Tampereen yliopisto

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“SHE CHOSE … WESLEY”

Translation of Onomastic Puns in *How I Met Your Mother*

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ABSTRACT

Nelli Nupponen: “She chose … Wesley”: Translation of Onomastic Puns in *How I Met Your Mother*
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This bachelor’s thesis analyses the translation of onomastic puns, i.e. puns that contain proper names, in an American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (HIMYM). The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the translation strategies used in the translation of the onomastic puns in the seasons 5–9 of the series. The research question is divided into three parts: what translation strategies are used in translation of the onomastic puns? Does the composition of the pun, or the type of the pun and the position of the proper name as either primary or secondary meaning in the pun, affect the chosen translation strategies? Does the type of proper name in the puns affect the chosen translation strategies?

The data consists of 105 onomastic puns, which were collected from the last five seasons of the series. The data is categorised according to five translation strategy categories, which were adapted from Dirk Delabastita’s translation strategy model containing nine categories, which was created in 1993 for translation of puns. In addition to the five categories, the data was analysed according to the type of pun and the type of proper name in the pun. The data consists of 55 homonyms, 20 homophones and 30 paronyms. From 106 proper names in the data, 60 proper names are used as references to real people, places or objects outside the series.

The data is divided into categories as follows: pun to pun translation (30%), pun to non-pun translation (30%), pun translated with another rhetorical device besides pun (10%), the part of the text containing the pun is removed completely from the translation (5%) and the pun is loaned as it is without changing it (25%). According to the analysis, the type of the pun can affect the chosen translation strategy: in the translation of paronyms, the translators prefer direct loans from the source text and the use of rhetorical devices in the translation, while with homonyms and homophones pun to pun and pun to non-pun translation strategies are used more. The type of proper name can also affect the chosen strategy: puns containing a real world proper name are less likely to be translated with pun to pun translation strategy.

Keywords: pun, onomastic pun, wordplay, translation strategies of puns, translation strategies of proper names, Delabastita’s translation strategies, HIMYM

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä kandidaatintutkielma käsittelee onomastisten eli erisnimiä sisältävien sanaleikkien kääntämistä yhdysvaltalaisessa tilannekomediassa *Ensisilmäyksellä* (eng. *How I Met Your Mother*). Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, minkälaisia käännösstrategioita on käytetty sarjan tuotantokausien 5–9 sanaleikkien kääntämisessä. Tutkimuskysymys on kolmiosainen: mitä käännösstrategioita on käytetty erisnimiä sisältävien sanaleikkien käännöksissä? Miten sanaleikkien rakenne, eli niiden tyyppi ja erisnimen asema sanaleikin ensisijaisena tai toissijaisena merkityksenä, vaikuttaa käännösstrategioiden valintaan? Miten erityyppiset erisnimet vaikuttavat sanaleikkien käännösstrategioiden valintaan?

Aineistona on 105 sanaleikkiä, jotka kerättiin sarjan viideltä viimeiseltä tuotantokaudelta. Aineisto luokitellaan viiteen eri käännösstrategiakategoriaan, jotka mukautettiin Dirk Delabastitan vuonna 1993 luodusta sanaleikkien yhdeksän kategorian käännösstrategiamallista. Viiden kategorian lisäksi aineistoa analysoidaan erisnimien tyyppien sekä sanaleikkien tyyppien avulla: aineistossa on 55 homonyymiä, 20 homofonia ja 30 paronyymiä eli sanaleikkiä, jossa kaksoismerkitys luodaan sanoilla, jotka eivät ole täysin samanlaiset. Aineiston 106 erisnimestä 60 on oikeassa maailmassa esiintyviä oikeiden ihmisten tai asioiden nimiä.

Aineisto jakautuu viiteen käännösstrategiakategoriaan seuraavanlaisesti: sanaleikin säilyminen sanaleikkinä käännöksen jälkeen (30 %), vain toinen sanaleikin merkityksistä säilyy käännöksessä (30 %), sanaleikin kääntämisessä käytetään muita retorisia keinoja kuin sanaleikkejä (10 %), sanaleikin sisältävä teksti poistetaan täysin käännöksestä (5 %) ja sanaleikki lainataan suoraan kohdetekstiin ilman käännöstä (25 %). Analyysin mukaan sanaleikkien tyyppi voi vaikuttaa käännösstrategian valintaan: paronyymien käännöksissä käytetään enemmän sekä sanaleikkien suoraa lainaamista että muiden retoristen keinojen käyttöä kuin homonyymien ja homofonien käännöksissä. Myös erisnimen tyyppi voi vaikuttaa käännösratkaisuun: sanaleikkejä, jotka sisältävät oikeita erisnimiä, käännetään enemmän ilman, että tuloksena on sanaleikki.

Avainsanat: sanaleikki, onomastinen sanaleikki, sanaleikkien käännösstrategiat, erisnimien käännösstrategiat, Delabastitan käännösstrategiat, Ensisilmäyksellä

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin Originality Check -ohjelmalla.

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1 Introduction

It is often thought that proper names should not be translated (Nord 2003, 182) and that wordplays cannot be translated (Delabastita 1997, 9). However, as can be seen from Nord's and Delabastita's works, these are not universal facts, and both can be translated. The notions of untranslatability reveal the difficulties that translators can have in their work. While both proper names and wordplays are translatable, what about when they are combined? Can the separate translation strategies for proper names and puns be used in analysis of these onomastic puns, where words that are used as proper names are used at the same time with another meaning as can be seen from the example given in the title of this thesis, where the proper name *Wesley* can be also interpreted as *wisely*? This thesis focuses on the large number of wordplays that contain proper names in the series *How I Met Your Mother* (HIMYM). HIMYM is an American sitcom that aired originally between 2005 and 2014 on CBS. It is known for its verbal humour and a large number of wordplays. In this thesis, I will analyse the onomastic – i.e. name-related – puns, from the Finnish subtitles of HIMYM seasons 5–9. The last five seasons are chosen because there are three bachelor's or master's theses available online that analyse the translation of verbal humour to Finnish from the seasons 1–4 of HIMYM (Hyyryläinen 2017, Pääjoki 2012, Riikonen 2020), which leaves a gap in the research for the rest of the seasons.

Pun as a concept can be difficult to define. Sometimes it is used as a synonymous term with "instance of wordplay" (Delabastita 1993, 56). In this thesis, however, wordplay is used as an umbrella term for different types of plays on words, such as spoonerisms (i.e. words with transposition of sounds between words), portmanteaus (i.e. words that are created by blending together different words) and puns, which are the focus of this thesis. Simplified, puns are a textual phenomenon that contrast "linguistic structures with **different meanings** on the basis of their **formal similarity**" (Delabastita 1996, 128).

Both puns and proper names are tied to the culture and language they are created in, and this can make them difficult to translate. The aim of this thesis is to identify the translation strategies used to translate puns that contain proper names and analyse the connection between the chosen translation strategies and the composition of the puns with focus on the puns' relationship with proper names. The questions answered are: what translation strategies

are used in translating onomastic puns? Does the composition of the pun affect the chosen translation strategies? Does the type of proper name in the pun affect the chosen translation strategies?

There is very little research done on the translation of puns from the later seasons of HIMYM – namely the seasons 5–9 – and no special interest has been given to the large number of onomastic puns present in the series. Generally, there is research on translation of onomastic puns (e.g. Crisafulli 2001, Delesse 2014, Pablé 2005; explained more below), but the research is not overwhelming in its amount. However, there has been research both on translation of wordplay (e.g. Delabastita 1993, Gottlieb 1997) and translation of proper names as such (van Coillie 2006) or, for example, as a part of allusions (Leppihalme 1997). Thus, the research on HIMYM will have a solid basis in continuing studying more specific research topic that has not been studied before.

As a basis for my research, I will use Delabastita's nine translation strategies for wordplays, because while the model is meant as a starting point for translating wordplays (Delabastita 1993, 191), the categories fit well to my chosen data. Because the puns I am studying are puns first, and the proper names are just part of them, I will use proper name translation strategies from Newmark and Ainiala et al. only as a reference in the closer analysis of particular puns.

In the first three sections, I will discuss the theories on translating proper names by Newmark and Ainiala et al., wordplays by Delabastita, and the restrictions that are present in audiovisual translation. After this, I will present the data of 105 onomastic puns used in my analysis and the adapted translation strategy categories. This is followed by the discussion on the results and concluding statements.

2 Aspects of translating onomastic puns

Onomastic wordplay has been studied before for example by Edoardo Crisafulli (2001), Adrian Pablé (2005) and Catherine Delesse (2014). In their works, they focus specifically on translation of onomastic puns in Dante's *Inferno*, Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Asterix* and *Tintin* comic series respectively. While all use the term onomastic to describe their wordplays (or puns in Delesse's case), not all three works have same standpoints in them.

Crisafulli describes the onomastic wordplays in Dante's work with words such as "evocative names" (2001, 8) and "creative names" (2001, 9). The content of the name creates the wordplay in Dante's work. Delesse describes puns that are "linked with proper names" and thus analyses how "the translators tackled the problems" (2014, 262). Pablé's work has a similar angle: the article describes how different translators have dealt with the problem of the name *Ernest* due to the pun *Ernest/earnest* used in the play (2005). In this thesis, the state of onomastic pun is similar to those in Delesse's and Pablé's data: a proper name can be part of a pun in one scene and be just a sound sequence to refer someone in the next.

Crisafulli notes four translation strategies: direct transfer (2001, 15), literal translation (2001, 18), creative translation (2001, 19) and original rewritings (2001, 20); Delesse notes that the translators managed "to convey the overall effect intended by the authors" (2014, 267). Pablé finds four different translation strategies: use of the original proper names but translating the adjective resulting in non-pun (2005, 318), use of the original proper names but also transferring the English adjective resulting in pun (2005, 319), wordplay-based translations where the pun is created in target language (TL) (2005, 319) and translation of the proper name without the pun (2005, 319).

This earlier research reveals the different translation strategies and the aspects the translator has to consider when working with onomastic puns: strategies for translating proper names and wordplay. Because HIMYM's is a multimodal text, the translator has to work around another detail: the possible restrictions audiovisual translation has.

2.1 On proper names and their translation

> A proper name is a noun that denotes a unique entity at the level of established linguistic convention to make it psychosocially salient within a given basic level category [pragmatic]. The meaning of the name, if any, does not (or not any longer) determine its denotation [semantic]. An important formal reflex of this pragmatic-semantic characterization of proper names is their ability to appear in such close appositional constructions as *the poet Burns*, *Fido the dog*, *the River Thames*, or *the City of London* [syntactic]. (van Langendonck, 2007, 87)

There are multiple aspects to defining a proper name. However, the objective of this thesis is not to analyse or address the definition of proper name or what separates it from the common nouns pragmatically, semantically or syntactically, which for example van Langendonck has done. While this is not as exhaustive definition as van Langendonck's whole definition, an adequate definition for the purposes of this thesis can be summarised from it as such: proper

names are nouns that denote important unique entities and differentiate them from other entities, and which do not carry the meaning the word(s) possibly originally had. Thus, proper names include for example people's names and other titles used as replacements for their names, place names, brand names and names of literary works.

While proper names could be thought to be meaningless, one cannot ignore the fact that proper names are "mono-referential" but not "mono-functional" (Nord 2003, 183). This means that proper names do have other functions besides their identifying function for their referent. Because of this, even when they seem to have no meaning, they always carry information – from a name, one has the possibility to figure out a person's age or where they might be from (Nord 2003, 183). Similarly, van Langendonck concludes that "proper names do have meaning, at least if presuppositional information can be called 'meaning'" (2007, 85), despite his definition of proper name. However, while people can make assumptions on the names based on their presuppositions, proper names as such do not carry meaning in themselves.

In fiction, where there is always "auctorial intention" in naming (Nord 2003, 183), one could assume that the names carry meaning outside their identifying function. Ainiala et al. name 11 chief functions for names in fiction (2016, 260–261). While names can sometimes only have an "identifying function", they can also have, for example, a "narrative function", which means that the name is important for the continuity of the story, or a "humorous function", which means that the name creates humour "with linguistic play concerning the name" (Ainiala et al. 2016, 260–261). Generally, understanding the function can be an important part of the translation progress because the functions can change the order of importance in the name, and thus some functions are translated with different priorities. Nord also notes on the "importance of translating functions instead of words" (2003, 189).

According to Newmark, people's names – first and last – are often transferred and not translated to preserve their national identity (1988, 214). However, with names that have connotations, especially in children's stories or allegories, the translation may be essential (Newmark 1988, 215). Ainiala et al. suggest that names that are only transferred and not translated are often "realistic" but not necessarily "authentic", i.e. proper names that could exist as proper names in the real world but are not necessarily referring to real people outside the fictive world (2016, 262). This applies only to some proper names, as some authentic names do have a translated name in TL, which should then always be used in the translation:

names for movies or holidays, titles for people, some geographical locations etc. For proper names in fictive texts, Ainiala et al. have four translation strategies: loan, translation, adaption and replacement, which mean using the source language (SL) name, translation of the SL name, transferring the SL name but making it a better fit for the TL and replacing the SL name with some other expression (2016, 261). The translation strategies also include partials of these for names that have multiple parts that are different from each other (Ainiala et al. 2016, 261). Ainiala et al. state that the translation strategy for authentic names in fiction is then often either loan or adaption, which depends on the form that is commonly used in the TL (2016, 262). This is visible for example in the translation of place names: *London* is adapted to Finnish, and the term *Lontoo* is used, but *New York* is loaned and has the same form in Finnish.

Newmark suggests that in cases where both national identity and the connotation are important, the connotative meaning of the SL name should be first translated to TL, which then should be naturalised in order to create a new SL proper name (1988, 215). This essentially means that the connotation is translated while the name retains the original nationality. For names of objects that work as proper names, Newmark suggests that they should be transferred as they are, but if there is a possibility that the audience will not understand the name, the translator should use "a classifier" that explains the name for the audience (1988, 216). While the thesis focuses on the identifying function of the proper names and thus ignores the possible connotations of the names, because the proper names are a part of puns, translation strategies like this could be sometimes necessary: the connotation has a similar role as the double meaning in the pun has.

Despite the many suggestions on how to translate proper names, there are no clear guidelines on how they should be translated (Nord 2003, 184). Translators do not always use the same strategies throughout their work (Nord 2003, 183). Thus, translation of onomastic wordplays is possible, because proper names – the part of the wordplay that some argue should never be translated – can be translated even if they only have an identifying function, because translation does not happen in isolation and the translators have to consider their priorities in choosing the translating strategies.

2.2 On puns and their translation

As mentioned above, the definitions for the terms wordplay and pun are not used synonymously, but both are used in this thesis for different purposes: a pun is a type of wordplay, where as wordplay consists of a lot of different phenomena. As Schauffler states, the terms "refer to the same concept of ambiguity, with wordplay also incorporating creative language use in which the ambiguity of a lexical item or structure is not the predominant element" (2016, 131). As puns are a type of wordplay, consideration on how wordplays generally are translated are also consideration on how puns should be translated.

Pun is a term that can have multiple different definitions by different authors, often depending on the focus of research. While Delabastita does use the terms wordplay and pun as synonyms, the definition of a pun he provides can be used for the purposes of this thesis, because it covers the necessary aspects of what separates a pun from a non-wordplay :

> Wordplay is the general name for various *textual* phenomena in which *structural features* of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about *a communicatively significant confrontation* of two (or more) linguistic structures with *more or less similar forms* and *more or less different meanings*. (Delabastita 1996, 128)

A wordplay uses structural features of a language to create context where words with similar forms have their meanings intertwined. The meanings of the words can be "more or less different" as noted above, but I will not acknowledge the difference between homonymy ("i.e. different words have an identical form") and polysemy ("i.e. one word has different but related senses") (Delabastita 1997, 5), as their relationship is dynamic (Delabastita 1997, 5). Because the categories are not clear-cut, the division is not seen to be relevant in this thesis.

"A communicatively significant confrontation" means that wordplay differs from non-wordplay by "deliberate nature" and "textual relevance" (Delabastita 1997, 6). If a word has multiple meanings, they are not always present in every instance the word is used: "not all (potential) puns that are plausible contextually have been intended as actual puns or will be perceived as such" (Delabastita 1993, 74). There needs to be intention in creating a pun. As HIMYM is scripted and a laugh track is added to mark the occurrence of jokes – and these puns often have a humorous function – it can be seen that they have textual relevance that the audience is supposed to understand.

Puns are not restricted to identical forms but forms that are very similar to each other. Puns can then be "further specified in terms of homonymy (identical sound and spelling),

homophony (identical sounds but different spellings), homography (different sounds but identical spelling), and paronymy (there are slight differences in both spelling and sound)" (Delabastita 1996, 128). Partington uses similar but wider categories "exact pun" and "near pun" to describe the phenomenon: "In an exact pun, two sound sequences which are identical are called into play, whereas in the near pun, two sequences are involved which resemble each other phonologically (sometimes visually)" (2009, 1795). These categories are not unambiguous, but because Partington's categorisation of near puns include puns created with multiple lexical substitutions (2009, 1806), paronymy could be considered to be a subcategory of the near pun, among other wordplay such as malapropism, "[t]he ludicrous misuse of words, esp[ecially] in mistaking a word for another resembling it" ("malapropism, n.", OED), which is created by substituting a lexeme, possibly with only slight resemblance to the original, in place of another. This thesis includes only paronyms, and not the other near puns.

In addition to the type of the word(s) present in the pun, puns can be categorised into vertical and horizontal wordplays. In vertical wordplays, the linguistic structure that contains the punning elements is present only once (Delabastita 1996, 128), and thus the audience needs to interpret all meanings from single instance of a word or a phrase, as in "Main Lobster" (HIMYM, S5E2), which draws a parallel between *main* and *Maine* from a single word, because they are pronounced the same. In horizontal wordplay the linguistic structure is repeated, and thus has both meanings present in different instances in the text (Delabastita 1996, 128). An example of a horizontal wordplay is antanaclasis pun, where meaning of a word or a phrase changes when it is repeated again ("antanaclasis, n." OED), as in the HIMYM episode "Romeward Bound", where "carry on" is used first as a phrase to say *continue working*, but before the character can do that she is asked an opinion about buying some luggage: "What kind?" "Carry on." (HIMYM S8E21).

Translation of wordplay is often thought to be impossible, or at least very difficult. However, while Low admits that the largest problems in translating humour are language- or culture-specific jokes, he argues that translating jokes and puns is always possible if one is creative enough – sometimes that means that the jokes are not as funny translated or a different linguistic structure is used than in the source text (2011, 60). In translating wordplay, there are two different aspects that need to be considered: "retention of clarity and credibility and the maintenance of formal fidelity to the source text (as well as the consequent prioritization of the transfer of information" and "the preservation of comedic value" (Schauffler 2016, 133).

Thus, both the informative and the functional aspects need to be considered; sometimes both are possible to translate and sometimes not.

In order to illustrate the translatability of puns, Delabastita offers a model for translating them. These translation strategies are divided to the following nine categories (Delabastita 1993, 192–217; names taken as they are, explanations summarised):

(1) PUN → PUN: the puns do not have to be identical in SL and TL, but TL has a more or less similar pun to the original
(2) PUN → NON-PUN
    - Non-selective: both meanings have been translated without creating a pun
    - Selective: only one of the meanings has been selected and translated without creating a pun
(3) PUN → PUNOID: use of other rhetorical devices
(4) PUN → ZERO: omission of the pun
(5) DIRECT COPY: PUN S.T. = PUN T.T.
(6) TRANSFERENCE: PUN S.T. = PUN T.T.
(7) ADDITION: NON-PUN → PUN: addition of a pun in the target text (TT) where there was none in the source text (ST)
(8) ADDITION: ZERO → PUN: addition of completely new material in TL to create a pun
(9) EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES: e.g. use of footnotes

Delabastita has meant the model as a starting point for translation of wordplays and the translation of a single pun can fit into many of the categories (Delabastita 1993, 191), which means that they are not necessarily the only or final translation strategies possible to use in translation of wordplays. Because of the multiple perspectives present in the categorisation, but also its function only as a starting point for the translation of wordplays, the model allows me to create a categorisation fit for my thesis.

2.3 Problems in audiovisual translation

In any kind of translation, the medium of the translation affects the translation possibilities. This is certainly true in audiovisual translation (AVT). Because of the multimodality of AVT,

in addition to the dialogue, the translator has to also translate all the information given visually or aurally (Díaz 2010, 344).

The audiovisual medium of the ST can create both spatial and temporal restrictions for the translator. “The time a subtitle stays on screen depends both on the speed at which the original exchange is delivered and on the viewers’ assumed reading speed” (Díaz 2010, 345), which means that the translator cannot always translate every part of the ST fully even if an understandable translation was otherwise possible. Translators have to consider the 6 second rule, which is a guiding principle, which recommends that in 6 seconds there should be a maximum of around 35 characters on the screen (Díaz 2010, 345). While this restriction is not this strict nowadays because of today’s generation’s faster audiovisual reading speed (Díaz 2010, 345), the rule’s existence illustrates that the translators do not have limitless space to translate for. The subtitles need to be synchronised with the dialogue (Díaz 2010, 346) and other parts of the audiovisual medium, and thus even if the audience would be able to read the large amounts of text fast, the subtitles should not distract the audience from the original text.

Because of these restrictions, the possibility to explain the translation choices is rarely there. At least one of the translation strategies – editorial techniques – is almost impossible to use. This also applies to the translation strategy of adding new textual material to the subtitling in order to compensate cases, where the pun has been omitted from the TT.

3 Data and Methods

The data consists of 105 puns collected from seasons 5–9 of HIMYM. Of these, 55 are homonyms, 20 are homophones and 30 are paronyms. The data was collected by watching the seasons and collecting all the wordplays, from which the onomastic puns have been collected to a separate file. In addition to the translation strategy category, the data is listed according to two features: the type of pun (homonym, homophone or paronym) and which of the meanings is the primary meaning in the pun. The primary meaning is collected by analysing which of the meanings is realised first in the pun. This division might not be definite in all instances but can help in analysing of translation strategy choices. Additionally, the proper names are divided into authentic names and names invented for the show.

I have chosen to focus on vertical and not horizontal puns. In addition to this, I have restricted the data with clear rules on what is classified as an onomastic pun and what is not.

From the data, I have removed puns where the double meaning comes from a very close origin (e.g. “Chinese”, where both essentially mean *relating to China* even if one reference is to food and one to a person).

Proper names have to be established as proper names in HIMYM outside the pun. As some words can act both as proper names or as common nouns (van Langendonck 2007, 11), it can be argued that when a proper name is used as a part of a pun, it does not necessarily in the moment act as a proper name if it is only the second meaning of the pun and thus needs to be interpreted by the viewer. However, in HIMYM the double meaning is always marked somehow in the context – for example with a laugh track – so that the audience can interpret the second meaning when intended. Thus, the proper name’s identifying function creates the second meaning. This does not mean that the pun is present all times a common noun that has the possibility of being a proper name is used in the show. To establish the proper name as such, it has to be a reference to an authentic name outside HIMYM or it has to be mentioned more than once in different contexts outside the pun. Realistic first names are more easily accepted if they are most commonly used as a proper name even if they have a common noun alternative (e.g. Frank, Nick, Seymour). Otherwise, the name does not fulfil its identifying function and does not differ much from translation of any normal common noun.

For the purposes of this thesis, proper names carry only identifying function and thus have singular meanings. As the world of HIMYM is a fictive world, the functions of proper names are present in the story. However, despite the possible multiple meanings and functions of proper names, this thesis will not focus on the implicit information hidden in the proper names or the other functions but restricts the proper name to its identifying function. This means that I will not analyse all proper names in the series but restrict the analysis only when the proper names are used as part of puns, i.e. when the double meaning comes from outside the proper name. Even if a name has potential for multiple meanings outside the identifying function, for example when it also has a common noun meaning, it has been removed from the data (e.g. “Daisy” is a name for a girl (HIMYM, S9E20), but she is just named after a flower. The name has a potential ambiguity, but it is not used as part of a pun in the show.) The possibility for a pun present in an established proper name in HIMYM does not make it a pun if it is not used in a clear, deliberate sense as is the case with any other noun which has multiple meanings. The possible polysemous proper names due to their multiple functions in fiction is outside the scope of this thesis.

The paronyms include words that are phonetically closely related. This includes only real words and not words invented for the show: while *Brolumbus* (S9E4) is not phonetically far from *Columbus*, it is not a pun as defined in this thesis, but a portmanteau (i.e. a type of wordplay) which is an invented word created by blending words together. However, *Parrot Top* as a name for Marshall's idea for a parrot that does prop comedy (S9E13) is counted as paronym because only one phoneme is exchanged from the original underlying name of an American stand-up comedian Carrot Top, and both *parrot* and *top* are real words.

While the thesis focuses on real words, puns where the pun is created only from a part of a word were included in the data, because the whole words were used in the context: in saying "No…ra" (S6E17), the meanings of *no* and *Nora* are both awoken from the context. These puns include puns where there is (a part of) a character's name in one of the meanings of the pun, e.g. "Barn door" (from *Barney* and *barn* door) (S5E21) or "Teddybear" (from *Ted* and *teddybear*) (S5E21) which were then used as a part of a joke with a reference to the common noun of the name, because invented nick names are a big part of the series – so while not maybe traditional puns, they do count as puns in this context. This however does not include descriptive nicknames such as *Marshmallow* and *Barnacle* used in the series, because they do not fulfil the pun's definition of having a meaning outside of having an identifying function.

The categories for the analysis in this thesis are adapted from Delabastita's nine translation strategies.

(1) PUN to PUN: the SL pun is translated to a TL pun in the same position, regardless of the new pun's semantic content
(2) PUN to NON-PUN: the SL pun is translated, but the translation is not TL pun. (Excluded from the categorisation are translations that used other rhetorical devices to compensate for the loss of the SL pun)
(3) PUN to RHETORICAL DEVICE: the SL pun is translated with using other rhetorical devices or other types of wordplay besides a pun
(4) OMISSION: the segment which contains the SL pun has been removed from the TT.
(5) DIRECT TRANSFERENCE (PUN ST = PUN TT): the SL pun is loaned as it is in the TL, possibly with slight grammatical changes to enable its usage in TL

From Delabastita's strategies, I have removed the *additions* and *editorial techniques* as they are not relevant in this case because of the space restrictions of the medium; Additionally,

data was collected in a way that the Finnish subtitles have not been combed through for possible puns that are not present in ST. Groups *direct copy* and *transference* have been combined, because there are no pure cases of transference used in subtitling of HIMYM. Delabastita's *Pun → Non-Pun* category is divided into two possible translation strategies: *non-selective* one, where both of the meanings have been translated and *selective* one, where only one of the meanings has been chosen to be translated. This division is not acknowledged in the categorization, but it is considered when analysing the information removed in translation. The categories are explained in detail below with examples from HIMYM.

The data is divided into the categories, and then analysed from the perspectives given in the research question: what kind of translation strategies are used to translate onomastic puns in HIMYM? Does the position of a proper name as either primary or secondary meaning in the pun or the type of pun affect the choice in translation strategy? Does the type of proper name as either authentic name or not affect the chosen translation strategy?

4 Results

All five translation strategies were used in the translation of HIMYM seasons 5–9. The percentages of usage can be seen from figure 1. The translation strategies are analysed more below.

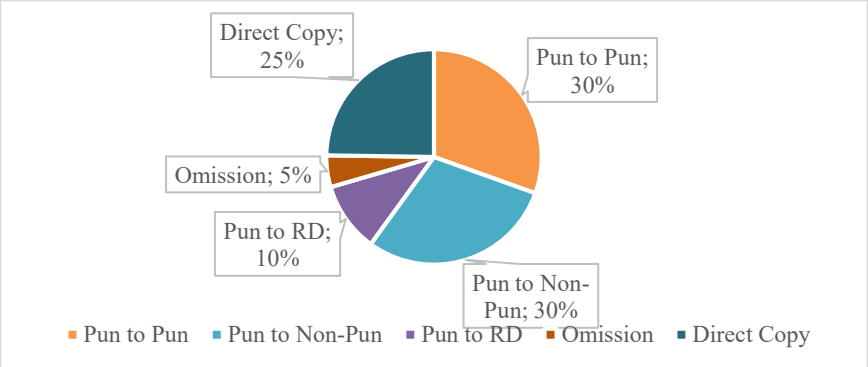

Figure 1. The overall usage of the translation strategies.

4.1 Pun to Pun

The data has 32 instances of pun to pun translation. These puns can be categorised further into three different categories: realistic names present in the series used as puns in some scenes (N=4); puns using names that are not relevant in that specific scene and could be translated completely (N=17); puns where the parts kept a similar (but not necessarily identical) relationship after the translation and a pun could be created (N=11).

The first category is translated by changing the names into realistic Finnish names which can also be used in punning. The nationality is kept in one of the names, and the translation has been done as suggested by Newmark explained above: connotation is first translated and then naturalised back into a name suitable for the nationality; *Cook Pu* became *Ripu Li* (S5E14).

Example (1) represents the second group: *Tantrum* is a name of an energy drink that Ted and Marshall drink occasionally during the whole series. While the name of the drink is established before this episode, and it has not been translated in any other episode, the translator has translated *Tantrum* as *Herja* every time it is mentioned in the episode.

(1) Ted: "Dude, you're a grown man, why are you throwing Tantrum."
(Herjojen heitteleminen on lapsellista.) (S9E18)

Because the name has been translated completely in this episode, the pun can be translated directly into Finnish, by choosing a name that allows one to create a pun similar to what is happening on the screen: Marshall throws a bottle of Tantrum to Ted and (1) is his answer.

In the third category, the puns can be created because the translation of the form of proper name used in the SL pun allows it. The name can have another form in Finnish, i.e. the proper name has an official translation to Finnish, where the form can then be used as part of a pun, either with the same relationship between the proper name and common noun as in the ST (e.g. *Isojalka* 'Bigfoot', a mythical creature against *iso jalka* 'a big foot', a part of the body (S7E13)) or as a completely new pun.

The third category is not restricted to cases where the proper name has another form in Finnish, but the original form can be used directly in a TL pun. (2) is an example of an instance of this.

(2) Ted: “Main lobster. They spelled Maine without ‘e’. Good thing to know we’re not getting the crappy understudy lobsters, right?”
(Heillä on tarjolla “Mainen hummeri”. | Tähän tilanteeseen sopisi taivainen hummeri paremmin) (S5E2)

Maine does not have another form in Finnish. However, the translator has created a pun by inflecting the word in genitive, which creates a link to another real Finnish word *mainen* ‘earthly’, from which the pun can then be constructed.

4.2 Pun to Non-Pun

The data has 31 instances of pun to non-pun translation. In 17 puns, the primary meaning has been translated, while the secondary meaning has been translated in 12 puns. While there are no clear instances of translation of both meanings, two cases a worth to analyse through.

(3) Robin: "And, and, I guess to see those, those, terra-cotta warriors and the Great Wall."
Lily: "Well, that's China."
Robin: "What, this? No. It's just a paper plate."
(Ja nähdäkseni kai ne terrakotta-sotilaat ja sen muurin." | "Ne ovat Kiinassa." | "Mitä tämä paperilautanen tässä tekee?) (S8E24)

Example (3) is an instance of selective translation, where only the primary meaning of the pun has been translated: *China* is translated only as a country, and the secondary meaning of *china* as a material has not been translated. Because of this, the comment about paper plate does not fit in the context, but because in the scene Robin picks up the ceramic plate and throws it on the floor, the plate has to be acknowledged in the subtitles.

(4) Lily: ”I-I watched *Survivor* without you.”
A text on screen: survivor guilt
(katselin *Selviytyjät* ilman sinua. | henkiinjääneen syyllisyyttä) (S7E6)

In example (4), only the secondary meaning of the pun has been translated. The immediate meaning of the pun is Lily’s guilt about watching *Survivors* without Marshall as they usually do, while the secondary meaning comes from the usual meaning of the phrase *survivor guilt*, which refers to guilt that one experiences because they survive a situation that others did not.

There are no clear instances on translation of both meanings, but in two instances the translator has tried:

(5) Lily: “He’s somewhere in Wisconsin in a rental car.”
Ted: "Hertz?"
Lily: "I mean it hurts a little but I'm not gonna cry about it."
(Hän ajaa vuokra-autolla Wisconsinissa. | -Hertzi? -Saan hertsin… | …jos Marshall myöhästyy.) (S9E4)

(6) Lily: "Oh, God, we're back to your stupid little private joke again? Are you guys really still doing this seven years later? It's so annoying, just stop it."
Robin and Ted: "Private joke again? Are you guys really still doing this seven years later? It's so annoying, just stop it.”
(Taasko tuo alkeellinen vitsi? | Siitä on seitsemän vuotta, ja teette sitä edelleen? | Ärsyttävää. Lopettakaa. | Alokas vitsi? Vielä seitsemän vuotta myöhemmin? | Ärsyttävää. Lopettakaa.) (S9E9)

In example (5), the translator adds an *i* to the pun form to adapt it to Finnish language. The car rental company *Hertz* uses same name in Finnish, but the target audience can still understand the connection with the name, despite the change in form. The secondary meaning is little more difficult to analyse. *Hertsi* as such does not mean anything in Finnish, but from the context it is used, the viewer can understand that Lily will feel something negative, if Marshall, the referred *he* here, cannot make it in time to the rehearsal dinner. The term *hertsi* might be an abbreviation of *hermoromahdus* ‘nervous breakdown’, but it is not immediately clear from the subtitles.

Example (6) shows an instance of an ongoing pun in the series, where every time someone uses (the common meaning of) an army rank in their speech, Ted and Robin will salute to the imaginary person whose name is created in the speech by making a two-finger salute and repeating the name as in greeting them. This joke can be created with words such as *general*, *major* or *private*. Often times, the pun is impossible to translate, because Finnish army ranks are not used in casual speech. However, while the pun is not perfect, in (8) the target audience can maybe get the idea of the joke, even if *alkeellinen* and *alokas* do not have identical forms. Thus, the translation does carry some of both meanings present in the pun made by the word *private*.

4.3 Pun To Rhetorical Device

The data has 11 instances of pun to rhetorical device translation: three allusions, two alliterations, two portmanteaus and four euphemisms.

(7) Strickland: ”You might say… I used it to make my van go."
(Sain siis ”vanin guntoon”.) (S8E18)

The scene in example (7), which uses Vincent Van Gogh’s last name as a pun, is full of puns made with an authentic name. Since the pun refers to a real person, translation of the proper name in this case was not probably preferred. By using the Finnish slang word *vani* which is derived directly from *van* and changing the voiceless velar plosive *k* from *kuntoon* ‘to fix’ to voiced velar plosive *g* the first letters of the word allow the translator to create allusion to the painter with almost identical start of the name, while also preserving the semantic content of the sentence. This is especially achievable because of the context of the SL pun: before this line, Strickland refers to the fact that he used the first money he got to fix his car. This information is then clearly available for the TL audience. While one could argue that this is a pun to pun translation, the TL sentence only alludes to the presence of the painter, while the meaning of Van Gogh itself does not fit to the sentence, as it does in SL pun.

(8) Ted: “It’s Edward James Olmos.”
Barney: "You're Olmos correct. It’s Jacob James Olmos.”
(Nimi oli Edward James Olmos. | “Olmos” oli oikein. Hän on Jacob James Olmos.) (S7E5)

This pun is built upon prolonged joke starting from a reference to Twilight works by Stephenie Mayer: Edward or Jacob? Ted and Barney argue about the first name of Edward James Olmos. *Olmos* is then used as a replacement for *almost* by Barney, creating meaning between *You’re almost correct* and *Olmos* is *correct*. Because of the long-standing joke in the series, the translation of the reference is not preferred: the chosen translation strategy translates the secondary meaning of the pun by alliterating the vowel *o*.

(9) Robin: "Your name should be Eric Slapton"
(Nimesi pitäisi olla Eric Läpston) (S5E9)

(9) is an example of translation, where the TL version of the pun is created with a similar way as in the ST. However, because of the phonetic differences of the languages, the ways in which the wordplays are analysed are different. The translation is a portmanteau made from words *läpsäys* 'slap' and Clapton. However, while the SL pun could be analysed to be blend of *slap* and *Clapton*, and *Slapton* could be then reanalysed as Slap-ton, which could be a refence to a lot of slaps, the SL pun has another level on it. While the term Eric Slapton refers to a person that is great at giving slaps, later in the series it is revealed that to be a great slapper, one has to also be slapped a lot: *Slapton* also sounds like *slapped on*. This pun is not visible in the TT, which only carries meaning of a great slapper brought about by connecting slap to Eric Clapton, person thought to be one of the greatest guitarists of all time.

4.4 Omission

The data has 5 instances of omission as translation strategy.

(10) Ted: "Wayne had no manners. Wayne manners. Wayne Manor. Home of Bruce Wayne, better knowns as Batman, mentor to Dick Grayson, his orphaned ward, who at night would don the colorful vestments of the Boy Wonder, a.k.a, Robin."
(*Tahditon Wayne.* | *Bruce Wayne, eli lepakkomies.* | *Orvon Dick Graysonin oppi-isä.* | *Öisin Dick Graysonista tuli Ihmepoika, eli toisin sanoen ...* | …Robin!) (S7E22)

In the scene, Ted is on a date with a woman, because he tries to remove his thoughts from his ex-girlfriend Robin. However, a single sentence from Ted's date about her ex-boyfriend gets Ted's train of thought going. The segment where the pun between *manner* and *manor* would have happened was left out completely in the subtitles. It could be argued that Ted's thoughts that echoes in the scene in (10) is rather long and fast (37 words in 17 seconds), and that the audience cannot read the subtitles as fast as needed. The first part of the subtitle stays on the screen for 6 seconds, while the second and third stay on 2 second each and the fourth 4 seconds. The assumed reading speed is then 2 words per second. This reveals that the first subtitle could also be read in a shorter span of time, and the space restriction of the medium were not the deciding factor in deleting the line. However, because the train of thought proceeds almost word by word, without an identical link in TL between *manor* and *manner*,

the pun is difficult to replicate. The TL subtitle does not leave a gap for the omitted material, but joins the preceding and following subtitles to each other, which means that the audience may not notice the omission of the pun.

(11) Ted: "Take him to a nice restaurant, preferably to a dessert place, that way you don't have to sit for a whole meal, before you get to…"
Barney: "Splitsville"
Ted: "Exactly"
Barney: "No, Splitsville, it's a dessert place right around the corner"
(Vie hänet jälkiruoalle niin et joudu kestämään koko aterian ajan. | Menkää Splitsvilleen. Se on jälkkäripaikka tässä lähellä.) (S8E6)

In the other four instances, where the pun is omitted, the translator has done similar solutions: the information gap is not necessarily visible for the audience, even if the humorous effect of the scenes may lessen. This happens in (9), where the proper name used in the pun has been kept in another line, but has been removed from the earlier line, which removes both the double meaning of the name *Splitsville* and the double entendre where the pun is used: *splitsville* was first an euphemism for when people end their relationship, or in other words, *split* up, and not just a name for a café that sells desserts like banana *splits*.

4.5 Direct Transference (Pun ST = Pun TT)

The data has 26 instances of direct transference as translation strategy. In 8 instances this creates a pun in TL, while in 18 instances, the transference does not work as a pun in TL. Here the division has not been done with an estimation on the target audience's language skills: the division has been done with a consideration to the similarity of the Finnish forms and meanings to the English forms and meanings. This means that some people with even poor English skills could understand.

(12) Robin: "Sharing a Brandy. Which is what I walked in my parents doing once."
(Yhteinen Brandy. | Siitä yllätin kerran vanhempani.) (S6E22)

(13) Lily: "Lunch Lady Scooter was there again today.
Marshall: "Yeah, did you jump on that thing? Give it a ride?"
Lily: "No!"

Marshall: “Really? If it were me, I’d be riding that scooter all day long until I broke that thing in half.”
(Ruokalantäti Scooter oli taas paikalla. | -Otitko vehkeeltä koeajon? -No en! | Minä hurjastelisin sillä, kunnes se hajoaisi.) (S5E16)

The direct transferences that create a pun in TL, are words that have exactly or almost the same form and meaning in SL and TL: *Brandy* is both the name of a drink and understandable name of a woman, even if the name is not used in TL (example (12)) and *Scooter* can be understood to be a name of a recurring character (*Scooter*) and also a vehicle (*skootteri*) despite the fact that the forms are not identical (example (13)), because *scooter* would be pronounced as *skooteri* by Finnish person, because Finnish do not have a lot of words ending in *r*.

In one instance, the direct transference creates a pun, but not to an identical place with the SL pun. The translation translates both of the parts of the pun separately, but then creates a pun in one of the parts:

(14) Barney: "And right now, I am watching a double-breasted - Robin!"
(Odottelen juuri, että tipu kuoriutuisi. Robin!) (S8E21)

Even if the pun between *robin* as a bird and *Robin* as a character is not present as a vertical wordplay in the translation, both meanings have been translated in a way. In the scene, Barney wants to know what a woman looks like under a large coat. Because he is dating Robin at the time, Lily does not think this is appropriate. Barney, however, thinks that it is like bird watching, so no harm is done. Robin is a real bird and double-breasted is an adjective not far from the common adjectives used in birds’ names (e.g. red-breasted swallow). Additionally, double-breasted is the type of coat worn by the woman in the scene. The TT translation translates both the bird-watching aspect (*tipu*) of double-breasted Robin, but also the coat in waiting that *tipu* ‘a chick’ *kuoriutuisi* ‘would hatch’ out of her coat. While the translation leaves out the reference to breasts, which are presumably what Barney wants to see, the pun with *chick* does compensate for that.

In direct transference without pun, approximately 80% of the puns contain authentic proper names, for example band names (e.g. *Cheap Trick)*, place names (e.g. *Long Island*), characters from other fictional works (e.g. *Dumbo*) or brands (e.g. *(Ford) Escort*). In these

instances, the name is often an important part of the conversation, and thus the punning is indicated at in the conversation, as in example (18).

(15) Barney: “Lot of songs written about those scrambled eggs. ZZ Top’s “She’s Got Legs”? Originally “She’s Got Eggs.” Led Zeppelin? “Scramble On.” Steve Miller? “The Yolker”.”
(Siitä munakokkelista tehtiin monta laulua. | ZZ Topin ”She’s Got Legs”? | Alun perin “She’s got Eggs.” Led Zeppelin? “Scramble On.” | Steve Miller? “The Yolker.”) (S9E8)

Even if the audience does not understand the puns in the song names, they are aware that there is something funny in the names, which indicates both meanings of the SL pun, but does not translate them.

In other instances, the proper name has been deemed to be more important than the pun as in example (16), where the allusion to a line delivered by the Grail Knight, “But choose wisely” (Spielberg 1989), from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade is left out of the subtitles. It is possible that some members of the audience will understand the pun anyway in these instances, but only one of the meanings of the SL pun is translated.

(16) Grail knight: "She chose, Wesley"
(Hänen valintansa oli Wesley.) (S9E6)

While one case uses a direct transference, it explains the pun by including the explanation to the characters speech:

(17) Robin: "I mean the man's initials are B.S."
(”B.S.” on myös lyhenne bullshitille.) (S9E22)

However, the swearword has not been translated, which means that as such there is no pun in Finnish, even if one can assume that many audience members understand the meaning of the word. Díaz notes that swearwords are often seen as “more offensive when starkly reproduced in text” (2010, 346), which is why they are often omitted in the subtitles. The translation choice in (17) might be translator’s attempt to decrease this offence.

5 Discussion

The results show that the translation strategies resulting in a non-pun are the majority. This could be expected: because a large number of the proper names are authentic (60 out of 106) or at least realistic, which would suggest that the names are often transferred (Ainiala et al. 2016, 262). However, their function as part of puns must override this idea, because only 25% of the puns were direct transferences. This does not mean that all the other names were translated, but it does mean that at least in 75% of the case, the pun and its function in the show overrode the importance of the proper name, and the proper name did not stop the attempt at creating a pun in TL.

The medium affects the possibilities of using all types of translation strategies in translating onomastic puns. In the work of De Vries and Verheij, onomastic puns in the Hebrew Bible were most often translated with the help of editorial techniques. However, one has to note that in the Bible, the names are "deeply rooted in sacred tradition" (De Vries & Verheij 1997, 87). While proper names are important in every story, in a fictive sitcom they have lesser importance than in the Bible, which means that while editorial techniques cannot be used, they also are not absolutely necessary.

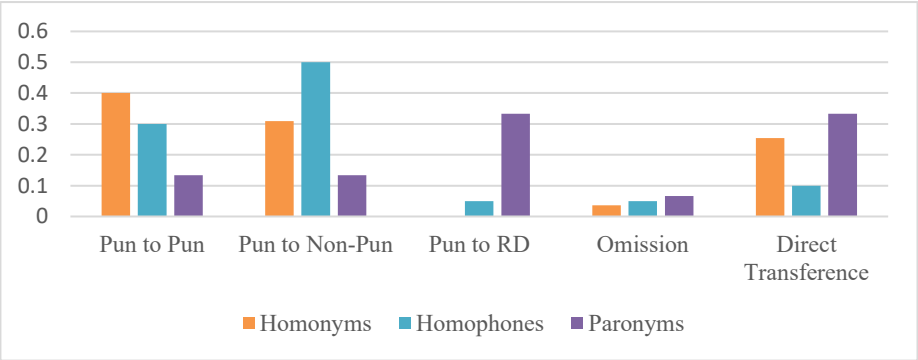

Figure 1. Relative frequencies of the translation strategies used with the different types of puns.

Figure 2 shows the difference in the usage of translation strategies for three different types of puns: homonyms, homophones and paronyms. Translation of puns using homonymy often resulted in puns: pun to pun translation was used most (40%) and a half of the direct transference's cases also resulted in pun (12,5% of all paronyms), and none of them were translated with the help of a rhetorical device. For homophones, the most common translation

strategy was pun to non-pun translation (50%), while all other strategies were also used. The difference could be a result of the SL puns' ultimate composition: with homonyms it is possible that the two meanings were fundamentally more closely connected through their exact form and as such could be either translated completely or left in the original form, but with homophones, the relationship between the two slightly different words that happened to be pronounced similarly is more distant, and thus the translation could not in most cases include both meanings.

For paronyms, pun to rhetorical device and direct transference were used in equal amounts (33%). This reveals an interesting trend: while in translation of homonyms and homophones the translators' preferred mode was either translation to pun or omission of the pun, with paronyms the translators used the two categories which try to use both punning and non-punning tactics: pun to rhetorical device uses other wordplays and rhetorical devices to keep the function of the pun – which is often, but not always, humouring – while still including the proper name in the text, and direct transfer can sometimes preserve both the pun and the proper name. It could be that with paronyms – which are near puns as explained above – both meanings are more present already in the SL pun form, which allows direct transference work more easily than with homophones and homonyms, where the audience usually has to interpret the hidden secondary meaning, and which is not always possible due to language barriers.

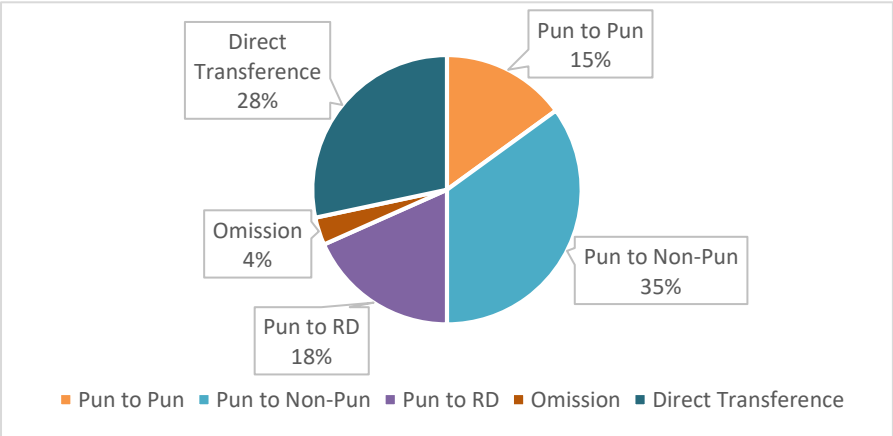

Figure 2. Translation strategies of puns containing authentic names

When comparing figures 1 and 3, which show the difference between the translation strategies of all puns and puns containing authentic names, the clearest difference is in the use of pun to pun translation strategy: with the whole data set, 30% of the puns were translated with pun to

pun strategy, but with puns containing authentic names, the portion is only 15%. This could be because authentic names are often not translated in other texts, and it could be difficult to include them in a pun due to their non-fictive nature. Completely changing authentic names – while sometimes done in the translation – is seemingly often avoided, which can show the value the references bring to HIMYM, at least from the translator's point of view.

Overall, the results mostly mirror the results of Pablé (2005): in both HIMYM and Pablé's results, direct transfer resulting in non-pun is found in the data as is the direct transfer with the pun (2005, 318–319). Additionally, in HIMYM the category pun to pun reflects cases in Pablé's work where the pun is created in TL with a new name (2005, 319) and some pun to non-pun cases in HIMYM mirror the translation of the onomastic pun without a resulting pun in Pablé's findings (2005, 319). However, the differences illustrate that the medium and the function of the onomastic puns may affect the translation strategies as well, because HIMYM has also instances where the proper name and thus the onomastic pun does not have as relevant a position in the plot as in Wilde's play; some of the onomastic puns could be omitted, and some could be translated with rhetorical devices to support the humour in the scenes. The translation of an onomastic pun certainly depends on its function and context, as with any other instance of translation.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis 105 instances of onomastic wordplay from the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* are analysed using a categorisation of translation strategies adapted from Dirk Delabastita's model of nine translation strategies used in translation of wordplays. The chosen strategies were pun to pun, pun to non-pun, pun to rhetorical device, omission and direct transference, and they all were used in the translation of the puns in the data set. While some translation strategies were used more than others – pun to non-pun and pun to pun strategies taking up 60% of the instances – there was no clear indication that one of the translator strategies were overall more preferred than others. However, the type of the pun – homonym, homophone or paronym – or the composition of the pun – having an authentic proper name – could influence the type of translation strategy chosen, even if the preferred translation strategies were not always possible: for homonyms and homophones the translators preferred translations that either produced a TL pun or removed the pun completely, while for paronyms the translators preferred tactics that could carry both of the meanings somehow in

the TT, for example by preserving the proper name and the humorous function of the pun, even if it could not be done in a pun form in the TT. The presence of authentic proper names in the puns decreases the preference or possibility for pun to pun translation.

Both primary and secondary meanings regardless of their status as proper names or as common nouns were selected to be translated when only one of the meanings of the pun was translated, which shows that the composition of the pun did not at least noticeably affect the translation choices: both primary and secondary meanings were translated, as well as the proper names and common nouns, depending on the most sensible choice in the context. Thus, the results cannot be generalised to apply to other instances of translation of onomastic puns as such; rather, the results indicate that the translators have chosen the strategy for the translation of an onomastic pun by selecting most suitable one for the specific context, and not necessarily selected the strategy based on the type of pun. The small data set of this thesis cannot indicate the choices of all translators.

While strategies outside the five categories were not used, the categories could be divided into even more specific ones when analysing the translation of onomastic puns. An attempt of this was made when categorising the data into the categories, but because of the quite small data set, exhaustive division into these would not benefit the results. This however could be done if one were considering using a larger dataset. Overall, the five categories chosen for this data set worked well, and the data could be divided into them quite easily. In the cases where the proper names were included in the TL translation, one could consider comparing them with for example Ainiala et al.'s translation strategies for proper names in fiction briefly explained above. However, with the scope of this thesis, that was not possible here, even if it proper names were an important factor to acknowledge in the translation of onomastic puns. Overall, the theoretical considerations about translation of proper names were important to make, even if the analysis itself leaned heavily on theories on translation of wordplay.

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