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The translatability of humour from English into Setswana: *Madam & Eve* comic strips

by

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Dedication and acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my daughter. Thank you for your patience during this time and for inspiring me to select this topic; your funny personality and curiosity keep me on my toes. To my late mother, thank you for showing me that it is never too late to improve oneself, I know you would be proud of this milestone. I would like to thank God for granting me wisdom, insight, strength, and the opportunity to pursue a project like this during my lifetime.

I also want to thank everyone who guided and supported me through the process of my MA research project. Special thanks to my superior Prof Alice Leal, for your support, guidance, and patience. Your demand for high-quality work has opened my eyes and made me a better student and practitioner. I would also like to thank the eight participants (and those who wanted to participate but could not) who made this research project possible. Your contributions will forever be part of the translation field of study and aid future researchers.



“Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better, but the frog dies in the process.”
— E.B. White

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the research

Translation serves as a powerful force that connects individuals, communities, diverse ethnicities, and cultures, fostering unity. This is particularly significant in South Africa. This study aims to explore humour in depth, examining its relationship with translation studies and its cultural significance—specifically within the South African context, focusing on the interaction between English and Setswana.

The intersection of translation studies and humour has a rich and evolving history. Translation studies, as a formal discipline, began to take shape in the mid-20th century, focusing initially on literary and technical translations (Ghanooni, 2012, p. 78). The study of humour within this field emerged as scholars recognised the unique challenges it posed. Victor Raskin (1985, p. 100) while working with Salvatore Attardo, recognised that humour often relies on wordplay, cultural references, and context-specific nuances, making it particularly difficult to translate effectively. This led to theories such as the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) (Attardo, 2002, pp. 173 - 194) and the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humour, proposed by Victor Raskin in 1985 –both instrumental in understanding these complexities. Over time, the focus has expanded to include audiovisual translation, in which humour has been adapted for different media formats, such as film and television (Dore, 2019, p. 62). Current research delves into the ways humour can be maintained or modified across different languages and cultures, emphasising the evolving and multifaceted nature of translation studies (Zabalbeascoa, P. & Attardo, S., 2023, p. 20).

1.2 Defining humour

The *Macmillan English Dictionary for International Students* defines ‘humour’ as (i) the quality that makes a situation or entertainment funny; (ii) the ability to know when something is funny and to laugh at funny situations and (iii) someone’s mood, while the *Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary* defines humour as the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech. *The Official Setswana (Monolingual) Dictionary – Thanodi ya Setswana* defines Motlae or Metlae (humour) as (I) *Puo e e tshegisang e e buiwang go sa tiisiwa*, (ii) *mokgwa wa go*

tlaela kgotsa go tshegisa le (iii) *se se tshegisang* (back translations – (i) speech or language that is funny said in unserious ways, (ii) a funny way or to make one laugh and (iii) what is funny or laughable.

In academic terms, humour is broadly defined as a phenomenon that includes anything perceived as funny, including jokes, puns, and comedic situations. It involves cognitive processes such as the recognition and resolving incongruities, whereby something unexpected or out of place is identified and then mentally resolved, often leading to amusement, as stated by Emiliussen *et al.* (2021, pp. 1 - 6). Couder (2019, p. 19) adds that theories of humour, such as the Incongruity-Resolution Theory, highlight this cognitive aspect, suggesting that humour arises when there is a discrepancy between what is expected and what occurs, which is then resolved surprisingly or cleverly. Moreover, humour can be seen as a social and communicative activity that fosters positive emotional reactions and social bonding, as Heintz and Hofmann (2020, p. 8) reaffirm. It also includes various forms like satire, irony, and wit, each with its unique mechanisms and effects.

Further, Ford *et al.* (2016, p. 2) also provide yet another viewpoint, stating humour can be understood as a recurring tendency, a skill, a disposition, an artistic reaction, a perspective, a way of interpreting the world, a means of managing challenges, or a protective strategy. Additionally, Scheel and Gockel (2017, p. 9) maintain that humour is seen as a communicative activity that ideally leads to laughter, while also encompassing the ability to produce, recognise, and appreciate humour and to use it as a coping strategy.

1.3 South African humour

South African humour has a rich and complex history, deeply intertwined with the country's sociopolitical landscape. During the apartheid era, humour served as both a tool of resistance and a means of survival. Comedians like Pieter-Dirk Uys used satire to critique the oppressive regime, often through characters such as Evita Bezuidenhout, who highlighted the absurdities of apartheid. Donain (2021), in *The Overview of Comedy in South Africa*, suggests that despite strict censorship laws, humour became a way for people to express dissent and cope with the harsh realities of segregation and discrimination. This period also saw the rise of Leon

Schuster, whose films used slapstick comedy to subtly address racial tensions and societal issues.

Post-apartheid, South African humour has continued to evolve, reflecting the country's ongoing struggles and triumphs. Comedians like Trevor Noah have gained international acclaim, using their platforms to discuss issues of race, identity, and politics with a uniquely South African perspective. Humour remains a powerful tool for social commentary and reconciliation, helping to bridge divides and foster a sense of shared identity. Today, South African comedy is celebrated for its ability to tackle serious issues with wit and resilience, making it an integral part of the nation's cultural fabric (Donain, 2021, p. 3).

South Africans have welcomed and developed humour across a wide range of forms and genres, showcasing its diversity and adaptability, including the humorous movies of Leon Schuster post-apartheid and the witty adverts of fast-food outlet Nando's (Mamatu, 2006, p. 9). This humour seems to bring South Africans together, strengthening their sense of unity. While laughter is a universal language, written jokes vary across linguistic boundaries. Can individuals from diverse language groups and cultures find common ground through shared laughter?

1.4 *Madam & Eve* comic strips

Enacted in 1996, the South African Constitution is widely recognised for its forward-thinking approach to human rights, particularly the right to freedom of speech and expression. Section 16 explicitly safeguards these liberties, ensuring that individuals can share their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs without the threat of censorship or retaliation. This provision is crucial for the arts, including comedy, as it provides a legal framework that supports creative expression and the critique of societal issues.

However, the Constitution also includes limitations to ensure that this freedom does not infringe on the rights of others, prohibiting hate speech, incitement to violence, and propaganda for war (van Vollenhoven, 2015, p. 2301). These limitations are essential in maintaining a balance between free expression and protecting individuals from harm.

In the field of comedy, these constitutional protections have significant implications. South African comedians are able to explore sensitive and controversial subjects, utilising humour as a means for social commentary and this freedom has enabled comedians like Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola to tackle issues such as race, politics, and inequality, often pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable discourse (Penfold, 2014, p. 294). However, the restrictions on hate speech ensure that while comedians have the freedom to express themselves, they must do so responsibly, avoiding content that could incite harm or discrimination. This balance aims to foster a vibrant and dynamic comedic landscape that contributes to the country's democratic and cultural development.

The South African Constitution, specifically Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights, affirms the right of individuals to use and express themselves in their preferred language. This chapter also outlines various freedoms, including those detailed in Section 16(1). For the purposes of this research, the emphasis is on freedom of expression, which encompasses freedom of the press and media, the ability to receive and share information or ideas, and the right to artistic creativity. This freedom invigorated South Africa, inspiring the creation and public sharing of stories without fear of censorship.

Following the democratic transition in 1994, television, radio, and print media began to feature more diverse and inclusive content with a local perspective. One notable example is *Madam & Eve*, a cartoon strip by Stephen Francis and Rico Schacherl, first introduced in 1992 and published in 13 South African publications. In 2000, it was adapted into a sitcom aired on SABC 2. The characters in *Madam & Eve* reflect the South African experience, particularly during the early democratic era. These include Madam (typically associated with a white female employer in South Africa), her housekeeper Eve, Madam's European mother Gwen, and Joe, the garden assistant. More recently, Thandi, Eve's cousin, has joined the cast. The most compelling aspect of the cartoon is how the characters interact, offering a humorous take on navigating everyday challenges in South Africa.

1.5 The English and Setswana languages

In 1994, South Africa embraced the concept of the Rainbow Nation, signifying the unification of diverse cultures that had long been divided under apartheid. This shift marked a new era in which all South Africans and their cultural identities were recognized as equal. Prior to 1994, the country had only two official languages—Afrikaans and English. However, with the advent of a new government, several indigenous languages—Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu—were granted official status, as outlined in the South African Constitution (1996, Chapter 1, Section 6(1).

With the inclusion of multiple languages, the need for translation and terminology development became increasingly important. To address this, the National Legislature established the Pan South African Languages Body (PanSALB) in 1995. This organization was tasked with promoting the growth and development of all official languages, ensuring they had appropriate and comprehensive terminology for use in key sectors such as law, education, healthcare, and science—equivalent to the resources available for English and Afrikaans, as mandated by Act 1 of 1995.

Among South Africa's official languages, this study focuses on Setswana, spoken by the Batswana ethnic group. According to the 2022 South African Census, the national population has reached 62 million, with 5.5 million (8.3%) being native Setswana speakers primarily residing in the North West, Gauteng, Northern Cape, and Free State provinces, as well as certain areas of Limpopo. Otlogetswe and Chebanne (2018, p. 102) highlight that Setswana is also spoken in Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, with significant linguistic development in literature, education, and politics dating back to the 1800s.

1.6 Issues related to the translation of humour

Dore (2019, p. 44) states that comedy attempts to replicate everyday language and situations. Most importantly, it considers the issues raised by the translation of humour in general by addressing the (im)possibility of transferring it across language and culture. The notion of "functional manipulation" is suggested to explain how humour translation is and can be done.

1.6.1 Linguistic and cultural issues

Translating humour involves significant linguistic challenges, primarily due to the cultural specificity of humour. Humour often relies on cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and wordplay that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. According to Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 18), translating humour necessitates a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures to accurately convey the intended comedic effect. For example, a pun that is funny in one language might completely lose its meaning when translated, as the wordplay might not exist in the target language. This cultural reliance makes it difficult for translators to preserve the original humour's impact, often requiring creative adaptation instead of a direct translation.

Another major issue is the difference in humour styles across cultures. What is considered funny in one culture might not be perceived the same way in another. Vandaele (2010, p. 149) highlights that humour can be deeply rooted in cultural norms and societal values, which vary significantly across different regions. For example, sarcasm and irony, which are prevalent in some cultures, might be misunderstood or even offensive in others. Translators must navigate these differences carefully to preserve the humour’s intent without alienating the audience. This often involves finding equivalent expressions or crafting new jokes that resonate similarly with the target audience while maintaining the original humour’s spirit.

1.6.2 Agency issues

Agency in translation denotes the ability of translators to make autonomous choices and decisions throughout the translation process. This notion underscores the proactive role of translators as intermediaries who mould the final text based on their comprehension, interpretation, and cultural background. Agency underscores that translators are not merely passive channels but active contributors who shape the meaning and reception of the translated material, this is outlined by Long (2020, pp. 168-192).

Agency issues in translating humour often revolve around the translator's role and the degree of creative freedom they possess. According to Vandaele (2010, p. 148), translators must balance fidelity to the source text with the need to adapt humour to the target culture. This balancing act can lead to agency issues, as translators might need to modify or even replace certain humorous elements to make them culturally relevant and understandable. Such decisions can be subjective and may not always align with the original author's intent, raising questions about the translator's authority and the extent to which they can alter the text while still maintaining its essence.

Another aspect of agency issues is the translator's responsibility to the audience. Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 18) notes that humour often relies on cultural references and wordplay that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Translators must decide whether to preserve the original humour, which might be lost on the target audience, or to create new humour that fits the cultural context but deviates from the source material. This responsibility can place significant pressure on translators, as their choices directly impact the audience's reception and understanding of the humour. The need to navigate these complex decisions highlights the intricate role of translators as cultural mediators and the agency issues inherent in translating humour.

1.7 Research objectives and research questions

This study endeavours to explore whether South African translators can effectively render a humorous text from English into Setswana while preserving its intended impact.

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

(i) To establish the adequacy of translation strategies in translating humorous texts (*Madam & Eve* comic strips) from English to Setswana.
(ii) To assess if the same humorous effect can be carried over from the English source texts to the Setswana target texts.
(iii) To investigate the culture and language-specific challenges in translating these humorous texts from English into Setswana.

1.8 Research framework

1.8.1 Theoretical framework for textual analysis

This study employs a dual approach: action research, which fosters collaboration between the researcher and language practitioners, and qualitative research, which focuses on gathering non-numerical data and observations for in-depth analysis.

1.8.2 Data collection

This study examines five selected comic strips from the *Madam & Eve* collection, a long-running publication with over 30 years in print. The texts were translated by eight professional Setswana/English translators, chosen for this study, each bringing different levels of experience to the translation process.

1.8.3 Data analysis

The *Madam & Eve* comic strips were analysed using Nord's model of Text Analysis, and the translations were analysed using the GTVH and Low's eight strategies for translating humour.

1.9 Ethical considerations

Maintaining ethical standards in research is essential for safeguarding participants and upholding the integrity of the study. This study follows key ethical principles, including informed consent, ensuring that participants are fully informed about the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and benefits before voluntarily agreeing to participate. All participants did so voluntarily without any coercion. Anonymity and confidentiality are ensured by protecting participants' identities and personal information. Additionally, minimising any potential harm to participants has been granted, whether physical, psychological, or social.

Furthermore, the researcher will communicate accurate results to avoid any form of misrepresentation. Participants have been selected fairly without any bias. Ethical approval was granted on 8 July 2024.

1.10 Contribution of the study

Studies on the translation of *Madam & Eve* from English to Setswana can significantly contribute to the existing body of research by providing insights into the complexities of translating humour across languages and cultures. *Madam & Eve*, a South African comic strip known for its satirical humour and cultural references, presents unique challenges for translators. By examining how these elements are adapted to Setswana, researchers can explore the strategies used to recreate the humour and cultural relevance in the target language. This can shed light on broader translation theories and practices, particularly in the context of African languages, which are often underrepresented in translation studies.

Furthermore, this research can broaden our understanding of the impact of cultural context on humour translation. It can highlight how translators navigate intricate cultural nuances and societal expectations to make humour relatable for Setswana-speaking audiences. Studies like this also aid in refining translation methodologies and tools, enriching the field of translation studies. By examining the challenges and solutions encountered in the translation process, researchers can provide insightful case studies that inform future translations of culturally rich, humour-driven texts.

1.11 Scope and limitations of the research

The results of the study do not represent the whole body of English/Setswana language practitioners but provide a guide for students, current practitioners in the field, and other researchers seeking to understand and translate humorous texts. The reader response to the translated text will not be tested in this study, given that priority will be given to the production of – rather than the reception of – humorous translations.

1.12 Organisation of the chapters

The present study consists of six chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the project and outlines what is expected. It provides an overview of the definition of humour, humour in South Africa in the dawn of a new era, the *Madam & Eve* comic strips, the English and Setswana language and their humour culture, and issues that relate to translation – linguistically and culturally. An outline of the research is also provided, and the research questions, objectives,

theoretical framework, data collection, and data analysis are explained. Ethical considerations, research contributions, as well as the scope and limitations of this study are discussed.

Chapter 2 contains a literature review, including (i) definitions of humour; (ii) definitions of translatability; (iii) theories, models, and hypotheses in the field of humour; (iv) existing data and empirical findings by previous humour translation researchers and (v) measuring instruments (questionnaires, scales, and indices) to ascertain the scope of humour translation.

In chapter 3, the *Madam & Eve* comic strips are analysed using Nord's model of text analysis in translation.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth examination of the research methodology employed in this study, covering its purpose, design, framework, and selected instruments.

Chapter 5 presents the findings and outcomes derived from the data analysis, including text analysis results and insights from the translated texts, evaluated through the proposed theories and strategies.

Chapter 6 summarises the key findings of the study, offering conclusions, recommendations for translators, and suggestions for future research.

In conclusion, a reference list and appendices are provided. The appendices include (i) eight translated texts, which contain five comic strips in the source text and columns of the script (source text) and the translations of each (target text); and (ii) consent forms from translators to use their translated works.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The translation of humour presents unique challenges due to its reliance on cultural nuances, wordplay, and context-specific references. This literature review delves into significant theories, methodologies, and case studies within translation studies, emphasising the challenges and techniques associated with translating humour.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Definitions of humour

The meaning of the term "humour" has shifted over time, transitioning from a physical to a psychological attribute. Initially, "humour" referred to bodily fluids (Lazzaro-Salazar, M., 2021). During the Middle Ages, humour was understood as a quirky or odd character trait and was brought to the stage by Ben Jonson between 1600 and 1627 (Scheel T. & Gockel C., 2017, p. 9). The evolution of humour is outlined in detail by Polimeni and Reiss (2006, pp. 347-366), who start with the basis that the shift towards an active use of the term “humour” was initiated by Morris in 1744, including the ability to perceive and depict the comic. McGhee (1972, p. 269) was one of the first to develop a full theory of humour, with humour becoming a matter of aesthetics. Establishing a genuine psychological perspective, Freud (1905, p. 8) described humour as the most economical form of comedy. He further emphasised that humour serves as the ultimate defence mechanism for reclaiming pleasure, highlighting its significance in psychotherapy by integrating jokes and humour into therapeutic practices.

Ruch *et al*. (1996, p. 323) reiterate that definitions of humour are manifold, depending on whether humour is seen as a communicative activity with positive emotional reactions in perceivers or as an individual trait-like sense of humour or cheerfulness in personality psychology research.

Today humour is seen as having multidimensional characteristics. Martin (2007, p. 133) summarises humour as (1) the ability to understand jokes and other humorous stimuli, (2) an expression of humour and cheerfulness, (3) the ability to make humorous comments or have humorous perceptions, (4) the appreciation of diverse

types of jokes, cartoons, and other humorous material, (5) the active seeking of sources that elicit laughter (e.g. comedies), (6) the memorising of jokes and funny anecdotes in life, as well as (7) the tendency to use humour as a coping mechanism. Thus, Martin (2007, p. 135) describes humour as a characteristic of a person rather than of a statement. Likewise, humour includes the ability to produce, recognise, and appreciate humour and to use humour as a coping strategy (Thorson, J. A., & Powell, F. C., 1993, p. 13) – a description that demonstrates circular reasoning. In line with the multitude of humour perspectives, the characteristics of humour vary, including surprise, incongruity, comprehension, and funniness (Aillaud, M. & Piolat, A. , 2012, p. 212). Furthermore, Martin (2007, p. 138) distinguishes four components of the humour process, that is, a social context, a cognitive-perceptual process, an emotional response, and the vocal-behavioural expression of laughter.

Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991, p. 215) emphasise the intentional use of both verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours that elicit positive responses, such as laughter and joy. Though the intention is not a crucial element in the definitions of humour, it is an appropriate characterisation of much of the instructional (and also organisational) humour examined so far. All these approaches view humour as a communicative activity, which ideally leads to laughter, but none of these definitions refer to what kinds of statements are humorous as compared with non-humorous (apart from the reaction of the audience). Ruch and Ekman (2001, p. 428) add that laughter is the most obvious behavioural expression of humour (or is rather caused by humour) and includes a distinctive behavioural pattern that also has psychophysiological correlates. Further, Ruch and Ekman (2001, p. 426) define laughter as a vocal and expressive signal used for communication. It involves specific breathing patterns, often characterised by short, rapid breaths, and produces unique sounds typically consisting of a series of vocal bursts.

There is no fully satisfactory comprehensive definition of humour. However, scholars agree that humour involves the communication of multiple, incongruous meanings that are amusing in some manner (Martin, 2007, p. 135). In the *Encyclopaedia of quality of life and well-being research,* Svebak defines humour as a “social phenomenon that is reflected in playful interaction and mirthful communication” (2014, p. 304).

2.2.2 Definitions of translatability

Translation is particularly challenging because it involves managing unpredictability, unlike comparative linguistics. While linguists focus on identifying general patterns of similarities and differences across language systems—such as grammatical structures and norms—translators must work with specific textual elements, including utterances that may defy standard conventions or introduce entirely new expressions (Zabalbeascoa, 2005, p. 24). As a result, every effort to define translation through fixed, universal principles has ultimately been unsuccessful.

Furthermore, Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 18) emphasises that numerous factors influence translation, many of which may still be undiscovered. The fundamental aspects of translation variables can be categorised into eight key points, outlining the complexities involved in the process as:

a. the language(s)/culture(s) one is translating from (including all aspects of language variation, such as dialects and registers);
b. the language(s)/culture(s) one is translating into and the purpose(s) and justification(s) for the existence of the translated version;
c. the nature of the text, including parameters such as textuality, genre, style and discourse;
d. the intended recipient(s), what they are assumed to be like, i.e., their needs and demands;
e. the expectation(s) for the translated text and prejudice towards translations and translators;
f. the translator(s): human (individuals or teams), fully automatic, or computer-assisted;
g. the conditions in which the task is carried out (deadline, materials, motivation, etc.); and
h. the medium, mode and means of communication: oral, written, audiovisual, private, mass media, etc.

Each of these variables can be considered individually or collectively, as not all texts are monolingual or serve a single purpose—for instance, multiple contributors may be involved in producing the final version. The translation of any textual element, whether a segment, function, form, or feature, is shaped by these factors. Given this level of variability, two complementary approaches could be particularly valuable for both scholars and translators. One approach, known as "mapping," involves identifying and analysing textual elements, such as instances of humour, by classifying them into relevant categories like humour typologies. The other approach, "prioritizing," focuses on determining the key aspects of translation in each case, assessing their significance, and establishing clear criteria to guide translation choices. Both scholars and translators must evaluate the importance of the text alongside the relevance of different types of humour when making translation decisions. An oversimplified assumption would be to believe that humour must always hold the same level of importance in both the source and translated versions or that its nature should remain identical across both texts.

This suggests that translators, educators, and researchers working with texts that incorporate humour—particularly when it plays a significant role—would gain valuable insight from a "humour map." Such a resource would consist of classifications, definitions, and examples of different humour types, along with models and perspectives on humour in translation, including frameworks like those presented in the GTVH (Attardo, S., & Raskin, V., 1991); (Raskin, 1985) and Ruch *et al.* (1996). Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 188) believes that the majority of mapping out what is humour work should ideally be carried out by humour scholars. Translation researchers and translators can then use that work or ultimately decide which map to follow or whether they need to create their own mapping, and this would be based on a solid model.

2.3 Key authors who contributed to the field of humour translation

The following authors have laid the groundwork for understanding the complexities of translating humour and continue to influence research in this dynamic field. Salvatore Attardo is known for his work on the GTVH alongside Victor Raskin. Attardo has authored numerous articles and books on the linguistic aspects of humour, including *The linguistics of humour: an introduction* (2023) and *Translation*

and humour: an approach based on the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), and *The translator* (2002). Victor Raskin is a pioneer in humour studies. He developed the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) and has extensively explored the intersection of linguistics and humour (Attardo, S., & Raskin, V., 1991, p. 297). This is relevant to this study as the Semantic Script Theory of Humuor will be used in the analysis of the Comic strips.

Delia Chiaro has written extensively on the translation of humour, particularly in audiovisual contexts. Her works include *Translation, humour and literature* and numerous articles on the subject that appear in Dore's 2019 *Humour in audiovisual translation: theories and applications (1st ed.).* Margherita Dore's work focuses on the audiovisual translation of humour, examining how humour is adapted in different media formats. She authored *Humour in audiovisual translation theories and applications* (2019). Dore synthesises key theoretical frameworks from both translation and humour studies to contribute to the development of research across these fields, providing concise analyses of wordplay and culturally specific references. The latter are important as they form part of this study.

Patrick Zabalbeascoa has contributed significantly to the study of humour in translation, particularly in audiovisual contexts. His research includes the classification of shifts in wordplay and strategies for translating humour as presented in, for example, *The Palgrave handbook of audiovisual translation and media accessibility* (Boguck,i Ł. & Mikołaj, D., 2020).

2.4 Theories, models, and hypotheses in humour translation

Vandaele (2002:150) claims that a dearth of research and work on humour translation makes it evident that this type of translation differs from other forms of translation, and that humorous texts differ from other types of texts. Gabriella (2020, pp. 68-83) supports this by stating that translating humorous texts might not be the priority of most translators and students. However, she also believes that the strategies, recommendations, and analyses of humour translation constitute a subfield of inquiry regarding jokes, wordplay, and irony, which, in turn, should be taught and included in the training of translators. Furthermore, this subfield of translation studies is one of the few that have produced working guidelines and

frameworks to analyse the adequacy of a translated text – namely the GTVH (Attardo, 2001), and eight strategies for translating humour (Low, 2011).

Vandaele's 2002 special issue of *The Translator—Translating Humour*—features contributions from multiple authors, exploring diverse aspects of humour translation. This collection provides a strong foundational framework for future researchers, shaping key discussions within the subfield. In the introduction, "(Re-) constructing humour, meaning and means" (pp. 149-172), Vandaele explains that in grasping and replicating humour, translators adeptly demonstrate a common practical understanding of it. In "Funny Fictions" (pp. 267-302), Attardo's chapter, entitled "Translation and Humour: An approach based on the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)" (pp. 173-194), outlines and identifies the six parameters that contribute to humour, whereas Antonopolou's "A cognitive approach to literary humour devices: Translating Raymond Chandler" focuses on the cognitive aspects of humour in literature, particularly in the context of translation (pp. 195-220). This approach combines insights from cognitive linguistics with the GTVH framework to analyse how humour is constructed and understood in literary texts.

Vandaele's above-mentioned works with other authors significantly contributes to the study of humour by providing a comprehensive foundation for research in humour translation. He explains that translators, by grasping and replicating humour, demonstrate a practical understanding of it. This sets the stage for a deeper exploration of humour translation. This collection of works not only highlights the interdisciplinary nature of humour translation but also provides valuable methodologies and theoretical perspectives that enrich our understanding of humour as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, and the basis of this study.

2.4.1 Nord's model of text analysis in translation

Christiane Nord's model of text analysis in translation is a cornerstone in the field of translation studies, offering a structured approach to understanding and interpreting both source and target texts. This model is particularly valuable for its emphasis on both extratextual and intratextual factors, which together provide a comprehensive framework for translators (Hwang, 1994, p. 90).

Nord's model of text analysis in translation (Nord, 2005) is rooted in functionalist translation theory, which prioritises the purpose of the translation. This approach is influenced by the works of Reiss, Vermeer, and Holz-Mänttäri. The primary goal of the functional approach is to ensure that the translation fulfils its intended function for the target audience while maintaining loyalty to the source text and its author, as stated by Reiss and Vermeer (2013, pp. 88 - 92).

Nord's model of text analysis in translation (Nord, 2005) looks at extratextual factors, which are elements outside the text that influence how it should be translated. These factors help translators understand the broader context in which the text was created and will be received. The eight extratextual factors are as follows:

- The sender or text producer is the author or originator of the text. Understanding the sender's background, expertise, and perspective can provide insights into the text's tone and style (Nord, 2005, pp. 47-52).
- The sender's intention can be to inform, persuade, entertain, or instruct, for example. Identifying the intention helps in determining the appropriate translation strategy (Nord, 2005, pp. 53-56).
- The audience may be referred to as the "receiver", and factors such as age, cultural background, and education level play a pivotal part. The expectations of the audience are also crucial for tailoring the translation (Nord, 2005, pp. 57-61).
- The medium or the channel through which the text is delivered could be print, digital, or oral. The medium can affect the structure and style of the translation (Nord, 2005, pp. 62-66).
- The place of communication is the geographical and cultural setting where the text is produced, and the place where it will be received. This factor influences the cultural references and localisation needed in the translation (Nord, 2005, pp. 67-69).
- The time of communication is the time (era) and context of the production, including the historical period or current events at the time of the text's creation and reception. This can affect the relevance and interpretation of certain content (Nord, 2005, pp. 70-73).

- The motive is the reason behind the text’s creation, such as responding to an event, fulfilling a need, or achieving a specific goal. Understanding the motive can guide the translator in preserving the text’s intent (Nord, 2005, pp. 74-77).
- Text function is how an intended communicative function of a text or text segment should guide the translation method. Nord identifies four basic functions: the referential function, which relates to the content or subject matter of the text; the expressive function, which conveys the sender's emotions or attitudes; the appellative function, which aims to influence the receiver's behaviour or response; and the phatic function, which focuses on establishing or maintaining communication. By understanding these functions, translators can better grasp the purpose of the source text and choose appropriate strategies to convey the same functions in the target text, ensuring that the translation fulfils its intended communicative purpose (Nord, 2005, pp. 77-82).

Intratextual factors are elements within the text that need to be analysed to understand its meaning and structure. These factors ensure that the translation accurately reflects the source text’s content and style. The eight intratextual factors are as follows:

- The subject matter is crucial for producing an accurate and functional translation. This involves examining the content, context, and purpose of the text to ensure that the translation conveys the intended meaning in the target language. Nord's methodology includes analysing both extratextual factors (such as the sender, audience, and medium) and intratextual factors (such as the text's structure, style, and terminology) to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Nord, 2005, pp. 93-97).
- The content typically means the text's reference to objects and phenomena in an extralinguistic reality, which could be either a fictional world or the real world. This reference is primarily conveyed through the semantic information embedded in the text's lexical and grammatical structures, such as words and phrases, sentence patterns, tense, and mood. These structures work together to complement each other, reduce ambiguity, and create a coherent context (Nord, 2005, pp. 98-104).

- The presuppositions refer to the background knowledge and assumptions that the text makes about its audience. Recognising these presuppositions is essential for ensuring that the translation is comprehensible and relevant to the target audience (Nord, 2005, pp. 105-109).
- The text composition is the structure and organisation of the text, including its layout, headings, and sections. Understanding the composition aids in maintaining the coherence and flow of the translation (Nord, 2005, pp. 110-117).
- Non-verbal elements play a crucial role in understanding and conveying the full meaning of a text. These elements include body language, facial expressions, gestures, and other forms of non-verbal communication that accompany spoken or written language. Nord emphasises that translators must consider these non-verbal cues to accurately interpret the source text and effectively convey its meaning in the target language (Nord, 2005, pp. 118-121).
- The lexis refers to the vocabulary and terminology used in the text, which includes technical terms, jargon, and colloquialisms. Accurate translation of lexis is crucial for preserving the text meaning and tone (Nord, 2005, pp. 122-128).
- The sentence structure pertains to the complexity and construction of sentences (Nord, 2005, pp. 129-130).
- The suprasegmental features are stylistic and rhetorical features of the text, such as tone, register, emphasis, and rhythm (Nord, 2005, pp. 131-138).

Nord's model of text analysis in translation (Nord, 2005) is practical and widely used in translator training. It provides clear criteria for text classification and guidelines for assessing translation quality. By systematically analysing both extratextual and intratextual factors, translators can make informed decisions that enhance the accuracy and functionality of their translations.

2.4.2 Descriptive translation studies

Descriptive translation studies (DTS) is a branch of translation studies that emphasises the empirical study of translations as they occur in real-world contexts.

This approach, which gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, was significantly influenced by scholars like Gideon Toury and Itamar Even-Zohar. Unlike prescriptive approaches that dictate how translations should be done, descriptive translation studies aim to describe and understand translations as they are, focusing on the norms and conventions that govern translation practices in diverse cultures and historical periods (Rosa, 2016, pp. 94-104).

Rosa (2016) notes that one of the core principles of DTS is its target-oriented nature. This means that DTS focuses on the target text and its function within the target culture, rather than on merely comparing it to the source text. This shift in focus allows researchers to explore how translations are received and function within the target culture, considering factors such as cultural norms, audience expectations, and the socio-political context. By doing so, it provides a more nuanced understanding of the role and impact of translations.

Recently, Brighi (2024, p. 8) added that DTS is characterised by its interdisciplinary approach. It often intersects with fields such as cultural studies, sociology, and literary studies, enriching the analysis of translations with insights from these disciplines. This interdisciplinary nature allows these studies to explore the complex interactions between translations and the broader cultural and social systems in which they operate.

Pradita (2016, pp. 52-66) outlines the main types of research in DTS as (i) product-oriented, (ii) function-oriented, and (iii) process-oriented studies. Product-oriented studies examine the translated texts, analysing their features and comparing them to the source texts. Function-oriented studies investigate the role and impact of translations within the target culture, exploring how they influence and are influenced by cultural and social norms. Process-oriented studies focus on the cognitive processes involved in translation, examining how translators make decisions and solve problems during the translation process. This latter type/method is suitable for this research study as it draws from what translators do instead of prescribing what they should do.

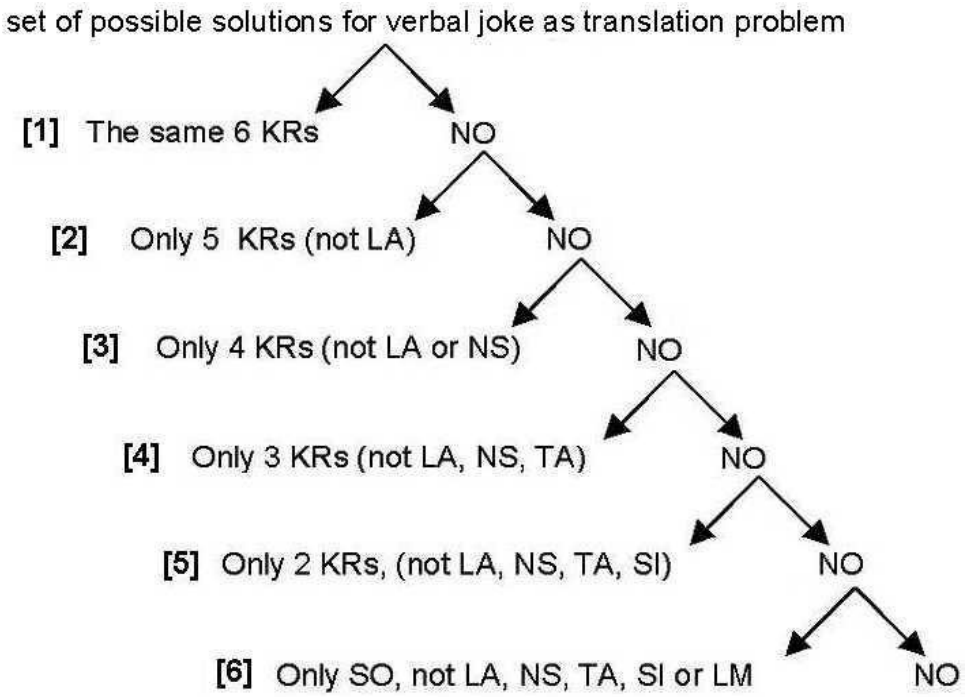
Toury (1995, pp. 10-12) claims that DTS has significantly reshaped the field of translation studies by shifting the focus from prescriptive rules to a more descriptive and empirical understanding of translations. Examining translations in their cultural

and historical contexts provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of translation practices and their impact on both source and target cultures. This approach has not only broadened the scope of translation studies but also highlighted the importance of understanding translations as part of larger cultural and social systems.

2.4.3 The General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)

Attardo and Vandaele have made substantial contributions to the study and theories of humour translation. In 2001 and 2002, Attardo introduced the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), which is applicable to a wide range of text types. This framework has served as a foundation for extensive research into humour translation and the analysis of humorous texts in recent years. The theory consists of six key parameters, referred to as knowledge resources: (1) *Language (LA)*—encompassing all the information required for verbalising a text; (2) *Narrative Strategy (NS)*—defining the structural organization of the text; (3) *Target (TA)*—an optional element related to the text's focus; (4) *Situation (SI)*—acknowledging that humorous texts or jokes typically revolve around a particular subject; (5) *Logical Mechanism (LM)*—responsible for resolving incongruities within humour; and (6) *Script Opposition (SO)*—which involves two conditions: (a) the text must be partially or fully aligned with two distinct scripts, and (b) these scripts must contrast with each other while simultaneously overlapping within the given text.

Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 18) demonstrates the above theory in the graph below, as well as the way it can be used in evaluating a text.



Graph A

2.5 Existing data and empirical findings in humour translation research

Xia, Amini, and Lee observed that factors such as language and the translation framework—specifically dubbing—could lead to the loss of comedic elements in the original text. Their study focused on the animated series *SpongeBob SquarePants*, concluding that fully preserving and transferring humor in this context is not entirely achievable. They emphasized that for a more precise and insightful analysis, larger datasets and broader samples would be necessary to refine conclusions (2023, pp. 1-33).

Abu-Rayyash (2024, p. 1) took the translation of humorous phenomena to another level – in this case a platform beyond human translation. He sought to investigate whether human translators were experiencing cultural and linguistic challenges in translating humour, and whether artificial intelligence (specifically GPT-4) could experience the same challenges or if the software would do a better job. The results of his investigation showed that GPT-4 produced “impressive” narratives that bridge cultural and language divisions that “echo the original’s spirit”. This would be useful for future studies and might give human translators some insight into what to do and what not to do in humour translation.

Britten (2016, p. 1), in her Masters report, drew attention to the *Madam & Eve* cartoon strips and its conflicting humours. Although her research did not focus on translation, it remains highly relevant to this study as it provides valuable insight into the cultural context being examined. Her report explored how South Africans perceive humour differently from the rest of the world and how it has played a key role in uniting a once-divided nation—allowing people to find laughter and lightheartedness even in serious matters.

Zhong (2024) explores the types of humour found in both the original Chinese text titled *Wo Yao Zuo Hao Hai Zi***,** by Beijia Huang, and translated English text *I Want To Be Good*, translated by a British sinologist Nicky Harman in 2021, as well as the methods Harman uses to make these humorous elements appealing to English-speaking young readers. By applying the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), the study examines the linguistic and cultural aspects of humour translation. The article highlights the humorous impact achieved in translation and the translator's approach to balancing domestication and foreignization, by emphasizing that the foreign quality of a translation is not solely a matter of language but also stems from cultural concepts, objects, and narratives embedded in the text. Harman challenges the idea that a translator should remain "invisible" when working with languages and cultures vastly different from English in order to achieve fluency and naturalness in English. Translators must actively adapt the text by explaining cultural references, restructuring sentences, and refining the overall flow. This approach positions the translator as a creative rewriter rather than a passive conveyor of meaning. This may apply to most languages, including the translation of English-language texts to Setswana. Through the analysis of rhetorical devices, such as exaggeration, parallelism and metaphors; and culture-specific items, such as traditional customs and references, the article shows that Harman selectively retains culturally rich images familiar to the target audience while using substitutions or omissions to improve readability. These are some of the strategies suggested by Low as well (2011). The article concludes by suggesting further research into humour in other literary genres like poetry, non-fiction, fiction, folklore, drama and media. The latter includes comics and drama, which apply to this study (pp. 1-16).

Zabalbeascoa (2023), In Chapter 1 of the book *Transmedial Perspectives on Humour and Translation From Page to Screen to Stage,* pointed out that contextual factors that hinder proper humour translation include shared knowledge or features, language specificity, and private occasions for jokes. Regarding diverse cultures, the two authors noted that people of various cultural identities might have different humour appreciation mechanisms; hence, they might respond to the same joke differently. Besides specifying these two humour translation barriers, this volume also proposes tentative solutions (pp. 13-32). Vandaele (2023) proposed in Chapter 3 of the same book that translators need to be fully aware of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the source texts, and the subjectivity of humour appreciation, which can help them identify and appreciate the humour. In addition to such broad stroke guiding principles for humour translation, this volume also incorporates specific strategies (pp. 52-68).

In Chapter 5, Maher (Vandaele, 2023, pp. 88-107) recommended a practical approach for humour translation: incorporating notes to explain the cultural connotations or contexts of the words and phrases intended to trigger laughter from readers. She argued that this translation approach can facilitate the translation of humour because it explains the elements that trigger laughter which might be otherwise be overlooked. Further, she noted that the intersemiotic translation of humour is a much less-covered topic in previous humour studies. The humour translation refers to the interpretation of humour across different media modalities

2.6 Setswana and humour studies

There has been some interesting research on Setswana literature, including on humorous texts. One to mention is the 1996 narratological study by Maserame Maria Letsie analysed short stories by B.D. Magoleng and S.A. Moroke, focusing on thematic and stylistic aspects. This study explored various elements, such as characterisation, space, and focalisation, which are crucial in understanding the humour and cultural context in Setswana literature (Letsie, 1996, pp. 1-59).

Additionally, the development of Setswana literature has been influenced by its oral traditions, which often include humour as a key component. This oral heritage

continues to shape modern written literature, providing a rich field for scholarly interest (Otlogetswe, T. & Chebanne, A., 2018, p. 188).

Boya (2023) highlights common themes in Setswana humour that often revolve around everyday life, social relationships, and moral lessons (pp. 1-14). These themes are the following:

(i) Family dynamics: Humour in Setswana often explores the interactions within families, highlighting generational gaps and the humorous misunderstandings that arise from them.

(ii) Animal folktales: Many Setswana humorous texts draw from traditional folktales, especially those involving animals like the hare (mmutla). These stories often use the cleverness and trickery of animals to reflect on human behaviour and societal norms.

(iii) Proverbs and figurative language: Setswana humour frequently incorporates proverbs (diane) and other forms of figurative language. These proverbs often use animals and everyday objects to convey deeper meanings and moral lessons humorously.

(iv) Social commentary: Humour is also used as a tool to comment on social issues, such as moral degeneration and societal changes. By using humour, these texts can address serious topics in a way that is engaging and thought-provoking.

These themes not only entertain but also provide insights into the cultural values and social norms of the Setswana-speaking community.

The translation of humour into Setswana constitutes a significant research gap, primarily due to the intricate interplay between language, culture, and humour. While there has been considerable research on Setswana literature and its oral traditions, the specific focus on translating humour remains underexplored. This gap is partly because humour is deeply embedded in cultural contexts, making it challenging to translate without losing its essence. Translators must navigate cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and societal norms that are unique to Setswana, which are often not directly translatable into other languages.

Additionally, the lack of comprehensive frameworks for translating humour in Setswana literature highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine insights from cultural linguistics, translation studies, and humour theory. Current studies often focus on either linguistic or cultural aspects in isolation, but translating humour effectively requires an integrated approach that considers both. Developing such frameworks could provide valuable tools for translators and contribute to a deeper understanding of how humour functions across diverse cultural contexts. Addressing this research gap would not only enhance the translation of Setswana humour but also enrich the broader field of translation studies by providing insights into the translation of cultural-specific humour.

Chapter 3 – *Madam & Eve*

3.1 Introduction

Madam & Eve is a literary work classified as a comic that originated in South Africa. It was first published in 1992 by Stephen Francis, Rico Schacherl, and Harry Dugmore. The main characters in the comic strip are Madam, Gwen Anderson, who is a typical white South African woman; Eve, who is Madam's domestic worker; Mother Anderson, who is Gwen's mother; and Thandi, Eve's cousin who lives next door. The comic strip aims to address issues and the transition of South Africans from apartheid into the Rainbow Nation in a humorous way. The daily comic strips were published in 13 publications (newspapers) that were predominately read by the white South African elite at the time (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

3.2 Nord's model of text analysis in translation

Christiane Nord's model of text analysis in translation is used to analyse the *Madam & Eve* comic strip as it has had a significant contribution to translation studies, particularly within the functionalist approach. It aims to provide criteria for the classification of texts for translation The key features of Nord's text analysis in translation functional approaches are extratextual and intratextual factors, as noted earlier. Nord emphasises the importance of the function of the source text in the translation process and argues that understanding the intended function of the text is crucial for producing an effective translation (Nord, 2005, p. 77).

This text analysis involves analysing both extratextual factors – by enquiring about the author or sender of the text (who?), the sender's intention (what for?), the audience the text is directed at (to whom?), the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?), the place (where?) and time (when?) of text production and text reception, and the motive (why?) for communication – and intratextual factors – by enquiring about the subject matter of the text (on what subject matter?), the information or content presented in the text (what?), the knowledge presuppositions made by the author (what not?), the composition or construction of the text (in what order?), the non-linguistic or paralinguistic elements accompanying the text (using which non-verbal elements?), the lexical characteristics (in which words?) and syntactic structures (in what kind of

sentences?) found in the text, and the suprasegmental features of intonation and prosody (in which tone?) (Nord, 2005, p. 131). She also pays special attention to intercultural communication, highlighting that the function of a text can only be assigned by the recipient in the act of reception.

Nord's approach is dynamic and context-sensitive, making it a valuable tool for translators aiming to balance fidelity to the source text with cultural adaptation. Intratextual factors are elements within the text itself that influence its meaning and how it should be translated.

3.2.1 Extratextual factors

a. Author or sender of the text (who?)

Not all texts bear an author's name – those are non-literary texts. Even in those instances, a sender is or must be identified. Nord states that a sender and text producer may be used interchangeably, but they are not always the same person. An example may be that the sender of a text is a company, but the text developer is someone in the marketing department. In addition, a translator may also be viewed as a text developer (Nord, 2005, p. 47). What is crucial is the information that is relevant to the translator, and what effect it will have on the translation.

As mentioned in section 3.1, the creators of the *Madam & Eve* comic strip are Stephen Francis, Rico Schacherl and Harry Dugmore. Francis was born in the United States in 1949 and moved to South Africa in 1988. He initially worked on a satirical magazine called *Laughing Stock* before co-creating *Madam & Eve* in 1992. Francis is known for his sharp wit and keen observations of South African society, which are reflected in the comic strip. He has also worked on various other writing projects and is a well-regarded figure in South African media (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

Rico Schacherl, known professionally as Rico, was born in Austria in 1966 and moved to South Africa at the age of 12. He has been drawing cartoons since he was a child and pursued a career in cartooning after studying graphic design and architecture. Besides *Madam & Eve*, Rico has worked on numerous illustration

projects for corporate communications, magazines, and educational materials. The third founding member is Harry Dugmore who is a native South African born in 1961. He was instrumental in the business side of the *Madam & Eve* partnership until he left in 2001. Dugmore has continued to work in media and education, contributing to various projects in South Africa (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

b. The sender's intention (what for?)

Nord starts by distinguishing between "intention, function and effect". The latter two will not be discussed here. The intention is the point of view of the sender, in terms of what they intend on achieving. This is important as it determines the structuring of the text and its communication purposes.

The senders (creators) of the comic strip aim to entertain while also providing social and political commentary. The comic uses humour and satire to address serious issues, making them more accessible and engaging for readers (Nord, 2005, p. 53).

c. The audience the text it is directed at (to whom?)

In translation-relevant approaches, the addressee takes precedence. It is also to be noted that there are two target audiences at play – the source-text audience and the target-text audience. These two audiences are different in terms of background, language, culture, and maybe educational level and geographical location. In some cases, the medium may also differ. The intention of the sender is the same for both target audiences (Nord, 2005, p. 57).

The target audience of *Madam & Eve* includes South Africans from various backgrounds who can relate to the social and political issues depicted. The comic's humour and satire are tailored to resonate with this diverse audience. It appears in newspapers that are predominately read by white South Africans – it is syndicated in 13 publications and claims a daily readership of over 4 million people. The strip was first published in July 1992, in a black and white weekly format in *The Weekly Mail* and a monthly colour format in *Living* magazine. In 1993 the creators added five daily cartoons, also in black and white (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

d. Medium or channel

"Medium" refers to the means or vehicle that carries or transmits the message to the receiver and in communication theory "channel" refers to the sound waves or print paper (Nord, 2005, p. 63).

The medium through which *Madam & Eve* is published – whether in newspapers or online – significantly influences its content, presentation, and audience engagement. In newspapers, the comic strip is typically limited to a specific space, often a single strip or a few panels. This constraint requires the creators to be concise and impactful, delivering humour and commentary efficiently within a limited format. Newspaper publication schedules (daily or weekly) influence the timing and topicality of the content. The creators often align the comic's themes with current events, making it relevant and timely for readers. Newspapers have a broad and diverse readership, including people who may not actively seek out comics online. This wider reach helps the comic engage with a more varied audience, including those who might not be regular internet users. The physical presence of the comic in newspapers means it can be part of readers' daily routines, often read over breakfast or during commutes. This habitual engagement can create a loyal readership (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

The internet provides a global platform, allowing *Madam & Eve* to reach an international audience. This broader reach can introduce the comic's themes and humour to readers outside South Africa, increasing its impact and popularity. Online platforms often provide archives of past strips, allowing new readers to catch up on previous content and long-time fans to revisit favourite strips. This accessibility enhances reader engagement and loyalty.

Online platforms enable quicker responses to current events, allowing the comic to stay highly topical and relevant. This immediacy can enhance the comic's satirical edge. With fewer space constraints online, the creators can delve deeper into complex issues, providing more detailed commentary and richer storytelling. Online publications can offer higher-resolution images and more vibrant colours, enhancing the visual appeal of the comic. By leveraging the strengths of both newspapers and online platforms, *Madam & Eve* can effectively reach and engage a

diverse audience while maintaining its sharp, humorous commentary on South African society.

e. Place of communication (where?)

There are two places to investigate: the place of text production (where it was made), and the place of reception (where it will be consumed/received). Nord notes that these refer to space in connection with certain media but cannot be necessarily seen as the medium. The comic is set in South Africa and reflects the country's unique social, political, and cultural landscape. The setting is integral to the comic's themes and humour, providing context for the interactions between characters (Nord, 2005, p. 67).

It incorporates local slang, cultural references, and specific South African contexts, making the humour accessible and relevant to its audience. This localisation helps to address racial dynamics in a way that resonates with readers. By using humour and satire, *Madam & Eve* provides a platform for discussing serious issues related to race and society in a way that is engaging and thought-provoking. It encourages readers to reflect on their perceptions and the ongoing journey towards equality and understanding in South Africa.

Some *Madam & Eve* artwork has been showcased in galleries, including an exhibition at the Caisa Gallery in Helsinki, Finland. The comic has also gained international recognition, with reviews and features appearing in several prominent publications, such as a *New York Times* article by Bill Keller on April 5, 1993, a *Washington Post* piece by Paul Taylor, coverage in France's *Liberation* in 1994, and an article in *The Economist* in 1997. Their cartoon collection books have been published in Denmark, France, and Sweden, and some cartoons are occasionally reprinted in a comics magazine in Norway (Francis, S. & Schacherl, R., 2024).

f. Time of communication (when?)

The dimension of time influences directly or indirectly the dimensions of the sender. The dimension of time encompasses not only the time of source text production and reception, but also that of target text production (the translation) and reception. The original communicative situation, as well as the intercultural

communicative situation, is determined by its respective temporal contexts (Nord, 2005, p. 70).

The comic has been running and produced since 1992, a period that saw significant changes in South Africa, including the end of apartheid and the transition to democracy. The comic strip has continued production for over 30 years and has experienced the dawn of democracy and South Africa's language policy changes.

g. Motive for communication (why?)

The issue of motive stems from why the text was produced. Different text types are often used to tell the motive of the sender of the text. A vocative (advertisement) text's motive is to evoke action from the receiver, whereas an expressive text's motive is the expression of the sender's emotions (poem) (Nord, 2005, p. 74). Whether this motive is achieved is subjective and cannot be measured. The same applies to the *Madam and Eve* comic strip: the motive may be viewed differently by both the sender and the receivers.

h. Text function

The primary function of *Madam & Eve* is to entertain, thus giving it an expressive function that stems from emotions and attitudes of the writers, while the secondary function may be an appellative function, which aims to influence the receiver's behaviour or response. This serves to provoke thought and discussion about social and political issues in South Africa. The comic's humour often carries deeper messages about equality, justice, and societal norms. *Madam & Eve* addresses racial dynamics in South Africa through humour and satire, providing a lens to explore the complexities of post-apartheid society (Nord, 2005, p. 77).

3.2.2 Intratextual factors

a. Subject matter

This refers to the topic or theme of the text. Understanding the subject matter is crucial for ensuring that the translation accurately conveys the intended message (Nord, 2005, p. 93). It primarily focuses on the relationship between a middle-class white woman, Gwen Anderson (referred to as "Madam"), and her black

housekeeper, Eve Sisulu, as they navigate the social and political changes in post-apartheid South Africa. The key themes and subject matters addressed in the comic strips are the following: (i) Post-apartheid South Africa – the comic explores the dynamics of a society transitioning from apartheid to a more inclusive democracy. It often highlights the challenges and absurdities of this period. (ii) Social and racial issues – the interactions between *Madam & Eve* reflect broader social and racial issues, often using humour to address serious topics like inequality, prejudice, and cultural differences. (iii) Political satire – the strip frequently pokes fun at political figures and events, both within South Africa and internationally. It has targeted various South African presidents as well as global figures like Donald Trump and Jacob Zuma (see Comic strip 4). (iv) Everyday life and humour – beyond political and social commentary, the comic also delves into the everyday lives of its characters, using humour to depict their quirks and the mundane aspects of life (Bradfield, 2012, pp. 529-545).

An example of subject matter is found in Comic strip 5. Madam might be seen trying to adopt new cultural practices to fit into the changing society, while Eve cleverly finds ways to benefit from Madam's often misguided efforts. This dynamic not only provides humour, but also subtly critiques the complexities of social integration and adaptation.

b. Content

This includes the information and ideas presented in the text. It involves analysing what is explicitly stated as well as any implied meanings. The content includes the dialogues, actions, and interactions between the characters (Nord, 2005, p. 98) Comic strip 1's explicit message in the dialogue is about the cast of the daily soap "Generations" being fired due to wage demands, and the *Madam & Eve* cast questioning and realising that they have also been working for free. The implied message is that sometimes a public problem can make one aware of an issue that is closer to home. Comic strip 2's explicit message is about Thandi's curiosity to know more about euphemism, but to her grandmother's surprise, she discovers that it was just a trick to get away and cover up Thandi she was called to the principal's office. The implied message is that one may use euphemism or words to hide or cover something that is unpleasant.

Comic strip 3's explicit message shows Thandi seeking help with coming up with a South African calendar that mirrors the Chinese calendar. The implied message may be that people need not copy other culture's customs but rather create and embrace their own. Another implied message may be that the elderly may possess useful information to share with the younger generation. Comic strip 4's explicit message refers to an American plumber Joe sharing his perspective on the similarities between plumbing and South African politics and, at the end, one discovers that it is a political advert intended to renew or fix the ANC's image. The implied message is that one can always restart or fix a ruined public image with the right tools (media campaign). Comic strip 5's explicit message is of Eve demanding to be paid more wages and Mrs Robertson doing Eve's duties (badly). The implied message is to take advantage of a situation while it is at play.

c. Presuppositions

These are the assumptions or background knowledge that the text assumes the reader has. Recognising presuppositions helps in making the text accessible to the target audience (Nord, 2005, p. 105). The comic assumes that readers have some background knowledge of South African history and politics. For instance, jokes about political figures or historical events rely on the reader's familiarity with these topics to be fully appreciated.

d. Text composition

This factor looks at the structure and organisation of the text, including how it is divided into sections, paragraphs, and sentences. It also considers the use of headings, subheadings, and other organisational tools (Nord, 2005, p. 110). The strip is typically composed of a series of panels that tell a short, self-contained story. The layout, sequence of events, and visual elements all contribute to the overall narrative and comedic effect. Linguistic features include the following:

(i) Language and dialects – the comic often uses a mix of English and South African vernacular, reflecting the diverse linguistic landscape of South Africa.

(ii) Syntax and grammar – the dialogue is typically informal and conversational, mirroring everyday speech patterns.

(iii) Pragmatics – the use of humour, irony, and satire is prevalent, often to comment on social and political issues.

(iv) Narrative structure – each strip usually follows a simple narrative arc, with a setup, conflict, and punchline.

(v) Repetition of themes, characters, and settings helps maintain coherence across different strips.

e. Non-verbal elements

These include images, graphs, charts, and other visual aids that accompany the text. Non-verbal elements can significantly impact the interpretation and translation of the text. Visual elements such as facial expressions, body language, and background details play a significant role in conveying humour and meaning amplifying the humour and making the social commentary more impactful (Nord, 2005, p. 118). This is demonstrated in Eve's exasperated looks or Madam's clueless expressions add depth to the dialogue. In a typical *Madam & Eve* strip, one might find Eve making a sarcastic remark about a current political event, using colloquial language that resonates with the South African audience.

f. Lexis

This refers to the choice of words and phrases used in the text. It involves analysing vocabulary, terminology, and any specialised language or jargon. The choice of words and phrases is tailored to reflect the characters' personalities and the socio-political context (Nord, 2005, p. 122). The language used in *Madam & Eve* highlights cultural and social differences of the characters, which enhances the comic's satirical tone. In comic strip 4, for example, Joe the Plumber uses plumbing related terminology to address political issues happening at the time of publication, for example "Well, let's be honest. Politics can often be a sewer! So I say – maybe it was time to unclog the pipes!!"

g. Suprasegmental features

These are elements such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and punctuation that affect how the text is read and understood. They can influence the tone and emphasis of the text. Elements like punctuation, emphasis, and timing are crucial in the comic strip. For instance, the use of ellipses, exclamation marks, and bold text can indicate pauses, excitement, or emphasis, adding to the comedic timing and delivery (Nord, 2005, p. 131). In comic 5, for instance, all the elements in the comic contribute to the

humour. The phrase “Strike while the iron is hot” is supported by the actual hot steaming iron held by Mrs Robertson and Eve’s protesting in the picture. In South Africa, to protest is to strike or “toitoi”. Therefore, without looking or taking into consideration the all the elements in the comic, a translator might miss the humour intended here or provide literal translation. Also, throughout comic strip 1, Madam’s facial expression indicates shock or surprise, and in the last block of the comic strip the use of bubbles show her thoughts.

By analysing these intratextual factors, translators can gain a deeper understanding of the source text and make more informed decisions about how to translate it effectively. This method ensures that the translation remains both precise and well-suited to the intended audience and cultural context.

3.3 Other translation factors

3.3.1 Cultural and linguistic nuances

The comic’s humour is deeply rooted in South African culture, politics, and social dynamics. Translating these elements requires a deep understanding of local nuances to ensure the jokes and satire resonate with the target audience. It often includes references to South African history, politics, and everyday life. Translators need to ensure these references are preserved or appropriately adapted to maintain the comic’s relevance and impact.

South Africa is a multilingual country with 12 official languages. Translating the comic into different languages can help reach a broader audience, but it also requires careful consideration of regional dialects and idiomatic expressions.
The relationship between *Madam & Eve* is central to the comic’s appeal. Translators must capture the essence of their interactions and the underlying social commentary to ensure the translated version retains its original charm.

3.3.2 Potential challenges

Humour can be particularly challenging to translate, as it often relies on wordplay, cultural references, and timing. Translators need to be creative and sensitive to these aspects to ensure humour is effectively conveyed.

Striking the right balance between staying true to the original content and adapting it to suit the target audience's cultural context is crucial for the success of the translation. Overall, a well-executed translation of *Madam & Eve* will be well received in South Africa, provided it respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of its audience and maintains the comic's unique humour and social commentary.

3.4 Reasons for choosing *Madam & Eve*

The decision for selecting the *Madam & Eve* comic strip for this translation study is the work's rich cultural and social context. Translating this comic strip does not only involve linguistic challenges but also the task of preserving the cultural nuances and satirical elements that are central to its humour.

Madam & Eve is renowned for its ability to address serious social issues through humour, making it a valuable subject for studying the translation of humour. The comic's use of satire to navigate and critique societal changes provides a rich source of material for examining how humour can be effectively translated across cultures and can gain insights into the complexities of translating humour, including the need to balance fidelity to the original text with the cultural adaptation necessary to make the humour resonate with a different audience.

Chapter 4 – Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and data analysis techniques used in this study on the translation of humour in the *Madam & Eve* comic strip. It begins with an overview of the research design, followed by a description of the data collection methods. The chapter then explains the data analysis techniques employed to interpret the collected data. Ethical considerations and potential limitations of the study are also discussed.

The research design for this study is qualitative, using an action research approach to investigate the translatability of humour from English to Setswana in the *Madam & Eve* comic strip. This design was chosen to capture the nuances and cultural references inherent in the humour, which are crucial for understanding the effectiveness of the translation.

The data collection involved selecting five comic strips of *Madam & Eve* in the original language – English. The strips were chosen at the researcher's discretion and the presence of humour that relies on cultural context, wordplay, puns, time, and visual gags. This method was selected to provide a comprehensive dataset for analysing the translation of humour.

A data analysis was conducted using Attardo's GTVH Model and Low's eight strategies for translating humour, which can be applied to most text types (Low, 2011, p. 57). A comparative analysis was also done, which focused on examining the differences and similarities between the original and translated versions. This dual approach allowed for a detailed examination of how humour is preserved or altered in translation.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. The study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the respectful and accurate representation of the original content.

4.2 Research design

The study adopted a dual approach: action research, which fosters collaboration between the researcher and language practitioners, and qualitative research, which focuses on gathering and analysing non-numerical data and observations.

Coghlan (2007) explains action research as a qualitative approach, that is a dynamic and participatory research design that emphasises collaboration between researchers and participants to address real-world issues. This method involves a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation of interventions. He further states that by engaging participants actively in the research process, action research not only generates rich, context-specific data but also empowers those involved, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes. This approach is particularly effective in settings where understanding complex social dynamics and implementing practical solutions are essential. Through its iterative nature, action research ensures that the findings are both relevant and actionable, leading to meaningful and sustainable change.

4.2.1 Participatory action research and practical action research

George (2023, p. 12) stated that participatory action research emphasises that participants should be members of the community being studied, in this case the English/Setswana community of language practitioners, empowering those directly affected by outcomes of said research, i.e. the Batswana language consumers. In this approach, participants act as co-researchers, with their firsthand professional experiences playing a crucial role in shaping the research process.

Practical action research focuses more on how research is conducted and is designed to address and solve specific issues. This method does not feature in this research. The above-mentioned approaches are meant to answer the research question and assist the researcher in reaching their objectives.

4.2.2 The research question of this study

Can South African translators adequately translate a humorous text from English to Setswana, while maintaining the effects of the text?

In both translation and communication studies, a disconnect exists between the originator of a message (source text) and its recipient (target text), highlighting the challenges in accurately conveying meaning across different languages and contexts. Lai *et al.* (2023, pp. 1398-1402) states that this gap is called noise, and this noise can be cultural, intellectual, institutional, or even social. Traditionally, this would fall upon the translator to redress. In translating humorous texts, the lay understanding and definition of translation become a little inadequate. Catford (1965, p. 20) states that translation is “the replacement of textual material in one language [source language (SL)] by equivalent textual material in another language [target language (TL)]”. This definition bears truth in translating certain text types in which strictly linguistic and semantic features are in the spotlight. Vandaele emphasises that humorous texts involve more than just language and meaning; other factors must also be considered. The intentions of both the sender and receiver, as well as the impact of each version of the text, may differ. Furthermore, the context in which the text is interpreted can vary for both the sender and the audience, influencing how humour is perceived and understood (2002, p. 163). The question raised in this study remains pertinent: “Can the humorous *effects* of a text be translated”? Even after preserving the original wording, can translators successfully recreate the punchline or retain the wordplay? It is important to consider that the effectiveness of a punchline or wordplay is not solely reliant on the translator's skill and the translated text but also on the audience's knowledge and understanding. However, the latter aspect falls outside the scope of this study.

4.2.3 The research objectives

(i) To establish the adequacy of translation strategies in translating humours texts from English to Setswana

Attardo (2001) and Vandaele (2002) have contributed immensely to research and theories of humour translation. In 2001 and 2002, Attardo developed the General

Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) theory, which can be applied to most text types. The GTVH theory has been the backbone of much of the research on humour translation and analyses of humorous texts in recent years, as mentioned in chapter 2.4.2.

Low (2011, p. 57) claimed that it is a betrayal for a translated joke *not* to elicit a smile or laughter. For this purpose, he suggested the following eight strategies:
(1) Delivery followed by preparation, whereby punch lines are translated first.
(2) Compensation in kind, meaning that translators can use other forms of verbal humour.
(3) Compensation in place, meaning inserting a funny, witty allusion in the next sentence.
(4) Dilution, referring to translating a certain number of puns with a lesser number of puns.
(5) Explication, meaning that in some cases a one-liner can be better translated in the form of a two-liner.
(6) An exaggeration of a joke.
(7) Signalling, meaning mentioning the existence of a joke instead of translating it.
(8) Substitution, referring to the use of a humorous text with different meanings but equally funny.

These strategies will be applied to assess the translated versions of selected *Madam & Eve* cartoon strips, determining their suitability within the South African cultural and linguistic context.

(ii) To assess if the same humorous effect can be carried over from an English source text to a Setswana target text

Zabalbeascoa (2005, p. 5) asserts that some translators might miss a joke in a text because they might misunderstand it for a plain, literal text – especially in the case of puns or culture-specific jokes. However, humour is not a consequence of mere literal word meaning in a sentence or phrase. In other cases, translators might find themselves in a difficult position because jokes might be offensive or not relevant to the target audience.

(iii) To investigate the culture and language-specific challenges to translating humorous texts.

When translating humorous texts, it is essential to account for cultural taboos and language differences, as they significantly influence how humour is perceived and interpreted across different audiences. These factors can shape the effectiveness of a joke, requiring careful adaptation to ensure it remains relevant and engaging in the target language and cultural context. Batibo (2009, p. 102) asserted that the Batswana ethnic group's language comprises both fundamental vocabulary (lexical units) and culturally specific vocabulary, shaped by their environment and traditions. This principle also applies to various English-language cultures and their linguistic expressions. Since language and culture are inherently interconnected—one emerging from the other—cultural norms differ significantly across societies. Additionally, taboos present further challenges in this context, as they may be rooted in cultural, linguistic, or historical influences.

In Batswana culture, children are not expected to speak freely to adults, as illustrated in a selected *Madam & Eve* comic strip where Thandi, a young girl, openly disrupts an elderly woman, Gwen, and asks uncomfortable questions. Additionally, the Batswana rely on euphemisms and idioms to address culturally sensitive topics—body parts and functions, for instance, are not referred to by their literal names but rather through indirect expressions, whereas English tends to use direct terminology.

Another challenge in translation arises from the incompatibility between Setswana and English vocabularies. Over time, Setswana, like many South African languages, has had to borrow words from English and Afrikaans to describe foreign concepts and objects that were not originally part of its cultural and linguistic framework. Words for items such as computers and televisions, which did not originate in Africa, lacked direct equivalents in Setswana, leading to the adoption of borrowed terms from English. Otlogetswe and Chebanne discuss this phenomenon, highlighting how colonial efforts sought to re-intellectualise African languages (2018, p. 202).

4.3 Research procedure and data collection

4.3.1 The General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)

The GTVH was developed by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (1991), is a comprehensive framework for analysing how humour functions in language. This theory builds upon Raskin's earlier work, the Script-Based Semantic Theory of Humour (SSTH), by incorporating additional parameters that contribute to the creation and perception of humour. The GTVH posits that humour arises from the interplay of six key knowledge resources: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language. These elements work together to produce a humorous effect in verbal communication (Attardo, 2020, pp. 176 - 198).

Script opposition is the cornerstone of the GTVH, referring to the clash of two different scripts or interpretations within a joke. This opposition creates a cognitive dissonance that is resolved through humour. For example, a joke might juxtapose a mundane situation with an absurd or unexpected twist, leading to a humorous outcome. The logical mechanism is the reasoning that connects these scripts, often involving absurdity, irony, or exaggeration. This mechanism helps to bridge the gap between the conflicting scripts, making the humour comprehensible and enjoyable (Attardo, 2001, p. 7).

The remaining four knowledge resources further refine the humorous effect.
The situation provides the context or setting in which the humour occurs, grounding the joke in a relatable scenario. The target identifies the subject of the humour, which can range from individual to societal norms. The narrative strategy outlines the structure and delivery of the joke, while the language encompasses the specific wording and stylistic choices that enhance the humour. Together, these elements form a cohesive framework that explains how verbal humour is constructed and why it resonates with audiences. The GTVH is widely applicable, offering valuable insights into various forms of humour, from stand-up comedy to literary works and everyday conversations (Attardo, 2020, p. 176).

This study is based on a selection of five comic strips from the *Madam & Eve* collection, which has been published since 1992. The selection is based on the researcher's discretion and has elements of humour in them. The texts were

translated by eight (of 12) professional Setswana/English translators with varying levels of experience in the translation profession. The translators were all approached through email.

The following comic strips were used in the research (sent to translators for translation from English to Setswana). The GTVH will be used here to analyse these comic strips and establish their credibility as humorous text.

a. Comic strip 1 – Time-specific humour

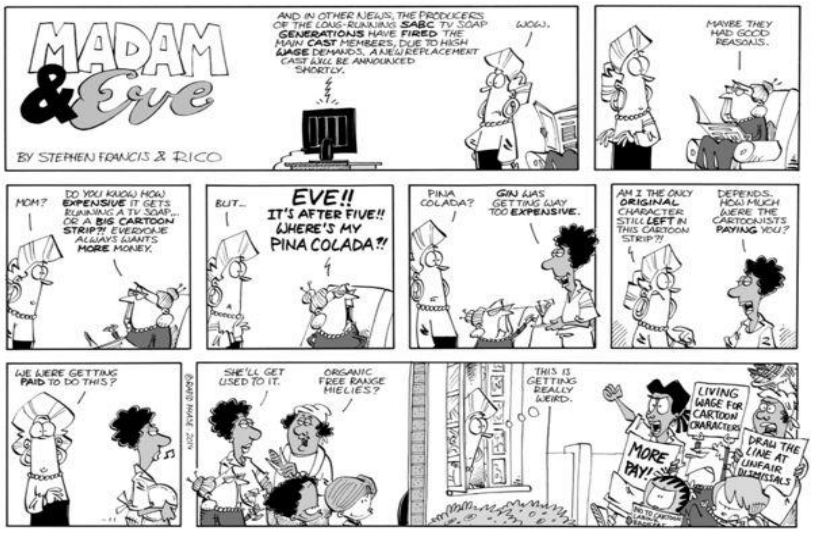


Figure 2

This comic strip was selected because the humour is time-based. Time-based humour refers to comedic elements that rely on the timing of delivery, temporal context, or pacing to be effective. This type of humour can include jokes that are relevant to current events, cultural references, or specific moments in time. The effectiveness of time-based humour often hinges on the precise moment a joke is delivered, the rhythm and speed of the comedic sequence, and the relevance of the humour to the audience's current experiences. These include jokes about latest news events or popular culture trends, are often time-sensitive, and may lose their impact as the context changes Dunbar *et al*. (2016, p. 130). In August 2014, executives fired 16 cast members of *Generations,* a popular South African soap opera due to payment increase demands (BBC, 2014). This comic strip highlights the issue that was taking place at that time while also finding an opportunity to make it humorous.

Analysis of Comic strip 1 according to the GTVH:

(i) Script opposition – Scripts: The comic contrasts the seriousness of wage disputes in the TV industry with the absurdity of the same issue affecting cartoon characters. (ii) Opposition: The humour arises from the unexpected and exaggerated scenario where cartoon characters discuss wage demands and job security, which is typically a human concern. (iii) Logical mechanism: The logical mechanism here is absurdity and exaggeration. The idea that cartoon characters are aware of their roles and concerned about wages is inherently absurd, creating a humorous effect. (iv) Situation: The setting is a typical domestic environment where the characters are watching TV and discussing the news. This familiar setting makes the humour more relatable and impactful. (v) Target: The primary target is the entertainment industry and its labour disputes and the readers of the newspapers the strip is published in – mainly white English-speaking South Africans. Secondary targets include the characters themselves, who are humorously portrayed as self-aware and concerned about their employment status. (vi) Narrative strategy: The strip uses a dialogue-driven narrative with a punchline at the end. The humour builds up through the conversation between the characters, culminating in a surprising and funny revelation. (vii) Language: The language is colloquial and conversational, making it accessible and relatable. The use of terms like “Pina Colada” and “Gin” adds a touch of everyday humour.

b. Comic strip 2 – Universal humour

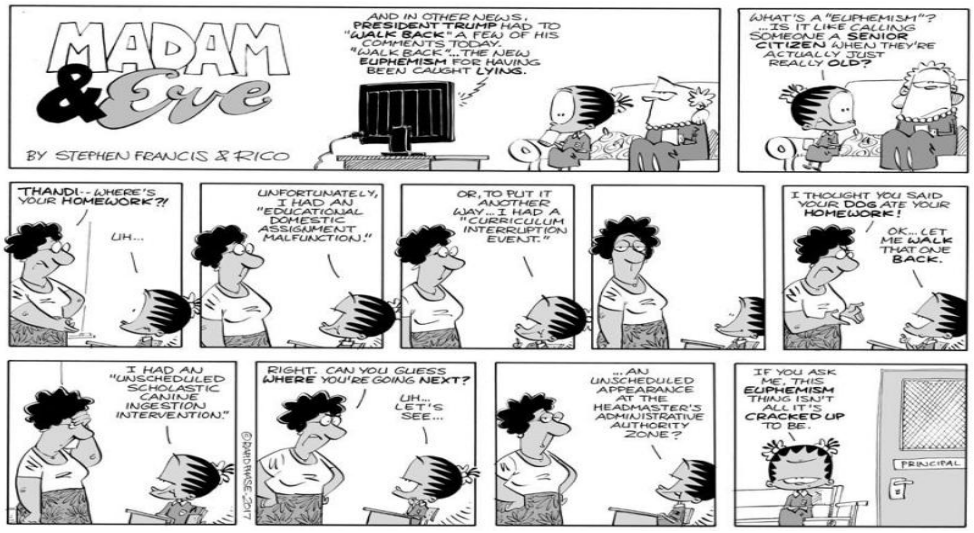


Figure 3

Universal humour refers to elements of humour that are recognised and appreciated across diverse cultures and societies. It often involves fundamental aspects such as incongruity, where there is a discrepancy between what is expected and what occurs, making it universally relatable by Ford *et al.* (2016, p. 1).

Sophia McClennen, author of *Trump was a joke*, discusses how political satire decoded the chaos of the American forty-fifth presidency. During Donald Trump's administration, several jokes and memes gained widespread popularity, often reflecting the political climate and public sentiment (Mcclennen, 2023, p. 78).

Analysis of Comic strip 2 according to the GTVH

Incongruity: The humour arises from the incongruity between the formal language used by Thandi and the simple reality of her excuses. Terms like "educational domestic assignment malfunction" and "curriculum interruption event" are overly complex and humorous because they contrast with the simple excuse of not doing homework. (i) Script opposition: The scripts of "truth" vs. "lying" are opposed here. Thandi's euphemisms are attempts to mask the truth, creating a humorous effect when she is caught. (ii) Logical mechanisms: The logical mechanism here is the use of euphemisms to obscure the truth. The humour is in the absurdity of the euphemisms and the eventual return to the simple truth.

c. Comic strip 3 – Culture-specific humour (South Africa)

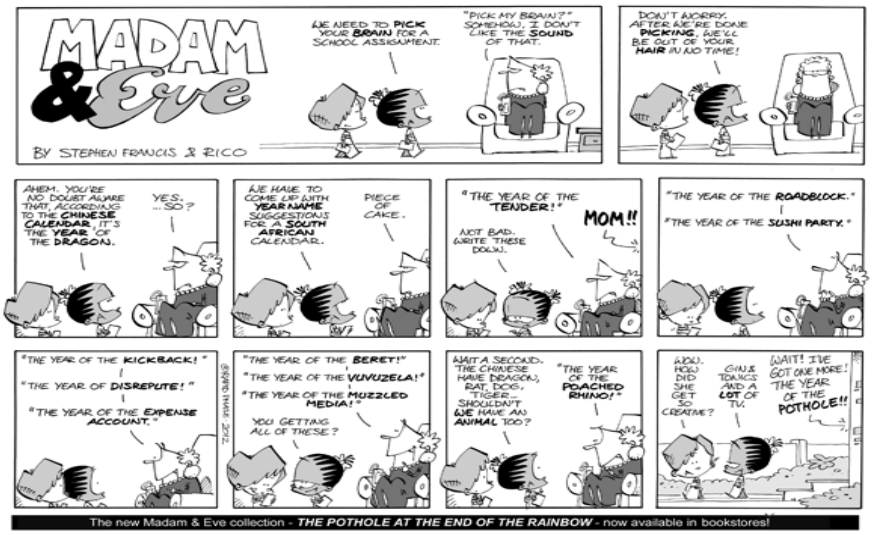


Figure 4

Cultural humour in South Africa has evolved significantly, reflecting the country's dynamic social and political landscape. During the apartheid era, humour was often used as a form of resistance and a way to cope with the harsh realities of segregation and oppression. Satirical performances and underground comedy provided a means for marginalised communities to voice their dissent and critique the regime (Roome, 1999, pp. 61-87).

Post-apartheid, the landscape of South African humour transformed dramatically. The end of apartheid in 1994 opened new avenues for expression, leading to a boom in comedy clubs, festivals, and media productions like sitcoms and films. The rise of digital platforms further diversified the comedic talent pool, allowing for a broader range of voices and styles to emerge.

In this comic strip, Thandi (Eve's niece) is asking Mrs Robertson to assist her in coming up with year names that suit a South African context, and the responses are things that only happen/happened in South Africa. This type of humour can only be understood by people who live in South Africa and understand the South African social and political landscape.

Analysis of Comic strip 3 according to the GTVH

Incongruity: Block 1: The phrase "pick your brain" is taken literally by Mrs Robertson, creating humour through the incongruity between the idiomatic expression and its literal interpretation. Block 5–10: The suggested names for the South African calendar, such as "The Year of the Tender" and "The Year of the Pothole," are incongruous because they are unexpected and humorous in the context of a calendar, contrasting with traditional Chinese zodiac animals.

(i) Script opposition – seriousness vs absurdity: The task of naming years in a calendar is serious, but the suggestions are absurd and humorous. This opposition creates a comedic effect. Literal vs figurative: The literal interpretation of idiomatic expressions like "pick your brain" and "out of your hair" contrasts with their figurative meanings, adding to the humour.

(ii) Logical mechanisms – wordplay and puns: The humour relies on wordplays, such as the literal interpretation of idioms and the creative, absurd suggestions for the calendar names. Cultural references: The suggestions for

the South African calendar names are humorous because they refer to specific cultural and political issues.

(iii) Situation (SI): The setting is a conversation between Thandi and Mrs Robertson about a school assessment and naming years on a South African calendar. The situation is familiar and relatable, enhancing the humour.

(iv) Target (TA): The humour targets the absurdity of bureaucratic language and the cultural and political issues in South Africa. It also gently pokes fun at Mrs Robertson's creativity.

(v) Narrative strategy (NS): The comic strip uses a dialogue-based narrative, with Thandi and Mrs Robertson exchanging lines. The progression from literal interpretations to absurd suggestions builds the humour.

(vi) Language (LA): The language is simple and conversational. The humour is enhanced by the clever use of language, such as "The Year of the Tender" and "The Year of the Pothole."

d. Comic strip 4 – Puns



Figure 5

A pun is a literary device that is also known as a "play on words." Puns involve words with similar or identical sounds but with different meanings. Their play on words also relies on a word or phrase having more than one meaning. Puns are generally intended to be humorous, but they often have a serious purpose as well in literary works (Shabo, 2024).

These are examples of some key elements of puns from Comic strip 4 are listed below:

- Double meanings – using words that have more than one meaning. For example, “And sure, it’s been leaked that the ANC Youth League can sometimes be a little childish ...”
- Homophones: Words that sound the same but have different meanings. For example, “that a big piece of the movement has broken off”.
- Homonyms: Words that are spelt the same but have different meanings. “For example, “…rather than throw a spanner in the works”.
- Wordplay: Clever manipulation of language to create a humorous effect. For example, “We can sanitise, flush out uncertainty and let democracy flow freely again.”
- Contextual humour: The pun often relies on the context in which it is used to be funny. The backdrop of all these puns is the plumber himself and every pun has one plumbing meaning and another relating to the African National Congress (ANC). In translation, the same double meaning, homophones, wordplay, and homonyms are replicated and understood by the target audience.

<u>Analysis of Comic strip 4 according to the GTVH</u>

(i) Script opposition (SO) – plumbing vs politics: The scripts of plumbing and politics are opposed. The plumber uses plumbing terminology to describe political situations, creating a humorous effect through this unexpected comparison.

(ii) Logical mechanism (LM) – puns and wordplay: The humour is based on puns and wordplay, using plumbing terms to describe political scenarios. This clever use of language draws parallels between the two domains, making the humour effective. The use of metaphorical language, such as “unclog the pipes” and “throw the babies out with the bathwater,” adds to the humour by creating vivid and unexpected images.

(iii) Situation (SI): The setting is a speech by a plumber, who is humorously addressing political issues using plumbing terminology. The situation is unique and adds to the humour.

(iv) Target (TA): The humour targets political situations and figures, using plumbing metaphors to critique and comment on political issues. It also targets the absurdity of political rhetoric.

(v) Narrative strategy (NS): The comic strip uses a monologue-based narrative, with the plumber delivering a speech. The progression from plumbing terms to political commentary builds the humour.

(vi) Language (LA): The language is rich in puns and metaphors, with plumbing terms used to describe political situations. The humour is enhanced by the clever and unexpected use of language.

e. Comic strip 5 – Puns and idioms and visual gags

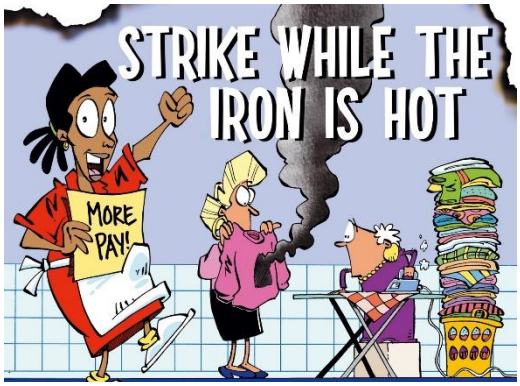


Figure 6

Shojaei (2012, p. 1220) says that idioms and fixed expressions are an inalienable part of each language found in most of the world's languages. The meaning of these collocations cannot be understood at the face-value meaning of the single words constituting them, therefore there are some problems in both processes of understanding and translating them.

In this comic strip, the translator must realise that the actions, pictures, and the idiomatic words, all come together to form a pun. If they only focus on the words, the translation might not be fitting.

<u>Analysis of Comic strip 5 according to the GTVH</u>

(i) Incongruity: The humour comes from the literal interpretation of idioms. For example, "Strike while the iron is hot" is taken literally, creating a humorous image.

(ii) Script opposition: The scripts of literal vs figurative meanings are opposed. The idioms are meant to be understood figuratively, but the humour comes from interpreting them literally.

(iii) Logical mechanisms: The logical mechanism is the play on idioms. The humour is in the unexpected literal interpretation of common phrases.

4.4 Selection of translators

In South Africa, there are several language societies, organisations and forums which bring together, and list language practitioners to build a community, exchange ideas, advertise conferences, and promote training, as well as for the general population to be able to find reputable language practitioners. The South African Translators Organisation (SATI) and the Professional Editors Guild (PEG) are two examples of such organisations that register freelancers. On the SATI website, there are 21 translators who translate in the English/Setswana language combination (Members | SATI (translators.org.za), whereas there are only two editors of the same language combination on the PEG's list (SAGE - South African Guild of Editors | (editorsguildsa.org). This pool is quite limited and not a true representation of the English/Setswana language practitioners pool, thus a purposeful selection of translators was done.

Purposeful selection is a technique widely applied in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002, p. 244). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced in a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, J & Plano, C., 2011, pp. 53-105). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002, p. 146) notes the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

Translators were selected from various workplaces ranging from the North-West University (honours students and lecturers), the provincial Department of Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation, The North West Provincial Legislature, PanSALB's Lexicography Unit (SEFALA), and freelance translators in the North West Province, Mafikeng City. They were sent emails requesting their participation in the study (see Appendix AA for the email content and consent form).

A total of 12 participants were selected and eight showed interest and consented to participate in the study. The selection criteria were based on the following: they should be of consenting age (18 years and above), both male and female

participants, they should be studying towards a translation or language qualification or have completed one, they should have at least one-year translation experience, and they should be proficient in English and be a native South African Setswana speaker (or studied the Setswana as a subject or course).

These are the consolidated demographics of the sample selected:

Personal age	#
18–25 years	1
26–35 years	2
36–45 years	0
46–55 years	4
56 and older	1

Table 1 - Age of participants

Gender	#
Male	2
Female	6
Do not want to disclose	
Years of translation experience	
0–3 years	3
4–10 years	1
11–15 years	1
16 –20 years	1
More than 21 years	2

Table 2 – Gender and translation experience

Select your two strongest working languages	#
English	8
Setswana	8

Table 3 - Language combinations

Highest formal education	#
Matric	0
Undergraduate	2
Honours degree	2
Master’s degree	3
PHD	1

Table 4 – Formal education

4.5 Duration of translations

The translators were sent consent forms and the texts for translation using the researcher's personal email address (Gmail). Emails containing the request to participate, the texts for translation and consent form were sent on 18 August 2024 with the deadline to return the translated text on or before 20 September 2024. In total that was 31 days. Translated texts were returned on 18 September 2024 and the last one was received on 5 October 2024, which is an average of six weeks.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in the research field involves principles and guidelines that researchers must adhere to ensure that their studies are conducted morally and responsibly. These guidelines aim to safeguard the rights, safety, and well-being of research participants, while also maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research. Guidelines may differ per field of study.

This research study involves human participants, and ethics approval was granted on 8 July 2024 as the following were considered and satisfied:

- Informed consent
  The translators were requested to fill in an informed consent form that confirms that their participation in the study is voluntary and thus no remuneration will be received nevertheless their participation in the study will add to the body of knowledge of translation studies.
- Privacy and confidentiality
  The data was collected and anonymised in the study and translation/translators are only referred to as Translation/Translator 1, Translation/Translator 2, etc. The data is stored in a password-encrypted folder (USB) that will be locked away in a cabinet for five years, after which the data will be deleted permanently.
- Fairness and equity
  Participants are not discriminated against by their gender, age, or race. The demographics indicated in the consent form do not influence nor factor in the data analysis of the translations.

- Use of deception
  Participants were informed of the purpose of the study in writing and may request the results at the end of this study.
- Use of vulnerable populations
  This study did not use children below the age of 18, pregnant women, people with mental incapabilities, animals, or prisoners.
- Conflict of interest
  The researcher does not have personal relations with the participants. The participants were only contacted by email, and no calls or face-to-face interactions were made that might coerce the participants. No remuneration was offered to the translators.
- Data manipulation
  The results of this study were presented as they are and not manipulated to support a particular outcome or agenda.
- Cultural sensitivity
  No values and beliefs were imposed on the participants.

4.7 Limitations of the study

The results of the study do not represent the entire body of English/Setswana language practitioners but will provide a guide for students, current practitioners in the field, and other researchers seeking to understand and translate humorous texts. The reader response to the translated text is not tested in this study, given that priority is given to the production of – rather than the reception of – humorous translations.

Chapter 5 – Data analysis

Peter Low's eight strategies for translating humour are relevant in today's globalised world and specifically to this study. These strategies provide translators with a toolkit to navigate the complexities of humour, which are deeply rooted in cultural and linguistic nuances. By employing techniques such as reproduction, replacement, compensation, and adaptation, translators can ensure that the comedic effect of the original text is preserved and resonates with the target audience. This is crucial not only for maintaining the integrity of the original work, i.e. the *Madam & Eve* comic strips but also for fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of humour. Low's strategies highlight the importance of creativity, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility in the translation process, making them indispensable for translators working in various fields, from literature and film to marketing and media (Low, 2011, p. 66).

These strategies will be used to analyse if the Setswana translators were able to recognise that they are translating a humorous text and not just an ordinary text, as Attardo (2020, p. 157) states, and use any of Low's strategies for translating humour. Part of each comic strip will be analysed by the eight translators using these strategies.

5.1 Delivery followed by preparation (reproduction of the same humorous effect)

The first strategy involves replicating the original humour as closely as possible. This requires finding equivalent expressions or jokes in the target language that evoke the same response from the audience. For example, a pun in English might be replaced with a similar pun in another language, ensuring that the humour is preserved. Low (Low, 2011, p. 60)says this strategy is often challenging due to linguistic and cultural differences, but it is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the original text.
Translation 2, Translation 3 and Translation 8 will be compared in Comic strip 3 (Blocks 1, 10) and Comic strip 4 (Blocks 7 and 8) with some back translation.

Comic strip 3 block 1: Source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Thandi: We need to pick your brain for a school assessment. *Mrs Robertson*: “Pick my brain?” Somehow, I don’t like the sound of that.	*Thandi*: A re bone gore a o tlhogo e ntsho *Mme Robertson*: Tlhogo e ntsho? Jang ke le tlhogo-putswa	*Thandi*: Let’s see if you are blackheaded. *Mrs Robertson*: Blackheaded? How when I am old?

Translator 8 reproduced the lines above with culturally equivalent phrases like “tlhogo ntsho” and “tlhogo-putswa” but in the process killed the joke. Culturally it is not respectful to call someone “old” thus the translator used “tlhogo-putswa” which directly means “Gray hair” and denotes “being wise”. Mrs Robertson saying “she does not like the sound of that” might also be seen in the Setswana culture as she expresses how she does not like how the children are disrespecting her. The challenge of balancing cultural appropriateness and maintaining humour is evident here.

Comic strip 3 block 1: Source text	***Translation 3***	***Back translation***
Thandi: We need to pick your brain for a school assessment *Mrs Robertson*: “Pick my brain?” Somehow, I don’t like the sound of that.	*Thandi*: Re tlhoka go nopola boboko ba gago go dira tlhatlhobo ya sekolo *Moh Robertson*: “Nopola boboko ba me” Ka tsela nngwe, ga ke rate ka moo seo se utlwalang ka teng.	*Thandi*: We need to pick your brain to do our schoolwork. *Mrs Robertson*: “To pick my brain” In a way, I don’t like how this sounds.

Translator 3 used a culturally appropriate phrase for “pick your brain” (nopola boboko ba gago) instead of translating directly. The semantics are transferred appropriately but the target audience might not get the same humorous effect as the source text.

Comic strip 3 block 1: Source text	***Translation 2***	***Back translation***
Thandi: We need to pick your brain for a school assessment *Mrs Robertson*: “Pick my brain?” Somehow, I don’t like the sound of that.	*Thandi*: Re tlhoka go utlwa dikakanyo tsa gago ka tiro ya sekolo *Mme Robertson*: Tlhopha dikakanyo tsa me? Ka gongwe ga ke rate ka moo o utlwalang ka gona.	*Thandi:* We need to hear your thoughts on your school work *Mrs Robertson*: Pick my thought? In a way, I don’t like the way you sound.

Translator 2 explained what “pick your brain” means “utlwa dikakanyo tsa gago” (hear your thoughts).

Comic strip 3 block 10: Source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Friend: Wow. How did she get so creative? *Thandi*: Gin & Tonic and a lot of TV. *Mrs Robertson:* Wait! I’ve got one more! “The Year of the Pothole”.	*Tsala*: Ijooo! Boitlhamedi jo bo kana *Thandi*: Ke ditiro tsa Gin & Tonic le go šeba TV thata *Mme Robertson*: Utlwang! Ke na le e nngwe gape! “Ngwaga wa Dikhuti”.	*Friend:* Ijooo! Such creativity. *Thandi:* It is the works of Gin & Tonic and watching a lot of TV. *Mrs Robertson:* Listen up! I have another one, the Year of Holes!

In the last part of this dialogue where Mrs Robertson says “Wait”, translator 8 used “listen up”, which sounds better in the target text.

Comic strip 4 block 7: Source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Plumber: And sure, it’s been leaked by the media that the ANC Youth League can sometimes be a little childish. But does that mean we should throw	*Plumber*: Ee, bobegakgang bo lomilwe tsebe gore ANC Youth League e na le go ipitika mo seretseng. Mme kana re a itse gore kgomo mogobeng e wetswa ke namane!!	*Plumber*: Yes, the media were told that the ANC Youth League often plays in the mud. But we all know that an elder is led into trouble by a child.

the babies out with the bath water?!		

The translation is done using culture-specific idioms and phrases – “ipitika mo seretseng” which means playing in the mud and that is equivalent to “childish” behaviour thus this idiom doubles up as a pun in the target text. “Kgomo mogobeng e wetswa ke namame” is a total reproduction from throwing babies out with bath water, the translator used “elders can be sometimes led stray by children”. This reproduction is done well and might resonate well with the target audience.

Comic strip 4 block 8: Source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Plumber: So I say…Let’s all stay level-headed. Rather than throw a spanner in the works, be a plumber’s helper! Let’s stay with the ANC that’s been a fixture for over 70 years!	*Plumber*: La me ke le…A re digeng makgwafo. Metsi a lekane dipota, nna mothusa rradiphaepe. A re emeng le ANC e e ntseng e le mo dipoteng tsa rona go feta dingwaga di le 70!	*Plumber*: This is my say ... let us calm down. All is enough, be the plumber’s helper. Let’s stand with the ANC which has been on our walls for over 70 years.

Translator 8 has also used idioms “diga makgwafo” and “metsi a lekane dipota”. These cultural phrases have reproduced the text with the hopes of maintaining the same humorous effect. “Metsi a lekane dipota” in its literal form here also doubles up in this context of the text being narrated by a plumber.

Comic strip 4 block 8: Source text	***Translation 3***	***Back translation***
Plumber: So, I say … Let’s all stay level-headed. Rather than throw a spanner in the works, be a plumber’s helper! Let’s stay with the ANC that’s been a fixture for over 70 years!	*Polamara*: Ka rialo… a botlhe re nne ka tlhogo tse di buduleng. Go na le go iphatlha ka mmu, nna mothusa polamara! A re re ka ANC seo e nnile sediriswa mo dingwageng di le 70.	*Plumber*: I say ... let’s all be level-headed (clever). Instead of blindsiding ourselves, be the plumber’s helper! Let’s say ANC has been a tool for 70 years.

Translator 3 also used idioms and cultural phrases to bring the text closer and more understandable to the target audience. “Go butswa tlhogo” literally means to have cooked heads, in this context. This might be humorous and cooking heads might seem like a political solution to the ANC. “Iphatha ka mmu” literally meaning “do not put soil in your eyes” might seem like great advice from a plumber (but he is there and might help you clean them up with his hose).

Reproducing and explaining the text is possible but reproducing the same humorous effect must be tested or judged by the target audience. Keep in mind that humour is subjective and does not always result in laughter.

5.2 Dilution (replacement with a different humorous effect)

When a direct translation is not feasible, Low suggests replacing the original humour with a different type of humour that fits the context and maintains the comedic tone. This strategy allows translators to adapt the humour to the target culture while preserving the overall effect. For instance, a culture-specific joke about American politics might be replaced with a joke about local politics in the target culture or context (2011, p. 66).

Comic strip 2 scene 6: Source text	***Translation 5***	***Back translation***
Gogo: I thought you said your dog ate your homework! *Thandi*: Ok. Let me walk that one back”.	*Gogo*: Ke itheile ka re wa re tirogae ya gago e tlhogile maoto! *Thandi*: Go siame... A ke ipoe motlhala.	*Gogo*: I thought you said your homework has grown legs! *Thandi*: It’s fine ... let me take it back.

Translator 5 replaces “a dog eating homework” with “the homework grew legs”. The dog eating the homework can give us something to blame but if we say it grew legs it means it just disappeared into thin air. Translator 5 attempted to give a different effect, but this might require a completely new humorous text of the same subject and context. Translators might consider this strategy only if they are given specific instructions or permission to do so and not translate at their discretion.

5.3 Compensation in place (compensation and omission)

Compensation involves introducing humour elsewhere in the text when a particular joke cannot be translated directly. This ensures that the overall comedic effect is balanced. On the other hand, omission is used sparingly when humour is deemed untranslatable or irrelevant to the target audience. While omission can sometimes lead to a loss of humour, it is necessary to avoid confusing or alienating the audience (Low, 2011, p. 67).

Comic strip 2 scene 10 – source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Thandi: If you ask me, this euphemism thing isn't all it's cracked up to be.	*Thandi*: Owai, phefofatso e ga e rekegele sepe.	*Thandi*: Really, this euphemism does not consider anything.

Translator 8 used the explanation ga e rekegele sepe (does not consider anything) instead of the phrase "cracked up". This gives the target audience a better understanding but takes away the "crack" (find out, denote) pun intended in the source text. The explanation "it does not consider anything" in the target culture means that it has no boundaries of respect.

Comic strip 4 scene 7: Source text	***Translation 7***	***Back translation***
Plumber: Sure, Jacob Zuma likes showers. Who doesn't? I'd take a monkey wrench to his plumbing anytime!	*Plumber*: Eya, Jacob Zuma o rata go tlhapa. Ke mang a sa rateng go tlhapa.	*Plumber*: Jacob Zuma likes bathing. Who does not like bathing?

This humour requires one to know about the former President's "shower" scandal which was published on the South African History Online (2006),consequently simply translating it as "Zuma like to bath" takes away the intended effect as the main point of reference here is "shower".

The translator also omitted the sentence that follows without any reason. This would have been an opportunity to use a footnote or comment section giving a reason for the omission.

5.4 Explication (addition and explanation)

Low (2011, p. 68) also discusses the addition of humorous elements that were not present in the original text to enhance the comedic effect in the target language. This requires a deep understanding of the target culture's humour. Additionally, explanation involves adding footnotes or parenthetical explanations to clarify jokes or humorous references that might not be immediately understood by the target audience. This strategy helps bridge cultural gaps and ensures that the humour is accessible.

Comic strip 4 scene 3: Source text	***Translation 2***	***Back translation***
Plumber: Now, I'm sure many of you feel that at the moment the ANC may be going down the drain.	*Plumber:* gajaana, ke na le bonnete jwa gore bontsi jwa lona lo akanya gore ka nako eno ANC e mo mathateng.	*Plumber:* Currently, I am sure that most of you think the ANC is in trouble.

Translator 2 instead of the phrase "down the drain", explained it as "being in trouble". The explanation is correct but the pun of down the drain applying to both the plumber and the ANC is taken away. This now only applies to the ANC and not the plumber's context.

Comic strip 4 scene 10: Source text	***Translation 8***	***Back translation***
Man 1: The "Vusi the plumber campaign" We can be up and running by next week. *Man 2:* I like it.	*Man 1:* "Letsholo la Vusi Rradiphaepe" Re ka tsena mo tirong beke e tlang *Man 2:* Utlwa ge.	*Man 1*: "The Vusi the Plumber campaign" We can start working next week. *Man 2*: That's it – I feel it.

Man 2 says “I like it” and translator 8 uses a phrase that resonates better with the target audience “That’s it – I feel it”.

Comic strip 3 block 2: Source text	***Translation 4***	***Back translation***
Thandi: Don’t worry! After we’re done picking, we’ll be out of your hair in no time!	Thandi: O se ka wa tshwenyega! Fa re sena go fetsa go go utlwelela, re tlaa bo re sa tlhole re go tshwenya!	Thandi: Do not worry! When we are done listening to you, we will not bother you anymore!

Translator 4 explains “picking your brain” as listed and “out of your hair” as not bothering you anymore, which is a good translation but does not have any humorous effects on the target audience. The effect comes from Mrs Robertson being concerned about her brain being “picked” and Thandi “being in her hair”. Being listened to, would not spark any concern as translated in the target text.

Comic strip 1 block 1: Source text	***Translation 7***	***Back translation***
TV: And in other news, the producers of the long-running SABC TV soap *Generations* have fired the main cast members due to high wage demands. A new replacement cast will be announced shortly. *Mrs Anderson*: Wow.	*TV:* Mo dikgannyeng tse dingwe, batlhagisi ba kgangtswelelopele ya SABC TV ya Generations, ba kobile badiragatsibagolo ba le batlhano ka ntlha ya gore ba ne ba batla dituelo tse di kwa godimo. Ba ba tlaa tsenang mo boemong jwa bone ba tlaa itsesiwe mo nakong e e sa fediseng pelo. *Mrs Anderson:* Ijoo.	*TV:* In other news. The producers of the SABC TV series *Generations* have fired five of the main characters because they wanted higher payments. Those who will replace them will be announced shortly. *Mrs Anderson*: Wow.

Translator 7 added that five characters were fired, which is not mentioned in the source text. A footnote or comment would have been helpful to explain this addition.

5.5 Compensation in kind (literal translation and adaptation)

Literal translation involves translating humour word-for-word, which is effective when the humour is based on universal concepts. However, this strategy can sometimes fall flat if the humour relies on language-specific nuances. Adaptation, on the other hand, involves changing cultural references to something more familiar to the target audience. This ensures that the humour resonates well with the new audience and maintains its intended effect.

Comic strip 3 blocks 1 & 2: Source text	***Translation 6***	***Back translation***
Thandi: We need to pick your brain for a school assessment *Mrs Robertson*: “Pick my brain?” Somehow, I don’t like the sound of that *Thandi*: Don’t worry! After we’re done picking, we’ll be out of your hair in no time!	*Thandi*: Re tshwanetse go tseela boboko jwa gago tlhatlhobo ya sekolo *Mme Robertson*: “Tsaya boboko jwa me?” Ka tsela nngwe, ga ke rate kgang eo *Thandi*: Se tshwenyege! Fa re feditse go bo tsaya, re tlaa bo re dule mo moriring wa gago ka ponyo!	*Thandi*: We must take your brain for schoolwork. Mrs Robertson: Take my brain?” In a way, I do not like that issue. *Thandi*: Don’t worry! When we are done taking it, we will be out of your hair in the blink of an eye.

Translator 6 used literal translation with these phrases – pick your brain going go tseela boboko (take your brain) and we will be out of your hair being re tlaa tswa mo moriring wa gago (get out of your hair). These literal translations work well in this context as they still give the desired shock reaction from Mrs Robertson that Thandi intended.

Comic strip 4 block 3: Source text	***Translation 4***	***Back translation***
Plumber: Now, I’m sure many of you feel that at the moment the ANC may be going down the drain.	*Mothudi wa diphaepe:* Jaanong, ke na le bonnete jwa gore bontsi jwa lona lo akanya gore ka nako eno	*Plumber:* Now, I am sure that most of you think that the ANC is properly flowing with the water!

Plumber: A big piece of the movement has broken off, and is currently flowing in the wrong direction.	ANC e ka tswa e elela le metsi *Mothudi wa diphaepe:* Gore karolo e kgolo ya motsamao e kgaogane, mme gone jaanong e elela ka tsela e e sa siamang	*Plumber:* That a big part of the movement has split, and now not flowing the right way.

Translator 4 in block 3 was able to maintain the pun intended in this comic strip both on the word level and the context of the plumber. This is done with the translation of “down the drain” to “elela le metsi” (flowing with the water).

In block 4 the translator again using literal translation was able to use the same words “elela ka tsela e e sa siamang” from “flowing in the wrong direction”. Both these illustrations are relevant for the context of the comic strip as the plumber deals with issues of water, and the translator was able and aware that that element must still feature in the translation.

Comic strip 5: Source text	***Translation 5***	***Back translation***
Strike while the iron is hot.	Itaya tshipi e sale khibidu	Hit the iron with its red.

Translator 5 translated this phrase literally (the back translation takes us back to the initial phrase) but did not consider two things. Firstly, this is an idiom therefore on a pure linguistic level translation it is not correct, as “to stick while it is hot” means “act decisively and take an opportunity when it arises”. Secondly, the images in the comic (see image 5) collaborate directly with the words to create double meaning – Eve striking (protesting) and Mrs Robertson holding a hot burning iron. In this case, the literal translation did not deliver the intended humorous effect and did not transfer the source text message to the target audience.

5.6 Substitution (cultural substitution)

Cultural substitution is a strategy where the translator replaces a culture-specific joke with one that is more relevant to the target audience. This approach ensures that the humour is understood and appreciated by the new audience. For example, a joke

about Thanksgiving in the United States might be replaced with a joke about a local holiday in the target culture (Low, 2011, p. 68).

Comic strip 4: block 3 Source text	***Translation 3***	***Back translation***
Plumber: Now, I'm sure many of you feel that at the moment the ANC may be going down the drain.	*Polamara*: Jaanong, ke na le bonnete jwa gore bontsi jwa lona bo dumela gore gajaana ANC e ka bo e wela ka lengope.	*Plumber*: Now, I am sure that most of you believe that currently, the ANC is falling into a pit.
	Translation 5 *Polammara*: Jaanong, ke tshepa gore bontsi ga jaana bo ikutlwa e ka re ANC e ya moribe.	*Plumber*: Now, I trust that most of you feel like the ANC is going astray.

Both Translator 3 and Translator 5 used Setswana idioms/phrases to translate "down the drain" to "well ka lengope" and "e ya moribe" respectively. Using these phrases may have taken away the pun intended in this strip, but the text will resonate more with the target audience.

Comic strip 3: block 3 Source text	***Translation 1***	***Back translation***
Thandi: We have to come up with year name suggestions for a South African calendar. *Mrs Robertson*: Piece of cake.	*Thandi*: Re tlile ka tshikhinyo ya leina la ngwaga ya khalentara ya Aforikaborwa *Mrs Robertson*: Ke metsi a mannyane.	*Thandi*: We have come up with a suggestion for the Calendar Name for South Africa. *Mrs Robertson*: Small waters.

Translator 1 also used a common or known phrase, namely "metsi a mannyane", for "a piece of cake". This a fitting expression for the target audience as it is used in informal settings to say something is easy.

5.7 An exaggeration of a joke (paraphrase)

Paraphrasing involves rewording the humorous content to make it more accessible to the target audience. This strategy is useful when the original joke relies heavily on wordplay or cultural references that may not translate well. By rephrasing the joke, the translator can maintain the humour while making it more understandable for the new audience (Low, 2011, p. 69).

Comic strip 4: block 10 Source text	***Translation 3***	***Back translation***
Man 1: The "Vusi the plumber campaign" We can be up and running by next week. *Man 2*: I like it.	*Monna 1:* "Letsholo la ga Vusi wa Mopolamara" re ka kgona go ragoga mo bekeng e e tlang. *Monna 2:* Ke a e nyala	*Man 1: "*Vusi the plumber campaign" can we kick off at the beginning of next week? *Man 2:* I am marrying it

Translator 1 instead of sticking to the literal or actual meaning of "I like it", they not only paraphrased it but brought a humorous element into it by saying "I am marrying it". This phrase in the context of a campaign is odd and might bring a smile to the audience. Who marries a TV campaign, right?

5.8 Signalling (footnotes and annotations)

Finally, Low suggests using footnotes and annotations to provide additional context for jokes that may not be immediately understood by the target audience. This strategy allows the translator to preserve the original humour while providing the necessary background information to make the joke accessible. This approach is particularly useful for literary translations where maintaining the author's original style and intent is crucial (Gabriella, 2020, pp. 68-83).

This is a strategy that was not used by any of the eight translators. They may have used this to explain some of the decisions they made while translating but EB White in the *Paris Review* interview by Plimpton and Crowther said if one explains or analyses a joke then it stops being a joke (White, 1969).

5.9 Conclusion

Peter Low’s strategies for translating humour highlight the importance of flexibility, creativity, and cultural awareness in translation. By carefully selecting and applying these strategies, translators can effectively convey the humour in the original text to the target audience, ensuring that the comedic effect is preserved and appreciated.

Chapter 6 – Findings, recommendations, and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Humour is shaped by a network of shared cultural assumptions, requiring an interdisciplinary approach to meet its needs. When viewed through the lens of translation studies, the linguistic elements alone are insufficient to fully explain its structure and purpose. In essence, identifying an equivalent that ensures the translation is both understandable and effectively humorous within the target culture presents a significant challenge, given the distinct variations between specific languages and cultural frameworks. Translators encounter major challenges in this area, as humour that fails to be adequately humorous and effective in the target text can be considered unsuccessful (Heydon, G., & Kianbakht, S., 2020, p. 8). Hence, translating humour requires an understanding of not just the language but, more critically, the cultural context of the source text. The translator must dissect and examine cultural elements, ensuring that both language and culture are effectively adapted to fit the linguistic and cultural framework of the target text.

6.2 Findings

The study aims of the study were to establish the validity of the following:

6.2.1 Objective 1

To establish the adequacy of translation strategies in translating humorous texts from English to Setswana.

The *Madam & Eve* Comic strips comply with six parameters of the GTVH, namely (1) language (LA), which contains all the information necessary for the verbalisation of a text, (2) narrative strategy (NS), which refers to the narrative organisation of the text, (3) target (TA), which is an optional parameter, (4) situation (SI), which involves that humorous texts or jokes are usually about something, (5) logical mechanism (LM), which refers to the resolution of incongruities and (6) script opposition. This qualifies the comic strip to be classified as humorous.

With that in mind, Peter Low's (2011) eight strategies were used in the five selected comic strips, even though they did not apply to all the texts:

(i) Delivery followed by preparation (reproduction of the same humorous effect)
This strategy was used by four of the eight translators with only two being successful.
(ii) Dilution (replacement with a different humorous effect)
This strategy proved not to be successful.
(iii) Compensation in place (compensation and omission)
This strategy was used by two of the eight translators but to the detriment of the humour in the text.
(iv) Explication (addition and explanation)
This can turn out well or go extremely bad. If done well, an additional liner can be added to enhance the source text humour, but when the humour is overexplained, it dies.
(v) Compensation in kind (literal translation and adaptation)
This strategy is successful when used with great consideration given to the choice of wording and taking into consideration the context and visual cues.
(vi) Substitution (cultural substitution)
This strategy works well when the translator knows the culture of the target audience and its everyday dealings. It requires a great amount of creativity and flexibility. The two out of eight translators who used it did this well.
(vii) An exaggeration of a joke (paraphrase)
Translator 8 used this strategy well in Comic strip 4. It also works as well as cultural substitution.
(viii) Signalling (footnotes and annotations)
None of the translators used this strategy. This only requires the translator to signal or hint that there is a joke, instead of focusing on making the text humorous. Any other information may be included using this strategy.

6.2.2 Objective 2

To assess if the same humorous effect can be carried over from an English source text to a Setswana target text.

Humour is deeply rooted in language-specific idioms, puns, and wordplay. Translating these elements while maintaining humour is challenging. It was essential to find equivalent expressions in Setswana that convey the same comedic effect. On a word level (Comic strip 3 and Comic strip 4), all the translators were able to convey the same message while only two of the eight were able to maintain the pun relevant on the word level and context level.

Character dynamics also play a role in creating humour. In this case, the relationship dynamics between Madam and Eve (and Thandi), need to be preserved. This involved not just translating words but also capturing the tone, sarcasm, and playful banter in a way that resonates with Setswana speakers. The sarcasm in Comic strip 3 and “pulling the leg” or “picking the brain” of Mrs Robertson by Thandi only reflects in three out of eight translations and translated literally or by an explanation by five of eight translators and thus kills the humour.

Comics rely heavily on visual humour. Ensuring that visual gags and expressions are universally understood can help bridge any gaps that might arise from language translation. Comic strips 4 and 5 were very dependent on the visual cues. The whole context of Comic strip 4 (the Plumber) and every scene was relevant to the text. By only focusing on the text, the message (puns) was lost in 5/8 translations. In Comic strip 5 none of the translators ensured that the translated text and image relate to each other.

6.2.3 Objective 3

To investigate the culture and language-specific challenges to translating humorous texts.

- Cultural nuances

Madam & Eve comic strips incorporate humour that is rooted in South African culture, including references to local politics, societal norms, and historical events. Translating these elements into Setswana proved to be challenging due to some jokes relying specifically on cultural knowledge that Setswana speakers do not share, e.g. in Comic strip 3 where Thandi is questioning and speaking freely to Mrs Robertson (an elderly woman). Denbow and Thebe (2006, pp. 135-160) in their book on culture and customs in Botswana state that this act is seen as uncommon and disrespectful in the Setswana culture. In Botswana, age is associated with privilege and the belief that wisdom accompanies it. Young people are encouraged to show respect to their elders, recognising their significant contributions to society's development.

Seniority influences interactions not only between parents and children or employers and employees but also extends to all social gatherings, even those involving just two individuals. It plays a fundamental role in shaping respect, communication, and societal dynamics across different contexts. This can be seen in Comic 5 where Eve is protesting. This would be an unusual act for a Motswana worker.

In Comics 2 and 4 the President of the United States, Mr Trump, and the President of South Africa, Mr Zuma, are talked about freely. In the Batswana culture that would be equivalent to a king (Kgosi), and talking like that about a Kgosi is a punishable act.

- Language structure

The structural differences between English and Setswana posed significant challenges. English-language puns often rely on homophones or similar-sounding words, which might not exist in Setswana. This made direct translation difficult and required creative adaptation to maintain the humour. Idioms in English (Comic 5) do not have direct equivalents in Setswana. This necessitated the use of different expressions that convey a similar meaning but might alter the humour.

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

Can South African translators adequately translate a humorous text from English to Setswana, while maintaining the effects of the text?

Translating humour from English to Setswana using already available strategies in the field, and research of translation studies can be done relatively successfully. For greater success translators still need more practice as translation of humorous texts are not in demand frequently, nor is it included in the training of most translators. The texts are also not always obvious or known to translators as humorous text.

Room still exists to derive a more customised model for translating humour for African (South African languages) focusing on four of the given strategies. These four are selected, as they are the ones most used by the translators in this study: Delivery followed by preparation (reproduction of the same humorous effect); compensation in kind (literal translation and adaptation); substitution (cultural substitution); and an exaggeration of a joke (paraphrase) will assist the translators to zoom into cultural issues that contribute to the creation of humour with and (less) on the sole focus of linguistic elements.

The model should also consider the type of text (comic strip) as the study of translating humour has been done in literature and audiovisual (subtitling) with little on comic strips.

6.3 Recommendations to translators, commissioners, scholars, and researchers

Humour is intrinsically tied to culture. Translators should deeply engage both the source and target cultures to understand the societal norms, values, and references that make the humour effective. This cultural insight aids in identifying equivalent expressions or crafting new ones that resonate with Setswana-speaking audiences. Consequently, Low's strategies of reproducing the same humorous effect or substituting it with a different one can be partially achieved.

For any translation task, providing a brief (and receiving a brief) is crucial, especially when translating humour because humour often relies on cultural nuances,

wordplay, and contexts that may not directly translate across languages. A brief helps the translator understand firstly, that the text is humorous as some translators, if not told, might assume that it is an ordinary text. Secondly, a brief will assist the translator in understanding the original intent, tone, and context of the joke, ensuring that the humour is preserved and adapted appropriately for the target audience. Without this guidance, jokes can fall flat or be misunderstood, losing their comedic impact. Therefore, a well-crafted brief aids in maintaining the essence and effectiveness of humour in translation, making it relatable and enjoyable for the new audience.

Translators would instead of direct translation, consider using transcreation, which involves adapting the content creatively to maintain the original humour's impact. This might mean altering jokes, idioms, or cultural references to fit the Setswana context while preserving the intended comedic effect. These are Low's strategies of cultural substitution, and paraphrasing. From the data analysis the two strategies proved to be the most effective.

Balancing literal and figurative language, and images in comics is key to delivering an appropriate target message (humour). Setswana, like many languages, has rich figurative language and proverbs. Translators should balance literal translations with figurative language that captures the essence of the humour. This might involve using local proverbs or idiomatic expressions that convey similar meanings. While considering these, translators should not ignore the images as they are key to the humour and the limited space (bubbles) in the comic strip. From the data analysis, this proved to be problematic with Comic Strip 5, all the translators only focused on the wording and translated it literally without considering the image.

Scenario changes might have to be considered to depict and fit the everyday experiences of Setswana speakers. This ensures that the humour remains relevant and understandable.

6.4 Contribution of this study

The study of translating Setswana humour significantly enriches the field of translation studies by highlighting the intricate relationship between language,

culture, and humour. Setswana, like many languages, has unique cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and comedic styles that are deeply rooted in its social and historical context. This study used an extremely limited sample of translators and cannot represent the entire body of English/Setswana Translators but the findings or the examination of how effectively humour from English to Setswana can be effectively translated; scholars and practitioners may gain insights into the broader challenges of translating humour across different languages and cultures. This contributes to developing more nuanced translation theories and methodologies that account for cultural specificity and the subtleties of humour.

Furthermore, translating Setswana humour fosters a greater appreciation and understanding of the language and its cultural heritage within the global translation community. It encourages the inclusion of African languages and perspectives in academic discourse, which has historically been dominated by Western languages. This not only diversifies the field but also promotes linguistic and cultural equity. By addressing the unique challenges of translating Setswana humour, researchers can develop innovative strategies that can be applied to other languages, thereby advancing the overall practice and theory of translation studies.

6.5 Recommendations for further study

Future studies on the translation of Setswana humour should consider these key areas to address existing gaps and enhance understanding. Research should delve more deeply into the cultural nuances that underpin Setswana humour. These include exploring how traditional oral narratives, proverbs, and contemporary social issues are woven into humorous texts. Dora (2019) extends this by saying understanding these cultural elements can help develop more effective translation strategies that preserve the original impact of the humour.

Another area is multimodal translation. Phetlhe (2018) presented a paper emphasising that based on the visual and textual nature of many humorous works, such as comics and multimedia content, future research should focus on multimodal translation approaches. This involves considering how visual elements, text, and cultural references interact to create humour and how these can be translated into Setswana effectively.

Another area is multimodal translation. Phetlhe (2018, pp. 1-24) in his paper emphasised that due to the visual and textual nature of many humorous works, such as comics and multimedia content, future research should prioritise multimodal translation approaches. This involves examining how visual elements, text, and cultural references come together to create humour and how these can be effectively translated into Setswana.

Including humour translation training at the level of undergraduate studies for translation students are essential because it equips them with the skills to manage one of the most challenging aspects of translation. Humour often involves cultural references, wordplay, and subtleties that require a deep understanding of both the source and target languages. By studying humour translation, students learn to navigate these complexities, ensuring that the translated content resonates with the target audience while maintaining its original comedic intent. This training enhances their overall translation competence, making them more versatile and effective translators in a globalised world where humour plays a significant role in communication.

Another area to be investigated is the exploration of the use of technological tools and software that can enhance accuracy and efficiency in the translation process. Hussein Abu-Rayyash (2024, p. 1) claims that the accuracy of translating humour using AI is more accurate than that of human translators. His research only focuses on Asian languages. With the limited Setswana corpora on the internet, future research could be done on how machine translation and AI can assist human translators in capturing the nuances of Setswana humour, while also addressing the limitations of these technologies.

6.6 Conclusion

The future of translating humour into South African languages holds great promise, driven by advancements in linguistic research and technology. One key focus area will be the development of more sophisticated translation tools that can manage the nuances of humour better. These tools, powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning, could assist translators in identifying cultural references and

idiomatic expressions, suggesting context-appropriate adaptations. Additionally, increased collaboration between linguists, cultural experts, and comedians can lead to more effective strategies for translating humour, ensuring that jokes and satirical content resonate with diverse South African audiences.

Furthermore, fostering a greater appreciation for multilingualism and cultural diversity in South Africa will be crucial. Educational programmes that emphasise the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous languages can help cultivate a new generation of translators who are adept at navigating the complexities of humour translation. By investing in training and resources for these translators, South Africa can ensure that its rich comedic traditions are accessible to all linguistic communities. This approach not only enhances the inclusivity of humour but also strengthens cultural ties and mutual understanding among South Africans, celebrating the nation’s diverse heritage through shared laughter.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Translated texts


Translation 1.docx


Translation 2.docx


Translation 3.docx


Translation 4.docx


Translation 5.docx


Translation 6.docx


Translation 7.docx

Appendix B: Consent forms


Consent form 1.docx


Consent form 2.docx


Consent form 3.docx


Consent form 4.docx



Consent form 5.docx



Consent form 7.docx



Consent form_8.docx

Appendix C: Ethics Clearance



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Appendix D: Declaration



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