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TRANSLATING THE UNTRANSLATABLE:  
THE CASE OF CZECH-GERMAN AND CZECH-ENGLISH  
CODE-SWITCHING\*

This article investigates the question of untranslatability in literary texts, exemplifying it through instances of Czech-German and Czech-English code-switching in Jaroslav Rudiš's (\*1972) novel *Konec punku v Helsinkách*<sup>1</sup> and its German translation *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*<sup>2</sup>. As the theoretical basis, Levý's<sup>3</sup> functional equivalence is used in order to assess whether the original and its translation are indeed functionally equal. Furthermore, a variety of compensation strategies that help overcome the untranslatable features of the source text are discussed.

So far, the literature on code-switching has mainly discussed the phenomenon as a specific property of the spoken language, i.e. analysing it by means of dialogue analysis<sup>4</sup>. It was only recently that the focus shifted to analysing code-switching in written texts as well<sup>5</sup>. Thus in describing code-switching as a translational challenge

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<sup>1</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, Praha 2010.

<sup>2</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, translated by E. Profousová, München 2014.

<sup>3</sup> J. Levý, *Umění překlada*, 4<sup>th</sup> revised edition, Praha 2012 [1963].

<sup>4</sup> P.J.C. Auer, *Bilingual Conversation*, Amsterdam 1984; B.E. Bullock & A.J. Toribio (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching*, Cambridge 2009.

<sup>5</sup> C. Jonsson, *Code-switching in Chicano Theater: Power, Identity and Style in Three Plays by Cherrie Moraga*. Dissertation, Umeå 2005; M. Sebba, *Multilingualism in written discourse: An approach to the analysis of multilingual texts*, "International Journal of Bilingualism" 17 (1), 2012, p. 97–118; M. Sebba, S. Mahootian & C. Jonsson (ed.), *Language Mixing and Code-Switching in Writing: Approaches to Mixed-Language Written Discourse*, London 2011.

lenge, this article endeavours to look into an issue that has not been discussed in such detail before<sup>6</sup>.

On the following pages, the term ‘code-switching’ is, however, used as a general term referring to a situation in a text when a switch from one linguistic code, i.e. one language, to another linguistic code, i.e. another language, occurs. Due to lack of space, the theoretical discussion of the relationship between the term ‘code-switching’ and other similar terms such as ‘code-mixing’ or ‘fused lect’ are not taken into account.

### Untranslatability as a translators’ challenge

Perhaps the most important Czech translation theorist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jiří Levý<sup>7</sup>, sees untranslatability and problematic translatability as being connected to the degree of language specificity of the source text<sup>8</sup>. On one hand, this language specificity tackles the question of the relationship between language and cognition, and on the other hand the relationship between language and culture. Therefore, according to Levý<sup>9</sup>, a translator’s work should not be based on “the original text but on its ideological and aesthetic values and the objective should not be the text itself but a particular content the text conveys to the reader” (translation MK).

This claim is certainly valid in general but there are also – as always – exceptions to the rule. As far as poetry is concerned, for instance, it is the form itself, i.e. the original text, which gains significance. Prose texts are not bound by the formal constraints of poetic language, as Malý<sup>10</sup> points out. However, these constraints are not universal and they are always subject to the particular cultural conventions of the given literary tradition. Malý<sup>11</sup> illustrates this disparity between different formal conventions by Christa Rothmeier’s German translations of modern Czech poetry. She dismisses rhymes in her translated poems because she claims it to be a typical Czech poetic feature unsuited for the German environment. To exemplify this point, Petr Borkovec’s poem [*Poštolka nasedá na vršek borovice ...*] / [*Ein Turmfalke landet auf einem Föhrenwipfel ...*] and its German translation are shown below.

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<sup>6</sup> As far as I (MK) know, there are only a few articles dedicated to this topic. For example, one chapter about the issues of translating code-switching between Swedish and English in an unfinished dissertation. by Nichola Smalley (personal communication). Her findings were presented at the conference *Code-Switching in Literature* that took place in London on 5 July 2013. Paul Bandia (1996) also shortly addresses the topic by pointing out the complications connected to English translations of African authors who code-switch between French and French-based creoles in their works.

<sup>7</sup> J. Levý, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> He draws upon the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that posits that speakers of various languages perceive the world in various ways. In other words, untranslatability is a default situation based on the cognitive differences in perception of the extralinguistic world by the recipient of the source text on the one hand and by the recipient of the target text on the other hand.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> R. Malý, *K otázce tzv. nepřeložitelnosti poezie*, „Slavica Litteraria“ 15 (1), 2012, p. 126.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

Poštolka nasedá na vršek borov <b>ice</b> ,	<b>A</b>
spona se zaklapne – pár minut po zápa <b>du</b> .	<b>B</b>
O strunu zbržděnému pá <b>du</b>	<b>B</b>
podobá se to, rance, zběžné sk <b>ice</b> .	<b>A</b>

Po létu plátno z lehátek jsme stáh <b>li</b> ,	<b>C</b>
sít' zatočili kolem javor <b>u</b>	<b>D</b>
a po schodišti vyšli nahor <b>u</b>	<b>D</b>
do patra, k oknu, před kterým jsme stál <b>i</b> .	<b>C</b>

Jemný svět okna: slepecká běl rámů, sled změn, série	<b>E</b>
odrazů, prach a fragment zahra <b>dy</b> .	<b>F</b>
Naskicování, načrtnutí, studie	<b>E</b>

k jaké epopeji, k jakému panoram <b>atu</b> ?	<b>G</b>
Klid, na sklech měnící se nála <b>dy</b> ,	<b>F</b>
oči – o prostor opřené jak o va <b>tu</b> .	<b>G</b>

léto 1996

Ein Turmfalke landet auf einem Föhrenwipfel,	<b>A</b>
eine Schnalle schnappt zu – kurz nach Sonnenuntergang.	<b>B</b>
Wie ein von einer Saite gebremster Fall,	<b>C</b>
ein leichter Schlag, eine flüchtige Skizze.	<b>D</b>

Wir zogen nach dem Sommer die Liegestühle ab,	<b>E</b>
wickelten die Hängematte um den Ahorn	<b>F</b>
und gingen über die Stiege in den oberen Stock	<b>G</b>
zu dem Fenster, wo wir dann stand <b>en</b> .	<b>H</b>

Zarte Fensterwelt: das Blindenweiß der Rahmen, Verwandlungen,	<b>H</b>
eine Serie von Reflexen, Staub und das Gartenfragment.	<b>I</b>
Entwürfe, Konzepte, Studien	<b>H</b>

zu welcher Epopöe, zu welchem Panorama?	<b>J</b>
Ruhe, auf den Scheiben wechselnde Stimmungen,	<b>H</b>
Augen – an den Raum wie an Watte gelehnt.	<b>K</b>

Sommer 1996<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> P. Borkovec, *Feldarbeit*, translated by Ch. Rothmeier, Wien 2001. My (MK) highlight and rhyme scheme.

According to Levý<sup>1312</sup>, the whole process of translation consists of three parts: the content of the original text and its double concretisation - for the first time performed by the reader of the source text, i.e. the original, and the second time by the reader of the target text, i.e. the translation. In Levý's theory, translation is considered to be a creative process aimed at repeating the same effects in the target text as those of the source text. Due to this interconnection of the translation and the original text, however, the translation process cannot be seen as purely creative, according to Levý, but should rather be situated on the border between reproductive and creative art.

Translation as a piece of art is an artistic reproduction, translation as a process is original act, translation as a type of art is a case on the border of reproductive art and creative art<sup>14</sup>. (Translation MK)

Along these lines, Levý<sup>1514</sup> also compares translation to acting. Acting, similar to translating, is based on a given screenplay (reproductive feature), but each performance represents the actor's individuality (creative character). In this respect, Ruberová<sup>16</sup> highlights Hausenblas'<sup>17</sup> rebuttal of Levý's conception of translation as a reproductive art. His dismissal is based on the different understanding of the term 'reproductive' since he sees the original and the translated text on the same level. In opposition to this relationship, the actor's performance, i.e. reproducing a text passage, and his screenplay, be it the original or the translation, represent two different levels.

In Levý's framework of double concretisation, untranslatability originates from the differences between the cultural environment of the source text and the cultural environment of the target text. If these two environments are not compatible, readers of the translation cannot be affected by the text in the same way readers of the original are. Levý<sup>18</sup> adds the following commentary to this issue:

The relationship between the translation and the original is the relationship of a text and its **rendering using different material**. It should therefore not be the unity between form and content in the new material that remains constant, but rather the **concretisation of the content in the mind of the perceiver**, in popular words the final impression or the impact of the work on the reader. (Translation MK)

If we thus accept that literary translation should not be a mere transfer in a one-to-one-ratio, which would make the translation absolutely faithful to the original text, there will inevitably be situations when not everything is translatable into the target language. This could be caused by various linguistic peculiarities of the original that does not facilitate the translation. Alternatively, such a situation might arise even though the given linguistic structures can be translated, i.e. there is a corresponding equivalent in the target language,

<sup>13</sup> <sup>12</sup>J. Levý, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 79.

<sup>15</sup> <sup>14</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> I. Ruberová, *Ke stavu českého myšlení o překladu*, „Slavia Occidentalis“ 58, 2001, p. 213.

<sup>17</sup> K. Hausenblas, *Překládání a teorie literatury*, „Rozhledy“ 13 (2), 1965, p. 155–167.

<sup>18</sup> J. Levý, op. cit., p. 111. Original highlight.

when the use of these equivalents would, however, not lead to any concretisation in the mind of the perceiver of the target language, i.e. in the mind of the reader.

The issue of untranslatability in literature, especially in poetry, has been addressed by Radek Malý<sup>19</sup> who analysed the notion of untranslatability within different translational frameworks. He concludes his article with the claim that, at least in regard to poetical texts, untranslatability seems to be a rather vague and useless term. This assertion is also further supported by the opinion of the well-known Czech translator of Shakespeare's works, Martin Hilský<sup>20</sup> who claims that „it is not very fruitful to ask **whether** a given literary text is untranslatable. Far more intriguing is the question **how** untranslatable the text is”.

One of the problematic aspects of the term ‘untranslatability’ stems from the fact that it is often used as an umbrella term in a variety of contexts, although ‘difficult to translate’ would perhaps be a more appropriate description. Real untranslatability is thus a rare property of literary texts. But even if translators come across a piece of text that really is untranslatable, they have a wide range of options at their disposal to compensate for the untranslatable passages. These compensation strategies are discussed later on using examples from the aforementioned German translation of Rudiš's novel *Konec punku v Helsinkách*.

Concerning untranslatability, in the 1950s Roman Jakobson postulated his famous dictum that two languages do not differ in respect to what information they can express, but rather in respect to what information they obligatorily have to express.<sup>21</sup> In the same article, Jakobson also refutes untranslatability as an objective property of texts, as the following quotation illustrates.

No lack of grammatical device in the language translated into makes impossible a literal translation of the entire conceptual information contained in the original. [...] If some grammatical category is absent in a given language, its meaning may be translated into this language by lexical means<sup>22</sup>.

Hence, compensation strategies play a central role on every level of the language system in this approach to translation. Grammatical structures that the target language lacks may be substituted by other grammatical or – when not available – lexical structures. In this regard, Jakobson is in opposition to Levý<sup>23</sup> who, at least implicitly, considers untranslatability, expressed by the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see above), to a certain degree an intrinsic feature of all texts. Jakobson then goes on to formulate his own view of translation. He stressed the relevance of conceptual equivalence and relativises equivalence in form. This brings him, however, again back to Levý's functional equivalence.

[T]ranslation from one language into other substitutes messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language. Such a translation is a reported spe-

<sup>19</sup> R. Malý, op. cit., p. 125–133.

<sup>20</sup> M. Hilský, „O nepřeložitelnosti aneb rytmus jako prvek významotvorný“, „Souvislosti“ 2, 1998, p. 16. Original highlight. My (MK) translation.

<sup>21</sup> R. Jakobson, *On linguistic aspects of translation*, [in:] R.A. Bower (ed.), *On Translation*. Cambridge 1959, p. 236.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 234–235.

<sup>23</sup> J. Levý, op. cit., p. 48.

ech; the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes<sup>24</sup>.

From that thought follows the idea that in the process of recoding the source text, translators will sooner or later find themselves in a situation when they have to attempt to compensate for structures not available to them in the target language. Grammatical and lexical structures on one side can be substituted by different grammatical or lexical structures on the other side.

In case of missing background information on the side of the readers of the translated text, such as missing context which is automatically available to the readers of the original, the translators may try to provide some extra information. There is basically only one option – the possibility of educating the readers may be left aside – available in this situation: explanatory notes<sup>25</sup>. It is up to the individual translator whether it will be footnotes or internal notes. Although both options are feasible, there is a general tendency in literary translations to omit footnotes since they significantly disrupt the text fluency and reading comfort. Unlike footnotes, internal notes are non-invasive and more appropriate in most cases because the reader who lacks knowledge of the original text might not even notice the fact that explanatory notes have been used. Such inconspicuous approach cannot be reached using footnotes and is therefore generally preferred.

### Code-switching and the End of Punk in Helsinki

The discussion of untranslatability sketched in the introductory section of this paper will now be illustrated by analysing the German translation of Rudiš's novel *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, more precisely by analysing the diary passages<sup>26</sup>. In these parts of the book, a teenage girl called Nancy who lives in Jeseník in communist Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1980s writes about her everyday problems. Since she comes from a mixed German-Czech family, she often makes use of a range of German expressions<sup>27</sup> in her entries. As a consequence, these sections of the book make fine examples of Czech-German code-switching. Furthermore, in these passages and on other occasions, instances of Czech-English code-switching can be found as well.

The following examples from the Czech original of the novel by Jaroslav Rudiš and its German translation offer the first type of compensation for missing context: organic insertion of an internal note into the German target text. For the average German reader, the name Gustáv Husák has no particular connotations. On the other hand, the average Czech reader knows Gustáv Husák (\*1913 – †1991) as the last communist president of Czechoslovakia. Apart from this piece of information, the Czech readership also regard him to be a symbol of overall stagnation prior to the Velvet Revolution. The translator solved this

<sup>24</sup> R. Jakobson, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J. Levý, op. cit, p. 115.

<sup>26</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 27–35, 73–77, 103–111, 128–138, 150–155, 169–178, 227–233, 242–252.

<sup>27</sup> In most cases, German lexemes used in the novel are limited to the words easily recognised by Czech readers such as *mutr*, (*dvoj*)*brudr*, *luft*, *gut*, *scheisse*, *šnaps*, *šniel* or *danke*.

problem by using explicit internal notes such as „der Herr Präsident“ or implicit „Neujahrsansprache“ so that the information that Gustáv Husák is the president, thus giving a New Year’s Speech, is conveyed.

V bedně mluvil Husák a mámin chlap říkal že je zajímavý jak mluví napůl česky a napůl slovensky a že přitom je nejvíc zajímavý že nikdy nic neříká a pak ještě řek že Husák ani nemluví ale spíš jen husákuje<sup>28</sup>.

In der Glotze quasselte Husák und Muttis Typ meinte wie interessant, dass der Herr Präsident zwar Tschechisch und Slowakisch auf einmal redet und trotzdem nichts Ordentliches rausbringt, dann sagte er noch, das ist keine Neujahrsansprache sondern Husákgelaber<sup>29</sup>.

Besides the aforementioned factual notes, there are also internal notes of (meta)linguistic nature trying to compensate for properties of the text that are lost in translation. The use of German lexemes within the Czech source text is self-explanatory since the code-switching is obvious. However, once translated into German, this instantiation of code-switching becomes inaccessible. It is exactly this kind of untranslatability that stands at the centre of attention in this paper. The translator decided to add the lost information with the help of an explicit note stating the utterance was originally in German, i.e. *auf Deutsch*.

A pak mě u hřbitova hladila po tváři a pořád bulela a opakovala ach du mein kleines mädchen a mně to bylo trapný protože už žádná malá holka nejsem a taky na nás čuměli lidi z autobusový zastávky<sup>30</sup>.

Vor dem Friedhof hat sie mir dann lange die Wange gestreichelt und konnte nicht aufhören zu heulen und sagte immer wieder auf Deutsch, ach du mein kleines Mädchen. Mir war es richtig peinlich, weil zum Ersten bin ich nicht mehr klein und zum Zweiten glotzten uns die Leute auf der Bushaltestelle an<sup>31</sup>.

As was already mentioned, one of the causes of the so-called untranslatability could be seen in the linguistic make-up of the original text. The following paragraphs, therefore, discuss different examples of code-switching between two languages within the original Czech text and its respective German translations.

Problematic situations arise when a foreign language with a particular effect on the reader of the source text cannot have the same function (cf. Levý’s functional equivalence) for the reader of the target text. As was already pointed out on several occasions, language is closely connected with the culture of its speakers. These speakers might have different or even no association with the foreign language in question. Levý<sup>32</sup> also comments on the instrumentalisation of foreign languages in literature and its translational consequences:

**A foreign language** that is common in the environment for which the original text was written, becomes unintelligible for a Czech reader and therefore it cannot be preserved; Punic language

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<sup>28</sup> J. Rudiš, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, translated by E. Profousová, München 2014, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>31</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>32</sup> J. Levý, op. cit., p. 116. Original highlight.



spoken by Plautus's soldier Poenulus, Turkish in classical Bulgarian literature or even French in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for a common reader would be unintelligible. (Translation MK)

Moreover, in the concrete case of Czech-German or German-Czech translation practice, the translator has to deal with the asymmetrical relationship between these two languages. Whereas German is relatively well-known and at least partially intelligible in the Czech environment, i.e. it is possible to assign a certain function to this language; Czech would hardly be able to accomplish the same in the German environment. The only function for Czech in the German-speaking environment would probably be simple exoticisation, i.e. functioning as a generic foreign language.

The following passages entail some examples of Czech-German code-switching in Rudiš's novel, such as the use of German words instead of their Czech counterparts, e.g. *angst* instead of *strach*, *oma* instead of *babička* or *brudr* instead of *bratr*. However, the German words are orthographically adjusted to the Czech spelling conventions, hence, losing some of their exoticising Germanness. All the German words are thus written with lower-case initial letters, vowel length is indicated with an acute accent or letters of the Czech alphabet are used to integrate the instances of code-switching into the remaining Czech text.

Neřekla jsem mu že mám **angst** že jsem v tom protože jsem měla **angst** co by řek on<sup>33</sup>.

**Oma** si vzpomněla že dneska to je tolik a tolik let co někde na rusácký frontě padnul její mladší **brudr** což je vlastně skoro strejda. Vytáhla **weltatlas** a to místo mi ukázala abych to taky věděla až tady nebude a bylo to docela blízko Černobyliu kterej všechno ozářil včetně nás<sup>34</sup>.

Helmut maká někde v lese a stejně by mu to určitě bylo **ganc egál** kdyby to věděl že jsem v tom protože už jedno dítě přece má a taky mu to je **ganc egál**<sup>35</sup>.

The German lexemes used in the Czech original of the novel fulfil an exoticising function. As was already mentioned earlier, most of the readers of the original Czech text have at least rudimentary passive knowledge of German. Besides, the German expressions are always used in such situations that the reader can easily understand everything from the context. Translating Czech-German code-switching into German almost inevitably destroys the code-switching situation of the original. If, however, a third language, e.g. English, is involved, the problem becomes less prominent as is shown later on using the examples of Czech-English code-switching.

Before we get acquainted with the solution proposed by Eva Profousová in her German translation, let us once again have a look at what Jiří Levý<sup>36</sup> recommends as the optimal strategy.

The most acceptable solution might be to translate relevant foreign sentences into Czech and leave the common greetings and short answers that are clear from the context in the foreign language to indicate the exoticism (particularly when the main idea is repeated in Czech in the next

<sup>33</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 30. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 33. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> J. Levý, op. cit., p. 116.



sentence); thus only imply foreign utterances and combine the implication with an explanation (*said in Turkish*). (Translation MK)

It is obvious that Levý's solution is not particularly suitable for dealing with the situations encountered in Rudiš's novel, mainly because the instances of code-switching are confined to the level of individual words, i.e. intra-sentential code-switching. This prevents the translators from further reducing the foreign utterances or using explanations that would appear stylistically problematic. A teenage girl would probably not use explanatory meta-language in her diary entries to comment on her own private language use. Therefore Levý's suggestion of the type *said in Turkish* cannot be applied.

Therefore, the translator had to come up with an alternative strategy for compensating for the missing aspects of the source text in her translation. Eva Profousová decided to make use of specific means available only to written language. As the following passages (corresponding with the previous Czech passages) from the German translation of the novel show, she exploited the graphic possibilities a book as a medium offered her. Such an approach to code-switching is thus only possible while working with written code-switching.

Hab ihm nicht gesagt dass ich **angst** hab wegen Kind im Bauch, weil ich **angst** hatte was er dazu sagen würde<sup>37</sup>.

**Oma** fiel ein, dass heute vor so und so viele Jahren ihr Bruder an der Russenfront gefallen war. Ihr jüngerer **Bruder**, also eigentlich mein Großonkel. Sie kramte einen **Atlas** hervor und zeigte es mir auf der Karte, damit ich es weiß, wenn sie nicht mehr da ist, und die Stelle war gar nicht mal weit von Tschernobyl das alles inklusive uns verstrahlt hat<sup>38</sup>.

Helmut ackert irgendwo im Wald. Sowieso wäre es ihm **total egal**, wenn er wüsste dass ich was im Bauch hab, weil er doch schon einen Wurm hat und auch der ist ihm **total egal**<sup>39</sup>.

This unorthodox compensation strategy can be best observed in the first passage, where the German word *angst* retains the orthographic form of the Czech original, i.e. with a lower-case initial letter. To achieve even higher graphic differentiation from the surrounding German co-text, the expression in question is additionally made even more exotic by using italics.

On the other hand, the second example indicates that the translator decided not to use her innovative compensation strategy, consequently abandoning it in certain cases. Thus the expressions *oma*, *brudr* and *weltatlas* with originally exotic effects remain in the translated text unmarked, i.e. Oma, Bruder, and Atlas. Regarding the reasons why Profousová chose not to exoticise these passages, no obvious explanation could be identified.

In the third example, Rudiš's translator, nevertheless, again works with the same method as in the first passage. However, she does not adopt the original orthographic form of the word exactly, and she partially adjusts it by removing the acute accent above the vowel signalling its length. On the other hand, in contrast to the second example, italics are

<sup>37</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 30. Original italics. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 32. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 31. My (MK) highlight.

used here to discriminate the original code-switching from the rest of the German sentence.

Nancy's diary in the book also contains, in a limited amount, code-switching between three different languages: Czech, German, and English. However, the use of English is limited to a minimal repertoire consisting of often repeated shibboleth-like phrases. The main function of these instantiations of code-switching is, unlike the examples discussed so far, not primarily to exoticise the text but rather to signal the speaker's social status. In the case of Nancy, they serve to identify her as a member of the punk subculture.

Ptali se jestli mi přijde důstojný oslavovat svátek práce v pomalovaný kožený bundě a s vojenskou taškou s nacistickými nápisy jako **punksnotdead fuck off Sex Pistols** [...] <sup>40</sup>.

[J]e fakt jak řek Helmut že by se ty navoněný pankáči z Anglie posrali kdyby žili opravdovej pank v ČSSR kde **no future** je fakt **no future** <sup>41</sup>.

This type of code-switching which does not involve the primary language of the source text, i.e. Czech, nor the primary language of the target text, i.e. German, allows, unlike the previous cases, for a translation of the code-switching in question. On some occasions, Rudiš's translator reuses her previous strategy of marking words involved in code-switching with italics. However, this strategy is not employed consistently throughout the text of the translation, as the following examples show:

Sie wollten wissen, ob ich es würdevoll finde, den Tag der Arbeit in beschmierter Lederjacke mit Gasmaskentasche zu begehen, auf der Nazi-Aufschriften draufstehen wie **punksnotdead fuck off Sex Pistols** [...] <sup>42</sup>.

In einer Sache hat Helmut aber recht und zwar wenn diese parfümierten Punks aus England das echte Punkleben in der ČSSR leben müssten, wo **no future** echt **no future** heißt, würden sie sich glatt in die Hosen schießen <sup>43</sup>.

In the part of the novel titled *Hezký lidi manifest* <sup>44</sup>// *Schmucke leute manifest* <sup>45</sup>, the translator found herself facing numerous instances of Czech-English code-switching. As was pointed out earlier, such a combination of languages does not pose any difficulties for the translation process. Even instances of code-switching that were lost in the target text could have been compensated for elsewhere. The passages below demonstrate that the German-English code-switching in the target text is in some respects even more exoticising than the original Czech-English instances. In the text of Rudiš's book, the effect of the English words is systematically weakened by their orthographic adaptation to Czech spelling standards, e.g. *excited* > *iksajtyd*. The language of the German translation does not

<sup>40</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 229.

<sup>42</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 149. Original italics. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 260. Original italics. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>44</sup> J. Rudiš, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 201–213.

<sup>45</sup> J. Rudiš, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 230–245.

adopt this approach, even though it disregards the German convention to capitalise first letters of nouns.

[...] a tvý kámoši **čekujou** na rohách, kdyby něco [...]<sup>46</sup>

[...] deine **boys** stehen schmiere für den fall aller fälle [...]<sup>47</sup>

The first example shows how the translator decided to compensate for the loss of one Anglicism (*čekujou*<sup>48</sup> > *schmiere stehen*) by introducing a new one into the text of the translation (*kámoši* > *boys*), hence, restoring functional equivalence. Not all the Anglicisms of the original text have been left out, however, as the example of the verb *čekneš* rendered as *checkst* in the German text demonstrates.

The following example illustrates in a similar manner how the translator added the German-English code-switching *a little bit* instead of Czech *malinko* even though the passage could unproblematically be translated into German without using code-switching. The phrase *sladce drímujou* is also a fine case of compensation strategy. The translator chose not to mark the verb, i.e. *schlummern*, but rather the adverb, i.e. *peacefull* (sic), as the exoticising entity.

[S]eš malinko nervózní a **iksajtyd**, takže cigy, pak vyrazíš a **čekneš** pro sichr ještě jednou ulici, jestli je fakt v **klíru**, a zjistíš, že je všechno **oukej**, že poliši maj po večerníčku a hezký lidi už dávno sladce **drímujou** [...]<sup>49</sup>

[D]u bist a **little bit** nervös und **excited**, also rauchst du eine nach der anderen wie ein schlot, dann marschierst du raus und **checkst** sicherheitshalber nochmals die straße, ob auch wirklich alles, aber auch alles paletti ist, und du siehst, in der bullerei hat das sandmännchen schon schlafsand gestreut und auch die schmucken leute schlummern **peacefull** [sic] in ihren bettchen [...]<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

The presented paper attempted to familiarise the reader with the general issue of untranslatability. It has been argued, however, that true untranslatability, i.e. a case when the target language is incapable of conveying the message of the source language, is very rare – if not non-existent. This could be corroborated by the various compensation strategies discussed in this article, which make it possible to transmit even the seemingly untranslatable to the recipients of the target text and thus restoring functional equivalence (Levý 2012 [1963]) between the original and its translation.

<sup>46</sup> J. R u d i š, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 201. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>47</sup> J. R u d i š, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>48</sup> The Czech word *čekujou* is the morphologically and orthographically adapted English word *to check*, *to check out*.

<sup>49</sup> J. R u d i š, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, op. cit., p. 203–204. My (MK) highlight.

<sup>50</sup> J. R u d i š, *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*, op. cit., p. 232. My (MK) highlight.

Special attention has been paid to the issues connected with the translation of code-switching between Czech, German, and English in the novel by Jaroslav Rudiš *Konec punku v Helsinkách* and in its German translation. Firstly, it could be shown that although the instances of Czech-German code-switching were obscured during translation into German, innovative use of orthography allowed at least partial functional equivalence. Secondly, it was demonstrated that if a third language, in this case English, is involved in the code-switching, this instance of code-switching can be successfully translated.

With regard to code-switching, several possible constellations between code-switching in the source and target text could be identified. Firstly, instances of code-switching found in the source language appear in the translation as well. Secondly, the original code-switching is missing in the target text. This loss could, however, be compensated for by other means. However, the extent of what could have been compensated for differs. Exploiting non-linguistic resources, i.e. orthography, could also be subsumed here. Thirdly, instantiations of code-switching could not be translated and this loss could not be compensated for.

While the cases of Czech-German code-switching were mainly of the second type, i.e. partial compensation, or of the third type, i.e. the code-switching is missing in the target text, examples of the Czech-English code-switching were more frequently of the first and second type. This higher success rate is possible mainly due to the position of the English language, which is, unlike in the cases of Czech-German code-switching, neither the source nor the target language of the translation.

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MARTIN KONVIČKA

### Translating the Untranslatable: The Case of Czech-German and Czech-English Code-switching<sup>51</sup>

#### Summary

The article offers a new perspective on the phenomenon of code-switching by looking at it from the point of view of translation studies. In doing so, the article addresses the general issue of untranslatability as well. Both theoretical topics are discussed using the example of the German translation of the Czech novel *Konec punku v Helsinkách* written by Jaroslav Rudiš. The aim of the article is to identify the different compensation strategies used to translate the untranslatable, i.e., the Czech-German and Czech-English code-switching in the novel.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, literary translation, Czech, German, English, Jaroslav Rudiš, *Konec Punku v Helsinkách*

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