(Mis)Matches in Translation – A Case Study of "The Big Fat Giant" and its Albanian Version

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to observe how semantic peculiarities travel across languages and cultures. The original book, *The Big Fat Giant*, by Roald Dahl lends itself perfectly to such a comparative study due to its linguistic and semantic features that need to be explored in order to understand how they were brought to the Albanian language and culture. Classifications of several levels at which mismatches occur are mentioned, such as mismatches at the level of syntax, semantics and phonetics. Examples are given to illustrate each level. The discussion is enriched with observations and examples from the intertextual level. The paper concludes with findings which refer to this tale in particular and recommendations for further research.

Kalbos (ne)atitikimai vertime: Roaldo Dahlio *The Big Fat Giant* ir jo albaniškasis vertimas

Santrauka. Vertimo procese kalbų ir kultūrų skirtumai išryškėja įvairiuose lygmenyse: sintaksės, semantikos, fonetikos ir pan. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama palyginti garsaus anglų rašytojo Roaldo Dahlio knygos *The BFG* (liet. *DGM* – vertė D. Žalytė) originalo tekstą su jo vertimu į albanų kalbą. Šis palyginimas atskleidė gana daug įvairių neatitikimų visuose kalbos lygmenyse, ypač verti dėmesio semantikos pokyčiai vertime. Pateikti pavyzdžiai skirti ne tik parodyti faktiškai užfiksuotus skirtumus, vertėjui kėlusius daugiausia problemų, bet ir atkreipti dėmesį į veiksnius, kurie daro poveikį pačiam vertimo procesui.

1. Introduction

The Big Fat Giant (the BFG further on) is one of the greatest children's books of all time. Being among giants and reading dialogues that give voice to the characters involves readers in a world of fascination in which language reflects actions and vice

versa. Characters act and speak in a funny, odd, and somehow meaningless way. The process of searching for meaning in their "language" becomes meaningful in itself. Children readers have always enjoyed this book and have laughed at the "gags" of the BFG and other inhabitants of the fantastic world. Adult readers are even more engulfed in the world so skillfully created by the writer. The reading purposes are enriched by scholars and translators who discover peculiar elements of style and meaning beyond the mere process of reading for pleasure. This empirical research has been carried out from a qualitative perspective, with the main goal of highlighting cases of semantic peculiarities of the original and the way they travel through languages, by trying to determine whether there are (mis)matches on different levels. Considerations will also be proffered about the intended purpose of the original author and whether that purpose has been carried across successfully by the translator.

2. Literature Review: Theoretical Background on Shifts and (Mis)matches in Translation

One of the first comparative studies undertaken in translation studies is Vinay and Darbelnet's *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (1958/1995). Vinay and Darbelnet discussed formal correspondences in translation and devised a methodology of translation which includes seven procedures covered within direct and oblique translation. Their work and analysis was mostly based on comparative linguistics and illustrative examples were decontextualized, however, they were among the first who categorized the process of translation in terms of "small linguistic changes occurring in translation of source text into target text" (Munday 2001, 55), which were later labeled as "shifts". The term "shift" has its origins in Catford's influential work "A Linguistic Theory of Translation" (1965) whereby shifts are defined as *"departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL"* (1965, 73). Catford argues that there are two main types of translation shifts, namely level shifts, where the SL item at one linguistic level (e.g. grammar) has a TL equivalent at a different level (e.g. lexis); and category shifts which are divided into four types: structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts, and intra-system shifts. (Catford 1965, 73–82). However, Catford was criticized for his linguistic theory of translation, especially from Snell-Hornby (1988), who argued that Catford's reliance on bilingual informants was "hopelessly inadequate", and his example sentences were "isolated and even absurdly simplistic". She considers the concept of equivalence in translation as being an illusion and she asserts that the translation process cannot simply be reduced to a linguistic exercise, as claimed by Catford, since there are also other factors, such as textual, cultural and situational aspects, which should be taken into consideration when translating. It took some years for the notion

of shift to be "improved" under a deeper cultural and interpretational view from a Slovak scholar – Anton Popovič (1970). According to him, in order to deal with "untranslatable" words, there is a need for shifts, and he categorizes four types of shifts as follows: constitutive shift (inevitable shift as a result of differences between languages, poetics and the styles of the original and translation), individual shift (resulting from stylistic individuality and subjective idiolect of the translator), thematic shift (substitution of cultural aspects, expressions, idioms of SL by features of TL), and negative shift (resulting from misinterpretation of the original). His analysis of shifts identifies shifts as a stylistic category as an invariant for comparing source and target language texts.

Toury (1980) moves away from an analysis of shifts and errors in the process of translation as mere configuration of errors or departures from the original and introduces the concept of norms and acceptability. Van Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990) devised a methodology for the analysis of microstructural and macrostructural shifts, the latter being related to discourse and narratological considerations. Another relevant model which introduces translation procedures was devised by Peter Newmark in the '80s. In "Approaches to Translation" Newmark proposes several translation procedures such as: transcription, literal translation, calque, lexical synonymy, componential analysis, transposition, modulation, compensation, cultural equivalence, translation label, definition, paraphrase, expansion, contraction, recasting sentences, rearrangement, improvement, and translation couplet. Some of these procedures, however, have to be used on non-literary texts only. Koller (1989) described five types of equivalence at different levels: denotative or referential equivalence, connotative equivalence, text normative equivalence, formal equivalence, and pragmatic or communicative equivalence. The discussion about equivalence is more elaborated in Baker's approach (1992) with several levels of equivalence (word level, above word level, grammatical level, and textual and pragmatic level). The last one is the highest and most desirable level of equivalence.

3. Comparative Study – Categories of (Mis)matches Exemplified

What I mean and what I say is two different things.

This fourth part of the article compares and contrasts the original book and its Albanian variant, a process which has brought to light not only the unique mastery of the writer to "manipulate" language naturally, but, at the same time, the skills of the translator to successfully "compete" with the playfulness of the writer in many ways and make the reading process rewarding on many levels. The BFG lends itself perfectly to comparative studies because the original contains examples on interesting phenomena

from a translation perspective, such as linguistic anomalies, puns, syntactic inconsistencies, etc. On the one hand, such phenomena present challenges for translators, but, on the other hand, they invite scholars to analyze insightful observations which serve not only to compare the original to its target language version, but also to offer recommendations and suggestions to other translators for similar works of literature or for the process of translation in general.

It is of foremost significance to realize that phenomena such as linguistic anomalies, novelties, syntactic inconsistencies (examples of which will be outlined below) are not incidentally encountered throughout the book but are purposefully created by Dahl and as such should be considered as a feature of his own style as a writer. It is thus required that the target text reflects as closely as possible the original, i.e. it is the duty of the translator to fulfill one of the most crucial requirements: re-creating the individuality of the writer's style in its features that mark his uniqueness. It needs to be mentioned that this paper does not intend to analyze all features of the individuality of Roald Dahl's style and compare and contrast them as they appear in the original versus the way they have been brought to the Albanian language – such a task would require much more space and time. What is intended is reflection on the way languages may (not) express sameness and/or similarity and an interpretation of how the translator can intervene in the process of travelling across languages and cultures.

According to Rudd, for Dahl "the shape, sound and possibilities of language are abiding concerns, often becoming part of the subject matter or plot." (Rudd 2012, 51). It is immediately apparent that the way the BFG and other giants speak constitutes a specific idiolect which should be brought into the Albanian language as closely and as naturally as possible since it reflects a significant feature of characterization. For the target version to be faithful to the original the purposefully created features of idiolect should be preserved either by re-creating them as they appear in the original, or by compensating for them when and where the translator thinks it is appropriate so that they match the intended purpose of the writer. Compensation entails employing the operation elsewhere, when the target language allows it, even though the source text does not require it at that place (Kratochvilová 2001, 52). Omission should be the last resort because it would result in significant loss in the reading process of the target text. This part of the article outlines examples of matches and mismatches that have been observed through comparison of the original to the Albanian translation. The examples have been categorized according to the specific feature of the idiolect of the BFG that they demonstrate: *syntax, semantics and phonetics*. Comments and assumptions will follow which reflect on the issue of whether the features of the TT match intentions of the ST and whether this is done in a natural way, thereby creating a fluent style in Albanian.

A careful reading process of the original and a comparative study of the original and the Albanian version has led us to exemplify the following categories of (mis)matches:

- *Syntax* (sentence structure, failure to conjugate verbs correctly, misuse or overuse of the present continuous tense);
- *Semantics* (puns, metaphors, and similes, neologisms, idioms);
- *Phonetics and Phonology* (misspellings and mispronunciations, alliteration and assonance).

3.1 (Mis)matches at the Level of Syntax

Failure to conjugate verbs correctly

The first words uttered by the BFG after having kidnapped little Sophie are "*What has us got here*?", a sentence that serves to illustrate the peculiar way the giant speaks, just like foreigners who have not mastered the rules of English. This feature, however, is not part of the way the BFG is introduced to the Albanian readers since it is "nullified" and the way he speaks falls under the rules of the Albanian language syntax. "*Pa të shohim pak se ç'kemi sjellë.*" The intention of the writer to portray the BFG from the way he speaks is again not matched in Albanian in an example that follows shortly. "*I is hungry!*" yells the giant in incorrect English, whereas following the rules of correct sentence arrangements and subject-verb agreement in Albanian "*Unë kam uri!*". The dialogue continues with Sophie trying to make sense out of grammatically incorrect sentences in the original, whereas in Albanian the sentences are grammatically correct as outlined below.

Table 1.

I is hungry	*Unë kam uri!*
I is a giant	*Ke të bësh me një gjigant*
I is a man-gobbling cannybull	*paske të bësh me ndonjë **kanilab** (*)*
You is about right	*Ke të drejtë*
Giants is all cannybully and murderful	*Të gjithë gjigantët janë kanilabë dhe **grabeqarë** (*)*
And they does gobble up human beans	*Është e vërtetë, ata ushqehen me njerëz toke.*
I is a freaky Giant! I is a nice and jumbly Giant. I is the only nice and jumbly Giant in Giant Country! I is THE BIG FRIENDLY GIANT!I is the BFG.	*Jam gjigant i çuditshëm unë, i urtë e i butë dhe konfuz sa s'ka më. Jam i vetmi gjigant i urtë e i butë, kokë e këmbë tuaf në vendin e gjigantëve. Unë jam Gjiganti i Madh e i Mirë. Unë jam GJMM!*
We is here at last!	*Arritëm!*

The examples above are taken from the first encounter between the BFG and Sophie, an interaction in which the BFG introduced himself not only to the little girl, but to readers as well. His distinctive way of speaking is strikingly evident in the original. In Albanian, however, we cannot recognize from the first lines that the BFG speaks oddly – in fact, in all the sentences the verbs are conjugated correctly. The first hint we get that even GJMM speaks by making mistakes is given from the translator through a footnote: he uses the symbol * and explains to Albanian readers that they will notice hereafter that GJMM makes blatant mistakes when he speaks. There is a shift to the nature of the "mistakes" from English into Albanian: in the examples above in ST we have illustrated mistakes that derive from the incorrect conjugation of the verbs, whereas in TT the verbs are conjugated correctly, but some of the words are turned into spoonerisms or humorous idiomatic phrases are used, which conveys the intentions of the original writer: making the speech of the giant sound strange. This strategy of compensation is used by the translator who succeeds in transmitting the purposes of the original writer, even though there is not always a match between the type of device used by the writer and the translator to mark the distinctive nature of speech of the BFG and GJMM respectively; in most of the cases, we can observe that the efforts of the translators have been towards matching the intentions of the writer through the use of different devices or techniques. That is why compensation is frequently used.

Present continuous tense overused and/or misused

Table 2.

If anyone is ever seeing a giant, he or she must be taken away at hipswitch.	*Dhe kushdo që e sheh një gjigant, duhet të rrëmbehet në cast, dorë me një.*
Tell me what you is seeing.	*Më rrëfe, ç'shikon?*
Who is you jabbeling to, Runt?	*Me kë po beshedon ti xhuxhuaxhuxh?*

The examples above also show that in the Albanian variant the feature of the speech that coincides with the tendency of overusing the present continuous tense (as in the case of failure to conjugate verbs correctly) is not present as such. However, the translator uses again the strategy of compensation in order to mark the speech of the BFG as unusual by producing peculiarities at the semantic level in Albanian.

3.2 (Mis)matches at the Level of Semantics

Dahl teaches children not only to love reading but also to enjoy language and not be afraid to get creative with it. Into his children's stories he projects the belief that "*ways*

of representing the world – objects, ideas, beliefs, values, and morals – are, ultimately, arbitrary" (Rudd 2012, 53). The creativity and arbitrariness of language and the way Dahl operates with it are evident at the semantic level through intentional puns, transformed idiomatic phrases, and other devices that will be explored through the examples below.

Puns

The original text is extremely rich in nonsense and puns. A comparative study of all puns and nonsense would require much more space and time. For illustrative purposes we mention a few examples below which produce puns through reference to countries and nationalities.

Table 3.

Human beans from Panama is tasting very strong of hats.	*Burrat e dheut të Lopanisë kanë shije lope.*
- Human beans from Wales is tasting very whooshey of fish. There is something very fishy about Wales. - You mean whales…whales is something quite different. - Wales is whales…don't gobblefunk around with words.	*-Në Pulani të gjithë kanë shije shpendi. Seç ka diçka prej fluturakësh Pulania.* *-Deshët të thoshit Polonia…Pulat s'kanë të bëjnë fare me Poloninë.* *-Poloni do të thotë Pulani…mos i ngatërro fjalët.*
I cannot be right all the time. Quite often I is left instead of right.	*Nuk mund të flasësh kurdoherë qartësisht. Shpesh frazat e mia nuk janë fare, fare të rregullta, unë flas disa herë gamibish, po ja që hë.*
- I know one who gallops all the way to Wellington for his supper. - Wellington? Where is Wellington? - Wellington is in New Zealand. The human beans in Wellington has an especially scrumdiddlyumptious taste, so says the Welly-eating Giant. - What do the people of Wellington taste of? - Boots. - Of course, I should have known.	*-Njoh një syresh që ia mbath çdo natë deri në Uellington* që të gjejë mse se të darkoset.[The translator has added a footnote at this point by clarifying that Wellington is both the capital of New Zealand and the name of an English general, thus making the pun explicit in Albanian.]* *-Në Uellington? Ku bie ky Uellingtoni?* *-Uellingtoni gjendet në Zelandën e Re dhe atje njerëzit janë viç-anërisht të erëkëndimshëm, sikurse thotë Zigandi i Gjelandës së Re.* *-Çfarë shije kanë ata të Uellingtonit?* *-Shije shoshonesh.* *-Sigurisht, duhet ta kisha ditur kaq gjë derisa gjeneralët mbathin çizme.*
We had one only the other day from Panama… For the hatty taste…	*S'ka disa ditë që morëm një raport nga Sardenja… Njerëzit atje kanë shije sardeleje…*

The puns that appear in the original create an association between the country and nationality and the kind of appealing feature that nationality represents to the giant that would eat them. Needless to say, Dahl's remarkable ability involves us in an enjoyable reading process; we can travel through different countries and "feel" the flavours each of the human "beans" represents. In the Albanian variant, the translator has re-created the pun in different ways: at times by maintaining the same nationality and association, by maintaining the association but relating it to another nationality, or by creating a new pun out of a new nationality and a new association. In the last case, there is a mismatch of the nature of the pun, but, undoubtedly, there is a match of intended purpose of the writer which has been clearly identified by the translator and created anew (with the same purpose). Occasionally, the strategy of omission is also used, but it is shortly followed by a compensation – puns appear in the Albanian variant, even though no counterpart of them can be found in the original. Sometimes, intratextual coherence is also lost, however, the general purpose is still maintained.

(Mis)use of idiomatic phrases and collocations, metaphors and similes

Translation of idioms requires mastery of both SL and TL in order to be able to recreate the idiom and its intended effect and purpose. Such a task has been successfully attained by the translator in most cases. The process of idiom re-creation has been facilitated because the translator is a writer himself, thus he can easily manipulate language to achieve the desired purpose. Below, some of the idioms are given, and figures of speech of the original juxtaposed to the way they have been brought into Albanian.

Table 4.

Now we is getting nosier than a parker	*tani po bëhesh më kurizore se përpara*
One of the biggest chatbags is the cattlepiddlers.	*Edhe vemjeve s'u futet goja në gjuhë.*
Talking rommytot	*po thua gjel-pula*
every crook and nanny	*fije më lesh*
every then and now	*rrallë e për dhallë*
once in a blue baboon	*rrallë e çift*
bumping into each other	*duke shkelur dhëmbët*
to be bug as a snug in a rug	*do të jem si thaçoku në mekër*
curiosity is killing the rat	*kureshtja i shtyn minjtë të bien në grackë*

Most of the idioms uttered by the BFG are "twisted" as a result of wrong or unusual collocations, or by unusual word order. In the Albanian language, the purpose of the writer is clearly understood by the translator who evokes funny images to the Albanian reader, either by misspelling the words or by choosing unusual collocations. Sometimes even the word order is reversed or the rules of grammar are broken. Compensation is again frequently used to enhance the effect of the newly created idiom, collocation or figure of speech. Intratextual coherence may not be maintained at all times; however, the individuality of the speech of the BFG and GJMM is always perceived.

Neologisms

Neologisms abound in the original; in fact, they are the most distinctive trait of the BFG. It is a pleasure reading and discovering what lies behind the creation of each neologism by Dahl and its re-creation by the translator Naum Prifti. We can admit with certainty that the intentions of the writer are clearly identified, understood, analyzed and re-created by the translator. The BFG and GJMM coincide perfectly in their ability to create new words and associations through different techniques. Sometimes GJMM uses neologisms as a match for the intentions of the writer, though not matching exactly the twisted form of the word out of which the neologism is derived in the original from BFG.

Table 5.

If you do go back, you will be telling the world most likely on the telly-telly bunkum box and the radio squeaker.	*Po u ktheve, ti do t'i japësh beharin gjithë botës në telezivër-vër ose në radiokasketë.*
icky-poo snozzcumbers	*teleshtranguj zorrëshkulës*
pilfflefizz	*gështenjar*
You must be buggles to be swalloping slutch like that!	*Ti je tërshërisht kërr-kërriç që kapërdin kësilloj ushqeni!*
You is a cream puffnut.	*Një tullumb-mace që e merr era.*
dumbsilly	*budallafiqe*
flushbunking flurry	*nxitohemi fët e fut*
boggled	*i çorbrientuar*
wacksey big ears	*veshë sa një gomar-dare*

3.3 Mis(matches) at the Level of Spelling and Phonetics

The uniqueness of the BFG is evident even in misspellings and mispronunciations of words. It is supposed that these mistakes are a result of the way the BFG has acquired the English language, however, they make his speaking and writing so much fun and distinctive at the same time that it should be reflected in much the same way in Albanian so that reading remains an enjoyable experience that reflects both the mastery of Dahl and the peculiarity of the BFG.

Table 6.

I is not exactly understanding their langwitch.	*Megjithëse nuk e kuptoj gjurin e tyre.*
Sweeter than a nightingull	*më e bukur se kënga e bribilit*
Catasterous	*Shkatërrimfare*
poor little human-beaney tottlers	*kolopuçrrat e vegjël të tokës*
little chiddlers	*kalamijtë*
skool	*shkallë*
peeple	*njerëzit*
puntulashon	*pykëzim*
cattypiddlers	*horra-ngut-tangot*
little chiddlers	*kaladjahtë*
little chiddlers	*kalavamanëve*
suspichy	*po më ngjall shumë dyshemera*

Through the illustrating examples, we can see that the translator has preserved the intentions of the writer by providing again cases of mispronunciations and misspellings that evoke funny images. Compensation is again frequently used to match the purposes of the writer.

3.4 The Intertextual Level

Susan Bassnett has brought to light the way translation can be seen as a kind of journey through time and space: "Translation can be seen as a kind of journey, from one point in time and space to another, a textual journey that a traveler may undertake in reality" (Bassnett 2000, 106). The comparison here juxtaposes writers and travelers. The metaphor is fully applicable on the intertextual level: in the target language, assumptions or implications should firstly be identified and analyzed in the context of the English language and culture as originally appearing in The BFG, and, secondly, the translator should be able to transfer them to the Albanian language and context.

Table 7.

It's Jack! It's the grueful gruncious Jack! Jack is after me! Jack is wack-crackling me! Jack is spikesticking me! Jack is splash-plunking me! It is the terrible frightswiping Jack! The beanstalk! He is coming at me with his terrible spikesticking beanstalk!	*Ky është Xheku! Është ai i habitshmi, i mallkuari Xhek. Më mbërtheu! Xheku po me grin! Po më bluan! Po më dërrlon. Po më shkartis. Xheku i llaftakrisur!* *Oh, me bëzhdile fasulesh! Po vjen drejt meje me ca kërcej të tmerrshëm fasulesh që të dërrmojnë.*
-Nicholas Nickleby -By Dahl's Chickens. -By who?	*-Nikolas Nikëllbi.* *-Nga Darles Çikens.* *-Nga kush*?* [*Writer's Footnote: *Darles Çikens për Çarles Dikens – në anglisht merr një nuancë edhe më komike, sepse "çikens" ka kuptim "zogj pule", pra Darli i pulave.*]

The first example builds on an allusion to the English tale "Jack and the Beanstalk" in which a young boy kills a giant. This intertextual level is lost to Albanian readers who can only perceive the humoristic effect. The second example is a reference to the famous writer Charles Dickens. Even in this case the intertextual level is not present in Albanian, regardless of the attempt of the writer to make the allusion explicit through a footnote, which only makes the pun more visible but does not transfer the allusion into Albanian. The allusions could have been domesticated by the translator in order to preserve their intentions rather than match the same allusive characters.

4. Findings and Suggestions for Further Study

Roald Dahl has provided some helpful advice to writers of children's books:

> *He must like simple tricks and jokes and riddles and other childish things. He must be unconventional and inventive. He must have a really first-class plot. He must know what enthralls children and what bores them...They love suspense. They love action...They love chocolates and toys and money...They love being made to giggle. They love seeing the villain meet a grisly death. They love a hero and they love the hero to be a winner. But they hate descriptive passages and flowery prose... Many of them are sensitive to good writing and can spot a clumsy sentence. (Dahl 2009)*

This advice can serve as a guideline for the work of translators of children's books as well, so that they do not lose sight of the fact that tricks, jokes and riddles should be reproduced in the target language so that the children can enjoy reading the book. Matching the unconventionality and inventiveness that lies with the original writer presents one of the greatest challenges for the translator, especially when it comes to *making children giggle*. Through the examples of this paper we can easily observe that

the reading process matches the uniqueness of the original. The translator has successfully accomplished the task of making the BFG speak Albanian. Even more so, the language spoken by the BFG is still unconventional Albanian, just like the speech of the BFG sounds unconventional in English. The peculiarity of speech can be felt in both languages, and the intentions and purposes of the writer match those of the translator: that is why in both languages the BFG is so easily distinguished by his way of speaking. Even though the device through which this is attained or the level at which the peculiarity of language is manifested do not always match across languages, this is skillfully compensated by the genius of the translator.

This study could be further developed in the future by analyzing the examples and grouping them according to the specific strategy used by the translator. It would also be interesting to analyze a whole range of examples that are part of the compensation strategy used frequently by the translator in the translation of the BFG as juxtaposed to its usage in translation of other works of the same author by Naum Prifti. We also think that comparative studies focusing on the phenomena of intratextual and intertextual coherence would raise specific interest. An analysis of illustrative examples extracted from this book in particular and other books written by Dahl and translated by Prifti would yield important results not only for the literary works under comparison, but for the process of translation as well.

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