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## **ANALYSIS OF HUMOUR IN TV SERIES *FRIENDS* AND ITS TRANSLATION INTO LITHUANIAN**

**Summary.** The present study examines humour in the tenth season of the TV sitcom *Friends* and its translation from English into Lithuanian. With humour often believed to be culture-specific, humour translation presents a notorious issue in translation practice, as jocular content in the target language is often criticised for being poor and vague. Grounded in Raskin's (1985) theory of verbal humour and adopting Schjoldager's (2008) inventory of translation microstrategies, the article examines the components and mechanisms of humour in the source language and analyses the strategies applied to humour translation, focusing on whether the intended humorous effect is preserved in the target language. The article also seeks to establish to what extent humour as used in *Friends* is culture-dependent. The study was conducted at two levels. First, we briefly presented the essence of Raskin's model of humour, which centres around the notions of script and incongruity, and later applied it to the selected series to identify and analyse the data in the source language. We then supplemented the findings with the identification of jokes in the target language and assessment of translation microstrategies employed in rendering humorous instances in Lithuanian. The findings of the study are believed to further the theoretical and practical domains of translation from English into Lithuanian in particular and, more broadly, contribute to the discussion on the culture-specific worldview.

**Keywords:** humour; translation; TV series; script; incongruity; culture-specific.

### **Introduction**

There is a widespread perception of humour as a very subjective and culture-specific phenomenon. Meanwhile humour translation is often criticized for being poor and vague as humour in the target language is frequently blamed for contravening humour in the source language. The two most common options to render humour in another language seem to be either to translate so as to transfer the effect, or to provide literal translation. The perfect scenario is that the translation succeeds in delivering the point, and the punch line does make people laugh. Consequently, the expectation for humour translation is that ideally it should sound natural, be understandable, and transfer the same effect as it does in the source language. This objective, however, is further complicated by the fact that, being a social phenomenon, humour must be strongly related to the culture or certain groups of people sharing the same language, traditions,

location, religion, etc., resulting in the concepts of *world view* or *mind set* (cf. Cameron, 2001; Dhooge, 2008). Ultimately then, rendering humour in a different language is confronted with an idea that there is no one-to-one correspondence in the world views of the source and target cultures. Due to all these reasons, the topic of humour translation is relatively unexplored in linguistic research.

The present article **aims** to examine the mechanisms of humour applying Raskin's (1985) theory of verbal humour, and to determine the strategies employed and measures taken while translating humour from English into Lithuanian, thereby contributing, on the one hand, to the debate on culture-specific world views, and on the other hand, to the broad range of explorations subsumed under the umbrella notion of *sustainable multilingualism*. Devoting this study to the analysis of humour in the TV sitcom *Friends* and humour translation into Lithuanian, we also seek to answer the question to what extent humour is culture-dependent.

To accomplish the aim, the following **objectives** were set:

- 1) to define the concept of humour;
- 2) to examine Raskin's theory of humour in light of other approaches to humour study;
- 3) to identify the main translation microstrategies;
- 4) to collect and classify instances of humour in the TV series *Friends* along the pre-selected criteria;
- 5) to compare the original and the translation in order to identify the microstrategy applied and analyse the transferred humorous effect in English and Lithuanian.

The analysis in the empirical part is conducted applying the comparative, qualitative, and quantitative methods. The comparative method is used to assess whether a given joke has the same or different scripts in the English and Lithuanian versions. We also apply it when examining translation microstrategies, alongside the qualitative method. The qualitative method is used to analyse the scripts upon which humour instances are based. The quantitative method is used to collect numerical data. While, given its scope, the study cannot provide a full account for the "formula of humour" in the relevant cultures, it is believed to provide interesting insights on the manifestations of humour in a typical representative of mass entertainment industry.

Since the present article is also concerned with the translation of humour, the two theoretical components to be investigated come from the fields of linguistic perspectives on humour and translation theory.

## **Theoretical background**

### **Toward the current humour theory**

Since ancient times humour has been of interest to many influential philosophers, including Aristotle and Plato, even though nobody formulated a finite theory (see, e.g. Perks (2012) and references there). Kant was arguably the first to approach humour scientifically (Morreal, 2016). According to Kant, in any form of communication, people formulate expectations for further possible scenarios. Unfulfilled expectations lead to laughter. Whether the joke is funny or not depends on such factors as surprise and contingency: the former responsible for evoking laughter (upon hearing a joke for the first time), and the latter for not doing so (since the joke heard a second time seems no longer so funny as when heard for the first time) (Morreall, 2016).

One of the earliest classifications of jokes is attributed to Freud (Lippit, 1995, p. 1), who classified jokes into tendentious jokes and innocent jokes, i.e. jokes with or without a purpose. Tendentious jokes are further divided into *obscene* and *hostile*, the latter usually based on aggression, irony or defence.

As for the contemporary theory of humour, two major approaches will be discussed: one by the British linguist Palmer and the other by the American scholar Raskin.

Palmer's (1994) primary focus was on incongruity, which can be seen as a successful fit of two different features, consequently, being a major component of humour. Incongruity is further held responsible for two different psychological states: the contradictory state and the state of playful arousal. The contradictory state is similar to incongruity in that both are unexpected and can be illogical. In fact, Palmer emphasizes that the core of the joke is constructed by the sudden and unexpected contradiction between two ideas, one plausible and the other not. Implausibility is a powerful multi-dimensional mechanism related, alongside plausibility, to arousal and absurdity; according to Palmer, an absurd answer is

capable of turning a plausible question into an implausible one (see also Burke, 2008; Pailer, Böhn, Horlacher, & Scheck, 2009). The state of playful arousal is a combination of two independently existing entities: playfulness and arousal, arousal having to precede the punch line for the joke to be successful. The two psychological states ultimately determine the two reasons why people laugh: when confronted with two different (contradictory) senses and when experiencing a relief (arousal), which comes as a resolution of tension upon hearing a joke (Palmer, 1994, pp. 94–102).

### **Raskin's humour theory**

In the present study, we seek to examine humour as employed in an American situation comedy (sitcom), the latter seen as an example of text and discourse. This enables the study to be seen as a contribution to the broad domain of critical discourse analysis, in which text, in particular that of TV shows, is “multisemiotic” (Faiclough, 1995, p. 4) to the effect that it can be perceived as a code to the “society and its institutions” and reflecting its “social practices” (Gee, 2004, pp. 20, 33; see also Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002). In general, while exploring cultural aspects, humour being one striking example, and bearing in mind American humour in particular, it seems to be a natural choice to turn to TV discourse, which has become ‘the principal storyteller in contemporary American society’ (Kozloff, 1992, p. 67; see also Attallah, 2010). The selection is also motivated by the fact that the sitcom genre has gained immense popularity and is taken as an integral component of the network broadcasting, ranked as the “least objectionable programming” and consequently, viewed by vast numbers of people (Staiger, 2000, p. 3). Having originated within the domain of generative grammar (and consequently stipulated by a cognitive perspective on language), Raskin's (1985) theory of humour was initially driven by the overall linguistic interest in context-dependent, or pragmatic, aspects (Attardo, 1994). Raskin's approach, while centred in the notion of the *script* (note immediate link to TV programming), is a natural consequence of the earlier approaches to humour which Raskin classifies into three groups: “cognitive-perceptual, social-behavioural and psychoanalytical” theories, each focusing on a certain aspect: “incongruity, ... disparagement, ... and suppression/repression” respectively

(ibid. p. 31). The theory evolved in two stages, known as the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) and the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). Both theories revolve around two main concepts, viz. *incongruity* and *script*. Let us first define the terms. *Incongruity* is an unexpected confrontation of two seemingly different planes that creates a paradoxical effect which provokes one's laughter. (Raskin, 1985, pp. 31–32). Meanwhile the *script* is a "large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it" (Raskin, 1985, pp. 80–81). Scripts have "cognitive structure" and therefore are a) inherent in native speakers' minds; b) composed of numerous lexical and semantic nodes that are understood and shared by certain groups of people. Consequently, scripts are "loaded" with the competence of the one who tells the joke (Willis, n.d.-a), and a joke can only be understood and appreciated if the competences of the joke teller and the joke hearer match. Incongruity is entirely dependent on the script to the effect that in the absence of the latter, the former is impossible.

To illustrate the concepts *incongruity* and *script*, Raskin uses a "prototypical" joke. "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in." (Raskin, 1985, p. 32; 2008, p. 25). Raskin identifies two scripts: the words "doctor", "patient", and "bronchial whisper" refer to the script of the doctor-patient relationship. In contrast, the words "young", "pretty", "whispered", and "Come right in" belong to the script of a love affair (Raskin, 1985, p. 32). Let us consider the reason one starts laughing upon hearing this joke. In the beginning, everything speaks in favour of a doctor-patient script. Remarks on the doctor's wife being "young" and "pretty" might not confuse the reader at first, although these words have a connotation different from the one conveyed by "patient" and "bronchial", and do not fit in the first script. However, the final phrase, where an invitation is brought into the dialogue, may first confuse the reader/hearer and then causes laughter because it makes the second script, that of a love affair, step into the foreground, with the words "young" and "pretty" now gaining relevance. The confrontation between the two scripts occurs when the negation ("No.") is immediately followed by the positive invitation "Come right in", and this is a culmination of the joke, its punch line.

The discussion above presents the view of the first version of Raskin's humour theory. He soon revised it, acknowledging the fact that one of the major

weaknesses of this is that, operating exclusively at the level of overlapping and opposition, the theory effectively deals with jokes, but cannot explain the fine-grained distinctions between puns and humour, the most obvious difference between the two being the fact that the former cannot be translated whereas the latter can (Attardo, 1994). Raskin also felt the need to underscore his focus on *verbal humour* (Raskin, 1985). This is why a revision of the SSTH followed, known as the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). Argued to be broader in its application domain, the GTVH includes “textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity, and pragmatics” (Attardo, 1994, p. 222). These three entities are seen as essential for humour to be understood, and their relation to funniness becomes an analyzable unit in the GTVH. The theory is expanded by paying closer attention to the very environment in which a given viewing it as composed of constituent parts complementing script opposition and jointly referred to as Knowledge Resources: the logical mechanism, the target, the narrative strategy, the language, and the situation (ibid., p. 223). Under this approach, Raskin expects his semantic theory of humour to be universal, that is, capable of accounting “for the meaning of every sentence in every context it occurs” (Raskin, 1985, p. 67). Elaborating on the mechanism of humour production in the aforementioned doctor/patient joke, Raskin explains that the joke teller adjusts an intentionally pre-chosen feature (expressed by the phrase “Come in”) to different entities (scripts) from his/her personal point of view, which highlights both similarity and dissimilarity between these entities. Semantically, the scripts are juxtaposed at the level of this feature to the effect that, on the one hand, “the text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts”, and on the other, “the two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite” (the former factor responsible for overlapping between the scripts, the latter for their opposition), the two conditions ultimately being “the necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be funny” (ibid., p. 99).

### **Palmer’s and Raskin’s theories compared**

Since Palmer and Raskin are regarded as the most prominent contemporary developers of humour theory, let us now briefly compare their approaches to

humour. Tables 1 and 2 below outline the similarities and differences between the two theories.

*Table 1.*

### Similarities in Raskin's and Palmer's views

Concept	Similarities in Raskin's and Palmer's views
joke	does not have to be rational and have their own logic to the effect that unreal logic is the reason for funniness, hence incongruity
incongruity	the main component of a joke
script	the result of at least partly contradictory components (ideas, senses) put together
punch line	to be funny, must be unexpected and funny

*Table 2.*

### Differences in Raskin's and Palmer's views

Differences	
Palmer	Raskin
Explains incongruity through the notions of plausibility and absurdity. Plausibility is rationality and reliability, and absurdity means not real and nonsense. Incongruity occurs when much implausibility and little plausibility are put together in a joke, which results in absurdity, or funniness.	Explains incongruity through the notion of scripts. Scripts are natural feelings of native speakers regarding what should be said and how to reach in certain situations. Incongruity occurs when two different or opposing scripts are put together in a joke.
Indicates one condition for incongruity to be successfully performed. It is a contradiction which must occur between implausibility and plausibility, and the amount of implausibility must be a lot bigger than plausibility. If implausibility and plausibility do not contradict, absurdity does not occur, and neither does funniness.	Argues that incongruity is successfully formulated if there are two conditions fulfilled: overlapping and opposition. Overlapping implies that a joke contains two scripts, while opposition requires that these scripts be opposite to each other.
The reason why one laughs is the arousal before the punchline occurs. This means that a temptation is created and it rises until a punchline is introduced, followed by the relief.	The reason why one laughs is the fact that the contradiction between the scripts, the punchline, is unexpected and immediate. One laughs because of a sudden realization of two different ideas being put together.
The logic of the joke may be of two types, rational and irrational, and a successful joke contains a small quantity of rational and a big quantity of irrational logic.	The logic of the joke is "local" and while distortion relative to the real world plays a major role, there is an entire scale of the logical structure available in a joke, from "straightforward juxtapositions" to "false analogies" (Attardo, 1994, pp. 223–226).

Table 3 summarises our comparison of Palmer's and Raskin's theories of humour.

Table 3.

### Summary of Raskin's and Palmer's theories of humour

Criterion	Palmer	Raskin
Focus on	incongruity	incongruity
Incongruity is	implausibility + plausibility	scripts: overlapping + opposition
Logic	rational + irrational	rational/irrational
Punchline	arousal → punchline → relief	script 1 vs script 2 = punchline

### Translation microstrategies

In the present study, translation microstrategies were employed as a ready-made diagnostic tool, but they still deserve at least a brief mention and are the topic of this section. We adopted a relatively recent classification proposed by Schjoldager, Gottlieb, and Klitgård (2008), based on the distinction of macro- and microstrategies: the former operating at a higher level and concerned with the overall sense of the content of both source and target language (Hermansen, & Skou Andersen, 2016, pp. 19–22; Schjoldager, Gottlieb, & Klitgård, 2008, pp. 89–92) and the latter specifying the exact means by which this is achieved, which facilitates and helps systematize the translation process. We therefore adopted the three macrostrategies readily available – direct translation, oblique translation, and transformation – and their relevant subdomains – microstrategies. Using the traditional distinction into *the source language* (the language of the language translated from, *SL*) and *the target language* (the language translated into, *TL*), we employed the inventory of as proposed by Schjoldager, Gottlieb, and Klitgård readily available (2008, pp. 90–92):

Table 4.

### Translation strategies, microstartegies and definitions

Translation strategy	Translation microstrategy	Definition
Direct translation	<i>Borrowing</i>	The source and the target texts are the same
	<i>Calque</i>	The TL uses the same construction or a phrase as the SL



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Translation strategy	Translation microstrategy	Definition
	<i>Literal translation</i>	a word-for-word translation while maintaining the correct grammar and idiomaticity in the TL and preserving the same meaning.
Oblique translation	<i>Explicitation</i>	Elaboration on the information appearing in the SL in an implicit way
	<i>Paraphrase</i>	Free translation
	<i>Condensation</i>	Information in the TL is condensed and made less explicit than in the SL
	<i>Transposition</i>	A word class in the SL is substituted for another word class in the TL without the loss of meaning
	<i>Modulation</i>	TL contains an insignificant change in meaning or message
	<i>Equivalence</i>	The TL employs "different (stylistic) means" than the SL while preserving the same meaning
	<i>Adaptation</i>	A culture-specific item in the SL is translated into a relevant phrase that would be understandable and effective to a TL speaker
Transformation	<i>Substitution</i>	An item from the SL is translated into an equivalent term in the TL
	<i>Repetition</i>	The formal components of the SL are rendered in the TL
	<i>Deletion</i>	Certain words or phrases present in the SL are omitted in the TL
	<i>Addition</i>	Certain items that are not present in the SL are added to the TL
	<i>Permutation</i>	A certain phrase or word appears in a different place than in the SL.

## Methodology

Eight episodes of the tenth season of the famous TV situational comedy (sitcom) *Friends* have been selected for the analysis. The sitcom is loved by many a viewer and has won a number of awards, such as Golden Globes or Primetime Emmy Awards (Awards, n.d.; *Friends* (TV Series 1994–2004), n.d.; Hermansen, Skou Andersen, 2016, p. 4). *Friends* is also widely enjoyed by Lithuanians (Barrone, 2013; "Kaip dabar atrodo serialo "Draugai" žvaigždės", 2014; "Legendinis serialas "Draugai" sugrįš į televizijos eterį", 2013); hence the linguistic and cultural choices of the translators made when rendering the jokes in Lithuanian merit a closer examination, especially in light of the fact that the apparent translation difficulties have already been commented on (Thomas, 2013). In this study, we focused specifically on humour and its translation within the frameworks of Raskin's theory of humour and translation microstrategies outlined above. We also sought to identify any problems that may have emerged in humour translation.

The empirical part was conducted as follows. Using the method of entire selection, we collected all instances of humour from the 8 episodes (each had English subtitles and Lithuanian dubbing), the criterion for the jokes to be collected being the presence of the background laughter. The few instances of non-verbal humour were eliminated, as they are not covered by the theory.

As a result, 224 instances were collected. These were divided into six big groups according to the type of scripts identified in the joke and comprised the following: a) general scripts, b) scripts with taboo or socially improper content, c) scripts with irony, d) scripts with word play, e) scripts as an opposition between what is said and what is meant, and f) scripts with swear words. These groups deserve further comment. The group of *general scripts*, which appeared to be the largest one, contains humour instances that are humorous due to the contradiction of two scripts within a joke. They are labelled as *general* because they do not fit under any other category distinguished below; rather, two different scripts are simply put together to contradict each other. The latter fact also allows one to regard this group as the most representative of Raskin's approach to humour, centred on scripts and incongruity. *Scripts with taboo or socially improper content* contain punch lines that have been deemed as impolite/improper/inappropriate to laugh at in public, and can broadly be referred to as black humour. *Scripts with irony* convey certain ironical content. This group differs from the group with general scripts in that it contains irony as a hidden script contained within a larger script. *Scripts as word play* contain humour instances based on amusing, unexpected, or witty word play. This group is different from others since its primary focus is on lexis, with the second script usually being not a different idea but a funny word, or a figurative phrase which is humorous due to its structure. In *scripts as opposition between what is said and what is meant*, the speaker's factual words oppose his/her intended meaning. Jokes of this group are mostly instances of lying or negation. *Scripts with swear words* contain swear words that come as a second script; jokes of this type are formed into a group of their own due to the special connotation they convey: while similar to the word play, jokes from this group convey a markedly stronger and more negative connotation than a simple word play.

In our analysis, we also compared scripts in English (SL) and Lithuanian (TL) and noted whether the relevant scripts were the same or different, forming

two corresponding groups. Hence, if the SL and the TL scripts were the same, they were attributed to the group of *same scripts*; if they were different, they were placed in the group of *different scripts*. In both groups humour instances were compared in terms of the translation strategy, viz. direct translation, oblique translation, or transformation and the relevant microstrategy. We also used the coding system to specify the season and the episode (e.g., Episode 1 is coded as S10E1), thereby referencing the jokes under analysis (see Appendix 1).

All instances of humour and its translation were presented in a table followed by a commentary. Analysis of the joke itself focused on the punch line, which is always the last sentence or word of the last speaker, except when identified elsewhere in a few cases. We also considered the relevance of the selected microstrategy as well as the relationship between a given script and incongruity.

In addition, an additional group containing peculiar translator's choices has been devised to store the most interesting translator's decisions made rendering a joke. Finally, following our assumption that humour translation is culturally and socially dependent, a group of 18 jokes was distinguished where cultural (in)adaptation is discussed from a closer perspective.

## Findings and discussion

As stated above, 224 humour instances were collected. 220 were classified into 6 groups: 133 instances (61%) are jokes with general scripts; 31 (14%) cases are taboo jokes or jokes containing socially improper content; 25 (11%) jokes belong to the group of jokes with irony; jokes with word play account for 19 (9%) instances; 7 jokes (3%) are jokes with scripts as an opposition between what is said and meant; jokes with swear words appear in 5 (2%) cases. The detailed break-down within each of the groups according to the translation microstrategy used is presented in Appendix 1.

Below we present the analyses of two sample jokes from the category of *Oblique translation*, the first (The Weird Al and Buckwheat joke) coming from the *same scripts* category, and the second (Rachel's joke) from *different scripts*.

## Same scripts

Table 4.

### Microstrategy: Adaptation. Culturally adapted content

The Weird Al and Buckwheat joke	
Context	
Monica is sad that friends changed their pairs. S10E1	
English (SL)	Lithuanian (TL)
Monica: Ross and Charlie. Joey and Rachel. Phoebe and Mike. We're the only ones leaving with the person we came with!	Monika: Rosas ir Čarli. Džo ir Reičel. Fibė ir Maikas. Mudu būsim vieninteliai visoje kompanijoje atvažiuavę ir išvažiuavę su tuo pačiu žmogum.
Chandler: That's not true. I came with Monica, I'm leaving with Weird Al.	Čandleris: Netiesa. Aš atvažiavau su Monika, o išvažiuoju su laukine.
Monica: Okay, I've had it with the hair jokes. Tomorrow I'm going to the salon.	Monika: Gana tyčiotis iš mano plaukų. Rytoj iš pat ryto, prieš kelionę, einu į kirpyklą.
Chandler: Okay, Buckwheat.	Čandleris: Gerai, kaliause.

## Commentary

As Monica is compared to Weird Al, it is translated into *laukine*, because Weird Al, a popular American singer and parodist, is not known in Lithuania so well as he is in the USA. Later, Chandler calls Monica *Buckwheat*, a movie character from the 1930s American film. Both cases are translated under the adaptation microstrategy so as to render the particular concepts coded by the relevant proper names in the SL.

## Scripts

The joke is comprised of two parts. First, Chandler talks to Monica when she has messy curly hair and compares her to Weird Al, known for his dark unruly hair. The humorous script is created when Chandler compares Monica as one person to another who is not just Monica, but rather Monica with Weird Al's hair, a particular property outshining the person. The other humorous script is created when Monica finally agrees to go to the salon to fix her hair, and Chandler still gives her a nickname, Buckwheat, comparing her to the dark-skinned American child actor who had a messy appearance acting in the TV show 'Little Rascals'

(Taylor, 2012), the young age of the reference adding a flavour of affection and tenderness to the entire situation.

### ***Different scripts***

*Table 5.*

#### **Microstrategy: Modulation. A slight change in meaning**

<b>Rachel's joke</b>	
<b>Context</b>	
Rachel is kissing Joe and then Joe tells her about Ross having relationship with Charlie. S10E1	
<b>English (SL)</b>	<b>Lithuanian (TL)</b>
Rachel: Ross and Charlie? Wow! She's really making her way through the group, huh?	Reičel: Rosas ir Čarli? Oho. Ji mikliai prasisuko per visą kompaniją.
[Pause]	[Pauzė]
Rachel: Eh, who am I to talk?	Reičel: Ai, kam aš čia aiškinu?

### ***Commentary***

At first sight, the punch lines in the SL and TL are almost the same; however, the emphases are put differently. In the SL, Rachel as if devaluates herself funnily expressing a view that she is not entitled to judge Charlie because they are similar. The punch line in the TL conveys an idea that Rachel's behaviour is self-evident and needs no further comment.

### ***Scripts***

The scripts in the SL and in the TL are different. In the SL, the first script acknowledges that Charlie has had a relationship with many boys from their friends group. The second script reveals that Rachel's behaviour is in fact no better than Charlie. Meanwhile in the TL, only the first script is the same. The second script is more evasive: it only suggests that Rachel's remarks are redundant: either because everybody can see that clearly, or because there is no one to listen to her. No reference is made to Rachel's history on relationships, or it is too obscure to identify. In the SL, the first script of condemnation is matched by the script of a frank confession, the overlap resulting in funniness. In the TL, the second script does not overlap with or oppose the first script, but only signals

that the dead-end the discussion has hit, and consequently the amusing effect is much weaker.

### ***Translator's choice***

In our analysis of humour instances, we identified four jokes whose translation demonstrated specifically the translator's choice and the jokes could not be not attributed to any of the groups, nor contribute to the statistical data. The reason for their exclusion is arguable and debatable motives of translation. We will comment on three of them below.

Table 6.

#### **Translation strategy: Transformation. Microstrategy: A combination of deletion and addition**

<b>The joke about Mike breaking up over the phone</b>	
<b>Context</b>	
Mike and Phoebe are talking on the phone. Mike is at restaurant, preparing to break up with his girlfriend and Phoebe is waiting for him to come back at his place. Mike's girlfriend is late. S10E1	
<b>English (SL)</b>	<b>Lithuanian (TL)</b>
Mike: She's not here yet. You know, I'm just gonna take off and break up with her over the phone. Phoebe: You can't do that. Oh, come on, Mike, strap on a pair.	Maikas: Jos dar nėra. Klausyk, gal aš nebelausiu, varau iš čia, juk galiu išsiskirti ir telefonu. Fibė: Ne, taip negalima. Maikai, prisimokei iš manęs šlykštynių.

### ***Comments***

In the SL the punch line is an idiom: to *strap on a pair* means to be brave and do something without hesitation. Therefore, Phoebe urges Mike to be brave and not to give up. In the TL, however, the punch line is translated so as to suggest that Phoebe assumes responsibility for Mike's unethical thoughts and behaviour.

### ***Scripts***

Only the first script in the SL and the TL is the same: viz. Mike telling Phoebe that he is afraid of seeing his girlfriend and would rather break up her over the phone.

The second scripts are different. In the SL, Pheobe only encourages Mike to act resolutely. In the TL, however, the punch line suggests that Pheobe is almost compassionate with Mike's ex-girlfriend to-be, and that hurting other people is Pheobe's bitterly regretted feature rather than Mike's, but at the same time, she assumes responsibility for breaking hearts in an ethical way. The incongruity is thus achieved, and the joke, albeit with different emphases, is funny in each case.

There is also one more point worth mentioning. In the SL, *strap on a pair* could have been translated as *susiimti/suimti save į rankas*, thereby being more loyal to the original text and its intended meaning; however, the translator has gone for a different perspective. Although incongruity is preserved in both languages, the motive of changing the message entirely remains unclear.

Table 7.

**Translation strategy: Transformation. Microstrategy: Substitution**

The joke about Rachel telling the truth	
Context	
Joey tries to explain Ross that there is nothing more behind the kiss between him and Rachel that Ross just saw. S10E2	
English (SL)	Lithuanian (TL)
Joey: But what you saw, that is the extent of it, okay? One kiss. Rachel: That's a lie! We also kissed in Barbados. Joey: Dude, chill!	Džo: Bet tai, ką matei, tai viskas. Vienas bučinyš. Reičel: Nene, nemeluok. Mes bučiavomės ir Barbadosė. Džo: Mergina, pagesk!

**Comments**

The punch line is translated with the same idea, however, the word *pagesk* is a very interesting decision because it is not common in colloquial Lithuanian.

**Scripts**

The first script is Rachel telling Ross that she and Joey really kissed, and Joey does not want Rachel to tell him. The second script is Joey using a colloquialism to tell Rachel to stop talking and telling Ross about their secret relationship. Incongruity comes into play when one realizes that Joey is really frustrated and

calls Rachel *dude*, which is not very polite, in a desperate attempt to stop her talking.

It is clear that Joey wants to familiarize the context/the relationship with Rachel, and talks to her like with a friend as if she were a guy. Considering the spoken language in Lithuania, *pagesk* is not a common or even recognizable word (by saying *recognizable* we refer to the exact meaning it conveys in the joke). By saying *chill* Joey seeks to make Rachel stop telling Ross the truth, if not make her stop talking, which is more likely in this situation. At this point we would like to suggest our own interpretation of the translator's solution and argue that *pagesti* may well have a correlation with a word *gesti* as used in *gesinti norą kalbėti* (i.e. to reduce the intention of telling the truth) which then is a choice of a very figurative rendering of the original.

Table 8.

**Translation strategy: Oblique translation. Microstrategy: Explication**

The joke about Chandler washing cranberries	
<b>Context</b>	
Chandler wants to help Monica with the dinner preparation and she tells him to wash cranberries. S10E8	
English (SL)	Lithuanian (TL)
Monica: I'm gonna go check on something across the hall. You start by washing these.  [Pause] Not with soap!	Monika: Aš einu šio to atsinešti į koridoriaus galą, o tu pradėk plautis rankas.  [Pauzė] Be muilo!

**Comments**

The whole idea is translated in the same way as it means in the SL; however, we believe this is an instance of an erroneous translation. *These* is translated as *rankas* which is not correct based on the situation. In fact, Monica asks Chandler to wash cranberries, and she physically gives them to Chandler while saying *these*.



## **Scripts**

The scripts in the SL and in the TL are different. In the SL the first script is Monica telling Chandler to wash cranberries while she goes to take something from the hall. The second script occurs when she yells at Chandler not to wash cranberries with soap. In the TL the first script is Monica asking Chandler to wash his hands. The second script is the same as it is in the SL: Monica yells at Chandler not to wash them with soap. However, in the TL *them* becomes hands, not cranberries, and the incongruity does not take place, because one does not understand why should not Monica allow washing hands with soap. In the SL, however, incongruity does take place, because cranberries should not be washed with soap, and this is exactly what Chandler wanted to do.

Incongruity is clear in the SL: Monica points to the cranberries and Chandler starts washing them. In the TL, incongruity is obscured, or rather, is of a very different sort because Monica essentially tells Chandler to wash his hands without soap, which is unusual. Consequently, the script of customary washing hands with soap is the same in both languages. But the translator's motive of changing the referent from *cranberries* to *hands* is questionable: a possible argument might be that the joke was translated without watching the visual material. While this is only an assumption which might be incorrect, we would like to leave the discussion open.

## **A note on cultural adaptation**

Cultural adaptation being a subtle issue, the way a particular culture-specific concept is rendered in the TL remains a sole choice of the translator and is, therefore, always open to debate.

Culture- or social-specific content has been identified in 18 (8,18%) humour instances. These are cases when the content is adapted so as to be understandable to speakers of the TL, but sometimes the content remains the same. Consequently, two groups of such examples have been compiled. Some examples are provided below.

## Jokes with adapted cultural content

### a) Translation of references to historical figures

1) *Weird Al* is translated as *laukinė*. The other culturally-specific instance in the same joke is *Buckwheat*, translated as *kaliausė*. In both cases, a particular feature in the appearance US stars is emphasized (viz. unruly hair), and the translation is adapted in the TL so as to convey the idea, albeit somewhat metaphorically. In general, the translator shows preference to concepts with a derogatory meaning, similar examples including *Allen Iverson* translated as *papušas*, and *Evel Knievel* as *baisa pabaisa*.

2) *Do a duet of "Ebony and Ivory"* is translated as *žaisti juoda-balta šilta-šalta*. There seems to be a correlation between the SL and the translator's choice in the TL: in the SL, reference is made to the well-known song sung a duet by Paul McCartney and Steve Wonder; in the TL it is translated as a name for a game (which in fact is not very popular or well-known). The translator has done her best to preserve the idea of two opposing features.

### b) Translation of culturally specific phenomena

1) *Foot Locker* is translated as *persirengimo kambarys*. Originally *Foot Locker* is a clothing store, but the retailer is not presented in the Lithuanian market. Therefore, given the fact that the scene develops at the sport's stadium, the term *persirengimo kambarys* has been selected instead. The translation of *Toys"R"Us* as *žaislų parduotuvė* and *Pottery Barn catalog* as *baldų katalogas* follow the same logic.

2) *Fifth* is translated as *Penktoji Aveniu*. The name is the equivalent in the TL, but is further elaborated to be understood by the audience.

3) *The first wave at Omaha Beach* is translated as *pirmoji desantininkų banga, kai sąjungininkai išsilaipino Normandijoje*. The translation is explanatory; however, one should be aware of the historical content.

## Jokes with unadapted cultural content

1) In the US, *B* refers to a grade. In the TL, it is translated literally as *B*. If one is not aware of the American grading system, the joke might not be understood.

2) *Maxim* is translated as *žurnalas Maxim*. In the US, it is a magazine for men, and it is not available in Lithuania. Even though there is an addition of the word *žurnalas* before the title *Maxim*, the Lithuanians will be left guessing about the content of the magazine, and the scene might not be as vivid in the TL as it is in the SL.

3) *The Dr. Phil* is translated as *daktaro Filo laida*. Although the translation contains elaboration, the TV show is not shown in Lithuania and consequently, there is still little chance that the joke will be understood by the TL audience.

4) *Mississippi* is translated as *Misisipė*. In English, there is a well-known way of counting seconds by adding the word *Mississippi*: *one Mississippi, two Mississippi*, etc. Lithuania, naturally, does not employ this method and consequently the audience will be left unaware of why the name of the river should have been included in counting, nor of the essence of the joke in general.

5) *Palmolive potatoes* are translated as *bulvės à la Palmolive*. *Palmolive* here refers to the *Palmolive* soap, and Chandler describes potatoes having the taste of the soap. The translator has not only preserved the proper name, but also improvised by introducing a French construction, widely used referring to dishes from the French cuisine. The humorous effect is strong as the latter component of the construction, contrary to all expectations of a sophisticated reference to a proper name to create an idea of an exquisite dish, in fact refers to a famous manufacturer of soaps and shower gels, and hence contradicts the customary script, while enhancing the idea of food of a questionable taste.

## Conclusions

In this study, we examined the concept of humour, its manifestations, and humour translation in a selection of episodes from the sitcom *Friends*. Proceeding from a long-standing assumption about humour as a mental shift, we adopted Raskin's General Theory of Verbal Humour, which is centred around the notions of *script* and *incongruity*. To account for translation differences in the source and target languages, we employed the translation microstrategies as defined by Schjoldager. In our empirical part, 224 jokes were selected, and their scripts and regularities identified. As a result, a six-partite script-based classification was developed. Our analysis revealed that the selected jokes follow the major

principle of joke construction as proposed by Raskin: script overlap or opposition. We further divided jokes into two categories depending on whether the source and target languages used same or different scripts to render the relevant effect, and examined culturally-specific concepts and their translation into the target language. Since the number of jokes requiring cultural adaptation in the target language was quite low, the initial hypothesis that humour translation usually requires cultural adaptation was not confirmed. Literal translation was found to be the most frequent translation microstrategy employed to render humour in the target language.

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  - The one with the cake
  - The one with the late thanksgiving
  - The one with ross' grant
  - The one where rachel's sister babysits
  - The one with the home study
  - The one where ross is fine
  - The one after joey and rachel kiss. In Bilsing, S., Bright, K., Buckner, B., Carlock, R., Choi, R., Cohen, T., C. D., G. M. S., J. S., K. M., K. D., K. W., K. E., K. M. J., R. A., R. M., S. S., Stevens, T. (Producers), *Friends*. New York: National Broadcast Company.

## Appendix 1.

### Coding of Episodes of the Tenth Season of the *Friends* Series Adopted in the Article

- Episode 1 (Crane, Kauffman, Reich, Cohen, & Bright, 2003) – S10E1;  
Episode 2 (Crane, Kauffman, Bilsing, Kreamer, & Weiss, 2003) – S10E2;  
Episode 3 (Crane, Kauffman, Buckner, & Halvorson, 2003) – S10E3;  
Episode 4 (Crane, Kauffman, Carlock, & Halvorson, 2003) – S10E4;  
Episode 5 (Crane, Kauffman, Klein, & Christiansen, 2003) – S10E5;

Episode 6 (Crane, Kauffman, Jones, & Weiss, 2003) – S10E6;

Episode 7 (Crane, Kauffman, Kunerth, & Bright, 2003) – S10E7;

Episode 8 (Crane, Kauffman, Goldberg-Meehan, & Halvorson) – S10E8.

## Appendix 2.

### Frequency of Translation Microstrategies According to the Type of Joke Script (Percentages Apply within the Relevant Category Only)

Table 1.

#### Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with general scripts

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Literal translation	31 (23.31%)
Paraphrase	15 (11.28%)
Modulation	15 (11.28%)
Equivalence	12 (9.02%)
Expilicitation	11 (8.27%)
Substitution	8 (6.02%)
Borrowing	6 (4.51%)
Calque	6 (4.51%)
Adaptation	6 (4.51%)
Addition	6 (4.51%)
Permutation	5 (3.76%)
Transposition	4 (3.01%)
Deletion	4 (3.01%)
Condensation	3 (2.56%)
Repetition	1 (0.75%)

Table 3.

#### Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with irony

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Literal translation	10 (40%)
Paraphrase	4 (16%)
Modulation	3 (12%)
Expilicitation	2 (8%)
Equivalence	2 (8%)
Addition	2 (8%)
Transposition	1 (4%)
Adaptation	1 (4%)

Table 2.

#### Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with taboos or socially improper content

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Literal translation	11 (35.48%)
Paraphrase	11 (35.48%)
Modulation	4 (12.9%)
Permutation	2 (6.45%)
Calque	1 (3.23%)
Condensation	1 (3.23%)
Addition	1 (3.23%)

Table 4.

#### Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with word play

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Literal translation	9 (47.37%)
Substitution	4 (21.05%)
Paraphrase	2 (10.53%)
Borrowing	1 (5.26%)
Calque	1 (5.26%)
Transposition	1 (5.26%)
Permutation	1 (5.26%)

Table 5.  
**Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with scripts as an opposition between what is said and what is meant**

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Calque	1 (14.29%)
Literal translation	1 (14.29%)
Paraphrase	1 (14.29%)
Modulation	1 (14.29%)
Substitution	1 (14.29%)
Addition	1 (14.29%)
Permutation	1 (14.29%)

Table 6.  
**Frequency of microstrategies in jokes with swear words**

Microstrategy	Times used (%)
Modulation	2 (40%)
Literal translation	1 (20%)
Equivalence	1 (20%)
Substitution	1 (20%)

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## **TV SERIALO „DRAUGAI“ HUMORO IR JO VERTIMO Į LIETUVIŲ KALBĄ ANALIZĖ**

**Santrauka.** Šiame darbe yra nagrinėjamas humoras ir jo vertimas dešimtajame situacijų komedijos „Draugai“ sezone. Humorą neretai yra veikiamas kultūrinio aspekto, todėl vertimo pasaulyje yra laikomas gana opia problema: išverstas humoristinis turinys yra kritikuojamas dėl neperteiktos prasmės ir netinkamos formuluotės. Straipsnyje yra pristatoma sudėtinių humoro dalių ir jo veikimo mechanizmų originalo kalboje bei taikytų humoro vertimo strategijų, nagrinėjant humoro efekto perteikimą lietuvių kalboje, analizė, atlikta remiantis V. Raskino (1985) žodinio humoro teorija ir A. Šjoldager (2008) vertimo mikrostrategijų rinkiniu. Straipsnyje taip pat nagrinėjama humoro priklausomybė nuo kultūrinio aspekto situacijų komedijoje „Draugai“. Analizė yra atlikta dviem lygiais. Pirmiausia yra paaiškinamas V. Raskino humoro modelio principas, kuris pabrėžia scenarijaus ir nesuderinamumo vaidmenį, po to jis yra taikomas, įvardijant ir nagrinėjant medžiagą originalo kalba iš atrinktų serijų. Analizę papildė išverstų humoro atvejų identifikavimas ir taikytų vertimo mikrostrategijų vertinimas, iliustruojant lietuviškais pavyzdžiais. Tikimasi, kad tyrimo rezultatai bus naudingi tiek teoriniame, tiek praktiniame vertimo iš anglų į lietuvių kalbą kontekste bei taps vertinga diskusijų dalimi, pasisakant kultūrinio ypatumo klausimais.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** humoras; vertimas; vertimo strategijos; situacijų komedija; scenarijus; nesuderinamumas; kultūrinis ypatumas.