Summary

This dissertation is devoted to the study of figures of words (fr. 'figures de mots') in the prose of the French literary group OuLiPo[72], founded in 1960 and functioning as a "workshop" where literature is experimented with through the systematic and conscious use of linguistic operations as a driving force for literary creation. The purpose of this work is, on the one hand, to shed light on the still largely unexplored linguistic dimensions of the use of figures of words, which differ from other types of figural operations by manipulating the materiality of language, affecting its minimal units—phonemes and morphemes—and contributing to sound-based play and lexical play (Robrieux, 2000). On the other hand, it offers a reflection on the solutions and strategies mobilized to transpose them into another language, Polish. More specifically, this topic, approached from a linguistic perspective, focuses on the operations that structure the analysed texts, on the functions they potentially fulfil within the Oulipian project, and on the possibilities of transferring formal manipulations deeply rooted in the French language and in the dynamics of Oulipian experimentation into a target language, which means transmitting not only a foreign content or context, but also restoring the aesthetic effects and formal games that structure the work.

Although both the concept of rhetorical figures and Oulipo have generated a large number of studies that offer valuable insights, a gap remains: there is, to date, no systematic and exhaustive description of figures of words (which, given the multiple definitions and typologies, reveal the instability of the concept) in Oulipian prose, nor any in-depth study of their translation into Polish. This dissertation seeks to fill these gaps by answering the following questions: Which figures of words contribute to Oulipian prose? What functions do these procedures fulfil within Oulipian experimentation and the aesthetics of constraint: are they mere games or critical tools for poetic explorations? Finally, how can these figures, deeply rooted in the source language, be translated, and which translation strategies make it possible to restore their effects in another language, particularly in Polish? The overall aim of this work is to show that figures of words, far from being marginal in Oulipian writing, occupy a central place. They embody the group's linguistic craftsmanship and its project of exploring the possibilities of language, while also representing a major issue for translation. Through a systematic analysis of the selected corpus and a translation-oriented reflection, this research seeks to make an original contribution to the understanding of Oulipo and, more broadly, to the study of the relationship between language, style, and literary creativity.

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[72] Ouvroir de la Littérature Potentielle, eng. 'Workshop of Potential Literature'.

To address these questions, an analysis was conducted on a corpus of more than twelve hundred units taken from narrative prose texts: novels, narratives, and various samples of individual and collective experiments published between 1960 and 1984, the first period of intense creativity within the group. The corpus reflects the heterogeneity of Oulipian approaches as well as the diversity of practices implemented within their project, which is simultaneously individual and collaborative, combining the invention of structures with textual realization.

The dissertation is structured into two main parts: one focusing on word figures in Oulipian prose, and the other on translating these operations into Polish, each comprising a theoretical and an analytical section.

The theoretical section of the first part consists of two chapters: the first one presents an overview retracing the evolution and definitions of the concept of figure of words to develop an operational definition suited to our object; the second chapter proposes a reflection on the mechanisms and functions of word figures in experimental literature. The analytical section is divided into three chapters: the first presents the corpus and methodology; the second is organized around the use of figures of words operating on the sound structure of words and on their morphosemantic structure, seeking to highlight regularities in their use, at both phonetic and morphosemantic levels; and the third addresses the relationships between these figures and Oulipian linguistic constraints. A summary follows each major chapter, and the analytical section ends with a concluding discussion concerning the role and function of figures of words in the Oulipian aesthetics.

The second part of the dissertation focuses on the translation of figures of words. The theoretical framework comprises two chapters: the first presents major approaches to literary translation and the factors that shape its dynamics. The second chapter addresses the challenges of translating figures of words and outlines relevant translation techniques. The analytical section comprises two chapters: one presenting the corpus and an overview of the analytical context and the second focusing on the results of the analysis and demonstrating the techniques that allow the effects of figures of words to be restored in their transfer into Polish. This part also concludes with a discussion of the strategies adopted by translators.

Finally, the work closes with general conclusions. The analysis carried out on this material demonstrated that figures of words play a significant role in Oulipian writing. They are part of an arsenal of linguistic resources that allow members of the group to play with language itself, constituting both a material for creation and an object of their investigation.

Three main functions emerge from all the observations: the poetic function, the ludic function, and the mimetic function. The results also show the relevance of studying the translation of figures of words into Polish. Manipulations of the signifier, strongly rooted in French, appear to coincide with the impossibility of restoring them from a strictly linguistic perspective. In this context, dynamic equivalence strategy often proves more suitable. Translation thus appears as a process of diversion, displacement, and reinterpretation.

The work is accompanied by a bibliography and two appendices presenting, in a concise manner, examples discussed in both parts.