

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Challenges of Translating Science Fiction

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Abstract : This article aims to highlight some specificities of translating Science Fiction (SF literature) and, more particularly, its comic subgenre. Translating SF presupposes the translation of neologisms and gadget names of all kinds, while the translation of humor sometimes implies a need for the translator to slightly modify certain scenes or situations. In the French translation of Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Jean Bonnefoy (Guide du routard galactique, 1982), the humorous dimension of the book is enhanced through certain choices made by the translator. One of the striking aspects of this translation is that almost all of the characters' names have been translated, which is not the case in the German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese translations. While there may be translations of characters' names outside of the SF literature, there is no denying that by translating them, Jean Bonnefoy added a humorous layer to Adams' work. This work belongs to science fiction literature thanks to gadgets resulting from futuristic technological innovations, but also the presence of space travel, extra-terrestrials and mysterious worlds, which are central elements in SF. These names of planets, aliens, and other gadgets have also been translated, adapted, or at least reinvented, by Jean Bonnefoy in order to amuse the French-speaking readership.

Keywords : translation, translation studies, humour, science fiction

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