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* (*The Ukrainian Week*) – a quality Ukrainian magazine having both Ukrainian and English versions. The magazine covers politics, economics and the arts and, as the official website says, is directed at the socially engaged reader who shares European values such as democracy and liberalism. *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* is one of the several Ukrainian media that appeared in the wake of the Orange Revolution.

The English version of the magazine – *The Ukrainian Week* – is published monthly and contains a selection of articles deemed to be of most interest to non-Ukrainian readers. The printed English edition is distributed to international airlines, press services of embassies and consulates, high-profile hotels, etc. The magazine is also available online. So it can be assumed that the target audience of the English edition is English-speaking foreigners, mostly Westerners, who take an interest in Ukraine. According to the publishers, the texts are translated from Ukrainian into English by native speakers of English, although the names of the translators are not mentioned either in the printed issues, or on the website.

Since the English edition is produced by the same media resource as the Ukrainian one, it is reasonable to assume that the communicative purpose of the English translations is largely similar to that of the originals; therefore, the translator’s reading of the original in this case tends to be compliant, rather than tactical or resistant in Martin and White’s terms (see Martin and White 2005:206). The translator’s reading is compliant when “the translator’s view of the task is to reproduce the source ‘faithfully’ no matter whether he or she is in agreement with the source or not” (Munday 2010:91). Meanwhile, the target readers of the English edition cannot be assumed to share the same cognitive environment as the target readers of the Ukrainian version as they belong to different cultures.

The articles that are discussed in this paper cover political issues and belong to the media genres that do not simply report on some events in a (relatively) neutral way, but provide a point of view on a particular issue and thus can influence public opinion. As is known, authors of such texts use not only factual arguments, but also language, particularly the language of evaluation. Polanyi, who studied oral stories, notes:

Tellers (...) *evaluate* the key events most highly in order to distinguish them from the other less important instantaneous main time line events. (...) Evaluation allows the story recipients to build up a model of the relevant information in the text which matches the teller's intentions as signaled by the manner in which the information about the storyworld is communicated. (Polanyi 1985:13, emphasis in the original)

Clearly, the same holds true for written genres and the use of evaluation in political and media discourse for manipulation of opinions has been the focus of extensive research (see e.g. Van Dijk 1993, 2006, 2011; Fairclough 1990, 1995a, 1995b; Fowler 1991). Irony, which is the focus of this study, can be particularly effective in evoking a feeling of solidarity between the author and the reader (see Van Mulken, Burgers and Van der Plas 2011) since it is implicitly evaluative. As Puurtinen notes, "implicit meanings (...) are likely to be more effective and insidious precisely because of their invisibility and the unlikelihood of their triggering objections" (Puurtinen 2007:215; see also Pirogova 2001).

4. IRONIC STATEMENTS IN THE SOURCE TEXTS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

In this chapter, I will analyze implicatures communicated by ironic statements in the source text and by their counterparts in the target text based on the principle of relevance. The material is organized according to the choices made by the translators: first, I discuss ironic statements that have been translated more or less literally; then I proceed to examples where the translators created new allusions in the target text to reproduce the source text irony; and finally, I discuss an example where irony appears only in the target text with no irony in the source.

4.1. Literal Translation of Ironic Statements

The first article under analysis was published on 30 December 2010 and it has the title *АНТИГерої 2010* (Український тиждень 30.12.2010:24), (the published target text: *ANTIheroes 2010* [*The Ukrainian Week* 01.2011:18]). It is permeated with irony; its purpose is to not inform about some new events or facts, but rather mock the hypocrisy, baseness and unscrupulousness of some Ukrainian politicians. A hint to that effect is given to the reader in the subtitle: "Тиждень вдруге відзначає 'достойників року', які своїми вчинками продемонстрували країні, чого вони варті" (Український тиждень 30.12.2010:24), (the published target text: "For the second year, Ukrainian

Week publishes its list of 'the year's worthies,' who have shown the country exactly what they are worth" (*The Ukrainian Week* 01.2011:18.) Through the use of irony the author *evaluates* the behaviour of the politicians in question, apparently expecting to gain solidarity from the target audience.

In 2010, Ukraine had a presidential election and most information in the article is related to that important event. One of the year's 'worthies' is former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, whose 'services' for his country are described as follows:

(1) *Віктор Ющенко*

Спецномінація "Унікальний пенсіонер"

Програвши з нищівними 5 відсотками ще в першому турі, екс-президент влаштувався набагато краще не тільки, ніж інші "лузери", а й багато переможців. На відміну від перших, ним чомусь не цікавляться слідчі органи (як, до речі, й близькими йому людьми). До того ж пан Ющенко тепер не мусить перейматися державними справами, а спілкуватись зі "своєю нацією" може лише тоді, коли хоче, і лише на бажані йому самому теми. Можливо, шикарне життя на залишеній йому дачі справді вартє провального правління та ганебного результату на виборах (Український тиждень 30.12.2010:24).

'Viktor Yushchenko

A special distinction 'Unique pensioner'

Having lost his bid for re-election already in the first round with a pitiful 5% of the vote, the ex-President has not only set himself up better than any of other 'losers', but better even than many a winner. In contrast to the former, investigators are not interested in him (or those near him) due to some unknown reason. Besides, now Mr. Yushchenko no longer has to concern himself with state affairs and can communicate with 'his nation' only when he feels like it and only on topics of interest to him. Perhaps, the luxury living on the state-granted dacha is really a decent reward for the failed rule and shameful election result.¹

The opinion echoed by this ironic paragraph is summarized in the last sentence and this opinion is attributed to Mr. Yushchenko. What the author literally says in the last sentence is opposite to what he really means: it is immoral to betray your voters and trade your principles, no matter what material benefits this may bring. Such interpretation is consistent with the ideology of the magazine that has published the article and with its declared values, and this interpretation is the only one that is relevant in the given context.

There are some other implicatures. First of all, the author hints that Mr. Yushchenko must have made a secret arrangement with his key rival even before the election. This hint can be read almost in every sentence. “...*The ex-President has not only set himself up better than any of other ‘losers’, but better even than many a winner...*” – in Yanukovych’s Ukraine such situation was rather unnatural for a politician from the Orange camp – unless the politician had agreed to collaborate with the new government. (Rumour had it that Mr. Yushchenko’s part of the deal was to vilify Ms. Tymoshenko – his former prime minister and Yanukovych’s key rival in the presidential election – in the eyes of pro-Western constituency to reduce her chance to win the election. Eventually, Yanukovych won the election by a narrow margin.) “...*Investigators are not interested in him (or those near him) due to some unknown reason*” is an ironic hint about the selective justice practiced by the new Ukrainian government. The fact that Mr. Yushchenko is immune from the prosecution – unlike his former political allies – means that he must be having some special relationship with the new government. The last sentence of the paragraph (“*Perhaps, the luxury living on the state-granted dacha is really a decent reward for the failed rule and shameful election result.*”) is another hint that Yushchenko was rewarded for his unscrupulousness. The sentence “*Mr. Yushchenko no longer has to concern himself with state affairs*” is a hint about Mr. Yushchenko’s laziness and his tendency to evade tough issues. The phrase ‘*his nation*’ in inverted commas is a hint about Mr. Yushchenko’s hypocrisy, who used to address his audience this way and who in the end has done nothing good for his nation.

The published English translation of this paragraph is as follows:

(1a) Viktor Yushchenko

For being a one-of-a-kind pensioner

Having lost his bid for re-election with a pitiful 5% of the vote, the ex-President has not only set himself up better than any of his fellow losers, but better even than many a winner. In contrast to the former, investigators are not especially interested in him or those near to him. In contrast to the latter, Mr. Yushchenko no longer has to concern himself with state affairs but can simply communicate with ‘his people’ whenever he feels like it and only on topics of interest to him. Add the nice country home he built himself and it’s not such a bad deal, really, considering his failed administration and miserable showing (*The Ukrainian Week* 01.2011:18).

It is reasonable to assume that the key implicature of this paragraph – the author’s contempt for Mr. Yushchenko, who has traded his dignity for his personal comfort – is recognizable also in the cognitive environment of the

Western readers familiar with the political situation in Yanukovych's Ukraine. The Western world knew about the selective justice used by the Ukrainian authorities for persecution of the opposition leaders – therefore, Mr. Yushchenko's extremely comfortable situation after the lost election and the fact that “investigators are not especially interested in him” should look suspicious to Western readers too (even though the translation omits the ironic remark “*due to some unknown reason*”). A secret arrangement with one's key political rival is considered equally immoral in the West and denounced even stronger than in Ukraine.

It is unlikely that Western readers will understand the full subtext of the phrase ‘*his people*’ (in the source text ‘*his nation*’) since this is actually an allusion to Mr. Yushchenko's rhetoric as president meant for domestic audiences.

Instead of “*the luxury living on the state-granted dacha*” the English translation has “*the nice country home he built himself*”. The translator must have decided that Western readers will hardly understand without an additional explanation what ‘*dacha*’ is, as this is a Soviet realia. In post-Soviet countries a *dacha* is a seasonal home, usually located in the suburbs of cities. In the Soviet era many *dachas* were state-owned and given for use to the political elite. In Ukraine, this practice persisted for a long time after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the target text, where “*the state-granted dacha*” is replaced with “*the nice country home he built himself*”, the reward Mr. Yushchenko got from the new government for his willingness to cooperate is somewhat diminished.

Another ‘year's worthy’ mentioned in the same article is the then Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament Mr. Volodymyr Lytvyn. The paragraph devoted to him starts as follows:

(2) Володимир Литвин

За невміння відрізнити рушник від рушниць

Минулоріч лише ледачий не глузував із жесту спікера, котрий, висуваючись у президенти, розчулено витирав очі “маминим рушником”. Сьогодні Радою керують зовсім з іншого місця, але на публіку пан Литвин намагається демонструвати неабияку твердість... (Український тиждень 30.12.2010:26)

‘Volodymyr Lytvyn

For not knowing the difference between a towel-cloth and a gun

Last year, only the lazy did not laugh at the Speaker's gesture, who, when announcing his decision to run for president, wiped his eyes tearfully with his ‘mother's towel-cloth.’ Today, the Verkhovna Rada is being run from a very different place, but, in public, Mr. Lytvyn tries to look tough...’

The proposition echoed by this ironic excerpt is that Mr. Lytvyn is an honest and sentimental person, while the real meaning communicated by the author is that he is a cheap, unscrupulous cynic. One implicature of the first sentence is that Mr. Lytvyn's gesture was clearly insincere. *'Mother's towel-cloth'* is an allusion to a popular Ukrainian song based on a poem by Andriy Malyshko *Пісня про рушник* ('Song about the towel-cloth') – a confession of a lyrical hero where his mother is giving him a towel-cloth as a symbol of a life path. In Ukraine, an embroidered cloth is an ancient cultural symbol, an important component of religious services and ceremonial events such as weddings and funerals. In the text above, Mr. Lytvyn, who is known as a cynical and corrupt politician, is pretending to be sentimental about such things as his mother's towel-cloth and everything that is symbolized by it. In the second sentence, the author keeps mocking Mr. Lytvyn by hinting that the Ukrainian parliament is de facto being controlled by the president, which means that Mr. Lytvyn as its Speaker has no dignity and his efforts 'to look tough' in public are comic.

The published English translation of the excerpt is as follows:

(2a) Volodymyr Lytvyn

For not knowing the difference between a runner and a gunner

Last year, only the hopelessly lazy failed to laugh at the Speaker's little performance: when he announced his decision to run for President, he wiped his eyes tearfully with his 'mother's runner.' Today, the Verkhovna Rada is being run from a very different place, but, in public, Mr. Lytvyn puts on a show of manly decisiveness... (*The Ukrainian Week* 01.2011:20)

In this translation, one ironic implicature of the original – that Mr. Lytvyn is being insincere – is made explicit: "*жест спикера*" ('the speaker's gesture') is translated as "*the Speaker's little performance*". To recognize that implicature in the original text, the addressee must entertain the assumption that the Speaker is corrupt and cynical. This assumption may not be part of the cognitive environment of Western readers, or it may be less manifest to them than it is to Ukrainian readers. Therefore, the translator, who is a Westerner himself, chose to explicitate.

Some hidden meanings will most probably be lost on the target readers of the translation. The chances are small that Western readers will understand the symbolic meaning of the *'mother's runner'*, even though the alluded poem has been translated into English (the translation is available in the Wikipedia). In Ukraine, this poem (and the song) is universally recognizable, but in the West it may be popular only within the Ukrainian diaspora. Moreover, in the English translation of the poem there is no such phrase as *'mother's runner'*: the

Ukrainian word *рушник* is translated as *towel-cloth* or simply *cloth*. The translator of the article may have been unaware of the allusive potential of this concept and may have opted for *runner* rather than *towel-cloth* in order to reproduce the wordplay in the subtitle (“*a runner and a gunner*”). On the other hand, in the Western culture neither a runner, nor a towel-cloth has any symbolic significance, which it has in Ukraine; accordingly, the *mother’s runner* has no lyrical or other connotations in the English translation. As a result, in the source text Mr. Lytvyn looks more cynical and shameless than in the target text, since in his political campaign he is trying to cash in on something that is deemed most sacred in the Ukrainian culture – the motherly love symbolized by the towel-cloth in the popular song. Meanwhile, in the translation Mr. Lytvyn is just pretending to be moved by the awareness of his ‘high mission’.

4.2. New Ironic Allusions in the Target Text

As the above analysis shows, implicatures communicated by ironic statements in the source text and by their counterparts in the target text may not fully coincide. This is further illustrated by the next several examples, taken from the article that was published on 10 July 2014 and has the following title:

- (3) *Європа і РФ: убогство філософії* (Український тиждень 10.07.2014:32).
‘Europe and Russia: Poverty of philosophy’.

The central idea of the article is that every state which aspires to regional or worldwide domination cannot do without a powerful political philosophy appealing to millions of people. Meanwhile, modern Russia with its geopolitical ambitions has no such philosophy and therefore it is recruiting supporters in the West through ‘banal bribery’. The author says: “*Путін експортує корупцію на Захід і робить це доволі успішно, як раніше Російська імперія, а Захід, як і раніше, охоче корумпується*” (Український тиждень 10.07.2014: 32). The published target text: “*Following the example of the Russian Empire, Putin is quite successfully exporting corruption to the West, and the West is eagerly succumbing.*” (*The Ukrainian Week* 08.2014:39) Through the use of irony, the author mocks Russia and condemns the ‘useful idiots’ of the West.

The irony can be noticed already in the title, which alludes to Karl Marx’s *The Poverty of Philosophy*. In Sperber and Wilson’s terms, this is a case of ironic quotation, where the irony arises from the interplay between the previous connotations of the quote and its new context. The title of Marx’s work is ironic in itself since the book was written as a critical answer to Proudhon’s *The*

System of Economic Contradictions, or The Philosophy of Poverty and its title is a wordplay on the title of Proudhon's book.

The allusion to Marx's book along with the irony may be recognized by the older segment of the Ukrainian target audience – those who studied at universities before the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Marx's teachings were an indispensable part of the university curriculum. Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* has been translated into Ukrainian – though, in fact, it was the Russian translation that was used at Ukrainian universities at that time. By quoting the title of Marx's book the author of the article mocks Russia's inability to create a meaningful philosophy to justify its expansionist policy. This implicature becomes clear from the further text, namely from the following sentences:

Нині відчувається драматичний для Росії вакуум ідей (...) Максимум можливого – убого-провінційний вузьконаціональний концепт 'Русского міра', з яким навіть не до кожного етнічного росіянина можна достукатися, а що вже казати про Балтію, Центральну Азію, Закавказзя, Україну... (Український тиждень 10.07.2014:32).

The published translation of these lines follows the original pretty closely, almost verbatim:

There is now a perceptible vacuum of ideas, critical for Russia (...) The most they have been able to come up with is the poor, provincial and narrowly nationalistic concept of the 'Russian World', which is not persuasive for all ethnic Russians, to say nothing of the Baltic States, Central Asia, Transcaucasia and Ukraine (*The Ukrainian Week* 08.2014:39).

Another implicature conveyed by the title may be the degradation of the 'philosophy' – that is, of democratic values – in the West, which "*is eagerly succumbing*" to the Russian corruption. The two aforementioned implicatures do not contradict each other and are fully consistent with the ideology of the magazine that has published the article.

In the published English translation, the title of this article is:

(3a) Russia and Europe: The Splendour of Money and the Misery of Philosophy (*The Ukrainian Week* 08.2014:38).

It is easy to notice that the English title no longer alludes to Marx's work but to another book, probably better known both in the West and in Ukraine – Honoré

de Balzac's *The Splendours and Miseries of Courtesans*. However, the phrase 'splendours and miseries' has been quoted so often in so many different contexts that it has essentially lost its original connotation and become 'a dead allusion' (see Leppihalme 1997:51), or a cliché generally meaning 'positive and negative aspects of something'. In the particular case, irony is generated by the modification of this cliché whereby the 'splendour' and the 'misery' relate to two different things – money and philosophy – which in Christian cultures traditionally have other value tags attached to them than in the above mentioned title: material things, such as money, are deemed less important than spiritual ones, such as philosophy. In the target text, the first implicature of the source title – Russia's 'unfortunate' inability to create a meaningful political philosophy – remains similarly manifest (although the irony is generated by different means), meanwhile the second implicature – that the West is eagerly succumbing to the Russian corruption – becomes much more pronounced.

Another instance of irony in the same article is the following sentence:

- (4) *Нині відчувається драматичний для Росії вакуум ідей, який аж ніяк не можуть заповнити наближені до російської влади "міські божевільні" на киталт Дугіна і Проханова з їхнім ідеологічним шаманством* (Український тиждень 10.07.2014: 33).

'There is now a perceptible vacuum of ideas, critical for Russia, which cannot be filled even by the 'village idiots' close to the Russian government like Mr. Dugin or Mr. Prokhanov with their ideological shamanism.'

In Ukraine (and Russia), a village idiot is a person who leads a socially marginal lifestyle and often is physically or mentally disabled. Usually, such people are widely known in their community for their nonsensical behaviour and are its 'living adornment'. Nowadays, the term can also be used to refer to someone who has a unique perspective on some issue, which is fundamentally different from the generally accepted view. Mr. Dugin and Mr. Prokhanov, mentioned in the article, are Russian intellectuals known for their extreme-right, ultranationalist views. The former is a professor at the Department of Sociology of International Relations of Moscow State University and the leader of the Eurasia Movement; the latter is a writer, the editor-in-chief of Russia's extreme-right newspaper *Zavtra*. By calling them 'village idiots' the author implies, first, that their ideas are nonsensical (another hint to that effect is the term '*ideological shamanism*' used by the author to refer to their theories), and second, that their theories are outrageous, even in the modern Russian society.

The English translation of the sentence is as follows:

- (4a) There is now a perceptible vacuum of ideas, critical for Russia, which cannot be filled even by the Kremlin's 'court lunatics' like the ideologue of the International Eurasian Movement, Aleksandr Dugin, or writer Aleksandr Prokhanov with their ideological shamanism (*The Ukrainian Week* 08.2014:39).

As one can see, in the target text a brief explanation is added of who Mr. Dugin and Mr. Prokhanov are, or rather, of what their political philosophy is (*'the ideologue of the International Eurasian Movement'*). Without this explanation, the second part of the sentence might prove altogether irrelevant for Western readers, naturally, less familiar with the Russian political discourse than Ukrainian readers. Instead of the '*village idiots*' the target text has '*court lunatics*'. This phrase may be a wordplay on the 'Lunatic Court' – the court of Mad King Thorn in the popular on-line game *Guild Wars*. In the game, King Thorn is insane and exceptionally cruel. Consequently, by calling Mr. Dugin and Mr. Prokhanov '*court lunatics*', the translator may be hinting not only at the absurdity of their ideas and their proximity to the Russian government but also at the insanity and cruelty of the Russian president. This additional meaning has good chances to be inferred by the Western readers who are at least superficially familiar with *Guild Wars* game.

4.3. Irony Appearing Only in the Target Text

In some cases, irony emerges in the target text when there is no irony in the source. One example is the title of the article that was published on 7 May 2014, roughly a fortnight before the presidential election:

- (5) Навіщо йдуть у президенти непопулярні кандидати (Український тиждень 07.05.2014:14)
'Why some unpopular candidates are running in the presidential campaign'

The article points out that those candidates who have no chance to win the election participate in the race for some practical, or even mercenary, reasons. Some of such candidates see this election as an opportunity to cement their political weight in the new post-revolutionary reality; meanwhile others just hope to trade their quotas for representatives in district election commissions. And to some the candidate status simply ensures protection from criminal charges.

In the English translation, the title of the article is:

(5a) It's Not the Winning, But the Taking Part That Counts (*The Ukrainian Week* 06.05.2014:10).

This title echoes the famous statement of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the International Olympic Committee: "The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part; the important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." It is worth noting that the first part of this statement, which is quoted in the English title of the article under discussion, was quite popular in the Soviet Union and is still well-known in modern Ukraine. The phrase was often used humorously as a consolation to an amateur who has lost a contest, not necessarily in sports. Meanwhile, in the English title of the article, de Coubertin's statement is quoted ironically: the irony emerges from the interplay between the original – existential – meaning of the statement ("the effort is more important than the result") and its down-to-earth meaning in the particular context ("participation in the presidential race can bring some practical benefits"). Consequently, the English title mocks the candidates who pretend to be acting in good faith but in reality are running in the presidential campaign for some dirty purposes.

5. DISCUSSION

In the theoretical model that has been used in the text analysis, irony always conveys an evaluation of the attributed worldview and sometimes also of the people who hold that worldview. Let us see how this rule works in the examples discussed above. In the first example (Yushchenko, a unique pensioner), the author implicitly expresses his contempt for Yushchenko, who has traded his dignity for his personal comfort. In the second example (Lytvyn, a sentimental man), the author mocks the speaker, who is trying to look sentimental and tough. In the third example (Poverty of Philosophy), the author mocks the 'poverty' of the modern Russian political philosophy and condemns the unscrupulous West, the latter implicature being more manifest in the target text (The Splendour of Money and the Misery of Philosophy). In the fourth example ('village idiots'), the author mocks Russia's ideological policy; the target text ('court lunatics') also condemns the madness and cruelty of the Russian president. In the fifth example (Why some unpopular candidates are running in the presidential campaign), irony emerges only in the target text (It's not the winning, but the taking part that counts) – *the translator* mocks the candidates who take part in the presidential campaign for dishonest purposes. It is easy to notice that the evaluations conveyed by the ironic statements stem from certain value judgments, such as "it is immoral to trade your principles", "it is immoral

to justify an expansionist policy with a false ideology”, “it is immoral to cheat your voters”. These value judgments, in turn, are based on a particular set of values, such as integrity, commitment to principle, responsibility. For the reader to recognize the implicatures of the ironic statements, these values presumably have to be part of his/her cognitive environment.

6. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that Sperber and Wilson’s account of verbal irony is a convenient framework for the analysis of meanings communicated by ironic statements in the source and target texts. In the examples discussed above, irony is used to emphasize the key point of the respective media text and, therefore, plays an important role. This fact seems to be fully appreciated by the translators, who handle ironic statements with the utmost care and creativity, and with the consideration of the differences between the cognitive environments of the source and the target readers: the names of the Russian public figures who are little known in the West are supplied with a brief explanation of their role in Russia’s political life; in the translations of the ironic statements, new allusions emerge that are sufficiently known in the target culture and these allusions generate new implicatures. The latter translation strategy is most often observed in the translation of titles, which may be explained by the difference in the tradition: the West has a long tradition of creating catchy headlines in the media, while in Ukraine this practice started to develop only after the end of the totalitarian rule and apparently has not yet become universal.

Some meanings, which are linked to a deeper cultural context, tend to be lost in translation. One example is the statement with the ‘mother’s towel-cloth’ as a symbol of the motherly love. This statement can be regarded as a ‘critical’ point, in Munday’s terms, since the phrase ‘mother’s towel-cloth’ is not inherently positive, but in the particular communicative context it has ‘a semiotic role’ (Munday 2010:86) in representing positive traditional values of the source culture. In the target text, this role is downplayed with the general ironic evaluation softened. At the end of the day, it is possible to conclude that implicatures of ironic statements in the source and target texts do not coincide completely, with the translators’ choices being prompted by their own individual interpretations and standards in the target culture; more often than not irony is even more pronounced in the English translation than in the Ukrainian original, particularly in titles. However, this latter observation is only tentative and needs to be supported by further research based on more extensive material of the same type. At the same time, the study has shown that the value

judgments communicated by the source ironic statements remain basically unchanged in the target text. Those value judgments suggest that the irony in the particular texts is rooted in the democratic value system; therefore, the context that triggers the ironic interpretations of the statements necessarily incorporates that value system. Future research may analyze similar texts representing other language pairs and cultures and possibly produce different results.

Notes

¹ The English texts provided under the Ukrainian excerpts are maximally literal translations of the respective excerpts.

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