

**WUT2018**  
**IX International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text:  
Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”**

**TRANSLATION OF EXTRACTS WITH HUMOROUS EFFECT IN  
THE CONTEXT OF TRIZ THEORY**

Evgeniya S. Abaeva (a)\*  
Corresponding author\*

(a) Moscow City University, the 2-nd Sel'skhozhozyaistvennyproezd, 4/1, Moscow, Russia, abaevas@bk.ru

*Abstract*

The article deals with such notions as problem solving and creativity in translation while working with extracts with humorous effect in the context of the Theory of invention tasks solving (TRIZ). The author underlines that interdisciplinary approach as well as the current studies in the field of humour translation allows a scholar to consider the whole range of required for humour creation parameters and to get a new angle on humour translation. The author touches upon the topic of special principles of algorithm development for creative thinking. Moreover, the article compares the stages of translation practice, the model of creative thinking and the algorithm of TRIZ theory to make some necessary observations and deductions. Such notions as ideal final result and psychological inertia are seen as essential for the subject matter. Some terms introduced by Altshuller, the author of TRIZ theory, could be as much as useful for the theory and practice of translation.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Translation, humorous effect, TRIZ, literary translation, creativity, algorithm.



## 1. Introduction

Scholars working in the field of translation notice the efficiency of the interdisciplinary approach in general. As Julian House writes, '<...> while translation is at its core a linguistic-textual operation, a multitude of other conditioning and constraining factors also impinge on its performance' (House, 2014).

Nowadays commonly accepted practice of speaking about the process of translation not only from the viewpoint of linguistics makes it possible to consider the observation presented in the article relevant. 'The many facets of literary translation – whether of cultural, institutional, aesthetic or linguistic origin – all impose their constraints on literary translation and the literary translator. It is hard to find an approach comprehensive enough to provide an integrated view on all these aspects. <...> it (literary translation) can be studied from a myriad of angles.' (Koster, 2014). Scholars try to look at the translation (both the process and the result) from different angles that always change to generate new conclusions. Let us consider, for example, the turn to the anthropocentric paradigm, obligatory registration of psycholinguistic factors, the emphasis given to cognitive studies and so on.

## 2. Problem Statement

For the purposes of our research it is essential to change the perspective yet again and examine a field of knowledge that is not exactly related to the theory of translation in order to better define the subject of our study. Since translation in general, and humour translation in particular, can be described as a cognitive task 'but with a very significant problem solving component concerned with mediation between languages' (Angelone, 2010), it is clear that some attention should be paid to the fields of knowledge centered on problem solving. As is the case with the Theory of Inventive Problem Solving (TRIZ) which 'is regarded today as one of the most comprehensive, systematically organized invention knowledge and creative thinking methodologies' (Cavallucci, 2015).

On the one hand, such two spheres as linguistics (translation studies) and engineering seem to be too distant from each other but, on the other hand, their methodology, algorithms and procedures could be called similar due to general similarity of the process of thinking.

## 3. Research Questions

Based on the assumption that any extract with humorous effect represents one of the most difficult cases for the translator, where problem solving combines with creativity, two main questions for the current paper are the following:

- Are there any similarities or differences in organization of the process of thinking when we deal with the act of creativity for a technical task or translation?
- Can some methods or procedures of TRIZ theory be effectively applied to translation practice?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

According to Schöfer M. et al. 'TRIZ and its derivatives offer concepts and tools that bear value for the analysis and modeling of complex systems and problems in non-technological domains' (Schöfer,

2015); and in the study we made it our aim to compare and contrast the present-day understanding of creativity procedure from two different angles: translation studies and scientific (technical) creativity. This helped educe some common ground, general rules which, in our opinion, have great potential when it comes to translating extracts with humorous effect.

## 5. Research Methods

The material for the current research includes TRIZ theory – the Theory of the invention tasks solving that allows to look at the creative process of invention from the logical and labor-saving perspective. The author of the theory, Altshuller G.S., tried to create the theory that would enable people to solve inventive engineering problems of higher complexity at minimum cost. However, he didn't exclude an inventor's personality, knowledge and experience from the context. The principle points were formulated in his work entitled 'Creativity as an Exact Science' (Altshuller, 1979), where the algorithm of invention task solving (ARIZ) as well as the theory itself was described.

Methodologically, our study is based on qualitative approach to data analysis. The main research methods which can be regarded more as general than specific are: description of the theory discussed, comparative analysis of different stages, systematization of data, an analogy-based method.

## 6. Findings

On the one hand, ARIZ has little in common with translation practice, as it was specifically designed to solve technical tasks. On the other hand, the development of cognitive and creative abilities forms its basis, so its theoretical foundation could be regarded as relevant for the practical activity of the translator.

The author of the theory considered scientific creativity to be a sister of artistic and 'possibly, to be the full sister' (Altchuller, 1979). He wrote 'The principles of operating the thinking while solving the invention tasks (the principles, but not the concise formulas or rules), apparently could be transferred into the organization of creative thinking in any sphere of human activities.' (Altshuller, 1979). We do not question the creative character of the translator's activity, especially in the sphere of literary translation, due to such facts as, for example, the creation of a new product, the social impact of the product, the realization of some hidden, unperceivable links between the elements etc. Moreover, a wide range of other less tangible factors could be pointed out here: the elusiveness of the process discussed, the influences of the translator's mindset, non-articulated nature of all the stages of translating, that deal with an unconscious level etc. And humour translation should be regarded as one of the most sophisticated types of translation with creative approach being of utmost importance.

The base for the Theory of solving the invention - in a general sense as the author pointed out - tasks, is assumed to be a range of sequential operations which one has to carry out to come closer to an invention, or a breakthrough. They are (1) the choice of a task, (2) the construction of a task model, (3) the analysis of a task model, (4) the elimination of material inconsistency, (5) the prior assessment of the solution obtained, (6) the development of the solution obtained and the process of solution analysis.

The algorithm suggested, as one can see, has much resemblance to the general four-stage model of creative thinking by G. Wallace, which includes preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification

(Beskova, 2010), as well as to the stages of the process of translation. The three stages of ARIZ can be regarded as pre-translation process. The fourth stage, that was formulated in a technical task as 'elimination of material inconsistency', corresponds in the theory of translation to the process of translation itself; the fifth and sixth stages are in congruence with editing and self-editing.

It is worthwhile to highlight the nuances of the algorithm stages. To merely pose a problem (choice of a task) several crucial intellectual operations should be carried out. For example, one should: determine the ultimate goal of the task solution; check if there is any alternative way; define which task solution is more effective; determine the required quantitative index; clarify the requirements caused by some specific conditions; see if the task could be solved by applying standard procedures. Moreover, many of these steps are subdivided into smaller, but equally important, ones.

To determine the ultimate goal that is the starting point of thinking process, it is essential, for example, to respond to a range of questions, which could restrict the setting of the goal itself: which of the characteristics should be changed, which characteristics definitely can't be changed, what allowed estimated costs are and so on. In terms of translation studies, in the context of humorous effect transference, these questions could be modified as follows:

- Which parameter should be changed?

For example, when dealing with the system of Salvatore Attardo (2001), it's essential to give consideration to the parameters of humorous effect realization such as scripts, language, logical mechanism, object, situation and narrative strategy in this very text.

- Which of the parameters definitely can't be changed?

For literary translation the alteration of the situation or the object is scarcely probable, however such parameters as scripts opposition or language realization are more likely to be altered.

- Which cost is allowed in each case?

In the context of translation, the cost is, for example, semantic shifts / omission, or the time limit which the translator can spend for his/her work on a certain extract.

In addition to the algorithm, which, in our opinion, could be effectively applied to translating extracts with humorous effect, a whole range of methods to activate the process of creative thinking is described in the work.

For example, such an intriguing, though a bit controversial, notion as IFR (ideal final result) could be used as conceptual standard of an ideal text with appropriate, humorous in our case, effect which the translator should always bear in mind.

The inertia becomes a crucial factor that reduces the functional equivalence of translation when the inventor (the translator in our case) follows the trodden path rendering extracts with humorous effect by means of language and culture foreign for the author of the original text.

One more factor that influences the transference of humorous effect is poorly understood script opposition, when a translator is not able due to some reasons to see an antonymic pair and analyze the script opposition (that is theoretically a 'technical task' in fact). In such case the percentage of functional loss in translation increases. This aspect was also highlighted by Altshuller G.S.; he pointed out that 'the solution of invention task is good (strong) when it overcomes technical inconsistency, contained in the task, and bad (poor) if the technical inconsistency is not understood and overcome' (Altshuller, 1979).

In the algorithm discussed four mechanisms to eliminate the technical inconsistency are used; two of them, in our opinion, are relevant for the humour translation algorithm as well. Especially, the first one which is described in the original system as ‘the transference from the technical system task given in the model to the ideal system means of identifying the ideal final result’ (Altshuller, 1979); and the last one, the fourth one, which consists in ‘application of the instruction system, which reflects the information about the most effective ways to overcome technical and material inconsistency (the lists of typical methods, tables of their usage, tables and manual how to use some physical effects)’ (Altshuller, 1979).

An ideal text (in terms of equivalence and adequacy) as the notion has been discussed in the context of linguistics as well as Translation Studies for years. And actually, any model of translation is ideal and hypothetical ipso facto. But in the theory the author states an automatic transference from an existed system (the source language in our case) to some ideal, though it is unachievable in real practical work. ‘The tactics of task solving with the help of IFR is that one should ‘grab’ the only superstrong decision and keep straight wherever possible’ (Altshuller, 1979).

Touching upon the second mechanism which, in our opinion, is relevant to translating extracts with humorous effect, it could be noted that it (the mechanism) means some typical methods of translation, typical transformations etc. Thus, the prospects of future studies in the field of humour parameters, essential for the linguaculture as well as for the author, appear desirable.

For example, in the context of logical mechanism ‘A=B’ for the humorous effect realization with the help of a metaphor, an epithet is of vital importance because it can ‘not only support one of the necessary scripts but actualize it entirely’ (Abaeva, 2017).

One of the advantages of the system discussed is that it ‘organizes an inventor’s thinking in such a way as if the inventor has the knowledge and practical experience of all other inventors, or at least many of them, at hand’ (Altshuller, 1979). Actually, that could be extremely significant, taking into account the speed of translation in the modern world, thematic and stylistic diversity of source texts and some other factors which inevitably affect the quality of a target text.

The author of the theory did not diminish the importance of the individual’s experience and knowledge, but thought that it is difficult to invent something very quickly, because ‘nor knowledge, nor experience, nor abilities (as ‘natural gift’) could serve as the sufficient grounding for the effective organization of creative activity. There are no people who can solve the problems of higher complexity regularly, one after another, thanks to their knowledge, experience and abilities only’ (Altshuller, 1979).

But as a translator has to constantly solve such problems in situation of humorous texts translation from a source language to a target one it means that the quality of translation is discredited. Consequently, creating a similar valid system which can make the unconscious thinking process easier (partially, at least) is of great practical value because ‘the resolution process is capable to guide creativity to generate innovative solutions, at the same time that it stores, indexes and reuses knowledge in order to accelerate the innovation process’ (Flores, 2015).

## **7. Conclusion**

As we can see, the similarity of thinking operations as well as their arrangement suggests that the other arguments of TRIZ theory could be reasonably transferred to the context of translation. Some

foundations of TRIZ theory as, for example, the ultimate goal determination or checking whether the problem can be solved by standard procedures are directly relevant to the thinking activity that the translator should demonstrate when facing a complex professional task.

Moreover, the ideal final result, the importance of divergence with 'psychological inertia' and some mechanisms of searching for solution, including the use of compositional data on gained experience (comparative tables) can help a translator enhance the creative activity.

To summarize, we would like to note that the data of the sciences even so distant from translation studies as technical tasks studies, in our opinion, could have some positive theoretical and practical impact on its development. Moreover, an alternative aspect of considering familiar things could contribute to further scientific development.

## References

- Abaeva, E.S. (2017). *Perevodyumoristicheskoy metafory v otryvke s logicheskimmekhanizmom A=B* [Translation of humorous metaphor in the extract with logical mechanism A=B]. «Yazyk. Kommunikatsiya. Perevod». Military-humanitarian journal. «Linguistics» - 'Language. Communication. Translation' №2, V.2, 182-189. [in Russian].
- Al'tshuller, G.S. (1979). *Tvorchestvokaktochnayanauka: Teoriyaresheniyaizobretatel'skikh zadach* [Creativity as an exact science: The theory of invention task solving]. Moscow: Sovetskoe radio [In Russian].
- Angelone, E. (2010). Uncertainty, uncertainty management and metacognitive problem solving in the translation task. G. Shreve, E. Angelone (Ed.) *Translation and Cognition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Attardo, S. (2001). *Humorous texts: a Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Beskova, I.A., Kasavin, I.T. (2010). *Tvorchestvo* [Creativity]. *Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya – New encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from <https://iphlib.ru/greenstone3/library?el=&a=d&c=newphilenc&d=&rl=1&href=http:%2f%2f2957.html> [In Russian].
- Cavallucci D. et al. (2015). TRIZ and Knowledge-Based Innovation in Science and Industry. *Procedia Engineering*. 131, 1-2.
- Flores R.L. et al. (2015). Collective intelligence to solve creative problems in conceptual design phase. *Procedia Engineering*. 131, 850-860.
- House, J. (2014). Introduction. *Translation: a multidisciplinary approach*. J. House (Ed.); Palgrave Macmillan
- Koster, C. (2014). *Literary translation. Translation: a multidisciplinary approach*. J. House (Ed.); Palgrave Macmillan
- Schöfer, M. et al. (2015). The value of TRIZ and its derivatives for interdisciplinary group problem solving. *Procedia Engineering*. 131, 672-681.