

**Book Review of *Humour in Self-Translation*  
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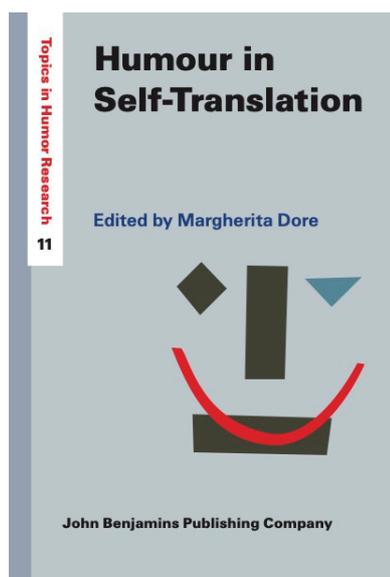
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In 2022, John Benjamins Publishing Company published *Humour in Self-Translation* contributed by Margherita and other academics. The book centers on the self-translation of humour, sharing insights about humour translation and self-translation in different fields. The variety of the book makes it an attraction for scholars and readers who have specific interest towards humour self-translation in various areas. The book reflects on ourselves and social reality by means of humour and self-translation. The discussion between conventional translation and self-translation can also be noticed among scholars sharing the process and translation strategies of humour self-translation.

Self-translated books are usually conducted by immigrant writers who write their original works in mother tongue and then translate them into a second language. Elin-Maria (2013: 178) suggests that self-translation is a form of bilingual writing which is part of the “original” creative process and that writing in a second language is “a translation process where the writer translates both language and self. Loredana (2012: 350) indicates that the boundaries between the “original” and its translation could become blurred, as migrants choose to self-translate their works. It also challenges whether the traditional notion of translation should be further broadened. In addition, migration could be seen as fostering diversity or cosmopolitanism on the one hand, but it also concerns the conflicts

between insiders and outsiders. Under this case, artists, writers, and academics may use translation and self-translation to raise the voice for the vast community of other migrants who are the reflection of contemporary migration societies, thus possibly igniting a retrospection of social self-understanding (Doris & Eleonora, 2019: 136). What is particularly intriguing is how humour self-translation can be exploited by writers as it provides a sanctuary for them to denounce social injustice without being threatened (p. 36). The book *Humour in Self-Translation* will offer an in-depth investigation into the self-translation of humour by migrants, which can help us better understand the process of self-translation and the translation of humour under different cultural backgrounds.

*Humour in Self-Translation* can be mainly divided into two parts. The first part begins with a discussion of self-translation in poetry, literature and theatre and ends with more modern examples of self-translation in stand-up comedy and TV shows. Chapter 1 sets the tone of the first part by offering instructions on the relationship among migration, multilingualism and self-translation and then specifically concentrating on humour in self-translation. Contributors of the book then give detailed illustrations of humour self-translation in political satire, puns, and culture-specific expressions. Through case studies of original works and self-translations, scholars have found that self-translators manage to make a balance between their two works by preserving the source text culture-specific expression through transliteration, adding creative subversion, and offering domestication and compensatory strategies. The successful self-translations problematize the oft-declared untranslatability of humour, let alone self-translating.

The second part is more focused on experimental methods towards the study of humour self-translation. Scholars, some of whom are also self-translators, analyze the self-translation of children's literature, autobiography, and humorous discourse in image-macro memes. Based on various theoretical frames, like Toury's terms of acceptability and adequacy, and multimodality, scholars have revealed the intricate process of humour self-translation, emphasized the freedom and authority of self-translators, and discussed the distinction between self-translation and conventional translation. Self-translators have experienced losses and gains in their translation, and the most important is that they obtain a deeper understanding of the source text and then improve their original writing as well as have certain creativity in the target language. Scholars have uncovered the importance of humour to multi-cultural, multi-lingual, hybrid, and in-between identities. Humour indeed functions as a bridge between languages, cultures, and national identities.

Variety is one prominent strength of this book. Under the main theme of humour self-translation, the analysis of humour self-translation covers a wide range of topics spanning from political satire in poetry, puns in self-translated novels, self-translation of the theatre of the absurd, self-translation of humorous discourse in image-macro memes, to self-translation of humour in TV shows, etc. Besides, those research materials are not confined to one specific language. For example, Richters studies Nancy Huston's French-to-English humour self-translation. Friedman focuses on self-translated English-Mandarin short stories. The languages involved in the book include Spanish, Japanese, Turkish, etc. The commonness of these materials is that English is always the one either being translated into or translated from. As Dore points out that the performance in English by Marsha De Salvatore conforms the high prestige English enjoys as a lingua franca (Margherita, 2018). This is also proved by Chaves "there is tacit recognition that English remains a vehicle of prestige and power" (p. 37). Moreover, contributors of this book play more than one single role. For instance, Tomoko Takahashi is a translator, author, and scholar. She examines her autobiography, self-translated from Japanese into English. Being Yoneyama Hiroko's proofreader makes it simpler for Anna Sasaki to get first-hand information and stay in touch with the author. The real experience of those scholars will make the study more insightful and persuasive. As for research methods, diversity can also be discovered in every study. Richters adopts Delabastita's translation methods and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor to analyze the humorous puns in Houston's two novels. Sasaki uses Toury's terms of acceptability and adequacy to carry out a case study of Yoneyama Hiroko's picture book self-translation. Iaia studies the image-macro memes through multimodal strategies. In summary, the variety of the book makes its study of humour in self-translation more objective and applicable.

It seems that self-translation is an underdeveloped area, let alone humour self-translation. In this book, scholars have considerations towards traditional translation and self-translation. Faithfulness, fidelity, and transferring the very message of the source text are accepted standards for conventional translators. However, creativity and freedom are permitted for self-translators. The authenticity is somehow potentially existed in self-translation. Rainier and Trish (2014) highlight that self-translating writer is allowed to endow their works with an aura of authenticity that is rarely, is ever, granted to "standard" translations. In the book, Friedman believes that self-translation is a creative process which makes the source text and the target text are of equal authority (p. 81). There is certain freedom for self-translators to modify their source text while self-translating. Instead of applying fidelity as the standard to evaluate the translation, translated works should be assessed 'in terms of their expansion, reconceptualization, and deconstruction of the source text, which ultimately enables the source text to transcend temporal and geographical boundaries' (p. 82). In Takahashi's stance, self-translation is another original as the translator is the author, owning the ST and having the freedom to take the liberties he wishes. Thus, the focus on self-translation is "the question of originality and creativity rather than that of accuracy and fidelity" (p. 210). In self-translation, self-translators are free to override their former self, which still disagrees with traditional translation. Under this circumstance, it seems that there should be two standards for self-translation and conventional translation. However, for Anna Sasaki, there is no particular difference between the two when translating children's literature, as long as the pedagogical-entertainment value proportion is the same in both the original story and its foreign language version. Personally, one thing we have to keep in mind is that self-translators are also confronted with linguistic and cultural barriers as other translators. Maybe a broader notion of translation should be developed.

The book offers a reflection on the way humour and self-translation can be studied simultaneously to better understand how these two natural human traits shape and are shaped by reality (p. 1). People use humour to relieve embarrassment, worry, etc., to create a relaxing atmosphere so that the distance between people can be shortened. In this book, humour is seen as culture-specific items, most of which can hardly be understood if translated literally. Under this circumstance, different translation strategies could be adopted by self-translators based on their various purposes. For Huston, she aims to make the original and translation alike. Therefore, she always translated a pun: by keeping the same pun, by translating literally despite the loss of the pun, or by using another literary device (p. 58). Richters has also introduced the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), consisting of language, narrative strategy, target, situation, logical mechanism, and script opposition (Salvatore, 1994: 297; 2014: 176). She uses it as a parameter to analyze Nancy Huston's self-translated puns, some of which can be considered as humorous following the presence of Script Opposition of GTVH. For most self-translators, creative translation or even subversion could be used in self-translation because of their special identity. It can be quite different from the Skopos Theory in which the translator can only be seen as an expert, but the whole action of translation is decided by many factors (Lawrence & Mona, 2000: 222). Anyway, what humour elicits is much more than just laughter. *Humour in self-translation* offers us a reflection on social issues, challenges stereotypes, contributes to individuals in novel forms of identity, facilitates our rethinking on our own sense of humour, and much more (p. 11). The book indeed enables us to

reflect on ourselves through the angle of self-translated humour. Though living in the digital era, the distance and boundaries among people across the world to some extent are actually becoming distant. Migrant writers who are also self-translators may feel it more, which enables them to self-translate humour to shorten the distance and increase mutual understanding. The value of the book cannot be ignored. The book *Humour in Self-Translation* covers translation material of various kinds and is studied based on manifold perspectives, which indeed provides insights into the self-translation of humour. However, because of its wide range, which means each chapter focuses on specific field of humour in self-translation, the continuity of the whole book could be interrupted. Although written under one common theme, the main idea of different chapters can still differ. For example, Friedman's focus is on Ha Jin and Pai Hsien-yung's self-translation strategy of those humorous wordplays. By contrast, Dore's main discussion is Marsha De Salvatore's identity balance under English and Italian backgrounds. All in all, we still cannot deny because of its variety, readers can appreciate the humour in self-translation in different stances and may find their own interest within the 12 chapters. *Humour in Self-Translation* is a book exploring humour and self-translation, the two underdeveloped areas in humour studies and translation studies. Being contributed by a group of scholars, the book encapsulates many possible research fields under the common theme of humour in self-translation. Each chapter leads us into a different world of humour study in self-translation. The book is indeed a strong supporter on the journey towards humour and self-translation study. It hopes that the book can arouse readers' interest in the study of humour in self-translation and become an essential reference for researchers in this area.

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