

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**THE TRANSLATION OF VERBAL IRONY IN THE  
ESTONIAN SUBTITLES OF *HOUSE M.D.*  
MA thesis**

**TEIVI SÄLIK  
SUPERVISOR: *Assoc. Prof.* RAILI MARLING**

**TARTU  
2010**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present thesis looks at the translation of verbal irony, focusing more specifically on translation strategies used in order to convey verbal irony in the Estonian subtitles of an American medical drama.

The theoretical part of the thesis explains the notion of verbal irony and introduces the theories of nonironic and ironic of speech acts. In addition, the present paper discusses the characteristics of subtitles and finally focuses on introducing a set of translation strategies that can be used to convey the ironic speech acts.

The empirical part of the thesis analyses the Estonian subtitles of the dialogues containing verbal irony from the third and fourth seasons of an American TV-show, *House M.D.* (2004–). The analysis focuses on translation strategies the translator has most often used in order to transfer verbal irony while keeping in mind the specific features of subtitles in order to see how this affects the conveyance of verbal irony.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
1 VERBAL IRONY .....	7
1.1 Clues to verbal irony .....	8
1.2 The social functions of verbal irony .....	11
1.3 Main theoretical approaches to verbal irony .....	13
2 IRONY AND SPEECH ACT THEORY .....	18
2.1 Non-ironic speech acts .....	18
2.2 Ironic speech acts .....	23
3 AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION .....	29
3.1 History of subtitling .....	30
3.2 Characteristics of subtitles .....	32
3.3 Transferring irony into another culture .....	36
4 DATA .....	40
5 METHOD .....	42
6 ANALYSIS .....	43
6.1 Assertive verbal irony .....	43
6.1.1 Literal translation, borrowing and calque .....	43
6.1.2 Sentence units and sentence structure .....	45
6.1.3 Emphasis and cohesion .....	47
6.1.4 Synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, hyperonyms and paraphrasing .....	50
6.1.5 Adding and omitting information .....	53
6.1.6 Domestication and foreignisation .....	57
6.1.7 Change of speech act .....	58
6.2 Expressive verbal irony .....	59
6.2.1 Literal translation .....	59
6.2.2 Sentence units and sentence structure .....	60
6.2.3 Emphasis and cohesion .....	61
6.2.4 Adding and omitting information .....	62
6.3 Directive verbal irony .....	64
6.3.1 Sentence units, sentence structure and word classes .....	64
6.3.2 Emphasis and cohesion .....	65
6.3.3 Synonyms, antonyms and paraphrasing .....	67
6.3.4 Adding and omitting information .....	67
6.3.5 Domestication and foreignisation .....	68
6.3.6 Change of speech act .....	69
6.4 Commissive verbal irony .....	70
6.4.1 Sentence units and sentence structure .....	70
6.4.2 Emphasis and cohesion .....	71
6.4.3 Paraphrasing .....	71
6.4.4 Adding and omitting information .....	71
CONCLUSION .....	73
REFERENCES .....	78
RESÜMEE .....	81

## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalising world, cultures interact with each other at an ever increasing rate. One area where communities are brought into contact with each other on a daily basis is television, which, according to Fiske (2003: 1), can be regarded as “a cultural agent” and “a provoker and circulator of meanings”. Television channels across the world produce, buy and sell non-scripted entertainment (documentaries and reality-shows) as well as scripted entertainment (films, drama series, sitcoms and commercials) that, besides being in a foreign language, also carry cultural values, beliefs and attitudes characteristic to the source culture that are sometimes difficult to understand by the target culture.

One such culture-specific element that belongs under the broader category of humour and depends on particular cultures and attitudes is irony (Ross 1999: 2). One of the main reasons why it is considered an especially problematic element to transfer and explain is that the definition of the concept has been changing over time. Until approximately the 14<sup>th</sup> century, irony was used in the sense of pretending<sup>1</sup> and producing humour or in a specific rhetorical sense only<sup>2</sup> (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 242). However, it was during the Renaissance when the concept of irony expanded and started to mean “a capacity to remain distant and different from what is said in general” (Colebrook 2004: 8) and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to Socratic irony and using irony as a trope, scholars also started to distinguish between dramatic irony, the irony of fate and verbal irony.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Socratic dialogues of Plato, Socrates often feigned ignorance about some fundamental concept (for example, he would ask someone who claimed to have extensive knowledge about the world to define friendship or justice) and then challenged their beliefs by asking questions and pointing out the various contradictions in those definitions, which eventually led to Socrates exposing the ignorance of his interlocutor and the latter understood that one cannot suggest that these terms are definite or self-evident (Colebrook 2004: 1–2).

<sup>2</sup> The Latin rhetorical manuals stated that irony means the contrary of what is understood and instructed the readers how to use irony as a figure of speech (i.e. one word has to be substituted with another word having an opposite meaning) or as a figure of thought (i.e. irony extends to an entire idea, which has to be substituted with an opposing idea) in order to make one's speeches and writings more effective (Colebrook 2004: 8).

This is not a fixed classification as there is still no agreement among scholars on what counts as irony and what not. For example, Attardo (2000: 795) points out that there exist instances of unintended irony which is a mixture of verbal and situational irony, in the case of which the speaker is unaware of producing an ironic utterance and Muecke (1969: 44) also adds musical irony, pictorial irony, ironic mimicry and architectural irony to the list and states the following:

I do not know of any book or article, whether English, American, French, or German, or of any European or American dictionary or encyclopaedia which presents a classification of irony one could regard as adequate. What classifications there are, either are not up to date, or reveal national biases and blindspots, or are too broad to be useful (Muecke 1969: 40).

Still, it is usually the aforementioned four types that are mentioned in the attempts to classify irony. Dramatic irony dates back to Sophocles' (c. 496–406 B.C.) tragedy *Oedipus Rex* and in the case of this particular type of irony the audience is aware of the plot and watches the hero of a play, novel etc. to achieve an outcome contrary to the latter's expectations (Attardo 1981: 795). The irony of fate "is the irony of unforeseen processes and situations, which falsify the expectations of the observer" (Haverkate 1990: 78). For instance, Colebrook (2004: 13) claims it is possible that a Wimbledon commentator may say that it is ironic that the Croatian player who was given a wild card entry eventually won the title. According to her, "it is as though human life and its understanding of the world is undercut by some other meaning or design beyond our powers" (Colebrook 2004: 14). Verbal irony differs from dramatic irony and the irony of fate in the sense that it is not an unexpected state of the world that can be perceived as being ironical or a situation in which one cannot affect the course of actions, but it is an intentional linguistic phenomenon where the speaker is fully aware of the ironic context and intentionally produces an ironic utterance in order to achieve a specific effect on the hearer (Haverkate 1990: 78). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have increasingly turned their attention

towards verbal irony and especially linguists and philosophers are interested in how the use of irony can convey pragmatic meaning (Colston and Gibbs 2007: ix).

Verbal irony has also intrigued translators since, as mentioned above, it can be quite difficult to successfully transfer it from one language and culture into another. What is more, when the target culture uses subtitles (i.e. words that are shown at the bottom of the screen to translate the actors' speech) as a primary method of translating television programmes, the translation process becomes even more complicated as the translator has to take into consideration the lack of time and space and the character's tone of voice and body language while conveying their lines (Gottlieb 2005: 20). Gottlieb (2005: 20) and Hatim (2009: 205) claim that those lines should be seen as speech acts (i.e. units of language with a certain intention and purpose and containing certain sociolinguistic norms and beliefs (Searle 1992: 18)), which the translator then has to transfer and make sure that the target audience responds to the translation in the same way as the source audience did to the source text.

The present thesis will look at the transfer of verbal irony in the Estonian subtitles of an American medical drama. More specifically, this thesis focuses on a topic that has not been investigated very thoroughly in Estonia, namely, which translation strategies are most often used to convey verbal irony while also keeping in mind the specific features and constraints of subtitles. The theoretical part of this thesis explains the notion of verbal irony and introduces the theory of ironic speech acts that is formulated by Amante (1981) and Haverkate (1990) on the basis of Searle (1979), and the translation strategies proposed by Chesterman (n.d.) which are used to analyse the corpus. The theoretical part is followed by a short synopsis of the TV-show *House M.D.* and the analysis of the translations of speech acts from the third and fourth season that contain verbal irony.

## 1 VERBAL IRONY

Research in the field of verbal irony began in the mid 1980s when experimental psycholinguists and linguists started to explore how irony is understood in a context where the speaker implies something else than what was literally said (Colston and Gibbs 2007: ix). It is sometimes assumed that verbal irony is somewhat “easier” to detect since different from literal irony, it is accompanied by various prosodic and kinesic cues, but such a viewpoint is erroneous since “conversational ironies /.../ lack the clarifying, the ‘fixing’ context that is developed by literary ironies” (Booth 1975: 93). Verbal irony is also characterised by its implicitness as according to Utsumi, it is not common for someone to state “I ironically inform you that...” (Utsumi 2000: 1778).

Another characteristic of verbal irony is its dependence on norms. Irony occurs when something goes against the fixed conventions (Colebrook 2004: 41). And this poses the problem of producing and recognising verbal irony since in different communities there are different norms and therefore, irony cannot always be successful, i.e. the hearer might not recognise that the speaker is trying to be ironic. According to Booth (1975: 22) the “successful reading of irony depends on reserves of tact and experience and even wisdom that are likely at any moment to prove lacking in any of us.” He (1975: 222) has also brought out five “pitfalls of irony” which may prevent recognising irony. Those are ignorance, inability to pay attention, prejudice, lack of practice and emotional inadequacy. In other words, verbal irony cannot be reduced to the level of grammar or linguistics only and a naïve hearer is likely to miss irony when he or she lacks the proper knowledge and experience (Booth 1975: 44).

It is also difficult to give simple unambiguous rules about how to detect verbal irony since it can take different forms. Metaphors, metonymy, puns, idioms, rhetorical questions and even simple statements can all be employed ironically (Gibbs 2000: 9). Here, the relationship

between verbal irony and sarcasm seems to be most problematic since there are scholars (Gibbs, Muecke, Haverkate) who believe that those two concepts belong under the same phenomenon, but there are also opinions (Sperber and Wilson) according to which irony and sarcasm are two entirely separate phenomena (Attardo 2000: 795). This paper treats these two concepts as being the same thing with some slight differences, i.e. sarcasm is one sub-type of irony “which uses a pro-code, a form of words ostensibly equivalent in denotation to the parent opposition. The pro-code must involve a pejorative counter-code, expressing the speaker’s unsympathetic or hostile attitude” (Nash 1985: 152). In other words, sarcasm is often more clearly marked (tone of voice, extra emphasis on certain words) and is usually employed in a narrower sense (criticism or insulting), but its mechanism does not differ from irony that much.

Compared to classical studies of irony, the study of verbal irony is relatively new, but it is not less problematic. Similarly with the wider concept of irony, there is no agreement among experts on the different aspects of verbal irony since it has been documented in many contexts and recognised in several different forms, but experts on irony do agree that verbal irony is a prolific linguistic phenomenon with many subtle nuances. Due to its implicitness, diversity and dependence on socially accepted norms, there is a danger that verbal irony can fail transactionally and therefore, researchers have tried to pin down some clues most often associated with the use of verbal irony.

## **1.1 Clues to verbal irony**

As stated above, in order to recognise verbal irony, we need to possess certain common beliefs and have had previous experience in producing and perceiving irony. By carrying out various cross-cultural case studies and empirical research, scholars have identified a list of indicators, which commonly occur in producing verbal irony and might help the hearer to recognise an ironic statement.



In the case of verbal conversation, the first signs that one's words are not to be taken literally appear in the speaker's body language. The speaker's facial expression can reveal that we are dealing with verbal irony when they make a funny or unexpected grimace while seemingly appearing to be serious, deliberately roll their eyes, wink or slowly shake their head. In addition, the speaker can form quotation marks in the air with his or her fingers (Kreuz 1996: 25–29). Other nonverbal cues include slow and emphatic speech, nasalisation, snorting sounds and marked intonation (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 245). However, irony can also be conveyed without any intonational clues whatsoever. Flattening of the pitch contour or a “deadpan method” is employed less commonly, but according to Kreuz and Roberts (1995: 24), in spoken communication it can even be more effective since such “unemotional” way of speaking stands out from the rest of the conversation and draws attention to the underlying ironic message. This list of nonverbal clues is by no means exhaustive as different speakers can be extremely creative and verbal irony can certainly be accompanied by other kinesic and prosodic clues that in certain contexts work as nonverbal ironic clues (Kreuz 1996: 29)

The verbal clues to irony may occur in spoken language or written texts and these include hyperbolic expressions (e.g. “After a million hours, she finally appeared”), tag questions (“That was easy, wasn't it?” said after completing an extremely difficult task), hyperformality (“I'm really sorry to bother you, young lady, but would you please be so kind and clean your room?” (said by a mother to her daughter who has repeatedly ignored her request to clean her room)), intensifiers (“I really appreciate your input in class discussion” said by a teacher to a student who is clearly not engaged in class activity), interjections (“Oh no, poor you!” said by someone who is not at all sorry for the person), and the ironic repetition of previous talk (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 246). Kreuz and Roberts (1995: 24) also bring out a combination in English which is often used in conveying irony and it consists of an adverb, followed by an

extreme, positive adjective (for example, someone who has just had a bad experience may express their frustration by exclaiming “Well, that’s just perfect!”).

Verbal irony can also be generated when part of an utterance “with a conventionally positive meaning and force is markedly inappropriate, but /.../ does not cancel the conventional meaning of the utterance entirely” (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 246). For instance, when someone says, “I wanted to congratulate you for your unprofessional behaviour”, then the fact that the utterance contains a word with a negative meaning (unprofessional) indicates that the other half of the utterance with a positive meaning is not to be taken literally by the hearer.

When talking about ironic clues, Kreuz (1996: 32) also emphasises the importance of the surrounding context. The use of ironic clues does not ensure the successful use of verbal irony in every situation. One limiting factor is the aforementioned existence of common ground between the speaker and the hearer, but there is also a constraint which is based on the so-called Pollyanna Principle. According to Matlin and Stang (1978), our minds tend to rather concentrate on the positive and avoid the negative and thus verbal irony appears more often and is somewhat easier to recognise in the form of positive statements having an underlying negative meaning than vice versa. Negative statements having a positive ironical message require special conditions. For instance, when someone has predicted that something bad will happen and in reality there is a different turn of events, the ironist can use a negative utterance with a positive meaning to turn someone’s words against them. Still, in order to be perceived as verbal irony, the presence of a “victim” seems to be a necessary requirement (Kreuz 1996: 32–33). What also needs to be considered is whether the default assumption of the situation is positive or negative as the perception of irony is directly dependant on that assumption (Kreuz 1996: 33).

It can be concluded from the above that verbal irony can be indicated with a number of clues, but the more clues the speaker employs, the better are their chances of being correctly understood. In addition, the speaker has to know the overall context and what is usually expected of him/her in that particular situation in order to create incongruities and indicate ironic intent.

## **1.2 The social functions of verbal irony**

The question that has intrigued many researchers is why people opt for using figurative language when there is a high risk that the hearer may misinterpret their intention and the whole conversation is likely to fail. One might think that the use of verbal irony leads to apathy or detachment towards something and has only one goal of showing the ironist's negative attitude towards a situation, but psychological research has indicated that as with other language devices, verbal irony can be used to achieve many other social goals (Gibbs and Izett 2005: 134). Speakers may want to be humorous, convey a certain attitude, persuade someone or influence the relationship between the speaker and the hearer (Dews and Winner 1995: 4).

People often tend to assume that verbal irony only shows negative or critical attitudes towards its object and praise is not commonly listed among the social functions of irony and indeed, it is not one of the most common usages of verbal irony. Although rare, there exist instances of so-called kind or friendly irony where one says something negative which is not to be taken literally<sup>3</sup>. When employed successfully, friendly irony can strengthen the social bonds between the speaker and the hearer, but such use of verbal irony demands a certain degree of familiarity and the possibility that the real intention behind the utterance is not recognised is

---

<sup>3</sup> Haverkate (1990: 90) also illustrates this with the following example: during a conversation between two lovers in an intimate setting the sentence "I don't like you at all" could be interpreted as a positive ironic utterance which actually implicates admiration or approval.

much greater than in the case of negative irony which in turn could lead to unexpected consequences (Attardo 2000: 796).

In the case of mocking or expressing aggression, verbal irony can have two effects. Depending on the context and relationship between the people involved in an ironic situation, irony can in some cases be harsher than literal language and in other cases also less insulting. According to Dews and Winner (1995: 5) the reason why verbal irony can have a stronger effect than literal words is that there is a greater contrast between the reality and what is actually said, i.e. between the positive and the negative. The social goals arising from employing this “harsh irony” are the speaker’s desire to minimize the significance of the hearer’s previously said words, lower the hearer’s social status and also the speaker’s intention to demonstrate to the hearer that he or she has enough emotional control to “disguise” the message as a witty and positive-sounding utterance as opposed to the banality of bad language (Dews, Kaplan and Winner 2007: 299–300). However, implying something indirectly can make the message less insulting. According to this view, verbal irony acts as a “buffer” between the directly negative statement and what is being said, thus being less threatening and having a conflict-reducing effect. What is more, by making a remark that the hearer can interpret in several ways, the speaker also frees himself or herself from responsibility and may always claim that the utterance was not meant as being ironic at all (Dews, Kaplan and Winner 2007: 300).

Lastly, people sometimes use verbal irony to convey humour, because using nonliteral language can be more effective and the incongruity between the utterance and the reality may produce a “funnier” outcome in the end. Using literal language also takes away the elements of surprise and unexpectedness and nonliteral language can sometimes convey some subtle nuances that are hard to achieve with literal language only (Dews, Kaplan and Winner 2007:

298). Here again, the purpose of using such type of humour can be to draw attention to the negative and criticise someone or something, but it can also point out the truly humorous or act as a conflict-solving device.

Although having the risk of being misunderstood, people still often use verbal irony for achieving a desired social goal. The duality of verbal irony allows us to use it as either a positive or negative language device and there also is a possibility where the decision-making is left to the victim. Those characteristics, among other linguistic means of insulting or approving, make verbal irony a desired tool in power-play, establishing social roles and expressing one's attitudes toward and object in everyday settings as well as in literature.

### **1.3 Main theoretical approaches to verbal irony**

The phenomenon of verbal irony has been approached from different directions. Psychologists, linguists, philosophers and scholars of literature have tried to come up with a comprehensive framework, but none of them has succeeded in creating a theory that explains verbal irony well enough to become a prevailing theory in the study of irony. This indicates that on the one hand, we can look at the various theories as “explaining a portion of the phenomenon, or one of a variety of mechanisms underlying the comprehension of the phenomenon, without necessarily being incompatible with one another” (Colston and Gibbs 2007: 4), but on the other hand, such “unified theory” is not comprehensive enough and it also seems that certain instances of verbal irony can be better analysed within a certain narrower theoretical approach than within the wide and somewhat contradicting theory. This thesis looks at the phenomenon of verbal irony from the viewpoint of linguistics and the following section gives an account of the dominant theories in this field.

The most traditional theory of verbal irony points back to Plato and Quintilian and treats irony as a figure of speech (Muecke 1969, Booth 1975). This approach defines irony the

following way: “if S utters a sentence whose (literal) meaning is M, he/she intends to communicate non-M, i.e. the complementary meaning” (Attardo 2000: 797). The problem with such an approach is that this definition makes it difficult to distinguish between instances of verbal irony and other figures of speech, such as metaphor, litotes, metonymy and hyperbole (Haverkate 1990: 81). According to Attardo (2000: 797), there is a more specific theory under the broader theory which sees irony as a trope that focuses on negation and he brings out Levin (1982) and Brown and Levinson (1978), who propose that irony is the exact opposite of a proposition or a word. Colston and Gibbs (2007: 4) argue against that approach by claiming that all instances of irony are not the opposite of the utterance because it is not clear what the opposite meaning is or the original literal meaning itself is. Kaufer (1981: 496–497) also notes that while many familiar colloquial utterances (“That’s a likely story!”) can be negated quite easily with little contextual knowledge, there are still instances of irony (rhetorical questions or just unconventional usages of verbal irony) that require heavier “contextual cueing”, which negation-based approaches generally do not provide. What is more, one can only apply the negation

to the truth-functional constituents of an utterance. /.../ Yet many ironies are triggered by non-truth-functional constituents such as the felicity conditions that govern its appropriate use, or the conversational implicatures (both general and particular) that specify its significance in context. In addition, ironies can be triggered by the non-truth-functional senses of surface lexical items (i.e., conventional implicatures) (Kaufer 1981: 497–498).

Sperber and Wilson (1981) proposed a different approach which can be termed as the mention-based approach. They claim that we need to distinguish between use and mention where in the case of the former the speaker expresses their true feelings and in the latter the speaker explicitly or implicitly refers back (echoes) to the someone else’s words, expectation or a cultural norm while having an attitude towards it in order to demonstrate ironic intent (Colston and Gibbs 2007: 5). An example of such ironic echoing is the speaker’s remark “You

really got him good with that one!” after someone has previously promised to assert himself or herself and impose respect on someone and failed to do so. This theory claims that the hearer has to understand the speaker’s utterance is a mention, after which he or she must recognise the source of the echoed utterance and that the attitude conveys “rejection or disapproval” (Attardo 2000: 804). Utsumi (2000: 1780–1781) argues that the mention theory fails to explain all cases of verbal irony and at the same time allows in instances of nonironic echoic utterances (i.e. utterances that echo an utterance, expectation etc. and are intended to express a negative attitude, but are still not ironic). The first major counterargument to the mention theory is that, as mentioned before, the goal of verbal irony is not always necessarily negative or disapproving. Other weaknesses of this approach lie in the fact that in the case of implicit verbal irony it is possible to argue that every utterance is a mention as it may be difficult to determine that the speaker is trying to convey irony and also the source of the mention may be extremely difficult as the theory does not give any other contextual clues that would help the hearer recognise that an utterance is ironic. Although Sperber and Wilson claim that prosodic and kinesic clues indicate ironic intent, they mean the clearly marked ironic tone of voice and dismiss the “deadpan” way of indicating irony (Attardo 2000: 805–806). They also claim that irony has to be contextually inappropriate which leads to the conclusion that “the ulterior step of the mentioning is unnecessary, since /.../ purposeful inappropriateness is a necessary and sufficient cause of irony” (Attardo 2000: 806).

Clark and Gerrig (1984) also saw the shortcomings of the mention theory and developed the pretense theory of irony in which they claim that in order to convey verbal irony, the speaker pretends to be someone else, expressing mock thoughts and feelings about something and expects the hearer to recognise the real intent behind the portrayed character who is usually “shown in an unbecoming light to essentially distance himself or herself from the position

advocated by that character, an likely even to belittle that viewpoint” (Colston and Gibbs 2007: 5). Attardo (2000: 808) argues that in comparison with the mention theory, the pretense theory seems to include more instances of verbal irony and is not so prone to “infinite regression”. Still, Utsumi (2000: 1782) thinks pretense is not the defining property of verbal irony as one can express verbal irony without pretending to be “someone else” and that pretending also extends to other instances, for example parody. Colston and Gibbs (2007: 18) also add that the pretense-based theory is too broad in the sense that according to the main argument, all indirect speech acts can be termed as verbal irony.

The fourth approach is based on the pragmatic principles and breaks into two main strands following either Grice (1975) or Searle (1979), who claim that verbal irony occurs when one violates the maxim of quality (according to which the speaker’s utterance should be true) or the felicity conditions of speech acts (conditions necessary for the utterance to succeed, i.e. bring about the desired results), respectively. In the case of Grice’s theory, later researchers (e.g. Sperber and Wilson 1981) have shown that irony is not restricted to the maxim of quality only as verbal irony can be achieved by flouting any conversational maxim and, what is more, in the case of literally true assertions and understatement, the speaker can display ironic intent by not violating the quality maxim. Also, Grice (1975) initially claimed that verbal irony is the exact opposite of the utterance, which, as mentioned before, is clearly not the case, but later on he (1978) revised his view and claimed that verbal irony is “a way of pretending, and consequently, of adopting an attitude towards a state of affairs” (Sorea 2009: 2).

Searle (1979) followed Austin’s (1971) speech act theory and his account on verbal irony resembles Grice’s in the sense that the hearer must analyse the speaker’s initial utterance and come to the conclusion that is not to be taken literally, but while Grice argues that the speaker violates a maxim, Searle asserts that the hearer also has to consider the surrounding context and



if there is some type of an incongruity with the felicity conditions of a speech act, replace the literal meaning with another one (Sorea 2009: 2–3). Although Attardo (2000: 803) has claimed that there is essentially no difference between Grice and Searle’s approach and they both deal with the flouting of the maxim of quality, then Searle’s theory of ironic speech acts has been broader from the beginning and over time, the difference has grown wider since Grice’s revision of his initial definition has led it closer to the pretense-based family of theories (cf. Clark and Gerrig 2007). Searle’s account, however, has been further developed by e.g. Amante (1981), Brown (1980) and Haverkate (1990), who have remained within the speech act theory framework and tried to expand and improve the theory even more so that it could explain as many instances of irony as possible, while still separating verbal irony from other figures of speech and linguistic devices that may have the same effect (e.g. lies), but still do not belong under irony.

Nowadays, new approaches on verbal irony under different names are constantly being presented, but in principle, they all proceed in some way or another from one of the abovementioned theories and try to offer solutions to their main problems. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and in the end, it is the specific nature of the research, which determines the choice of a theory. While keeping in mind the purpose of the present thesis, which focuses on analysing various instances of verbal irony in subtitles, this thesis will follow the theory proposed by Searle in identifying ironic speech acts. In addition, the present thesis will also look at the improvements offered to the approach by other scholars which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

## 2 IRONY AND SPEECH ACT THEORY

The theory of speech acts was first formulated by J. L. Austin and the William James Lectures he delivered at Harvard University in 1955 were first published in 1962 as a monograph titled *How to Do Things with Words* (Sadock 2005: 54). According to the speech act theory, “to say something is in the full normal sense to do something” (Austin 1970: 94) and this has to be done according to specific rules. This means that for a speech act to succeed, the speaker’s utterance should convey a certain intention under certain conditions which the hearer has to recognise. The following section introduces some of the main points of Austin’s theory and its modifications and also the more recent approaches within the framework of speech act theory that focus specifically on verbal irony.

### 2.1 Non-ironic speech acts

Until Austin, philosophers of language generally distinguished between utterances that “stated” something and could be either true or false, and utterances that “did” something to which the truth conditions did not apply. Austin called the first type of utterances constatives and claimed that “to issue a constative utterance (i.e. to utter it with historical reference) is to make a statement” (Austin 1970: 6) and the second type performatives, which “indicate that the issuing of an utterance is the performing of an action” (Austin 1970: 6). Following this argument, the sentence “It is raining today” is a constative utterance and “I promise to pass on the message” is a performative utterance.

While one cannot determine whether a performative utterance is true or not, Austin (1970: 14) argued that they can be successful or unsuccessful or, in Austin’s terms, felicitous or infelicitous, depending on whether they correspond to certain social practices, norms and other

relevant conditions. For example, a wedding ceremony is successful only when it is conducted by a licensed minister or secular official who utters the appropriate words and performs the right gestures at a proper time and place. But when a person from the crowd utters the exact same words and follows the same procedure wherever he or she wants, the ceremony is not successful since the person has no legal right to conduct the event and the social circumstances are inappropriate. Another example is when someone has promised to do something, but actually has no intention of doing it and makes a false promise with insincere feelings towards the act and in the end the promise is unfulfilled and therefore also infelicitous.

Austin tried to find a test which would help to determine whether a verb belongs to the class of performatives or constatives. At first, he argued that performative verbs (e.g. state, request, demand) can be distinguished from constative verbs by using certain formulas (adding certain adverbs, asking a question about the utterance or rephrasing the utterance) (Austin 1970: 77–82). However, in the end he came to the conclusion that such a distinction is impossible to make as all utterances possess the performative and constative aspect and to say something is also to do something (Sadock 2005: 54). So, Austin (1970: 145) proposed a new and wider distinction between the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Locutionary acts are physical acts of saying something by making certain sounds that carry a meaning in a certain language according to the grammatical rules of that language (Austin 1970: 108). Illocutionary acts refer to the acts done while speaking having a certain purpose. For instance, when one says, “I’ll make sure she gets there on time”, he or she is performing the act of promising. Illocutionary acts also have illocutionary force, that can be either explicit (usage of a performative verb such as *promise*, *congratulate*, *thank* or certain grammatical constructions such as “Get out!” or “Would you like another cup of coffee?”) or implicit (the function of the utterance depends on the context, for instance, when someone says,

“It’s raining today”, in different situations it can be interpreted as a statement of fact, accusation or even an exclamation of joy) (Griffits 2006: 152). The third type is called the perlocutionary act “that we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (Austin 1970: 108), e.g. as a result of the utterance “You’ll regret this!” (a threat) the listener feels intimidated. However, it is not always guaranteed that the perlocutionary effect intended by the speaker’s illocutionary act actually occurs. For instance, the speaker may brag about his or her recent achievement with the intention to impress the listener, but the latter feels annoyed or bored instead.

J. R. Searle followed Austin’s theory, but found that some of the latter’s claims were inadequate or too narrow and offered a “neo-Austinian analysis” (Sadock 2005: 59) of the subject. For instance, Searle (1992: 30) argued that every utterance has an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), which shows the speaker’s intention behind the utterance. In English, the IFID can be either explicit and include “word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verbs” (Searle 1992: 30) or implicit, in the case of which the context makes the force of the utterance clear enough and there is no need to use a specific IFID. In addition, Searle introduced the concept of a proposition and claimed that it has to be distinguished from an assertion and statement as “stating and asserting are acts, but propositions are not acts” (Searle 1992: 29). In other words, a proposition *p* is the content of the speech act and it can be expressed by asserting or stating something.

In Searle view, speaking consists of certain socially constructed acts and “to perform an illocutionary act /.../ is to follow certain conventional rules that are constitutive of that kind of act” (Sadock 2005: 61). In order to examine the illocutionary act, Searle (1992: 63), based on Austin’s felicity conditions, also proposed a set of rules that make the utterance felicitous or

infelicitous. He assumed that there is a speaker S who utters a sentence T to a hearer H and listed the following conditions:

1. Normal input and output conditions<sup>4</sup> obtain.
2. S expresses the proposition that p in the utterance of T.
3. In expressing that p, S predicates a future act A of S.
4. H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H would prefer his doing A to his not doing A.
5. It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events.
6. S intends to do A.
7. S intends that the utterance of T will place him under an obligation to do A.
8. S intends (i-I) to produce in H the knowledge (K) that the utterance of T is to count as placing S under an obligation to do A. S intends to produce K by means of the recognition of i-I, and he intends i-I to be recognized by in virtue of (by means of) H's knowledge of the meaning of T.
9. The semantic rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered if and only if conditions 1.–8. obtain (Searle 1992: 57–60).

From those conditions, Searle (1992: 63) derived five rules about how to use the IFID. The first, the propositional content rule means that an utterance “is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence (or stretch of discourse” (Searle 1992: 63)) and that different speech acts have different propositional contents which have to be observed for the successful performance of the speech act. For example, the propositional content for a warning is a future event that can happen to the hearer predicted by the speaker, while the propositional content for thanking someone is an event done in the past by the hearer (Sadock 2005: 61). Next, a speech act has one or several preparatory rules, which means that the interlocutors presuppose certain expectations from each other. For instance, in the case of asserting something, the speaker believes that it is in the interests of the hearer to believe that the utterance is true and that the propositional content of the assertion is not obvious to the hearer (Holtgraves 2008: 13). The sincerity rule states that the speaker should have a certain attitude towards the propositional content of the utterance and the hearer usually has certain expectations about it as well. In the case of promising, the speaker has the intention of doing the promised act and the hearer

---

<sup>4</sup> By the terms “input” and “output”, Searle (1992: 57) means “the conditions of understanding” and “the conditions for intelligible speaking” and the successful use of those conditions ensures that the speaker and the hearer speak the same language, understand each other and are not have any physical disabilities which would prevent them from communicating in a conventional manner.

believes that the speaker's motives are sincere. The last condition is termed the essential rule which means that the speaker's utterance has a specific purpose or illocutionary point that he or she tries to achieve (e.g. in the case of promising, the speaker is undertaking a commitment to fulfil his/her promise) (Holtgraves 2008: 13–14).

Searle claimed that there are five such illocutionary points and presented a taxonomy that he labelled assertives (descriptive statements that can be either true or false), directives (utterances with the purpose of making the hearer to do something; e.g. commands, requests), commissives (the speaker undertakes to act according to what he or she has expressed; e.g. in the case of promises), expressives (utterances that express the psychological state or feelings of the speaker; e.g. apologies, congratulations) and declarations (statements that “change the world”; e.g. marriage, baptism) (Smith 2003: 9). In order to classify speech acts that have the same illocutionary points – e.g. in the case of requests and commands that are both directives –, one option is to look at their felicity conditions. For instance, in the case of a command one of its preparatory rule is that there exists a hierarchical power relationship between the interlocutors and in the case of a request the condition is not necessary (Holtgraves 2008: 15).

In addition, Searle (1979: 30) argued that there are speech acts in the case of which the speaker does not want the hearer to take the propositional content literally and intends to convey a different speech act, i.e. the speaker performs one illocutionary act while expressing (and also indirectly performing) something else. For instance, when person No. 1 has done something bad to person No. 2 and asks from the latter, “Can you forgive me?”, person No. 1 is not really asking whether person No. 2 is able to forgive him/her, but is requesting person No. 2 to do so. Searle termed such instances indirect speech acts and claimed that “the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general

powers of rationality and interference on the part of the hearers” (Searle 1979: 31–32). In addition, Searle (1979: 31, 33) introduced the notions of primary (the uttered speech act) and secondary illocutionary acts (the intended meaning) and claimed that there are various ways how to use them. Namely, a person can say one thing and mean something completely different, or he/she may also want to retain the propositional content of the original utterance and add another meaning so that he or she is conveying two messages simultaneously.

Since Austin first formulated the modern speech-act theory and stated that every utterance conveys information as well as produces an “effect” or result, this particular theory has become an integral subfield in the area of linguistics and language philosophy. Later modifications and elaborations of the theory have made it all the more exhaustive, enabling it to be widely used in more specific areas of language functioning.

## **2.2 Ironic speech acts**

As mentioned in the previous section, speech act theory claims that there exist certain speech acts that include other, indirect and hidden speech acts. Such instances of language permeate our everyday speech and many scholars who study figurative language or politeness have based their general claims on the speech act theory. The following section will explain the views of those who have focused on the narrower topic of verbal irony by using the theoretical framework of indirect speech acts.

The main characteristic of an ironic speech act is that it “is parasitic in the sense that it is performed in the guise of another speech act, which functions as a ‘vehicle’ for the irony” (Pelsmaekers and Van Besien 2002: 244) and the intended meaning can be the exact opposite of the utterance or only a part of the utterance or it can also be something related to the “original” utterance (Haverkate 1990: 81). However, verbal irony is not the only language device that uses one illocutionary point to achieve another. Searle (1979: 30) has claimed that “in hints,

insinuations, irony, and metaphor – to mention a few examples – the speaker’s utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart in various ways.” This brings us to the question, “How to determine whether we are dealing with an instance of verbal irony or some other form of figurative language?” Haverkate (1990: 102) argues that in the case of a metaphor, litotes, hyperbole or plain lies, the speaker detects a “transparent insincerity” that differs from the sincerity conditions of irony which will be explained below. In a metaphor, there is an “obvious discrepancy between what is expressed by the propositional content and the extralinguistic reality” (Haverkate 1990: 102). For instance, when the speaker calls the listener an ass, it is immediately clear to both interlocutors that the speaker does not really think of the listener as an animal. When we move on to litotes and hyperbole that are most often confused with verbal irony, it can be said that “the rhetorical effect of litotes is brought about by a reduction of the proportions of the extralinguistic reality, whereas the rhetorical effect of hyperbole is brought about by an extension of those proportions” (Haverkate 1990: 103). The difference between telling a lie and being ironic is that in the case of lying, the propositional content of the utterance is not true, but the speaker does not want the hearer to realize it. Usually the speaker wants the hearer to believe the lie and does not provide any clues indicating that the utterance is not true. In comparison with the previous examples, verbal irony also deals with transparent sincerity, but is a more complex phenomenon as it does not only affect the propositional content of an utterance, but also the illocutionary level in the sense that the propositional content may be true, but the speaker indicates that his or her illocutionary goal is something else. However, as said in the previous chapter, verbal irony can occur in the form of a metaphor, litotes, idiomatic expression, lie etc., but every instance of figurative language is not necessarily an ironic one.



Before we can turn to the sincerity rule of verbal irony specifically, it is necessary to understand how other felicity conditions of verbal irony differ from those formulated by Searle. Amante (1981: 77) claims that “irony operates by covertly negating one or more of the conditions and rules underlying most non-ironic speech acts” and, based on Searle, has proposed a list of (slightly vaguer) rules that apply to assertive ironic speech acts (which he denotes with the abbreviation *Ir*). First, Searle formulated one propositional content rule for all speech acts, ironic as well as nonironic, but Amante (1981: 82–83) claims that an ironic speech act has different input and output conditions than a “normal” speech act as the speaker intends to be ironic (i.e. imply something else than he or she utters) and signal this to the victim of irony or the audience by offering certain clues. The hearer then has to understand the speaker’s intentions and recognise the *Ir* with the help of the provided clues and the surrounding context and his or her background knowledge. Consequently, an ironic speech act consists of two propositions which oppose or differ from each other. The two propositions may be explicit, i.e. occur in the same sentence, or implicit, i.e. the other proposition is stated in later utterances related to the original or only implied. What is more, the speech act has to refer to something or someone and the two differing propositions both have to have the same referent (Amante 1981: 84, 87).

According to the preparatory rule, the speaker has to believe that the discrepancy in his or her utterance is obvious and also that the hearer or the audience is capable of understanding the difference. For this, the speaker has to provide some clues. Of course, unintentional instances of verbal irony are always possible, but in most cases, irony tends to be deliberate and the speaker consciously uses an indirect speech act (Amante 1981: 85).

The sincerity rule of ironic acts states that the speaker does not believe what he or she utters or does not want the hearer to act according to his or her words and also makes it clear to

the audience that his or her intentions are not sincere (Amante 181: 85). For instance, one can express his or her disbelief by saying, “Yeah, right” or “Oh, you’re so funny!” with a sarcastic or mocking tone of voice and accompany his or her words with contextually inappropriate facial expressions or gestures. The speaker can also ask a rhetorical ironic question (e.g. “Could this be any more perfect?” said in a situation where nothing goes as expected), in the case of which he or she does not want the question to be answered and the question takes the form of a statement (Haverkate 1990: 90). The last rule, the essential rule of ironic speech acts, states that the speaker intentionally wants the hearer or the audience to question the words uttered and signal that there is more behind the utterance than first appears (Amante 1980: 87–88).

Haverkate (1990: 90) agreed with Amante that irony most often occurs in the form assertives, the goal of which is to “express a qualifying judgement”, but he also argued that that irony can be used with other types of speech acts as well. For instance, the aim of directive irony is to “influence the intentional behaviour of the hearer in order to get the latter to perform, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, the action directly specified or indirectly suggested by the proposition” (Haverkate 1990: 94). This means that orders, requests etc. are more often used in an ironic way. It is also possible to create ironic warnings and instructions, i.e. speech acts “that are performed in order to get the hearer to carry out the action primarily for his own benefit” (Haverkate 1990: 94), but such instances are less common. For example, when someone thinks that his/her friend is about to make a mistake, but the friend does not listen, the speaker may utter, “OK, do it then” and actually mean “Do not do it”. In addition to directive irony where the speaker means the lexical or propositional opposite of what he or she states, there are also instances where the real illocution is something else and this mostly happens in the case of rhetorical questions (Haverkate 1990: 95). For instance, when someone is annoyed or bored at someone else’s talk and asks ironically, “Oh, could you tell me more about it?”, he

or she actually means, “Shut up!”. Also, Haverkate (1990: 96) states that an assertive utterance can be interpreted as a directive, for instance when someone enters into a poorly lit hotel room and claims “Wow, it’s bright in here!”, his or her utterance can be interpreted as an indirect request for someone to open the blinds or turn on more lights.

Instances of commissive irony occur when the speaker insincerely promises or offers to perform the action indicated in the propositional content of the utterance while it is obvious that he or she is not able or willing to do it (Haverkate 1990: 97). For example, the speaker may produce a humorous effect (e.g. when someone who has a broken leg offers that he or she could help someone to carry something heavy) or the goal of the utterance may also be to intimidate the hearer (e.g. “Do you want me to get angry?”) (Haverkate 1990: 98). Haverkate (1990: 99) also argues that in the case of commissive irony, the real meaning of the utterance is always something else and never the exact opposite.

Expressive speech acts aim to express certain psychological states of the speaker. In order to express it ironically, the speaker utters certain words without being sincere and intends to convey something else. For instance, when a person who is carrying heavy bags meets a friend who does not offer help him or her, the former can say: “Thank you for helping me” in order to convey his or her disappointment or condemnation. Ironic expressives also seem to require slightly more shared background knowledge in order to understand the underlying message (Haverkate 1990: 100). Haverkate (1990: 99) also claims that act of conveying sympathy cannot be realised ironically, and that the utterance “I condole with you on the birth of your son” cannot be used ironically. However, Haverkate seems to be overlooking statements where this is possible, e.g. “Poor you! It must be hard being so rich”. Lastly, Haverkate (1990: 89) argues that it is not possible to create ironic declaratives since “they are performed by means of performative formulas, to which no sincerity condition applies”.

It can be said that compared with nonironic speech acts, verbal irony is a linguistic device with distinct felicity conditions that manifests itself in the form of four speech acts. Although the speaker often uses certain cues to signal ironic intent, the listener still needs to possess sufficient knowledge about how verbal irony functions in order to recognise and respond to it. The next section will look at how verbal irony in one language and in the spoken medium form is transferred into another language and medium.

### 3 AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

The world's first films were displayed to audiences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and as they started to be purchased by other countries, a need to translate them into other languages became increasingly acute. So, along with the development of the cinema, audiovisual translation (AVT) started to gain prominence (Rietveld 2008: 7). However, although widely used in many non-English speaking countries, this area was not thoroughly researched until relatively recently. It is only during the last 20 years that the audiovisual industry has grown at a remarkable rate and several researchers have addressed the various forms of audiovisual translation, developing it into one of the most rapidly expanding fields of study (Cintas 2009: 1).

Audiovisual translation can be divided into three subfields: dubbing, voice-over translation and subtitling. In the case of dubbing, the actors' speech in the source language is replaced by speech in the target language while taking into consideration the timing and phrasing, but disregarding the lip movements of the actors. This is also the most expensive form of AVT since the process involves several translators, adaptors and actors. Voice-over translation is similar to dubbing in the sense that the source language is replaced with the target language and lip movements are not taken into account, but the viewers are able to hear the original language as the speech volume is turned down, not completely muted. Also, while in the case of dubbing several actors replace the voices of the characters on the screen, in the voice-over process only one person gives a voice to all the characters. Thus, this technique requires one translator and one speaker and is considerably cheaper than dubbing (Rietveld 2008: 5–7). Subtitling is the fastest and also the least expensive form of AVT, in the case of which spoken text is transferred into a written form only by the translator. However, this

method is also called “the most unforgiving form of audiovisual translation” (Rietveld 2008: 8) since the lack of time and space puts constraints on the amount and type of information that can be transferred. As a consequence, viewers who are able to understand both the source and the target language often complain that subtitlers translate inaccurately. Of the three AVT methods, this thesis will focus on subtitling (since it is the most often used method in Estonia) and also how the translator has chosen to convey irony in a specific TV-show. The following section will provide a brief overview of the history of subtitling, introduce some of its main characteristics and peculiarities and also look at the most common translation techniques used in this field.

### **3.1 History of subtitling**

According to Gottlieb (2005: 15), modern subtitling is “the rendering in a different language of verbal messages in filmic media in the shape of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original verbal message.” Today, this is done with the help of computer software that allows the translator to create subtitles and determine when and for how long they appear on film with a couple of mouse-clicks. Those results have been achieved during the last decades of the PC and laptop era, but in the past, subtitling demanded much time and effort.

Rietveld (2008: 7) claims that the first form of subtitles called intertitles appeared in the silent film *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1903. They were pieces of paper with texts written or printed on them that were edited between the scenes and conveyed the dialogues between the actors. The word “subtitle” was first used in 1909 as they were employed in a similar way to newspaper subtitles, but back then they were not inserted on the moving image. It was the world's first sound film – *The Jazz Singer* (1927) – that was shown in Europe with subtitles appearing on the moving pictures for the first time and since subtitling is cheaper than the other

two translation techniques described in the previous section, many European minor speech communities chose it as the prevailing translation method (Gottlieb 2005: 27).

In Europe, Hungary, Norway, Sweden and France started to develop subtitling techniques for cinemas further by photographing the subtitles and copying them on to the film copy. As the film negative was needed for that and several re-copies were made from the original negative, it eventually resulted in the loss of film quality. Later, two separate film rolls were used, one with the original film on it and the other with the subtitles, which were then shown simultaneously on one screen (the optical method). In 1930, the subtitles were stamped directly on the previously softened emulsion layer of the film strip for the first time (the mechanical method) and a few years later, heat was used to melt the emulsion away instead of softening it (the thermal method). However, these techniques were not fully reliable as sometimes it was hard to distinguish the letters while watching the film and the subtitles were not placed in a straight line. In 1932, R. Hruska came up with the chemical method, in the case of which the subtitles were impressed on the paraffin-coated film strips with the help of heated printing plates and the film was then soaked in a bleach bath. Although the edges of the letters were a little ragged, the results were legible. The most recent method, laser subtitling, originates from France and it employs a laser beam that vaporises the emulsion and writes the text on the film strip without damaging it as much as with the previous techniques. All these methods are still in use in many countries today, but nowadays they are modernised and produce better results (Ivarsson 2004: para. 7–19).

Television also started out with intertitling but later on, the choice of the AVT techniques differed across countries and “only in countries that already subtitled sound films did TV broadcasting companies opt for subtitling in this new mass medium” (Gottlieb 2005: 28). In the case of television subtitles, the optical method was also used (and still is in some countries

today). The subtitles were shown in a parallel film strip and mixed electronically together with the original or the subtitles were typed on paper and made into a film negative that could then be fed to the subtitling mechanism either manually or mechanically. These methods were followed by the invention of caption generators that electronically inserted subtitles on the moving image. However, these machines were difficult to use and highly expensive, so in the 1970s, special subtitling programmes based on word processors were developed that can be divided into two types: the teletext system and the computer-controlled character generators that both create subtitles and mix them into the picture. The latest advance includes using subtitling programmes on a personal computer that is based on time coding, i.e. the video tape is equipped with a timing system which allows the subtitler to determine the appropriate place and duration for the subtitle to appear (Ivarsson 2004: para. 20–34).

Nowadays, subtitling has remained the most popular AVT technique in the Scandinavian countries and small European countries where the population is under 25 million and the literacy rate high (e.g. Greece, Portugal, The Netherlands, Estonia). Gottlieb (2005: 23) argues that in these areas, subtitling can be considered a part of culture and reading subtitles is “second nature to the literate population.” However, large language areas with sufficient financial means such as Poland, Russia, Germany and Spain prefer dubbing although recently, subtitling has become more popular in those countries as well (O’Connor 2006: 158).

### **3.2 Characteristics of subtitles**

Subtitling is a special form of translation and the process of subtitling differs from translating a literary text in many ways. First, subtitles can either be open (generated on the screen by a subtitling programme and are in another language) or closed (appear on the screen when the viewer selects a corresponding teletext page; they are in the same language as the source text and usually meant for people with hearing impairments. They can also use colour-



coding to indicate who is speaking and include descriptive words about the speaker's intonation and emotions) (Rietveld 2008: 10). Subtitling is also an exceptional form of AVT because while the other two types remain within the spoken medium, the subtitler has to consider the characters' speech and means of nonverbal communication and transform them into a written form (Rietveld 2008: 11).

What is more, while in the case of dubbing or voice-over translation the actors speaking in the target language are mostly able to convey all the information present in the source language and there are not many formal requirements, the subtitler has to follow specific rules regarding the layout and amount of text. For instance, the positioning of the text itself is extremely important. According to Karamitroglou,

Subtitles should be positioned at the lower part of the screen, so that they cover an area usually occupied by image action which is of lesser importance to the general aesthetic appreciation of the target film. The lowest line of the subtitles should appear at least 1/12 of the total screen height above the bottom of the screen, so that the eye of the viewer does not have to travel a long distance towards the lowest part of the screen to read it. Space should also be provided on the horizontal axis, so that, again, the eye of the viewer does not have to travel a long distance along the sides of the screen in order to read a subtitle line. To this end, image space of at least 1/12 of the total screen width should be provided to the left of the first character and at least 1/12 of the total screen width to the right of the last character, for each subtitle line. Subtitles could be positioned towards the upper part of the screen only in extreme cases where visual material (linguistic or other) of vital importance to the appreciation and the comprehension of the target film is exposed at the pre-determined part of the screen where subtitles would otherwise be inserted (Karamitroglou 2007: para. 6).

The length of a subtitle is constrained to two full lines that can appear on the screen for eight seconds. Of course, depending on the specific situation, the subtitle can also appear for a few seconds less or more (for example, in the case of documentaries where there is much important information to be conveyed, the subtitles sometimes change after every six seconds while in the case of a sitcom where a character is speaking slowly, the subtitle can also appear on screen for almost ten seconds). However, a subtitle has to appear on screen three to seven

frames before the speaker starts to speak and remain there at least for one second and ten frames<sup>5</sup> (Rietveld 2008: 14–16).

When it comes to the length of the lines, the average number of all characters (including punctuation marks and spaces) is 37 and an average viewer<sup>6</sup> is able to read ten to eleven characters per second. However, depending on the complexity of the sentence and the target language, this number can also vary. Still, there should not be more than 40 characters in a full two-line subtitle in any language as the text becomes too “dense” and difficult to read. In the case of a long sentence that requires two subtitles, the last line is followed by three dots (sequence dots) that indicate that the sentence continues. The dots can also appear at the beginning of the new subtitle to inform the reader that he or she should connect the subtitle with the preceding one and in this case they are called linking dots (Karamitroglou 1997: para. 4). In addition, the number of frames between two consecutive subtitles is three because otherwise it is difficult for the viewer to differentiate new information from old. In order to make a distinction between speakers in a dialogue in the case of a two-line subtitle, a dash is put in front of the subtitle of the second speaker (or in some countries in front of the lines of both speakers). If possible, questions and answers should be within one subtitle in order to prevent confusion and the same applies to word combinations (Rietveld 2008: 17–18).

The preferred fonts are Helvetica or Arial and the font colour should be pale white. A sentence ends with a full stop or a question mark and if there is a need to express emphasis, with an exclamation point. Italics are used in the case of a borrowed word or “to indicate an off-screen source of the spoken text, (e.g. “when there is a voice of someone contemplating

---

<sup>5</sup> A frame means how many images are shown within one second. In Europe, this number is 25 while in the US it is 29.97 or 30 (Rietveld 2008: 15).

<sup>6</sup> According to Karamitroglou (2007: para. 12), an “average” viewer is aged between 14-65, from an upper-middle socio-educational class and an “average” text is a text of average complexity (a combination of formal and informal language).

something, speaking over the phone from the other end, or narrating something” (Karamitroglou 1997: para. 28)), but in general, using bold, italics or capital letters to emphasise something should be done with caution as it might overlabour the text (Taylor 2000: 7). The same applies to single or double quotation marks or parenthesis. Commas, semicolons and upper- or lower-case letters are used like in any other printed text (Karamitroglou 1997: para. 10, 22–31).

When taking into consideration the rules described above, it can be said that in comparison with the other two forms of AVT techniques, subtitling has the following advantages: first, the viewer is able to listen to the source language and read the target language, which makes subtitling an excellent way of learning a foreign language. What is more, in the case of a subtitled TV-show or film, no “valuable aspects of that material’s authenticity” (Kilborn, cited in Rietveld 2008: 9) are destroyed, which might happen in the case of the other AVT methods. In addition, the viewer is also able to listen to the original voices of the actors that might be a crucial part of a character’s identity, helping the audience to understand the character better (e.g. the American sitcom *The Nanny* where one part of the leading character’s personality – played by Francine Joy Drescher – was her distinctive high-pitched and nasal voice that also was the object of many jokes in the sitcom).

However, there are also several drawbacks to this particular translation method. For instance, the translator has to rely on the background knowledge of the viewer as there is no room for footnotes or explanatory notes (Rietveld 2008: 14). The lack of space is especially problematic in the case of fast speech and sometimes a subtitle only conveys about 50% of all the information (Gottlieb 2005: 20). As stated earlier, the reader has the opportunity to compare the source text and the target text and so the translator and the subtitles are more vulnerable to criticism than in the case of other forms of AVT. Also, while transforming speech into a written

form, much of the speakers' prosodic features are underrepresented (accents, emphasis, deviant grammar). Lastly, many subtitles suffer from being either too complex or too short and are thus difficult to read. According to Rietveld (2008: 12), some translators try to include too much information into one subtitle and cannot find the right balance.

While all forms of AVT have their advantages and disadvantages, subtitling seems to be the most demanding technique when it comes to transmitting information. Although it only requires one translator, he or she is charged with the responsibility of deciding how much information should be translated and formatted correctly on the screen so that the end result would satisfy the average viewer. In order to achieve this goal, the subtitler usually has to choose among various translation strategies which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **3.3 Transferring irony into another culture**

Translators are often called “cultural mediators” (Moneva 2001: 290) since much of their work entails trying to make the target audience understand what is meant by the source text. Those texts frequently reflect the mindset, attitudes and beliefs of another culture that often differ from those of the receiving audience. Thus, one of the most talked-about topics in the field of translation among scholars and translators is what can be considered as culture-specific material and whether it can be (successfully) translated. Ramière has defined this notion as follows:

material to encompass the verbal and non-verbal (visual and auditory) signs which constitute a problem for cross-cultural transfer because they refer to objects or concepts that are specific to the original sociocultural context of the film – i.e. that, at the time of distribution, do not exist, or deviate significantly in their connotational value from similar objects and concepts in the target culture(s) considered. (Ramière 2003: para. 15)

Thus, while translating, the subtitler has to be “aware of the intent of the original as well as the target audience's common pool of allusions” (Whitman, cited in Gottlieb 2009: 23). Still,

the “intent of the original” is sometimes difficult to detect. Rietveld (2008: 23) argues that for instance in the case of humour, it depends very much on the translator’s talent whether he or she is able to reproduce the same humorous effect in the source text and this skill cannot really be learned.

Verbal irony is one form of humour which is closely bound to culture, a specific situation and people’s personal beliefs and it is especially crucial that the translator first recognises the phenomenon (which is often only implicitly expressed) and then attempts to convey the intended message (Moneva 2001: 216). Moneva (2001: 219–220) also claims that this should be done so “that no much further explicitation than in the original is required” and “the reader or addressee of the target text should be able to reach similar effects to those of the source text audience without any further demand of processing efforts” (Moneva 2001: 219–220). As films and TV-shows bring cultures together and have a profound social impact on the audience, the importance of conveying verbal irony should not be disregarded because otherwise, it may result in confusion or misunderstanding (Ramière 2003: para. 19).

So, depending on the type of humour, the translator has to carefully choose among various translation strategies and not be satisfied with the first solution that comes to mind since according to Gottlieb,

no word should be accidental, and even good ideas should be tested against alternative solutions. There is always more than one answer to a (subtitling) question, but even more ‘solutions’ that miss the target. And in order to hit that target, all relevant linguistic, esthetical and technical means should be utilized, and both dialogue, film and viewers must be considered (Gottlieb 2005: 19).

Gottlieb (2005: 20) further argues that in the case of subtitling, the speech act is in focus and it is more important to convey the intention of the speaker in the target language and create the desired effect among the viewers than concentrate on transferring all the elements that constitute that speech act. In that way, the subtitler is given more linguistic freedom, but on the

other hand, the end result has to be written so well that the viewers do not realize that the translator has spent much time and effort on it.

Rietveld (2008: 28–29) claims that there are two types of translation strategies: one concentrates on the translation process and the other on the text. In the case of subtitling, the translator should use strategies that relate to the latter as it is concerned with what ends up being shown on the screen. In order to analyse how an Estonian translator has subtitled a popular TV-show, this thesis will use the translation strategies proposed by Andrew Chesterman (n.d.) adapted by Rietveld (2008) that have been divided into three categories – syntactic, semantic and pragmatic – and show how the translator works on three levels “to make the text presentable, comprehensible and legible to the viewer” (Rietveld 2008: 29).

The category of syntactic strategies includes literal translation (i.e. the text follows the source language as closely as possible), borrowing (words or phrases are taken directly from one language into another without translating them), calque (also called loan translation – a foreign compound word or phrase is translated word for word into another language), transposition (one part of speech is replaced with another, e.g. a noun is made into a verb. However, the tense remains the same), unit shift (the unit of the morpheme, word, phrase etc. changes, e.g. a word changes into a phrase or two separate sentences are made from one complex sentence), structural change (e.g. singular is made into plural, first person into second or third or changes in word or sentence order), cohesion change (e.g. ellipsis or substitution) and change in rhetorical scheme (changing parallelism, alliteration etc.) (Rietveld 2008: 29).

Semantic strategies include using a synonym (substituting a word with another word that has the same or nearly the same meaning), antonym (a word with the opposite meaning or using negation), hyponym (a word with a narrower meaning) or hyperonym (a word with a broader meaning), expanding (adding elements) or condensing (shortening) the text, changing the

emphasis (e.g. by adding or omitting adverbs) and lastly, changing a rhetorical trope (e.g. omitting or adding a metaphor) (Rietveld 2008: 30).

The third category, pragmatic changes, entails adding or leaving out information, explicitation and implicitation (making information explicit or implicit), paraphrasing (rewording something) and domestication or foreignisation (making the text more familiar by substituting the foreign element with a similar element that can be found in the target culture or emphasising the cultural differences by retaining the foreign cultural element) (Rietveld 2008: 30). Chesterman (n.d.: para. 18) also has also transediting (re-editing by other translators) in his list, but according to Rietveld (2008: 29), this technique does not apply to subtitles as only one person works with them. However, Rietveld has left out formality change (e.g. substituting a technical term with a “simpler” word or changing the forms of address) and change of speech act (e.g. an assertion is changed into a question), but the author of this thesis believes these techniques can be also be used in subtitling.

The counterfactual nature of verbal irony makes this particular linguistic device extremely appealing and it is used extensively in spontaneous and scripted speech which, in turn, is transmitted within and across cultures. When it comes to transferring irony in subtitles, one the one hand, the translator is free to use several strategies in order to convey the linguistic and cultural aspects of that phenomenon, but on the other hand, the choice made by the subtitler determines whether the end result has the same effect on the viewers that was originally intended by the author of the text or creates a cultural misunderstanding instead. Hence, the translator should be able to first recognise the meaning and attitude behind an ironic utterance and then use the appropriate translation techniques to effectively convey those ideas or feelings in the target language. The next section will look more closely at the translation strategies that have been used to signalise verbal irony in the Estonian subtitles.

## 4 DATA

This thesis focuses on verbal irony in the medical drama *House M.D.*, created by David Shore in 2004, in order to see which are the most common translation strategies used while attempting to transfer verbal irony into Estonian subtitles.

*House M.D.* is about a misanthropic and chauvinist medical genius Dr. Gregory House (Hugh Laurie) who is the Head of the Diagnostics Department at the Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital. The series has a coherent storyline and while most of the action takes place within the hospital, the show also focuses on some personal issues in the lives of some of the main characters. In general, each episode (approximately 43 minutes long) follows the pattern of presenting Dr. House with a new “mystery case”: a critically ill patient whom he and his team have to cure. Dr. House is an extraordinary doctor because he is willing to break all the hospital rules and use the most unconventional methods in order to solve the case and, also, due to a serious leg injury in his right leg, he is addicted to the painkiller Vicodin and is almost unable to function without it. Despite being a drug addict, Dr. House is exceptionally good at noticing the smallest details of his cases, which usually leads to him finding the right diagnosis without even having to speak with the patient. Thus, his “little problem” and his tendency to be rude towards the patients as well as his colleagues because of his pain are overlooked by the hospital management (Gibson 2008: para. 6–7).

Interestingly, Dr. House’s ability to diagnose is the best when he is surrounded by a team of other doctors offering their theories and diagnoses which Dr. House usually proves wrong and argues against, but which also help him to think and eventually match the symptoms with the problem. During the first three seasons, Dr. House’s team consisted of Dr. Eric Foreman (Omar Epps), Dr. Robert Chase (Jesse Spencer) and Dr. Allison Cameron (Jennifer Morrison); in the fourth season the latter three were replaced by Dr. Chris Taub (Peter Jacobson), Dr.



Remy Hadley aka Thirteen (Olivia Wilde) and Dr. Lawrence Kutner (Kal Penn). The only person Dr. House seems to care about is his best friend Dr. James Wilson (Robert Sean Leonard) who also works at the same hospital and likes to psychoanalyse every aspect of Dr. House's life and conversations with him often end with Dr. House having one of his "epiphany moments" about his current case. The hospital is headed by the Dean of Medicine Dr. Lisa Cuddy (Lisa Edelstein) who is the only person with enough authority to control Dr. House (Werts 2009: para. 20–21). The latter is also attracted to Dr. Cuddy, but expresses it by playing psychological mind games with her and publicly making demeaning and sexually objectifying comments about her in front of the hospital staff.

*House M.D.* has been popular among the American viewers as well as among the film-critics. According to the Nielsen ratings<sup>7</sup> published by *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2005 (Hollywoodreporter.com 2005), the first season had approximately 13.3 million viewers and the sixth season that was launched in September, 2009 and is currently running, gained 17.13 million viewers (Softpedia.com 2009: para. 4). The drama series has also received many nominations and awards. Among others, the TV-show has won two Writers Guild Awards, three BMI TV Music Awards, four Emmy Awards and two Golden Globes (Imdb.com 2004). *House M.D.* is also purchased by many European countries and it has been translated by employing all three AVT methods. In Estonia, *House M.D.* has also gained much popularity among the television audience and the fifth season of the TV-show is currently being aired once a week on the television channel TV3 and the series is shown with open-caption subtitles.

---

<sup>7</sup> A system developed by A.C Nielsen that is used to estimating the popularity of TV-shows in the US by calculating how many people watch a particular TV-show (Financial Times Lexicon 2009).

## 5 METHOD

The Estonian subtitles of the third and fourth season of *House M.D.* (a total of 38 episodes) were obtained from the television channel TV3. In addition, the original scripts of those episodes were read<sup>8</sup> and the dialogues containing verbal irony in both languages were collected to form a corpus.

Based on the theory of speech acts developed by Searle (1979) and the theory of ironic speech acts formulated by Haverkate (1990) and Amante (1981), the dialogues were divided into broader categories according to their illocutionary goal. Next, those categories were divided into subcategories (e.g. literal translation, change of speech act etc.) according to the translation strategies formulated by Chesterman (n.d.) and revised by Rietveld (2008). However, although a large corpus was needed in order to have a clearer overview of the frequency of the translation strategies and the full draft of the analysis also includes information about strategies that had been employed less often, only the most prevalent trends (i.e. translation strategies that occurred more than three times in the corpus) will be discussed within this thesis.

This thesis will look at the context in which verbal irony occurs (the ironic utterance and its Estonian translation are underlined) and compares the dialogues from the original scripts with the subtitles (which are presented in the same layout as they appear on screen and when the subtitle pairs include the preceding or following subtitle that are not relevant in the current context, they are marked with square brackets) to see which translation strategies were used while transferring verbal irony into Estonian subtitles. The paralinguistic features that accompany verbal irony are also important in distinguishing verbal irony from ordinary speech

---

<sup>8</sup> available at the webpages [www.twiztv.com](http://www.twiztv.com) and [community.livejournal.com/clinic\\_duty/](http://community.livejournal.com/clinic_duty/)

and therefore such nonverbal signals such as body language, pacing, voice quality and tone are discussed by relying on Kreuz (1996) and Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën (2002).

## **6 ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 Assertive verbal irony**

According to Haverkate (1990: 90) and Amante (1981), verbal irony most often occurs in the form of assertive statements which either state the opposite of what is said or convey an additional meaning or imply something completely else (in addition, the truth condition also applies to such statements) and in the case of *House M.D.*, the most instances of verbal irony were also assertive statements. Moreover, Haverkate (1990: 90) also claims that there are instances of verbal irony, in the case of which the speaker asks a question, but in an insincere manner and does not expect it to be answered. So, although seemingly requesting for information or confirmation, the speaker uses the rhetorical question to convey a different illocutionary point (Holtgraves 2008: 13–14). Haverkate (1990: 95) also states that depending on the context, such questions may be meant as assertives.

In general, the aim of an ironic assertive is to give a (usually negative) evaluation of the speaker or the situation (Haverkate 1990: 90–91) and, according to Dews, Kaplan and Winner (2007: 299–300), the speaker may also want achieve other social goals (e.g. induce laughter, reduce or strengthen the effect of the speaker's illocution expressed by the ironic proposition etc.).

#### **6.1.1 Literal translation, borrowing and calque**

The syntactic translation strategy in the case of which the translation follows the form of the source language (Rietveld 2008: 29) could only be used when the assertive ironic speech act was very short, i.e. did not exceed three or four short words and the speaker's speech rate was

not too fast. In such cases, the specific format of subtitles and differences between the Estonian and English language usually caused no problems for the translator and the irony could be conveyed word-for-word without making any changes in the source language text. In Example 1, the mother of another patient is questioning the effectiveness of the treatment:

### **Example 1**

Franklin: How long is this treatment gonna take?

Foreman: We should start to see some improvement in his liver functions soon.

Judy: Soon! Very scientific.

Kui kaua ta ravi aega võtab?

– Peaksime varsti nägema paranemist maksa talitluses.

– Varsti. Väga teaduslik.

Here we are dealing with two relatively short assertions, so the translation fits within the 37-character limit of subtitles (Karamitroglou 1997: para. 4) and the translator had been able to fully render the character's speech. What can be pointed out, however, is that the translator relies on the prosodic features of Judy's assertion and has not chosen to emphasize the Estonian adverb *varsti* for instance with an exclamation mark, using italics or quotation marks since he probably did not want to overlabour the text as the tone of the speaker already conveys the ironic intent (Taylor 2000: 7).

In addition, literal translation had been used with interjections that were employed ironically by the characters: *(oh) yeah, sure, fine* and *right*. As a rule, the translator had translated them as *jah, muidugi, hästi* and *õige*, respectively, but sometimes he had also opted for synonyms (see subsection 6.1.4).

Calque (i.e. compound words or phrases that are translated word-for-word or morpheme-for-morpheme while also transferring the meaning (Rietveld 2008: 29)) had been used relatively often, but the translator had not followed a specific pattern in employing this translation strategy in the case of ironic assertives, except for when dealing with the transfer of proper names that are known to Estonians. Borrowing (transferring a word or phrase into the

source language without translating it (Rietveld 2008: 29)) had also been used only to transfer proper names and this tendency will be discussed in more detail under the section dealing with domestication and foreignisation.

### 6.1.2 Sentence units and sentence structure

Because of differences between the English and Estonian language, there were some syntactic translation strategies that were rather dependent on the characteristics of the Estonian syntax and the specific format of subtitles than on verbal irony in particular. For instance, the subtitler sometimes had to change the word order. Although in both languages, the preferred word order in declarative sentences is subject-verb-object (SVO), the sentence structure in the Estonian language is more flexible, thus constructions such as SVX and XVS are also relatively frequent and changing the word order does not always change the overall meaning of the sentence because it is retained with the help of 14 case endings (Ehala 2006: 50).

However, one quite frequently used translation technique belonging under the category of syntactic strategies that depended on whether the proposition was ironical or not was unit shift, i.e. the changing of certain types of complex sentences into two or more separate sentences (Rietveld 2008: 29). More specifically, as can be seen in Examples 2 and 3, when an ironic complex sentence began with an affirmative or negative word, the translator often separated the first word of the sentence:

#### **Example 2**

Cuddy: If you're right, then this guy, who's not an ass, who's not a workaholic, who's not a sociopath, has somehow missed both her depression and severe alcoholism.

House: Yes, imagine that, a couple with secrets.

[Oled vist ikka paarst.]

– Kui sul on õigus,

siis pole mees, kes pole tööbras, töönarkomaan ega sotsiopaat,

märganud ei naise depressiooni

ega ränka alkoholismi.

Jah. Kujuta ette,

paar, kellel on saladusi.

**Example 3**

Evan: What's the test say?

House: As I suspected, you have significant losses in the upper right quadrant of your visual field.

Evan: Are you serious?

House: No, it's a joke.

Mida test näitab?

– Seda, mida kahtlustasin

Teil on märgatav nägemise kadu

ülemises paremas veerandis

Tõsiselt?

– Ei. See on nali.

While in English, the sentences begin with *yes* and *no* and are immediately followed by an explanatory clause, then in the Estonian subtitles, the words *jah* and *ei* have been grammatically isolated with a full stop and constitute one-word sentences, followed by a separate explanatory sentence. In this way, the fact that the speaker's ironical assertion is not true has been made more explicit with the help of punctuation, which also means that the translator has employed the pragmatic translation strategy of explication in order to draw the reader's attention to the discrepancy between the situation and what is really said (Rietveld 2008: 30).

In addition to isolating ironic negations and affirmations, the part of a complex sentence containing verbal irony had also been frequently separated. In Example 4, Dr. Wilson enters his office and finds it being occupied by Dr. House and his team as a part of an ever-lasting power-play with Dr. Cuddy and decides to approach the situation in an ironic manner:

**Example 4**

Cameron: Why now? Why a power-play now?

House: I smelled weakness. Get the kid an echocardiogram.

Wilson: That's funny; it says James Wilson, what a strange typo.

Miks võimumäng just nüüd?

– Haistsin nõrkust.

Tehke poisile ehho.

Huvitav. Siin seisab James Wilson.

Milline kummaline trükiviga.

This time, the sentence consists of three parts, two of which containing verbal irony (*that's funny* and *what a strange typo*). Again, the translator has chosen to separate those instances and Dr. Wilson's ironical assertion has been made into three short sentences.

When dealing with longer ironic rhetorical questions, the translator had also preferred to make a long question into two or more simple sentences, the last one being a question. Although this translation strategy was not used every single time, it was still preferred by the translator most of the times when transferring assertive verbal irony, thus implying that the translator had thought that it was more functional to use punctuation to emphasise the irony.

### 6.1.3 Emphasis and cohesion

Some of the most common verbal clues to irony are the usage of interjections, intensifiers and repeating previous talk ironically (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 246). In the case of longer assertive sentences that contained the previously mentioned elements and were accompanied by explicit intonational clues to irony, the translator had usually omitted them and found another solution to convey irony. This can be seen in Example 5, in which Dr. House is implying to one of his team members that her behaviour is irrational and uses irony to strengthen the effect of his words (Dews and Winner 2005: 5):

#### Example 5

“Thirteen”: Yeah, I’m at risk for Huntington’s. I’ve dealt with it.

House: By not getting tested? Dealing with it by not dealing with it. It’s clearly working beautifully.

Jah, ma olen Huntingtoni riskigrupis.

Olen selle küsimusega tegelenud.

Mitte teste tehes.

Tegelesid jättes tegelemata.

Paistab hästi toimivat.

In Example 5, the translator has retained the irony by employing the syntactic translation strategy of changing the mood into the oblique (Rietveld 2008: 29), but he has left out the contracted form of *it is* and the adverb *clearly*. Moreover, in this example Dr. House uses marked intonation or the so-called ironic tone of voice (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensiën 2002: 245), which signals to the viewer that his proposition is insincere. The same tendency could be noticed with similar cases where the speaker’s kinesic and prosodic features revealed that the speaker’s feelings were insincere and as a consequence, the translator had chosen to keep the

subtitle as compact as possible by omitting intensifiers, interjections and ironic repetition of previous talk.

However, when the speakers used the “deadpan method” (Kreuz and Roberts 1995: 24) in the case of which the ironic message is conveyed by using words that convey strong emotions, but without the expected intonation, the translator had often opted for retaining or even adding an intensifying word. In Example 6, Dr. Cuddy is implying that Dr. House’s treatment methods have not worked:

### Example 6

House: I only cling to this crazy theory because it's been proven right every step of the way. Each treatment worked.

Cuddy: Yes, she looks perfectly healthy.

Ma hoian sellest  
hullust teooriast kinni,  
sest see on igal sammul  
õigeks osutunud.  
Kõik ravid on mõjunud.  
– Jah.  
Ta paistab täiesti terve.

Here, the translator has again made the irony more explicit by separating the affirmative word from the rest of Dr. Cuddy’s utterance and secondly, he has retained the adverb *perfectly* in the Estonian translation (*täiesti*). In Example 7, the speaker also flattens his pitch contour but this time, the translator has added an element in order to indicate the ironic intent:

### Example 7

Cuddy: You think the problem’s in her pancreas?

Foreman: I think it will be, I think we need to forget about the liver.

Cuddy: We just forgot about the lungs, now we need to forget about the liver?

Foreman: We need to stop retracing our steps and get ahead of this thing.

Wilson: House, you’ve tanned.

Arvad, et probleem on kõhunäärmes?

– Arvan, et varsti on.

Unustame maksa.

– Just unustasime kopsud,

nüüd ka maksa?

– Lõpetame oma jälgedes käimise

ja püüame tõvest ette jõuda.

– House, oled kõvasti päevitunud.



In Example 7, Dr. Wilson realises that the information presented by Dr. Foreman is actually coming from Dr. House and feigns mock-surprise to indicate this to Dr. Foreman. In the source language, his utterance does not contain an intensifier but in the Estonian subtitles, the adjective *päevitunud* has been intensified with the adverb *kõvasti* that adds additional emphasis to it. In the case of other similar examples in the corpus, the translator had also often used intensifiers such as *kogu* and *küll* to modify nouns and *nii* to modify adverbs in order to draw the reader's attention to the irony when the speaker's tone of voice did not make this explicit enough. The most common intensifiers used to add emphasis to propositions containing interjections were *ikka*, *küll* and sometimes also *jah*, although this almost always included the omission of the interjection.

In the subtitles, the ironic intent of the speaker was also often indicated by adding the pronouns *see* or *need* at the beginning or at the end of the main clause. In Example 8, Dr. House makes an ironical observation about the patient's worsening condition:

### **Example 8**

Kutner: We, uh, loaded him full of prednisone to try to fix the liver.

House: Good news is, he's running out of organs to fail.

Me toppisime ta prednisooni täis,  
et maksa korda teha.

Hea uudis on see, et tal hakkavad  
uued streikivad elundid lõppema.

In Example 8, additional emphasis has been added by the pronoun *see* at the end of the main clause of Dr. House's utterance, which refers back to *hea uudis* (*good news*) and makes the irony more explicit. Thus, the adding of such words also belong under the semantic translation strategy of expanding and adding information and under the pragmatic category of making information explicit (Rietveld 2008: 30).

According to Chesterman (n.d.: para. 35), another way to make the connections in the sentence more explicit and the sentence more cohesive, is to use a connector. This has been

done in Example 9, in which Dr. House has hired a new team member who used to work for the CIA, but has just found out that his decision might not have been the best one and is talking it over with Dr. Wilson:

### **Example 9**

House: I think she might be an idiot.

Wilson: Who?

House: But she can't be an idiot. She's in the CIA, for God's sake.

Wilson: The Bay of Pigs was a daring triumph.

Ma kardan, et ta on idioot.

– Sina?

Ei, tema. Jumala pärast,

ta töötas ju CIA-s

Ja Sigade laht oli triumph.

According to Dr. House's logic, a person who works at the CIA, cannot be an idiot and Dr. Wilson decides to answer with a humorous ironical remark containing a cultural reference. Namely, Dr. Wilson is drawing a parallel with the unsuccessful invasion of the CIA to Cuba in 1961 in order to overthrow Fidel Castro. The translator has chosen to translate that reference word-for-word (since it is known to Estonians), but in order to better connect Dr. Wilson's proposition with Dr. House's, the translator has added a connective word *ja* at the beginning of his utterance. And since Dr. Wilson says this in an ironic tone of voice, the intensifier *daring* has been left out like in previous examples. In the case of similar propositions, the translator has usually followed the same pattern.

#### **6.1.4 Synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, hyperonyms and paraphrasing**

Among the four semantic and one pragmatic translation strategies (Rietveld 2008: 29–30), synonyms and paraphrasing were used most often in combination with condensing (i.e. shortening the text), so that the overall meaning of a sentence or phrase was expressed by one or two words with a similar meaning in the target text. As mentioned before, ironic interjections were generally translated literally, but there were also instances where the translator had opted for a synonym (such as *just*, *tore* and *huvitav*) to translate the interjections listed in subsection

6.1.1. However, interjections such as *brilliant*, *wow*, *absolutely* and *great* were always conveyed into the Estonian language by using words with a similar meaning: *suurepärane*, *lahe*, *tore* and *muidugi*. Interestingly, the word *wow* was most often translated with different equivalents and never literally (e.g. *vau*).

In the case of antonyms, the translator had mostly chosen to negate the entire proposition, rather than to use a word or phrase with the opposite meaning (antonyms had only been used with interjections such as *yes* or *yeah*, which had been translated as *ei*). In Example 10, in which Dr. House tries to prove to Dr. Wilson that he is not worried that his best friend is in a relationship and will not spend so much time with him anymore, the translator has used several of the aforementioned strategies:

### **Example 10**

House: I didn't try to break up your marriages, you did that yourself.

Wilson: My marriages were so crappy I was spending all my time with you. Your real fear is me having a good relationship.

House: Yes, that keeps me up at night. That and the Loch Ness monster, global warming, evolution, and other fictional concepts.

Mina pole püüdnud su abielusid

nurjata, seda tegid sa ise.

Mu abielud olid viletsad,

sest olin alailma koos sinuga.

Tegelikult kardad sa,

et mul tekib hea suhe.

Jah, see ei lase magadagi.

Nagu Loch Nessi koletis,

globaalne soojenemine, evolutsioon

ja teised väljamõeldised.

In Example 10, the proposition *that keeps me up at night* has been negated in Estonian (*see ei lase magadagi*) and also paraphrased. In Dr. House's next sentence, the pronoun *that* has been replaced with the adverb *nagu* in the Estonian subtitles, thus using back-referencing (that belongs under the category of cohesion change (Rietveld 2008: 29)) and the noun phrase *fictional concepts* has been substituted with a one-word synonym (*väljamõeldised*), thus considerably shortening the subtitle and still conveying the information. In addition, the

utterance also contains a cultural reference (*the Loch Ness monster*), but since the legend is familiar to Estonians, it has been literally translated by employing calque (Rietveld 2008: 29). What is more, since Dr. House's ironic utterance takes more than two lines, the translator should have used sequence dots and linking dots (Karamitroglou 1997: para. 4) to indicate continuity, but he had never used them when translating long sentences.

While translating assertive speech acts, there were no instances of using a hyponym (a word with a narrower meaning) in the corpus as the translator had preferred to add explanatory words instead. But when the speaker's utterance contained culture-specific concepts that were either too long to translate among other important information or were unknown to the Estonian audience, the translator had often used hyperonyms (i.e. words have a broader meaning (Rietveld 2008: 30)). In Example 11, we are dealing with a foreign concept:

### **Example 11**

Gabe: You like to figure things out. Why not go into research? Why work with people when you obviously hate people.

House: Oedipal fixation. I was seeking my mother's love and she thought that Ben Casey was just the dreamiest.

Teile meeldib asju välja selgitada.

Miks siis mitte uuringud?

Milleks töötada inimestega,

kui te neid selgelt vihkate?

Oidipuse kompleks.

Otsisin oma ema armastust.

aga tema ihales

hoopis telesarjaarsti...

This dialogue between Dr. House and a patient contains two cultural references that are used ironically. The first – *Oedipal fixation* – has been translated (*Oidipuse kompleks*), but the second name, Ben Casey (it was a medical drama aired in the US during the 1960s (Bencasey.com n.d.)) is unknown to Estonians and instead of retaining the name, the translator has used a more general term describing the profession of the main character: *telesarjaarst*. In Example 12, the culture-specific element is too long to be fully translated:

**Example 12**

Wilson: You know, even if you manage not to get struck down by a bolt of lightning and make it a week, Cuddy's not going to give you the space. She can't.

House: A bet's a bet.

Wilson: Yes. And that rule outranks the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Isegi kui peaks juhtuma ime  
ja sa nädala vastu pead,  
ei anna Cuddy sulle seda kohta.  
Ta ei saa. – Meil on kihlvedu.  
Jah. See on kindlasti  
kangem kui seadused.

In Example 12, Dr. House is talking with Dr. Wilson about the bet he has made with Dr. Cuddy. Namely, they have agreed that if Dr. House stays in a wheelchair for a week, Dr. Cuddy will give him the parking space of another disabled employee that is closer to the main door of the hospital. Dr. Wilson is trying to make Dr. House understand that Dr. Cuddy is playing with the latter and that it is illegal to make such decisions. Thus Dr. Wilson “agrees” with the fact that a bet outranks the laws by using the “deadpan” way of speaking. In the source text, Dr. Wilson utters the name of the act, but since the utterance is followed by Dr. House's reply, the lack of time and space has forced the translator to use a hyperonym *seadused* (laws). In addition, Dr. Wilson's proposition has been paraphrased and in Estonian, it constitutes a comparison (i.e. Dr. Wilson claims that the bet is more valid than the laws). Thus, the verb *outranks* has been replaced with an adjective (*kangem*). Moreover, the translator has chosen to add an intensifier *kindlasti* in front of the adjective *kangem* (because Dr. Wilson's tone of voice is not ironical) and the connective word *and* at the beginning of the sentence has been omitted.

**6.1.5 Adding and omitting information**

Although in the Estonian subtitles of *House M.D.*, the translator had added intensifiers and connectors when the speaker did not indicate the ironic intent with his or her tone of voice, the lack of time and space caused information to be left out more often than not. According to Rietveld (2008: 14–16), a subtitle appears on screen for about eight seconds during which the

reader must be able to read the entire subtitle. When the characters speak fast, the translator sometimes has to sacrifice up to 50% of the information (Gottlieb 2005: 20). The following examples show how the translator has coped with rapid speech containing verbal irony.

Usually, information in the Estonian subtitles had been considerably condensed when the speech included the ironic repetition of previous talk which is actually one of the most often-used clues to verbal irony (Pelsmaekers and Van Bensien 2002: 246). In Example 13, Dr. Chase expresses his frustration about having to examine a patient's previous symptoms all night long and finding no logical connections:

### **Example 13**

Foreman: 2002, patient had dry eyes.

Chase: Dry eyes plus a grunt, it all makes sense.

2002. aastal oli tal kuiv silm.

– Ja mõmin.

Loogiline.

[– See võib olla neuroloogiline.]

In the original version, Dr. Foreman reads an old symptom out aloud. Dr. Chase repeats the symptom and adds the most recent one and then concludes that all of this does not make any sense. In the Estonian subtitles, however, the mentioning of the dry eyes has been omitted and replaced with the connector *ja* thus linking Dr. Chase's utterance with the Dr. Foreman's and the rest of Dr. Chase's utterance has been replaced with one single adjective *loogiline*. In this case, even more than 50% of the information has been omitted, but still, the ironic intent is clear.

In Example 14, we are also dealing with repetition, but this time, the same word is repeated between bits of new information:

### **Example 14**

House: You can't explain transudative pleural effusion with giant cell arteritis. You'd need 3 whiteboards and 100 different coloured markers.

Foreman: No, it's much more likely she has an invisible protein that allowed bacteria to arbitrarily invade her lungs then arbitrarily invade her pleura then arbitrarily jump into her head.

[Autoimmuunsus on loogilisem.]  
 – Transudatiivset pleuraefusiooni  
 ei saa seletada  
 hiidrakulise arteriidiga.  
 Selleks on vaja kolme tahvli  
 ja sadat eri värvi vildikat.  
Ei. Palju tõenäolisem on,  
et tal on nähtamatu proteiin,  
mis lasi baktereid talle kopsu,  
pleurasse ja lõpuks pähe.

Here, Dr. Foreman uses the rhetorical scheme of *conduplicatio* by repeating the word *arbitrarily* throughout his utterance in order to draw Dr. House's attention to the fact that the latter's diagnosis is not logical. As in previous examples, the translator has first grammatically isolated the negative and secondly, he has left out the repeated word altogether (and also the last verb of the utterance: *jump*), thus employing the translation strategies of changing the rhetorical scheme, omitting information and condensing (Rietveld 2008: 29, 30). The reason for such changes is probably the fact that Dr. Foreman is speaking relatively fast and the utterance also contains other clues of irony (the intensifier *much*, the noun *invisible* and Dr. Foreman's sarcastic tone of voice), so in the Estonian subtitles, the full effect of the sentence is not realised, but irony has not been entirely omitted either.

While in the previous examples, some of the information had been left out, but the ironic effect still remained, there were also instances in the case of which irony in the source language became non-irony in the target language. In Example 15, Dr. Cameron and Dr. Chase are at the house of an autistic child, taking samples around the house to find possible causes for his illness. Dr. Cameron finds a bottle of antidepressants and uses an ironic overstatement:

### **Example 15**

Cameron: Big shocker, dad's depressed.  
 Chase: Save your time, SSRIs don't cause chest pain.

Isa on depressioonis.  
 – SSRI-d valusid ei põhjusta.

In the Estonian subtitles, however, the translator has omitted the overstatement, thus changing the rhetorical effect of the utterance (Rietveld 2008: 30). Dr. Cameron's utterance is also

followed by Dr. Chase's response that includes important medical information that has to be conveyed in order not to confuse the viewer and due to the format of subtitles, the translator has only retained the most relevant information of Dr. Cameron's utterance.

In Example 16, the ironic effect has also been lost due to condensing:

### **Example 16**

George: You figure, I'm fat therefore I hate myself.

House: That's a huge leap of logic.

Arvate, et kuna olen paks,  
siis vihkan ennast? – Jah.

This dialogue takes place in the middle of an argument between Dr. House and the patient and both of them are speaking relatively fast. Since the translator has fully translated George's utterance, the format of subtitles has forced the translator not to translate Dr. House's ironical overstatement as such, and instead, the real illocutionary goal has been conveyed with one single word: *jah*. So, although the real meaning behind Dr. House's ironical utterance has been translated and there is no confusion in the subtitles, the social function of using verbal irony to insult someone has been lost (Dews and Winner 1995: 5).

In most of the cases when an rhetorical ironical question began with *you* + a verb, the translator had omitted the entire phrase – especially phrases such as *you think* and *you want* – or replaced it with an interrogative word such as *kas*, *mis*, *kuidas* etc. Another possibility was to omit the subject and begin the rhetorical question with a verb:

### **Example 17**

Chase: He'd be right. Could be an STD.

Foreman: One that doesn't give him any symptoms in his sexual organs? He never mentioned anything.

Chase: Maybe they're embarrassed. What else could it be? You think they just like the sexy feel of latex against their genitals?

Kui tal on õigus,  
võib see olla suguhaigus.  
Selline, mis genitaalidel.  
ei ilmne? Nad ei maininud midagi.  
Võib-olla häbenevad.  
Mis see veel olla võib?  
Arvad, et neile lihtsalt  
meeldib lateks?



In the Estonian language, it is possible to begin a sentence with a verb (*arvad*), since it is conjugated and the suffix *-d* indicates that it is in the second person singular and refers to the listener and there is no need for the word *you*. In addition Dr. Chase's rhetorical question has been condensed (Rietveld 2008: 30) and the phrases *sexy feel of* and *against their genitals* have been omitted in the subtitles.

Also, when the possessive pronouns and the object they referred to were in the same sentence, the translator had often omitted the possessive pronoun in the Estonian translation. For example, the ironic rhetorical question *You think they synchronized their watches?* had been translated as *arvad, et nad sünkroniseerisid kellad?* While in English, the pronoun *their* is necessary, it can be left out in Estonian and the meaning remains the same and thus, the translator had omitted this element very often in order to save space.

### **6.1.6 Domestication and foreignisation**

Since the TV-show has been produced in the USA, it also contains references to culture, in the case of which the translator has to decide whether to retain the foreign element or make it familiar to the target audience (Moneva 2001: 290). In the corpus, most of the cultural references were connected with the names of places or diseases that had been borrowed directly (Rietveld 2008: 29) into the Estonian language and in the case of famous people, historic events or things, the translation depended on the fact whether the translator thought they were known to Estonians or not (see Examples 11 and 12).

As mentioned above, in the case of unfamiliar concepts, the translator had sometimes chosen to domesticate the text with the help of hyperonyms, but for instance in the case of units of length used in the USA, the translator had never converted them into the metric system. Thus, when encountering such words as *mile* or *yard*, the subtitler retained the foreign element (Rietveld 2008: 30) and translated them as *miil* and *jard* (probably because converting the

numbers would have taken up extra space in the subtitles as in the metric system, they are now whole numbers).

### 6.1.7 Change of speech act

Verbal irony has sometimes been called a “parasitic speech act” that acts as a “vehicle” for other speech acts and implies several things at once (Pelsmaekers and Van Besien 2002: 244). Thus, as one method for translating verbal irony, the translator may choose to change the speech act in order to emphasise the implied meaning (Chesterman n.d.: para. 37). In the case of assertives, the translator had always followed the same pattern while employing this particular translation strategy. Namely, the ironical assertive speech act had been changed into an ironical directive speech act (a rhetorical question, suggestion etc.) or vice versa. In Example 18, Dr. Foreman’s assertion has been changed into a suggestion:

#### Example 18

House: If you screwed up, I don’t have to cry myself to sleep.

It’s a simple bleeding disorder. Foreman, redo the test.

Chase: How could I screw up a simple bleeding time test?

Foreman: Maybe you were abducted; lost time.

Kui sa ka vusserdasid,

ei kurvasta ma eriti

See on lihtne hüübivusprobleem.

Foreman, tee uus analüüs.

Kuidas ma sain lihtsa

hüübivustesti untsu keerata?

Võib-olla tulnukad röövivad su?

This dialogue comes from an episode in which a critically ill little boy is hallucinating about aliens and in a later conversation with his colleagues Dr. Chase has stated that he believes in extraterrestrial life. The rest of the team finds this amusing and so in Example 18, Dr. Foreman is mocking Dr. Chase by suggesting reasons for the latter’s inconsistent test results. In the TV-show, Dr. Foreman utters his lines with mock-horror and in a low voice and like a statement, but in the subtitles, his assertion has been changed into a suggestion in the form of a rhetorical question. In addition, the translator has made the information more explicit by explaining who

might have been the abductors (*tulnukad*) and the second part of Dr. Foreman's utterance has been left out since the utterance is too long to be fully conveyed in a dialogue.

In the previous example, the translator had just added a question mark at the end of the speech act, but adding an interrogative word before the SVO-sentence was also a common strategy when changing the speech act. Lastly, almost always when the translator had changed the speech act, he had also added intensifying adverbs or pronouns and when the in the source text there was no object, the translator usually had added it in the translation.

## 6.2 Expressive verbal irony

Under the category of ironic expressive speech acts belong (insincere) thanking, complimenting, apologising, congratulating and wishing someone good luck in doing something. Moreover, although Haverkate (1990: 89) has claimed that condoling cannot be realised ironically, the corpus included instances of ironic condoling. According to Haverkate (1990: 89–100), the main goal of ironic expressives is to convey one's disappointment or criticism and the speaker always implies something else than the opposite of what is being expressed.

### 6.2.1 Literal translation

Among the aforementioned expressive speech acts, short phrases such as *congratulations* and *thanks* had been translated directly (*palju õnne* and *tānan*, respectively). Also, the mock-condoling phrases *my condolences* (*minu kaastunne*) and *poor you* (*vaene sina*) had always been directly translated, although the latter is not a very commonly used phrase in Estonian (*vaeseke* is a more familiar and often-used phrase). Ironic compliments consisting of an adjective and a noun phrase had usually been translated literally, but in the case of descriptive

sentences and phrases consisting of an intensifier and an adjective or just an adjective, the translator had often made some changes in the translation which will be discussed below.

### 6.2.2 Sentence units and sentence structure

The word order in translating expressive speech acts was changed according to the same principle as mentioned under subsection 6.1.2.

In the case of rapid speech, some “compliments” were changed into one-word interjections (very often, the translator had used the word *õigus*).

#### Example 19

House: If Wilson’s wrong. We’ll biopsy her just to be sure.

Chase: The brain stem? Brain damage is not only possible, it’s likely!

House: Good point. Let’s biopsy something safer, like her shoes.

[Ja kui sa eksid?]

– Kui Wilson eksib,

teeme tüdrukule igaks juhuks

biopsia. – Ajutüvest?

Ajukahjustus on seejuures

lausa tõenäoline. – Õigus.

Teeme siis biopsia millestki

ohutumast, näiteks ta kingadest.

In Example 19, Dr. House’s ironical praise is followed by another ironical proposition, and the information is uttered very fast. Thus, the translator has replaced the compliment with an interjection that is shorter (*õigus*) and this has enabled to convey both speech acts. The translator followed the same pattern with similar cases that included “compliments” consisting of two or more words, followed by other important information.

Changes in word class only occurred while translating the phrase *thank you*. However, as employing this translation strategy is closely connected with changing the emphasis of the utterance, this tendency will be discussed in the next example.

### 6.2.3 Emphasis and cohesion

Emphasis was mostly changed only while translating the phrase *thank you*. As rule, the translator had transferred it into Estonian by replacing the noun *you* with an adverb:

#### Example 20

Chase: Happy Valentine's Day.

Cameron: A holiday that only applies to people who are already paired up. For everyone else it's Wednesday.

Chase: Wow. Thank you for that dash of cold water.

Head sõbrapäeva.

– Püha, mis on mõeldud vaid neile,  
kes on paariviisi. Kõigile  
teistele lihtsalt kolmapäev.

Tänan väga selle külma duši eest.

[– Ära mind valesti mõista]

In Example 20, Dr. Cameron's response to Dr. Chase's expressive utterance is not what the latter expects and thus he "thanks" her for that (*thank you for that dash of cold water*). In the Estonian subtitles, the noun *you* has been replaced with an intensifying adverb *väga* (*very*). In fact, this translation strategy had been used every time when translating that particular ironic phrase and *thank you* was never translated as *tänan sind*. In addition, Dr. Chase's utterance also includes the ironic interjection *wow*, which, as in previous examples, has been omitted due to lack of space in the subtitles.

In the case of mock-compliments consisting of adjectives only, the translator had generally added the intensifier *väga* before the adjective (e.g. *clever* had been translated as *väga nutikas*). Thus, in order to prevent confusion, the ironic force of the utterance had been made more explicit by adding extra emphasis to the word.

Connective words were added to the source language text when translating the following phrases: *thanks for* and *sorry to*. This can be seen in Examples 21 and 22:

#### Example 21

Wilson: No, you're wasting a question. I have a better one. Why steal my pad?

House: Oh my God, you're right! I'm an addict. Thanks for opening my eyes.

Te raiskate küsimuse. Mul on parem.  
 Miks sa mu retseptid varastasid?  
 Õigus! Ma olen sõltlane!  
Aitäh, et silmad avasid.

### Example 22

Finn: People come to my show because they want a sense of wonder. They WANT to experience something that they can't explain.

House: If the wonder's gone when the truth is known, there never was any wonder. You have tularaemia from your rabbits. I've put you on antibiotics, you'll be better in a couple of days. Sorry to spoil the mystery.

Inimesed tulevad mind vaatama,  
 sest tahavad tunda imet.  
 Kogeda midagi,  
 mida nad ei oska seletada.  
 Kui tõe selgumisel ime kaob,  
 pole seda olnudki.  
 Teil on jänestelt saadud tularemia.  
 Andsin antibiootikume,  
 paari päevaga läheb paremaks.  
Vabandust, et salapära rikkusin.

In Example 21, while translating Dr. House's ironic expression of gratitude (*thanks for*), the translator had added a connective word *et* in the Estonian subtitles between the expression of gratitude and the rest of the utterance in order to make the implicit more explicit in the Estonian language (Rietveld 2008: 30) and the same has been done in Example 22, where the connector *et* serves the same purpose. The translator had followed the same tendency in the case of similar propositions that expressed gratitude by employing the same sentence structure.

## 6.2.4 Adding and omitting information

When dealing with ironic compliments that included an adjective or an intensifier and an adjective that acted as a subject complement, the translator had often added an object to the target language text in order to make the meaning more clear.

### Example 23

House: Monkey's afraid to eat the red berries until he sees another monkey eat them. Monkey see, monkey do, that's all it was. Your kid's still just as messed up as when we admitted him.

Wilson: That was sensitive.

[Nagu vestlus.]  
 – Ahv kardab marju süüa,  
 kuni näeb teist ahvi neid söömas.  
 Ahv näeb, ahv teeb. Kõik.  
 Teie laps on sama segi

kui siia tülles.  
See oli peenetundeline vastus.

In Example 23, Dr. House is explaining to the parents of an autistic patient that although the latter mimicked Dr. House's movements, he is still "messed up". Dr. Wilson finds that this information could have been presented in a better way and "praises" Dr. House with an elliptical ironic compliment (*that was sensitiv*) that consists of a subject, a linking verb and a subject complement, but lacks a direct object. In the Estonian subtitles, however, the translator has added the latter element (*vastus*). The same tendency could also be noticed with other ironical compliments that did not include a direct object in the source language.

When it comes to translating ironic apologies, then in the phrase *I'm sorry*, the element *I'm* was never translated and the translator had always used the shorter form *vabandust* (*sorry*) instead of, for instance, *palun vabandust*. In fact, the former equivalent is used more often ironically in the Estonian language and the latter translation would have needed additional linguistic clues (for instance, *eksole* at the end of the utterance or *väga* before *vabandust*) in order to convey ironic intent which in turn would have required extra space.

However, among dialogues that contained expressive ironic speech acts, there were the most instances where the translator had mistranslated the speech act following the expressive speech act thus creating an end result that did not convey the ironic intent and rather confused the viewers.

#### **Example 24**

House: That just leaves cancer. Get a lung biopsy.  
 Foreman: It took a half an hour to get a mask on the kid for the lung scan!  
 House: Well I'm sorry, was there somewhere you needed to be?

Jäab ainult vähk.  
 Tehke kopsubiopsia.  
 Poisile maski panemine  
 võtab pool tundi.  
Vabandust. Kas sa ei peaks  
kusagil mujal olema?

When dealing with ironic expressive speech acts that were immediately followed by another ironic speech act, the translator had sometimes omitted the first element thus often losing the full ironic effect of the utterance. However, in this particular case, the translator has mistranslated the ironic rhetorical question *was there somewhere else you needed to be?* In the source language, Dr. House implies to Dr. Foreman that nothing is more important than performing his work duties, even when they are time-consuming. The Estonian translation – *kas sa ei peaks kusagil mujal olema? (wasn't there somewhere else you needed to be?)* – implies the opposite: that Dr. Foreman needs to be somewhere else. Thus, the ironic expression of gratitude has no effect in Estonian and even creates confusion (one possible translation that conveys the correct illocutionary point would have been for instance *kas sa pead kusagil mujal olema?*).

### **6.3 Directive verbal irony**

The goal of directive speech acts (requests, orders, warnings etc.) is to make the listener to do something that benefits the speaker (Smith 2003: 9) and Haverkate (1990: 94) has also claimed that sometimes directive verbal irony can be used to make the listener to do something for his or her own benefit by using an utterance which implies the (lexical or propositional) opposite meaning or something else. In general, directives occur in the form of imperative sentences, but it is also possible to convey indirect requests, warnings etc. by using assertives or rhetorical questions.

#### **6.3.1 Sentence units, sentence structure and word classes**

The translator had followed the patterns mentioned under subsection 6.1.2 when changing the word order and mostly, the translator had changed longer phrases in the source text into short words in the target text.



Some types of ironic suggestions had been translated by changing the mood of the sentence. Namely, when the translator had changed the speech act from a directive rhetorical question into an assertive speech act, it usually included a change in the mood of the sentence.

### Example 25

House: Do a colonoscopy.

Cameron: Because he's had no symptoms?

House: You lose your keys, the first thing you do is look everywhere you might logically have placed them. When you don't find them, then you start looking in other places – the medicine cabinet, freezer, mailbox. We need to look in this kid's mailbox.

Cameron: Why don't we x-ray his feet? They're fine too.

[Tal polnud sooltes sümptome.]

– Tehke kolonoskoopia

Sest sümptomeid pole?

– Kui võtmed on kadunud,  
otsid kõigepealt sealt,  
kuhu sa need panna võisid.

Kui sealt ei leia,

hakkad otsima mujalt.

Rohukapist, külmikust, postkastist.

Vaatame ta postkasti.

Teeks jalgadest röntgeni ka.

Need on ju terved.

In Example 25, Dr. Cameron's suggestion (*why don't we x-ray his feet?*) is in the indicative mood, but in the Estonian subtitles, it has been changed into the conditional mood, which is indicated by the inflectional ending *-ks* added to the verb (*teeks*). In addition, the verb *to x-ray* has been transferred into Estonian as a noun phrase and extra emphasis has been added with the adverb *ka* at the end of the utterance. The translator had followed the same pattern in the case of translating directive ironic rhetorical questions, but the mood had not been changed while transferring directives that occurred in the form of affirmative sentences.

### 6.3.2 Emphasis and cohesion

In the case of translating ironic suggestions, the translator had frequently used the adverb *ka* in order to emphasise the insincerity of the suggestions. This has been done in Example 26 (also see Example 25):

**Example 26**

House: Let's start with the cute paraplegic.

Cameron: Welcome back!

Chase: Hey!

Cameron: You look...

Foreman: Healthy.

House: Quad with no broken neck, struck me as odd.

Cameron: You could take a whole two minutes to ease into being back.

Alustame kena parapleegikuga.

– Tere tulemast tagasi.

Sa paistad...

– Terve

Halvatus murtud kaelata...

Kummaline.

Sa võid ka kaks minutit

olukorraga kohaneda.

In Example 26, Dr. House returns to his team after recovering from a gunshot wound and acts as if nothing happened and Dr. Cameron implies that he should not treat the matter so lightly. The translator has used the translation method of paraphrasing in order to convey Dr. Cameron's utterance and he has also placed the adverb *ka* in front of the ironic phrase *kaks minutit* (*two minutes*) to draw the viewers' attention to the understatement and indicate ironic intent. Due to the free word order in the Estonian language, the adverb *ka* can be used in various places within a sentence and the translator had usually placed it in front of the ironic element or at the end of the ironic directive utterance.

In addition to *ka*, adverbs such as *ikka* and *küll* had also been frequently used before the main verb of the ironic directive (e.g. *you seriously have no idea when to shut up* had been translated as *te ikka ei oska suud kinni hoida* and *don't buy a new one* as *ära uut küll osta*) and the adverb *muidugi* had been used similarly to *ka* within the sentence.

Similarly to translating interjections, the translator had used exclamation marks slightly more often when translating short directives (such as *stop!* and *back off!* which had been translated as *lõpeta!* and *jäta!*, respectively) than, for instance, in the case of assertives, but in general, most directives uttered with strong emotion were not emphasised by using exclamation

marks or other means of formatting, thus confirming Gotllieb's (n.d.: 20) claim that translators tend to underrepresent the prosodic features of the characters' speech in subtitles.

### 6.3.3 Synonyms, antonyms and paraphrasing

Synonyms had been used in combination with paraphrasing with the goal of shortening the text and often when the original utterance contained any idiomatic expression, the effect of those had not been retained in the translation. For instance, the proposition containing an idiom – *you definitely get to the bottom of that* – had been translated as *uuri tõesti kõik välja*, which conveys the same message in Estonian, but the translator has omitted the rhetorical trope (Rietveld 2008: 30) and produced a shorter end-result. In the case of producing a translation with an opposite meaning, the translator had sometimes negated the entire proposition instead of using an antonym.

### 6.3.4 Adding and omitting information

Similarly to previous examples, the translator had only added intensifiers and information had been left out more frequently. For instance, when the ironic directive included repetition of previous talk, it had been almost always omitted and where possible, the translator had also omitted the subject and used a conjugated verb form instead. Ironic interjections that preceded the ironic directives and personal possessive pronouns had also been often left out. Also, if possible, those sentence elements that comprised the object had been omitted in order to save space (e.g. while translating the utterance *you can sit around an moan about who's the bigger weakling* the object had been omitted and the Estonian translation only stated *istuge siis siin ja halage*).

### 6.3.5 Domestication and foreignisation

Among the two translation strategies, domestication had been used more often while transferring ironic directives. The foreign element had been either translated (*rodeo clowns* had been translated as *rodeoklounid*) or directly borrowed into the source language and very rarely substituted with a more familiar element (e.g. while conveying the phrase *let's cure her with sunshine and puppies*, the translator had replaced the word *puppies* with *bunnies*: *ravime päikesepaiste ja jänkudega*). The following examples show how the translator has used foreignisation by assuming that the target audience is familiar with the concepts.

#### Example 27

Chase: That pin was removed six months after –

House: So what, a little piece broke off during removal.

Chase: Titanium is used to build nuclear subs, pieces don't just break off.

House: Tell that to the guys on the Kursk.

See võeti pool aastat hiljem välja.

– Väike tükk murdus ära.

Titaanist ehitatakse

tuumaallveelaevu. See ei murdu.

Seda räägi poistele Kurskil.

#### Example 28

Chase: House! Clancy's gone missing.

House: Oh, no! Well, you take Alpha Centauri, Foreman can look on Tatooine, and Cameron can set up an intergalactic checkpoint. Let's pray he hasn't gone into hyperdrive! We'll never catch him.

House! Clancy on kadunud.

– Oh ei!

Sina võta Alpha Centauri,

Foreman Tatooine

ja Cameron seab üles

intergalaktilise staabi.

Palvetagem, et nad hüperkiirust

ei kasutanud, siis me teda ei leia

In Example 27, Dr. House's team has found a piece of titanium inside the patient's body and do not believe it came from a pin used to fix the patient's broken arm a few years ago. So, Dr. House uses an ironic directive to imply that titanium is not indestructible material. By uttering *tell that to the boys on the Kursk*, Dr. House refers to the Russian submarine that sank in the

Barents Sea in 2000 due to an explosion of a test torpedo. Probably since it is a recent historical event that happened in the vicinity of Estonia, the translator has chosen to transfer the element.

In Example 28, the same patient who believes in extraterrestrial life is hiding himself in the hospital. Dr. Chase shares his belief and thus, when he reports about the incident to Dr. House, the latter mocks him by using notions from the science fiction film series *Star Wars*. Although one has to be a true fan of *Star Wars* in order to recognize the references, the irony has been retained since the names of the planets are still recognizably fictional and Dr. House's tone of voice also indicates ironic intent.

### 6.3.6 Change of speech act

When translating ironic directives, the translator had employed two methods: he had either changed the proposition into a rhetorical question by adding interrogative verbs to the utterance (Example 29) or just adding a question mark at the end of the ironic utterance (see Example 18).

#### Example 29

Chase: Kidneys are clean.

House: Tell me he's a mutant human hybrid.

Foreman: It is a bleeding disorder.

Tee selgeks, mis tal on. Neerud  
seletaksid... – Neerud on puhtad.

Kas ta on siis tulnukmutant?

– See on hüübivusprobleem.

In Example 29, the translator has changed Dr. House's ironic request (*tell me he's a mutant human hybrid*) into a question in the Estonian subtitles by adding an interrogative word *kas* at the beginning of the sentence, omitting phrase *tell me he's*, and adding the adverb *siis* before the noun *tulnukmutant* (which replaces the phrase *mutant human hybrid*). The changes made when opting for second method were already discussed under subsection 6.3.1 and will not be covered here in detail.

## 6.4 Commissive verbal irony

In the case of commissive verbal irony, the speaker promises to do something but has no intention of doing it and the real illocutionary goal of the speech act is to produce humour or intimidate the hearer (Haverkate 1990: 97–98). According to Haverkate (1990: 99), the actual meaning of ironic commissive speech acts can never be the opposite of what is said and the speaker always implies something else. Although Haverkate (1990: 90) states that the most ironic speech acts are realised in the form of assertives, he does not comment on how often irony manifests itself in the form of commissive speech acts. In the corpus of *House M.D.* there were the least instances of ironic commissive speech acts.

### 6.4.1 Sentence units and sentence structure

As commissive speech acts were affirmative sentences, the translator had acted as described under subsection 6.1.2 when dealing with word order and when the translator had changed the speech act into a question, he had followed the same technique as described under subsection 6.1.7.

In some cases, the sentence that included an ironic commissive speech act began with an interjection or assertive speech act and in general, the complex sentence had then been separated into units, thus isolating the commissive speech act. Whenever possible, longer phrases in the source language had also been changed into shorter phrases or words in the target text (e.g. *I'll be doing a dance of joy* had been translated as *esitan rõõmutantsu*).

Ironic commissives occurred in the conditional or the indicative mood and the translator had retained it the subtitles. However, since most of the commissives were in the future tense which does not exist in the Estonian language, they had been conveyed by using the present simple.

### 6.4.2 Emphasis and cohesion

The most often used intensifier while translating ironic commissives was the adverb *ka*, which had been used in various places in the sentence in order to add emphasis to different parts of the translated utterance. In addition, the word *jah* had also been used for the same function. Moreover, it can be said that in the case of commissive verbal irony, emphasis had been mostly added and not omitted. When it comes to changing the cohesion of the utterance, the most prevalent trend involved adding the connective word *et* in the Estonian subtitles of utterances expressing cause and reason in order to make the sentence more cohesive and the irony more explicit.

### 6.4.3 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing had been used quite often, but it always depended on the context and the only feature that can be brought out is that the translator had usually tried to simultaneously paraphrase and condense the target text in order to make the end result shorter. However, by using this translation strategy, verbal irony had not always been successfully conveyed. For instance, the utterance *anything I can do to help your game* had been translated as *mängu edendamiseks, mida iganes*. While the translation is grammatically correct, the meaning remains slightly vague and confusing and for example, reversing the parts of the sentence (*mida iganes mängu edendamiseks*) would already make it less clumsy.

### 6.4.4 Adding and omitting information

Again, the only elements that the translator had added were intensifiers and in the majority of cases, the lack of time and space demanded the translator to omit information.

In the case of utterances where the speaker is making a commitment with the help of personal pronouns, they were almost always omitted in the Estonian subtitles and the message had been conveyed with the help of conjugated verbs. Sometimes when the speaker's tone of

voice was extremely sarcastic, the translator had also omitted as many verbal cues to irony as possible. For instance, the utterance *yea we'll get right on that* had been translated as *kohe uurime* (i.e. the Estonian translation does not include the ironic interjection *yea*, the subject *we*, the helping verb *will* and the pronoun *that*). Also, as with directives, the objects in the ironic commissive utterances had been left out whenever possible.

The results of the analysis indicate that among the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic translation strategies, there were certain strategies that had been employed more frequently when transferring verbal irony. Moreover, the usage of certain strategies also depended on the ironic speech act. It also seems that although the full ironic effect may not always come across in the Estonian subtitles of this particular TV-show, most ironic speech acts had still been relatively successfully conveyed and the constraints of subtitles actually do not pose a serious problem for the translator.



## CONCLUSION

Since the first television programmes started circulating the globe in the 1960s, television has been effectively operating as an agent of cross-cultural communication. While in today's globalised world certain source culture specific concepts and attitudes have become familiar to the target culture and do not need any further explanation, there are still instances in the case of which cultural misunderstandings may easily arise, especially when the television texts undergo the process of translation.

One conversational feature, which is relatively common in real-life situations as well as in scripted entertainment is verbal irony. In general, it can be said that across various cultures the linguistic means through which to express, for instance insincere claims, requests and compliments are slightly different. Thus, translating verbal irony may prove to be a difficult task for a translator who has to be able to understand the intended meaning in the source language and produce the same effect in the target language.

In Estonia, many television programmes are purchased from other countries and translated into Estonian by using subtitling. Compared to the other two audiovisual translation techniques (dubbing and voiceover), subtitling is the cheapest and fastest means of translating, which makes it appealing to many small countries. However, it is also the most complicated method, since the process of translation involves transferring spoken text into a written form. This involves taking into consideration the specific constraints of subtitles: the number of allowed characters per line, formatting, the amount of time a subtitle appears on screen, etc.

The present thesis focused on verbal irony by relying on the theory of ironic speech acts formulated by Searle and further developed by Amante and Haverkate, which claims that verbal irony is a highly context-dependent linguistic device with a hidden actual meaning. In the context of such a theoretical framework, this thesis looked at how verbal irony produced in the

North-American culture had been transferred into the Estonian culture via subtitling. In addition, the thesis also analysed the usage of translation strategies proposed by Chesterman and adapted by Rietveld in order to see which strategies were the most prevalent and whether the translator had always been successful in conveying verbal irony.

The corpus, which consisted of 38 episodes of *House M.D.*, confirmed Haverkate's claim that most ironic speech acts appear in the form of assertives as most instances of verbal irony occurred in the form of affirmative sentences, interjections and rhetorical questions to which the truth condition applied. These were followed by ironic expressives, i.e. insincere thanking, complimenting, apologising, congratulating etc. Moreover, although Haverkate has argued that it is not possible to condole ironically, the corpus included the ironic realizations of these speech acts as well. Compared to assertives and expressives, there were considerably fewer directives (ironic requests, orders, warnings etc.) and commissives (making insincere promises) in the corpus. Lastly, Haverkate has also asserted that it is not possible to express declaratives ironically and, indeed, the corpus did not include any instances of that particular speech act being used ironically by the speaker.

Among the syntactic translation strategies, literal translation, borrowing and calque had been most frequently used to convey ironic assertives and expressives. Still, literal translation had only been used when the ironic proposition consisted of up to four short words and the character's speech rate was normal or even slow. In the case of longer sentences, the fact that Estonian and English do not belong in the same language family coupled with the specific features of subtitles made it difficult for the translator to follow the source language as closely as possible and so the translator often made some changes. Calque had been most often employed when the ironic proposition contained proper names or historic events that the translator had thought were familiar to the audience, but otherwise there were no distinct trends

that were connected with the conveyance of verbal irony. The same applied for borrowing and in the majority of cases, this strategy had been used in combination with foreignisation. In the case of directives and commissives, however, the translator had always made some minor or major changes, thus not employing literal translation or calque.

Changing the units and structure of a sentence were employed more frequently than the translation strategies discussed in the previous paragraph. The analysis found that when translating ironic assertives and commissives, the translator had often drawn the viewers' attention to irony by using punctuation. When the ironic proposition began with an affirmation or negation, these elements had been almost always grammatically isolated from the rest of the utterance. Also, when dealing with a complex sentence, the parts containing verbal irony had been made into separate simple sentences. Changing the word order affected the translation of all ironic speech acts that were longer than two or three words. As the word order in Estonian is not as fixed as it is in English and there are 14 case endings the meaning of the sentence remains the same even when the word order is changed.

Changes in the mood affected most commissive speech acts since in English, they were often in the future tense and in Estonian, the present simple is used to convey future tense meaning. Also, when changing directive ironic rhetorical questions into assertives, the translator usually had changed the mood from the indicative into conditional.

The most "popular" syntactic translation strategy involved changing the emphasis of utterances containing verbal irony. As a general rule, the addition or omission of interjections or adverbs depended on the character's tone of voice. The analysis showed that when the speaker used an ironic or sarcastic tone of voice or contextually inappropriate body language, the translator had omitted all verbal cues to irony (intensifiers, interjections and the ironic

repetition of previous talk) and when the speaker intentionally showed no emotion towards the utterance, the translator had either retained or added the aforementioned cues.

From the punctuation techniques in subtitles described by Karamitroglou, the translator had only used full stops and sometimes exclamation marks to grammatically isolate the parts of the utterance containing irony and to add emphasis. In general, it can also be said that when translating long ironic utterances that needed more than two full subtitle lines, the translator had never used sequence dots or linking dots to create a connection between the two subtitle pairs.

Instead, cohesion had been mostly changed within the same subtitle pair by adding connectors to make the connections within or between sentences more explicit. However, this strategy had only been used with assertives, where the connective word *et* had been added wherever possible, and expressives, where connective words had been added to the source language text only when translating certain fixed phrases (*thanks for* and *sorry to*).

From the semantic translation strategies, the most prevalent trend was to use synonyms in combination with paraphrasing and condensing with the goal of shortening. The analysis also showed that antonyms or negating the entire proposition can only be employed with speech acts where the implied meaning could be the opposite of what is said (assertives, directives) and not with speech acts where the real meaning is always something else (expressives and commissives).

The translator had not chosen to use hyponyms, but hyperonyms had been employed when transferring assertives and directives that contained culture-specific concepts and using this particular strategy was often related with the pragmatic translation strategies of domestication and foreignisation. When encountering culture-specific concepts, the translator had considered two factors: first, whether the concept was familiar to the Estonian audience, and secondly, whether there was enough time and space. In the case of an unfamiliar or overly long concept,

the translator had always opted for a hyperonym, thus making the foreign element more familiar to the target audience.

When it comes to adding or omitting information, the analysis showed that information had been omitted more often than it was added and this was due to lack of time and space. So, even when the translator had added intensifiers and connectors, there were almost always some other elements that had been left out of the translation. Those elements included verbal cues to irony (when the speaker employed contextually inappropriate tone of voice and body language), ironic repetitions, omitting the objects and replacing them with a conjugated verb form.

Lastly, the strategy that included a change in the speech act affected only assertives and directives and in both cases an affirmative utterance had been changed into a rhetorical question or vice versa. The former strategy produced a more powerful ironic effect and in the case of the latter, the character's tone of voice or body language allowed the translator to lessen the effect of the utterance in the subtitles.

The analysis of the dialogues from *House M.D.* containing verbal irony showed that subtitling verbal irony is not as impossible as it may seem at first glance. In the case of this particular TV-show, it appeared that when analysing the conveyance of verbal irony into Estonian, certain translation patterns could be observed for each category of ironic speech acts. Above all, it can be said the images and sounds accompanying the subtitles help the Estonian viewer to recognize and understand the ironic situation and therefore, in spite of the constraints of subtitles, the cultural transfer of verbal irony into Estonian subtitles can be very successful.

## REFERENCES

### Primary sources:

- Community.livejournal.com. 2010. House Transcripts. Available at [http://community.livejournal.com/clinic\\_duty](http://community.livejournal.com/clinic_duty), accessed April 22, 2010.
- House M.D.* 2004. [Television programme]. USA: Fox Broadcasting Company.
- Mõisnik, Mihkel (translator). 2006–2008. “Dr. House” [Television programme]. Estonia: SDI Media Estonia.
- Twiztv.com. 2009. House M.D. Available at <http://www.twiztv.com/scripts/house/index.html#season1>, accessed April 22, 2010.

### Secondary sources:

- Amante, David J. 1981. The theory of indirect speech acts. *Poetics Today*, 2:2, 77–96.
- Attardo, Salvatore. 2000. Irony as relevant inappropriateness. *Journal of pragmatics*, 32, 793–826.
- Austin, J. L. (ed by J. O. Urmson). 1970. *How to do Things With Words*. London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bencasey.com. n.d. Perhaps the Best Medical Show on Television. Available at <http://bencasey.com/>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Booth, Wayne C. 1975. *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, Robert L. 1980. The Pragmatics of Verbal Irony. In Roger W. Shuy and Anna Shnukal (eds). *Language Use and The Uses of Language*, 111–127. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Brown, Penelope and Stephen C. Levinson. 1978. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chesterman, Andrew. n.d. Translation Theory Course. Available at <http://www.helsinki.fi/~chesterm/TransTheory.html#strategies>, accessed October 6, 2009.
- Cintas, Jorge Díaz. 2009. Introduction – Audiovisual Translation: An Overview of its Potential. In Cintas, Jorge Díaz (ed). *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, 1–20. Bristol, Buffalo and Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Clark, Herbert H. and Richard J. Gerrig. 2007. On the Pretense Theory of Irony. In Colston, Herbert L and Raymond W. Gibbs (eds). *Irony in Language and Thought: A Cognitive Science Reader*, 25–33. New York and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Colebrook, Claire. 2004. *Irony*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Colston, Herbert L. and Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. 2007. A Brief History of Irony. In Colston, Herbert L and Raymond W. Gibbs (eds). *Irony in Language and Thought: A Cognitive Science Reader*, 3–25. New York and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dews, Shelly and Ellen Winner. 1995. Muting the Meaning: A Social Function of Irony. *Metaphor & Symbolic Activity*, 10: 1, 3–20.
- Dews, Shelly, Joan Kaplan and Ellen Winner. 2007. Why Not Say it Directly? The Social Functions of Irony. In Colston, Herbert L and Raymond W. Gibbs (eds). *Irony in Language and Thought: A Cognitive Science Reader*, 297–318. New York and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ehala, Martin. 2006. The Word Order of Estonian: Implications to Universal Language. *Journal of Universal Language*, 49–89. Available at <http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache%3ADh3Esol->

- [tHcJ%3Alepo.it.da.ut.ee%2F~ehalam%2Fpdf%2FEstonian\\_word\\_order.pdf](http://www.alepo.it/da/ut/ee/~ehalam/Fpdf/Estonian_word_order.pdf), accessed April 22, 2010.
- Eki.ee. n.d. Basic Characteristic Features of Estonian. Available at <http://www.eki.ee/keel/et002.html>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Financial Times Lexicon. 2009. Nielsen ratings. Available at <http://lexicon.ft.com/term.asp?t=Nielsen-ratings>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Fiske, John. 2003. *Television Culture*. Great Britain, Cornwall: TJ International Ltd.
- Gibbs, Raymond W. 2000. Irony in Talk Among Friends. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 15: 1, 5–27.
- Gibbs, Raymond W and Christin D. Izett. 2005. Irony as Persuasive Communication. In Colston, Herbert L. and Albert N. Katz (eds). *Figurative Language Comprehension: Social and Cultural Influences*, 131–153. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gibson, Stacey. 2008. The House that Dave Built. Available at <http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/cover-story/david-shore-house-creator-television-producers/>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Gottlieb, Henrik. 2005. Texts, translation and subtitling – in theory, and in Denmark. In *Screen Translation. Eight Studies in Subtitling, Dubbing and Voice-over*, 1–40. University of Copenhagen: Center for Translation Studies.
- Gottlieb, Henrik. 2009. Subtitling Against the Current: Danish Concepts, English Minds. In Cintas, Jorge Díaz (ed). *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, 21–43. Bristol, Buffalo and Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Grice, Paul H. 1975. Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds). *Syntax and semantics*, vol. 3: Speech acts, 41–58. New York: Academic Press.
- Griffiths, Patrick. 2006. *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hatim, Basil. 2009. Pragmatics. In Baker, Mona and Gabriela Saldanha (eds). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed*, 204–208. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- Haverkate, Henk. 1990. A speech act analysis of irony. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 14, 77–109.
- Hollywoodreporter.com. 2005. Primetime Series. Available at [http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/search/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1000937471](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/search/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000937471), accessed April 22, 2010.
- Holtgraves, Thomas M. 2008. *Language as Social Action*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Imdb.com. 2004. Awards for “House M.D.”. Available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0412142/awards>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Ivarsson, Jan. 2004. A Short Technical History of Subtitles in Europe. Available at <http://www.transedit.se/history.htm>, accessed October 6, 2009.
- Karamitroglou, Fotios. 1997. A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe. Available at <http://accurapid.com/journal/04stndrd.htm>, accessed October 6, 2009.
- Kaufert, D. S. 1981. Understanding Ironic Communication. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 5, 495–510.
- Kreuz, Roger J and Richard M. Roberts. 1995. Two Cues for Verbal Irony: Hyperbole and the Ironic Tone of Voice. *Metaphor & Symbolic Activity*, 10: 1, 21–31.
- Kreuz, Roger J. 1996. The Use of Verbal Irony: Cues and Constraints. In Jeffrey Mio and Albert N. Katz (eds). *Metaphor: Implications and Applications*, 23–38. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Levin, Samuel R. 1982. Are Figures of Thought Figures of Speech? In Heidi Brynes (ed). *Contemporary Perception of Language: Interdisciplinary Dimensions*. 112–113. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

- Matlin, Margaret and David Stang. 1978. *The Pollyanna Principle: Selectivity in Language, Memory and Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing.
- Moneva, M<sup>a</sup> Angeles Ruiz. 2001. Searching for Some Relevance Answers to the Problems Raised by the Translation of Irony. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*. 14, 213–247.
- Muecke, Douglas Colin. 1969. *The Compass of Irony*. London: Methuen.
- Nash, Walter. 1985. *The language of Humour*. London and New York: Longman.
- O'Connor, Kevin. 2006. *Culture and Customs of the Baltic States*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Pelsmaekers, Katja and Fred Van Besien. 2002. Subtitling Irony: Blackadder in Dutch. *The Translator*. 8: 2, 241–266.
- Ramière, Nathalie. 2003. Reaching a Foreign Audience: Cultural Transfers in Audiovisual Translation. Available at [http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art\\_ramiere.php](http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art_ramiere.php), accessed October 6, 2009.
- Rietveld, Jessica. 2008. The Mind of a Subtitler: Translation Strategies Employed in Subtitling Crime and Comedy. MA thesis. Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands.
- Ross, Alison. 1999. *The Language of Humour*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sadock, Jerrold. 2005. Speech Acts. In Laurence L. Horn and Gregory Ward (eds). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, 53–74. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Searle, John R. 1979. *Expression and meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, John R. 1992. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press .
- Smith, Barry (ed). 2003. *John Searle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sperber, Dan and Deirde Wilson. 1981. Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction. Radical Pragmatics. In P. Cole (ed). *Radical Pragmatics*, 295–318. New York: Academic Press.
- Softpedia. Com. 2009. 'House M.D.' Season Premiere Pulls In Monster Ratings. Available at <http://news.softpedia.com/news/House-M-D-Season-Premiere-Pulls-In-Monster-Ratings-122443.shtml>, accessed April 22, 2010.
- Sorea, Daniela. 2009. Hyperbole and Irony as Sitcom Props. Available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/12536990/DANIELA-SOREAHyperbole-and-Irony-as-Sitcom-Props>, accessed November 24, 2009.
- Taylor, Christopher. 2000. The Subtitling of Film: Reaching Another Community. In E. Ventola (ed). *Discourse and Community; Doing Functional Linguistics*, 309–330. Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen. Available at <http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/citatal/documenti/trieste/subtitling.rtf>, accessed October 6, 2009.
- Utsumi, Akira. 2000. Verbal Irony as Implicit Display of Ironic Environment: Distinguishing Ironic Utterances from Nonirony. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32, 1777–1806.
- Werts, Diane. 2009. Fox's Medical Marvel Stays on Top. Available at <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117999278.html?categoryid=3530&cs=1>, accessed April 22, 2010.



## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

**Teivi Sälik**

**Verbaalse iroonia tõlkimine telesarja “Dr. House” eestikeelsetes subtiitrites.**

**The Translation of Verbal Irony in the Estonian Subtitles of *House M.D.***

Magistritöö  
2010  
Lehekülgede arv: 81

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev töö käsitleb verbaalset irooniat, keskendudes täpsemalt sellele, milliseid tõlkestrateegiaid on kasutatud Ameerika populaarses meditsiinidraamas sisalduvate irooniliste kõneaktide edasiandmiseks.

Töö teoreetiline osa seletab lahti verbaalse iroonia mõiste ning tutvustab kõneaktiteooriast lähtuvaid verbaalset irooniat käsitlevaid teooriaid. Lisaks vaatleb käesolev töö subtiitritele iseloomulikke tunnuseid ning tutvustab tõlkestrateegiate kogumit, mille kasutamist iroonia ülekandmisel analüüsitakse.

Töö praktiline osa analüüsib verbaalset irooniat sisaldavaid dialooge Ameerika telesarja “House M.D.” (“Dr. House” 2004–) kolmandast ja neljandast hooajast. Analüüs keskendub kontekstile, milles verbaalset irooniat kasutatakse ning vaatleb, milliste tõlkestrateegiate abil tõlkija televaatajatele näitab, et tegemist on verbaalse irooniaga. Töös vaadeldakse ka seda, kuidas subtiitrite poolt tekstile seatavad piirangud iroonia ülekannet mõjutavad ning kas subtiitrid annavad iroonilise kõneakti eesmärgi sama efektiivselt edasi kui originaalkeeles.

Analüüsi tulemused näitavad, et antud telesarja puhul ei ole inglisekeelses Põhja-Ameerika kultuuriruumis toodetud iroonia Eesti keelde ja kultuuri tõlkimine väga keeruline. Samas ilmneb, et tõlkija kasutab teatud irooniliste kõneaktide ülekandmisel järjepidevalt samu tõlkestrateegiaid. Kokkuvõttes näitas analüüs, et telepilt ning helid aitavad iroonia mõistmisele kaasa ja subtiitrite spetsiifilisest vormist hoolimata on verbaalse iroonia kultuuriline ülekanne enamasti edukas.

Märksõnad: verbaalne iroonia, kõneaktiteooria, subtiitrid, tõlkestrateegiad