# PUNTASTIC SOLUTIONS: THE TREATMENT OF PUNS IN RUSSIAN AND CROATIAN TRANSLATIONS OF *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

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### Abstract

*This paper examines pun translation on the corpus of six translations of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: three into Croatian and three into Russian. The examples of polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns from the corpus are analysed using Delabastita's classification of pun translation techniques and are compared on two levels. First, they are compared in order to reveal similarities among the techniques applied in pun translations into two related languages. Second, individual translations are analysed in order to indicate differences among the strategies employed by the six translators. The results indicate that, although similarities between languages affect pun translation, translators tend to use different translation strategies and in that way establish a pattern in their translations.*

## 1.  Introduction

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a novel which provides enjoyment for its readers, both young and older, as much as it causes problems and worries for the translators who make an attempt at its translation. They have to deal with, among other things, Carroll's language, which is rich in humour, nonsense and wordplay. Although many believe it to be 'untranslatable', the novel has been translated into more than 120 languages and today translations of one of Carroll's most famous pieces of writing still have their place on bookshelves around the world. Thus, Carroll's book and the language he uses are translatable; the only question is how successful translators are in providing target readers with a similar level of humour and wittiness as the source text provides.

   However, the quality of translations is not the topic of this paper. Rather, this is an analysis of the ways different translators cope with problems which arise from specific instances of wordplay, i.e. puns based on polysemy, homonymy and homophony. My aim is to examine and compare six translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (three into Croatian and three into Russian) and determine the level of similarity

among the translation techniques applied in pun translations into two languages which belong to the same family. A more detailed analysis brings out noticeable differences among individual translators and their approaches to the translation of puns. These may refer to the translation technique which each translator mostly uses when dealing with puns, the technique which a certain translator uses more than other translators do and similar.

I start with Delabastita's (1993: 191-227) division of translation techniques. The aims of the paper are indicated in Section 4, while Section 5 provides a more detailed review of the methodology applied in the research. Section 6 presents the findings, including a statistical analysis of the translation techniques used by the six translators. In the end, some general conclusions are drawn. Some examples of puns from the original text and the six translations are presented within the body of the paper, while the complete list of examples used in this study can be found in Table 2 in the Appendices.

## 2. Key concepts

The notion of pun is, as various authors indicate, not simply and unambiguously defined. As Delabastita (1993: 55) points out, during his research of wordplay he had to cope with "terminological and conceptual inconsistency" due to differences in the treatment of the pun. Theoreticians attach different meanings to the term *pun*, which range from more specific to broader. The definition provided by Goddard (1998: 125) on the last pages of her book on the language of advertising could be used as an illustration of those definitions which limit the range of linguistic levels on which a pun can be realized: "A comic play on words as a result of a word having more than one meaning […] or two words with different meanings having the same sound". Leech's (1969: 209) definition is based on a similar concept: "A pun is a foregrounded lexical ambiguity, which may have its origin either in homonymy or polysemy". In the context of wordplay, 'broad' would refer to those definitions which cover puns created not only on the basis of words' equivalence regarding their form or meaning, but also on their proximity on the level of phonetics, semantics, as well as morphology, syntax and other levels. Such is the definition offered within Delabastita's (1993: 57) view of the pun and its classification, which I use as the basis for my analysis of the translations of Carroll's puns:

[W]ordplay is 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 significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings (signifieds) and more or less similar forms (signifiers).

Delabastita insists on exposing the complexity of the term in relation to the structure, content and the pragmatic nature of the pun. At first sight, other definitions mentioned above are broad enough for the purposes of my analysis, which focuses on wordplay arising only from homonymy, homophony and polysemy. However, Delabastita's treatment of the pun will prove to be the most appropriate one after considering the translation solutions, as the translators repeatedly rely on other levels of language to recreate source text puns in the target text.

Before proceeding further to Delabastita's list of techniques, several terms which are used in connection to pun translation within this research should be clarified: translation technique, translation solution and translation strategy. I use the term *translation technique* primarily in connection to Delabastita's theoretical approach to puns and their translation. Delabastita uses this term to list and explain various possible results in pun translation. Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002: 508) explain that translation techniques "affect microunits of the text", in this case puns, and define the result of their translation. In the present paper I often refer to them as types of translation solutions and, according to Delabastita's list, classify them as puns, non-puns, punoids, etc. In relation to this, the term *translation solution* is considered to be a target text fragment which corresponds to a particular fragment from the source text. In other words, I use this term when referring to specific examples from the corpus. The last term that should be explained is *translation strategy*, which "may be seen as the idea of the translator about the best way to act in order to solve a translational problem" (Chan 2004: 256). Although the terms *technique* and *strategy* are often used as synonyms, for the purposes of this study translators' strategies are considered to be the general tendencies or patterns within individual translations, which distinguish each translated text from other translations in the corpus.

Delabastita lists several techniques which translators exploit when dealing with wordplay. Among these techniques is translating the source text pun by creating a target text pun, which may or may not be equivalent to the original pun regarding its form or content and can be modified to a certain degree. These shifts in structure are

justified by certain objective factors – by the differences between languages, contexts and co-texts, as well as some subjective factors, such as translators' abilities and efforts (Weissbrod 1996: 221). The frequently occurring semantic difference between the source text pun and its counterpart in the target text can arise from the following: shifts in the focus of the pun (in the target text, play on words is inspired by a word or a group of words from the imminent context of the source text pun); shifts in the semantic field to which the two meanings of the target text pun belong (the meanings of the target text pun can be shifted within the semantic field of the source text pun or they can belong to a completely different semantic field); or shifts in the textual environment, i.e. the co-text, of the target text pun (Delabastita 1993: 192-202).

Another technique for translating puns is 'pun > non-pun' where the translated fragment of the source text containing wordplay does not contain a pun in the target text. Delabastita (1993: 202-206) indicates three possibilities within this technique: non-selective non-pun in which both of the two meanings of the word engaged in wordplay are translated, but they do not result in a pun in  the target text; selective non-pun – one of the two meanings of the punning word is translated more or less correspondingly and the other meaning is omitted; diffuse paraphrase includes all other cases of pun > non-pun translation in which the source text wordplay is translated rather freely by means of a passage which does not include wordplay, but some semantic elements of the source text passage can be distinguished within it.

Translators can also apply the technique 'pun > punoid' in their translations. The term *punoid* is coined and introduced by Delabastita (1993: 56) in order to "label the cognate phenomena or borderline cases that have clear affinities with wordplay but whose membership to this category is nevertheless uncertain or actually excluded for any one of a wide range of reasons". These cases include instances of repetition, imagery, assonance, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony, allusion and similar (1993: 207-208).

In addition, the translator of the source text pun may decide to omit the whole portion of the text containing wordplay. This technique is included in the list as 'pun > zero' (Delabastita 1993: 209-210).

Translators also have the possibility of using two similar techniques: direct copy and transference. Direct copy is a technique in which, as its name indicates, the translator directly copies the pun from the source text, without changing its original form or adapting it to the target text in any way. In transference, target text elements

acquire the meaning of their equivalents from the source text. The difference between the two techniques is, in Saussurean terms, that direct copy functions on the level of the signifier and transference functions on the level of the signified (1993: 210-215).

Translation of a fragment from the source text which does not contain a pun by a target text fragment that includes a pun is called addition ('non-pun > pun'). This technique is usually used as a means of compensation for any earlier losses in the translation of the original text. Addition can also signify the technique of adding new textual material (a portion of text containing wordplay) to the target text for which there is no corresponding portion of the text in the source text ('zero > pun') (1993: 215-217).

The last group of translation techniques in Delabastita's list are editorial techniques which include various commentaries on translations (footnotes, endnotes, parentheses within the target text marked with italics, square brackets etc.) (1993: 217-221).

These techniques, which accompany Delabastita's analysis of Shakespeare's puns, have proved applicable in the analysis of Carroll's wordplay and its translation. The majority of these techniques have been used to a greater or lesser extent in the translations which present the corpus analysed in this paper. Section 6 offers a more detailed analysis of their use and provides concrete examples of their exploitation in the comparison of puns from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and their equivalents from three translations into Croatian and three into Russian.

## 3. Previous research in the area

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has always attracted the interest of scholars from many disciplines. Of course, among them are translation scholars who have concentrated on puns and their translation into various languages, as they are "most likely to cause translators sleepless nights" (Landers 2001: 109). Rachel Weissbrod (1996: 219-234), in her analysis of three Hebrew translations of *Alice*, found that the rendering of wordplay was governed by different norms of literary translation. In the first translation, socio-cultural acceptability demanded wordplay which was deeply rooted in Jewish culture, while linguistic acceptability resulted in an elevated style in the second translation. In the third translation the translator had greater freedom of using all the possible translation strategies at his disposal, as the norms had changed and required adequacy at the linguistic and socio-cultural levels. As De Borba (1997:

115-126) concludes in her comparison of two Brazilian-Portuguese translations of Carroll's book, translation of wordplay is often adapted to the target audience. While the version for adults is written in a more formal register and contains many instances of compensation, the translation aimed at children is 'more reader friendly' – the language is simpler and there are more comparisons and explanations. Díaz Pérez (1999: 357-373) also adds *Through the Looking Glass* to his analysis of pun translation from one Galician and three Spanish translations of Carroll's books on Alice. On the basis of his findings he concludes that puns, in fact, are translatable, as the majority of source text puns from his corpus have their counterpart in the target texts.

## 4. Aims and hypotheses

The aim of this paper is to examine possible translation solutions to various puns by comparing six different translations: three into Croatian and three into Russian. The analysis will be conducted on two levels. On the one hand, the findings concerning the two target languages (Croatian and Russian) will be compared, and on the other, those concerning individual translations and their preferred strategies.

My first hypothesis, therefore, is that pun translations into two languages which belong to the same family, in this case Slavic, display a certain similarity in terms of translation solutions employed. Target language linguistic structure can be expected to affect the types of solutions that translators tend to opt for when translating puns. Therefore, deviations from the polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns are expected, and it is interesting to determine the degree of these deviations.

The second hypothesis concerns a comparison among the six translators and their approaches to the translation of puns. I hypothesise that, despite the overall similarities in types of solutions observed in the two target languages, there are striking differences among individual translators in terms of their preferred strategy.

## 5. Methodology

The first step in my research was collecting the corpus of texts, that is, finding information on available translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Croatian and Russian, and deciding which translations would be included in the corpus. I chose three Croatian and three Russian translations which are the "most popular" ones – translations which have already been republished several times, whose translators

have made an important contribution to the world of literature in the target culture (through their translations, literary and other work), translations which are most familiar to the target readers, i.e. which are read the most and are considered to be favourite translations. The information about the popularity of each translation among the target readers was gathered mostly on the Internet – from forums or blogs, commentaries on different publications, etc. The three Croatian translations I chose according to these parameters are the following: the translation by Mira Jurkić Šunjić (first translation into Croatian), which was first published in 1944 and has been repeatedly published ever since; the translation by Antun Šoljan, first published in 1985, and the translation by Predrag Raos published in 2001. The last two translators are not just well known literary translators from English into Croatian, but also famous Croatian writers. As far as Russian translations are concerned, that by Vladimir Nabokov is one of the first published (1923). As he is a world-famous writer, it seems interesting to have a look at his skills in translation from English into his mother tongue. Nina Demurova's translation (first published in 1967) is by many considered to be the most successful translation in terms of language and style used and is favoured by Russian readers. Another translation which Russian readers enjoy reading is a translation (or, as is indicated in some publications, an adaptation) by a well-known translator and children's writer, Boris Zahoder, which was first published in 1971.

After determining the scope of my research and collecting the texts for the corpus, I found instances of puns based on polysemy, homonymy and homophony in the source text and their equivalents in the six translations. Texts with theoretical background on puns and their translation provided a typology of puns and a list of techniques which are usually used in the translation of puns. The list can be found in Delabastita's (1993) research on Shakespeare's puns and their translation. The next step was to apply these categories of translation techniques in the analysis of the corpus and determine which technique from Delabastita's list was used in each of the target texts examples.

This information was organized in a table (Table 2, see Appendices) for easier analysis and a clearer perspective on each example. The first column of the table contains fifteen instances of puns based on polysemy, homonymy and homophony taken out from the source text. Other columns contain the corresponding portions of target texts together with the number of page they appear on. The name of the translator and the year of publication are indicated in the first row of each column,

with the year of first publication stated in brackets. Also, after each portion of text there is a short commentary on the technique used and the type of pun (or punoid). It also seemed useful to draw up a smaller table (Table 1, see Appendices) to summarise the types of source text puns and strategies used in target texts. Fields in this table are coloured differently in order to highlight the similarities and differences between the original puns and their translations, as well as the differences between translations.

## 6. Findings

### *6.1   Translation solutions*

This section offers a detailed analysis of different techniques the translators from the corpus used when dealing with puns. Going back to Delabastita's list of techniques, whose brief explanation can already be found in this paper among the key concepts, I will now proceed to giving examples of their usage. All of the following examples are taken from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its translations from the corpus of this study. As the present study focuses primarily on the puns based on the semantic and phonetic structure of words, that is, polysemy, homonymy and homophony, only these types of puns and their translations will serve as examples here.

### 6.1.1  Pun > pun

When they come across a pun in the original text, translators usually try to create a corresponding target text pun. This is not always possible due to various subjective and objective circumstances, such as differences between languages and cultures, or translators' capabilities, creativity, etc. As I describe below (Section 6.2.), this research shows that, in the large majority of cases, translators actually do manage to apply this technique. Here is an example from the corpus to exemplify how this is achieved:

> 'Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria, declared for him: and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, **found** it advisable –' 'Found *what*?' said the Duck. 'Found *it*,' the Mouse replied rather crossly: 'of course you know what "it" means.' 'I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing,' said the Duck: 'it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop **find**?' (Carroll 1949: 32)

'Edwin i Morcar, erlovi od Mercije i Northumbrije, izjasniše se za nj; dok je čak i Stigand, rodoljubivi nadbiskup canterburyjski, to **našao** primjerenim...' 'Našao *što*?' upita Patka. 'Našao *to*', odvrati Miš prilično prijekim glasom, 'pretpostavljam da znate što znači riječ 'to'.' 'Znam ja to jako dobro što znači nešto naći', rekla je Patka. 'U pravilu je *to* žaba ili crv. Ali je pitanje, što je bio taj *to* što ga je nadbiskup **našao**?' (Raos 2001: 35)[1]

['Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria, declared for him; while even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, **found** it appropriate...' 'Found *what*?' asked the Duck. 'Found *it*,' the Mouse said rather crossly, 'I assume you know what the word 'it' means.' 'I know well enough what it means to find something,' said the Duck. 'Usually *it* is a frog or a worm. But the question is, what did the archbishop **find**?']

As it can be noticed, this target text pun corresponds to the original one: it is based on the same linguistic phenomenon – polysemy, the corresponding target text word is exploited for wordplay, that is, the pun retains its position in the target text. The only difference between the original phrase 'to find something advisable' and the solution 'naći što primjerenim' is that the Croatian phrase is stylistically marked; it is more formal, while the English phrase is stylistically neutral.  Of course, such high level of correspondence cannot always be achieved. According to O'Sullivan (1998: 197), sometimes translators have no option but to use a functional equivalent, in which case "wordplay is not translated literally, but its function is retained with the means at the disposal of the target language". As it has already been said, this results in shifts within the pun's structure. For example, the focus of the pun can be shifted, that is, another word from the immediate co-text of the original pun becomes the focus. For example:

'Just think of what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its **axis** –' 'Talking of **axes**,' said the Duchess, 'chop off her head!'  (Carroll 1949: 71)

Predstavlyaete, kakaya by nachalas' putanica? Nikto by ne znal, kogda den', kogda noch'! Ved' togda by **ot vrashcheniya**... – Kstati, **ob otvrashchenii**! – skazala Gercoginya. – Otvratitel'nyh devchonok kaznyat! (Zahoder 2008: 116)

[Just imagine how much confusion that would cause! No one would know when it is day and when night! You see, from the **rotation**... – Talking of **disgust**, – said the Duchess, – Disgusting little girls get punished!]

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[1] After each example from the corpus texts, the surname of the translator of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is given in the reference

The source text pun is based on homophony between the words 'axis' and 'axes'. The translator preserves the type of wordplay – homophonous, but the focus of the pun is shifted to another segment from the co-text. Thus, in the translation, the Duchess does not mishear the word 'axis', but thinks that Alice is talking about 'otvraschenie' (eng. disgust), when she is actually talking about the rotation of the Earth – ot vraschenia (eng. from the rotation [of the Earth]). That is why she says that disgusting girls get punished.

Another shift may occur within the semantic field of the pun:

'Of course not,' said the Mock Turtle: 'why, if a fish came to me, and told me he was going a journey, I should say 'With what **porpoise**?'' 'Don't you mean '**purpose'**?' said Alice. (Carroll 1949: 122)

Ti zbilja ništa ne znaš – rekla je Lažna Kornjača – pa ni jedna riba ne spava bez **jastoga**! Neudobno je. – Da ne mislite reći **jastuka**? – rekla je Alica. (Šoljan 1995: 98)

[You really don't have a clue about anything – said the Mock Turtle – why, no fish sleeps without a **lobster**! It is uncomfortable. – Don't you mean a **pillow**? – asked Alice.]

Here the word which produces the pun in the source text – 'porpoise' – is replaced with a Croatian word for lobster – 'jastog'. The two words differ in meaning, but they still belong to the same semantic field of sea animals. This can also serve as an example for a change in the type of wordplay. While the original pun is based on homophony, the target text pun is paronymous – the words combined to produce wordplay are not identical in sounding, but only similar.

When it comes to semantic fields of the pun, the meaning(s) of the pun can be shifted to a completely different semantic field:

'Of course it is,' said the Duchess, who seemed ready to agree to everything that Alice said; 'there's a large **mustard-mine** near here. And the moral of that is – 'The more there is of **mine**, the less there is of yours.'' (Carroll 1949: 107)

Vot imenno, **mineral**! – podhvatila Gercoginya. Ona, po-vidimomu, gotova byla soglasit'sya so vsem, chto by Alisa ni skazala. – Tut nepodaleku chto-to **minirovali** gorchichnymi **minami**, sovsem na dnyah. A otsyuda moral': «Chemu byt' – togo ne **minovat'**!» (Zahoder 2008: 173)

[Precisely, a **mineral**! – exclaimed the Dutchess. As it seemed, she was ready to agree with anything Alice said. – The other day they **mined** something with mustard **mines** not far from here. And the moral of this is: 'You cannot **avoid** that which has to happen[2]!']

Here the translator turns to another meaning of the word mine which belongs to a different semantic field – a type of bomb ('mina' in Russian) and the paronymous play on the group of words: mineral (mineral) – minirovat' (to place mines) – mina (a mine) – minovat' (to avoid).

There are also shifts in the textual environment of the target text pun:

At last the Mouse, who seemed to be a person of authority among them, called out, 'Sit down, all of you, and listen to me! I'll soon make you **dry** enough!' They all sat down at once, in a large ring, with the Mouse in the middle. Alice kept her eyes anxiously fixed on it, for she felt sure she would catch a bad cold if she did not get dry very soon. 'Ahem!' said the Mouse with an important air, 'are you all ready? This is the **driest** thing I know. Silence all round, if you please!' (Carroll 1949: 31)

Najposlije se javi Miš, koji je svakako među njima bio ugledna osoba, i poviče: – Sjednite svi! Ako budete mene slušali svi ćete se brzo **osušiti**! – Poslušaše ga i svi posjedaše u široku krugu, a Miš ostade u sredini. Alica je zabrinuta promatrala njegovo mokro krzno, jer bi se mogla zakleti da će se i sama ljuto prehladiti, ako se brzo ne osuši. – Hm, hm! – zine Miš dostojanstveno. – Jeste li se smirili? Jeste, lijepo. Hoćete da se osušite. Dobro, ja ću vam pomoći. Pazite, jer je ovo što ću vam sada pripovijedati, vrlo **suha** stvar, najsuhlja stvar na svijetu. Nemojte se micati, molim! – <u>Miš, koji je izglodao mnoge knjige od korica do korica i dobro znao da je povijest, kako se uči u nekim školama, zaista **suha** stvar, zamisli se i nastavi</u> [...]. (Jurkić Šunjić 1964: 23)

[At last the Mouse, whom they considered to be a respectable person, called out: – Everyone, sit down! If you listen to me, you will soon get **dry**! – Everyone did as he said and sat in a large ring, with the Mouse in the middle. Alice was anxiously looking at his wet fur, as she was sure to catch a bad cold, if she did not get dry soon. – Ahem! – said the Mouse with dignity. – Have you settled down? You have, that's nice. You want to get dry. Fine, I will help you. Pay attention, because the story that I am now going to tell you is a very **dry** thing, the driest thing in the world. <u>Please, be still! – The Mouse, who had gnawed many books from cover to cover and knew that history, as it was taught in some schools, was a really **dry** thing, paused for a moment and then continued.</u>]

In this example, the focus of the pun and the semantic field of the meanings of the pun are not changed, but there is a noticeable shift in the co-text. The translator

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[2] The proverb is translated literally to explain wordplay in the Russian translation. The English proverb which actually corresponds to the given Russian proverb is "What must be, must be!"

decided to modify the textual environment of the pun with a fragment which functions as a sort of a clarification of the target text pun (underlined in the example).

### 6.1.2  Pun > non-pun

Sometimes translators are not aware of the pun in the source text or they are unable to create a corresponding pun in the target text. In either case, they may choose to replace the original pun with a non-pun in the target text. There are several subtypes of this translation technique which are determined by the degree of change or loss of meaning.

In a non-selective non-pun both meanings of the pun (literal and figurative) are translated, but they do not result in a pun in the target text. To make it clearer, here is an example:

> 'You can draw water out of a water-well,' said the Hatter; 'so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well – eh, stupid?' 'But they were in the **well**,' Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark. 'Of course they were', said the Dormouse; '– **well** in.' (Carroll 1949: 89)

> Voda se može izvlačiti iz vodenog zdenca – reče Klobučar – i rekao bih da se iz zdenca pekmeza ne može izvlačiti maslo, nego samo pekmez... ej, tvrda glavo! – Ali one su bile u **zdencu** – reče Alica Puhu, ne obazirući se na Klobučara. – Naravno da su bile – reče Puh – **duboko** unutra. (Jurkić-Šunjić 1964: 62)

> [Water can be drawn out of a water well – said the Hatter – and I believe that you cannot draw butter from a marmalade well, but only marmalade... eh, stupid? – But they were in the **well** – said Alice to the Dormouse, not paying attention to the Hatter. – Of course they were – said the Dormouse – **deep** inside.]

In this example the noun 'well' and the adverb 'well' are in a homonymous relationship in the source text. Both meanings, i.e. that of the noun and of the adverb, are translated, but their forms in the target text are not in a homonymous relationship or, as a matter of fact, in any other relationship which would result in a pun.

The second option within this technique is the selective non-pun:

> 'Just think of what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its **axis** –' 'Talking of **axes**,' said the Duchess, 'chop off her head!' (Carroll 1949: 71)

> Zamislite samo kakvu bi to zbrku učinilo od dana i noći! Jer, vidite, Zemlja treba dvadeset i četiri sata da se okrene oko svoje **osi**... Vi znate, dakako, da se Zemlja okreće na osi kao

glava na vratu... – Kad već govorimo o glavi na vratu – rekla je Vojvotkinja – odrubite joj glavu! (Šoljan 1995: 56)

[Just imagine what a mess that would make with the day and night! Because, you see, the Earth needs twenty four hours to turn round on its **axis**… You, of course, know that Earth turns round on its axis like a head on a neck… – Speaking of a head on a neck – said the Dutchess – chop off her head!]

Here is an example of homophony in the source text – between the words 'axis' and 'axes'. In the target text only 'axis' is translated with a corresponding Croatian noun 'os', while 'axes' is nowhere mentioned.

Diffuse paraphrase refers to cases of 'pun > non-pun' translation in which the pun is paraphrased within a passage. The meanings of the original pun are not preserved, but some semantic elements of the source text passage are recognizable within the target text passage:

The Rabbit Sends in a Little **Bill** (Carroll 1949: 40)

Kto-to letit v trubu (Nabokov 2010: 38)

[Someone is flying into the chimney]

Again, a translation of a segment from the original text results in a non-pun. However, here neither of the two meanings of the word 'bill' is transferred into the target text passage which is recognized as the translation of the source text passage containing a pun.

## 6.1.3 Pun > punoid

As it has already been explained, a punoid can be a play on words by the use of rhyme, alliteration, allusion, etc. Some of these devices can be recognized among the examples from the corpus of this research and will be briefly indicated below.

Alliteration:

The Rabbit Sends in a Little **Bill** (Carroll 1949: 40)

**G**uštera **g**urni **g**dje je **g**usto (Šoljan 1995: 32)

[Stick the lizard where there are problems]

Rhyme:

'You can draw water out of a water-well,' said the Hatter; 'so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well – eh, stupid?' 'But they were in the **well**,' Alice said to the

Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark. 'Of course they were', said the Dormouse; '– **well** in.' (Carroll 1949: 89)

Vodu mozhno cherpat' iz obyknovennogo kolodca? Mozhno. Otchego zhe nel'zya cherpat' sirop iz kolodca siropnogo – a, glupaya? – No ved' oni byli v **kolodce**, – obratilas' ona k Sone, prenebregaya poslednim zamechan'em. – Konechno, – otvetil Sonya, – **na samom dne**. (Nabokov 2010: 91)

[Can you draw water out of an ordinary well? You can. Why then can't syrup be drawn out of a syrup well – eh, stupid? – But they were in the **well**, – she said to Sonya, ignoring this last remark. – Of course, – said Sonya, – **at the very bottom**.]

Other examples, as well as the examples of the use of other devices, such as referential equivocality and allusion, can be found in Table 2.

### 6.1.4  Pun > zero

This technique occurs only twice in the corpus. It is interesting that both instances of its usage are solutions to one and the same pun and are evenly distributed across the two languages – one example is from a Croatian translation and one from a Russian (see Table 2).

### 6.1.5  Editorial techniques

In the afterword to his translation, Raos (2001: 141-149) comments on earlier Croatian translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, on the difficulties in its translation (mostly on wordplay) and explains instances of wordplay from the novel. He not only comments on his translation solutions, but also explains source text puns in order to, as he himself points out, explain them to curious readers and teach future young translators. For example, he comments on his solution to the homonymous word 'bill':

U izvorniku se gušter zove Bill, što nije samo skraćeni oblik imena William, nego i bill (račun). Zbog toga je naslov poglavlja »Zec šalje malog Billa/računčić«. Gušteru, međutim, mnogo bolje pristaje ime Gušt (Gustl, Gustav, Augustin), što omogućuje i novu igru riječima.

[In the original text, the lizard's name is Bill. This is not only short for William, but also a bill (check). This is why the title of the chapter is "The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill/bill".

However, Gušt (Gustl, Gustav, Augustin) is a much more suitable name for a lizard[3], which makes it possible to create a new play on words.]

Instances of usage of other techniques from Delabastita's list were not found among the solutions to puns based on polysemy, homonymy and homophony that were taken from the six translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This does not mean that the four remaining techniques (transference, direct copy, non-pun > pun, zero > pun) were not used in the texts at all. Rather, as this research is focused on a certain type of puns and their translation, no additional exemplification will be given, as it surpasses the topic of this paper and might cause confusion.

To sum up, in the translation of polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns examined in this paper, the following four techniques from Delabastita's list are used: translation by a pun, non-pun, punoid and zero (omission). Editorial techniques are used by one translator in the afterword, where he comments on different translation solutions, without giving any indication of these commentaries within the target text itself. As it will be described in the following section, some of the translation solutions found in the target texts were not recognized as techniques from Delabastita's list. These include target text puns based on syntax, morphology and portmanteau words.

## 6.2   Comparison between Croatian and Russian translations

This section examines the level of similarity between pun translations into two languages which belong to the same family. It analyses the translation techniques employed in the two groups of translations and deviations from the original type of wordplay when the 'pun > pun' technique is involved.

We can now proceed to a more detailed analysis of the techniques used in the corpus, including a statistical analysis of their usage. The structure of target text puns is analysed in terms of their deviation from the linguistic phenomenon in the original pun. Hence, for every instance of the 'pun > pun' technique it is indicated what serves as the basis for play on words in the target text. This results in seven groups of target text puns which are, together with other techniques, displayed in Table 1 (see Appendices) with differently coloured fields: polysemous puns, homonymous,

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[3] "gušter" in Croatian

homophonous, paronymous, portmanteau words, syntactic puns and morphological puns. It is visible from the table that the majority of solutions to source text puns are actually some type of pun. To be more precise, 73 per cent of the total 90 translation solutions are puns. However, the 'pun > pun' technique is used more often by Russian translators: 64 per cent of solutions in Croatian translations are puns, while in Russian they amount to 82 per cent. Graph 1 shows the distribution (number of instances) of the seven groups of target text puns mentioned above in the Croatian and Russian translations.
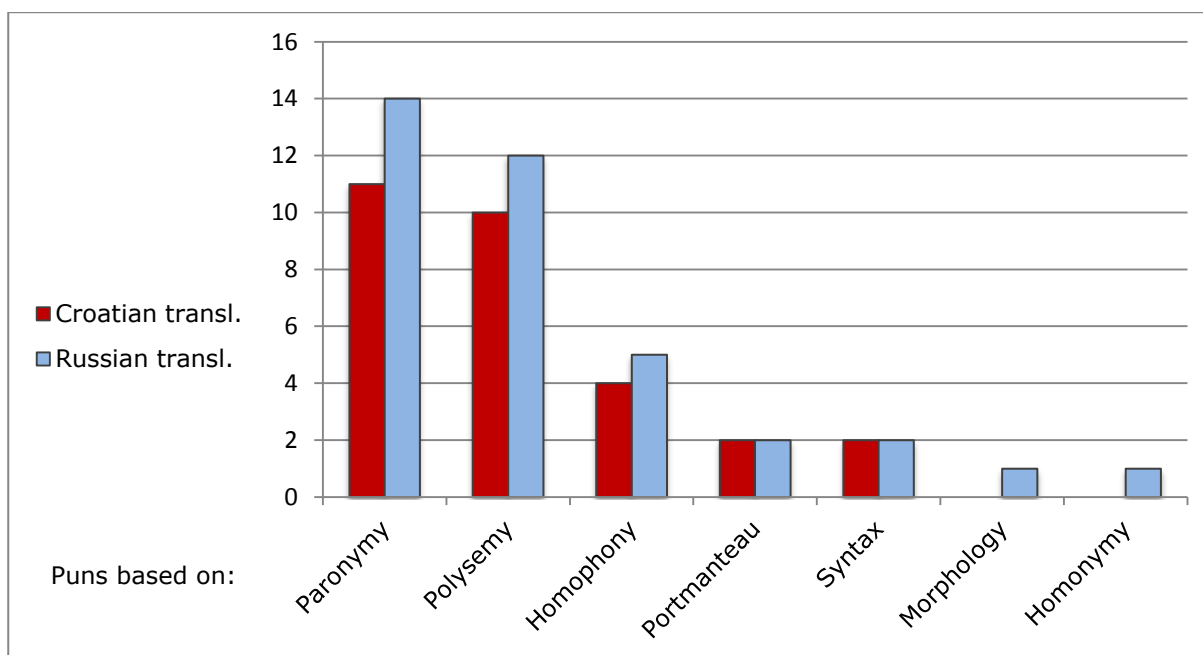


**Graph 1**   Distribution of puns in target texts

As is visible from Table 1 (see Appendices), in both languages polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns are transferred mostly as either polysemous or paronymous puns. It is also important to notice that only one instance of a homonymous pun can be found among the solutions in the target texts. Original puns based on homonymy have been dealt with in various ways, as also indicated in Table 1.

Now we can take a look at the degree of deviations from the original type of pun and see to what extent the translators preserved linguistic phenomena employed in source text puns. Of the 15 solutions to polysemous puns, nine target text puns are polysemous in Croatian translations, while in Russian only six puns are polysemous. As I have already mentioned, homonymous puns resulted in the largest number of

deviations from original wordplay, as there is only one homonymous target text pun, which was found in one of the Russian translations. Solutions to homophonous puns also show a high level of deviation. From 18 potential homophonous solutions in each language, only three of them are homophones in Croatian translations, whereas there are five homophonous puns in Russian translations. These figures show that, in the majority of cases, pun translation results in a significant deviation from the original play on words. This is most noticeable in the translation of homonymous puns, in which translators mostly rely on punoids and paronymy. From these observations, it can be concluded that in both groups of target texts translators equally manage to preserve the type of wordplay used in original puns. The difference is that, in Croatian texts, puns based on polysemy have the highest level of correspondence with the original puns (more than 50 per cent of solutions to polysemous puns are polysemous), while in Russian target texts translators are almost equally successful in the translation of polysemous and homophonous puns.

Already a quick look at Table 1 (see Appendices) reveals that the 'pun > non-pun' technique was used significantly more often by Croatian translators. However, the use of this technique should not be presented as a general characteristic of Croatian translations, as the large majority of non-puns (75 per cent) are the solutions offered by one translator. Croatian translators also use the 'pun > punoid' technique more often – there are seven punoids among the Croatian translations and only four among Russian. It is interesting, however, that from the four punoids in Russian, three of them are translations of one and the same homonymous pun, as the three translators all decided to employ the same technique. The technique 'pun > zero' was not used often – there is only one instance of this technique among Croatian and also one among Russian translations. Graphs 2-4 present a graphical comparison of the source text and the two groups of translations.
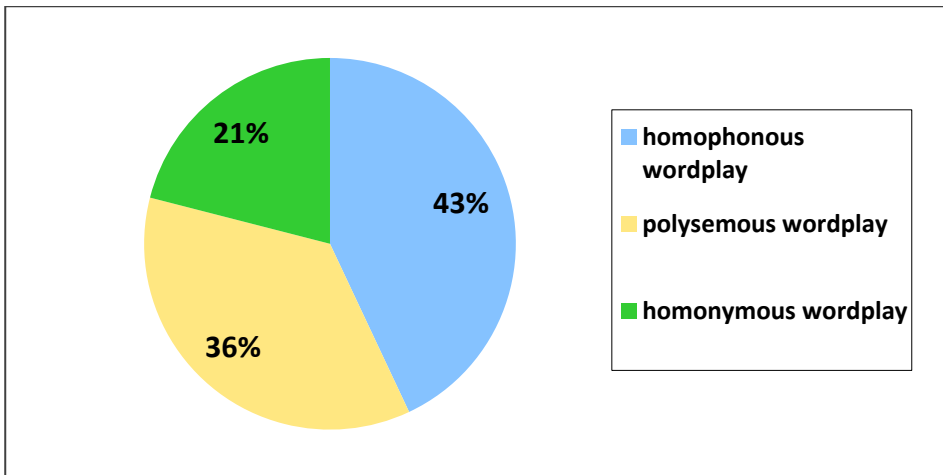
**Graph 2**    The distribution of wordplay types in the source text
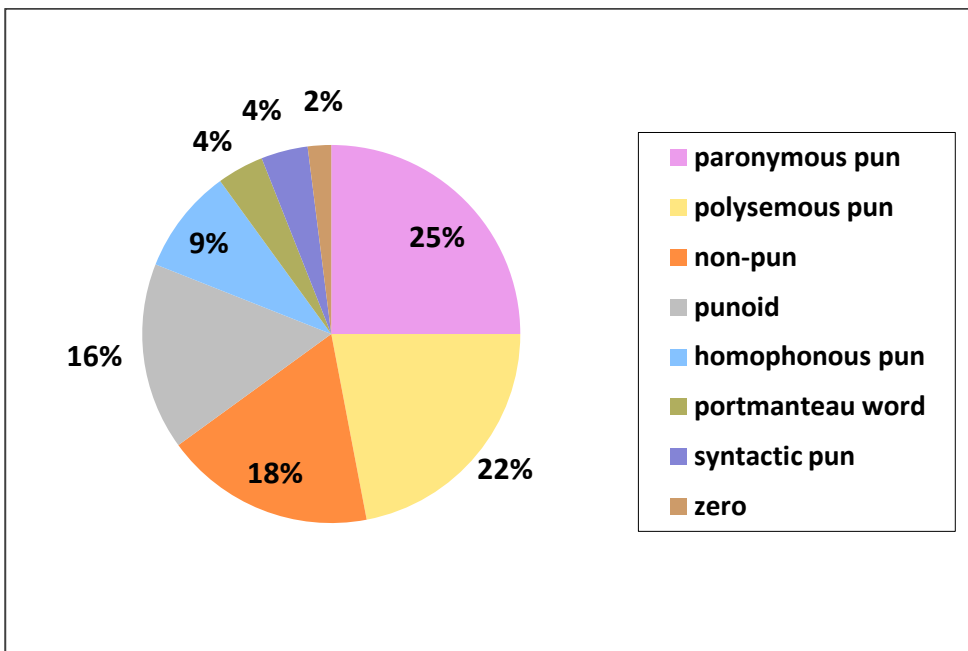


**Graph 3**    The distribution of translation techniques in the Croatian translations
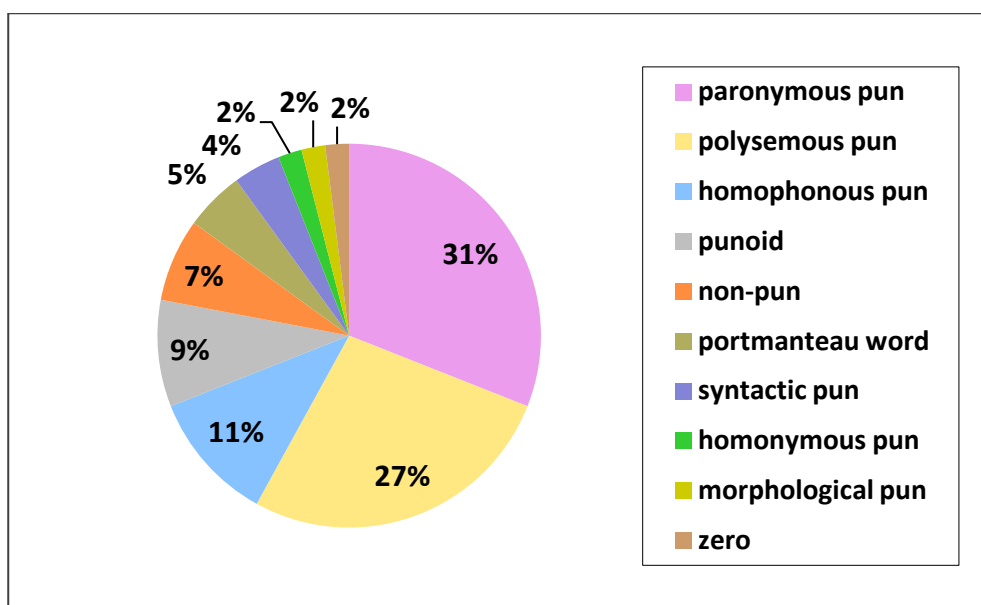
**Graph 4**    The distribution of translation techniques in the Russian translations

Before proceeding to the next section, let us summarize the findings of the present analysis, which support the first hypothesis of this paper. As it is visible from the figures given above, the two groups of translations indeed do display a significant level of similarity when it comes to pun translation techniques. Thus, polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are in both languages mostly transferred as puns, the majority of which are puns based on polysemy and paronymy. The 'pun > non-pun' technique is used more often in Croatian translations; however this is the result of a single translator repeatedly applying this technique. There are also more instances of 'pun > punoid' technique in Croatian texts, while the 'pun > zero' technique is equally used. When it comes to the deviations from the original type of wordplay, in both languages the level of deviation is similar, with homonymous puns having the highest level of deviation.

## 6.3   Comparison between individual translations

After this general analysis of the two groups of translations, a brief examination of individual translations will show a more detailed distribution of the techniques from Delabastita's list and highlight the approach to pun translation of each translator.

Returning to Table 1 (see Appendices), the most prominent column among the Croatian translations is certainly the first column with its many cells coloured orange

and marked 'non-pun'. This is the main characteristic of Jurkić-Šunjić's translation (first published in 1944). This translator applies the 'pun > non-pun' technique in 40 per cent of the solutions and the majority of non-puns from her translation are non-selective. Furthermore, she is the only Croatian translator who has decided to omit a source text passage containing a pun. Only a third of her translation solutions are actually puns and are based on polysemy, paronymy and syntax. Thus, it can be concluded that this translator tends to avoid wordplay in her translation by repeatedly using the 'pun > non-pun' technique. This can perhaps be justified, as De Borba (1997) points out, by the target audience at which the translation is aimed, or possibly by specific norms of translation which determined the treatment of wordplay in the given text.

The second column in the table shows Šoljan's translation (first published in 1985). As it can be seen, he applies the 'pun > non-pun' technique twice. Although he is more determined to create puns, he often uses other types of wordplay in translation of polysemous, homonymous and homophonous puns. In other words, only 20 per cent of his solutions to source text puns are based on the same type of wordplay as the original pun, all of them being polysemous. Original type of wordplay is mostly replaced by wordplay based on paronymy. It is also interesting to take a closer look at instances of the 'pun > punoid' technique applied in his translation, as two out of three punoids are based on alliteration.

Raos (2001), on the other hand, tries to preserve the original type of wordplay. Nearly 50 per cent of his solutions correspond to the type of wordplay from the source text. Like Šoljan, Raos also manages to preserve polysemy. A higher level of correspondence is also a result of his tendency to create homophonous puns in the target text, which neither of the other two Croatian translators does. Among the six translations, this one contains the largest number of homophonous puns. If we look at the structure of these puns, we will notice that half of them arise from one word being heard as two. However, this calls for many shifts in the focus and the textual environment of the target text pun, which can be seen in the examples from Table 2 (see Appendices).

The colours in Table 1 (see Appendices) indicate even at the first glance that the techniques are more evenly distributed among the three Russian translations. Nabokov's translation was first published in 1923. Already the translation of the title – *Anya v Strane Chudes* – reveals that this translation is more adapted to the target

culture, as the heroine of Carroll's book acquires the Russian name *Anya*. This is also confirmed in the translation of the polysemous pun in which the Mouse talks about British history, while Nabokov transfers it into a story from the history of Russia. A possible explanation for his motives can be found in Weissbrod's (1996: 225) analysis of Hebrew translations of *Alice*, in which she highlights the influence of norms on the translators. The oldest translation from her analysis was published in 1923 (the same year when Nabokov's translation was published), at a point when, according to Weissbrod, the most important quality of translations was their cultural acceptability. This is why "translators manipulated socio-cultural aspects of the source texts so as to naturalize them or make them more familiar to the target audience". Regarding the techniques, in distinction from the other two translators, only Nabokov constructs portmanteau words in his solutions. Also, two out of three instances of non-puns in Russian translations are found in his translation.

Demurova, whose translation was first published in 1967, has the highest number of homophonous solutions among the translators into Russian. The three homophonous puns are all based on one word being heard as two. However, she is also the only Russian translation to apply the 'pun > zero' strategy. If we look at Table 2 (see Appendices) more carefully, we will notice that her target text puns are often characterized by a shift in the focus or the textual environment of the pun. In addition, it seems that Demurova approaches each pun individually. In other words, while other translators from the corpus seem to have a strategy which they consistently apply in their translations, the analysis of Demurova's translation does not reveal any specific pattern. As outlined above, each translator deals with puns in a certain way: Jurkić-Šunjić tends to use the 'pun > non-pun' technique significantly more often than others; Šoljan translates them as puns, but changes the type of wordplay; Raos tries to preserve the original type of wordplay; and Nabokov tends to adapt the whole text to the target culture.

Zahoder, whose translation was first published in 1971, mostly relies on polysemy and paronymy in the translation of source text puns. Moreover, he is the only translator who creates a play on the morphological structure of words. In several examples from Table 2 (see Appendices), we can see that he modifies the textual environment of some puns with a commentary on the target text pun. However, his commentary is not given from the viewpoint of the translator. Zahoder inserts passages written from the viewpoint of the narrator in the first person. Actually, this is the strategy he employs throughout the whole text, as numerous passages have in

this way been integrated into the source text. This is why, among other things, some editions of his translation also label it as an adaptation.

This analysis and comparison of individual translations shows that translators – both those working into the same language and those working into one of the two languages belonging to the same family – tend to develop their own translation strategies, which result in noticeable differences among the target texts. Therefore, some translators tend to preserve wordplay, while others may use the 'pun > non-pun' technique more often, or even omit passages containing puns. Different strategies may arise from various factors mentioned above, such as translation norms, the translators' abilities, their creativity, their familiarity with the source language and culture and their understanding of what is desirable in a translation.

## 7.  Conclusion

The present study deals with the translation of wordplay based on polysemy, homonymy and homophony from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Three translations into Croatian and three into Russian serve as the corpus for this analysis, which aims at revealing similarities between the translations into two related languages and highlighting differences between individual translations. In order to do this, the translation solutions to puns are categorised according to Delabastita's (1993) division of pun translation techniques. Additionally, a brief discussion of the notion of the pun and its various definitions is given early in the paper to avoid possible misunderstandings when it comes to the use of the term. Although both the topic and the size of the corpus limit the scope of this paper to three types of wordplay and a small number of translations, the paper supports the general claim that puns are in fact translatable, and offers some interesting findings about pun translation.

The examples from the corpus demonstrate that translators into two languages which belong to the same family tend to choose similar techniques when dealing with puns. They generally try to convey the humorous effect to the target readers by the use of puns or some other humorous technique in the target text. Therefore, the 'pun > pun' technique is applied in the majority of pun translations. However, within this technique there are significant deviations from the original type of wordplay. In further research, the two groups of translations may be analysed in more detail and reveal some other similarities or differences. This may involve a closer look at the

structure of puns in each language, the norms of translation governing literary translation, the influence of cultural and ideological factors on pun translation, etc.

A comparison of individual translations indicates that translators tend to follow a certain pattern in their approach to translation and develop individual strategies. These result in considerable differences among the translations, which provides an opportunity for a more detailed analysis. For example, it would be interesting to examine to which extent translators apply compensation in their translations. What is the target audience of each translation and how does that affect pun translation? As many of the translators from the corpus are writers as well, how does this affect their translation strategies? What do target readers think of different translations? However, these and similar questions remain to be answered in future studies on puns. This paper has shown that the pun translations into Croatian and Russian are similar to a certain degree, while individual translators still preserve their uniqueness in translating Carroll's language, which is a wonderland of its own.

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