The Sound of Humor: Translation, Culture and Phonological Jokes

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between sound, meaning, humor and culture through the lens of translation. It illustrates the relevance of sound to determining the meaning of words by analyzing textual examples in a variety of media—oral, written and visual—where the phonological aspect of words constitutes a deliberate component of the message. Sound is also presented as a cultural and linguistic factor present in the configuration of certain types of humor. Phonological jokes, or jokes that use words of one's own language to parody the way another language sounds, are selected out of a variety of possible texts as heuristic tools for analyzing the interrelationship between sound and meaning within a humorous context. A primary classification of this type of joke is presented together with an original corpus of examples from over 30 languages. Such multilingual perspective enables us to examine the role of sound as a culturally-bound component of language, while demonstrating that sound-based humor exists in multiple cultures and is a widespread phenomenon.

Resum

Aquesta tesi analitza la relació entre el so, el significat, l'humor i la cultura a través de la traducció. Il·lustra la importància del so per determinar el significat de les paraules mitjançant l'anàlisi d'exemples textuals en una varietat de mitjans de comunicació—oral, escrit i visual—destacant com l'aspecte fonològic de les paraules constitueix un component intencional del missatge. El so es presenta a més com un factor cultural i lingüístic present en la configuració de certs tipus d'humor. Per demostrar aquest aspecte, d'una varietat de possibles textos humorístics s'han seleccionat acudits de caràcter fonològic, o acudits que es fan servir paraules de la llengua pròpia amb el propòsit de parodiar la manera com sona un altre idioma. Aquests acudits serveixen com a eines heurístiques per a l'anàlisi de la interrelació entre el so i el significat en un context humorístic. Una classificació primària d'aquest tipus d'acudits es presenta juntament amb un corpus original i multilingüe d'exemples en més de 30 idiomes. Aquesta perspectiva d'anàlisi multilingüe ens permet examinar el paper del so com un component cultural arrelat en la llengua, alhora que demostra que l'humor basat en el so existeix en diverses cultures i és un fenomen generalitzat.

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"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922)

Introduction

Chinese tradition makes an insightful distinction between the translation of meaning, *yìyì* 意譯, and the translation of sound, *yīnyì* 音譯 (Li 2007: 45).[1] These two Chinese words are pronounced in a similar way and are, in fact, related lexically as well as phonologically, yet contrasting them allows us to think extensively about two different ways of approaching the transfer of a word from one language to another. The twin concepts of *yìyì* and *yīnyì* imply that meaning is not the only element of language that needs to be considered in a translation process; sound is also important.[2]

The notion that sound is a key component of translation is not exclusive to the Chinese language. It is a concept valid in many areas of human experience across a variety of source and target cultures. Sound is a consideration in choosing a title for a translated book, in selecting a name for a product to be launched in a new country, or in adapting films or musical theater into another target culture through dubbing and subtitling. In fact, numerous examples of situations can be cited where translators have made conscious decisions to alter the meaning of certain words or phrases in favor of preserving the way they sound.

Speakers of different languages do not hear the same sounds in the same manner. One need only consider the various ways in which we create onomatopoeias. A rooster's crow, for example, is transcribed as cock-a-doodle-doo in English, *quiquiriquí* in Spanish, *wo-wo-wo* 喔喔喔 in Mandarin Chinese, and *ake-e-ake-ake* เอ๊ก-อี-เอ๊ก-เอ๊ก in Thai. Sound is clearly idiosyncratic. The

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Chris Wen-Chao Li from San Francisco State University for providing the Chinese characters for these two concepts.
[2] From here onwards, I shall be using the term 'sound' as an umbrella term meaning the phonological component of words in a language.

combination and enunciation of a particular range of phonemes can possess diverse meanings depending on their interpretation by the recipient of the message.

In our everyday lives, whenever we choose a word from our ample repertoire to use in any type of discourse, we select the *mot juste* that accords with our communicative priorities. And depending on our interlocutor, we tend to modify or expand our lexicon to achieve a specific communicative effect, all the while aware that a number of linguistic mechanisms such as accent, intonation or syntax (e.g., you are here vs. here you are) may give additional meaning or nuance to a word or sequence of words.

But what about situations where a certain combination of sounds—either random or deliberate—does not merely contribute to, but actually determines the communicative quality and meaning of a word? It is this question Roman Jakobson anticipated when he asked rhetorically: "Does a word simply name the thing in question, or does it imply a meaning such as offering, sale, prohibition, or malediction?" (1959: 232). More to the point, the fact that words contain both sounds and meaning has important implications for how the purpose of those words is interpreted and translated from one culture into another.

Indeed, translation has traditionally been regarded both as a mediator between cultures and as a tool for understanding another language, thereby allowing the recipient of the translated text to get at least a glimpse of the source culture. It has played "an undeniable role in the shaping of cultures, of national identities, and it is the vehicle that may make compatible the strengthening of our group identity and consequent knowledge of our own culture with the sharing and learning of other cultures; cultures and their texts becoming accessible and available to international audiences" (Muñoz-Calvo 2010: 5).

In practice, however, we have all experienced more and less successful translations in our everyday lives, from the title of a film and how it has been

subtitled or dubbed, to how a piece of news—because of the abundance and immediateness of the mass media—is sometimes translated in a way that distorts its content (e.g., the case of machine translation), style, or even ethical dimension (Meschonnic 2011). Such situations amply demonstrate how the act of translation can negate its own purpose, which is, after all, to represent or transmit meaning across cultures.

A task not easily executed successfully in the best of cases, translating can be even more difficult to accomplish when humor is involved. Humor, an important component of culture, tends to pose a particularly serious challenge in translation theory and practice because of its cultural specificity, not to mention the complicated interplay of phonological, morphological, semantic, contextual and cultural factors involved in its production. Such challenges are even more complex in cases where humor is based on sound. Phonological humor or, what is the same, sound-based humor, involves the explicit or deliberate use of the phonological component of language in the semantic configuration of a humorous sequence, (e.g., an onomatopoeia, a deliberate regional accent, an imitation of another language, etc.). Using Raskin's concept of scripts (1985), sound-based humor essentially consists of not one, but two parallel scripts that need to be conveyed in the target language so that the humorous message can be fully preserved in terms of both the cultural and the phonological script. It is often through the translation process, with its numerous constraints, that one is made aware of the semantic intricacies of humor.

Origins of the Research

The idea for the subject of this dissertation topic came to me in the summer of 1995, when as a university student I was fortunate enough to travel through Europe for a solid month on an InterRail ticket. It was during that time that I first became exposed to many different languages and cultures, as it was

my longest trip outside of Spain, my home country. There were six of us traveling and staying in various youth hostels where we met other students, who like ourselves were taking advantage of this exciting opportunity. One of our first stopovers was Munich, where we all gathered around an evening camp fire exchanging bits of conversation with other foreign students. In the midst of the conviviality, we suddenly heard two Hungarian boys starting to laugh uproariously. Curious, the rest of us asked them what was so funny. One of the boys answered that he was telling his friend a comical joke in their language, whereupon some people next to him encouraged him to share it with the rest of us. He agreed to do so, even though he warned us that translating the joke into English would not be anywhere near as funny as it was in Hungarian. He explained that the joke consisted of a question that made reference to a particular language or culture, with the punch line composed of a sequence of sounds that imitated the language mentioned in the question.

Q. Hogy hívják a kínai hentest?
What do you call 'a butcher' in Chinese?
A. Csak Mócsing Csüng
Only fat hanging

As anticipated, the Hungarian boy's translation of the joke into English did not come off: it certainly did not provoke the desired laughter. However, his telling and explanation did allow us to get the hang of it and to see its humorous possibilities.

Interestingly, other people in the group spontaneously started telling similar jokes one after another, like a chain reaction. The interest in these jokes was contagious. The unsuccessful translation of the Hungarian joke into English began to generate jokes by young people from all sorts of different cultures, speaking very different languages (Hungarian, Russian, German, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, etc.). A friend of mine gave an example in Spanish:

Q. ¿Cómo se dice mudanza en árabe?
How do you say 'to move house' in Arabic?
A. Bájame-la-jaula-Jaime
Bring the cage downstairs, James

Once initiated, the linguistic exercise was replicated over and over in different variations, as one after another, the rest of the students volunteered examples of exactly the same type of phonological humor in their own respective languages. And remarkably, besides being able to more or less understand the ingeniousness of the various punch lines in their English translations—the group's *lingua franca*—, we were surprised to see that even though most of us did not understand the languages spoken by the different speakers, we were able to appreciate the joke's structure: consisting of an imitation of a particular foreign language using words from one's own language, and the fact that these clever sound sequences were parodying specific languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Russian, etc.

Even more interesting was the fact that telling such jokes presented a challenge which the various group members were all too willing to take on. For each joke-teller had to make a concerted, and spontaneous, effort to perform a joke by imitating the sounds of the parodied language while using words from their own language, and then to translate the joke for the group into English. Needless to say, as a university language student, I found this experience not only entertaining, but fascinating. I could see how such phonological jokes were linking humor with culture. I also appreciated the role played by translation, and how it allowed me to get an insight both into the phonological structure of the jokes and their relationship to culture. Moreover, I perceived that it would be worth my while investigating if this phonological humor could constitute a more widespread phenomenon. I certainly felt that this experience was inspirational and I was convinced that exploring such jokes would be an interesting way to learn about how we perceive other languages and cultures,

and thus an important research topic that would allow me to study culture, humor and translation at the same time.

Accordingly this dissertation will focus on examining the relationship between sound, meaning and humor through the lens of translation. As Paul de Man famously wrote, "sounds have no natural connection with our ideas, but have all their signification from the arbitrary imposition of men" (De Man 1978: 16). Unquestionably, sounds are carriers of connotative meaning that is both personal and cultural, and often specific of time and place, as Saussure (1916) had demonstrated by showing how the social and the arbitrary depend strictly on each other. Such being the case, the information contained or encoded in sounds carries significance. And yet, to date, there has been little research done on the role of sound—a crucial component of any language—and its constraining effect in the translation of humor. For this reason, in addition to a review of theories dealing with translation and humor, I will establish a multilingual comparison of examples of sound-based humor focusing on the cultural messages that they carry and transmit. Given the wide variety of humorous texts, my concentration will be on phonological jokes, their structure and purpose, and I will use these phonological jokes as heuristic tools for analyzing the interrelationship of sound and meaning within a given humorous context.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The principal objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

1) to illustrate the relevance of the phonological component of language as a cultural and linguistic factor in the configuration of humor, and to describe the relationship between sound and humor through examples in a variety of media;
2) to confirm that translation studies can serve as a tool for analyzing culture;

3) to examine the constraints that the phonological aspects of language can pose on the process of translating humorous texts;
4) to describe and analyze a specific form of verbal humor based on sound that involves a parody of a foreign language using words and phonemes of one's own language, and to find an appropriate term to describe this type of joke, which has received little explicit mention in existing literature;
5) to determine whether such jokes can be classified under the category of punning or whether they might belong in a different category, or categories;
6) to examine such jokes from a linguistic and cultural perspective, and classify them into categories as gleaned from the data, using jokes in Spanish as examples;
7) to extend the descriptive and contrastive analysis of jokes in Spanish to an original corpus of jokes in 30 languages and determine whether there are significant differences in the characteristics of these jokes across languages.

The main hypotheses advanced in this dissertation are the following:

1) the perception of the phonological component of language is often closely related to cultural factors, and sound can play a role in determining the meaning of words;
2) the phonological component of words can sometimes function as a prevalent or even dominant element in the configuration of humor in different textual modes—oral, written and visual—such as literature, journalism, film, television and advertising;
3) the translation of humor requires a broad knowledge of the source and target culture, as well as keen linguistic awareness, especially in those cases where the phonological component of words forms an important component of the semantic message;

4) as short compact texts with encoded cultural implications, jokes facilitate the study and analysis of humor and culture, and thus serve as useful tools for translation and cultural studies;
5) common trends in the configuration of phonological jokes can be found, possibly enabling a classification of their main characteristics;
6) phonological jokes can be found in multiple cultures and in languages that belong to different linguistic branches, and this type of phonological humor is a widespread linguistic and cultural phenomenon;
7) phonological jokes in different languages and cultures share some common characteristics, such as the use of elements of popular culture (proper nouns, geographical and historical references, brand names, etc.).

Methodology

In order to establish an appropriate theoretical framework for this dissertation, I review literature that examines the methods for analyzing and translating humor and how contextual factors such as cultural assumptions may affect the translation of humor. As part of the methodology to describe the relationship between translation and culture, I use Maria Tymoczko's ideas (2010), which focus on the act of translation from a social and descriptive perspective, amplifying the scope of translation rather than narrowing it to a normative framework. Also relevant from a methodological point of view are the approaches applied in the sociological analysis of humor (Kuipers 2008), such as the functionalist approach; conflict approach; symbolic interactionist approach; phenomenological approach; and historical-comparative approach, which I use to outline the possible methods for explaining humor as a sociocultural manifestation.

In order to establish the relevance of sound to meaning, I analyze texts of various types, paying particular attention to cases where the phonological aspect of words constitutes a deliberate part of the message. I demonstrate that this relationship between sound and meaning often occurs in humor, where sound is a key component of comedy. I then proceed to build and analyze an extensive corpus of 'phonological jokes'—a specific type of verbal humor whose unique composition allows me to explore the role of sound within a humorous context. Phonological jokes use words of one's own language for the purpose of parodying the way another language sounds and thereby eliciting laughter. I show that this form of humor exists in multiple languages and appears to be a widespread phenomenon.

In the first part of the analysis of this corpus, I propose a preliminary classification of phonological jokes using the Spanish portion of the corpus. The process of gathering data through interviews with native speakers demonstrates the difficulties involved in obtaining the pertinent linguistic sequences which are the core of my research. When collecting jokes in Spanish, the following steps were taken. First, the researcher explained the background of the research to the potential informant. Second, the researcher presented evidence of a phonological joke in a language of communication familiar to the interlocutor. In this part of the research Spanish was selected as the common language. Third, the informant had to think of an example that would come to mind immediately after comprehending the type of text being asked for. Fourth, if the informant knew of an example at that moment, the researcher asked the informant to write it down in order not to modify how the original text and the spelling of the imitated sounds was understood. Since the informant's native tongue and language of communication between the researcher and the informant were the same (Spanish), the researcher usually did not require an immediate explanation of the joke. Fifth, the researcher and the informant analyzed the joke and agreed on where the punch line was to be

found. They also discussed some of the cultural and contextual implications that could be inferred from the text.

As part of the analysis of the corpus, I examine the factors involved in attempting to translate these jokes into English. I have chosen the English language because of its growing status as a *lingua franca* in academia (Ammon 2001; House 2010; Björkman 2011), in the study of both humor and translation, as well as in the increasingly globalized media.

Subsequently, I extend the analysis of Spanish jokes to jokes in other languages. In this multilingual and contrastive analysis of the second part of the corpus, the process of gathering the data consisted of the following steps. First, the researcher explained the background of the research to the potential informant. Second, the researcher presented evidence of a phonological joke in a language of communication familiar to the interlocutor, e.g., English. Third, the informant had to think of an example that would come to mind immediately after comprehending the type of text being asked for. Fourth, if the informant knew of an example at that moment, the researcher asked the informant to write it down in order not to modify how the original text and the spelling of the imitated sounds was understood. Fifth, since the language of communication was usually English, the informant was asked to give a literal English translation of the text. Sixth, the informant was asked to explain the grammatical function of the individual components of the text so that the researcher could understand how the linguistic elements operate in the text at the lexical and phonological levels. Seventh, the informant was asked to give an explanation of what made the joke humorous, where the punch line lay, and what contextual and cultural implications could be inferred from the text.

While performing the contrastive analysis of examples in the corpus, I review the phonological factors that can help or hinder the translator and conclude with the assertion that sound can function as a constraint in the translation of humor. As part of the methodological approach, I also follow the explanation of the main categories or contexts that anthropologists and

folklorists have used to interpret humor, namely: the cultural context, social context, individual context and comparative context (Oring 2008). Applying these categories to phonological jokes helps identify the factors that contribute to the creation of this type of humor.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the first chapter, **'The Interrelationship between Translation and Culture,'** I survey how different translation theories have been elaborated based on the notion of culture. I begin by surveying what various scholars understand by 'culture' in the context of globalization and the evolving nature of diasporas. I then assess the ways in which translation scholars in the last few decades have attempted to interpret the concept of culture, and how the role of translation as a medium for understanding other cultures has developed. Various theoretical approaches are discussed: from the more traditional frameworks, such as the notion of 'equivalence,' to more recent debates like Reiss and Vermeer's Skopos Theory (1984); Michaela Wolf's (2000) postulates, wherein the translator is no longer seen as a mediator between two different poles, but rather as an individual inscribed under a 'cultural overlapping' that surrounds any act of translation; or Maria Tymoczko's (2010) criticism of the Eurocentric theoretical frameworks of translation studies. These latest ideas have enriched the field by focusing on the act of translation from a social perspective, and by amplifying its scope rather than narrowing it to a normative framework.

In the second chapter, **'The Role of Translation in the Analysis of Humor,'** I examine humor as an inherent component of culture. More specifically, I review existing research on culture and humor, presenting them as symbiotic concepts that can be analyzed through the prism of translation. For this purpose, I review literature that examines how humor can be translated and how contextual factors may affect the translation of humor. Translating humor requires a reflection on the process itself, the type of text, and a degree

of familiarity with a variety of disciplines that may range from linguistics or pragmatics to anthropology and history. For this reason, approaches from related fields such as sociolinguistics and ethnographic studies are included here. I argue that the sociocultural background, which impacts the translatability of any given text, is especially important when translating humor, since humorous texts are built on a series of specific cultural assumptions.

The third chapter, **'The Semantics of Sound within a Humorous Context,'** examines the relationship between sound, humor and culture through examples from multiple media, including film, literature and advertising. Given that humor is configured through the interplay of a series of shared cultural assumptions, translating it demands an interdisciplinary approach. Furthermore, the formal linguistic structure of a given humorous text may be accompanied by a deliberate sound component (e.g., an onomatopoeia, a deliberate regional accent, an imitation of another language, etc.) that imposes further constraints on its translatability. Consequently, sound is a key linguistic and cultural element that needs to be taken into account in the translation process. In order to produce an effective translation, both a broad knowledge of the specific cultures involved and keen linguistic awareness are required. Thus, it is important to preserve the phonological aspects of humor that may be present in the source text so that they can be perceived as humorous by the target language addressee. In other words, translating the cultural component of humor is as important as reconstructing its phonological dimension.

Following is an analysis of specific instances in which sound has a deliberate aesthetic, poetic or semantic purpose within a humorous context, and of cases where the phonological component is prevalent, if not dominant, in the configuration of the humorous script. Examples from different textual modes (oral, written and visual) are used to examine the semantics of sound-based humor, including samples from a television comedy show, a film, a children's novel, press articles, and advertising. I show that in cases where the sound

component has not been fully taken into account, the translation of some humorous texts may appear contrived or unnatural as compared to the original, and I discuss why it may be challenging to fully reproduce and combine such components (the semantic and the phonological) into a single translated message. Finally, I survey the use of sound as a way of representing foreignness in humor using specific instances from the press, television and film, where sound is used in humorous representations of foreign countries and cultures. Thus I demonstrate that sound is not only a crucial aspect of meaning but, also and more importantly, a dimension of language deeply connected to cultural factors and shared assumptions.

The fourth chapter, entitled '**Phonological Jokes as an Example of Cultural Distinctiveness in the Configuration of Humor,**' relates to the previous chapter by introducing a specific type of joke, a 'phonological joke.' Defined as jokes that use words or phonemes of one's own language to imitate and parody the sounds of another language, phonological jokes constitute a distinct category. Yet there are few explicit references to them in existing literature on humor. In general, jokes are very useful for translation theory: as short, compact texts they facilitate the study and analysis of humor in translation. And verbal humor, because of the many extralinguistic elements involved in its production, can be particularly difficult to translate. Thus, I establish a primary framework for the analysis of phonological jokes, using jokes in Spanish as examples, and examining them from a linguistic and cultural perspective. A literal translation into English is included in order to help survey the factors that help or hinder their translatability. Literal translation in this context is similar to what Mona Baker (2001b: 8) calls back-translation.[3] Also provided are a preliminary classification and a contextual

[3] As Mona Baker explains, a back-translation "involves taking a text (original or translated) which is written in a language with which the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar and translating it as literally as possible […] how literally depends on the point being illustrated, whether it is morphological, syntactic or lexical for instance. […] A back-translation can give some insight into aspects of the structure, if not the meaning of the original" (2001b: 8).

analysis of phonological jokes to show that even if cultural realia referred to in the joke are similar in two languages—a factor typically expected to facilitate the translation of humor—the phonological component of sound-based humor can impose additional constraints on the translation process.

The fifth and last chapter, **'Crossing Cultural Boundaries in the Analysis of Humor: Phonological Jokes as a Widespread Phenomenon,'** builds upon the previous one by reviewing a sample of phonological jokes in languages other than Spanish, in order to illustrate the widespread nature of this type of humor. During my research I have found examples in 30 languages and evidence in a further 7, mainly through interviews with native speakers in direct contact with their respective cultures. The languages in which examples were collected for this study are: Afrikaans, Basque, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Italian, Korean, Macedonian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Turkish. What this extensive corpus of over 1000 jokes demonstrates is that sound-based humor is a phenomenon that exists in many unrelated languages and cultures around the world.

Accordingly, I present representative examples to demonstrate how these linguistic sequences operate within each language. I provide an explanation of the cultural assumptions present in each joke, while elaborating on the aspects that facilitate or constrain the translatability of the most representative examples into English. Thus, I illustrate the difficulties associated with translating sound-based linguistic sequences, and comment on the existing relationship between translatability and sociocultural phenomena. As in the previous chapter, I show that phonological jokes are a highly interesting type of humorous text enabling a review of some theoretical points having to do with the translatability of humor, and more specifically verbal humor.

In conclusion, the analysis of phonological jokes through the lens of translation and from a multilingual perspective helps us examine the role of sound as a culturally-bound component of language. As shown by the existence of phonological jokes in multiple unrelated languages, sound can impact the meaning of words and one's perception of them, and it can play an important role in the configuration of humor in various cultures. Sound is, therefore, a key component of meaning and an aspect of language impacted by myriad cultural factors.

Chapter 1. The Interrelationship between Translation and Culture

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I survey the different ways in which translation studies has been used as a tool for interpreting and understanding culture. I start by showing that neither 'culture' nor 'translation' lend themselves to simple definition. Next, I briefly review traditional translation methods such as word-for-word translation, sense-for-sense translation, literal translation, and faithfulness or fidelity translation, often used to transfer the meaning of a text into a different language, or to better understand a given culture. All these traditional methods emphasize translation as an activity focused on the linguistic aspects of a text, and while they do primarily touch on the notion of language and culture as two closely related concepts, they tend to ascribe comparatively greater importance to linguistic aspects than to cultural ones.

Building on such traditional understanding of translation and culture, I describe the subsequent development of concepts such as 'norms' and the notion of 'equivalence,' which redefined translation as more of a cultural activity. I review the translation methods that have attempted to bridge the apparent dichotomy between language and culture, e.g., 'domestication' and 'foreignization' or 'Skopos Theory.' Following, I briefly present some of the different semantic interpretations of the word 'translation,' which makes clear how much the meaning of the word 'translation' can vary across languages and cultures. This also suggests that in speaking of translation, we need to do so from a global perspective, one that ideally includes a cross-linguistic study of the different questions and interpretations posed by researchers of translation theory. Finally, I explain how translation studies has, most recently, moved beyond its conventional role of mediator between languages and between cultures to incorporate insights from other disciplines.

1.2. Translation and Culture

> Translating as an activity and translation as the result of this activity are inseparable from the concept of culture. The translational capacity of culture is an important criterion of culture's specificity. (Torop 2002: 593)

With these words Torop touches on the most salient aspects of translation studies of the last century, with its focus on translation as an intercultural activity entailing not just in-depth knowledge of two or more cultures, but more particularly the interpenetration of disciplines that explain 'culture,' that is, anthropology, sociology, history, ethnographic studies, linguistics, etc., to name just a few. Capacious and unstable, 'culture' is an evolving, ever expanding concept that has been fueled by nationalism, colonialism and, most recently, globalization. Our understanding of culture has been continuously amplified by a host of emerging disciplines and areas of study such as: structuralism, feminism, multiculturalism, urbanism, communications, etc., as well as reflected by and classified through the study of comparative literature, ethnographic studies and art history. Despite the existence of melting pot cities like New York, London, Toronto, Singapore, and Hong Kong one distinguishes among the different identities and cultures that comprise them: Hispanic, Italian, Jewish, Chinese, Muslim, Russian, Hindu, etc., according to their respective set of attitudes, values, beliefs and traditions transmitted through generations. We distinguish cultures by their institutions, their collective mores, their languages with their peculiar intonations and pronunciations, names, cuisines, work ethics, ways of expressing emotion, sense of humor, arts and crafts, and myriad other shared modalities and characteristics that constitute their distinct identity. Indeed, we recognize our own culture and those differing from ours by the arbitrary signs and symbols through which each culture interacts with its environment to create its own

specific context, i.e., "the totality of norms, conventions and opinions which determine the behaviour of the members of a society" (Vermeer's 1989a: 9; quoted in Snell-Hornby 2006: 55).

Often manifested through a language or system of linguistic expression, culture is in itself 'a language,' that is: a net of semiotic relations to be preserved and transmitted, as well as molded and manipulated by means of translation, and therefore changed or adapted. Indeed, it was thought for a long time that the issue was to translate languages *per se*, and that culture could only be examined through the lens of linguistic translation, especially since scholars have for so long regarded translation as the way to gain insight into different cultures. Using translation to decode or study culture has been the traditional way of dealing with the linguistic restrictions generally known as the 'language barrier.' Until it became clear that even in cases of cultures sharing a common language, historians and anthropologists have found themselves having to not so much 'translate,' but rather reconstruct, reinterpret, redefine the cultural parameters that can operate restrictively within two neighboring territories or communities sharing the same language. Indeed, the new awareness is that difficult though translating a language may be, the real challenge is 'translating' a culture.

We see now that not only the notion of translation is changing, but also the notion of culture. The facts are that in our rapidly accelerating globalized world peoples' lives and the environments around them are becoming transformed in numerous ways. New foods, fashions, health and beauty products, machines and electronic equipment, etc., that were unavailable in any shape or form twenty years ago can now be bought in stores or online. Reflecting these new consumer products, mass media is transforming our notion of culture, both in linguistic terms as well as in terms of ideas, attitudes, and values. Common everyday notions of marriage and family, childhood and education, work and play, retirement and old age are all being transformed and blurred to accommodate new realities. We now have not only the concrete

environment that surrounds us but also virtual realities of the Internet and the social networks which form an integral part of our daily lives. This amalgamation of the two realities, the one we live and the one we are compelled to live by the mass media, gives the impression that we are no longer monolingual communities, isolated linguistically and culturally. We are continually bombarded with information about events in remote and hitherto unknown parts of the world. Culture, nations, places once part of our imaginary world have acquired a certain familiarity for us and thus become part of our generational identity, i.e., "aquello que nos hace 'nosotros'" (that which makes us 'us') (Santoyo Mediavilla 1994: 142).

Inevitably, this connectedness to those geographically distant cultures that we now perceive as familiar has also affected the way we express ourselves, what we talk about, and the way we speak. Certain words, names of once exotic places, sounds of new and different languages have become easier to recognize and more accessible as we become aware of the tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity of the planet we all share. And, interestingly, as the mass media continues to inform and thereby form us, we as individuals and as cultures become more acculturated, assimilated and changed by our knowledge of the foreign.

All these changes in our notion of culture inevitably feed into the act of translating, which in this new global context entails a greater degree of awareness in developing an attempt to make a text available to a target audience, whatever the medium. Such an attempt, of course, depends hugely on the translator's knowledge of the culture or cultures involved in the process. "Translators need cultural literacy, communicative language competences and cross-cultural competence as well, because they have to interpret sociocultural meaning in cross-cultural encountrers" (Muñoz-Calvo 2010: 2-3). Indeed, in the absence of such knowledge the translator may be incapable of creating the desired text in the new cultural and linguistic context. Another important factor in the translation of a text is the *destinataire* or recipient. This recipient of the

translated text plays a key role and certainly conditions the efforts of the translator, directing them towards a specific rather than general understandability and purpose within the target culture. Furthermore, the text typology—be it a poem, prose, a joke or advertising copy—may function as a linguistic barrier constricting the translation process. In such cases the translator will have to look for an alternate translation route, or simply give up on this aspect of the text. Clearly, depending on the type of text being recoded into a new language, the different translation methods that can be used to achieve the desired goal may vary. In any event, a successful translation must abide by the established conventions of the target language (TL).

1.3. An Overview of Selected Translation Methods

1.3.1. Traditional Translation Methods

Here I would like to present a brief overview of selected methods that have been traditionally used by translators. My purpose is to show a theoretical background that will enable a more precise understanding of the interconnectedness between translation and culture. Following Shuttleworth's classification in his *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (1997), I explain some general concepts often identified as methods of translation.

1.3.1.1. Word-for-Word Translation

This method of translating entails precise fidelity to the wording of the source text (ST). Dating back to Cicero and Horace, it is considered today an extreme form of literal translation in which a target language (TL) word is substituted for each source language (SL) word, without reference to TL syntactical factors such as word order. Nevertheless, word-for-word translation can be a useful technique to illustrate how the syntax of a foreign language works, or as a

reading aid for people with limited knowledge of a language, and in fact was one of the first methods used to learn a foreign language. Generally, this method does not provide much opportunity to experiment with the outcome of the translation, as the options tend to be limited due to a loss of cultural referents in the translation process. It may seem similar to literary translation, but in fact it is not, since "the problem with this kind of translation is that the outcome may not be meaningful; it could be awkward and discomfited, simply because meaning was not the center of translation" (Shiyab 2006: 28). Besides, according to Jones (2011: 142), there is a cognitive dominance of the different linguistic equivalents that takes place during the translation process. This is more evident, for instance, in the case of poetry where specific elements may need to be maintained in order to adjust to the poetic or aesthetic dimension of the SL.

1.3.1.2. Sense-for-Sense Translation

A general term often identified as free-translation, it is used to describe a type of translation that favors the transfer of meaning of a source text over an accurate reproduction of the original wording. The purpose of such a translation method is to accommodate the needs of the TL reader by producing a text that conforms to the linguistic and textual norms of the TL and culture, and which therefore does not sound foreign.

> The many different types of sense-for-sense translation, technical translation, scholarly translation, literary translation, conference interpretation and so on [. . .] all of them [are] conceived as attempts to convey in the TL a sense equivalent to that of the SL, to convey the SL information to the TL reader in such a way that he or she does not notice that it is a translation since it reads (or sounds) just like an original text. (Robinson 1991: 250)

Hence, more attention is paid to producing a naturally reading target text (TT) than to preserving the source text wording intact. This method underscores the semantic aspect of a message so that how the audience perceives the text is a priority. Thus this translation method is generally more TL oriented than literal translations and is often related to the concept of freedom and creativity (Malmkjær 2005: 87).

1.3.1.3. Literal Translation

This method has been at the heart of most translation controversies where it has been either defended or vigorously attacked, while favoring its opposite, the 'sense-for-sense or free translation.' There is a certain amount of variation in interpreting this term as it is closely related to the word-by-word method. It is generally understood more as a communicative technique than a syntactically focused one. By focusing mainly on the linguistic aspect of the translation, it "ignores the semiotic, pragmatic and contextual connotations of text-structure, while taking into account the linguistic conventions of the target language. While literal translation is not commonly used in translating texts, it is fundamental for the study of language structures" (Shiyab 2006: 28). In this respect Dirk Delabastita makes reference to the ambiguity of this term, and argues that a literal translation: "may either denote one of the many subtypes of translation, or a category in its own right which is perhaps in some respects akin to the general class of translation" (1991: 149).

1.3.1.4. Faithful, Faithfulness or Fidelity Translation

These are general terms used to describe the extent to which a target text can be considered a fair representation of a source text according to certain criteria. Traditionally, a faithful translation has been understood as one that bears a strong resemblance to its source text, usually in terms of either its literal

adherence to source meaning, or its successful communication of the 'spirit' of the original. This method also has to do with the meta-communicative dimension of a text.

> The most salient problem that arises when considering fidelity in translation stems from the obvious and well-known fact that languages—in the context of respective cultures where they operate—are not isomorphic. Firstly, there are obvious differences in the lexicons and grammars of different languages, for instance with 'missing' words in some and an 'abundance' of words around the same referents in others [. . .]. Secondly, while many lexical units and rules of grammar in two languages look similar at first glance there are often subtle differences in their use in context. (Gile 2009: 52)

Although the free-literal dichotomy probably encompasses the methods most frequently encountered in translation, it has been defined in various ways. For instance, some critics have established an attempt to redefine the contrasts between the free and the literal methods, without significantly altering the underlying concepts. This dichotomy pertains partly to the interrelationship between words and meaning, and how a translator tackles a translation problem:

> Words on the one hand and meaning on the other have been regarded as two contradictory, mutually exclusive references, and their very opposition appears to be the basis of the way translation had traditionally been apprehended ever since. The translator has no other choice but to decide on one of these options to the exclusion of the other. (Cosculluela 2003: 106)

In spite of the theories and methods mentioned above, it is widely accepted that both free and literal translation do not need to function in opposition to each other, but rather in combination. In this sense, Newmark's definition of culture is most revealing, since, as he points out, culture is "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (1998: 94). Newmark's preoccupation for the linguistic aspect of translation as regards culture has led him to distinguish 'cultural' from 'universal' and 'personal language,' which he recognizes as broad and fuzzy distinctions, but which nonetheless confirm the interrelationship and interdependence between language and culture.[4] Consequently, the application of one or multiple translation methods may vary according to the purpose of the translation, the text typology, the linguistic context and the linguistic units that may impose additional constraints in translation. The translation process should at least attempt to serve as a mediator between the source text and the target text, in order to adapt and transform the source culture into a new cultural and linguistic reality.

1.3.2. Beyond Traditional Translation Methods

Next, I will present several theoretical frameworks that enable a better understanding of culturally-oriented strategies for the translator to employ during the translation process. To begin with, Eugene Nida (1964) speaks about the formal equivalence or correspondence that focuses attention on the message. According to Nida, a translator striving for formal equivalence needs to allow the source text to speak in its own terms, rather than attempt to adjust it to the circumstances of the target culture. In practice this means using formal rather than functional equivalence whenever possible, i.e., not joining or

[4] Newmark gives several examples to illustrate what he understands by cultural, universal and personal language. For instance he mentions 'mirror' and 'table' as universal, 'monsoon' and 'tagliatelle' are cultural words, and language used to express personal qualities and used in private life would be personal language (1998: 94).

splitting sentences and preserving formal indicators such as punctuation marks, etc. Nida also speaks about dynamic equivalence with special reference to the Bible in order to describe the orientation found in that particular translation process. It is in that regard that the translator seeks to provide a text in which the desired response from the receptor is essentially like the one in the original text, in other words: "Equivalent which points toward the source language message; natural which points toward the receptor language, and closest which binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation" (Nida 1964: 176).

In the last decades of the 20th century the study of translation was often regarded as a branch of applied linguistics or comparative literature (Snell-Hornby 2009: 124), hence some of the terminology borrowed from these disciplines. In a sense, these interdisciplinary connections enriched the translation field by allowing it to access the many different possibilities that could make translation studies a good analytical tool for both literature and linguistic discourse. On the other hand, it also helped translation studies to mold and conform to a discipline of its own.

For instance, Ernst-August Gutt (1991) was more concerned with the linguistic aspects of translation, and for this reason he has elaborated on the differences between direct and indirect translation. He defines direct translation as one of the possible types of translation that function in accordance with Relevance Theory, i.e., the pragmatic framework designed by Sperber and Wilson (1986). They, in turn, view translation as a special instance of the wider concept of communication. Direct translation refers to a process in which the translator remains faithful to the explicit content of the original rather than simplifying it. In this sense, the translator seeks to be close to the content and form of the original to the maximum extent possible. This type of translation eschews explanatory interpolation in the translated text, relying rather on such devices as introductions, notes or glossaries to provide information that the translator considers vital for a full understanding of the original content.

By contrast, indirect translation stands for the strategy used by the translator when the dilemma between the need to give the receptor access to the authentic meaning of the original—a meaning unaffected by the translator's own interpretative effort—and the urge to communicate as clearly as possible is resolved in favor of the latter. An indirect translation created for a communicative context that differs significantly from the original context is likely to include a large amount of additional interpolated explanatory information. And providing such additional information helps the translator focus on the optimal reception of the text by the receptor.

Gideon Toury (1980; 1995), on the other hand, elaborated on the degree of equivalence and distinguished between adequacy and acceptability. The former notion applies if a translator seeks to follow source—rather than target—, linguistic and literary norms. In other words, a translator who is translating adequately will perform only those translational shifts that are truly obligatory, thus producing a target text that retains the source features unchanged whenever possible. The notion of what is obligatory describes the translational norms that operate in the output of a single translation, or which typify the translational practices prevalent in a particular literature at a given time. Although a target text is always a compromise between adequacy and acceptability, translations that lean towards acceptability can also be thought of as fulfilling the requirement of 'reading as an original' written in a TL, rather than of 'reading as the original.'

1.3.2.1. Norms

Toury's (1995: 53-70) theory has also concerned itself with the notion of norms in such a way that they represent a mixture of competence, i.e., the different available options for a translator, and performance, i.e., the actual choices made by the translator. The concept of norms, therefore, is closely related to the decisions the translator makes during the act of translation as they

are related to the "regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type" (1995: 55). Toury distinguishes between two larger groups of norms, preliminary and operational. As he explains:

> 1. Preliminary norms have to do with the translation policy used and include the choice of the types of texts (e.g. literary vs. non-literary), individual source texts, the authors and the languages chosen. In short, these norms have to do with all the different steps that the translator needs to take prior to the act of translation. These need to be selected carefully as they are closely related to the nature of the texts to be translated, and may also have a direct impact on the translation process.
>
> 2. Operational norms are related to the decision-making process during the act of translation. These can be divided into two main types: matricial, which are linked to the textual dimension of the text, e.g., the amount of material translated, its segmentation and distribution: omissions, additions, changes of location and manipulation, etc. And textual-linguistic norms, which deal with the selection of material to formulate or complement the target text, or the material used to replace segments of the original text.

Also, as Toury explains, there are two major sources that can be used to reconstruct translational norms: textual and extra-textual. The textual ones include "the translated texts themselves, for all kinds of norms, as well as analytical inventories of translations (i.e., virtual texts), for various preliminary norms" (1995: 65). On the other hand, the extra-textual translational norms comprise "semi-theoretical or critical formulations, such as prescriptive 'theories' of translation, statements made by translators, editors, publishers, and other persons involved or connected with the activity, critical appraisals of

individual translations, or the activity of a translator or 'school' of translators, and so forth" (1995: 65). Although the concept of norms may be perceived in the first instance as a prescriptive set of rules, Toury emphasized that they actually function as a descriptive mode composed of the different translational patterns that can be extracted by studying and comparing texts. However, Mary Snell-Hornby (2007) had already detected that the concept of norms offered a terminological problem as it probably does not represent what is implied by its very name. Likewise, one of the most recent developments that tries to challenge the notion of norms advanced by Toury in the 1980s is the one developed by Robinson (2011) who sees Toury's pioneering contribution to the field as "the 'positive' version of translational sway, of which the translator's errors have long been a staple of translation criticism" (2011: x). Robinson uses the concept of 'sway' to establish a connection between 'norms,' which according to him could be considered, in the first instance, as a form of 'bias,' since norms are supported and approved by a given community that recognizes them as such. In his theoretical approach, he does not propose that 'norms' are actually 'biases' but rather that both terms can be considered under the umbrella of 'sway.' As he puts it: "the sway of a norm maintained by Group A may be identified as the sway of bias by members of Group B, who, if they do make such a charge will also be inclined to brand translations 'directed and regulated' by those norms as errors" (Robinson 2011: 2).

1.3.2.2. Domestication vs. Foreignization

The theoretical framework developed by Lawrence Venuti (1995) and which establishes a distinction between foreignizing translation and domesticating translation also shows how culture is taken as a premise in the act of translation. The former concept, as its name suggests, designates "an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (Venuti 1995: 20), i.e., a type of

translation in which a target text is produced that deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original and consequently making it less oriented to the target culture in question. The latter, on the other hand, describes "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" (Venuti 1995: 20), i.e., a series of translation strategies in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TL readers and designing the translation according to the conventions of the target language so that the text sounds as natural as possible. As Yang remarks:

> The wild variety of viewpoints presented to be for or against domestication or foreignization are from different perspectives. In fact, both domestication and foreignization have their advantages and disadvantages. Domesticating translation is easier for the readers to understand and accept. However, the naturalness and smoothness of the TT are often achieved at the expense of the cultural and stylistic messages of the ST. Foreignizing translation preserves the ST formal features and in turn informs the readers of the SL-culture, but alien cultural images and linguistic features may cause an information overload for the reader. In a word, both domestication and foreignization entail losses, as losses are inevitable in the translation process. (2010: 79)

Besides the binary distinction between domestication and foreignization, the notion of invisibility (Venuti 1995) is important here, as this term describes the translator's role in preparing a target text likely to be acceptable in a target culture. This is achieved by means of a conscious adoption of a fluent, natural-sounding TL style, and by the adaptation of a target text to conform to target discourse types, and also, as we will see in the following chapters when we analyze the translation of humor, it will need to adhere to communicative

restrictions given by the type of text translated so that it functions as semantically equivalent.

1.3.2.3. The Notion of Equivalence

Given its inextricable relationship with the term culture, we find in the notion of 'equivalence' one of the most problematic concepts that have emerged in translation studies in the last three decades. As Mona Baker explains (2001a: 77), some theorists (Catford 1965; Nida and Taber 1969; Toury 1980; Rabadán 1991; Pym 1992, 1995; Koller 1995) have made use of this concept in the sense of 'equivalence relations' while others have either preferred not to use it, because of its ambiguous meaning, presenting it as irrelevant (Snell-Hornby 1988) or even as a dangerous word for translation studies (Gentzler 1993). For these reasons the word 'equivalence' has become widely used among translators to simply identify: "a relationship between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) that allows the TT to be considered a translation of the ST in the first place" (Baker 2001a: 77).

In spite of its common use, this dichotomous view regarding the term of 'equivalence' may have to do with the very nature of its meaning. Although it seems logical to talk about equivalence in one language or another, it is difficult to transform this notion into a tangible assumption—precisely because what may be the representational aspect of language in a given culture need not necessarily correspond to another. Anthony Pym (2009: 83) illustrates this with a series of good examples, as he explains: "Friday the 13th is unlucky day in English-language cultures, but not in most other cultures. In Spanish, the unlucky day is Tuesday the 13th. [. . .] The color of death is mostly black in the West, mostly white in the East. A nodding head means agreement in western European, disagreement in Turkey." In these examples, from the perspective of 'cultural equivalence' we see that the problem with the notion of equivalence is that it can comprise many different layers of meaning. Besides, as Rabadán

(1991: 63) argues, it also includes both the social and situational aspects of the translation.

In this sense, we could argue whether it might be (im)possible to find an absolute equivalence between two languages in view of the different factors that may be operative not only from a cultural point of view but also from a lexical, syntactical, morphological or even phonological one. Equivalence may also be questioned in terms of its appropriateness according to a specific communicative situation because of the register used. Even if we accept that equivalence is possible at a cultural level, it would be revealing to see how the representational aspect of language, its symbolic value or its metaphorical range, that may be perceived as equivalent in the first instance, may not entirely function as such in another language. This is especially relevant in the case of idiomatic expressions or metaphorical language, where "one finds it most difficult to come to terms with the substitution of a receptor-language's equivalent for the source language message [. . .] for the simple reason that here, unlike elsewhere, the receptor-language's equivalent may bear little resemblance to the original information" (Sin-wai and Pollard 1995: 573). According to Sin-wai and Pollard (1995: 573), this is what Nida (1964) refers to by explaining that the expressions have a 'semantically exocentric' nature:

> Most combinations of words are not lexical units, but rather what may be called semantically endocentric phrases, of which the meaning of the whole is deducible from the meanings of the parts; e.g., *he is in the house*, *I want something to eat*, and *between London and New York*. On the other hand, when combinations of words constitute single lexical units they are semantically exocentric. In such a unit the meaning is not traceable to the signification of the parts or to their arrangement, but apply to the units as a whole; e.g., *he is in the doghouse* and *between the devil and the deep blue sea*. [. . .] Fortunately, languages often supply clues as to whether

> expressions are endocentric or exocentric. [. . .] Also, the stylistic form often provides clues to the exocentric character of certain expressions. (1964: 95)

For example, in English we can use an idiomatic expression to refer to something easily achievable by saying: "It's a piece of cake." If we look for a term in Spanish we could use the expression, "*Es pan comido*," with a very similar meaning that could be regarded as plausibly 'equivalent.' However, the degree of equivalence between the two linguistic sequences, and its correspondence in terms of what both expressions may represent in the collective memory of the speakers of both cultures, could be challenged. Yet, while the Spanish metaphor may function as equivalent to the one in the source culture, we can ask whether such equivalence might be perceived by the listener who, not being familiar with the idiomatic expression in question may or may not be able to retrieve the message. Let's consider the following example:

Idiom in English	**Equivalent Idiom in Peninsular Spanish**	**Degree of Equivalence**
It's a piece of **cake**!	1. *¡Es pan comido!* (lit. trans.: It is as easy as eating bread!)	1. Differences existing at the representational level: 'cake' is substituted for '*pan*' (bread).
	2. *¡Está tirado!* (informal context, differences in register and use) (lit. trans.: it's a cinch!)	2. In the second example, '*tirado*' (thrown) the past participle of the verb '*tirar*' (to throw) is used to express the meaning of 'easy,' in a way 'it would be as easy as throwing something,' a not very strenuous action. In the third example, the representational level is almost identical, but in

		this case there is no use of idiomatic or metaphorical meaning.
	3. ¡Es facilísimo! (equivalence at a functional level that would enable communication) (lit. trans.: it's very easy!)	3. Non-equivalency at the lexical level, although equivalent at the functional level. Linguistic differences in the use of both expressions, e.g., register, as the Spanish translation loses the idiomaticity of the language of the ST.
Idiom in English	**Equivalent Idiom in Peninsular Spanish**	**Degree of Equivalence**
That really takes the **cake**! (US mainly) / That's the last straw! (UK)	*¡Esto es el colmo!* ('*un colmo*' is a heap, that which rises above the brim of a measure of grain, flour, etc., or an over-measure)	Differences at the representational level within the same language American vs. British English. Different expression in Spanish similar at the functional level.
You can't have your **cake** and eat it!	1. *¡No se puede estar en misa y repicando!* (lit. trans.: One cannot attend the mass and ring the bells at the same time) 2. *¡No se puede nadar y guardar la ropa!* (lit. trans.: One cannot swim and keep one's clothes on at the same time) 3. *¡No se puede tener todo en esta vida!* (lit. trans.: One cannot have it all in this life)	Idiomatic expressions with the same metaphorical meaning or perceived as equivalent, but with very different representational levels. Except for the third expression which is more explanatory, the word 'cake' functioning as an object is substituted here by different actions 'to attend the mass / to ring the bells / to swim / to keep one's clothes on'
To sell or go like hot **cakes**	*Venderse como rosquillas* (lit. trans.: To sell like a typical Spanish donut)	Idiomatic expression with the same metaphorical meaning perceived as equivalent, and

		with a similar representational level ('hot cakes' is substituted by 'rosquillas', a typical Spanish donut.

As we see in the table, the lack of equivalence would also be applicable to other expressions in English that build their metaphorical meaning around the same idea, 'a cake,' and whose metaphor often represents something desirable or pleasant. It is challenging to fully represent each reference and its context in translation. Even though 'equivalent' expressions in English have been used to illustrate the similarities or differences between the two languages, the resulting translations cannot offer an accurate picture of the degree of equivalence between the different expressions. It is not easy to categorize what we understand by equivalence, and these examples illustrate that when the language is idiomatic or metaphorical the degree of equivalence could be diminished, given the many semantic and cultural implications that may be operative in the configuration of meaning.

1.3.2.4. Skopos Theory

As Mona Baker (2001a: 161) points out, in recent decades translation theory has started to detach itself from devising a series of normative rules for translators, since "several different [. . .] approaches to translation have been developed, attempting to trace in detail the actual process of translation, to describe how translators actually translate, rather than telling translators how they ought to translate" (Baker 2001a: 161). As a result, there have been successful attempts to develop new theoretical approaches that could provide a better model for representing the translation activity. These new approaches are inextricably related to cultural studies, anchored as they are in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. What is new about these approaches is that they emphasize more the process than the result of the translation, thus emerging as

alternatives to theories that have traditionally focused mainly on the linguistic level of the text without taking into consideration the cultural factors that surround the translation process.

Holz-Mänttäri's 'translatorial action' (1984) and Reiss and Vermeer's Skopos Theory (1984) give examples of some of these new ideas that have enriched the field of translation studies by focusing on the act of translation from a social perspective, and amplifying its scope rather than narrowing it to a normative framework. As Jeremy Munday explains (2008: 77-79), the model proposed by Holz-Mänttäri (1984) takes into account concepts such as communication theory and action theory, aspects that adjust to the range of different situations a translator may encounter. The most salient aspect of this theoretical framework is that it sees translation as a holistic activity: from its main purpose to its outcome, thus encompassing a process of human interaction that involves intercultural communication: "[It] is not about translating words, sentences or texts but is in every case about guiding the intended co-operation over cultural barriers enabling functionally oriented communication" (Holz-Mänttäri 1984, 7-8, quoted in Munday 2008: 78).

Following in the same direction, Skopos theory points directly to the goal or *skopos* of a translation. For this reason, its theoretical approach:

> focuses above all on the purpose of the translation, which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This result is the TT, which Vermeer calls the *translatum*. Therefore, in skopos theory, knowing why a ST is to be translated and what the function of the TT will be are crucial for the translator. (Munday 2008: 79)

As Munday (2008: 80) indicates, the basic underlying rules that would apply to a translation that focuses on its skopos are:

1. A *translatum* or target text is determined by its *skopos*;
2. A TT is an offer of information (*Informationsangebot*) in a target culture and TL concerning an offer of information in a source culture or SL;
3. A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clear reversible way;
4. A TT must be internally coherent;
5. A TT must be coherent with the ST;
6. The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule predominating.

This theory has been regarded as a more faithful approach to conveying the meaning and the purpose of a translation, given that its focus of priority is on the result, and on how the result of a translation that has focused on its skopos may be perceived as coherent in a target culture, i.e., "as an act of communication across cultural barriers, the main criteria being determined by the specific function of the translation for its recipient" (Snell-Hornby 2006: 59).

We constantly question the nature of what is understood by 'culture' and its operational parameters. Consequently, translating seems no longer only about adapting or making data linguistically accessible; it is also about constructing and designing an array of non-linguistically-oriented strategies that need to be reoriented according to the needs and cultural requirements of the target audience from a broad perspective. In this regard, more recent steps have been taken to expand the sociological dimension of translation by incorporating into its theory new disciplines, e.g., ethnography, a field of research half-way between sociology and anthropology, which suggests that the role of the translator as 'mediator between cultures' has evolved or changed, especially as regards translation practice (Limon 2010: 29), given that

globalization has become a tangible reality affecting the true nature of what we understand by 'culture.'

1.4. Revisiting Translation Studies as a Cultural Phenomenon in the Context of Globalization

In the last decade, we have witnessed a new, global approach to translation that has emerged because of the influence of globalization, among other factors, which can be defined in general terms as:

> the growing interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all aspects of society [. . .]. For most non-academic commentators, globalization is first and foremost about the development of a global-scale, capitalist free market that is entwining economic activity across national borders in new and unprecedented ways. From an academic perspective, however, it has a plethora of further usages. It is applied to various different dimensions of social life in the contemporary world, spanning cultural, technological, informational, environmental and political transformations—to name but a few of the more significant spheres of globalization's conceptual reach. (Jones 2006: 2)

The importance of studying culture from a global perspective has made me appreciative of Andrew Chesterman's cross-cultural research as a vital piece of scholarship helping us to understand the very notion of translation. In reading Chesterman's article "Interpreting the Meaning of Translation" (2006), I found his information and theory invaluable for understanding how and why the process of translation may not be exactly the same in all languages and in all cultural traditions and how the very act of translating is inextricably related to the notion of culture. In fact, Chesterman shows how the very word

'translation,' as understood by different linguistic communities, offers important semantic differences. To demonstrate these differences he embarks on a contrastive etymological journey around the globe, only to conclude that the assumption that translation is not a universal concept is not an obvious one. As he explains the different nuances in meaning of the word 'translation' in languages that are unrelated to each other, such as Korean, Hungarian or Arabic, he emphasizes the numerous etymological characteristics that distinguish one linguistic tradition from another. In doing his research Chesterman (2006) gathered data from different language families starting with the Indo-European languages, where he already observed important nuances in how the term 'translation' is used.

1. Classical Greek *metapherein*, Latin *transferre*, English *translate;*
2. German *übersetzen*, Swedish *översätta*, Czech *překladat;*
3. French *traduire*, Italien *tradurre*, Spanish *traducir*, Russian *perevesti*. (Chesterman 2006: 5)

Continuing his analysis on the etymology and the actual use of the word 'translation' in different languages, he mentions the Uralic language family in which the word for 'to translate' in Hungarian, *fordítani,* means 'to turn something to the other side,' similar to the Finnish *kääntää* 'to turn,' thus possessing a meaning different from the terms used in many other modern European languages. For the Altaic language family, he mentions the Turkish words *tercüme etmek* meaning 'mediation.' For Japanese, it is *honyaku* for the written tradition and *tsuuyaku suru* for oral tradition, while the Korean word *tong yeok hada* also carries the meaning of 'mediation.' The same notion of 'mediation' is applicable to Arabic, whereas the words for 'translation' in Mandarin Chinese are *yì* or *fānyi* and have the basic meaning of 'flutter,' i.e., movement. For the Austro-Asiatic family, Vietnamese uses words that are cognate with Chinese and, therefore, with a similar meaning. For the Malayo-

Polynesian family the terms are borrowed from Arabic, and for the Dravidian language family Tamil emphasizes the notion of 'transfer, change, turn over,' but uses the same term for written and oral modes. As Chesterman explains:

> Most of the languages in this sample have different terms for oral and written translation, which suggests different ways of conceptualizing these activities. The oral mode is of course historically older. The etymologies of terms denoting interpreting seem to display the feature of mediation more frequently than those denoting written translation. (2006: 9)

Speaking of the various interpretations encountered, he also states that: "not all these interpretations give the same priority to the preservation of sameness which characterizes the words denoting 'translation' in many modern Indo-European languages" (Chesterman 2006: 10). Apart from the similarities or differences contained in the concept of translation, Chesterman suggests that in speaking of translation we need to do so from a global perspective, one that includes a cross-linguistic study of the different questions and interpretations posed by researchers of translation theory. Such a perspective not only serves to enrich the research, it also confirms a more realistic and universal point of view for academia, one that finds justification in our increasingly globalized world.

A related reason bearing on the importance of studying translation from a global perspective is cultural diversity and the unstable and evolving nature of culture, following David and Muñoz-Basols:

> in the 21st century, in the context of globalization, diasporas continue to loom large. The question is how they are being affected in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact (Held 1999: 15), and especially in the quality of their reception and adjustment within 'host' countries. Although globalization has

> already begun to register major changes in people's lives, we are currently living a period of transition, rapid change and challenge consisting of major economic, political, ecological, climactic, social crises, together with almost daily advances in technology and communications. So that the full enormity of globalization with its unwieldy and unpredictable effects, unclear structure and parameters, has yet to unfold. [. . .] In short, technology and globalization notwithstanding, the diaspora narrative continues relentless and unremitting, generating a multitude of sub-narratives, each one unstable and specific to place and moment, each a distinct and idiosyncratic language system of pain and hardship with its own history and tradition, its own socioeconomic and political underpinnings. The Bengali Diaspora of Calcutta is no more comparable to the case of Albania's massive emigration than the Haitian Diaspora can be compared to the Palestinian narrative of return, or to any of the various diasporas around the world today (i.e., the Philippine in Canada, the Hispanic in the United States, the Turkish in Germany, the Japanese in Peru, the Algerian in France, the Indian Diaspora in Malaysia, the Russian Diaspora in Moldavia, the Chinese in Australia, or the Roma in Spain, Italy, and Croatia, etc.). (2011: xiii, xvi, xvii)

In spite of the more tangible cultural diversity, we have always been surrounded by and our own experience or throughout history, most of the theoretical frameworks used by academia, at least in the past, have come mainly from Western traditions, thus ignoring how translation has been used and developed in non-Western cultures. As a result, the very validity of translation studies as a cultural discipline has been questioned. Accordingly, globalization is begging for a redefinition of the parameters that have governed

translation studies in the last decades. Referring to what he calls 'metalanguage,' Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer explain:

> We thus talk and write *about* translation(s) and our knowledge about translation(s). At the same time, translation can also act to interrogate the metalanguage used by other scholarly disciplines. Some of the metalingual (sometimes metalinguistic) terms we use in our discourse are tributary to other sources, terms *in* or *derived from* other languages. Metalingual considerations can thus become a metatranslational matter too, one which is not going to evaporate in our era of globalization and massive language contacts. Also, time has come to challenge the so-called Eurocentric bias of Translation Studies by exploring the diversity of 'non-Western discourses' on and practices of translation. (2009: 1; emphasis in the original)

The fact is that the discipline of translation studies has continued to evolve, even though it still needs to be redefined from a more global perspective that will help it to become more effective in term of reconstructing a theory applicable to a multiplicity of different cultural and linguistic contexts. This is what Maria Tymoczko (2003; 2006; 2007; 2010) has promoted in the last decade by advocating for an enlargement of the field of translation studies that would represent its status in the current era. For instance, Tymoczko (2010: 113) gives the example that Chesterman's (2007) recent theory on the memes of translation is based on Eurocentric translation history. On the other hand, she further explains that "it is not that Eurocentric models of translation are bad in and of themselves so much as that they are located knowledge—tied to space, history and particular interests—and hence incomplete. Their dominance has also skewed the development of translation studies" (2010: 113). As she further explains, most of the scholarship in translation studies has been built on:

> Eurocentric ideas, assumptions, and experience about the nature of translation as both process and product [. . .]. The frames and memes used in Translation Studies—its largest conceptual structures—are built almost exclusively on data from Western Europe, data that do not even cover all cases of translation in Eurocentric contexts; these data, frames and memes are hence very restricted. As a consequence, therefore, the materials used thus far in Translation Studies are inadequate for constructing adequate international translation theories. Conceptual metaphors structuring Eurocentric ideas of translation are both the cause of this theoretical inadequacy and the vehicle for sustaining Eurocentric conceptual dominance in Translation Studies. (2010: 113)

As a result, Tymoczko (2010: 114) criticizes the "pretheoretical assumptions" of traditional translation theories that she considers "Eurocentric" instead of the "international ideas, conditions, practices, and histories" that she considers necessary and essential for translation theory to take into account in the 21st century. Based on her criticisms of the tendencies of the Western approach, I will elaborate on the ideas that have contributed to narrowing the scope of the scholarship on translation studies during many decades. These ideas are:

1. "Translators are necessary in interlingual and intercultural situations; they mediate between two linguistic and cultural groups" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). This statement has been at the core of numerous approaches in translation theory. Hence, many theoretical frameworks have presented the act of translation using the 'black box' metaphor as a way to illustrate how translation operates from one culture to another, and in which the translator reconstructs a

message without paying closer attention or knowing what happens to it during the process. By giving a priority to the result, rather than considering the factors that have contributed to achieving a specific outcome, the translator fails to relate to the experience and to what can be learned from the process. For this reason, the role of the translator as a mediator between two cultures or linguistic communities has not always been clear, and its validity recently questioned in areas of knowledge such as the sociology of translation. Consequently, when talking about translation, scholars and practitioners alike must bear in mind that the constantly evolving definition of the word culture forces an ongoing redefinition of translation studies, especially since 'a given culture' may also be an amalgam of other cultures, with the result that 'culture' remains a blurred term. In this sense the linguistic reality of a source text may also be composed of a linguistic complexity akin to that of the cultural notion, but which has more to do with the linguistic variety of repertoires and with different non-uniform communities of speakers using the same language. Therefore the role of the translator as someone 'in between' is questionable—a fact that seems to be a central issue for Tymoczko (2003), and which she explains in her essay by questioning precisely 'in what sense the translator is in between.' She recognizes that the ideology of translation is complex and difficult to categorize since it results from "the layering of the subject of the source text, the speech acts of the source text, the representation of the content by the translator, and the speech acts of the translation itself, as well as to resonances and discrepancies between these aspects of the source text and target text as utterances" (2003: 181).

2. "Translation involved primarily written texts" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). In order to illustrate how translation operates from one culture to another, various theories in translation studies have considered written texts as their main source. Yet in so doing many other cultural aspects of language also important to understanding this process have been left out or missed. For instance, in

many cases, translation studies have not been taking into consideration what the role of translation has been in the oral tradition that accompanies any given culture. In recent years the scope of translation studies has been amplified to incorporate other types of textual modes, e.g., studies in interpreting, dubbing and subtitling, where there may be other factors that affect the translation process. These may include: text cohesion, the audio-visual dimension, tone of voice, accent, language style, emphasis, music, sound effects, timing and synchronization, verbal vs. non-verbal components, viewing behavior, etc., and which demonstrate that translation can operate at almost any mode and level of communication, not just at the level of the written text. Thus, it is not sufficient to simply concentrate on the analysis of written texts without taking into consideration other possibilities which may contribute to enriching the process, if only to correctly categorize translation studies as a more realistic and comprehensive field of study. Moreover, a written text can also include features from orality. In this sense these aspects may well contribute directly or indirectly to the final written product. For example, although a dialogue in a novel constitutes a written text, it is, at the same time, a representation of the speaker's oral performance. Accordingly, for a given text to be translated, a translator must be able to create a second text that aims to represent "locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces determined by relevant factors in the receptor context" (Tymoczko 2003: 182).

3. "The primary text types that translators work with have been defined and categorized" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). As explained above, it might not be appropriate to state that the text types that translators use have been fully categorized or defined, since in doing so there may be many different texts possibly left out in the process. Also, depending on the nature of the text, there may be many different modes that can contribute to its configuration, and that may not be completely represented in translation, e.g., the correlation between images, sounds, lip movement in dubbing, etc. How language relates to the

listener's experience may also allow for new possibilities if one considers the need for translation to be as realistic and representational as possible in order to cover diverse needs. This can be seen, for instance, in the case of subtitles given that audio-visual language transfers cannot be defined as only meant for one type of viewer or listener, since as De Linde and Kay explain: "there are two distinct types of subtitling: intralingual subtitling (for deaf and hard-of-hearing people) and interlingual subtitling (for foreign language films). [. . .] While it is often assumed that interlingual subtitles serve all viewers adequately, in practice this is not the case. Interlingual subtitle rates are too high for many deaf viewers" (1999: 1).

4. "The process of translation is a sort of 'black box': an individual translator decodes a given message and re-codes the same message in a second language" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). This 'magical box' where one thing happens on one side and another happens on the other side, without really knowing for sure what the process is all about, has functioned as a metaphor to represent what happens to a message during the translation process. However, how a message is decoded, by whom, for what purpose, and likewise what happens at the same level on the other side of the box, are also important aspects inextricably linked to any act of translation. For this reason it is not only the process that matters, but also the context that surrounds it within its overarching goal of communication. In such a case, the number of layers that appear to contribute to the outcome of a translation may be distinctive in nature, and are a good example of the complex phenomenon translation constitutes *per se*. The translation process may include aspects that are—to name a few—cognitive, pragmatic, semantic, semiotic, discursive, stylistic, literary and cultural.

5. "Translators are generally educated in their art and they have professional standing; often they learn their craft in a formal way connected with schooling or training that instructs the translator in language competence, standards of

textuality, norms of transposition, and so forth" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). As Tymoczko suggests, this idea is also questionable, since even though a translator may have received instruction in a particular area or as part of a school of translators, or may even have been instructed under a specific theoretical framework, the act of translation is a decision-making process governed by a series of strategies that the translator needs to adopt individually. The translator's individual decisions are determined in many ways by the nature of the text to be translated, its purpose, the target audience, etc. As a result, it cannot be stated that any one group of translators would perform a given task in exactly the same way, since there may be variations in terms of the cultural or linguistic experiences that a translator may have had before, i.e., the genre of a text or the lexical repertoire that a translator may possess, etc. The degree of creativity that a translator is able to employ can also be taken into account here, as it is a factor important to the act of translating. Creativity is especially relevant, for example, in literary translation and in challenging communicative contexts such as humor, as will be illustrated in the following chapters. The degree of creativity and how it may function in a target culture has been indirectly addressed by Nida (1964) in his concept of 'dynamic equivalence.' As explained before, 'equivalence' has proven to be a challenging concept considering how it has been understood or used in translation theory during the last decades. In Nida's approach, equivalence refers specifically to the response to the target text, as opposed to a response to the source text. Thus the translator may decide to be more or less creative to achieve this objective. However, it is clear that the degree of creativity may vary from one translator to another, as it is very unlikely that two translators would tackle a text or a linguistic problem in exactly the same manner. This creativity, for instance, would also contribute to explaining how the craft used by the translator would not only vary based on the expertise and knowledge acquired in the past, but would also include the psychological idiosyncrasies that may exist among people and how they relate to the communicative act. Also, we could mention

here the concept of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1991) related to how a translator would operate, given that his/her *habitus* would be primarily conditioned by instruction rather than by experience. And Robinson's recent criticism of translation studies also looks in this direction through the 'somatics' of translation, i.e.,

> the ways in which the decision made by translation commissioners, translators, and the critics and ordinary readers of translations are guided by 'shared evaluative affect.' The reticulation of such affect through a group, or what I call the somatic exchange, is my model of all social regulation—the channel by which such things as the meaning of a word or phrase, the correctness or not-quite-correctness of a linguistic structure or ideological formulation and the appropriateness of a response are governed by the group. (2011: ix)

Hence in the case of the translator, instruction as well as experience come into practice as a result of the skills the translator may have acquired through both training and individual life experiences.

6. "Currently translation is entering a completely new phase and assuming radically new forms because of cultural movements and diasporas associated with globalization and because of the hybridity of the ensuing cultural configurations" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). It is not so much a completely new 'phase' that translation is entering, but a situation whereby certain cultural trends that have always existed to some extent are becoming more frequently noticed by translation scholars. For indeed, some of these aspects, such as the phenomenon of diaspora, have been perceived in the last decade as more relevant to translation theory because of the influence globalization has exerted

on cross-cultural communication and its impact, from a linguistic point of view, on the configuration of societies. As Shiyab concludes:

> at the translation level, globalization has impacted the lives of everyone, including the profession of translation and the lives of translators. With the new technology and the emergence of new words and concepts, translators have to incorporate globalization into their daily practices. At the cultural level, translation can bridge the gap between peoples and nations, and globalization has contributed in a more effective way towards understanding the source language and culture. (2010: 10)

And yet, diasporas have always existed: there have always been communities of speakers integrated into different cultures, since "small concentrations of ethnic and linguistic groups have always been found in surprising places—Lebanese in West Africa, Japanese in Brazil and Welsh in Patagonia" (*The Economist*, November 19-25, 2011, p. 13). In this sense, it might not be plausible to refer to this phenomenon as a completely 'new phase' within the discipline of translation studies. It is only because of our perception of diasporas as more frequent and large scale in the 21st century that scholars have started to take this cultural factor more into consideration within the theory and the practice of translation.

> Diasporas have been a part of the world for millennia. Today two changes are making them matter much more. First, they are far bigger than they were. The world has some 215m first-generation migrants, 40% more than in 1990. If migrants were a nation, they would be the world's fifth-largest, a bit more numerous than Brazilians, a little less so than Indonesians. Second, thanks to cheap flights and communications, people can now stay in touch

> with the places they came from. A century ago, a migrant might board a ship, sail to America and never see his friends or family again. [. . .] [Today's] migrants do not merely benefit from all the new channels for communication that technology provides; they allow this technology to come into its own, fulfilling its potential to link the world together in a way that never could if everyone stayed put behind the lines on maps. No other social networks offer the same global reach. (*The Economist*, November 19-25, 2011, p. 76)

Consequently, diasporas are configuring a more tangible reality of cultural contact compared to what used to be the case in the past, especially since technology has enabled us to live in closer proximity to one other. As David and Muñoz-Basols explain:

> The message of history with its evolving and capacious meanings tells us that diasporas may be integral to the human condition, existing as far back as recorded history and surely before that [...]. Almost from the outset the term 'diaspora' included such diverse groups as settlers, colonizers, banished slaves, victims, as well as tradesmen and others in search of a better life. What they all had in common was a collective identity: the notion of their 'old country' buried deep in language, religion and tradition, claiming their memory and their emotions by giving them a sense of allegiance and belonging that sustained them in their travails [...]. This fact of coming from 'someplace else,' thus harboring a separate identity from that of their host culture, was what they had to negotiate if they were to cross the boundary, perceived or real, into their surrounding environment in order to 'make a life.' (2011: xi)

One need only to think of how much we are learning about different parts of the world, and how many new words or concepts we have seen incorporated into our own respective languages because of the mass media and their impact both on language and culture today; something that will be amply demonstrated in the analysis of phonological jokes in chapters 4 and 5. Also, it is true that, while always present in many different European countries, the diasporic dimension within society did not appear as salient as it does today. Diasporas having been generally regarded as minority phenomena rather than as an inherent and important cultural presence, it used to be easier for scholars to deal with translation as a discipline dealing with homogeneous groups of people both as a source and as a target culture—even though it was clear that the theory would not be entirely accurate but somehow incomplete.

However, technology is now functioning as a reminder to scholars of the importance and complexity of the cultural reality in which we live. A multicultural reality that not only materializes with the diasporic experience, but also in the sociological dimension of a given culture regarding the diversity of languages, customs, attitudes and ways of life that technology is contributing to mold and affect. As Martin Fuchs reminds us, "people relate to others, and even interact with them, across and through differences, across boundaries—differences or boundaries [...] between discourses, between cultural contexts, between social positions, or between social fields (subsystems or institutions)" (2009: 26).

Indeed, these new boundaries have led to the development of new trends rather than new phases in translation studies with, for example, its new field of 'localization,' a recent area of study still under development but with a direct connection to globalization.[5] Certainly this new area within translation studies

[5] Anthony Pym explains that the term "does not appear in Shuttleworth and Cowie's *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (1997)" (2004: 29), and while there is no direct mention of 'localization' as a term *per se* (Pym 2004: 29) in the first edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker 1998, 2001), the revised edition which was published in 2008 (Baker and Saldanha)

defined as: "the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and locale of a foreign market, and the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow" (Baker and Saldanha 2008: 157), requires a definition and understanding of globalization. More precisely, as Shiyab argues, "the debate now remains between those who believe that assimilation, within the global system, remains highly unlikely and those who believe that globalization will lead to internationalization" (2010: 3). But how we define and understand globalization, given the interconnectedness of both globalization and localization, can result in an even more complex relationship between localization and translation studies. This is correctly perceived in the definition used by Pym: "Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold" (2004: 29). A good example of localization can be found, for instance, in hardware and software products where "the products are most often first developed in English and only then localized into the respective languages. The languages are sometimes divided according to their market importance into three or four tiers. Most software companies usually start by having their products localized into FIGS (French, Italian, German, Spanish) as well as Japanese" (Mazur 2007: 342). In this sense, it is clear that localization and globalization can be related and even interdependent since: "Globalization is [also] business-driven in its essence, though its definitions have not been settled down and have varied across different fields and social situations" (Chuang 2010).[6]

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devotes several pages to explaining how the term originated. Likewise, it is worth noting that in a review of the book by Bert Esselink (2000) *A Practical Guide to Localization*, Pym claims that "The localization terms have not developed within mainstream Translation Studies" (2002: 191).

[6] In this regard Shiyab comments that, "the effect of globalization had a tremendous linguistic and social impact on translation or translation studies simply because globalization necessitated translation. Nowadays, there are more demands on translation services requested by educational institutions and private companies than any other time, simply because parts of the world are becoming interested in one another due to many reasons, i.e., world conflicts and clashes, world economic crises, shared concerns, common interests, etc. This was triggered

7. "Translations can be identified as such: translation theory has defined the object of its study" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). The fact is that, beyond the new trends that are developing in the discipline—briefly explained in the previous point—, this idea that translation theory can be simply defined is certainly problematic in view of the complexity of the act of translation and the myriad challenges it can pose. It is already difficult to categorize translation from a terminological point of view, as it has been suggested at the beginning of this section following Chesterman's ideas (2006), but also given the diverse factors involved in the source text, the process and its final outcome. Hence the difficulty of identifying and isolating the object of study in translation studies: the many communicative aspects surrounding the translated text that require consideration.

8. "The parameters of the relationship between the source text and translation have been delineated, even though debate still remains on the particulars" (Tymoczko 2010: 114). Clearly, while we are not able to know exactly what happens inside the 'black box' of translation, we are also not in a position to explicitly indicate the parameters operating between the source and the target text, as these may vary substantially if we consider different modes, types of texts, languages, social contexts or cultures.

Manifestly, from the various points of criticism in the outline above, it is difficult to conceptualize the discipline of translation without falling into at least one of those trap-like categories, especially since they have been so often used as part of numerous different theoretical vantage points. But in many ways they have helped us to see translation as a process not easily described:

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through the need for technology, which has helped, to a large extent, reduce the cost of disseminating or exchanging information. This in turn has led to two things: one is the spread of English as a world language, and the second is the global demand on translation" (2010: 7).

> These assumptions are particularly problematic in countries that are plurilingual and that have widespread multilingualism, and they are frequently inoperative in countries where cultural forms and genres are quite different from Eurocentric ones. They also ignore histories of diaspora and hybridity and they exclude practices divergent from those consonant with dominant contemporary Eurocentric models. Thus, for example, they fail to adequately account for translation in most oral cultures, yet such conditions are more typical of the world than the norms of literacy. (Tymoczko 2010: 114-115)

That said, it begs the question: Has the role of mediator between cultures traditionally attributed to translation changed? According to Michaela Wolf it has: "the translator is no longer a mediator between two different poles, but her/his activities are inscribed in cultural overlappings which imply difference" (quoted in Munday 2008: 134; Wolf 2000: 142).[7] Using Wolf's terminology, one has to admit that inevitably some 'cultural overlapping' surrounds any act of translation. Therefore, it is surprising that "this shift or turn" in translation studies inscribing its activity within the parameters of sociology, for instance, has not occurred before (Munday 2008: 157). This is more evident and perceived as necessary nowadays because of the influence the mass media exert on the very notion of culture and since we are becoming used to living in virtual proximity thanks, for instance, to the Internet and the social networks. In this regard, it is expected that scholars in translation studies will strive to acknowledge the new 21st century reality that identifies our understanding of

[7] On the other hand Shayib argues that translation inscribed within globalization has played a role in cultural understanding mostly at the social level. As he explains, "globalization has helped translators become significant mediators among cultures through a better understanding that can be accomplished. One cannot deny that, as a result of globalization, people develop a deep interest in familiarizing themselves with other cultures, and what better way to do this but through translation" (2010: 9).

the term culture as a rapidly evolving term that needs to be reexplained, reinterpreted and redefined.

Following on from the idea of culture as an evolving concept—whose very definition has changed over the recent decades and continues to develop—, in the following chapters I will focus on humor as a culturally-bound phenomenon. In chapter 2, I will analyze different approaches to the study of humor, describing how translation can be used as a tool to analyze the relationship between humor and culture. In chapter 3, I will focus on how humorous messages are created, paying special attention to the phonological aspect of language as an important factor in the creation of meaning within a humorous message. In chapter 4, I will study a specific type of joke, the phonological joke, which is characterized by the deliberate use of sound to create humor. Finally, in chapter 5, I will establish a contrastive and multicultural analysis of this type of joke in different languages, with the objective of demonstrating how the phonological component of language is often closely related to cultural factors, and to how sound can play a role in determining the meaning of words within a humorous context.

Chapter 2. The Role of Translation in the Analysis of Humor

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine humor through the lens of translation. Often deemed an 'impossible' task, the translation of humor remains, despite its complexity and limitations, a crucial tool for understanding humor in other languages. Accordingly, I discuss the main factors identified as problematic in translating humor and give an overview of the approaches adopted to confront these supposed challenges that have served to question certain traditional theories of translation and their application. I then highlight some of the most recent and prominent publications in the field of the translation of humor to show the growing body of research in an area that requires much further study.

Additionally, I explain how the study of the translation of humor has evolved through the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach with contributions from different areas of knowledge. To date, humor has been studied in fields such as anthropology, folklore and sociology. I specifically comment on the different approaches applied in the sociological analysis of humor, such as: the functionalist approach, the conflict approach, the symbolic interactionist approach, the phenomenological approach, and the historical-comparative approach. Finally, I suggest certain ways in which the analysis and study of humor can benefit from acknowledging new social phenomena such as globalization. Given the increasing interconnectedness among societies that do not necessarily live in physical proximity to each other, it is clear that there is a growing need for researchers in the field to analyze humor from a multilingual and multicultural perspective, so that the conclusions they draw can be plausible and applicable to today's world.

2.2. The Translation of Humor: An Impossible but Inevitable Task?

As indicated in the previous chapter, the notion of culture in our 21st-century globalized world is currently shaping definitions and approaches, and is initiating new trends in translation studies that make translation an evolving field (Koskinen 2004: 143). Since culture is a problematic concept, in speaking of translation the notion of what is culture becomes more complicated given the increasing number of languages and cultures included in the analysis. On the other hand, the fewer languages and cultures we include in the analysis of translation, the more complicated it becomes to assume general principles that might correspond to the different cultures involved. Hence, if our goal is to make a plausible claim about the interaction between translation and culture, it is necessary to adopt a cross-cultural approach that would defend the validity of such a claim.[8]

Koskinen (2004: 143) points out how Eugene Nida's (1964; 1969) work of the last half century was a clear example of how culture constituted the central aspect of translation theory, making it the medium for intercultural communication. By contrast, a few decades later, Toury's *Descriptive Translation Studies* (1995) emphasized the target culture as a conditioner and key component to understanding how translation operates. More recent linguistic frameworks of translation have benefited from both Nida's and Toury's approaches to the (inter)cultural study of translation. As Koskinen puts it: "the concept of culture has permeated Translation Studies, more or less regardless of theoretical background. It has almost become a platitude to state that one does not translate across languages but across cultures" (Koskinen 2004: 144).

In Koskinen's pertinent observations regarding translation and culture, we can see that there is a permeability of culture that has dominated translation

[8] In his book *Fascinated by Languages* (2003), Eugene Nida provides a very good example of the importance of including multilingual and multicultural data, i.e., representative of many different communities of speakers. In his study, he offers insights on the problematic associated with the translation of biblical texts. To this end, he presents examples from Africa south of the Sahara, Asia, Latin America, North America, Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

studies. It is precisely this notion of culture dominating and conditioning the very act of translation that finds its true manifestation in the example of humor as: "a universal phenomenon, bearing upon all aspects of human life, relationships and interactions" (Carrell 2008: 306). Because this phenomenon that we call 'humor' is so broad and encompasses so many different manifestations, it is a term difficult to define. As Amy Carrell puts it:

> For some, humor is a physical manifestation, laughter; for others, humor is the comic, the funny, or the ludicrous. For still others, humor is a synonymous with wit or comedy. [. . .] Yet in spite of this lack of precise definition, humor research has become serious business, attracting a diverse and growing corps of researchers and scholars who are nevertheless certain of the phenomenon which they investigate, the phenomenon of humor. (Carrell 2008: 306)

Indeed, humor has an interdisciplinary nature, and when analyzed through the prism of translation the linguistic components of humor are hardly sufficient to describe its configuration and *raison d'être*. It is here that translators find their major challenge, since humor that does not come across as sufficiently humorous in translation may represent a failure. For this reason, in order to even attempt to translate humor the translator needs to conjugate and be aware of both language and culture in the source text, so that both language and culture can be reconstructed into the new linguistic reality of the target text. The existence of humor needs to enable and, at the same time, reconcile the two notions—language and culture—as intertwined, interdependent and inseparable: "While cultures and languages seem inseparable, cultural and linguistic approaches to Translation Studies have, paradoxically, been antagonistic. From the beginning, Translation Studies has been influenced from

two main directions: linguistics and literary studies, the later developing toward a cultural studies perspective" (Koskinen 2004: 144).

Taking a similar view, Torop (2002: 593) argues that "culture operates largely through translational activity, since only by the inclusion of new texts into culture can the culture undergo innovation as well as perceive its specificity." As regards humor, probably one of the most culturally-bound manifestations of human behavior, it is precisely this 'specificity' of culture that normally presupposes a greater challenge for any translator. At the same time, the cultural barrier that the translator faces represents an opportunity to contrast and compare different cultures: their similarities and differences. With the result that, even though translating humor may result in varying degrees of successful and faithful renditions, it is in the modern world performed as a necessary, if inevitable activity wherein an insight into the production and configuration of humor can be gained as well as disseminated. Indeed: "The translation of humor has long been a topic of interest given its difficult and at times borderline impossible nature. It is widely seen as a challenge for the translator. Yet, it is performed on a daily basis, for example in the dubbing of films and sitcoms" (Attardo 2008: 126). Because of the cultural specificity of any given culture, humor in translation may clearly fail to accurately represent the information that needs to be decoded and rewritten into a new language, because of the linguistic restrictions, the different cultural assumptions that do not necessarily need to coincide between the two cultures, and the communicative intention of the message. Nonetheless, translation serves as a tool which helps gather information while making aware of the cultural implications involved in the production and configuration of humorous texts.

2.3. On the Difficulties Associated with Translating Humor

Any translation implies the development of a series of strategies by the translator. Since humor involves an array of in-depth cultural experiences that

may not be possible to completely replicate in the target languages, translating humor can easily become a challenging task. Hence, humor is one particular aspect of language that risks being inaccessible in a new linguistic and cultural environment because it is a culturally-bound phenomenon.

As Victor Raskin (1985) has demonstrated in his "Semantic Script Theory of Humor," in verbal humor the text must be compatible with two different semantic scripts that are opposite in one of a number of particular ways: obscenity/no obscenity, violence/no violence, money/no money, death/life, bad/good, etc. Raskin's theory is strictly limited to jokes viewed as linguistic forms or texts. On the other hand, Salvatore Attardo (2003: 1287), speaking about Raskin's theory, points out that all humor involves a semantic-pragmatic process that possesses phonological, morphological and syntactic aspects. Thus verbal humor possesses an explicit linguistic form that becomes a challenge to any translator. The difficulty lies in the deviation of its primary communicative purpose. Unlike an informative text, in which we can find a certain degree of persuasiveness executed by the media in which it is produced, the humorous text seeks both an explicit and immediate reaction in the addressee, i.e., laughter. Likewise, the communicative intention of the text needs to be taken into account in translation to also meet its communicative goal.

Another widely accepted theory of humor relies on incongruous meaning in verbal humor. As Vandaele (1999: 237) argues, incongruity is the main feature that defines the production of humor. When a speaker produces a humorous utterance, there are many factors surrounding its enunciation that have to be considered in order to interpret it correctly. Additionally, since humor is organized in both the cognitive and linguistic dimensions, and since it tends to use real scenarios as part of the humorous narrative that is shared between the speaker and the listener, the translation of this phenomenon presupposes a virtual understanding of the different cultural motifs that configure such narrative. However, the performer of the text and the listener

may not necessarily share the same perception of the implicit and explicit humorous meaning of the verbal enunciation:

> One of the difficulties in writing about humour is defining the very concept. In everyday life, we cannot help but be aware of considerable variation among individuals as to what is considered funny, and what kind of topics is it legitimate or appropriate to laugh at. This is so even within a single culture and language, and [. . .] only becomes more and more evident when we examine humour and its reception in different cultures or, for that matter, historical periods. (Maher 2011: 2)

In the history of translation, there are many examples that show a lack of conveyance capacity in the translation of humorous texts, where the source semantic meaning has not been preserved. In this sense, a successful translator possesses the required cultural knowledge when decoding a text in order to transform the linguistic sequences into a new code. In other words, it is a matter of accessing both realities, as well as devising a strategy that combines a deep knowledge of cultures, societies, linguistic features of the languages involved, and the audiences. For example, the recipients of the humorous text play an important role since they are the ones who will confirm, by means of laughter or amusement, whether the translation has been successful or not. They will also be the ones to judge to what extent the text keeps on being humorous in their respective culture, which is certainly the case with screen translation (Zabalbeascoa 1994; 1997).

Moreover, sometimes translating humor becomes an art reflecting the linguistic and sociocultural awareness and creativity of the translator under the constraints of the historical period in either the source text or the target text, and according to the degree of difficulty involved. In that case, succeeding in the attempt to recode a text into a new linguistic and cultural reality involves an

interdependence of different fields of knowledge. Although the idea of a broad compendium of disciplines that take part in the translation process is widely accepted, the principles of translation are not universally agreed on. Traditionally, three main requirements have been regarded as essential for the act of translating:

1. Preservation of the sense of the ST;
2. Possession of a good understanding of both: the source and the target languages, as well as the cultural backgrounds in question;
3. Possession of some knowledge about the discipline translated.

Nevertheless, I would like to make a few comments on the validity of these three traditional categories with regards to humor. Referring to (1), I would like to point out that in translating humor it is the modality of humorous texts: verbal, written or visual humor, that will to a large degree determine the difficulty involved in preserving the meaning of the source text, and pose additional challenges to the translator. In this regard, Ana María Rojo López makes reference to the distinction that Nash (1986) establishes between written and oral humor by arguing that:

> although both depend on context, written humor differs from oral humor or a popular joke in the greater complexity of the procedures authors use to expand it, whereas oral humor is expanded by the repetition of a certain type of joke or the exploitation of an evident situation or subject, textual humor is expanded by more elaborated devices that are meticulously interwoven forming a complex pattern. Moreover, while oral humor appears as a response to an immediate situation, textual humor is designed for a distant and anonymous receptor that has

> to interpret the complex clues imbricated in the text. (Rojo López 2002: 35)

However, in translating both written and oral texts, preserving the exact cultural meanings of the source text can result in a failure to elicit a humorous response by the target audience, who might not be able to retrieve the humorous content in the same way as the source audience. Therefore, in reference to the three requirements mentioned above, especially when these are applied to the translation of humor, I would argue the following:

> 1. In the translation of humor, preserving the meaning of the ST is not always possible, since the translator often needs to focus on the humorous intention of a text rather than on its informative purpose;
> 2. Linguistic decoding / recoding, and representing a new cultural reality or scenario, are two different elements that are important to reconcile whenever possible;
> 3. The translator needs to have a cultural competence in the discipline that is being translated in order to understand the communicative purpose of the text, as well as knowledge about the textual typology and its *destinataire*.

By the same token it may be pertinent to pose the following questions: Is preserving humor a sign of a successful translation? How much meaning must the translator preserve? Does the translation of humor always imply the design of a series of strategies different from those strategies used when translating other types of texts? And, if the main communicative purpose of the text corresponds to its humorous aspect, as is the case with many jokes, does preserving semantic meaning need to be the primary goal of the translator?

Answers to these questions may, of course, vary. But, in general, if the translator does not possess a thorough competence of both the SL and the TL, he or she can resort to a native speaker. When resorting to a native speaker for help, the translator can better understand what evokes and causes the humor, thus retrieving as much cultural knowledge as possible to help achieve the translation goals. In this sense, Salvatore Attardo (1994) refers to the linguistic components of humor using "what anthropologists call 'emic,' i.e., the native point of view on what is funny, playful, or artistic (this native point of view can be expressed metalinguistically or by means of actions or reactions, such as laughter or applause)" (quoted in Sherzer 1996: 132). This idea also implies that the translator benefits from investigating the aesthetics of the humorous text or the ways in which diverse texts are able to express certain contexts: age considerations are important for instance, since some types of humor are not applicable to all age groups, and the humor of children, adolescents and adults may differ considerably (McGhee 1989).

On the other hand, the translation of humor also poses the question of what happens with the translator's own creativity or sense of humor. Since humor involves wit and the creative use of language, it is undeniable that the translator will need to exercise his or her imagination in order to produce a humorous text that shows some degree of inventiveness, especially in view of the fact that translating can be "another way of speaking" (García Landa 2000: 121). Thus if the translator's voice does not correspond to the voice of the author of the original text, so that there are two different realities, there might not be a semantic equivalence between the SL and the TL.

2.4. A Brief Overview of Traditional Approaches to the Translation of Humor

In what follows I intend to examine additional literature on the translation of humor. First, I would like to underscore that while there have been different approaches to this topic, the variations in how humor may be

translated have to do principally with the particular text one is attempting to translate. Consequently, it is not the same translating humor in a novel or translating a joke in the subtitles or the dubbing of a film, since the text typology, the context in which humor is produced and the space and time constraints, as in the case of films, require the use of different strategies by the translator (Zabalbeascoa 1994; 1997; 2001).[9] Also, the type of humor may affect how it is translated as it may sometimes relate more to the linguistic level, while in other examples humor may be more strongly related to cultural references. Overall, translating humor means carrying out a cultural reinterpretation or cultural translation. For that reason, translations can function as a tool for cross-cultural or anthropological research because of their sensitivity to both cultural and linguistic factors. Such sensitivity might take principally the form of either presenting TL recipients with a transparent text that informs them about elements of the source culture, or of finding target items that may in some way be considered to be culturally equivalent to source text items.

Regarding this kind of cultural sensitivity, Don Nilsen claims that "humor is based on complication. In the first place, there are always two scripts, the natural one and the unexpected one. And there is frequently a key word or a trigger that operates to change the mind of the listener into a new mind set" (1989: 123). Accordingly, a translator who uses a culturally sensitive approach is simply recognizing that each language contains elements derived from its own culture. To that extent a translation can be made either on a linguistic basis or on a cultural one, or the degree of interdependence can be such that one always implies the other.

Can we then speak about linguistic and cultural translations of humor? And when translating humor, does a translator need to prioritize between one of the two? This is what Díaz Cintas (2003) seems to suggest when defending that the translator will need to design a series of priorities depending on the

[9] As Zabalbeascoa points out: "Timing of delivery is an important factor in dubbing, both for lip movement and for certain situations that call for special responses with a special timing, e.g., a joke or a dramatic climatic moment" (1997: 335).

type of humor. These may be geared towards a more cultural-oriented translation, i.e., to make people laugh as its main goal, or a translation, depending on the priorities of the translator, which is more faithful to the original text. As Zabalbeascoa explains, there are also other factors that must be taken into account:

> A possible set of priorities for translating television situation comedy could be the following: Do well in popularity ratings, be funny, aim for immediate response (i.e. be entertaining and elicit laughter), integrate the words of the translation with the other constituent parts of the audiovisual text (verbal and nonverbal units including verbal and nonverbal jokes), use language and structures (verbal and nonverbal elements) appropriate to the channel of communication. (1997: 335)

In any case, the answer to these questions involve the consideration of broader theoretical points, as cultural differences may justify substantial changes in the SL message to make it understandable to a TL audience. For instance, Delia Chiaro (2008: 570) acknowledges that the interlingual translation of Verbally Expressed Humor (VEH), in its written or oral forms, constitutes a clear problematic field for translation studies:

> whether the kind of VEH to be translated is a short text such as a joke, whether it is a longer text such as a novel or a more polysemiotic entity such as a film, a play or a sitcom and whether we are dealing with puns or irony, satire or parody, the transposition from source language (SL) to target language (TL) will present the translator with a series of thorny problems which will be both practical and theoretical in nature. Such difficulties are due to the fact that the translation of VEH manifestly touches

> upon the most central and highly debatable issues in Translation Studies, those of equivalence and translatability. (Chiaro 2008: 570)

In this regard, Debra Raphaelson-West (1989: 130) speaks about the necessity of creating a series of strategies that enable the translator to obtain an optimal translation of a humorous text. She also establishes a comparison between the translation of poetry and the translation of humor, stating that in both cases the form constitutes an essential part of the message. Along the same lines, Chiaro also suggests that the translation of humor "[shares] many problems with the translation of conventional poetry" (2008: 570). Making a comparison of how poetry and humor deviate from the habitual use of language, she argues that "[through] the presence of unusual lexical collocations and irregular word order, poetry relies on patterns of repetition at all levels of sound, syntax, lexis and meaning. [. . .] As it is highly improbable that any two languages will share such similar features as to be able to reflect identical effects, poetry is virtually untranslatable. Yet, paradoxically, translations of poetry do obviously exist" (2008: 570). However, she further argues that:[10]

> whereas in conventional poetry the translator attempts to emulate the source language unyielding patterns of stanza, rhythm and rhyme, in the case of humor s/he has to deal with anarchic breaking of such patterns. For example, puns, a common feature in jokes, are notoriously untranslatable. When dealing with an example of wordplay which pivots around a pun, an interlingual translation is bound to involve some kind of compromise due to

[10] For an exhaustive and innovative study on the translation of poetry see Jones (2011), where he includes interesting ideas and examples on formal aspects of poetry translation such as how rhyme or rhythm can be related to the cognitive process, emotion, creativity, and information on the social aspect of translating poetry such as actual talks and input from translators.

> the fact that the chances of being able to pun on the same word in two different languages is extremely remote. And even in the prospect of such a possibility, the chances of finding the same type of pun (i.e., a homophone, a homograph, a homonym, etc.) are even slimmer. (Chiaro 2008: 571)

Referring precisely to jokes which use puns to elicit laughter in the listener, Raphaelson-West (1989: 130) provides a general classification related to the translation of humor. Accordingly, she divides jokes into three main categories:

1. linguistic, i.e., puns;
2. cultural, i.e., ethnic jokes;
3. universal, i.e., the unexpected.

As we will see once we analyze, in chapters 4 and 5, the linguistic sequences that are the core of this study, and which I call 'phonological jokes,' it is difficult to maintain that a joke or any humorous text can be defined or classified according to just one parameter that may identify it as part of a single or exclusive group. Quite the contrary, the complexity associated with the creation of humor, and with the many different mechanisms that may be operative in its production and in how humor is performed or verbally expressed, makes it difficult to classify all jokes under just one of these categories. There are some instances of humor that can possess linguistic or cultural or universal characteristics, or in fact all three, with the humorous text emphasizing one or several of these aspects. Nonetheless, however basic or broad Raphaelson-West's classification may be, it seems to suggest that when confronting humor, a series of hypotheses as part of the problem-solving task before proceeding with the translation should be formulated. These prior hypotheses may materialize into strategies which can become necessary steps

towards the process of translating. For, unlike the case of conventional translations with a primary informative value, translating humor does not simply involve the ability to preserve information from the SL into the TL: it also implies preserving or eliciting laughter—or at least producing a target text can be identified as humorous. Indeed, successful texts reproduce a significant part, if not most, of the aesthetic components encapsulated by the humorous text in its original form.

Another interesting classification, although in this case in much more detail, corresponds to the one created by Anne-Marie Laurian (1989: 13), who proposes different aspects with which the translator must be familiar when translating humorous texts:

1. Références précises des mots (et en particulier pour les langues où les références extra linguistiques de l'une sont inexistantes pour l'autre).
2. Connotations précises des mots (et en particulier dans les cas où les connotations liées à une référence pour une langue n'ont rien de commun avec celles liées à la référence correspondante de l'autre langue).
3. Homonymies, ambiguïtés, doubles sémantismes de chaque langue.
4. Perception de ressemblances phoniques.
5. Mentalités, comportements, traits psychologiques propres ou donnés pour propres à un groupe linguistique.
6. Types de textes, types de styles, types de publications propres à un groupe linguistique.
7. Valeurs (morales, religieuses, scientifiques, etc.) qui imprègnent les locuteurs d'une langue.
8. Environnement social, politique, économique, d'un groupe linguistique (actualité et histoire)

1. Precise meaning of words (particularly when the extra-linguistic references in one language do not exist in the other).
2. Precise connotations of words (particularly in cases where the connotations of a word in one language have nothing in common with those of the corresponding word in the other language).
3. Homonyms, ambiguities, double meanings in each of the languages.
4. Perception of phonological similarities.
5. Mentality, behavior and psychological traits specific to each language group.
6. Types of texts, types of styles, types of publications specific to the language group.
7. Values (moral, religious, scientific, etc.) that impregnate the speakers of the language.
8. Social, political and economic climate of the language group, both current and historical. (My translation)

As Laurian claims, this is not an exhaustive list of all the possibilities, and by no means is it intended to present all the circumstances that a translator may have to confront when translating humor. Nonetheless, it does summarize the most important aspects involved in the translation of humorous texts. In the following chapters I will be presenting evidence, in the analysis of humorous texts and phonological jokes, of how some of these features determine their possible translatability.

2.5. Beyond Traditional Approaches: A Review of Selected Literature on the Translation of Humor

Paradoxically, even though humor clearly represents a challenge in translation, it is often through the translation process and its many constraints that we become aware of the intricacies of humor. However, as Delia Chiaro (2008: 569) explains, scholars in translation studies have not devoted enough energy to studying humor in translation, and this is one of the reasons why the translation of humorous discourse is often not analyzed in depth because of the complexity associated with providing translations that would be adequate. Another reason, she points out, is the fact that the translation of humor is still considered a rather new discipline which "gained independence from both comparative literary studies and linguistics (Bassnett 1980: 13)" (Chiaro 2008: 569). Chiaro is very explicit when she says that as regards VEH (Verbally Expressed Humor), for instance, its study has been literally "swept beneath the carpet and ignored" (2008: 570). In fact, few are the scholars who have made the attempt to bring the fields of translation studies and humor studies together by publishing research on the discipline that could function as tools for scholars, and include a broader perspective beyond isolated pieces of research on specific case studies on the translation of humor. Such a scarcity of materials has created a gap such that in almost every article in the discipline, translation scholars in the field of humor have acknowledged there is still much research to be done—a claim that seems completely legitimate and probably due more to the complexity associated with the analysis of humor than with the current lack of academic interest. At the same time, this gap in the literature of translation combined with humor has, fortunately, attracted scholars who perceive the need to study humor from an international and, whenever possible, multilingual perspective.

One of the first attempts to reconcile both translation studies and humor studies was the pioneering book edited by Dirk Delabastita in 1996, entitled

Traductio: Wordplay and Translation: Essays on Punning and Translation (St. Jerome), which was one of the first issues of *The Translator Series*. This volume devoted its pages to the study of wordplay and punning from different perspectives and with themes that included the translation of wordplay in a diversity of topics ranging from: the Bible, proper names, or feminism, to idioms, Shakespeare and subtitling. Given the inextricable relationship between wordplay and humor, such a multidisciplinary approach contributed to clarifying important aspects related to the translation of humor, especially as some of the articles in the volume analyzed punning within a humorous context and its effect on the translation. It is clear that the author was both keen on eliciting multidisciplinary contributions, and aware of the necessity of providing a valid framework that would make it a valuable tool for future scholars. Interestingly, in the previous decade, Parrinder had claimed that the 'pun' was a category that, in spite of being a widespread phenomenon, had not attracted enough attention from scholars: "the pun is a universally despised linguistic device" (1984: 233; quoted in Bollettieri Bosinelli and Whitsitt 2010: 166). This shows that, by bringing together many different perspectives on wordplay and punning, Delabastita's volume was precisely a timely contribution to the field. It was indeed a first step in the right direction of applying translation to the study of humor. At the same time, given the innovativeness of the approach, the editor was certainly conscious of the limitations that scholars had to face in attempting to classify phenomena such as punning or wordplay:

> Classifying phenomena may look a barren and futile academic exercise, but in the best of cases typologies of the pun proceed directly from an attempt to understand the complex, linguistic, textual, psychological, or other rules and semiotic conventions which govern the production and the perception of wordplays. If one believes that such a complex set of rules and conventions

> really exists and that it can be studied systematically and profitably, then the often prevalent ironical attitude towards typologies loses much of its edge. (Delabastita 1996: 2-3)

Different volumes have appeared either in journals, monographs or books that have dealt directly with the translation of humor as a discipline, considering its interdisciplinary dimension and advancing the research. Most of the literature in the field of humor in translation has been published as part of volumes devoted to other topics or interrelated disciplines, such as literary studies, linguistics, pragmatics, psychology, etc. I will comment on the three with the most significant contributions, which interestingly have appeared in the last decade.

The first one was a monographic issue published in 2002 by Jeroen Vandaele as editor of a volume for *The Translator Series* (St. Jerome Publishing) devoted to "Humor and Translation." It included a brief editorial by Mona Baker (2002), a renowned translation studies scholar, and an introduction by Jeroen Vandaele (2002) on the construction of humor and its purpose; a theoretical article by Salvatore Attardo (2002) linking the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) to translation; a cognitive approach to literary humor and translation by Eleni Antonopoulou (2002) as well as the implications of style in literature; an article written by Umberto Eco and translated into English (2002). It also included two essays on screen translation: one on irony and the other one related to censorship, written by Katja Pelsmaekers and Fred Van Besien (2002) and Vandaele (2002) respectively; a multilingual approach to the translation of humor in Shakespeare by Dirk Delabastita (2002); a study by Ibrahim Muhawi (2002) on the relationship between performance and translation in Arabic jokes; the implications of using humor from a narratological point of view in a postcolonial setting by Christi Ann Merrill (2002); and the use of humor in simultaneous conference interpreting by Maria Pavlicek and Franz Pöchhacker (2002). Using a somewhat humorous metaphor

Jeroen Vandaele explained that humor and translation studies were areas of interest among scholars, while still needing to find their place and direction as a complete unit in academia.

> Even though humor studies increasingly appears to be a theory-informed, well-established academic discipline, the 'sea of humor' to be sailed remains vast. At the same time, ordinary people do paddle, bathe and swim, so to speak; they make and have fun. [. . .] Whereas the immense practical act of translation itself is also increasingly being theorized in what has come to be known as translation studies [. . .] the combined object of humor translation must have seemed until now so vast, disorienting and dangerous an ocean that few academics efforts were made to theorize the processes, agents, contexts and products involved. Many contributions are no more than intelligent or not so intelligent *ad hoc* reflections by swimmers who lack an overview, not by cartographers with tentative maps in need of completion. (2002: 149)

As seems evident from the topics chosen for the above-mentioned volume, this was an important contribution attesting to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of humor translation by including less studied cultures such as the Indian and the Arabic traditions. What emerged from this work was the idea of a need for further research to include other perspectives and disciplines where humor had to go hand in hand with translation in view of "the dearth of serious work on humor translation in Translation Studies [. . .] one cannot write about humor translation in the same way one writes about other types of translation" (Vandaele 2002: 150).

The second noteworthy publication was a monograph published in 2005 as a special issue of the journal *Humor* (volume 18, number 2), i.e., the journal of

the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS)—a scholarly and professional organization dedicated to the advancement of humor research. This special issue was edited under the supervision of Delia Chiaro in 2005 with only five articles, which were welcome contributions to the field. In the first article Delia Chiaro comments on how many studies in the field have ignored the relationship between Verbally Expressed Humor (VEH) and translation. Also included in the volume is an article on ethnic humor by Christie Davies, which was a good way to include a broader perspective on humor studies, even though Davies's study on this occasion was related to "European ethnic scripts." As in the special issue of *The Translator* (2002) on humor and translation, Dirk Delabastita wrote for this volume on the use of humor in Shakespeare building on his previous studies (1994; 1997), but paying attention this time to the cross-language comedy and the inclusion of more languages in the analysis of humor and translation. Particularly innovative in his contribution was Patrick Zabalbeascoa's article in his presentation of humor and translation as an interdisciplinary field opening many new possibilities. Also included was Rachele Antonini's analysis of the perception of subtitled humor in Italy, a subject that also brought new ideas to bear on the link between humor response and reception studies. As part of the journal *Humor*, these studies were well received by scholars in the discipline.

It was not until 2010 that new possibilities in the field were advanced with two comprehensive volumes entitled *Translation, Humour and Literature* and *Translation, Humour and the Media* (Continuum), devoted entirely to the translation of humor. These two volumes tried to offer what probably could not have been done before: "a comprehensive overview of all areas, past and present, in which humor has been, and is, translated" (Chiaro 2010a: 1). As a result, many scholars were able to contribute to the new field from a broader perspective than previous studies, not because of a previous lack of interest, but because the discipline needed time to evolve and consolidate.

The two 2010 volumes also took into account the new modes applied to the study of humor as being clearly divided into two main branches, 'literature,' on the one hand and 'the media,' on the other. Even though the important aspects related to humor and translation, the existence of this division showed that there were differences that had to be taken into account and studied in isolation in order to be able to offer an accurate picture of how humor appears, is expressed and translated in literature and the media. To this end, the first volume was also subdivided into three main parts. The first one dealt with the sociocultural point of view under the heading of "Translating Humour in Society" and included articles on the analysis of the linguistic factors in the configuration of humor (Ritchie 2010), and on the translation of jokes from one variety of English into another (Davies 2010). A second part entitled "Translating Humour in Antiquity" centered on the translation of humor from ancient times, e.g., of Aristophanes into English (Ewans 2010), and on humor and the reinvention of popular culture in translation from Greece to Rome (Ruffell 2010). A third and final part, of the first volume, entitled "Translating the Humour of the Great Literary Tradition," included articles on well-known literary figures from very different cultural traditions and perspectives such as: the French tradition in Boccaccio, (Lee 2010), the translation of humor for performance in Japanese theater, (Wells 2010), humor in the works of James Joyce (Bollettieri Bosinelli and Whitsitt 2010), the translation of verbal humor in Humphry Clinker (Mateo 2010), on the notion of untranslatability in the language-based humor of Lebanese theater (Elzeer 2010), and a closing article on "Cross-Talk Acts" (Redfern 2010).

The second volume did not include parts classified by specific topic, as the articles were distributed according to diverse themes interdisciplinary in nature. They ranged from the translation of audiovisual humor, dubbing, subtitling and advertising to the translation of humor in video games or different modes and the assessment of the quality of a translation. The volume included studies on humor in advertising (Gulas and Weinberger 2010); humor

in translated cartoons and comics, (Zanettin 2010); a study on the simultaneous interpretation of humor during the Academy Awards Ceremony (Antonini 2010); the translation of humor for the screen in Japanese TV (O'Hagan 2010); the translation of humor in video games (Mangiron 2010); the translation of audiovisual humor in Hong Kong (Wai-Ping 2010); an empirical account on the response from the audience in the translation of humor (Rossato and Chiaro 2010); an article on language-play and translation quality in dubbing and subtitling (Schröter 2010); Woody Allen's themes through his films and their translation (Zabalbescoa 2010); the translation of the humor of the Marx Brothers (Fuentes Luque 2010). The last articles of the volume focused on topics including the analysis of the translation of sitcoms such as *'Allo 'Allo!* (Delabastita 2010), humor in the dubbing and subtitling of *Six Feet Under* (Bucaria 2010), and humor in the Spanish dubbing and dynamic versus static discourse in *Will & Grace* (Valdeón 2010).

What can be deduced from all these contributions is what Zabalbeascoa (2005) had anticipated: that the translation of humor is clearly interdisciplinary and growing in its importance as it is studied in new media, and that both humor and information travels with globalization, e.g., as we can see in examples of screen translation, video games or in advertising. By including studies of non-European languages, these two volumes also demonstrate the necessity of studying humor from a multilingual perspective. As the editor of these volumes explained, "care has been taken to ensure that a good number of translational language directionalities from and into English are represented. Accordingly, the various essays explore lingua-cultural specificities of Arabic; Danish; French; German; Italian; Japanese; Norwegian; Spanish and Swedish, as well as Ancient Greek, Latin and numerous dialects of the British Isles" (Chiaro 2010a: 2).

2.6. Humor and Translation Studies: From Multidisciplinarity to Interdisciplinarity

As already mentioned, the edited volume on punning and wordplay by Dirk Delabastita (1996) was one of the first steps in the direction of having humor and translation studies complement each other. While acknowledging that there is still a lot to be done, in his introduction to the volume Delabastita is very explicit: "Indeed, multidisciplinarity is likely to remain, here as in many other areas, the motto for future work. This need for a wide-ranging approach is inherent in the nature of wordplay as well as of translation, I think, given both the necessity and the insufficiency of the linguistic component in the research" (1996: 19). Even though many of the articles on the translation of humor at the time had appeared scattered in different publication, scholars working in the field were still able to use them in their theoretical approaches with the result that translation studies and humor studies could complement each other. Later on, the translation of humor was already regarded as a "qualitatively different [area]" (Vandaele 2002: 150) or as a distinct discipline within translation studies. However, the lack of a comprehensive theory had historically created a dichotomy between studies that claim that humor could be translated—or at least semantically adapted to a new linguistic reality—and those studies that defended the idea that translating humor was an impossible task. In any case, this dichotomy had a positive impact as it attracted many new studies at the graduate level, for instance. In effect: "humor and translation has become a popular subject for postgraduate dissertations in the field of Translation Studies (TS), while a glance at many TS conference programmes will reveal numerous presentations on the subject too" (Chiaro 2010a: 1).

The contributions made by Zabalbeascoa in bringing together both disciplines (1993; 1994; 1996; 1997; 2001; 2005) are also noteworthy for having helped to expand the interdisciplinary nature of humor in translation. For instance, translation studies has benefited from the different tactics described

by Zabalbeascoa (1997), particularly the need for translators to adopt them when translating humor. His information served to illustrate the possible situations the translator may encounter and the possibility of replicating them at various junctures in the translation of a humorous text. On the other hand, humor studies has used translation studies as an instrument of analysis, since it is through translation that we can become aware of the many intricacies that can operate within a given humorous context. This complementary approach between the two areas of knowledge has, however, benefited the translation of humor by positioning it as a new discipline that can serve different studies. What this experience has confirmed is that, even within run of the mill translation programs, humor and its translation have become an important aspect in the training of future translators and interpreters. Indeed, because of its cultural specificity and as one of the more difficult aspects of translation, the translation of humor has been given a lot of attention. Partly because of its interplay with and connection to a variety of different disciplines: humor studies, cultural and intercultural studies, contrastive linguistics, phonetics, etc., and phonological, morphological, semantic, contextual and cultural factors, the discipline of humor translation has become a subject of different workshops and programs.

For this reason it makes sense here to mention how Zabalbeascoa (1997: 341) proposes to redefine Jakobson's (1959) terminology about translation as it combines translation studies and cultural semiotics as intralingual (translation of verbal signs by verbal signs of the same language), interlingual (verbal signs of one language with the verbal signs of another language), and intersemiotic translation (interpretation of the signs of a sign system with the signs of another sign system). Accordingly, Zabalbeascoa (1997: 341) explains that both:

> the ST and the TT can manifest variable degrees of 'monolinguality' and membership to a single genre and a single type of discourse. Thus, interlingual translation (seen as a process

> whereby a monolingual ST which is prototypical of a given type of discourse and genre is rendered into a TT with the same characteristics, except for a change of language) is only one type of translation, or rather it is on one end of a cline ranging from monolingual and monodiscursive prototypicality to hybrid multilingual or multidialectal texts. Instead of interlingual—intersemiotic distinction it seems more accurate to regard texts as having varying proportions of linguistic and verbal elements combined with monolinguistic or nonverbal signs. In this light, all translations are the result of semiotic processes, where nonolinguistic (and/or nonverbal / suprasegmental / etc.) signs are more important in some translations than in other.

And it is for this reason that Zabalbeascoa (1997: 341) also points out that future translation 'techniques' or solutions should probably consider nonverbal compensatory tactics. This is an aspect especially relevant when speaking about humor, in view of the different linguistic contexts that may condition and determine the production of a humorous sequence or the configuration of a humorous script, as well an important issue serving to recognize the precise role of humor in translation (Zabalbeascoa 1994: 95).

In chapters 4 and 5, I will illustrate how the analysis of phonological jokes through the lens of translation requires an interdisciplinary approach, given the presence of many cultural assumptions, which become evident during the translation process.

2.7. The Role of Translation in the Analysis of Humor

Translation has traditionally been regarded as the most efficient way to make a message available in another culture. In fact, the act of translating from one language into another has been proposed in many cases as the only way to

communicate effectively across cultures. However, this has not always been the case, and we find many illustrations of the impossibility of translating that serve as a tool providing a realistic measure of the difficulties related to the translation of humorous texts. Humor presupposes a composition of many cultural assumptions that are not only related to linguistic parameters, but also to cultural ones. Besides entertaining, humor may also seek or be directed towards the goal of causing laughter in the recipient of a message. For this reason, translation does not necessarily serve as an effective way to communicate humor between two different cultures. For although it may be attempting to convey meaning, the cultural implications involved may be lost in the process of translation. As we will see in the following chapters, this idea is closely related to the type of humorous sequence at hand, as it may be the case for instance that humor can be accompanied by a phonological component, adding an additional constraint to the translation, as well as confirming the difficulty of finding an accurate model for the translation of humor within translation studies.

One of probably the most successful attempts to find a theoretical approach to the study of humor in translation can be seen in the work of Popa (2005) who has suggested the Skopos Theory of Reiss and Vermeer (1984) as one of the theoretical frameworks that better suits the translation of humor. Instead of prescribing the parameters for producing a successful translation by focusing on the relevance of contextual factors surrounding the act of translation, the Skopos theory represents a shift from predominantly linguistic translation theories to a more functionally and sociocultural concept of translation. i.e., it emphasizes the result or outcome of the translation rather than preserving its original meaning. For this reason, Skopos Theory has been deemed by Popa (2005) as one of the best theoretical frameworks available for the translation of humor. Because of its notion of equivalence, it functions as a suitable theory to account for how humor is best transferred between different cultures. As she elucidates:

> Hans J. Vermeer's Skopos Theory views translation as a process in which it is of prime importance to determine the purpose of a translation. Consequently, the main focus is the function a translation has for the target audience, which, in turn, determines the methods and strategies for attaining this purpose. Skopos-oriented translation procedures are highly relevant for humorous texts, in particular jokes: clients, senders, and translators have to be fully aware of the function of jokes in the target-language socio-cultural framework. (2005: 50)

In recent years, research in the field of humor translation has taken advantage of an interdisciplinary approach that has enriched the discipline at all levels. Indeed, the interdisciplinary approach to humor and translation (Zabalbeascoa 2005) "challenges the current conventional way of thinking by promoting and responding to new links between different types of knowledge and technologies" (Munday 2008: 14). Although as pointed out by Asscher, "it seems that there is still much work to be done to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the translation of humor, and to draw on recent developments in the relevant fields of research" (2010: 238).

In any case, what is important here is that there has been a shift in translation studies towards pointing out the ineffectiveness of translation as a mediator between cultures, an aspect even more evident now as globalization has become a factor of our daily lives. Consequently, theoreticians have looked for other alternatives besides translation that could help us to understand other cultures by representing and explaining cultural meaning more effectively. The recent interest in the field of the applicability of anthropology and ethnographic studies in cultural studies, and in the study of language and how a message can

be understood in a particular culture, is a good example of scholars looking at new ways of interpreting culture:[11]

> Ethnography, in other words, is never simply about 'writing up' that which one has seen nor simply about providing an interpretation of what has been written up. Rather it is process of empathetically entering the psychic space of other human beings and, to the extent possible, translating the actions of those subjects by way of seeing the world from their point of view. (Churchill 2005: 5)

For this reason, in the analysis of humorous sequences and jokes, carried out in the following chapters, there will be an attempt to describe and represent the verbal sequences analyzed in order to make meaning accessible in terms of its culture of origin.

2.8. The Study of Humor in Anthropology and Folklore

As we have seen, it has become clear that humor studies is a field that is still trying to find its way among the other disciplines. Given that humor manifests itself in varied and myriad forms of experience as well as subjects within the humanities (literature, art, folklore, anthropology, etc.), science and medicine (e.g., therapeutic uses of humor), humor has been the concern of philosophers and thinkers throughout time. Plato and Aristotle were fascinated and perplexed by laughter, seeing it as a manifestation of human superiority and contempt: an expression of pleasure and *joie de vivre* but fueled by aggression. Their ideas on literary theory or philosophy influenced the

[11] As Michael Kearney explains "ethnography is the base of social anthropology. A basic feature of the ethnographic method is direct, largely informal interaction with the people being studied so as to provide the opportunity to learn about their society and culture as naturally as possible" (2004: 17).

centuries that followed.[12] Although difficult to define, humor or the comic has always acknowledged its presence in society as a component of human behavior, attracting the attention of thinkers and writers. For Hobbes in the 17th century laughter was "a sudden glory" brought on by the unexpected as well as by a feeling of contempt vis-à-vis that which one considered inferior and contemptible. "Men laugh at the infirmityes of others by comparison of which their own abilityes are sett off, and illustrated." (Skinner 2004: 157). But it was not until the 19th century that humor was incorporated into new disciplines such as anthropology and folklore in an "effort to understand the intellectual and spiritual development of mankind. Anthropology would focus on the concept of *culture* whereas folklore would emphasize the notion of *tradition*" (Oring 2008: 183).

As Oring explains (2008: 183), anthropologists and folklorists were not studying humor as a central idea of their research, but inevitably, they found it impossible not to address humor as a manifestation so deeply rooted in society that it could not be ignored. In this sense, anthropologists concerned with the notion of culture examined humor as part of a particular culture and ways in which it appeared. Folklorists, on the other hand, tended to look at how humor was represented in the various categories related to tradition: in tales, songs, proverbs, jokes and other forms of humorous expression. What was clear was that, while both disciplines were investigating humor in different ways, they found each other in their respective attempts to interpret humor, seeing:

> the concord between these disciplines, [anthropology and folklore], in their perspective toward humor arises from their mutual concern with recording and interpreting humor in the context of its expression in the life of society. Both are committed

[12] For instance, as Mikhail Bakhtin explains, Aristotle's ideas on the philosophy of laughter were very popular at the time of Rabelais: "Of all living creatures only man is endowed with laughter. This formula [. . .] was given a broader interpretation: laughter was seen as man's highest spiritual privilege, inaccessible to other creatures" (1984: 68).

> to fieldwork—the first-hand observation of humor in the flow of social life—and the documenting of humorous expression for analysis and interpretation. (Oring 2008: 183)

Another point in common for anthropologists and folklorists was the essentiality of obtaining comparable data in order to be able to elaborate theoretical frameworks in their respective disciplines. For this reason, scholars from both fields have always tried to compare the phenomena they studied in different societies or cultural traditions, since finding similarities among these would make their data more conclusive. A notable example of anthropological research emerged with Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'carnivalesque.' More connected to the grotesque and satire, it constituted a path-breaking analysis of humor as an inherent component of human behavior and society: as a protean and tantalizing experience capable of surprising and astonishing, something irresistibly contagious, inexhaustible and fluid (Elliot 1999). As Bakhtin noted, "the essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life" (1984: 62), and it is precisely this 'double-faced' context that we often find in humor. For instance, it is in jokes that we are allowed to explore aspects of society through their meaning and configuration that could not be explored in other contexts. It is in jokes where there are no restrictions as to the topics that can be found.[13]

As other examples of research in folklore, we can mention Vladimir Propp's (1924) analysis of the morphology of the folk tale, as well as Malinowski's (1922) research on the cultures of the Western Pacific, which "urged anthropologists to pay closer attention to the native point of view" (Oring 2008: 191). In both cases oral tradition was regarded as an important component of how stories were narrated and preserved, while also indirectly

[13] As Kuipers argues (2008: 377) "[Bakhtin] analyzed 'the carnivalesque' as a space of freedom, community, and equality, denoted by laughter, humor, and more generally by corporeality, physicality, and the 'grotesque' [in which] carnival can function as an alternative sphere of freedom and resistance."

revealing orality as an important component of humor evidenced, for example, in the case of jokes. It is interesting to note that both anthropology and folklore have contributed to the enrichment of humor research by showing scholars both the challenges of humor and also the many possibilities that can be derived from the analysis of humorous texts.

Many different approaches have been applied to the study of humor, e.g., literary, psychological, linguistic, historical, philosophical, etc. All of these have analyzed humor from different angles taking into consideration how humor operates under specific boundaries or analysis, examining humor in different textual forms rather than considering it as an interactive means of expression and communication. However, the sociological study of humor, as a discipline broad by nature, has integrated other areas of knowledge and of human interaction and communication. Sociology is, in fact, one of the fields under which humor has traditionally been analyzed more in-depth by considering the different variables from the contextual information of humor to joking relationships. More importantly, it has helped scholars understand how humor is embedded in society and social behavior. This will be illustrated in the analysis of Spanish phonological jokes in chapter 4 and through multilingual examples of jokes in chapter 5.

2.9. Sociological Approaches to Humor

In order to explain how sociology has contributed to the study of humor within a particular culture and the different approaches that have originated in this area, I will follow the information provided by Giselinde Kuipers (2008: 363). As she explains, Sigmund Freud was the person to develop "a first full-fledged theory of humor" (2008: 363). In his book, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), he elaborated a theory around the phenomenon of humor using elements from psychoanalytic theory and incongruity theory. Even though some of his theories have later been explained from very different

perspectives, and today may not even be perceived as plausible, it is undeniable that he made an important contribution to the study of humor from a sociological point of view. By transforming this topic into a significant area of inquiry using jokes and brief narratives as its subject, Freud was convinced of the importance of humor as a mechanism in the configuration and expression of one's personality and its role in society: "First, Freud discussed the importance of social relationships between the teller of the joke, his audience, and (when applicable) the butt of the joke. In other words: he introduced the social relationship into the analysis of humor. Second, Freud paid attention to the relationship between humor and—socially constructed—taboos" (Kuipers 2008: 363). Laughter for Freud constituted a release of tension generated by inhibited desire, as well as a way of challenging these socially constructed taboos. Also noteworthy are Henri Bergson's insights into the study of humor and laughter and their role in society. "For sociologists, his most relevant observations have to do with the social character of laughter [as he] described humor and laughter as essentially social and shared" (Kuipers 2008: 364). For instance, Bergson saw laughter as the natural reaction triggered by a perception of a rigidity or distortion, as when a person reminds one of an object rather than a human being—someone *risible* and *derisoire* because of an incongruity, absurdity or exaggeration, a foible, something inappropriate or ridiculous.

From everyday experience we know that laughter is also generated by a perception of what is new and admirable, the cute and clever. But also its opposite, the nervous laughter one experiences in the face of death or something of extreme seriousness: macabre laughter, gallows humor. In other words, laughter manifests itself for many different reasons, positive as well as negative. By not isolating or excluding the phenomenon of humor and by bringing humor as an intrinsically human manifestation and necessary means of expression in society, the above-mentioned approaches inaugurated the analysis of humor from a sociological perspective. Since those first steps, other approaches to the study of humor have appeared. Some of them are clearly

related, and may even overlap in their analyses, but what they have attempted is to include new directions in the analysis of humor.

2.9.1. Functionalist Approach

This approach makes an interpretation of humor taking into consideration aspects such as the social functions it may have within a society or a specific social group. Such an interpretation is closely related to what anthropologists call joking relationships, i.e., by studying in what instances two people joke we may learn aspects about their behavior, humor preference, interests and even the degree of intimacy shared by them. As pointed out in different studies, humor is "not only a sign of closeness among friends, it is also an effective way of forging social bonds even in situations not very conductive to closeness: Humor breaks the ice between strangers, unites people in different hierarchical positions, and creates a sense of 'shared conspiracy' in the context of illicit activities like gossiping or joking about superiors" (Kuipers 2008: 366). It is clear that humor has a function in society, that it is perceived as a human necessity and as an inherent aspect of the human condition. However, as Erasmus points out in *In Praise of Folly,* the one rule of conviviality is: "Either drink or get out." For Molière laughter was a ridiculing, corrective laughter, a way of straightening out behavior gone awry. Not adhering to the socially established parameters may lead to a person's exclusion so that he is in all likelihood made to "feel left out, shamed, or ridiculed" (Kuipers 2008: 366).

Also of importance are the notions of relief, control and cohesion which are also related to how humor and joking may serve to maintain a certain degree of social order. These three terms have to do with the psychological dimension of humor as a social mechanism facilitating interaction among people. Such a functionalist approach may reveal important data about the very purpose of humor, and its contribution to defining important elements of a given culture or individual.

2.9.2. Conflict Approach

As its very name implies, this approach has centered on the analysis of humor as a means of expression that emphasizes conflict, antagonism or struggle. For this reason, many of the theoretical frameworks developed under its umbrella have looked at the specifics of the intentionality of humor, i.e., who creates a humorous message, or around what topics it is created, and perhaps more relevant for this approach, who is the butt of a joke and for what purpose. This search for the target of the humor or ridicule has been analyzed in areas where antagonistic humor would be likely to be found, i.e., political or ethnic humor. Because of such contexts, it might be easier to find some of the reasons that hide behind this type of humor. "This approach is clearly indebted to the Hobbesian tradition of humor as 'sudden glory.' However, the literature about humor and conflict suffers somewhat from a conceptual lack of clarity: In writings about the use of humor as a 'weapon,' hostility, aggression, superiority, and rivalry are often used interchangibly, and are not clearly distinguished or delineated" (Kuipers 2008: 368).

It is important to note that this conflict approach has also evolved with the passing of time and with social changes related to power in societies as well as nations. Consequently the 'conflict' present in humor narratives or jokes may no longer be applicable to current events, or it may have changed in such a way that it may no longer be recognized or perceived as 'conflict.' This is the case, for instance, in ethnic humor since: "the importance of ethnicity and of ethnic identity varies over time in any particular society, and there even seem to be general cyclical oscillations in the importance of ethnic ties in a range of societies having similar social structures and interconnected cultures" (Davies 1990: 2).

An added problem of the conflict approach is that it usually performs a very literal reading of humor and does not consider the ambiguity that can often accompany a humorous text, and which means that a humorous sequence

can be both enjoyed and inferred in different ways. "Also, conflict theories generally cannot explain why and when people in situations of conflict decide to use humor rather than more serious expressions of antagonism" (Kuipers 2008: 373)—something which has been the concern of other theoretical approaches such as symbolic interactionism and phenomenology.

2.9.3. Symbolic Interactionist Approach

This approach "focuses on the role of humor in the construction of meanings and social relations in social interaction" (Kuipers 2008: 373). In so doing, it uses detailed data from interviews with informants as well as transcripts of conversations. In this approach, society is not explained in terms of a given cultural milieu and defined as such, but "as constructed and negotiated in the course of social interaction" (Kuipers 2008: 373). It is, therefore, the relevance of humor as an interactive form of communication that has attracted the attention of scholars who have studied humor from this perspective. "Within humor studies, the micro-interactionist approach gave a strong impetus to small-scale ethnographic studies of humor, as an alternative to the analysis of standardized forms of humor, joke ratings and questionnaires" (Kuipers 2008: 373). However, this approach has posed a problem, because although this method of study could cast light on specific groups, and on how the interaction among these groups was negotiated in terms of humor, the data could not be generalized or be representative of other groups. Because of this "critics of this approach have pointed out that symbolic interactionist studies tend to be overly descriptive and particular, and hence hard to generalize" (Kuipers 2008: 375). Indeed, the study of humor demands a broad analysis of examples and data, and has to be legitimate enough to be used to describe how humor operates across different cultures. Accordingly, when I analyze phonological jokes in chapter 5, I will present examples in 30

languages so that the conclusions about this type of humor can be grounded in a comprehensive corpus.

2.9.4. Phenomenological Approach

This approach "conceptualizes humor as a specific 'outlook' or 'worldview' or 'mode' of perceiving and constructing the social world" (Kuipers 2008: 376). It is characterized by an eclectic methodology which combines "textual analysis, historical data, and micro-interactionist studies to show how humor constructs at the same time entail a particular worldview" (Kuipers 2008: 376). While it may appear that this approach benefits by having a broad spectrum of elements connected with the study of humor, critics have explained that by analyzing humor from a general perspective, the phenomenological approach tends to essentialize humor. "By focusing on humor as a 'worldview,' [it neglects] other meanings of humor, including negative or dysfunctional effects, and overstates the importance of humor. [. . .] [It] is [also] said to be hard to operationalize: it provides inspiring insights but it is not clear how its notions and concepts are to be used in actual empirical research" (Kuipers 2008: 378). For these reasons, although this approach is in a way helpful, as applying it may reveal information that can be used to link how humor is used in different societies at a macrostructural level, it might also be difficult to apply this information to the microstructure of humor in those cases where the analysis needs to be more specific.

2.9.5. Historical-Comparative Approach

This approach aims to understand the social role of humor by comparing it from a historical point of view and considering its development in time and place. It also tries to find common trends in humor that would be representative across different cultures, and that can be related to the main themes around

which jokes are created, namely: "sexuality, gender relations, bodily functions, stupidity and strangers (Apte 1985)" (Kuipers 2008: 379). One of the most comprehensive analyses in this sense is the work carried out by the scholar Christie Davies. His books *Ethnic Humor around the World. A Comparative Analysis* (1990), a study that has its origins in culturally distant places such as Gujarat (India) and Wales (Davies 1990: ix), and *The Mirth of Nations* (2002), "a book analyzing the jokes told by or about particular peoples, viewed in a comparative and historical context, and examining the social circumstances of the particular time when the jokes emerged and flourish [. . .] looked at in detail, but with an eye to making comparisons" (Davies 2002: 1), are good examples that confirm that it is certainly legitimate to study humor from a comparative perspective. Davies's research concentrates mostly on ethnic jokes. By comparing how these jokes are used, and who is the butt of the humor and its producer, he has been able to illustrate that the general idea behind ethnic humor, in spite of the obvious differences among cultures, is probably a universal form of humorous expression (Kuipers 2008: 379). His work has also shown that "a cross-comparison of humor often ends up telling us as much, or maybe more, about the groups being compared as it tells us about humor" (Kuipers 2008: 380). With the development of electronic tools that can be applied to conduct research, such as the Internet or the social networks, which makes it easier to access information and carry out ethnographic research, it is certain that many more comparative approaches will emerge to represent a more accurate understanding of the similarities and peculiarities of the production of humor around the world. In this study, although most of the corpus was collected through interviews with native speakers, the Internet has also served as a source of raw data on phonological humor, facilitating examples that could be contrasted with those provided by the informants.

Rather than advocating for one of the approaches that have been mentioned as to which one would be the most suitable in analyzing humor

from a sociological perspective, scholars should benefit from incorporating different aspects can be extracted from all them. All these approaches together may contribute to reconstruct a somewhat faithful picture of how humor functions in society, and that it is reasonable to think that similarities will be found regarding the way humor is constructed in different languages and cultures.

2.10. What Are the Next Steps? The Necessity to Analyze Humor from a Multilingual/Multicultural Perspective

Even though humor is a cognitive process, and thus an inherent aspect of being human as well as a social manifestation of culture, the study of humor as a sociocultural entity does not tend to include cultures and languages that are not directly related. Besides, many of the theories on humor have been built mainly from a Western point of view. This has drastically reduced the scope of the different studies that try to explain how humor originates, and how it is constructed and negotiated in any given society. By not including cultures that are different socially and linguistically, the study of humor has been explained only in part. After all, humor can be found in all areas outside of academia and thus demands a broader study, especially if we accept that humor is a universal feature (Apte 1985; Carrell 2008).

To date, there is still a need for scholars to study humor as a social component and in terms of its role in communication in less well-known societies than they have done until now. Although there seem to be similarities between the Western approaches followed by most scholars to the study of humor, mostly through translation, one would have wished for a more comprehensive multilingual and multicultural perspective. The absence of such an analysis may have been due to the difficulty in obtaining data on humorous texts from less-spoken languages, but also because Western scholars have not chosen to study the representation of humor in those languages. As I have

explained, translation is the principal way in which scholars have attempted to understand humor, even though it is clear that translation can only account for some part of the complete humorous message. Yet in the translation process where something is often lost between the source language and the target language, be it meaning, laughter, amusement, etc., or on the contrary, the translated humorous effect can in some way be enhanced and produce even more impact, but clearly in a manner different from the original message.

In recent years, it has become clear that there is a need to understand humor from a global perspective, as we are constantly exposed to humorous messages, for instance in advertising as will be amply illustrated in chapter 3. As the world has become more interconnected and certain cultural patterns from one society can be more easily assimilated by other cultures, it has become important to acknowledge that there is likely to be an ever-increasing degree of commonality in the parameters that amuse different societies or communities of speakers. For this reason, it is important that when we elaborate on humor, it may be interesting to extract those aspects that are in some way common to different languages and cultures. Such a broad analysis of humor will serve to enrich the discipline while offering a more realistic account of how humor operates and evolves. To achieve this, common features in the creation of humor need to be identified in different cultures and, ideally, in unrelated languages. Once the phenomenon has been identified, it may be interesting to study it in a limited number of languages to be able to draw preliminary conclusions and then if the data proves to be valuable it can be extrapolated to a greater number of languages to assess to what extent the same phenomenon applies to all of them.

As we will see in the following chapters, this is what I have attempted to accomplish in my study by focusing on one such common feature, which appears to exist in a vast number of languages: the use of sound as an ingredient in the production of humor. In chapter 3, I study how the phonological component of language operates within a humorous context in

different media. Using examples from popular culture, I illustrate how the fact that sound is present in such different textual modes confirms the importance of its use in the configuration of meaning. In chapter 4, I then contrast a humorous linguistic sequence that follows a similar pattern in different languages, making it possible to note the similarities and differences across cultural boundaries. I use Spanish as the main language to study the same type of joke and extract general data. Finally, in chapter 5, I establish a multilingual analysis by means of a comparative approach of phonological jokes in a representative number of languages, which confirms that the use of sound in the production of humor is a widespread phenomenon.

Chapter 3 - The Semantics of Sound within a Humorous Context

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I examine the relationship between sound and humor, analyzing humorous texts in which sound has a deliberate aesthetic, poetic or semantic purpose. Drawing on case studies from diverse media including film, literature, journalism and advertising, I present examples of how the phonological aspect of words can be exploited to convey a variety of semantic messages and meanings. Building on the idea that sound can be used or deliberately manipulated in order to create a specific semantic function, I explore how such use or manipulation can elicit laughter in different humorous contexts.

I begin analyzing the use of phonological humor by commenting on translated excerpts from the novel *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin* by Carol Weston. Showing how language can be crafted in such a way that its phonological elements provoke laughter in the reader, I discuss the necessity for reconstructing analogous phonological elements in translation in order for the same humorous textual typology to be maintained in the target language. Analyzing specific instances where sound plays a key role in the configuration of both meaning and humor, I illustrate the added challenge that phonological humor presents to the translator, who can resort to a variety of strategies in order to overcome the cultural and phonological barrier that a given text may present. Moving on to comment on the use of phonological humor and its relationship to the persuasive message found in advertising. I analyze different examples illustrating how advertisers can use the phonological aspect of language as one of the techniques to communicate with the recipient of their message. I then examine journalistic texts where sound is a key component used in news headlines for the express purpose of attracting the reader's attention.

In the final part of the chapter, I survey the use of sound as a way of representing foreignness in humor using specific instances in the press, television and film. I cite examples from *The New Yorker* magazine, Monty Python films, as well as television sketches by the British humorist Catherine Tate, who uses sound exaggerations in her humorous representation of foreign countries and cultures. Thus I demonstrate how sound is not only a crucial component of meaning but also, and more importantly, an aspect of language deeply connected to cultural factors and socially shared assumptions.

3.2. The Importance of Sound in the Configuration of Meaning

In one of the few studies Roman Jakobson (1959) devoted to translation, entitled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," he theorizes on the problem of sound in translation theory. In his analysis he claims that every word or phrase is a linguistic and semiotic fact, and that it is their combination and the way these two components relate to one another that accounts for and represents the duality of language, i.e., its binary composition of sound and meaning.[14] Referring to poetry, Jakobson highlights what seems to be a central feature of both the configuration and translation of sound, namely that "phonemic similarity is sensed as semantic relationship" (1959: 238). Thus, by bringing together meaning and sound—two aspects of language often analyzed separately—Jakobson's theory is applicable to language in all modal texts, not just to poetry. And since sound can be used as a device to create or evoke a specific effect on the listener's part, sound is a key element to consider in the transfer of meaning that takes place during the translation process. It goes without saying that sound is an important aspect of our everyday life, and that it has even earned its place in history—albeit for a variety of reasons, some of them not so praiseworthy. A case in point is the example provided by Michael

[14] As Robinson (1991: 3) explains: "The meaning of a word, Augustine wrote in *On Christian Doctrine*, is a transcendental label identifying and unifying the fleeting physical (graphological or phonological) sign."

Holquist: "In 1312, Władysław Łokietek, one in a long series of Polish unifiers, reconquered Krakow from the Silesian Germans. He then made every inhabitant of the city over the age of seven pronounce four Polish words. If they could not muster sounds that were Polish enough, they were executed or exiled" (2007: 3).

Sound is above all idiosyncratic, so that the combination and enunciation of a particular range of phonemes may vary in both interpretation and meaning, depending on the recipient of the message. We know that in our everyday life, whenever we choose a word from our ample repertoire to use in discourse, we select the *mot juste* that accords with our communicative priorities. At the same time, depending on who our interlocutor is, we tend to modify or expand our lexicon to achieve a specific communicative effect, all the while aware that a variety of linguistic mechanisms, such as accent, intonation, syntax (e.g., you are here vs. here you are), may give additional meaning or dimension to a word or sequence. However, what if a casual, or even a deliberate, combination of sounds were not only to contribute to, but actually determine the communicative quality of a word or utterance?

Reviewing the literature on translation it is noteworthy that in the area of translation theory and practice sound has heretofore been mainly analyzed from the point of view of poetry. Indeed, sound has remained a much neglected phenomenon in textual studies other than poetics.[15] This is probably due to its complexity, as Chris Wen-Chao Li has suggested, because in our Western tradition it is meaning, rather than sound, that is usually regarded as the dominant component of a text:

[15] In this respect Kayra emphasizes that the task of translating requires both aesthetic and phonological awareness on the part of the translator, and for this reason "ne consiste pas seulement à transférer d'une langue à l'autre une pensée ou un sentiment, mais aussi à mettre en œuvre une valeur d'ordre esthétique [mais de] caractère sonore" (1998: 254) (Not merely to transfer a thought or emotion from one language to another, but also to bring into action aesthetic values of a phonological nature) (My translation).

> The explanation for this lack of interest in sound may lie partly in the fact that sound lies at the margins of mainstream Western translation theory: for much of its history, translation theory in the Western tradition has focused on levels of equivalence, with much attention placed on the division between dynamic (sense-for-sense) equivalence and formal (word-for-word) equivalence. While sound can be seen as part of the 'form' of the linguistic material to be transferred, and hence part of the parcel of 'formal equivalence,' in practice discussion of formal equivalence ends at the level of word or morpheme, and rarely touches upon units at the sublexical level. (Li 2007: 47)

To buttress his assertion, Li points to the clear distinction in Chinese tradition between *yìyì* 意譯 (the translation of meaning) and *yīnyì* 音譯 (the translation of sound) (2007: 45).[16] Even though these two Chinese words have similar sounds and are, in fact, related phonologically as well as lexically, it is the fact of contrasting them that allows us to think extensively about the two concepts as they relate to the transfer of a word from one language to another. In the instance of *yìyì* and *yīnyì* we see that meaning is certainly not the only crucial component of language; sound is equally important. In fact, numerous examples of situations can be cited where translators need to constantly make conscious decisions to alter the meaning of certain words or phrases in favor of preserving their sound. For instance, the importance of sound is especially evident in different activities such as selecting a name for a product to be launched in a new country, choosing a title for a translated book, or in adapting films or musical theater into another target culture through dubbing and subtitling. An example of the latter, which illustrates the importance of sound in translation, can be found in the famous phrase, "The rain in Spain stays

[16] I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Chris Wen-Chao Li from San Francisco State University for providing the Chinese characters for these two concepts.

mainly in the plain," in Spanish "*La lluvia en Sevilla es una pura maravilla*." If we are familiar with the plot of the musical *My Fair Lady* (1964), we understand that it is precisely by avoiding sheer literalness, and thus allowing the sounds to carry messages that are both aesthetic and poetic to the listener, that the Spanish adaptation achieves its success.

The context of the film is the story of Professor Henry Higgins, a well-to-do London linguist and teacher of phonetics who makes a spur-of-the-moment bet with his friend, Colonel Hugh Pickering, to turn Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney girl they have just met, into an elegant and refined lady. The first impediment is the way Eliza emits sounds in English; it has to be changed so that she can become accepted in London's upper class.[17] Consequently, Dr. Higgins' method consists of teaching Eliza how to transform her vulgar intonation and pronunciation into the pure RP English sounds acceptable to London's high society. This shows how important sounds are, not in just the film, but also in our everyday life. The phrase about rain in Spain, which Eliza uses to practice correct pronunciation, represents a challenge to the girl due to the series of sounds that she cannot enunciate. To achieve the desired phonological transformation of her speech, Eliza practices her pronunciation by using the phrase about the rain in Spain, as it contains especially challenging sounds that she has difficulty enunciating. This represented an equally enormous challenge for the translator, since a mere syntactic transfer of the phrase, ("*La lluvia en España suele depositarse en la llanura*"), would have resulted in a dry, humorless and awkward-sounding rendition; a translation that, in spite of partially preserving its informative meaning, neither maintains the rhyme nor conveys the same deliberate phonological purpose as the original. It is precisely because this is a musical about language in society, and the

[17] As Zabalbeascoa indicates, "the tone of the humor is another important variable for the translator to grasp [. . .] in relation to the translation of dialects or foreign languages within a text, we would want to know the (rhetorical or ideological) function of the language variation of the text" (2012, forthcoming). For an analysis of the translation of nonstandard language and cross-language equivalencies, see Azevedo (1998).

symbolic value of sounds for the members of a class, that the challenge for the translator was to hold on to the spark and spirit of the original text.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how through the use of free translation with a slight change in geographical setting, i.e., "la lluvia en Sevilla," the translator was able to convey a 'sound effect' in the target language comparable to the original. Just as importantly, both the context and reference to Spain were preserved, so that when Eliza finally "gets it," Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering break into a joyful dance simulating a bullfighting *corrida* to celebrate her achievement. Indeed, the Spanish translation could probably not have been more appropriate and evocative, with its visual images and explicit mention of "rain" and "Seville."[18] As it happens, southern Spain has long periods of drought in which rain is experienced as a great relief.

Hence it is very interesting to see that even though only the reference to "rain" was maintained in translation, the proposed solution to the problem seems to have worked adequately. Comparing meaningful examples like this one can shed light on important information regarding, for instance, what tactics have been followed by translators depending on the characteristics of the language in question. As Zabalbeascoa (1997: 339) points out there are several factors that need to be taken into account when translating for the screen, since as he mentions, "Dubbing reminds us of the possibility that all translations have a semiotic dimension, in some it is more important than in others." After all, subtitling and dubbing are also translation methods and for this reason Zabalbeascoa (1997: 339-340) establishes a classification which shows how these translation activities are governed by a set of specific norms, or what is the same, "the explicitation of the regularities observed in real translators' behaviour in a particular time and place [. . .] which describe the literary, cultural, linguistic or ideological rules that determine each translation" (Agost 2004: 65). In addition, besides synchronization, which is always a key factor, the

[18] Another example of how successful this adaption was is that the phrase in Spanish forms part of the collective memory.

degree of importance of the verbal and nonverbal dimension and how they might be inextricably related must also be taken into account here:

1. Read only, where nonverbal elements have very little relevance; e.g. a novel.
2. Read and seen (verbal and non-verbal visual signs); e.g. a comic book, or an entirely verbal text where layout, formatting and/or colors are highly relevant or meaningful (a frequent case in advertising).
3. Heard only (verbal and non-verbal sounds); e.g. a radio program.
4. Heard and seen (including verbal and non-verbal signs); e.g. a play performed on stage.
5. Heard and seen and read; e.g. a film with subtitles or with written messages in the original picture.
6. Seen and/or heard only (including only nonverbal images and sounds); e.g. a comic strip with no words, some silent films.

Moreover, also related to the translation of sound, in the specific example of the translation of songs there has to be some principle of singability, i.e., "the phonetic suitability of the translated lyrics: from words being easy to sing to particular note values"[19] (Franzon 2008: 374), something that was certainly accomplished in the Spanish version of the musical if for instance we were to analyze the adequacy of the synchronization of lip movement and sound in the original and the dubbed version into Spanish.

Paradoxically, there are also sounds that remain almost untranslatable, or at least this is how it is perceived by speakers of some languages, despite a translator's effort. An example of this can be found in an article entitled "What's in its Name?" published in *The Economist* during the week of May 22nd, 2004.

[19] Franzon (2008: 374) also explains that the meaning of this term is not restricted solely to the aspect of suitability in translated texts, since it can also be applied to assess original lyrics and translations. For an extensive analysis of the different solutions that translators have given to this scene of *My Fair Lady* (1964) in Scandinavian languages, see Franzon's doctoral dissertation (2009).

The article recounts a problem that has arisen in the former Czechoslovakia regarding finding a proper English name for the country that would sound well and satisfy the Czechs. Tired of the name "Czech Republic," a long expression that is not useful in marketing and sounds too formal, some Czechs argue that just as one does not say "the Commonwealth of Australia" or "the Kingdom of Spain," English speakers should not refer to their country as the "Czech Republic."

The controversy over the name is even more poignant because, as the columnist from *The Economist* puts it, "one problem is that a short name risks reminding older Czechs of the contemptuous terms 'Tschechei' and 'Rest-Tschechei' that the Nazis pinned on the 'rump of the country' after seizing the Sudetenland in 1938. Modern Germans have got over this by coining the name 'Tschechien,' and Czechs have welcomed this, despite confusion with Tschetschenien, the German name for Chechnya" (2004: 48). As the author points out, the same sound problem applies even to the short name in Czech, "Česko," whose pronunciation in English inevitably resembles the English supermarket chain "Tesco" that Prague consumers are familiar with. Yet, not having found the right combination of sounds for their country in English, the Czechs are still trying to agree on a one-word informal name that does not have any added connotation. In mentioning this, I would like to draw attention to how translating the name of one's country into a foreign language can bring with it a series of difficulties, ranging from issues of national identity to how the name in the new language may sound. Also, in this example we see how sounds may sometimes have an array of added connotations because of how a particular combination of phonemes may resemble other words or because those sounds may already possess added symbolic associations or cultural connotations. In any case, this proves that although speakers might not be completely aware of this fact they are able to discern what 'sounds' appropriate or not in a given situation.

As we have seen in all the examples presented above which belong to different areas of human experience (e.g., the use of basic words, the configuration of proper nouns, the translation of lyrics in music, etc.), sound is a component inherent to words and may determine the meaning of a linguistic sequence. Moreover, these examples demonstrate that sound is a decisive element in everyday communication. Consequently, I will present different examples as a first step to illustrate how the phonological aspect of words can be played with in order to communicate an array of different semantic messages for specific purposes. These examples will also serve to show how sound is deliberately manipulated in everyday situations in order to create specific meanings and how the phonological technique of using sound for a specific purpose is especially relevant in the context of humor.

3.2.1. How an Informative Message Can Become a Humorous Message

Fig. 1. Road sign in Fulbrook, Oxfordshire, UK

Original message	Modified message
FULBROOK Please **drive** carefully	FULBROOK Please **d i e** carefully

This image constitutes a good example of how information found in our everyday life can be deliberately manipulated to achieve a specific purpose in communication, i.e., to create a humorous message. The original message contains both informative and prescriptive meaning. In showing the message: "Please drive carefully," the road sign indicates to drivers that they are passing through the town of Fulbrook in Oxfordshire (United Kingdom), and that they therefore need to exercise caution by paying attention to their speed. However, as evidenced in the image, the message originally displayed on the road sign has been modified to create a humorous message. By simply deleting two consonants, the "r" and the "v," thus transforming the verb "to drive" into "to die," the sign is communicating a paradoxically unexpected message. Incongruity and, therefore, humor is obtained by the association of this new message together with both the place where it appears and the surprising recommendation it gives to drivers. As Dubinsky and Holcomb explain, "laughter springs from incongruity (or from similar notions such as ambiguity or contradiction): in other words, a joke (or cartoon or comedic bit) typically combines two or more incongruous meanings into a single sound, word, expression or situation." (2011: 2). In this sense, it is indeed comical to think that, instead of the logical combination of words usually displayed on a traffic sign, "drive carefully," one could 'officially recommend' to people that they "die carefully," as per the image above, an activity that is not exactly pleasant and certainly not achievable in a careful manner.

While this example functions mainly at the lexical level, one word having been substituted with another in order to subvert the meaning of the original

text, it is interesting to note how words can be deliberately tailored to the speaker's intention of creating a humorous message, even if they already constitute part of a well-known message. Obviously, the person who modified the original was confronted with the challenge of performing a double reading that would lead to the creation of the new text for the purpose of effecting humor. Consequently, all these elements: the modification of the original message, its originally intended informative meaning, and the setting where the message is found, contribute to eliciting laughter, underscoring the fact that humor is sometimes achieved by transgressing the socially established norms of daily life.

3.2.2. How a Humorous Message Can Also Be an Informative Message

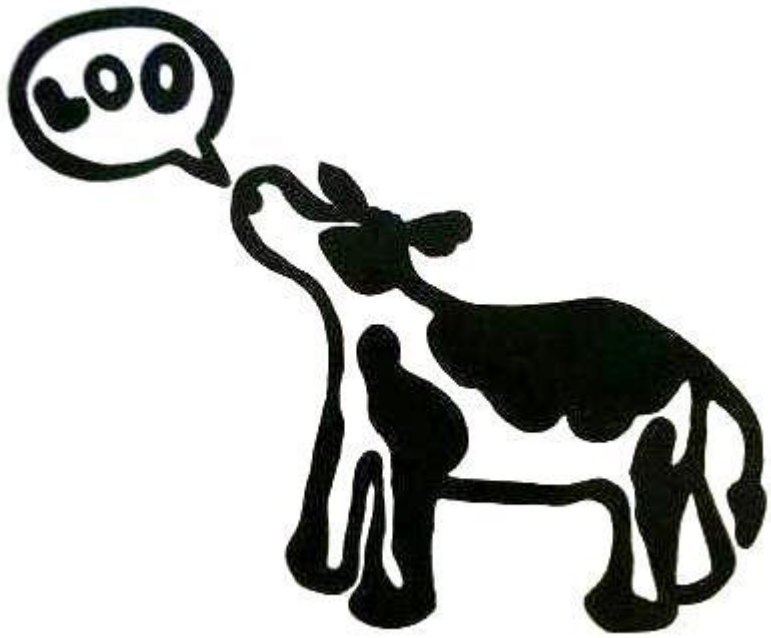


Fig. 2. Sign on a public bathroom door. G&D's cafeteria, Oxford, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
LOO	**LOO** (Informative) **- MOO** (Figurative)
Actual pronunciation	**Similar pronunciation**
LOO [luː]	MOO [muː]

This example shows how we semantically associate words with similar sounds and, in some cases, use these phonological similarities to create messages. Although at a first glance the composition of the text together with the image may appear to have a simple and direct meaning, it has been crafted in such a way as to be simultaneously informative, humorous, and meaningful to the specific place where it is located. Functioning as a symbol for the chain of cafeterias G&D, the drawing of the "cow" is not a random choice. The sign displayed on the door of a public bathroom constitutes a humorous construction based on a pun, and using visual, lexical, and especially phonological elements. This humorous construction is achieved by presenting a phonological association or paronomasia, i.e., words that sound similar or almost alike but have different meanings, between the word "loo," a common term referring to a "bathroom" in British English, with the quasi-homophone "moo," the onomatopoeic representation of the sound cows make in the English language. As Salvatore Attardo explains (1994) the existence of sound-symbolism and sound-based associations make it possible to sum up how this aspect of language is normally perceived by speakers as applicable to verbal acts, given that "if it sounds the same, it means the same, [meaning that] these sound associations must bear some sort of association, however connotative and feeble it may be" (1994: 164).

In this particular example, it would be interesting to see whether English speakers who are not familiar with British English could 'get' this semantic association, for instance, if the same message were to appear in an American setting.[20] To know how this specific message would be interpreted by other non-British English speakers, it would obviously be necessary to conduct a survey. Yet what this example illustrates is that a simple linguistic sequence, evidenced here by the use of an onomatopoeia, can create a meaningful communication while contributing to the creation of a successful humorous and informative message. Referring precisely to onomatopoeias and their uses as signifiers, Hempelmann and Samson explain that: "the arbitrariness of the linguistic signs and the iconicity of the visual one are gradational and show exceptions. [Indeed] There are groups of linguistic signifiers that have a sound resemblance to that which they signify. This well-known phenomenon of onomatopoeia works when words denote events or objects that involve sound and thus can imitate that sound" (2008: 616).

Our example of the cow also underscores how some sounds are more culturally rooted than others. In this particular case it would probably be difficult to achieve a similar effect in other languages, were we to decide to create a similar linguistic construction. In order to accomplish this, one would have to find a linguistic combination of sounds having a particular informative and humorous meaning, i.e., a message in which an onomatopoeic representation could be used in a similar context and therefore be functionally equivalent. Such an endeavor could prove to be problematic since onomatopoeias can differ considerably from one language to the next. Nor would it be easy to find a coincidence between a particular sound and the

[20] This can be compared to the BAA example that appears later on, in which the sequence "You're Ghana" in an advertisement has been used with the meaning of "You're gonna," a typical expression from American English. Although this phrase has been used for an advertisement placed at a British airport, it would probably find more acceptance as a useful phonological technique, given that British speakers are used to some aspects of US English because of the influence of the mass media, than the use of term "loo" in contexts where British English is not spoken.

informative meaning attributed to it. Recalling again the example of the cow, such a coincidence would require that the sound made by an animal also be representative of a specific place. But such a message could be missed in the same way non-British English speakers might fail to grasp the "moo" and "loo" message illustrated above.

3.3. The Semantics of Sound within a Humorous Context: On Sound-Based Humor

In this study, the terms phonological humor and sound-based humor are used interchangeably. However, it might be interesting to explain that during the years when I was carrying out the research for this study I found that 'phonological humor' was a term applied very broadly to identify humor where a sound component was used. For this reason, and given the scope of my study, I felt compelled to try to find a more representative term since I was focusing on the importance of sound in the intentional configuration of meaning within a humorous context. Following this idea, I coined the nomenclature 'sound-based humor' in order to describe sequences in which sound has a deliberate aesthetic, poetic or semantic purpose within a humorous context and where the phonological component is prevalent, if not dominant, in the configuration of the humorous script as a whole (Muñoz-Basols 2008: 250). I was particularly interested in the deliberate use of sound to reinforce and create the humorous quality of a linguistic sequence. With this term and its corresponding definition I wanted to highlight that sound is especially relevant in the configuration of meaning and, in some cases, may even determine the semantic structure of a sequence.

Although it might be difficult to ascertain what comes first in the creation of a linguistic sequence which uses humor based on sound, i.e., the phonological or the semantic aspect—as both tend to blend together with the common goal of producing laughter—I think that the term 'sound-based

humor' is representative of those cases where sound is particularly relevant to the semantic configuration of a humorous sequence.

I first introduced the term 'sound-based humor,' at the Second Dublin City University International Translation Studies Conference. Dublin, Ireland, in April 2005 where the paper "Sound-Based Humor and Its Translatability: Crossing Intercultural Boundaries in the Translation of Humor" was delivered. The term was well received by the participants and the presentation was highlighted in the 1st Bulletin of the ITIA (Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association) published in April 2005. The concept has since been expanded and was also presented in the XIII Susanne Hübner Seminar: "Translation and Cultural Identity," Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain, in November 2005; and publicly presented as a research project at the University College of London Translation Summer School in July 2007; and, more recently, at the 3rd Scandinavian Conference in Linguistics and Philology at the University of Bergen (Norway) in June 2009, at a comparative literature conference at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona (Spain) on the representation of foreignness in literature and other discourses held in September 2011, and at an International Symposium on Humor at the Universidad de Alicante (Spain) in December 2011.

Interestingly, I have only found one publication that makes explicit reference to the same term, 'sound-based humor,' and that points out how sound can be explicitly used to elicit laughter. It is noteworthy that this publication used the term to make reference to how humor based on sound constitutes a 'hallmark' in the Hanna-Barbera cartoons of "Tom and Jerry": "Another hallmark of the Hanna-Barbera episodes is the sound-based humor. Film editors emphasized the impact of each strike and explosion with great sound effects [. . .] or having onomatopoeia emphasize or replace slapstick scenes" (Lehman 2007: 62). The fact that 'onomatopoeia' is mentioned as one of the possibilities could not be more revealing as there is probably no other linguistic device that gives greater relevance to the phonological component of

language, as onomatopoeias convey meaning purely through sound, and not through words.

One of my hypotheses for this study on the interrelationship between sound and humor is that 'sound' is in certain instances a prevalent and even dominant component in the production of humor. My assumption underpinning this hypothesis is that when sound-based humor is translated into another language, the characteristic sound(s) of the linguistic sequence must be preserved in order to achieve a similar or quasi-similar phonological effect, especially in cases when the phonological systems of the two languages involved differ considerably. Not to do so is to completely lose, or at best diminish, the phonological effect of the sequence, that is, the punch-line and intended perlocutionary effect (e.g., laughter, etc.) in translation. Therefore an effective translation draws on the translator's broad knowledge of the specific cultures involved, as well as keen linguistic awareness, and preserves the phonological aspects of humor that may be present in the source text, so they can be perceived as humorous by the addressee in his/her target language. In other words, for optimal results, the translator needs to translate the cultural assumptions of humorous texts, while at the same time reconstructing their phonological features.

To understand the configuration of humor and be able to establish plausible conclusions, one needs to survey its textual multiplicity in a variety of modes: oral, written and visual. It is the phenomenon of the interrelationship between sound and meaning that I would like to examine, specifically within a humorous context, and that I will analyze in different media. In the various examples that I will present next, sound is crucial to the configuration of meaning and humor. I will begin by showing how sound has been deliberately used or manipulated to create different effects with semantic implications. I will focus on the analysis of humor in the translation of children's literature, before moving on to other textual genres and modes such as advertising, journalism, television and film.

3.3.1. Wordplay with a Phonological Component in Literature: A Practical Case Study on the Translation of Carol Weston's *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin*

When David Lodge, the well-known British writer, chose the title *Deaf Sentence* for his 2008 novel, he was consciously using a play on sounds that was both catchy and meaningful in English, but which would certainly pose a host of challenging problems for his translators. The dedication of the book is enough to signal the demanding nature of his text, from the very title to other wordplay aspects throughout the novel. It is certainly revealing to see the writer acknowledge that translators will have to confront, and had already been doing so in his previous texts, a series of wordplay difficulties—more important here given that this is a book about 'hearing and deafness.' As he convincingly declares in the dedication: "Conscious that this novel, from its English title onwards, presents special problems for translators, I dedicate it to all those who, over many years, have applied their skills to the translation of my work into various languages" (Lodge 2008: 9).[21]

Since the choice of a novel's title is usually directly related to its content, it can present difficulties because of the various connotations, shades of meaning and nuance it may encompass. Often an interesting and creative title selected by an author may turn out not to be in line with the publisher's idea of a 'good' marketing title. Or, as in this case, the problem may have to do with the fact that wordplay tends to create difficulties for the translator who has to find not just an adequate equivalent in another language, but one that is also catchy, meaningful and faithful to the spirit of the work. In an interview in which Lodge was asked to speak about problems he had come across when

[21] I would like to express my gratitude to Richard Rabone, a former student of mine at the University of Oxford, who in a conversation about the topic of this study suggested this example as a representative one to illustrate how sound-play is especially important in written literature and how writers seem to be aware of the phonological implications of language.

writing his novel, he replied that his problem was finding a way to combine the comedy generated by Desmond's deafness with the inevitable seriousness of his mortality. His solution was to make the title of *Deaf Sentence* pun with the common expression 'death sentence'—a phenomenon identified from a semiotic perspective as 'acoustic iconicity' (White 2011: 291). Accordingly, the novel features at the beginning a predominantly comic tone connected with the deafness theme, together with its modulation into an elegiac tone as it approaches the end of the story. "It is not for me to say how well I have managed it, but most readers seemed to feel it works," commented Lodge (Thwaite 2009).

The result of such a clever title in English was that Lodge's novel caused his translators considerable pondering before it was published into different languages, such as French and Spanish. In some languages an effort was made to link the content of the novel's plot to the title, so the title of its 2010 publication in Spanish was '*La vida en sordina*,' following the same pattern as the French translation, '*La vie en sourdine*,' the word '*sourdine*' referring to the muted sound of a musical instrument. What is interesting here is that, even though the French and Spanish translations both lose the phonological wordplay of the English original, the French title of Lodge's book links it in the reader's collective memory to '*La vie en rose*,' that is, to the life and song of Édith Piaf, which is obviously less meaningful in Spanish despite the literal translation from the French. Although a clever way of translating the title of the novel, it demonstrates not just the translator's inability to reproduce both effects: the play on sounds and words of the original title as well as its poetic connotation, but also how different languages can possess distinct cultural and connotative storages that are not transferrable. What the specific example of Lodge's novel illustrates is how the choice of the title or the names of characters in a literary work can often entail complex creative decisions on the part of the translator with important phonological implications. Certainly, this idea corroborates that sound-play constitutes an omnipresent component of language capable of

evoking a range of different meanings, while at the same time demonstrating the relevance of the deliberate use of sound-play in literature.

As we will discover next, sound-play can be used in literature for different specific purposes and is especially important in children's literature, something that is worth analyzing through the prism of translation. Accordingly, focusing on the deliberate use of sound in literature, in this section I will explore the difficulties associated with translating children's literature where we find different varieties of humor, such as wordplay, jokes, puns, poems and nicknames. I discuss how a translator could resolve certain problems focusing specifically on those related to phonological humor and reflecting on the role of sound in the configuration of humor.

As will be explained through the analysis of different examples the quality of the target text depends greatly on the translator's creativity, because of the multi-textual schemata and strategies used to elicit humor. This is especially evident when translating a text where sound-based humor is exploited since there will always be a "humorous sound constraint that makes the linguistic sequence untranslatable [from a literal point of view]" (Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols 2003: 245). Moreover, as Roy Ouyang argues: "Humor based on sounds seems to be the most difficult to translate. Finding a similar homophonous pair of English words to convey a pun could seldom occur. According to contemporary translation theory, if a certain piece of linguistic humor is not very informative, adaptation may be applied to help to reproduce the humorous effect in the target language" (Ouyang 2003).

Carol Weston is an American author of children's fiction and non-fiction. Most of her non-fiction books have been translated into a variety of languages.[22] For instance, *Girltalk: All The Stuff Your Sister Never Told You* (Harper Collins, 1985) has been translated into Chinese, Czech, Latvian, Polish, Russian, Vietnamese, and there were Australian and British customized editions as well.

[22] Carol Weston's book *For Teens Only*; *Quotes, Notes and Advice You Can Use* (2002) was selected by *Student Weekly of Thailand* as one of the top five books of 2003. For more information please see: www.carolweston.com

From Here to Maternity (Little, Brown, 1991) has been translated into German. *For Girls Only: Wise Words, Good Advice* (Harper Trophy 1988) has been published in Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, and *Private and Personal* (2000) has also been published in Chinese (2002).

Carol Weston's fiction is comprised of the Melanie Martin series:[23] *The Diary of Melanie Martin* (2001), *Melanie Martin Goes Dutch* (2003), *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin* (2004) and *Melanie in Manhattan* (2005). Melanie Martin, Carol Weston's fictional character, is an 11-year-old girl who lives in Manhattan and travels to different countries with her parents, the brother she calls 'Matt the Brat,' the family's stuffed animals, and her most important possession, her personal diary. In fact, each novel is constructed as a diary in which Melanie observes every event significant to her. Little escapes this "appealing young heroine" (Schappell 2004: 40); lively and imaginative, she is always thinking aloud, sensing what all the characters in the book are feeling. She is at that awkward age when girls begin to bombard their parents with a stream of pertinent, often ticklish, questions about life and relationships.

Interestingly, only one of Carol Weston's fiction books has ever been translated. Given Melanie's particular ability to observe and describe her surroundings in vivid detail, it is a difficult job for the translator to make her accounts both believable and accessible. To exemplify the complexity associated with the translation of the Melanie Martin series, we can consider how the Italian translation, *Vacanze Italiane* (A. Mondadori, 2002), of the first of the series of *The Diary of Melanie Martin*, was not successful in representing fully some of the peculiarities of the source text.

The author provides several examples about how the Italian translation of her book was at times not a creative rendition that would produce an analogous effect on the target audience. Some of these translational problems had to do with the sound of specific words and others with how the translators

[23] According to *Artnews*, the author "is hoping to start *Melanie Ooh, la, la*—set in France. Melanie may go to the movies too: comedian Caroline Rhea has optioned the series for film" (May 2005: 65).

found a rhyme which was probably not the best solution for the intended book's audience. As the author explains:

> [when my books were translated] some words got lost in translation. For instance, Melanie likes to say 'Ciao for now' which rhymes in English. In Italian, it's '*Ciao per ora*' which lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Those of us who love language recognize that a translator's job [. . .] can be downright thorny. [. . .] Melanie cites a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The world is so full of a number of things, / I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.' The Italian version of that British poem is, '*Nel mondo ci sono tante cose, / Perché non siamo felici como spose?*' [. . .] Who is happier: spouse or king? I suppose both have problems. Happiness is elusive. In English, we say 'happy as a clam.' A clam?! Go figure. What's so great about being a clam? Then again, are earthworms joyful? *Feliz como una lombriz*. I'd rather be a partridge. *Feliz como una perdiz*. Or a kid with new shoes, *feliz como un niño con zapatos nuevos*. A good translator tries to capture the author's voice even when this means taking liberty with language. (Weston 2011: 9)

Indeed, as the author claims, the translator needs to be creative while trying to preserve the spirit of the original. Creativity seems to be a prerequisite in order to translate children's literature. Another example of the problems with the translation of Carol Weston's books appears when Melanie Martin, the protagonist, speaks of how she would prefer to write a "haiku" or a "limerick" rather than the 30–line poem she has been asked to produce as homework by her schoolteacher. Let us consider the following examples, comparing the Italian and the Czech translations:

Source Language

I wouldn't mind writing a haiku or a limerick—but thirty lines! (p.5)

Target Language 1 (Italian)

Un *haiku*[1] o un *limerick*[2] li avrei scritti senza problemi, ma trenta righe! (p. 8)

[1] "Genere poetico giapponese constituito da componimenti di una strofa di soli tre versi, rispettivamente di 5, 7, 5 sillabe" (p. 8)

[2] "Filastrocca inglese dal contenuto paradossale, composta da cinque versi dei quali il primo rima con il secondo, il terzo con il quarto e il quinto con il primo" (p. 8)

Literal Translation into English

I wouldn't mind if I had to write a *haiku*[1] or a *limerick*,[2] but thirty lines!

[1] "Japanese poetic genre composed of elements of one stanza of only three lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables respectively"

[2] "English nursery rhyme of paradoxical contents composed of five lines whose first rhymes with the second, the third with the fourth and the fifth with the first"

Target Language 2 (Czech)

Nevadilo by mi, kdybych měla napsat japonskou *haiku* nebo pětiřádkový *limerick* – ale třicet řádků!" (p. 12)

Literal Translation into English

I wouldn't mind if I had to write a Japanese *haiku* or a five-line *limerick*, but thirty lines!

It is somewhat surprising that instead of looking for a strategy that would solve the lack of knowledge by a young reader of the Japanese or English literary terms for certain types of short poetic compositions, the Italian translators opted to insert both terms in italics accompanied by a footnote, which as Julio César Santoyo Mediavilla (1994: 147) indicates, tends to destroy humor by attempting 'to explain the impossible.'

Inserting a footnote was probably not the best choice given that this is a book for children; it might have been better to look for other options, instead of diverting the young reader's mind and attention with a rather technical footnote which is difficult to understand by the target readers of the novel. As a contrast, this important translation issue was successfully resolved in the Czech

translation of the first book of the series, *Deník Melanie Martinové* (BB/art, 2006). Unlike the Italian translators, the Czech translator simply added the words in italics with an adjective, which helps the reader identify the origin of one of these poems (in the case of the haiku) or its form (in the case of the limerick). In the context of the passage it is clear that both of them refer to metrical units. The adoption of different strategies for the same problem highlights the importance of considering certain aspects of the source text that may be acceptable for an adult audience but are clearly not appropriate in this novel because of the restrictiveness of the genre in question: children's fiction. Thus, since this is the genre of the novel, there were some important preliminary implications, namely: "an adjustment of the text to make it appropriate and useful to the child, in accordance with what society regards (at a certain point in time) as educationally 'good to the child'; and adjustment of plot, characterization, and language to prevailing society's perceptions of the child's ability to read and comprehend" (Shavit 2009: 113).

In addition, the author was somewhat disappointed with the Italian cover (Fig. 4), [24] in which the main character looks much older than 11, unlike Marci Roth's appealing illustration of the protagonist in the fun collage design of the English original (Fig. 3) that, interestingly enough, has been faithfully maintained in the Czech version (Fig. 5) as shown by the images below.

[24] For an exhaustive analysis of the covers of books in translated children's literature see Gillian Lathey's article on the translations of *Harry Potter* (2009). For a general perspective on the translation of children's literature see the special issue of *Meta* 48.1-2 (2003) "Translation for Children," under the direction of Riitta Oittinen, and also the book *Comparative Children's Literature* (O'Sullivan 2005). See also the *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, (Wolf et al. 2011) for the latest research in the field.

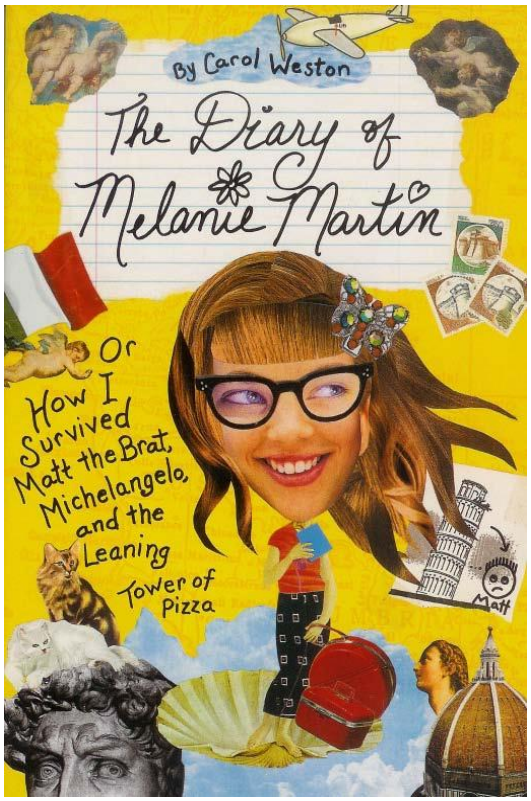


Fig. 3. *The Diary of Melanie Martin*. New York: Yearling, 2001.

Fig. 4. *Vacanze italiane*. Zelda Alice Franceschini and Anna Franzoni (trans.) Milano: A. Mondadori, 2002.

Fig. 5. *Deník Melanie Martinové*. Petra Klůfová (trans.) Praha: BB/art, 2006.

Carol Weston asked me to revise the English manuscript of her latest adventure, *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin*, checking for possible inaccuracies in the Spanish words used, as well as any incorrect information about Spanish culture and society. Once the book was published in January 2004, she asked me to begin translating it into Spanish, as she was looking for someone knowledgeable about both American and Spanish culture. To make the novel meaningful to young non-English readers, and to obtain the author's seal of approval, my task as a translator was to try to capture Melanie's personality, together with the many cultural references in her experience as well as "the textual conventions, the intended rhetorical effects (humorous or not), [and] the historical circumstances" of the novel (Delabastita 2005: 162). Indeed, creativity is required in striking a balance between reproducing the literal language and the spirit of the text, while careful not to betray either:

> La traducción de obras para niños reviste gran importancia, no sólo desde una perspectiva literaria, sino también educativa, debido a que éstos constituyen un valioso puente entre culturas, y contribuyen a mejorar las relaciones entre los diferentes pueblos, y el conocimiento de sus rasgos particulares y únicos. (Beuchat and Valdivieso 1990: 55)

> The translation of children's literature is of great importance not only from a literary, but also from an educational perspective, due to the fact that children constitute a valuable bridge between cultures and contribute to improving relations between national groups and to making their specific and unique features more familiar. (My translation)

A better understanding of the plot of *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin* can be gained from reading how the novel was reviewed in different magazines. For instance, on the one hand *Kidzworld* says:

> What would happen if on your family vacation, your mom met up with her old flame for some quality catching up? Think it would be weird? Well, Melanie's about to find out! When they first arrive, Melanie starts plotting ways to keep her mom and Antonio apart—but then she meets Miguel, Antonio's son, and her whole perspective changes. Suddenly Antonio doesn't seem so bad since the more time they spend with him, the more time she gets to spend with Miguel. But just how much Antonio time is Mel's dad willing to take?

On the other hand, *National Geographic Traveler* makes a more explanatory account of the novel:

> Precocious fifth grader Melanie Martin records her adventures in Spain in her trusty travel journal. Art-teacher mom is visiting an old boyfriend (bad!), but said boyfriend has a cute 11-year-old son (good!). Along the way Melanie tries out Spanish phrases, views art masterpieces, and learns local customs. Fun squiggly drawings make the diary look real. In previous books, Melanie traveled to Italy and the Netherlands. Author Carol Weston includes ideas on how to make travel fun for kids. For example, try out Melanie's favorite museum game, 'Point Out the Naked People!' (2004: 48)

In both reviews, we can already appreciate some of the peculiarities of the novel such as the possibilities it opens for young children to learn the

Spanish language, places, customs and art through the 11-year-old heroine's personal activity of narrating these events and learning experiences in a diary.

Carol Weston felt that because of my interest and research in translation theory I would be able not only to translate the words accurately in a text prepared for Spanish children, but that I could actually attempt to give Melanie a Spanish voice. This was actually especially challenging, since I had no previous experience translating this type of literature, and it was clear in the novel that the author herself had put a lot of thought into different phonological aspects of words that were also in accordance with the stylistic conventions of the three previous books of the series. Consequently, and given the experience the author had had with the Italian translation of the first book of the series, she obviously wanted a translator who would be able to achieve a similar goal in the target language while maintaining an appropriate narrative voice. As the author explains:[25]

> What do others hear when *you* talk? Your voice makes a huge impact. It's more than accent, education, mood, confidence, warmth. It's more than which language you speak: Voice. *Voz*. *Voix*. *Voce*. People obsess about how they look. Why not give equal thought to how they sound? My intention is to tell you why voice is important; to show how you can use your voice, both spoken and written, for better or worse; to discuss how I use my voice in my talks, columns, and books; and to inspire you to use your voice as effectively as possible. Your voice is often the first impression you make, and it can be charming or critical or crude. How do you come across? Many people who care about linguistics

[25] Carol Weston was the plenary speaker who opened the XIV Susanne Hübner Seminar in Linguistics in 2007 that took place at the University of Zaragoza in Spain. Her talk was entitled "Finding Your Voice," which is another example of how important it is for the author to find one's voice both as a writer and also, as she suggests in the quote mentioned above, for the translator to do the same.

> speak more than one language and are aware than in one language they may sound more formal—or flirtatious—than in another. Finding your voice, and yourself, in different countries and speech patterns can be fun. Are you at home in the world? I hope so. Is your voice always the same? I hope not. (Weston 2011: 2)

Therefore, teaching Spanish at Trinity School in New York City was a useful background that helped me understand the mind of this 11-year-old New York girl who lives in Manhattan. This was especially important as the language displayed was not only a particular literary style that the author had adopted to recreate the way American children would talk, how they would play with language and imitate sounds of other languages, but there were also many different elements contributing to represent the language of children and that inevitably would pose a challenge in translation. As Beuchat and Valdivieso point out: "El traductor debe estar consciente del idioma de los niños en el original y debe conocer la lengua usada por los niños en la lengua meta" (1990: 62). (The translator has to be conscious of children's language in the original and has to know the language used by children in the target language).

Contrary to what we may normally think, the language of children is not strictly limited to saying taboo words or scatological connotations but there is also a constant violation of the rules governing it on different linguistic levels which relies on the fact that the child experiences extreme joy in language learning (Bariaud 1989: 31-33). In this regard there are two main levels, the phonological and the morphological one, which according to Bariaud are related to the creation of puns and wordplay in general and that characterize the way children communicate through linguistic humor:

1. Play with word sounds (phonological level). This involves consciously distorted or childish pronunciations (Shultz and Robillard 1980), substitutions or pure inventions based on phonetic resemblance (Tessier 1986). The young child purposely slips from one word to another similar one in terms of sound ("Mr. Steet is like sweet, she's a sheet), or goes on to another nonexistent word resembling the previous one's sound ("He's really suntinned" for "suntanned"). Another practice is to string together words, real or invented, without any logical sequence so that they seem to follow one another by virtue of a similarity in their sound ("What a flooty, what a flooto"). The pleasure in all these cases derives from manipulating word sounds. Slipping into homonyms (words which are pronounced the same or nearly the same; e.g. "ate," "eight") and paronyms (words which are almost but not quite homonyms; e.g., "construct," "constrict") seems to be at the root of puns and the use of double meaning which emerge at about age 7.

2. Play with word shapes (morphological level). A young child who makes a mistake in formulating a word (e.g. constructing a plural of a verb tense) sometimes deliberately exploits the situation to provoke laughter. The mistake entails the intervention of an adult who corrects it. At the beginning the child was serious, but then he is sidetracked into a game of reiterating, this time voluntarily, his inadequacy. His attention is at first centered on his speech but shifts to the expectation of others and to the amusement produced by not conforming. The initial mistake is thus transformed into a farce. In the course of trial and error while learning language, children often produce strange creations. Sometimes their laughter or smiling shows that they are aware of

> their incongruity. Thus, they invent words when they do not know the appropriate ones (e.g., "boing, boing" for Jack-in-the-box). They make new words or expressions by association [or] with their peers, they sometimes burst into laughter by using key words to create nonsense sequences. (Bariaud 1989: 31-33)

For my part, I was extremely interested and challenged by this translation project given the abundant wordplay and sound-based humor, including riddles, jokes, haikus, funny names, little poems, etc. I also felt that it would be beneficial to integrate this experience into my research, sharing the challenges and the findings page-by-page, as I translated sound-based humor sequences from the novel. This aspect was especially important to the novel given that there is a language learning theme throughout, as can be evidenced in the many different pronunciations of Spanish words by the protagonist Melanie Martin or her brother Matt the Brat, but also because all the linguistic references to other Spanish words serve as a way to initiate English-speaking readers to the sounds and vocabulary of the Spanish language. For this reason, when translating children's literature it might be useful to formulate a series of preliminary questions about the text that is to be translated. As Russo Bachelli points out: "Translators should always ask themselves: What prompted the author to say this? Will my message produce the same effect on my readers? Is there conformity in terms of style, clarity of expressions, especially as my readers do not share the same background as those of the original author?" (1991: 103). I needed to reflect on these questions, and be careful to have, as Patrick Zabalbeascoa puts it, "an awareness of the nature of humor" (2005: 189), as I was designing a series of translation strategies that could produce a target text similar to the one an 11-year-old Spanish girl could write in Spanish. One of them, extremely valuable from a stylistic point of view, was to read children's literature in both languages for a similar age audience paying attention to wordplay and the style used. As Riitta Oittinen indicates: "reading is the key

issue in translating for children: first, the real reading experience of the translator, who writes her/his translation on the basis of how she/he has experienced the original; second, the future readers' reading experiences imagined by the translator, the dialogue with readers who do not yet exist for her/him, that is: imaginary projections of his/her own readerly self" (Oittinen 2000: 5).[26]

The intended reader's age was also a factor related to the didactic purpose of the book since translators always need "to compensate for the child's inevitable lack of life experience, or to strike a balance between filling gaps in children's knowledge and the need to stimulate curiosity and enhance a tolerance of the unfamiliar" (Lathey 2010: 7). Likewise, as far as age is concerned, humor was equally important given that it was a relevant, while especially challenging, component in the configuration of the semantics of the source and target texts. For this reason:

> It is significant that the various types of linguistic humor which are greatly appreciated between the ages of about six and twelve are no longer considered funny after about the age of twelve. This would seem to indicate that the basic communicative skills involved in them continue to develop up to about age 12 and that their mastery is complete at that time (Mahony 1987: 9)

I will now analyze different excerpts from the novel to demonstrate the challenging nature of translating children's humor, particularly sound-based

[26] This is related to what Carol Weston says in relation to the uniqueness of one's voice because in order to find one's voice in writing we actually need to experience other types of voices to be aware of how differently they may sound: "You think you can speak only to adults? Consider speaking to teens. You're used to speaking to little kids? Try speaking to adults. You're used to a classroom? Try a microphone in a studio. You're used to a microphone in a studio? Try a live audience. Expand your range as you keep thinking about what you want to say or tell or teach" (2011: 13).

humor where, among other things, "the translator is called upon to reconstruct the stylistic effect of wordplay" (O'Sullivan 1998: 201). Hence, the challenge is to find a way to convey the humor of the source language while losing as little of it as possible.[27] Lladó (2002: 125) has proposed a framework for categorizing different types of wordplay phenomena that can be found and that are related to the rhetorical dimension of a text; as summarized by Marco (2010: 267):

> 1. Wordplay based on consonance (defined as phonetic similarity), which includes the following figures: paronomasia, alliteration, assonance, antanaclasis, polyptoton, derivation, homoioteleuton, apophony, cacophony and neologism;
> 2. Wordplay based on polysemy, which includes syllepsis and zeugma;
> 3. Wordplay based on homophony, or complete phonetic identity, whose typical manifestation is the calembour;
> 4. Wordplay based on transformation, which includes all figures based on the alteration of the phonetic and graphic structure of a word in order to create a different one, such as anagram, *portmanteau* word, metathesis, metagram, heterogram and palindrome.

However, as I will demonstrate in the examples that follow, there may be a mixture of different categories of this classification and that presuppose a multiple challenge for the translator. As can be evidenced in one of the reviews of the book, which claims: "You're guaranteed to laugh out loud throughout the book and you may even learn a thing or two. Since the book is set in Spain, Melanie flexes her linguistic skills by throwing in as many Spanish words as

[27] The present paper draws on a corpus of texts that correspond to the first 18 pages of the book, a small portion but one that nonetheless captures the essence of the novel.

she can (don't worry, she includes the pronunciation in brackets beside the word)" (Kidzworld).

As we will see, a consistency in the target language's typology that provokes a similar reaction in the reader, i.e., laughter, as in the source language can be sometimes reproduced, more or less successfully, but in any case the poetic function of the language also needs to be maintained. Accordingly, my first step in translating the novel was to create consistency in the way Melanie Martin reads and speaks Spanish considering her persistent habit—in the English source text—of pronouncing the Spanish language as though it were English. The difficulties I experienced as a translator can be observed in the examples that follow. SL stands for Source Language (English) and TL stands for Target Language (Spanish).

SL Example 1
I'm excited about this trip because I speak Spanish—*hablo español* (Ah Blow S Pon Yole). Not fluently or anything, but I know how to count. One is *uno* (Oo No), two is *dos* (Dose), and three is *tres* (Trace). I can also say hi, which is *hola* (Oh La), and lots of other words. (p.1)
TL Example 1
Tengo tantas ganas de ir porque yo—*hablo español*. Bueno, sólo un poquito, pero sé contar. One es *UNO*, two es *DOS*, y three es *TRES*. También sé decir *hola*, y muchas otras palabras.

As we can see from the passage above in the source text, Melanie tries to pronounce words in Spanish as they would sound to a native English speaker of her age. She does this by turning pronunciations into capitalized words, so that the intended reader—in this case an English-speaking child—can play with the sounds and thus experience them the way Melanie does. From the very beginning, the reader is aware of the efforts Melanie makes to pronounce Spanish, for she spells the words to make them easier to pronounce for an Anglophone. Thus, I had to decide whether to find a way to translate these

childish phonetic transcriptions or simply avoid them. Clearly, Melanie's transcriptions of foreign words would make no sense at all in Spanish. By way of example, let us take the numbers mentioned in the example above: "One is *uno* (Oo No) / One es *UNO*," "two is *dos* (Dose) / two es *DOS*," and "three is *tres* (Trace) / three es *TRES*". To preserve the fluency I opted to keep the English words in the target text, assuming that nowadays 11-year-old children in Spain and in other Spanish-speaking countries learn to count at least to three in English, thereby creating the effect of Melanie Martin sharing her knowledge about Spanish. On the other hand, I could not preserve the phonetic transcriptions for reading these words in English, since they have no semantic relevance for the Spanish target reader. Instead, I used the typographic conventions created by the author, capitalizing words and using italics as visual aids, as if Melanie were reading these words out loud. Incidentally, many of her diary pages come with drawings that a child of her age would make, which gives the whole textual composition a visual and playful effect.

Humor in the novel is more explicit when the two siblings are in competition to produce a hilarious joke. Indeed, each joke in this novel constitutes a tour-de-force for the translator, as in the example below.

SL Example 2
Right now I'm in seat 22 next to Matt the Brat. He asked me, "Are the street signs in Spain in Spanish?" "Duh," I said, and made a how–stupid–can–you–get face. "Wrong!" He laughed. "They're in sign language!" Believe it or not, that joke was better than some of his other second-grade humor. (p. 2)
TL Example 2
Ahora mismo estoy sentada en el asiento 22 al lado del mocoso de Matt, que me acaba de preguntar: "¿En España la gente siempre duerme la siesta?" "¡Bah!", le dije, y lo miré pensando si es realmente bobo o se lo hace.

"¡Pues no!" dijo riendo "¡porque siempre están de fiesta!" Aunque no te lo creas, este chiste es mucho mejor que la mayoría de sus chistes de 8 años.

As John Robert Schmitz notes, "cultural jokes are language-specific and are often a challenge for translators. Many of them do not 'translate' well and would obviously not be humorous to native speakers of the target language. [...] The translator would have to find another joke, that is, a different joke with no doubt another scenario or frame" (2002: 107). Of course, the joke above is impossible to translate verbatim since the word "sign" in English refers to different objects with no equivalent axiological load.[28] In Spanish the most common equivalents would be *"signo"* and *"señal."* While in the SL the word "sign" is used to evoke both "traffic signs" and "sign language," functioning as a pun due to its dual reading, in the TL this word does not have the same equivalence, since the Spanish words are *"señales de tráfico"* and *"lenguaje de signos."* Russo Bachelli emphasizes the importance of creativity as a strategy to adopt in such situations: "If the dual script is amusing in one language but not in the TL, it may be easier to write a new joke based on the TL culture" (1991: 102). Consequently, since the two expressions differ both phonologically and semantically when translated into the target language, I created a new joke that would be appropriate for an 8-year-old child to evoke the same semantic effect by keeping its theme, i.e., Spanish society. In this regard, I thought of two internationally known Spanish customs that also constitute lexical items in many languages, including English: *"siesta"* and *"fiesta."* Hence, the TL joke leads the reader to infer the punch line, achieved in this case by means of two cultural references–which the reader will also encounter later on in the book–and which are comically presented with a rhyme.

[28] According to Pérez Quintero and Toledano the axiological load of a word "depends on the socio-cultural context, the historical period or even experience" (2001: 184).

SL Example 3
In the taxi, for instance, Matt said, "What goes ha-ha-ha-ha-splat?" I said, "What?" and he said, "A man laughing his head off". (p. 2)
TL Example 3
En el taxi, por ejemplo, Matt me preguntó, "¿Qué es lo que hace ja, ja, ja, ja, crac?" y le contesté, "¿Qué?" y dijo, "Alguien que SE PARTE de risa".

The second joke was challenging to translate because of the play on words mixed with the play on sounds under the same textual typology, clearly exploiting sound-based humor, where sound plays an essential role in the configuration of meaning. Thus I had to convey the same meaning in a joke made up of words and sounds that were childish. What I did was to use the Spanish colloquial expression, *"partirse de risa,"* to evoke the explicit onomatopoeic sequence about laughter together with the idea of something breaking. Again, I modified the typography of the SL by using capital letters to achieve a more visual effect in the TL.

SL Example 4
By the way, for my birthday, I got a new diary—you!—which I saved for this plane ride. But now I'm going to put you away and wrap the airplane blanket around myself (and Hedgie) so we can try to fall asleep. I was going to bring a different stuffed animal and leave Hedgehog safe at home. But I couldn't bear to. (Or hedgehog to, get it?) Matt did leave DogDog behind. He said he couldn't stand it if DogDog got lost again like on our last trip. So he brought his penguin, Flappy Happy. It is black and white with a yellow beak and trusting eyes. (p. 6)
TL Example 4
¡Ah! Por cierto, para mi cumpleaños me regalaron un nuevo diario —¡tú!— fuiste mi regalo, mi querido amigo, pero te he reservado para este viaje. Pero ahora te voy a guardar, y yo me voy a tapar con la manta del avión a ver si

Espi y yo nos dormimos. Iba a dejar a Espinete a salvo en casa y a traer a otro peluche pero quería que Espinete viniera conmigo. Sin embargo, Matt abandonó a su perrito GuauGuau. Decía que si GuauGuau se perdía otra vez no lo podría soportar, como ocurrió en nuestro último viaje, y entonces se ha traído al pingüino Rufino, que es blanco y negro, tiene el pico amarillo y unos ojitos entrañables.

In this example the translation challenge had to do with existing naming conventions in the Melanie Martin books. The excerpts that are part of this analysis come from the third book in the series, and some of the stuffed animals Melanie and her brother Matt have in this book had already appeared on previous trips: hence their significance within the whole collection. Since this is the first book in the Melanie Martin series translated into Spanish, this is an important issue. As Christiane Nord explains: "To find a name for their fictional characters, authors [and translators] can draw on the whole repertoire of names existing in their culture, and they can invent new, fantastic, absurd or descriptive names for the characters they create. We may safely assume, therefore, that there is no name in fiction without some kind of autorial intention behind it, although, of course this intention may be more obvious to the readers in one case than in the other" (2003: 183). Accordingly, I made an effort to find names for the stuffed animals that would accompany Melanie and Matt on future trips to Spain or elsewhere, and would be appealing and meaningful to Spanish children, since "the main factor that seems to determine whether the PN [Proper Noun] should be retained in the target text or an alternative strategy is to be adopted is clearly whether the referent of the PN is assumed to be identifiable by the target audience or not" (Antonopoulou 2004: 220).[29]

[29] As Delabastita indicates, "naming puns or onomastic wordplay [. . .] has a humorous or characterizing function in many literary and semi-literary works, ranging from the *Astérix* comic strips to Dante and Dickens" (1996: 15).

Source Language	Target Language
DogDog	GuauGuau
Hedgehog	Espinete
Hedgie	Espi
Flappy Happy	Pingüino Rufino

For Matt's stuffed animal I translated the name as the onomatopoeic representation of a dog's bark in Spanish, *¡guau!* This is also what very young children call dogs when uttering their first words, and therefore it is something sounding familiar to the target reader. For Matt's other toy I chose two words that rhyme, as in the SL, and constitute a play on words in terms of one another. I inserted the literal translation of penguin, *"pingüino,"* and added a proper noun that rhymes and sounds funny when the two words are pronounced together, "*Pingüino Rufino*." For "Hedgehog" I used a proper noun from a famous Spanish TV show for children from the 1980s, *Barrio Sésamo*, based on the American *Sesame Street*, to evoke the same meaning in the target language. The name "*Espinete*" makes it easier for the target reader to identify "Hedgehog," as it was a hedgehog in the Spanish show.[30] As already mentioned, this was an important decision for reasons of consistency with the series but also because children seem to enjoy homophony related precisely to proper nouns, either the entire word or just its ending (Bariaud 1989: 32). Consequently, this fact was important for the names of non-human characters in the novel to also be meaningful in the target language but equally important

[30] Something that would be worth exploring further is how the gender of these stuffed animals or little friends is modified in translation in children's literature. As Liudmilla Miteva puts it: "Children's fiction is especially interesting in this respect because feminine or masculine gender is often assigned to creatures and things normally used in neuter" (2000: 34).

for the target readers who likewise needed to benefit from experiencing to some extent the same play on sounds as in the original.

SL Example 5
When we all get off this plane We will be in Madrid, Spain. When our travels reach an end, Mom will see her old boyfriend. (p. 7)
TL Example 5
Una vez que del avión bajemos En Madrid, España, estaremos. Cuando nuestro viaje llegue a su fin, Mamá verá a su antiguo amiguín.

In this poem the difficulty lay in the translations of the rhymes into Spanish. One word that was problematic to match was "boyfriend," since its translation into the usual Spanish *"novio"* does not rhyme with the word *"fin."* Once again, I resorted to a colloquial expression that encapsulates the same meaning while adding humor, a relevant aspect to Melanie's poem. I chose the word *"amiguín,"* which functions as a colloquial diminutive for *"amigo,"* "friend," in order to convey the same meaning, so that the word "boyfriend" became "little friend" in the target language.

SL Example 6
Sometimes I wonder if Matt will be immature his whole life long. He even got Dad in trouble. What happened was, Mom said that flight attendants used to be called stewardesses and that "stewardesses" is the longest word you can type with just your left hand. Matt asked, "In Spanish too?" Mom said, "No, in Spanish, the word is *azafatas*". Well, instead of hearing Ah Sa Fot Ahs, Matt heard a

really bad phrase that Mom would never say about a person's behind. He started laughing and said, "Some flight attendants have *azafatas!"* (p. 7-8)
TL Example 6
A veces me pregunto si Matt madurará algún día. Hace poco puso a papá en un apuro. Lo que pasó es que Mamá dijo que las personas que trabajan en el avión se llaman en inglés "stewardesses" y Matt preguntó, "¿En español también?" y Mamá dijo, "No, en español se llaman *azafatas*". Y Matt, en vez de oír "*azafatas"* pronunció "*garrapatas*". A continuación, Mamá se puso muy nerviosa y Matt se dio cuenta de que no había dicho nada bueno. Mamá le dijo que no era esa palabra, "No es eso Matt, se dice '*azafatas'*" y entonces Matt empezó a gritar "*azafatas"* "*garrapatas*", "*azafatas"* "*garrapatas*", "*azafatas"* "*garrapatas*". Se empezó a reír y dijo, "¡Las azafatas son garrapatas!"

This passage was especially difficult to translate because of the word "*azafatas,"* which means "stewardesses," and is used as a bilingual pun, i.e., a sound that represents "anglicized versions of the 'foreign' sound" (Chiaro 1992: 39). At least this is how Matt the Brat presents it to the source language reader. By pronouncing this word with an American accent, deliberately looking to create the effect of a double meaning, this sequence, presented as a homophone of the Spanish word, has a different meaning in English. The word *"azafatas,"* phonetically transcribed by Melanie as "Ah Sa Fot Ahs," and explicitly used by Matt with the last two syllables standing for "fat-ass," creates a comic scene that culminates in uproarious laughter accompanied by the mother's rage. To translate this passage into Spanish I had to think of a word that would sound the same as *"azafatas,"* while producing a humorous association when pronounced together. As the scene takes place on an airplane, Matt once again displays wit that is considered inappropriate by his mother and by Melanie. To achieve this effect I came up with the word *"garrapatas,"* which means "ticks,"

sounds similar to *"azafatas,"* and is inappropriate for the context. Thus the humor in the target language is produced when Matt the Brat shouts these words combined, *"¡azafatas!" "¡garrapatas!",* unleashing a comic chain of events in the scene. Here I had to reconstruct the text in Spanish with the objective of creating a phonological effect, which was difficult given the semantic restrictions present in the original text, which could not be reproduced at both the lexical and the phonological levels in the target language. In this sense, Henri Bergson's words might be revealing here since according to him a distinction has to be made between the humorous effect that a language expresses, and the humorous effect that the language itself creates:

> Mais il faut distinguer entre le comique que le langage exprime, et celui que le langage crée. La premier pourrait, à la rigueur, se traduire d'une langue dans une autre, quitte à perdre la plus grande partie de son relief en passant dans une société nouvelle, autre par ses mœurs, par sa littérature, et sourtout par ses associations d'idées [. . .]. C'est le langage lui-même, ici, qui devient comique. (Bergson 1914: 105-106)

> But one must distinguish between the comical which is expressed by language and that which is created by language. The former could, strictly speaking, be translated from one language into another, even though it will lose most of its depth upon being transferred to a new culture, different in its manners, its literature and most of all its associations of ideas [. . .]. It is language itself that becomes comical here. (My translation)

In Bergson's opinion the first type of effect may be translated into any language, as is the case of many translations of comic texts. The second one, which hinges on the restrictive use of language, is not easily translatable. "In

many instances [. . .] one simply cannot reproduce certain formal elements of the source message. For example, there may be puns, chiasmic orders of words, instances of assonance, or acrostic features of line-initial sounds which completely defy equivalent rendering" (Nida 2000: 135). Although Nida refers mainly to poetry, these comments also apply to other types of texts as well, but in any case—and as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter—humor bears some similarities to the translation of poetry especially as regards its phonological component.

SL Example 7
Mom says Spaniards pronounce some v's like b's and say some c's and z's in a lisping way. In Castillian Spanish, Valencia is Ba Lenth E Ah. "You can often tell where people are from by how they talk". "Like, if a person says, 'Pahk the cah,' he might be from Boston?" I asked. "Yes," Mom said. "And if he says, 'Howdy, y'all,' he might be from Texas?" Matt added. "Yes," Mom said. "Do people in Valencia, Barcelona, Madrid, and Seville have different accents?" We'll be visiting those cities so I thought that was a good question. (p. 9-10)
TL Example 7
Mamá dice que los españoles pronuncian la 'v' igual que la 'b' y que pronuncian la 'c' y la 'z' con la lengua entre los dientes. Si se quiere pronunciar Valencia con acento español hay que poner la lengua entre los dientes y soplar para pronunciarlo correctamente Va-len-CCCI-a. "A menudo se puede saber de dónde es una persona por la manera en la que habla". En Estados Unidos se sabe enseguida si alguien es de Texas o de Boston por su acento. "¿También tendrá la gente en Valencia, Barcelona, Madrid, y Sevilla acentos diferentes?" Como vamos a visitar estas ciudades pensé que sería una buena pregunta.

This excerpt shows the translator's inability to create a target text equivalent to its source. Because dialectal pronunciation in the text is a culturally-bound element and is only meaningful within the linguistic repertoire of the source linguistic community, I had to omit the examples of the Texas and Boston accents due to their lack of correspondence with the target language. Yet to preserve the narrative structure of the passage, I did keep Melanie's questions about different regional accents in Spain. By way of reinforcement, I reduplicated the sound "c" for the voiceless dental fricative sound /θ/ in the name of the city "*Va-len-CCCI-a.*" In this playful translation, I emphasized the accurate pronunciation while using the author's typographic conventions. To simply have substituted the source cultural references for target ones, in this particular case, would not have been an option: it would not have been very similar, in the eyes of the reader, for an 11-year-old American girl on her first visit to Spain to possess this kind of knowledge about different Spanish accents.

SL Example 8
We're about to see Spain—yippee!! We're about to see Antonio—yipes!! *Adiós* (Odd E Ose) or Bye, Melanie (p. 12-13)
TL Example 8
Estamos a punto de ver España—¡¡Yupiii!! Estamos a punto de ver a Antonio—¡¡Aaaah!! *Adiós*, Bye o ¡Hasta luego! Melanie

Here, the humorous effect is achieved through the use of two onomatopoeic interjections. The first one corresponds to "yippee!!" which has its equivalent in the target language as "*¡¡Yupiii!!*," i.e., a way of expressing enthusiasm, wild excitement or delight about something. I translated the

second one, "yipes!!," as "*¡¡Ahhh!!*" since both expressions are used to denote both fear and pain. Although in this case the meaning was preserved, the visual and prosodic effect of the two words, which in the original have the same three letters, could not be achieved in the target language.

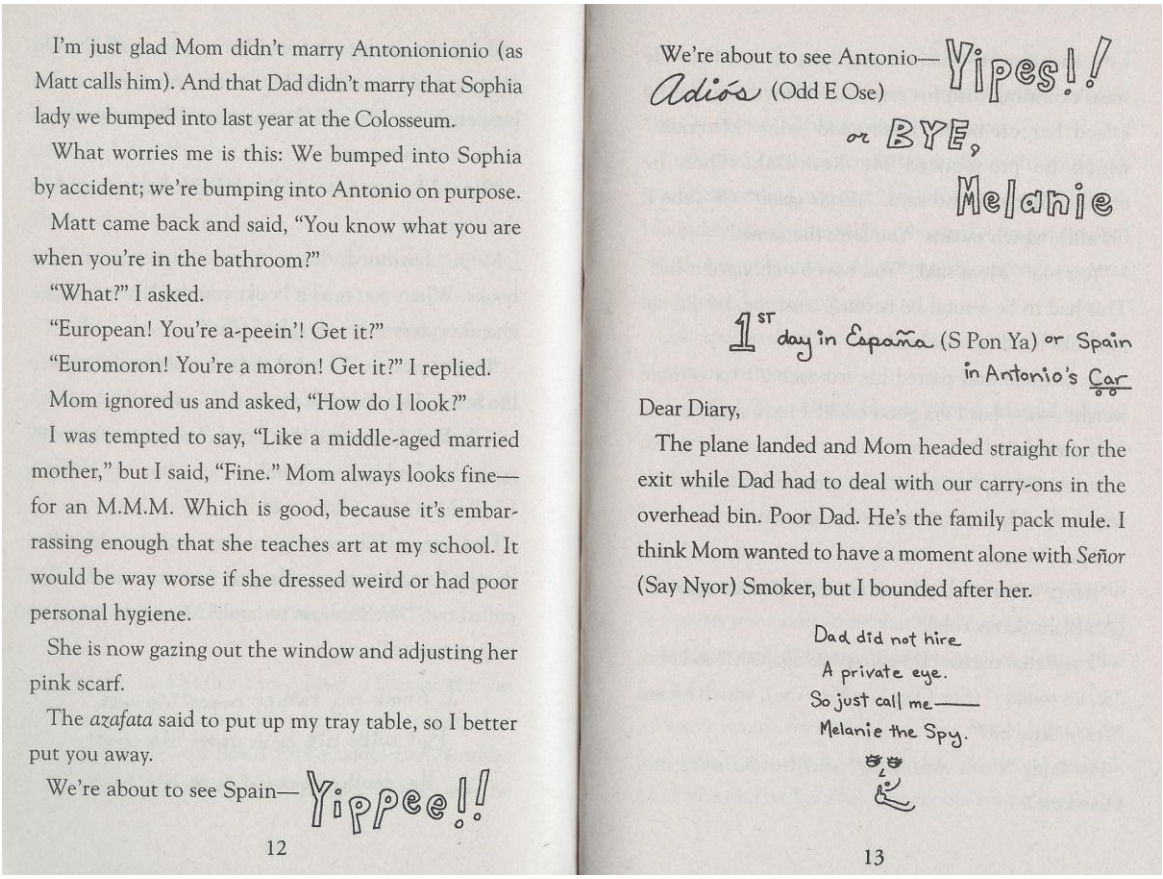
SL Example 9
Dad did not hire *A private eye.* So just call me— *Melanie the Spy.* (p. 13)
TL Example 9
Papá no me dijo Que hiciera de policía. Por eso llámame— *Melanie la espía.*

This poem is translated almost literally, except for the first and the second verses. I translated it so that the verses sound natural to the ear:

> El traductor de obras de literatura para niños debe saber que la comunicación interlingual implica darse cuenta de que una misma cosa puede ser fácil de decir en una lengua y difícil de decir en otra; debe dominar el modo narrativo de los cuentos infantiles en ambas lenguas; debe tener sensibilidad y madurez estética. (Beuchat and Valdivieso 1990: 57)
>
> The translator of children's literature needs to know that interlingual communication implies realization that the same thing could be easy to say in one language and difficult in another. S/he needs to master the narrative mode of children's tales in both

> languages and needs to have sensibility and aesthetic maturity. (My translation)

Since the expression *"hacer de policía"* (play the policeman) is used in children's games, I chose the word *"policía"* to evoke the sense of "private eye," or a watchman, but also because it rhymes with the translation of the word "Spy," *"espía"* in Spanish.



I'm just glad Mom didn't marry Antonionionio (as Matt calls him). And that Dad didn't marry that Sophia lady we bumped into last year at the Colosseum.

What worries me is this: We bumped into Sophia by accident; we're bumping into Antonio on purpose.

Matt came back and said, "You know what you are when you're in the bathroom?"

"What?" I asked.

"European! You're a-peein'! Get it?"

"Euromoron! You're a moron! Get it?" I replied.

Mom ignored us and asked, "How do I look?"

I was tempted to say, "Like a middle-aged married mother," but I said, "Fine." Mom always looks fine—for an M.M.M. Which is good, because it's embarrassing enough that she teaches art at my school. It would be way worse if she dressed weird or had poor personal hygiene.

She is now gazing out the window and adjusting her pink scarf.

The *azafata* said to put up my tray table, so I better put you away.

We're about to see Spain— Yippee!!

12

We're about to see Antonio— Yipes!!

Adiós (Odd E Ose) or BYE, Melanie

1st day in España (S Pon Ya) or Spain in Antonio's Car

Dear Diary,

The plane landed and Mom headed straight for the exit while Dad had to deal with our carry-ons in the overhead bin. Poor Dad. He's the family pack mule. I think Mom wanted to have a moment alone with *Señor* (Say Nyor) Smoker, but I bounded after her.

Dad did not hire
A private eye.
So just call me——
Melanie the Spy.

13

Fig. 6. Sample of visual aids employed in *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin*. New York: Knopf, 2004.

Translating passages from *With Love from Spain, Melanie Martin* has allowed me to put into practice some ideas from my research on the translation of phonological humor. As demonstrated through this practical case study, if humor is challenging to translate, then it can be even more challenging to translate children's humor and sound-based humor. A question that arises is to

what extent does the translator need to be familiar with the intentions of the author. I have learned from experience that whenever possible, and particularly in regard to humorous texts, the translator benefits greatly from direct communication with the author to obtain feedback, and thus achieve a target text nourished by both the author's intent and the translator's knowledge of the target culture. When there is communication between the translator and the author, the final result can be enriching for everyone, including the reader: "Every successful translation of an innovative author who has a high degree of linguistic and stylistic awareness entails a gain for the literature of the language into which it is translated" (O'Sullivan 1998: 202). Through the analysis of the above examples, I wanted to show the interrelationship between humor and sound, which proves to be very difficult to translate. This is especially relevant in the translation of sound-based humor since the translator faces two distinctive challenges: the semantic and the phonological one. Besides, in children's literature scholars always raise the issue of whether it should be viewed as art from a literary point of view or if, on the contrary, it should be viewed from the vantage point of its manifest pedagogical values and didactic practices (Alvstad 2008: 225). In my view, both notions are compatible, but the translator needs to be aware of them during the entire process. In the end, I hope to have demonstrated in the excerpts analyzed here that even with the benefit of the author's suggestions and feedback, translating humor presupposes a thorough knowledge of both cultures, represents a challenge, and depends on the translator's originality and creativity to achieve a text that is both humorous and playful in the target language.

3.3.2. The Relationship between Humor and Informative and Persuasive Messages

As we have seen in the previous section, through the analysis of examples in a literary context, sound is important in translation theory because

of the impact that it has on meaning. Accordingly, the interdependence of sound and meaning is relevant not just from a literary perspective but, perhaps even more importantly, in everyday life. In an increasingly diverse and globalized world that demands high accountability for translation, there are plenty of examples to demonstrate how translators would benefit from acknowledging the importance and interdependence of sound in the configuration of meaning, and most especially from studying how sound operates from one language to another, especially since, as Jan Blommaert argues, language nowadays possesses many different sociolinguistic aspects one of them being that it is "intrinsically connected to processes of globalization" (2010: 2).[31] Hence, in striking a balance between reproducing both the literal language and the spirit of any linguistic sequence, while careful not to betray either, what is important for the translator is to have an awareness of the range of phonological implications that the chosen terms may carry into the target language(s), as this may affect—even defeat—the very purpose of the translation.

Therefore, the knowledge of how sound operates within a translation context could be of great help in the field of advertising, where the goal is to create a specific effect and thus to achieve a more persuasive message. In point of fact, globalization is one of the reasons for the vastly enhanced versatility of marketing, which in turn has resulted in the adoption of strategies to maximize the salience of a product through the use of translation as persuasive communication. Indeed, to effectively sell a product one needs not only to translate its brand or name, but also its functionality and *raison d'être* into a different culture. At all levels, it is the configuration of proper nouns that offers the clearest example of the importance of sound, both in translation and in one's own language. An historically notable example can be found in the persona of Chile's Nobel Prize winning poet, Pablo Neruda, whose real name,

[31] As Torop indicates, "Due to the activity of the topic of globalisation and the opposition of the global and the local, the understanding has been reached once again that no society wishing to enact its specificity can escape the consideration of cultural identity" (2002: 594).

Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto, would certainly not have achieved the sonorous and poetic effect of the pseudonym he used to publish his first poems. In effect, the name Pablo Neruda was not merely the poet's name: it became his self-identifying and self-perpetuating charismatic sound combination. It is interesting to note that, different theories notwithstanding, nobody knows the exact reason for this chosen phonological combination that became his name, as the poet himself never revealed it.[32]

> From October 1920 Neftalí began to refer to himself as Pablo Neruda. The reason for the change of name is undisputed: by then he was publishing regularly in local newspapers and journals and he was anxious to conceal his identity from his irascible father, who would much rather have seen his son forging a successful career for himself than frittering away his time and energy on something as frivolous as poetry. However, the origins of what was initially no more than a *nom de plume* (he did not change his name officially until December 1946) are more mysterious. (Moran 2009: 20)

By contrast, there are unfortunate sound combinations in the names of products that have become classical gaffes in marketing. By and large such mistakes have been the result of a variety of factors, such as the similar rendering of a direct equivalence between form and sound from one language into another. In most instances, however, mistakes have been produced because of a lack of awareness of the fact that sound and its combinations may have different associations when carried into a target language or culture.[33] This is

[32] One of the most plausible hypotheses is that it may have been originated as the combination of the first and last name of, respectively Pablo de Sarasate, a Spanish violinist, and Wilhelmine Norman-Neruda, a Moravian violinist (Moran 2009: 21).

[33] As Malmkjær explains: "The kind of adjustment that needs to be made to brand names and advertising materials is often known as localisation. Localisation generally refers to the need to make advertising copy or brand names suitable for a given culture, but the underlying need to

directly related to the conscious use of sound in brand naming, i.e., what Kirsten Malmkjær identifies as the 'phonoaesthetic view of language,' i.e.,

> the notion, along with other types of sound symbolism, plays a significant role in brand naming decisions and advertising, and may therefore be of clear significance to translators. It is true that advertisements are rarely translated directly; nevertheless, translators may be charged with producing copy which is as catchy, chiming, or appealing in the new language as the original was in its language. There is a growing literature on brand name translation which emphasises the importance of awareness in such translation of sound symbolism, perhaps especially between European languages and Chinese, because sound symbolism and naming are especially important in the latter language. (2005: 76)

Even for a well-known company like Coca-Cola[34] it was not easy to enter China, since the first phonological adaptation of the famous drink was rendered by the marketing people as "ke-ke-ken-la" 蝌蝌啃蜡. Only later, once the brand had been publicly advertised, was it allegedly discovered that the phrase actually means "bite the wax tadpole" or "female horse stuffed with wax," depending on the dialect.[35] The company then began to do research until it found a combination of Chinese characters with a close phonetic equivalent, "ko-kou-ko-le," 可口可乐,which could be translated as "happiness in the mouth," an adaption that maintains its "appealing psychoacoustic effect" (Panic 2003: 249). Speaking of such translation gaffes, Lawrence Venuti argues that the

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appeal to a projected audience of consumers is of course as keenly felt in campaigns intended to attract a given consumer group in a company's home country" (2005: 76-77).

[34] For a more detailed explanation see: "Translation mistakes" <www.i18nguy.com/translations.html>

[35] For an exhaustive analysis of the translation of this example and other brand names into Chinese, see the doctoral dissertation by Tsui-Ling Huang (2006) and the study of Chuansheng and Yunnan (2003).

Coca-Cola example: "exemplifies [a] 'phonosemantic' strategy, but clearly it signifies beyond a simple semantic correspondence" (2008: 19). In fact, the product-naming process is probably one of the best areas where we can observe the importance of sound in the constitution of a lexical unit, since:

> [it] inevitably depends on the mechanisms of language, and it is here that certain levels of linguistic analysis enter the scene and play a crucial role in creating new names. All aspects of brand naming are governed by two general principles—language economy and language creativity—linguistic phenomena which are crucial in creating successful and memorable brand names and which exert their influence on and permeate the morphological, phonological, and semantic levels of brand naming alike. (Panic 2003: 248)

Since language is composed of a duality that can be identified as both meaning and sound, in some instances it appears that one of the two elements has either taken priority over the other, or the two appear to blend together to perform a definite communicative act. This is similar to what happens in poetry where, according to Jakobson: "syntactic and morphological categories, roots, and affixes, phonemes and their components (distinctive features)—in short, any constituents of the verbal code—are confronted, juxtaposed, brought into contiguous relation according to the principle of similarity and contrast and carry their own autonomous signification" (1959: 238). In addition, according to Panic "the linguistic approach to brand name creation is both scientific and creative—it makes use of well-established morphological, phonological and semantic principles, combining them in a creative way" (2003: 248).

In advertising we are often exposed to a creative motive, dominated in some cases by an intentional—although unexpected for customers—phonemic similarity or paranomastic value, which is exploited with more or less

successful effect towards the goal of persuasive communication. I agree with Rosenthal, who defines persuasion in this context as: "the transmission from a source to a receiver of information intended to motivate the latter to undertake a particular course of action, e.g., to vote, to buy, to donate, to join, etc." (Rosenthal 1972: 16). Likewise, referring to persuasion in the context of translation for advertising, Adab adds that:

> Specialists in advertising research tend to agree that in the Western culture, the purpose of the advertising text is to persuade the reader to adopt a certain type of behaviour, through belief in the positive qualities of the product. [. . .] For purchases involving greater expenditure, the appeal is achieved through the creation of an identity which can be enhanced by use of the product (e.g. different makes of car—family, sporty, adventurous, reliable, luxury). This identification has to work on two levels, by simultaneously creating a sense of belonging to a group to which the consumer could aspire and yet asserting the individual and unique properties of the product, use of which will confer these properties on the user. (2002: 140)

In this regard, some car brand names are also well-known examples of advertising pitfalls: instead of being successful at persuading consumers to buy, on the contrary they make speakers and consumers laugh.[36] As pointed out by Muñoz-Basols (2010: 187), many famous anecdotes serve as illustration: the *Mitsubishi Pajero* (a colloquial Spanish word meaning 'wanker') changed to *Montero* in Spanish-speaking countries for obvious reasons; the *Mazda Laputa* (meaning 'prostitute'), whose name derives from the book *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift; *Nissan Moco* ('snot'), *Vauxhall Nova*, (literally, it doesn't work, or

[36] For the role of humor in advertising see Sternthal and Craig (1973); Chattopadhyay and Basu (1990) and Eisend (2009).

'*no va*'), which is produced in Spain as *Opel Corsa*, or the *Ford Pinto* (Brazilian slang for minuscule male genitals), subsequently renamed as *Ford Corcel* (which means 'horse') (Hayden 1997: 4). In each of these examples the unfortunate combination of sounds chosen—which also shows a lack of awareness of this important feature of language—has failed to represent the intended purpose or persuasive message. After all, sound is a component that is inherent to any translation process, and especially relevant in advertising, not to mention of vital importance in rendering the constitutive elements of language.[37]

Yet another form of the use of sound to achieve persuasive communication is one in which there is a prevalence of sound over meaning, i.e., where meaning is conditioned by the phonological combination of words and its paranomastic value, which as we will see next in the analysis of some examples, is especially relevant in advertising. An illustrative example can be found in the Ukrainian entry for the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest held in Helsinki, performed by Verka Serduchka (Andriy Danylko), and which generated a lot of controversy due to its apparently non-sensical title: Данцінґ Лаша Тумбай, "Dancing Lasha Tumbai." The singer claimed that the title meant 'whipped cream' in Mongolian, but this was purportedly a linguistic device used with a paranomastic effect or phonetic resemblance to the words 'Russia Goodbye,' a direct reference to the Ukrainian Orange Revolution that took place from November 2004 to January 2005. The impact of having Ukrainians pronounce this phrase in a contest broadcast in Europe, and in which Russia was also taking part, is certainly self-explanatory. The interesting thing about this phonological device was that its sonorous persuasiveness probably made an impact, since out of all the 24 countries competing in the event the song

[37] Other examples that come from marketing emphasize the effect created when we mentally combine a visual image with a paranomastic combination of letters in such a way that a visual pun is achieved. Take, for example, "the clothes shop chain firm French Connection [that] invented the daring logo (FCUK)" (Goldstein 2005: 35), whose acronym and unpronounceable combination of letters inevitably remind us of a well-known swearword; a good example of how professionals use "the best of art, psychology, sociology, marketing, advertising and technology to zealously promote their products" (Rutledge 1994: 207).

"Lasha Tumbai" came second. One explanation could be that while the form of the message was linguistically neutral, since the words could not be recognized in first instance as meaningful to speakers of Ukrainian or Russian, it was the resemblance of the sounds to the English expression 'Russia Goodbye' that gave the sequence meaning, thus making the use of sounds the primary goal in the configuration of meaning.

Two years later, following the perhaps success of such a strategy, the national broadcaster of Georgia (GTVR) decided to enter the song "We Don't Wanna Put In" for competition in the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest, to be held in Moscow, which as *The Guardian* mentions:

> was rejected by organisers for containing obvious references to the Russian prime minister. Georgia has withdrawn from the Eurovision song contest after their proposed entry was banned for being too political. The track 'We Don't Wanna Put In' was rejected by event organisers for containing obvious references to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin—particularly in the song's title. Now Georgia's state broadcaster has issued a statement saying they are not prepared to change the lyrics. Georgia's relationship with Russia is still tense following the brief conflict involving the two countries last August. (*The Guardian*, March 11th, 2009)

Unfortunately, it seems that the sound strategy in this case was not as well-crafted as in the 2007 Ukrainian entry, since the phonemic similarity with the English phrasal verb in the song title inevitably betrayed its entertaining

purpose. Consequently, Georgia was not allowed to sing the song in the capital of Russia.[38]

Through the different examples from popular culture that I have presented, I hope to have illustrated that sound is an idiosyncratic and complex phenomenon. Sound has a direct relationship to the creation of persuasive messages, just as the failure to correctly represent the phonological aspect of a message may, unwittingly, be the cause of misunderstanding, laughter, vulgarity or even mockery. Sound is important in translation theory because of the impact that it has on meaning. For where sound is a prevailing component in the configuration of a message, it underscores the existence of a phonological reality in one language that does not necessarily exist in another language. As such, it may constitute, in our global society a source of either communication or miscommunication.

3.3.2.1. Wordplay with a Phonological Component in Advertising

Next I will analyze some examples from advertising where sound has been used to create different messages. To this end, I will focus on analyzing the structure of the message, paying attention to the relationship between sound and meaning in the context of persuasive communication. The following examples come largely from an advertising campaign carried out in 2008 by BAA Limited, a company that owns and operates airports, primarily in the UK. Also included are other advertisements that employ different phonological components and techniques with the objective of persuasive communication.

The purpose of the BAA campaign was to inform passengers of the convenience of reserving a parking space online, rather than paying a higher price for it at the airport. The message was specifically designed to persuade prospective customers to use this service and the use of humor in the campaign

[38] There are other meaningful references in the chorus of the song which reads: "We don't wanna put in, / Cuz negative move, / It's killin' the groove, / I'm gonna try to shoot in, / Some disco tonight, / Boogie with you" (*The Guardian*, March 11th, 2009).

seems appropriate since it has been demonstrated that humor has a positive effect on persuasion (Gulas and Weinberger 2006: 115). The campaign used elements of wordplay and humorous messages to remind passengers of this service—some of which will be analyzed below—together with useful information. Its main linguistic device creating the message was the use of puns. These puns were usually proper nouns easy to identify with a geographical area and, therefore, meaningful within the setting of an airport, as well as to the potential passengers traveling to different destinations.

What was interesting was how the publicists of these advertisements were able to come up with the various proper nouns related to geography, names of cities, countries, etc., in other words, nouns that would function as homophones or quasi-homophones to actual English words. It was thus that the specific sequences designed for this campaign succeeded not just in catching the passengers' attention, but also in compelling them to read the different advertisements and to interpret them correctly, while they were being entertained. In addition to their various communicative purposes, these sequences were short and direct in the information they provided, but because of the pun used in the configuration of the main message, they also functioned similarly to mnemonic devices—with the added component of humor—through which passengers could perhaps remember the information more easily. Besides, as we will see in the examples, while in some cases the pronunciation of the pun works as a homophone or quasi-homophone, in other cases there has to be a necessary deviation of the pronunciation so that the pun can be associated with the intended meaning in order for the double reading of the pun sequence to be correctly performed and understood. This is an important aspect as it underscores the relevance of sound in the configuration of meaning and humor, and how the use of sound varies.

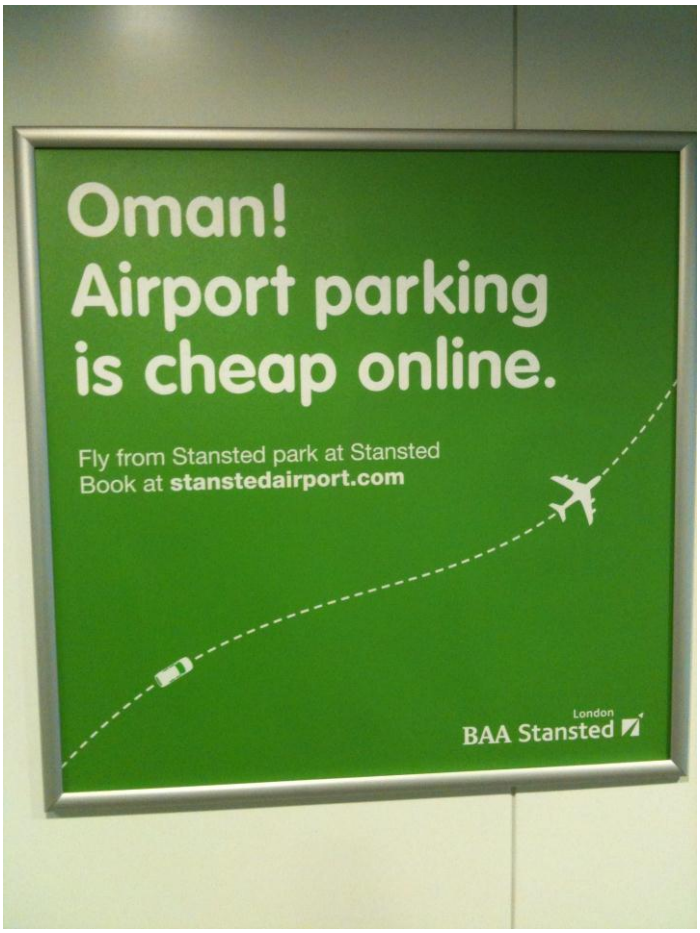

Fig. 7. BAA Advertisement, Stansted Airport, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
Oman! Airport parking is cheap online.	**Oh man**! Airport parking is cheap online.
Actual pronunciation	**Intended pronunciation**
Oman [əʊˈmɑːn]	Oh man [əʊ] [man]

The context for this example makes it an interesting case. The advertisement is clearly complemented by visual aids: a car following a route is suddenly transformed into a plane, symbolizing the journey of many passengers, i.e., those who take their own car to get to the airport. However, the message which

functions as a useful piece of advice is presented through humor to catch the attention of passers-by. This is achieved by using a proper noun, "Oman," a country on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula, a possible travel destination given the context of the airport. The double reading of the message here is obtained because the name of the country functions as a homophone of the English expression: "Oh man!" It is an expression used to indicate surprise or disappointment; the latter being more relevant here. In this particular case, the phonological effect chosen through the use of a homophone indicates that it is cheaper to book parking online. Consequently, those who did not book their parking in advance could have saved money had they done so, and would be disappointed when reading this message now. The expectation, of course, is that the passengers exposed to this publicity are able to interpret and perform the double reading, as they are being entertained by its informative and persuasive message.

Fig. 8. BAA Advertisement, Stansted Airport, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
Cheap airport parking? **Cannes** do!	Cheap airport parking? **Can** do!
Actual pronunciation	**Intended pronunciation**
Cannes [kan]	Can [kan]

As in the previous example, a proper noun has been used in the configuration of the message. Once again, the double reading of this pun sequence is based on a homophonic play on words. In this case, the French city of Cannes has deliberately been used to represent the English auxiliary verb "can." The phrase

"can do" is a colloquial or abbreviated expression to indicate that something is feasible, achievable, a task easy enough to fulfill. Here, as well, the passenger who sees the advertisement will learn about the convenience of booking a parking space online as a cheaper option than paying for one at the airport.

Fig. 9. BAA Advertisement, Stansted Airport, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
To save money, **Dubai** your airport parking in advance.	To save money, **do buy** your airport parking in advance.
Actual pronunciation	**Intended pronunciation**
Dubai [d(j)uːˈbʌɪ]	Do buy [duː] [bʌɪ]

Again, the passengers who are the recipients of this message are exposed to wordplay. In this case, the use of a city, Dubai, is presented as equivalent phonologically and semantically to the verbal forms "Do buy," i.e., an affirmative imperative form with the verb "to buy" and an auxiliary form used to express emphasis, which in this example functions as a recommendation. The pun functions as an exhortative reminder for passengers of the convenient option of booking a parking space before going to the airport; it is entertaining; and it aims to be mnemonic, especially since the homophone used corresponds to the main verb in the sentence.

Fig. 10. BAA Advertisement, Stansted Airport, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
You're **Ghana** save by booking your parking airport in advance.	You're **gonna** save by booking your parking airport in advance.
Actual pronunciation	**Intended pronunciation**
Ghana [ˈgɑːnə]	gonna [ˈgɒnə]

Along the same lines as in the other BAA advertisements, here the colloquial use of language is preferred in order to make the message more meaningful. What is interesting is that the specific combination of sounds of the colloquial

form: "You're Ghana...," i.e., "You're gonna..." may have determined the use of this sentence so that the message could be constructed to follow the pattern of the other advertisements. The complete and standard form of the whole expression, "You are going to...," would have resulted in a dry and humorless sequence. Also, it is worth noting that even though this advertisement was displayed at Stansted Airport, outside London, this form of expressing the future tense is more typical of American English. Accordingly, by choosing this form, the publicists may have assumed that, given the influence of the American media, British speakers would be accustomed to this form of speech even though they do not use it themselves as frequently.

Fig. 11. BAA Advertisement, Stansted Airport, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
Jamaica habit of flying? Make a habit of parking!	**You make a** habit of flying? Make a habit of parking!
Actual pronunciation	**Intended pronunciation**
Jamaica [dʒəˈmeɪkə]	You make a [juː] [meɪk] [ə, eɪ]

Here, the name of the country Jamaica is made to sound like the English words: "(Do) You make a…" It is interesting to note that this homophonic

correspondence between the word used and the intended meaning is not as clear as in the previous examples. For this reason, it seems, the publicists resorted to the use of a parallel structure between the question and the answer in the message, i.e., "You make a... (Jamaica)" – "Make a habit..." This serves both to relate the answer to the question and to use the imperative to make a stronger, more persuasive recommendation and, above all, to facilitate the reading of the pun which may not be sufficiently clear, and therefore require a little more focus on the language in order to interpret the message correctly.

Fig. 12. Costa Coffee, Cirencester, UK

Original message	Intended meaning
GRABB-IT!	**GRAB THE RABBIT!**

This advertising example shows how puns sometimes also need, in addition to lexical and phonological features, visual imagery to create meaning. In this case, were we to cover the image that appears above the words and concentrate exclusively on the main text, "GRABB-IT," it would be difficult to retrieve the complete message of the advertisement. Although this example is not used as a visual pun, i.e., "one visual element [that] signifies two meanings simultaneously" (Hempelmann and Samson 2008: 615), it is interesting to note that the image certainly helps to reinforce the meaning of the advertisement. To configure the verbal message, the spelling of the verb "to grab" has been changed by doubling the final consonant of the verb to "BB," so that the new spelling visually matches the second syllable of the English word "rabbit." This technique helps the receiver of the message to easily establish an association between the image and the words. Again, it is the similar sound of the words "GRABB-IT" and name of the animal "RABBIT" that creates a semantic association through the phonological features of these two words that are mentally contrasted here. In turn, this phonological and semantic association is linked to humor, and reinforced in advertising by the image of a cookie in the form of a rabbit, as well as the words that encourage shoppers to buy this product. In addition, this advertisement also connects with childhood memories of the Easter Bunny in the English tradition (Spring Bunny in the US). Since this is a culturally-bound type of advertisement, the expectation is that since the customers are able to understand the semantic associations, phonological features, and cultural hints, they will therefore be entertained and persuaded. A similarly child-like tone is used on the Costa Coffee Facebook website, where more information on this product can be found: "Meet Brian the Bunny, an oh-

so-crunchy, spiced gingerbread biscuit, baked and lovingly hand iced by a small expert family business in Shropshire. Oh and he's really quite cute!" (Costa Coffee Facebook).

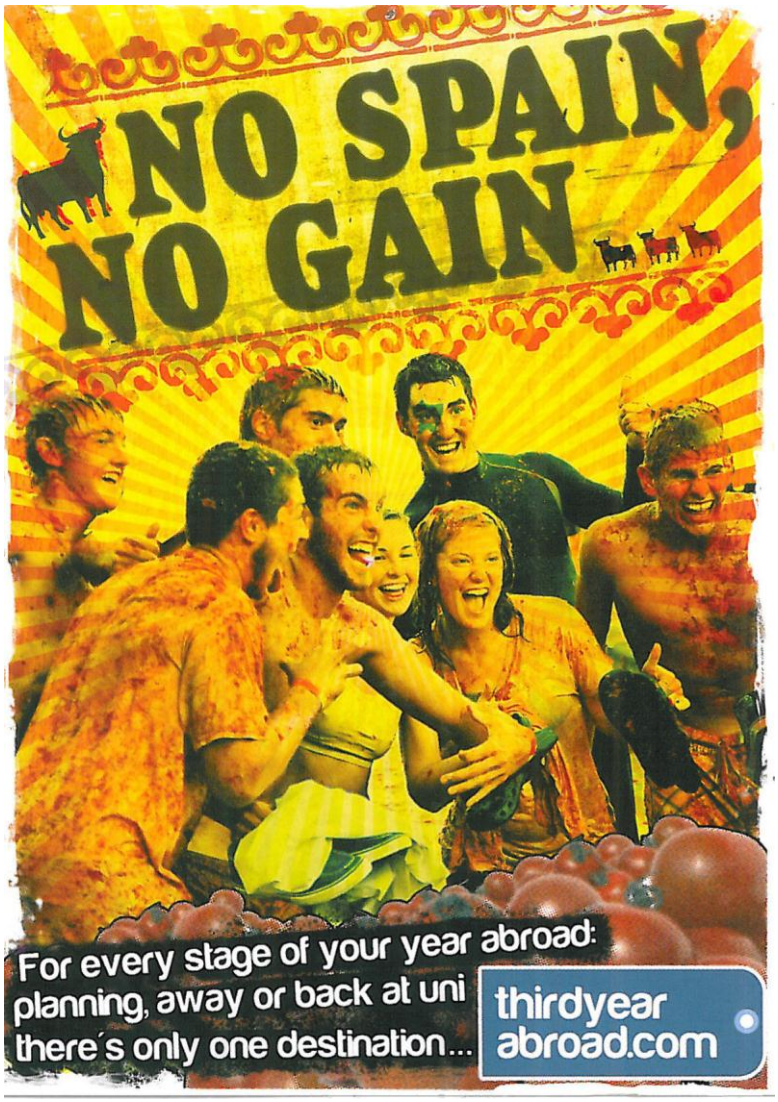

Fig. 13. *www.thirdyearabroad.com*

Original message	Intended meaning
NO **SPAIN**, NO GAIN	NO **PAIN**, NO GAIN
Actual pronunciation	**Intended meaning**
Spain [speɪn]	pain [peɪn]

This last advertising example also makes use of a rhyme to create a persuasive message. In this case, we see a group of young people having fun in one of the Spanish festivities—especially well-known in English-speaking countries—called "*la tomatina*." This event takes place in the town of Buñol (Valencia) and consists of people throwing tomatoes at each other. The witticism in this advertisement comes from the association of the rhyming English idiomatic expression, "No pain, no gain," and its transformation into "No Spain, no gain." It sound like, as is, a recommendation by the advertiser, www.thirdyearabroad.com, an Internet website for British students who want to spend the third year of their university degree in a foreign country. This program is similar to the Erasmus Program among European universities, the only difference being that students do not need to be enrolled at another university while they are abroad. By linking the proverb "No pain no gain" to the third year abroad experience, and by phonologically reminding the reader of the original message slightly changed in its main lexical unit, "pain / Spain," students are encouraged to visit the website where they will find different opportunities to travel to Spain and enjoy a new cultural experience, as can be seen in the picture. To complement this idea, the colors of the Spanish flag, red and yellow, as well as the repeated image of a black bull functioning as an ellipsis at the end of the sentence, and of course recognizable as a symbol of Spanish popular culture, are displayed to enhance the persuasiveness of the message.

As we have seen in the examples analyzed, different techniques at the lexical, phonological or visual levels are used to create meaningful and persuasive messages. Many of these constitute a play on words and are often accompanied by a humorous component. What these examples illustrate is that meaning can be created through the use of different devices, ranging from direct or easy to retrieve messages where meaning is used for its configuration primarily at a lexical level, to other more complex messages where, for instance, a phonological or a cultural component needs to be identified correctly for the

interpretation of the message to be adequate. It is for this reason that language is, in some cases, adapted and crafted to serve the purpose of a specific message or image whose meaning may not be obvious and may require a careful reading. Such adaptation and crafting may be accompanied by different rhetorical and linguistic devices that may also affect the register, formal vs. colloquial, or even different versions of the same language: British vs. American English. It is all these aspects that exemplify the intricacies of language of advertising, often linked to humor, which functions as an entertaining linguistic puzzle that the reader needs to rapidly decipher in order to correctly understand the message.

3.3.2.2. Wordplay with a Phonological Component in Journalism

In journalism, as well as in advertising, readers are constantly exposed to messages that make use of wordplay. This linguistic device constructed around a play on words, and often accompanied by a play on sounds—which especially concerns us here—tends to be more evident in the headlines of news items. In news headlines, information is condensed and made as succinct as possible and at the same time persuasive and representative of the information presented in the article. It is through successfully compressing both language and message, and making it appealing and entertaining, that the journalist manages to attract the attention of a prospective reader of the newspaper or magazine. A good example of such linguistic compression can be seen, for instance, in *The Economist* magazine, which tends to use ingenious ways of introducing a piece of news: making reference to specific information, it also often uses wordplay to entertain the reader. This has been identified by Richard Alexander as the "witty headline" (1997: 111); he explains that different techniques can be found in headlines to create humor such as the use of different kinds of puns, allusions, metaphors and other added formal features

related to phonological aspects such as a recurrent use of alliteration.[39] The following examples show just how the use of wordplay in journalism, often accompanied with humorous, entertaining or persuasive messages, represents common practice. However, it hinges on the fact that the language used by journalists is correctly understood and interpreted by readers. It is the readers who need to be able to decode the information—or intended combination of words—for the communication to be successful. In some of the examples, a higher degree of cultural knowledge is needed to adequately understand the information. In addition, the use of phonological wordplay in these examples demonstrates successful ways of displaying messages that employ punning and wordplay to transmit, recall or evoke information having to do with current popular culture at the time of the writing of the article.

[39] Understanding these headlines is usually not easy for foreign language learners and making the effort to learn how they are configured may have a positive impact on learning as Alexander suggests: "If students can be sensitized to some of the features employed, it is likely that their reading comprehension will be enhanced; they will, at least, have one necessary reading strategy, that of 'going beyond the information given'." (1997: 111).

return of the beau tie

Smart and quirky, there's an irresistible brio about a bow tie, says Jonathan Futrell.

If proof were needed of the way in which men's style is immune to the whimsy of fashion pundits, the renaissance of the bow tie is it.

What began as a rumour some 18 months ago, and was denied by the more prosaic forecasters, is now a fact: the bow tie, that most idiosyncratic item of male neckwear, is back where it belongs.

Confined for a couple of decades to a twilight world of ballrooms and casinos, the 21st-century butterfly knot has found itself adapting to life as daywear. Sales of bow ties are up across the board – from Turnbull & Asser, where there is a 30 per cent increase from this time last year, to eBay, which is awash with them. Other traditional houses – Gieves & Hawkes, Hackett and Thomas Pink – all report increased sales, too. But when Paul Smith, the grand master of English tailoring with a twist, comes out strong with striped, knitted silk ties in sombre black, brown, purple and burgundy (£70 each), you know bow ties have arrived. Young, fresh and surprisingly "normal", they looked great on his catwalk teamed with beanie hats, jeans and knitwear.

Time-honoured bow tie wearers to reference are a mixed bunch, who share an irresistible brio. From the old guard, Karl and Groucho Marx, Sirs Winston Churchill and Robin Day, and James Bond creator Ian Fleming, through to stars Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jnr (who is reputed to have owned more than 300 bow ties), and to thoroughly modern men such as Apple's Steve Jobs and David Hockney.

A good place to start a bow-tie rehabilitation is Ralph Lauren, where the silk bows come in four colours (£70) and, accompanied by tweedy jackets, define the label's New England appeal. Then to Brioni, which has plumped for 100 per cent cashmere bow ties (£120) that exude a Clark Kent wholesomeness. Bucking the casual trend is Thomas Pink, which didn't do bows five years ago and now has nine smart styles in a variety of colours (£30).

Turnbull & Asser's buyer Charles O'Reilley is a man who can tie the perfect bow in less time than it takes most men to tie their laces, and he isn't surprised at their appeal. "The bow tie used to be sign of rebellion in the 1800s, so it's not surprising that we're selling a lot to younger people." Behind him sits a bow tie carousel loaded with 100 styles and colours – polka dot, paisley, velvet and Jacquard (£30-£35).

Moments later, as if to endorse the theory that bow ties are the skinny cardigan of 2009, I almost bump into a rangy 20-something gent in London's smart Burlington Arcade. He is resplendent in his satin-piped, two-piece grey suit with a mustard shirt and a gold bow tie; think David Bowie and Bryan Ferry circa 1972.

Should we really be that surprised? After all, real men don't do radical fashion. The boundaries of the male mode were mapped out more than a century ago. Chaps tend to manoeuvre within an acknowledged sartorial framework, with items like bow ties drifting in and out over time.

OK, so bow ties will never become mainstream. They're too quirky, too eccentric for that. But, like trousers with turn-ups and double-breasted jackets, which were also no-no's for many years, they've woven themselves back into the fabric of male style. For one thing, bow ties are so damnably practical. It's why university professors, heart surgeons, orchestral musicians and trenchermen with a penchant for soup of the day have worn them for generations.

The other style bonus is that they have to be worn with the shirt collar buttoned up. Bow ties don't do unkempt, unless you're going for the 007 "ready-for-bed" look with a couple of martini glasses clinking in one hand and a bottle of iced Stoli in the other.

Hackett's spotty silk (£35) and tartan (£35) bow ties now comprise part of the key looks in the label's new-season catalogue. "People used to really stare at me as though I was sporting pink hair when I wore one," says Jeremy Hackett. "But now everybody seems to be wearing them and I don't get a second glance. I might even stop wearing mine now."

There aren't many bow tie do's and don'ts; only that it must be real, and under no circumstances one of those clip-on jobbies. And a bow "spread" of 3in is about right. Anything larger than this and you'll look clownish.

"It's all part of the Duke of Windsor thing," says Gieves & Hawkes' head of design, Frederik Willem. "The chic country look." In the 15 months since moving to the Savile Row emporium from Pringle of Scotland, Willem has quadrupled the company's bow tie range. From just the classic black tie there is now a choice of 25 styles in three sizes – small thin, classic medium and large (£20-£49) – all taken from vintage patterns. "Our staff are wearing them in the store and customers are saying that they really like that," says Willem. "Dressing up is back and what we're finding is men, especially slightly younger ones, are ready to try them." ✦

TAKE A BOW

Brioni, 32 Bruton Street, London W1 (020-7491 7700; www.brioni.com) and branch/stockist. **Gieves & Hawkes,** 1 Savile Row, London W1 (020-7434 2001; www.gievesandhawkes.com). **Hackett,** 137/138 Sloane Street, London SW1 (020-7730 3331; www.hackett.com) and branches. **Paul Smith,** 40-44 Floral Street, London WC2 (020-7379 7133; www.paulsmith.co.uk) and branches/stockists. **Ralph Lauren,** 1 New Bond Street, London W1 (020-7535 4600; www.ralphlauren.com). **Thomas Pink,** 85 Jermyn Street, London SW1 (020-7930 6364; www.thomaspink.com) and branches. **Turnbull & Asser,** 71/72 Jermyn Street, London SW1 (020-7808 3000; www.turnbullandasser.co.uk) and branch/stockist.

Bow ties, from left: **Thomas Pink, £30. Brioni, £95. Hackett, £35. Paul Smith, £70. Ralph Lauren, £70. Turnbull & Asser, £35.** Main image: **Gieves & Hawkes, £49.**

howtospendit.com

Fig. 14. *How to spend it* (Financial Times Magazine), December 11th, 2009

Original message	Intended meaning
return of the **beau** tie	return of the **bow** tie
Actual pronunciation	**Similar pronunciation**
beau [bəʊ]	bow [bəʊ]

The headline of this article employs a bilingual pun (beau / bow). The use of the French word "beau" (beautiful), as well as another word for "boyfriend" in English, instead of "bow" for the bow tie worn by men, usually on formal occasions, and an idiosyncratic style somewhat out of fashion, helps to configure the message about how it has now "come back." It is not difficult to do the double reading since both words, "beau" and "bow," are pronounced as phonological equivalents in the English language. This, however, would not be exactly the case if, for instance, the reader pronounced this word with a correct French pronunciation [bo]. Nonetheless, because of how the word is used, and since it is already on loan from the French language, and the visual context of the photograph, the reading of the primary message is easier and captures the intended connection with fashion and French culture, a cultural assumption relevant for this context.

Investment Series 2011

THE LEX COLUMN

Thursday March 10 2011

Two problems, yuan solution

Daimler/Rolls/Tognum

Buying back a company you used to own but sold in a fit of absence of mind (presumably) is a curious way to spend shareholders' cash. Yet that is what Daimler is doing with Tognum. It used to own the German engineering group but sold it six years ago for €1.6bn to management and private equity group EQT; it bought a 28.4 per cent stake when Tognum listed in 2007. Now Daimler and Rolls-Royce are setting up a joint venture to buy the remainder, valuing Tognum at about €3.2bn.

A deal is by no means done. The intended offer is at €24 a share, a 30 per cent premium to the undisturbed share price. Tognum's highly regarded management, led by chief executive Volker Heuer, is hardly likely to bite at the same price as the initial public offering. Management and staff own more than 10 per cent of Tognum; they may feel their turnround work is worth more. WestLB reckons a takeout price could be €27.50.

The acquisition makes sense for Rolls-Royce, which sees Tognum as a perfect fit with its marine systems division. The UK company will fold its Bergen engine unit, with annual revenues of about €400m, into the new joint venture; its share of acquisition costs should not exceed about €1.4bn.

The benefits to Daimler are less obvious, however. It has nearly €12bn in cash. Tognum is relatively small, and participating in the joint venture will allow Daimler to protect a valuable existing relationship. But Daimler has failed once before to make Tognum work, and the acquisition will not do much to enliven its share price performance: Daimler has underperformed BMW by 60 per cent since the start of 2008. Sorting that out will be a tougher task for Dieter Zetsche, chief executive, than adding another industrial unit to the mix.

Cocoa and oil

Although some children would disagree, oil is more important to modern life than cocoa. So the widely reported supply shock in crude should be a greater concern than disruption to the raw material for chocolate. The story, though, is a bit more complex.

The political upheavals in the Middle East have pushed up the spot price of crude by 20 per cent since the start of the year. But users need not worry much. While refiners are struggling to make up for lost Libyan crude (there are few substitutes) the actual fall in global daily production has been less than 1 per cent, which is easily absorbed by inventory adjustments and compensating production increases by other producing nations. The shock is almost entirely psychological: an increased fear of future tightness.

The cocoa story sounds like the oil one: a 25 per cent price increase since January, civil unrest and a fear of shortage. But there is a big difference (besides the fact that the annual global oil bill is about 200 times larger). The cocoa trouble is already cutting exports from the country responsible for almost 40 per cent of the world's supply. A partially obeyed ban on exports by one would-be Ivory Coast president and a confiscation of the resulting inventories by the other give chocolate producers good reason to pay up now, before beans become really scarce.

So long as a Saudi outage or something similar remains no more than a halfway plausible story, shelves empty of chocolate bars are much more likely than queues for petrol. But the world's easy money regime makes it fairly cheap to buy future contracts as insurance against – or speculation on – a disaster. Higher interest rates could help make it easier to tell oil from chocolate. If borrowing were more costly, sharp price increases would be more likely to reflect actual than hypothetical disruptions.

Oil nightmares

The latest bout of instability in the Middle East naturally spawns nightmare scenarios about a big cut-off of oil supplies. The 1973-74 Arab oil embargo, which sparked what was then the worst postwar recession, is often used as a template. But that episode provides a kind of reassurance, too. Whoever is in charge of a big oil producer, however unfriendly to the west, has an obvious incentive to sell as much crude as possible. Even the ultimate disaster – an overthrow of the House of Saud – should not mean a permanent shortfall.

In theory, oil production can be added as easily as it can be erased. So while the price of crude would rocket upwards if Saudi Arabia's 8.3m barrels a day of exports disappeared for even a couple of weeks, a return to full production would quickly lead to a price decline. A long disruption could lead to a recession and the exploitation of alternative sources of energy; in that scenario, the oil price might even fall below pre-crisis levels.

In practice, however, it has not been so simple. After Iran's revolution and the subsequent sanctions and war with Iraq, output of 6m b/d plunged by two-thirds and even now it is only about 4m b/d. Venezuela's 2002 strike halted output for nearly two months. Today's production of 2.6m b/d is three-quarters of the previous peak despite the development of new fields.

Oilfields cannot be switched on and off like light bulbs without consequences, sometimes permanent. Lost foreign expertise often leads to less production. And supply can be cut by events less dramatic than a coup d'etat. An attack on a key Saudi facility such as Abqaiq or Ras Tanura, or a blockage of the Straits of Hormuz, could remove more than twice as much oil from the market as lost from Libya. Nightmarish indeed.

Iberdrola

Sell high, buy low. That strategy seems to be working for Iberdrola. The Spanish power company is set to spend €2.5bn buying back the 20 per cent it does not own in Iberdrola Renovables, its renewable energy arm. The stake was listed back in 2007 with much fanfare at €5.30 per share (more than 50 times projected 2008 earnings); Iberdrola will now pay holders just €2.98 (24 times projected 2012 earnings) to have it back. Jaded minority owners, though, should not worry too much about the hit to their pride – the offer is 10 per cent above an undisturbed share price that has gone nowhere.

Iberdrola will regain full control of its fastest-growing division; over the next four years generating capacity is projected to increase by almost two-fifths and UBS expects earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation in renewable energy to rise 10 per cent annually. But that growth is capital intensive. In 2010, Renovables spent €1.7bn on capital investment and generated only €950m in operating cash flow – borrowings made up the difference. The investments and high multiple will dilute Iberdrola's earnings per share by at least 2 per cent for the next few years.

But that is not the only reason Iberdrola's investors marked the company's stock price down 1 per cent on Wednesday. Government subsidies still make or break renewable energy producers' profits and the global downturn has forced cuts – particularly in Spain where the generous subsidies that fuelled much of Europe's clean energy sector are gone. Sure, Renovables is expanding aggressively abroad, but more than two-fifths of its output was still produced in the home market last year.

For a company at the mercy of erratic government regulation, Renovables' valuation of 24 times next year's earnings still looks rich.

LEX ON THE WEB

For a Lex note on **Dynegy** go to **www.ft.com/lex**
For e-mail, go to **www.ft.com/nbe**
For BlackBerry, go to **www.ft.com/mobile**

The solution is clear

Chinese inflation (annual % change on consumer price index) — All items, Non food, Food

Renminbi against the dollar (renminbi per $)

Source: Thomson Reuters Datastream

Fig. 15. *The Financial Times*, March 10th, 2011

Original message	Intended meaning
Two problems, **yuan** solution	Two problems, **one** solution
Actual pronunciation	**Similar pronunciation**
yuan [jʊˈɑːn]	one [wʌn]

This example comes from *The Financial Times,* and is therefore targeted at readers who are familiar with the information presented and able to decode the headline of the piece correctly. Unlike the previous example where the two

main words of the message, ("beau" and "bow"), were phonologically equivalent and presented as homonyms, here the double reading of the main lexical unit "yuan" in the message is achieved by contrasting the two words, "two" and "yuan," and by substituting the latter by its phonological resemblance to the word "one." The article explains that the exchange rate of the yuan, China's official currency, has caused inflation in the country. In displaying this message in the headline, the journalist is pointing at how the Chinese Government is in the process of examining their national currency in an attempt to control inflation. Yet, at the same time as it summarizes the main idea contained in the article, the headline also manages to entertain the reader and to attract attention by means of this deliberate use of phonological humor. Similarly, the reader is probably familiar with the topic and able to identify the name of China's national currency.

Fig. 16. *How to spend it* (Financial Times Magazine), July 3rd, 2010

Original message	Intended meaning
THE **THRILLS** ARE ALIVE	THE **HILLS** ARE ALIVE
Actual pronunciation	**Similar pronunciation**
thrills [θrɪlz]	hills [hɪlz]

The sequence used in the headline of this piece of news also proposes to entertain the reader. In this particular case, the word "thrills" has been used because it sounds similar to the word "hills." This reminds the reader of a famous song, whose lyrics have become part of popular culture and which belongs to the soundtrack of the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*, which takes place in Austria. In fact, the words that follow the main phrase used in the article coincide with part of the song's lyrics, which read "The hills are alive with the sound of music...," thus establishing the connection for the reader. The sub-heading makes the connection to Austria explicit: "Austria's spa hotels have always offered scenic splendour for the summer visitor—but recent investment has created an even more compelling proposition for the pleasure-seeker" (p. 35). It is interesting to note here how the use of a well-known song can effectively contribute to creating a message and thus communicate the main idea contained in the article. Also, the use of lyrics belonging to a specific song adds to our understanding of how we internalize words that combined into a sentence may possess very different messages and meanings.

This technique of using words or phrases from texts of popular culture with which the reader is familiar, because they belong to the collective memory of a given cultural community, is frequently used in journalism, since it allows for the creation of new meanings based on an original source as a departure point. As we will see in chapter 4, the same technique is also used in the case of phonological jokes as many of them make either implicit or explicit references to elements of popular culture. This helps create a shared perception among speakers which may have been acquired by cultural assimilation through elements of popular culture, i.e., history, music, famous films, etc., or other more specific cultural elements, e.g., name of cities, last names of important people, etc.

As we have seen in examples from different literary texts, advertising, and journalism, sound is deliberately used to create a specific effect on the listener that may have different communicative purposes. These may range

from humor or entertainment to persuasive communication as seen in the different examples of advertising. All these examples amply demonstrate that advertising "can provide valuable and updated information about the way society thinks and acts [. . .] as a handy and useful mirror if we want to reflect on the way we behave socially" (Simões and Freitas 2008: 1-2). After the examples presented above, it is now possible to take a further step and for this reason I will next analyze examples of the use of sound within a humorous context in different media, but in this case, I will illustrate how sound can contribute to the humorous perception and representation of foreignness.

3.4. Phonological Humor as Perception and Representation of Foreignness

Why do we get such joy out of imitating or parodying the sounds of foreign languages? How is such phonological humor created and what is its *raison d'être*? Phonological humor is a form of playful creativity. Based on our perception of what a particular language and its community of speakers 'sound' like, we create phonological humor by deviating, distorting, mixing, adding, substituting, transposing vowels and consonants in order to seize on the particular sounds that befit our idea of what a foreign language is like. Such humor abounds in the form of jokes, many of them off-color, as well as in funny imitations of single words. It is difficult to forget the clumsy "French" Inspector Clouseau who meets with laughter when he asks for a *rhume* (French for a 'head cold') in a hotel, or the ridiculous names, "Naughtius Maximus" or "Sillius Soddus," parodying Latin sounds for English audiences in the Monty Python film *The Life of Brian*. Because of our spontaneous ability to parody peculiar accents, sounds or linguistic sequences that trigger laughter in the listener, the repertoire of jokes that use phonological humor as a linguistic device is vast.

What is implicit, of course, is the speaker's ability to make the logical connection between the language imitated and the use of sound in parody form. In this way the cultural assumptions used in the humor confirm the

particular combination of sounds as identifiable, or more importantly, 'seeming' to belong to the particular foreign culture in question. In other words, the phonological aspect of the humorous communicative act does not occur in a vacuum but rather in a pre-prepared humorous context in which the sequence of sounds may be exaggerated or distorted, and yet both understandable and laughable precisely because of the shared assumptions regarding the sounds of another foreign language originating in the language of both joke-teller and listener. The hinge, of course, is the act of enunciating or imitating the supposed 'foreign' sounds, so that they function as an attention catcher that establishes the connection between the question of the joke and its punch line.

3.4.1. Phonological Humor as a Representation of Foreignness in the Press: An Example from *The New Yorker* Magazine

Indeed, we recognize our own culture and those differing from ours by the arbitrary signs and symbols with which each culture interacts with its environment to create its own specific context—all the while conscious of the possibilities for assimilation, acculturation and change. An apt illustration of such acculturation and change can be appreciated in the humorous image on the cover of *The New Yorker*, December 10, 2001, by Maira Kalman and Rick Meyerowitz, which featured New York City with its various ethnic neighborhoods contextualized by the then daily newscasts of America's war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Clearly, in designing their ingenious magazine cover the two artists managed to feed into the multicultural character of their fellow New Yorkers while, at the same time, combining it with symbols and signs of the political situation of the moment. The result was a monumental spoof encapsulated in the witty invention of *New Yorkistan* complete with images and sounds parodying America's collective perceptions of the exotic images, regions, languages and cultures of South and Central Asia—for instance, *Pashmina* for 'the posh' Upper East Side

neighborhood of Manhattan, or *Turban Sprawl* for the suburban spread on Long Island's North Shore—applied to ironic representations of the specific culture of each neighborhood.

Humor was created by combining various cultural assumptions about faraway places in the news and using prefixes or suffixes reminiscent of various exotic languages and places to rename New York City's five boroughs of New York: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx together with cultural stereotypes of their various neighborhoods. Thus *Central Parkistan* represents Manhattan's Central Park; *Hiphopabad*, a composite of 'Hip hop' and 'bad' refers to Bedford-Stuyvesant, an area of Brooklyn populated largely by African-Americans, made to sound like 'Islamabad;' *Khandibar* is a play on 'candy bar' and 'Kandahar;' *Moolahs*, sounding like the slang term for 'money' as well as 'mullah,' a Muslim religious clergyman, refers to Manhattan's Wall Street financial district; *Lubavistan* in Brooklyn refers to the area of the Lubavicher ultra orthodox Jews; while *Trumpistan* describes the new Upper Westside Hudson River shoreline built by Donald Trump, the wealthy developer. Thus decoded, each of these fictitious names or funny image and sound combinations connotes meaning of a cultural nature.

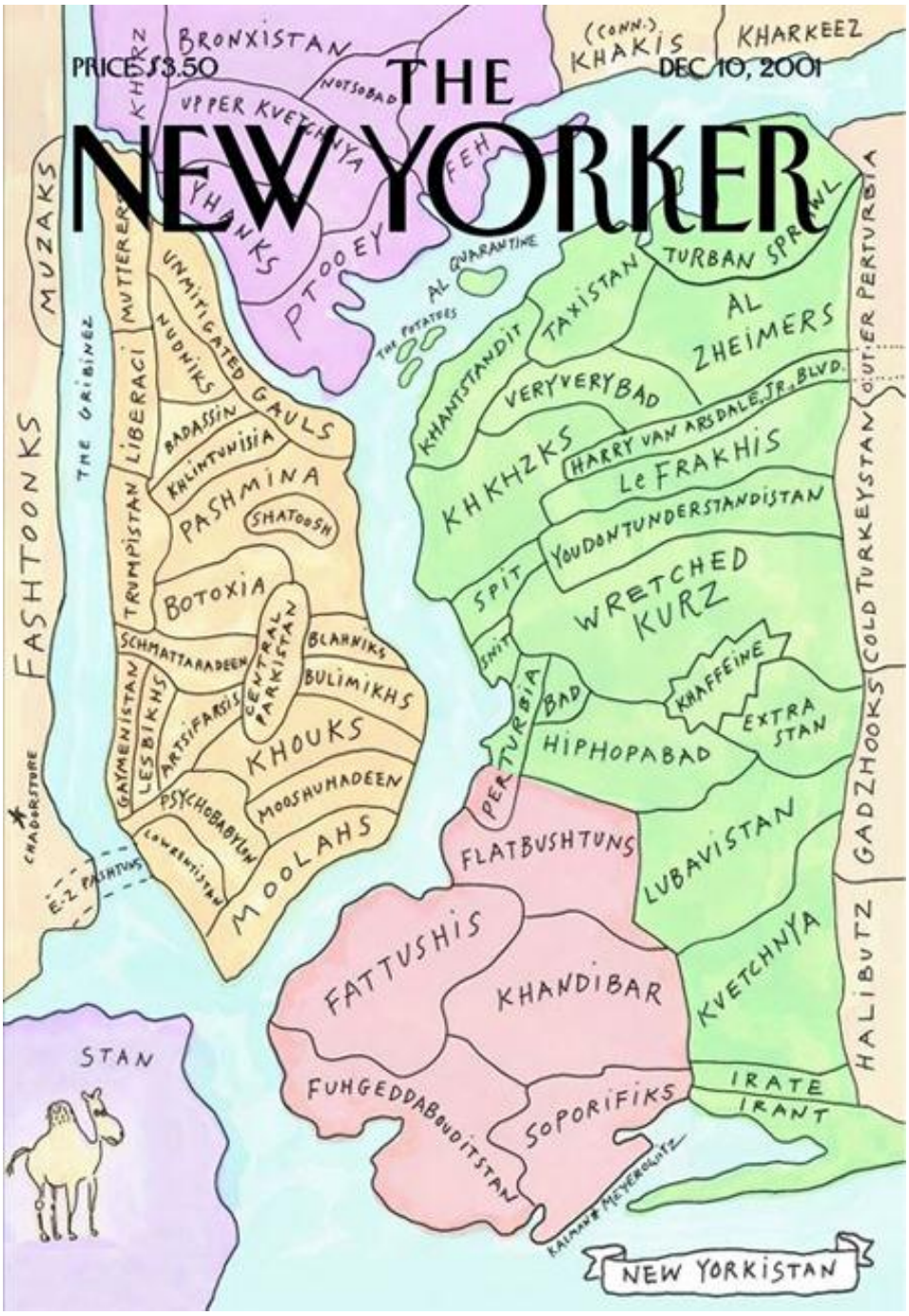

Fig. 17. *The New Yorker*, December 10, 2001

Remarkably, a year before the publication of this *New Yorker* magazine cover, many of the cultural implications it contained would certainly not have been as significant or obvious to the New York reader. Expressing how new this recently opened up world was to the general public, Alleen Pace Nilsen,

president of the Society of Humorous Studies, had this to say in her newsletter to the journal *Humor*:

> The December 10, 2001 cover of The New Yorker presented a new kind of humor. It was an ''Afghanistanicized'' map of New York City or New Yorkistan. We Nilsens found it especially funny because we lived in Afghanistan between 1967 and 1969 [. . .]. For months now, we have been both amused and flabbergasted to see the names of obscure places, that we considered to be our own family secrets, printed in headlines as if they were as big and as important as Paris, New York, and Tokyo. (Nilsen 2002: 235)

Perhaps more to the point, what these imaginative illustrators, Kalman and Meyerwitz, managed to prove was that, given a transformative political context and a specific moment in time, a well designed strategy to capture culturally held stereotypes of the various New York communities could be transposed or 'translated' into a different cultural lingo. And that by dint of linguistically transforming certain names, words, or colloquialisms, adding or subtracting syllables and sounds in order to amuse millions of New York readers, it was possible to parody hitherto unknown, exotic sounds thereby making them part of one's everyday life. What it proved, in other words, was just how permeable a concept culture is. How easily it adheres to different perceptions, prejudices, or different ways of viewing 'foreignness,' and how it can be integrated with one's own cultural assumptions—or prejudices—through parody and 'translation.'

3.4.2. Phonological Humor as a Representation of Foreignness in Television and Film

To conclude this section and chapter, I would like to comment briefly on two examples of how humor is used to represent foreignness in television and film. In the first one, I will briefly analyze how this is achieved in a skit by the British humorist Catherine Tate, which uses sound-based humor as part of a scenario in which pure sounds imitate languages and therefore elicit laughter through the representation of foreignness. The second example comes from the 1979 Monty Python motion picture, *The Life of Brian*, and portrays the same idea about what a particular language sounds like, or how a given culture can sometimes be identified by the phonological enunciation of specific sounds, in this case through the use of proper nouns that function as jokes.

3.4.2.1. The Humor of Catherine Tate

One of the features that characterizes Catherine Tate's humor is the deliberate use of sound. This technique takes many forms, from the imitation of an Irish, posh or foreign accent to actual words or catchphrases that she uses and in some cases has invented to create specific effects while provoking laughter.[40] For instance, in the skit 'The Translator,' Catherine Tate offers to help a colleague at work, who desperately needs an interpreter at the last minute, arguing that she took the TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) course in her gap year, and therefore is able to translate into seven different languages.[41] We soon discover, however, that Catherine Tate's idea of translation is nothing more than an imitation of the sounds of a particular language presented to a British audience. Although initially it may seem that

[40] One example is her catchphrase 'bovvered' which is actually a mispronunciation of a shift of 'th' to 'vv' and that is used by the character Lauren, a high school 'chav' girl (Horne 2010: 21).
[41] A gap year is a year off that some British students take after finishing high school and before going to university.

the sounds Catherine makes are simple, they are actually very contrived and carefully designed to parody the language of a particular community of speakers. The immediate effect of such sounds is, of course, to cause profound desperation in Catherine's colleague, but at the same time it creates an uproariously comical scene for the audience, reinforced by canned laughter. More importantly, the scene serves to emphasize how successful such sounds are in creating comedy, thus underscoring the existence of a shared body of extra-linguistic knowledge within the same community of speakers.

To describe some of the features of this extra-linguistic information, they range from the peculiar intonation used to address the French CEO, and the constant lisp used to address the Spanish CEO, which underscores the prominence of the voiceless dental fricative sound /θ/, which is only present in a few languages such as English, Spanish or Greek, and the guttural tones used to address the Swedish CEO, not to mention the confluence of plosive and nasal sounds that easily remind the viewers of the similarity between Catherine's enunciations and the sounds of an African language.

After analyzing the video, it is worth noting at least three important aspects in the configuration of this type of humour, pertinent to this study:

1. The first aspect has to do with the fact that European languages are clearly identified, in contrast to the rest of the languages parodied in the skit.
2. As regards the second aspect, the more distant cultures and societies (such as the Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Pakistani, or African) are not identified as belonging to any specific country. This may be because of political correctness in view of the strong presence of South Asian (Hindi and Pakistani), East Asian (Chinese and Japanese), and African communities currently living in the UK. Or it may be due to the impossibility of relating the sounds to a particular language, given the

geographical distance that makes it difficult to link the language parodied or imitated to one specific culture or country.

3. The third, and perhaps most interesting aspect, is that although this skit is clearly addressed to an English-speaking audience (mainly British), the perception of certain sounds, their similarity to the cultures they represent, the type of humor and its *raison d'être*, could be easily understood by many viewers of other cultures, even non-English speaking ones.[42]

This example demonstrates how phonological humor is carefully crafted in such a way that its configuration serves the purpose of communicating different cultural assumptions though the use of sounds that are common to a particular community of speakers.

3.4.2.2. Phonological Humor in Film: The Humor of Monty Python

The humor of Monty Python is full of examples in which sound is used to achieve a specific humorous purpose. Some of the different techniques to provoke laughter in the viewers have to do with the fact that humor is sometimes reinforced by the nonverbal dimension of sound of an audiovisual text, i.e.,

> nonverbal 'oral' sounds including interjections and intonations patterns; other associated features of voice quality (e.g. pitch) and profile (e.g. a funny or a fearsome voice); and other sounds (special effects which can be either directly related to the words or not). The various dimensions of the soundtrack combine in many

[42] I used this skit as part of a paper presented at the 20th ISHS Conference (International Society for Humor Studies) at the Universidad de Alcalá, in Spain, in July of 2008, where the audience was composed of people from many different countries. It was interesting to discover that even for people whose native language was not English the skit was equally funny and meaningful in the imitation of the different languages.

> different ways with the picture. Some images and some of the nonverbal sounds are directly related to the words uttered and others are not. (Zabalbeascoa 1997: 335-36)

Thus, as we will read below in the scene XII from the 1979 Monty Python motion picture, *The Life of Brian*, sound plays a central role in the semantics of the text, as it is deliberately used in a series of proper nouns that parody the way Latin sounds to English speakers:

> PILATE: Now, Jewish wapscallion.
> BRIAN: I'm not Jewish. I'm a Roman.
> PILATE: A Woman?
> BRIAN: No, no. Roman. [slap] Aah!
> PILATE: Your father was a Woman? Who was he?
> BRIAN: He was a centurion in the Jerusalem Garrisons.
> PILATE: Weally? What was his name?
> BRIAN: '**Naughtius Maximus**'.
> CENTURION: Ahh, ha ha!
> PILATE: Centuwion, do we have anyone of that name in the gawwison?
> CENTURION: Well, no, sir.
> PILATE: Well, you sound vewy sure. Have you checked?
> CENTURION: Well, no, sir. Umm, I think it's a joke, sir,... like, uh, '**Sillius Soddus**' or... '**Biggus Dickus**', sir.
> GUARD #4: [chuckling]
> PILATE: What's so... funny about '**Biggus Dickus**'?
> CENTURION: Well, it's a joke name, sir.
> PILATE: I have a vewy gweat fwiend in Wome called '**Biggus Dickus**'.
> GUARD #4: [chuckling]
> PILATE: Silence! What is all this insolence? You will find yourself in gladiator school vewy quickly with wotten behaviour like that.
> BRIAN: Can I go now, sir? [slap] Aaah! Eh.
> PILATE: Wait till **Biggus Dickus** hears of this.

GUARD #4: [chuckling]

PILATE: Wight! Take him away!

CENTURION: Oh, sir, he-- he only--

PILATE: No, no. I want him fighting wabid, wild animals within a week.

CENTURION: Yes, sir. Come on, you.

GUARD #4: Ha ha haa ha, ha ha ha. Hooo hooo hoo hoo. Hoo hoo...

PILATE: I will not have my fwiends widiculed by the common soldiewy. --- Anybody else feel like a little... giggle... when I mention my fwiend... **Biggus**...

GUARD #1: [chuckling]

PILATE: ...**Dickus**?

GUARD #1: [chuckling]

PILATE: What about you? Do you find it... wisible... when I say the name... '**Biggus**'...

GUARD #3: [chuckle]

PILATE: ...'**Dickus**'?

GUARD #1 and

GUARD #2: [chuckling]

PILATE: He has a wife, you know. You know what she's called? She's called... '**Incontinentia**'. **Incontinentia Buttocks**

By reproducing easily identifiable phonemes, these names humorously evoke Latinized sounds, which at the same time are meaningful in English, thereby making the situation doubly humorous. Indeed there are two possible reactions to this type of humor. One comes from the oblivious Pontius Pilate who, in spite of the Centurion's warning ("Umm, I think it's a joke, sir"), simply utters the words devoid of their spirit and is not amused. The other one comes from the soldiers who laugh uncontrollably since they recognize and understand the joke. The first of the names: "Naughtius Maximus," or the maximally naughty, is pronounced by Brian to avoid being thrown to the lions, by claiming it is his Roman father's name. Even though the Centurion points out that this is a joke—and it is certainly one for the viewer—the name sounds

so Latinized that it is ignored by Pontius Pilate. Other examples suggested by the Centurion, "Sillius Soddus," meaning silly-sod, or someone who exercises a lack of wisdom, and "Biggus Dickus," a grotesque way to refer to oversized genitalia, are also a parody of how the Latin language sounds to both characters and spectators. Unlike the oblivious Pontius Pilate all the soldiers understand the meaning of these jokes and therefore laugh at them. However, Pilate's puzzlement and exasperation compel him to state that he has a friend named "Biggus Dickus," which is precisely one of the joke-names. Not only does Pilate pronounce this ridiculous name repeatedly, he also adds the name of Biggus Dickus's wife, "Incontinentia Buttocks;" more technically: lacking normal voluntary control of excretory functions. Pilate thus unleashes a scene of uproarious laughter, or better still, incontinent laughter. What all these names have in common is that they represent a parody of language that can be both a play on words and on sounds, the latter being particularly relevant to my analysis. Knowing that this is a film about Romans, we realize that these names are a parody of how Roman names, the *praenomen* (or given name) and the *nomen* (name of the clan), are conventionally spelled and pronounced.

In this regard, a possible interesting research topic related to this particular scene would be to illustrate the most interesting aspects that can be elucidated from the dubbing and the subtitling of the film *The Life of Brian* (1979) by paying a closer attention to what has been the result, as far as humor is concerned, for a multilingual product such as a DVD by comparing how the above-mentioned scene was adapted into different languages. By reconstructing humor in each of the languages analyzed it would also be possible to see what tactics were followed by the translators and whether the nonverbal dimension of sound has been taken into consideration when creating humor in the target language. This is especially relevant given that in some cultures Monty Python's humor was not at all successful and consequently a contextual explanation was necessary for the audience. Such was the case, for instance, in the reception of Monty Python in Japan:

> There are problems with jokes from the mysterious West. The audience roared with laughter at the Television Blackmail Game and the Upper Class Twit of the Year Race, but seemed bewildered by the 'nudge nudge' and dead parrot sketches. 'We Japanese wouldn't argue so much if a product was unsatisfactory,' a Tokyo girl told me. The film's importer, Telecas Japan, helped the audiences to leap the humour barrier by preparing a 20-page programme [. . .] which relentlessly 'explains' every scene. (Sample: 'It is the middle of a Canadian forest: in natural surroundings a lumberjack cuts down big trees, but in reality he is a homosexual.') The programme also has two highbrow essays on the nature of satire and on the success of Monty Python. 'To understand black humour we need political understanding; but Japanese people do not concern themselves with politics in their daily lives, so they do not understand the black humour or the anger of the Monty Python.' (Thompson 1982: 50)

Cultural differences may range from the theme of joke that may not be perceived as 'funny' by the target culture, as we have seen in the example above, but also as a necessity to parody what cannot be said in public because it is not considered politically correct. These aspects are equally important in finding a way to reconstruct humor so that it is acceptable for a given culture and therefore it is not only the linguistic aspect of humor but also the semantic implications that can be derived from it. Above all, the example analyzed demonstrates the relevance of sound, its extra-linguistic component over purely linguistic or lexical meaning and its interdependence in the configuration of sound-based humor. Besides, this particular example will be helpful as a first step to better understand, in the following chapters, how phonological jokes

employ very similar linguistic devices as they also produce a type of humor which attempts to represent foreignness.

As we have seen in the different examples of media analyzed throughout this chapter, phonological humor seems to be a more prevalent linguistic device than we might imagine. It is present in and integral to many aspects of our everyday life. One of its uses, as we have explained, is to represent how a foreign language may sound to a particular community of speakers. Following on from this idea, in chapter 4, I will be analyzing this specific type of phonological humor, as it has not received a lot of attention by scholars, and I will concentrate on how phonological humor is used to represent the notion of foreignness. To this end, I will look at phonological jokes as a type of text that allows us to explore this idea through a parodic representation of other languages by means of certain explicit phonological tactics. Thus, I will be paying attention to the different humorous contexts in which these parodies can be inscribed, explaining its configuration. In so doing, my primary framework will be that of jokes in Spanish that illustrate some of the frequently used themes serving these short narratives in order to establish a possible thematic classification. Finally, in chapter 5, I will extend the analysis of the same linguistic sequence by broadening its study thanks to the data obtained though ethnographic research and interviews with informants regarding a large number of different languages and cultures. It is this data, together with the contextual analysis of jokes in different languages, that will allow us to highlight their importance as regards the deliberate use of sound to elicit laughter—through shared cultural assumptions and analyze it from a global and multilingual perspective. All the examples reviewed in this section have illustrated how there is a 'shared perception' governing humor regarding how certain languages seem to sound to speakers of different languages. Accordingly, in the following chapters we will explore how this type of linguistic parody can be extrapolated to other cultures.

Chapter 4. Phonological Jokes as an Example of Cultural Distinctiveness in the Configuration of Humor

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore the use of jokes as a linguistic device for gleaning cultural information, particularly as regards perceptions of one particular community of speakers by another. Since jokes contain multiple layers of linguistic and cultural meaning, these can be delved into by means of different decoding approaches and disciplines. Based as they usually are on the shared assumptions of speakers who are culturally linked, jokes are valuable specimens for analyzing pertinent areas of language and aspects of knowledge. My comments, therefore, have to do with how jokes can contribute to fields such as: translation and comparative linguistics, sociology and cultural studies, communication studies, discourse analysis, pragmatics, semantics, stylistics and literary theory.

In this process, I concentrate on a specific type of joke, the phonological joke, whose objective is the use of words or phonemes of the speaker's own language in order to imitate and thereby parody the sounds of another language. Illustrating a number of such phonological jokes, I present them as a distinct category marked by a specific structural pattern based on a script constructed by combining both cultural and phonological material. More specifically, taking Spanish as the featured language, I analyze examples of phonological jokes for the purpose of exploring their main characteristics and providing a preliminary classification into different categories. Following these categories I present them through the lens of translation and thus comment on the translatability of these phonological jokes into English. While building on the previous chapter, in which the deliberate use of sound was explored in different textual forms and as the representation and perception of foreignness, here my focus is on the role of sound in both the configuration and the

production of humor in phonological jokes. I treat sound as a linguistic device possessing the same principle of foreignness and which operates within phonological jokes as its main *raison d'être*.

In view of the fact that to date phonological jokes have not been studied in depth, I elaborate on the different humorous contexts normally used in sociological studies, namely the cultural, social, individual, and comparative contexts, to survey their characteristics. Through such a process of analysis we will be able to better understand the particular configuration of this type of humor.

4.2. What Can Jokes Teach Us About Language and Society?

As we have seen through examples from various types of texts analyzed in the previous chapter, sound can play a key role in the configuration of humor in different contexts and media. In this chapter, I will expand on this idea with an in-depth case study of sound-based humor supported by examples of phonological jokes in Spanish. These jokes are structured as humorous attempts at translation of foreign language words or phrases, and their punch line derives from a play on sounds. They thus constitute useful samples for the analysis of sound and its role as a factor in translation.

The use and diversity of different languages, in and of itself, represents one of the reasons why the concept of culture cannot be applied uniformly since it is built on many different and specific aspects and assumptions that have to do not only with language, but also with an array of factors ranging from socioeconomic status to the search for an identity. For this reason, Juliane House (2002: 93) explains, the concept of culture has been studied across diverse disciplines. She indicates two main trends in the study of culture: the humanistic and the anthropological one.

> The humanistic concept of culture captures the 'cultural heritage' as model of refinement, an exclusive collection of a community's masterpieces in literature, fine arts, music, etc. The anthropological concept of culture refers to the overall way of life of a community or society, i.e., all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of members of the culture. Culture in the anthropological sense of a group's dominant and learned sets of habits, as the totality of its non-biological inheritance, involves presuppositions, preferences and values—all of which are, of course, neither easily accessible nor verifiable. (House 2002: 93)

Thus, when we try to explain common trends in the behavior of people who belong to a particular culture, we use assumptions that we are either familiar with or have acquired or inherited, directly or indirectly, through diverse textual modes. In this way, we may start to familiarize ourselves with a particular culture and build assumptions around its specific milieu. For instance, we may hear that Italians and Greeks are very friendly while Finnish and Norwegian people tend to be colder. This assumed perception on how to categorize a nationality may be inherited but could be contradicted if we come across someone who belongs to one of above-mentioned cultures and manifests a behavior that contradicts our initial inherited assumption. We could then revisit our own experience from a more empirical point of view to ascertain its validity or determine whether or not this is always the case. Consequently, we may create a new assumption, taking our own experience as the most valid source of information.

If, on the other hand, this same person with learned or inherited assumptions about a specific nationality moves and settles in the midst of one of the above-mentioned cultures, it is likely that his or her experience would change the original assumptions based on not only on the people this

individual would meet, but also on the different customs and traditions that s/he would experience and that would reinforce some of the old assumptions and add other new ones, e.g., in Italy and in Greece people go out a lot in the afternoon, while in Norway and Finland this does not have to be the case. Consequently, the information created would be a mixture of our own perceptions and the acquired assumptions.

Linking this idea to humor, and analyzing the different implications present in a joke, we can see that even if a joke elicits laughter in the listener, the reasons for this laughter may be manifold and probably not the same across the board. Conversely, the absence of laughter elicited in a listener or listeners would, perhaps, explain why the same joke might not have been understood or the information retrieved in the same way. If we then explored how this experience could be applied to the presence of sound in humor, we would discover a further complication: for a phonological joke to be understood there would have to be a confluence of both the semantic and the phonological scripts (Raskin 1985) working together or complementing each other to produce the humor.

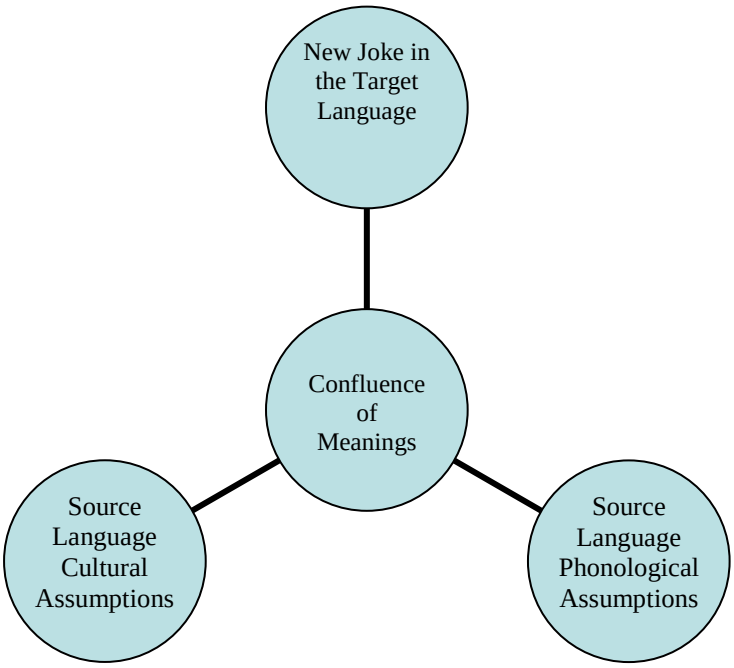

Fig. 18. Phonological Joke in Translation

Indeed, the study of jokes can shed light on a number of disciplines that can help us to better understand the communicative act as Lendvai (1996: 97) suggests: "Perhaps, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the ability of understanding, appreciating and, moreover, telling jokes may be considered as a reliable measure of foreign language proficiency." This shows that many different aspects can be gleaned through the study of jokes, given the different cultural assumptions contained in a joke's message, and the resulting humor which in many cases is a complex communicative situation difficult to categorize on its own. Unlike everyday uses of language (e.g., to order, to request, to give advice, to greet, to thank, to complain, etc.), the communicative purpose and production of linguistic humor in a given situation responds to a variety of factors such as the intention of the speaker, the audience or listener, and the context in which a specific type of humor might be produced.

Nonetheless, the very complexity associated with the production of humor, and more specifically with the creation of jokes, implies the existence of encoded information and meaning from different areas of knowledge. This makes jokes valuable tools for decoding cultural identity and its perception. In this regard, Chafe (2007: 99) makes an interesting comparison to illustrate the importance of jokes as linguistic mechanisms in everyday communication that can reveal useful information about how we communicate:

> When jokes are found in natural conversations, they tend to be clustered in pleasurable displays of joke-telling ability. Such exchanges constitute special episodes within longer conversations [. . .]. Jokes, nevertheless, are conspicuous as devices whose only or chief purpose is humor, and also as devices that exhibit a relatively straightforward design. [. . .] Jokes have something in common with fruit flies. Fruit flies provide a relatively simple model for genetic studies because of their small size, the ease of raising them in a laboratory, their short life-cycle, and their

> possession of only four pairs of chromosomes. Jokes provide a simple humor model by stripping away the messiness attached to the both humorous and the nonhumorous manifestations of nonseriousness [. . .]. They thus have the potential to illuminate the essentials of humor. (Chafe 2007: 99)

As short compact sequences with minimal yet significant cultural implications surrounding their semantic production, jokes allow researchers to explore in practice that which would be considerably more difficult to do in a larger text. Because they constitute an important heuristic tool, it is worthwhile discussing the usefulness of jokes for translation theory, and more broadly their relevance to linguistic and cultural studies. In this sense, given that the analysis of jokes can reveal new data in areas related to the study of language in a social setting, jokes can be studied within different areas of knowledge to explore information related to at least the following disciplines.

4.2.1. Translation and Contrastive Linguistics

When discussing the case of the translation of humor in children's literature in the previous chapter, I demonstrated that because of the diverse components contained in their structure, jokes can manifest an array of distinctive linguistic features specific to a particular language. This encoded distinctiveness is especially relevant in translation, for it is through translation that the purposeful language construction that characterizes a joke can be shown in conjunction with its intended meaning, as well as its structural difference from that of another language. The contrastive study of jokes may also be useful in analyzing the linguistic mechanisms that operate in a language in order to create humor, and how these can be effectively translated, or not, into a target language. Mohammad El-Yasin's perspective about the importance of analyzing these minimal texts certainly points in the right direction. He refers

to jokes and puns by claiming that these texts "should be explored because studying them would make translators and others interested aware of what problems are involved [in the translation of humor]" (1997: 672). In effect, jokes allow translators to explore in practice that which cannot be applied in other textual modes, given the minimal yet significant cultural implications surrounding the text's semantic production. Thanks to the mass media, the translation of humor is becoming especially relevant as we are getting used to humor from other cultures through TV series, films, the Internet, etc. Consequently "humor travels more quickly than it as ever done before. [. . .] With information traveling so fast and in a shrinking planet, people expect to see feature films worldwide as soon as possible after the Hollywood premiers. The public learns about new US TV series via the Internet before they are aired elsewhere. There is a very large translational market that requires speedier work than ever before" (Chiaro 2010: 12-13). As a result, the translation of humor is of paramount importance as we are constantly exposed to different humorous messages, and translators can use their knowledge about similar cases to learn and apply this knowledge when confronting new challenges in the translation of humorous texts.

4.2.2. Sociology and Cultural Studies

The study of jokes can provide new data on cultural aspects related to a particular community of speakers not only from a linguistic point of view, but also in terms of the cultural assumptions and implications used in the production of a given joke. Jokes can describe, praise, criticize or simply poke fun at a given community's fears, desires, values, traditions, habits—to name only a few possible cultural aspects that can be exploited in the context of humor. Common perceptions or stereotypes about other cultures are another frequently observed feature, as in the case of ethnic jokes, "which provide insights into how societies work—they are not social thermostats regulating

and shaping human behavior, but they are social thermometers that measure, record, and indicate what is going on" (Davies 1990: 9).

Similar factors are also evident, for instance, in the case of 'stupidity jokes,' where the community or cultural group figuring as the butt of the joke is easily identifiable within the geographical location or cultural community that produces the humor. These jokes are easy to compare from a cross-cultural perspective as they "are similar in any language, but while in the United States the target position is occupied by the Poles, in France it is the Belgians" (Popescu 2011: 176), making the group that is the butt of the joke one of the few differences among ethnic jokes. In discovering the factors that contribute to their creation, such types of jokes make them useful tools for exploring particular cultures. As Van Boeschoten argues, "through the jokes, the joker, in interaction with his audience, constructs a different linguistic ideology, which undermines official discourse and at the same time seeks to control the in-group. [. . .] The integration of this cultural space may help us understand ethnicity from a different angle and to expand the notion of 'cultural intimacy' beyond the institutional frameworks" (2006: 371). It is this type of 'cultural intimacy' among speakers of the same language that can be revealed through the study of humor and, more specifically, through the study of jokes as the different themes and types of jokes also have to do with one's humor preference as well as with behavioral factors. Given that the recipients of the joke are used to the type of humor in question, and that the joke-teller assumes the joke is amusing to his or her audience, they can therefore, for example, be "important indicators of corporate culture since they are direct products of human relations at the workplace" (Röhm 2006: 26). As a result, jokes can also serve to reveal similar behavioral patterns among groups of people who share similar humor preferences as, for instance, jokes can "reveal the existence of a complex hierarchy among folk groups and their subgroups" (Magdalenic 1999: 24).

4.2.3. Communication Studies

Humor is an important component of everyday communication, and jokes are one of the main mechanisms for speakers to express and communicate humor. As a result, we are constantly exposed to humorous messages either in everyday conversation or in the media. In this regard, Christie Davies explains that: "Jokes are an important form of popular creativity, one of the few that are left now that the mass media have annexed or intruded themselves into so much of popular culture. Jokes are immune because the best jokes are politically incorrect" (Davies 2005: 6). For this reason, jokes collected from the media can be illustrative of what type of humor is most common in a given culture, and also indicate the current events used in the production of these jokes. Those short narratives that we call jokes may even have a therapeutic effect, as Freud (1905) demonstrated in his analysis of laughter as a manifestation of repressed inhibition (Ziv 1984), and because "[they] are a means of coping with unpleasant experiences" (Kuipers 2011: 22). In this sense, current affairs jokes could be created as mechanisms for stress or tension reduction within a society, as is the effect with disaster jokes, for example, since "in the joke, the disaster is linked in a humorous way with a topic that is felt to be incompatible with such a serious event" (Kuipers 2011: 21). Thus the mass media can contribute to echo this type of humor and disseminate it, while also generating different sorts of information on a particular topic around which new joke cycles may be created.

4.2.4. Discourse Analysis

Jokes normally require a great deal of interaction. Even in stand-up-comedy, where there may not be direct verbal interaction between the speaker and the audience, it could be argued that the interaction comes in the form of laughter from the audience. Jokes can definitely shed light on how speakers

interact in a communicative situation: how they perform the jokes, i.e., with what intonation pattern; how they imitate an accent; and also when and how they introduce a joke into a conversation. Especially relevant here is the distinction between canned jokes, those that already exist in written or oral forms, and conversational jokes that are improvised and for this reason possess great contextual links (Attardo 2011: 143-144). This aspect of joking has been widely studied by Norrick (1993; 2000), who has developed a comprehensive account of conversational joking in natural conversational contexts of everyday communication. Some of the aspects he has analyzed are "how conversationalists weave wordplay into their talk, [. . .] how they interrupt the flow of topical talk and get the floor to perform funny stories and jokes, [. . .] and how speakers use puns, banter and sarcasm, but also personal anecdotes and narrative jokes to align themselves together, to present a personality, and to build rapport" (2000: 172). An interesting study in this regard is the research of Makiko Takekuro on conversational jokes in Japanese and English, a topic that highlights the interactional aspect of humor through jokes and that according to her can be defined as "impulsive speech behaviors and as what participants spontaneously create to exchange in the course of interaction" (2006: 86)—a study in which she concludes that the differences between the two languages are grounded in the differences of the habitual sociolinguistic practices. More importantly, in analyzing and comparing the different ways in which speakers of different languages joke, we are able to get an insight into the similarities and differences as regards the rhetoric that speakers use for conversational jokes in each language. After all, as Beatriz Penas Ibáñez indicates "a meaningful stretch of speech should not be reductively considered the mere product of a constituting consciousness but the interaction of many voices brought into focus by an individual's performance" (2006: 228).

4.2.5. Pragmatics

The analysis of jokes can also be a rich source of information on how meaning is both created and used at different levels, not just linguistically, but also in the context of the utterances used, and in the actual and intended meaning of a speaker. Jokes always play with the notion of 'message,' often an ambiguous or even 'hidden message.' Therefore, the pragmatic value of such messages reveals important information regarding how meaning is transmitted, and not only in terms of the linguistic aspects of language, but also taking into consideration the context in which the message is produced and the speaker's intended meaning in producing such a message. This is especially relevant in the case of jokes, since the context, as well as the social group a given individual may belong to, can determine the theme of the joke and also the type of humor displayed that people can appreciate. The joke-teller produces a humorous sequence with the idea that telling the joke will entail a certain witticism. For this reason, an effort is always made to perform such an activity in a meaningful manner. Also important here is the role of the interaction and the communicative relationship between the speaker and the listener:

> We need to ask ourselves what is the repertoire of choices that speakers have and what significance is attached to each of these choices (and/or their absence). For example, on hearers' part, laughter after a joke expresses some degree of agreement with the speaker that the occasion was appropriate for joking (among other things, of course). Withholding laughter may therefore be seen as rejection of this implicit claim and therefore as disapproving (once more, among other options which include failure of noticing and/or understanding the humor). (Attardo 2003: 1289)

It often happens, for instance, that the performance of a joke is accompanied by gestures or special acoustic effects such as changes in the vocal pitch or intonation. The communication established between speaker and listener in the context of humor also presupposes that the listener will be able to decode the possible ambiguity that can be derived from the humor, and will be capable of interpreting it adequately. This aspect of communication is called 'pragmatic competence' and:

> is part of human social cognition and develops naturally as linguistic and cognitive abilities mature. Strong evidence comes from neuroscience research that revealed that the right hemisphere is responsible for pragmatic functions, specifically those that involve inferential processing based on discoursal and contextual information (e.g., understanding irony, humor and metaphors). (Taguchi 2009: 4)

Equally important here is how the addressee or listener retrieves the humorous message since: "Our perceptions of other people may also be influenced by the type of humor they use, the responses of others to their humor, and the social context in which they express it" (Martin 2007: 132). For instance, dirty jokes are normally seen as negative if told by strangers rather than friends, and the same idea is applicable if this type of joke is produced by a man rather than by a woman. In addition to all these factors, there is also "the degree to which other people find the person amusing" (Martin 2007: 132). Likewise, it is interesting to point out here that from a pragmatic point of view jokes and humor in general are seen as a violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP), such that:

> Humor differs from other modes of communication that involve violations of the CP, such as lying, in that its purpose

> (amusement) is largely approved of socially and that significant amounts of humor are incorporated in everyday conversations, exchanges, etc. Therefore humor is not seen as an antagonistic mode of communication (such as lying) but rather as part of and parcel of communication. (Attardo 2002b: 162)

Yus proposes (2008) an interesting Relevance-Theoretic classification of jokes from a pragmatic point of view under the theoretical parameters of the Relevance Theory. This theory regards communication as "a highly inferential activity for human beings who have to develop the schematic string of words that arrives at their mind into fully contextualized and relevant information" (2008: 155). In this sense, he establishes four main types of jokes: 1) jokes where an explicit interpretation is questioned, i.e., manipulating the steps of interpretation taken by the listener; 2) jokes where an explicit interpretation clashes with contextual assumptions, i.e., the necessary amount of contextual assumptions and conclusions from the mixture of explicit information and context; 3) jokes which force the audience to draw implicatures or conclusions, i.e., explicit information does not appear and the audience is responsible for retrieving the humorous effects; and 4) jokes targeting background encyclopedic assumptions, which include stereotypical quality, and cultural schemas on society and human roles on activities. What this classification seems to suggest is that the listener needs to be ready to retrieve the humorous message, and rapidly decipher its semantic intention. The speaker assumes that the person listening will understand the joke and will consequently possess the necessary information to understand the message. This is similar to a scenario that we may find in the case of irony, as can be seen in Leonor Ruiz Gurillo's (2010) NeoGricean approach, who points out that as with humor, irony can also be explained as a violation of Grice's conversational maxims. Above all, as illustrated, the study of jokes within a pragmatic approach offers many possibilities as the information obtained can be relevant for scholars to learn

about the relationship between language and culture taking place within the interactive setting of the communication process.

4.2.6. Semantics

Jokes are particularly useful for the study of semantics, since in their production there is usually an attempt by the speaker to manipulate language so as to create double meanings that may transform the literal utterance into a different denotative significance, i.e., what a word may stand for and its actual meaning in a humorous situation. As Wen-li (2001: 159) points out, semantics can be very helpful in the field of translation since:

> the aim of translation is, in the ultimate analysis, to comprehend the original text and represent it in the target language. The translator, first of all, has to understand the meaning of the words and sentences, particularly anomalous sentences in the original text. A careful translator often has to weigh again and again before he decides which word, which sentence, and what kind of sentence order or structure are to be used in the target language. (2001: 159)

Likewise, since semantics has many times been analyzed through the lens of translation theory (Mott 2009), the same idea can be applied to humor studies, and to the usefulness of the discipline of semantics in identifying how meaning is constructed—i.e., what specific mechanisms at the lexical and syntactical levels are used for the purpose of evoking amusement or laughter within a given context.

The idea of a semantics of humor was amply defended in Raskin's Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH) (1979; 1985) that he applied to verbal humor and which was extended later by both Victor Raskin and Salvatore

Attardo (1991) into the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). An interesting point has been raised by Alexander Kozintsev (2010), who argues that the term semantics applied to humor begs for a redefinition since,

> although dozens of theorists analyze what they call the semantics of humor, we arrive at the unexpected conclusion: humor has no semantics. There is nothing paradoxical or unusual about this: parody, too, has no semantics. What does have semantics is the parodied text [. . .]. By the same token, the sole purpose of humor, which is completely self-reflective and self-referential, is to undermine any semantics underlying the subject's serious relation to the object; for it is this relation that humor parodies. (Kozintsev 2010: 32)

According to this idea, to be able to speak about the semantics of humor one needs to perceive the object within a humorous narrative or a comic text in a serious manner. In any case, it is clear that the study of jokes from a semantic perspective can shed light on how the different elements within a sentence contribute to the same goal of eliciting laughter.

4.2.7. Stylistics

Jokes are also a good resource for studying the relationship between the linguistic devices used in a joke and its interpretation, given the many stylistic resources that can be used in the production of a joke: for example, punning and the use of sounds. Some of these sound effects may come from literary sources, but because of the habitual use of jokes in verbal discourse, many of them tend to originate in different cultural areas such as pop culture and advertising. Also, because jokes make use of language in similar ways as poetry—with different rhetorical devices that may range from alliteration to a

paranomastic effect—jokes also disrupt "the patterns of conventional expectation" (Widdowson 1992: 13). Moreover, as Malmkjær explains, "Poetry, in particular, in virtue of both its layout and other visible patterning, explicitly invites attention to virtual sound, and poetry is in any case often written with a special eye to the sound effects that may be achieved at reading" (2005: 70). Similarly, the phonological component of jokes is clearly crafted with a deliberate purpose related to performance since most jokes are normally expressed verbally, much as poetry is usually written to be performed. For this reason, it may be interesting to study the different combinations of sounds used to elicit laughter in jokes in order to show how the phonological component is used to achieve specific communicative goals, while integrated and combined within a sentence, and what are the different sound effects—and specific phonemes—used in a humorous narrative to create poetic and aesthetic meanings, and for what purpose.

4.2.8. Literary Theory

The study of jokes in literature can reveal a great deal about their presence and purpose, since jokes normally belong to the verbal domain. They can also help in the interpretation of literature as a way to portray the specific behavior of a character in a novel, play, film, etc.

> Joking is a specific and meaningful practice that the audience and the joke-teller recognise as such. There is what we might call a tacit social contract at work here, namely some agreement about the social world in which we find ourselves as the implicit background to the joke. There has to be a sort of consensus or implicit shared understanding as to what constitutes joking "for us", as to which linguistic or visual routines are recognised as joking and which ones are not. Most jokes work through the

> experience of a felt incongruity between what we expect to be the case and what actually takes place in the joke [. . .] But in order for the incongruity of the joke to be seen as such, there has to be congruence between joke structure and social structure [. . .] When this implicit congruence or tacit contract is missing, then laughter will probably not result, which can be the experience of trying – and failing – to tell the joke in a foreign language, like in German. So, in listening to a joke, I am presupposing a social world that is shared, the forms of which the practice of joke-telling is going to play with. Joking is a game that players only play successfully when they both understand and follow the rules. Ludwig Wittgenstein puts the point perspicuously in one of his posthumously published remarks: What is it for people not to have the same sense of humour? They do not react properly to each other. It's as though there were a custom amongst certain people for one person to throw another a ball which he is supposed to catch and throw back; but some people, instead of throwing it back, put it in their pocket. (Critchley 2002: 45-46)

As a result, jokes may belong to a specific group and not all people produce the same type of humor. Some jokes can be classified according to sex or age, e.g., jokes about men, dirty jokes, ethnic jokes, religious jokes, and jokes typical of children, while other jokes are restricted to social groups, e.g., lawyer jokes, political jokes, etc. For this reason jokes can also provide a comic dimension and additional meaning to the plot of a literary text by expanding its semantic parameters.

As we have seen, jokes can provide useful information and can also contribute to different disciplines of knowledge. For this reason they are valuable tools available to researchers. Following, I will focus on the study of

phonological jokes by paying attention to the many different cultural aspects and linguistic data that can be obtained through their analysis.

4.3. Understanding the Intricacies of Phonological Jokes

As pointed out in the previous chapter, achieving an optimal result when translating humor presupposes the translator's knowledge of a variety of disciplines relevant to the translation process. The textual product must thus be elaborated according to a series of cultural and linguistic parameters designed to convey as much meaning as possible from the source text to the target one.

Given the wide variety of humorous texts, illustrated in chapter 3, I will now concentrate on the analysis of linguistic humor, specifically, phonological jokes. As short, compact texts, jokes are very useful for translation theory in that they facilitate the study and analysis of humor and culture. Moreover, by studying jokes, potential translators may have an easier *entrée* into the nature of a particular language and its community of speakers, i.e., what Segers (2000: 384) calls 'the cultural turn,' i.e, not only the "contemporary political and social developments, but also economic and technological developments, whether they have a global or rather a local nature, [which] can only be understood via the concept of cultural identity." Hence jokes can be of great value for understanding cultural identity. As we will see in the analysis of some phonological jokes in which culture-specific realia appear, e.g., names and historical events, a detailed contextual explanation may be required to understand the individual joke. Nonetheless, and as I will demonstrate, these jokes constitute an important heuristic tool to better understand the interrelationship between sound and meaning within a humorous context.

To date, I have not found many articles or publications that 'explicitly' address the type of sequence that is the core of my research. In one of the few studies which mentions this type of joke, in which the joke-teller attempts 'to translate' using Spanish sounds that recall other languages, it merely describes

the structure and provides examples in Spanish. There is neither an attempt to categorize this type of sequence, nor to relate it to its translatability:

> Este trabajo se basa en el tipo de chistes que presenta la estructura '¿Cómo se dice X en alemán, chino, portugués, etc.?' La respuesta es la glosa del término, frase u oración en esta lengua. Por supuesto, el contador del chiste no conoce ese idioma y lo que hace es 'traducir' usando palabras en español con sonidos, entonaciones y estructuras que recuerdan esa lengua. (Arguedas Cortés 1996: 129)

> This work is based on a type of joke that presents the structure, 'How do you say X in German, Chinese, Portuguese, etc..?' The answer is the gloss of the word, phrase or sentence in this language. Of course, the joke-teller does not know the language in question and what s/he does is 'translate' using Spanish words with sounds, intonation and structures that are reminiscent of the language. (My translation)

The second article that makes reference to this type of sound joke speaks about the translatability of jokes between Arabic and English. However, there is no attempt to further explain the phenomenon since the author simply enumerates some examples, arguing that "the joke is made possible [...] because of a sheer accidental phonological fact of Arabic, namely, that some obscene expressions sound like words or names in other languages" (El-Yasin, 1997: 675).

In the third article Draitser (1998: 174) quoting Roback's *Dictionary on International Slurs* (1944: 315), mentions Russian as an example where this type of humorous sequence can be found and how it "perceptively finds it influenced by the phonetic resemblance of the Russian words to the Japanese

names. There are several comic routines for Russian schoolchildren that parody the Japanese language (among others); most such parodies are scatological." As we will see in chapter 5, once we establish a contrastive analysis of examples of phonological jokes, many of the languages analyzed attempt to imitate some languages that tend to be easily recognizable for speakers, such as Japanese, Chinese, Russian or Arabic. In this regard, some of the possible reasons for why the imitation of some languages seems to be more popular than others will be offered. However, we can anticipate that one of them lies in the fact that the above-mentioned languages possess a greater degree of exposure, or have historically exerted a larger influence on some particular communities.

Thus, in my study, I would like to open a debate on the analysis of this type of joke, which has as yet not been studied in depth. My research focuses on the investigation of the main characteristics of this type of joke, at the same time commenting on the difficulties associated with the translation of this type of humor. Although there is a vast literature dealing with the translation of humor, it is interesting to note that not much research has been done on the fact that sound can function as a semantic unit that constricts the translation process itself within a humorous context. Some of the studies that have dealt with this topic center mostly on the analysis of specific instances which seem to be present in some languages but are interesting because they possess a peculiar phonological nature and are used by speakers as devices to convey different meanings. In this respect Don Nilsen, writing on the translation of humor, coined the term "'homonoid' to describe words which are almost homonyms, but not quite, especially when these 'homonyms' occur in different languages" (1989: 113). On the other hand, Delia Chiaro characterizes as "bilingual puns" sounds that represent "anglicized versions of the 'foreign' sound" (1996: 39). Anne-Marie Laurian also notes the interrelationship between humor and phonetics, and describes this phenomenon as "the most difficult to translate" (1992: 114).

As we will see in the last chapter of this dissertation, the type of joke that is the subject of my inquiry can be found to exist across multiple languages and cultures. However, as a native speaker of Spanish I will first be presenting jokes only in Spanish here in order to provide a more accurate primary framework of study. This was the first part of the ethnographic research that I carried out on the topic. I also intend to shed more light on the translation of phonological humor that will lead to future research on how this phenomenon operates in other languages. The present chapter thus shows a variety of samples that serve to illustrate the characteristic nature of this verbal phenomenon.

In essence, the jokes under consideration here are formed by using the words or phonemes of one's own language to imitate and parody the sounds of another language. Let us consider the following example in English (Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols 2003: 240):

(1) What do you call an overweight person in Chinese?
Wei Wan Tan

The first sequence of jokes of this type is normally an interrogative that follows one of these patterns: "What do you call X in Y?", "How do you say X in Y?" or "What is the name of X from country Z?"[43] X stands for the word or phrase that the speaker purports to translate into Y, the language parodied. In the example above, X corresponds to "overweight person," and Y identifies the Chinese language. The answer is constructed with a series of semantic units representing sounds identifiable as characteristic of language Y. However, in spite of appearing to be genuinely Chinese, these sounds only have meaning in the language of the joke, in this case English. The Anglophone listener readily recognizes that the expression *Wei Wan Tan* is a parody of the monosyllabic

[43] Another pattern that is not very frequent but also appears in some languages is: How do the (people of a given nationality) say X?

feature of the Chinese language, but corresponds phonologically to the English words "weigh one ton."

As Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols (2003: 240) indicate, phonological jokes tend to follow two principal features that characterize its linguistic structure:

- A question-answer format that in the question makes reference to a particular language or culture
- A sequence of sounds within the answer that attempts to reproduce the language mentioned in the question

In this regard, Norrick (2007) pertinently explains that there is not a clear distinction between culture-based humor and language-based humor. He presents the type of humor usually found in phonological jokes, i.e., the imitation of a foreign language, to contrast with 'merging,' i.e., the "mixing of languages/and or cultures for humorous effect" (2007: 297). To this end, he quotes the phonological joke mentioned above which had appeared in Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols's brief study (2003) on phonological jokes. He is right to point out the blurred boundary between humor based on cultural assumptions and, on the other hand, humor that is generated through language from purely a lexical point of view and which does not involve cultural references. However, although he explains that the humor of phonological jokes does not constitute an example of 'merging,' it remains unclear why he presents an example of a phonological joke within the explanation of this concept. In his study, Norrick defines 'merging' as a strategy in creating humor which presupposes "the availability of two or more separate discourse systems allowing bilingual participants to switch between the systems and to mix them for special effects, including humor" (2007: 290).

As can be evidenced from the "Wei Wan Tan" example presented above there is clearly no assumption that either the speaker or the listener needs to be bilingual—i.e., be competent in both English and Chinese—in order to retrieve

the humorous message of the joke, since there is only one possible reading, i.e., the English words "weigh one ton." As can be gathered from the example, these words are an imitation of the Chinese language with the intention of amusing the audience with a quick and unexpected 'fake translation,' which creates "a feeling of suspense during the buildup: suspense that is resolved with the punchline surprise. [. . .] People enjoy being stimulated to expect something that will surprise them, and then experiencing the satisfaction of knowing what it is" (Chafe 2007: 101).

As Norrick elucidates, it is also possible to argue in this particular case that there is a phonological resemblance or association with the Chinese 'wonton soup,' which many English-speakers would be familiar nowadays. As he explains:

> Depending on who tells and who receives this joke, it could count as either cross-cultural or bilingual, but it illustrates interdiscourse humor through merging either way. "Phonological jokes," as they are called by Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols (2003), initially seem similar. Consider as an example: (10) What do you call an overweight person in Chinese? Wei Won Ton. However, English and Chinese are not merged in this joke. Instead, English words with sounds we consider characteristic of Chinese (from an N. R. Norrick outsider's perspective) construct an answer based entirely on the English semantics of the words. English "weigh" is simply misspelled as "wei" and "won ton" is the English term for a filled (Chinese) noodle. The Anglophone recipient recognizes "wei won ton" as a parody of the monosyllabic nature of Chinese (or at least the sort of Anglo-Chinese associated with Chinese food), but does not bilingually merge the two language systems. (2007: 292)

It is interesting to note, however, that even if an English-speaking person were not able to establish the connection between the words in the answer of the joke "Wei Wan Tan" and the Chinese food "won ton soup," the joke could still be perceived as being funny by an audience. As will be explained later on, when producing this type of joke, the joke-teller focuses not only on the actual meaning of the words but also on important phonological aspects such as performing the joke as an imitation of the foreign language mentioned in the question. The fact that monosyllabic sounds are used in the answer, also noted by Norrick, makes it plausible to think that a listener who is not able to link the answer of the joke to Chinese food would likewise laugh by establishing a connection between the resolution of the joke and a typical monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language. Other factors, such as the intonation and gestures could equally enhance the performance of the joke and its perception as a humorous text.

According to Bernárdez (1984: 114), these jokes can be classified as belonging to the broader group of jokes, where we find a first part "which can vary greatly but which is accepted as 'normal' by the listener and understood as such, and a second one, which completely disrupts the world created by the first part." Notwithstanding, the linguistic uniqueness of this type of joke led Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols (2003) to use the term 'phonological joke' in order to identify it. As a revealing exercise, I will explain briefly the steps that were followed in order to find a nomenclature that would reflect the phonological and humorous components of this type of linguistic sequence. Originally the jokes were named 'fake puns' or 'imperfect puns' since at a first glance these jokes seemed to operate semantically in a similar way to a 'pun,' i.e., the humorous use of a word that emphasizes different meanings or applications. In fact, Hempelmann (2008: 342) devotes a section in an article of his to comment on different examples under the category of 'imperfect puns,' and interestingly—as it happened with Norrick's observations—he also focuses on examples that touch upon the peculiar phonological aspect of some puns which

do not a follow a perfect pattern to be classified solely as 'puns.' Hempelmann defines 'imperfect punning' as when "the target is a word, often only paradigmatically present in the text, while the pun is the actual or first occurring of the word that aims at this target. In the following example the target is 'insane' and the pun 'in Seine'. (5) Those who jump off a Paris bridge are in Seine" (2008: 342). In his example, Hempelmann (2008: 343) explains that imperfect punning would take place if a French pronunciation of the name of the river "Seine" is attempted by the joke-teller. However, he also points out that the example could also work for a speaker who does not use a French pronunciation of "Seine," and focuses on pronouncing this word in an identical way to the actual word intended, i.e., "sane." As he explains: "This represents one end of the spectrum from homophony (sound identity) to the highest tolerable heterophony (sound difference)" (Hempelmann 2008: 343).

As we see, the term 'pun' still proves to be a difficult concept to define, and, as a result, a debate has traditionally generated among scholars on this topic. "A straightforward observation is that a pun and the target it is punning on are similar in sound, thus creating an overlap. But the multiple purpose of this sound similarity and its interaction with the requirements of the text to be a joke, as well as the faulty reasoning that underlies it, are far from simple" (Hempelmann 2008: 343). Also, as Salvatore Attardo puts it while explaining Milner's claim for the usage of semiotic methodologies in the analysis of puns and its definition, a pun "is a paradigmatic reversal of two items: instead of the anticipated one it is a member of the same virtual series that is actually used and the other item is relegated to virtual status" (Attardo 1988a: 353). Other scholars prefer to describe the 'pun' by providing definitions that have already existed as a departure point, such as Delabastita (1996): "the use of the same word in different connotations or a balancing of homonyms (Preminger 1986: 224)," while Chiaro prefers to talk of "a conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the sound, but differ in the sense" (Addison [1711] 1982: 343; quoted in Chiaro 2008: 587). As Attardo explains, "puns have long been

presumed to be the sole legitimate field of analysis for the linguistics of humor [. . .]. The analyses of puns are primarily taxonomic" (2008: 105). This is an interesting remark given that Attardo (2008: 105) maintains that puns have always been identified as playing an important role in the analysis of linguistic humor as legitimate data, and that for this reason it has been possible to classify puns into four broad taxonomies that are useful to better understand how this phenomenon operates at a linguistic level:

> 1. Taxonomies based on linguistic phenomena (e.g. homophony, homography, paronymy, etc.).
> 2. Systematic taxonomies based on linguistic categories (e.g., syntagmatic, paradigmatic, etc.).
> 3. Taxonomies based on surface structure (e.g., the phonetic distance between the two phonetic strings punned upon).
> 4. Eclectic (i.e. taxonomies that use mixed criteria).

He explains that these taxonomies are in a way a positive contribution since under them we are able to "collect and systematize a wealth of data vastly more detailed than any other area of the linguistics of humor, for example, it seems that punning may well be a universal since it is attested in many non-Indo-European languages" (2008: 105). On the other hand, "the downside of taxonomic approaches to puns is that taxonomies cannot substitute theory building and, worse, taxonomies always presuppose a theory, but do so implicitly" (Attardo 2008: 105). Notwithstanding, Attardo (2008: 105) also acknowledges that by mentioning the four main categories of puns, he does not claim that these four taxonomies are the only possible ones. And that the information should be interpreted 'in general terms' as there might be different criteria that may lead to the creation of a pun (morphologic, syntagmatic, phonetic, etc.). Likewise, Delabastita (1996: 6) acknowledges the problematic nature of this phenomenon by arguing that criticism has focused mainly on

'safe cases,' "where the pun is clearly signalled and plain to see." As he further explains, "we have reached the point where the term pun or wordplay can arguably no longer be used to mean anything but the question remains where the threshold lies" (1996: 6).

This idea means that although it is possible to establish a classification on how puns may work within a humorous context, the concept of 'pun' is indeed difficult to define or conceptualize, and there is still a lot of research to be done in this field. Hence all those linguistic examples that cannot be correctly classified under established taxonomies can reveal new categories of linguistic sequences, which are either difficult to classify under the taxonomy of 'pun,' or that on the contrary, may detach from its typical definition; that is the case, as we will see, with many phonological jokes.

As we will see in the following chapter, the deliberate use of sound in phonological jokes is present in many different languages and cultures, and thus it constitutes a widespread phenomenon. This fact allows us to elaborate a theory around the use of this peculiar type of linguistic sequence which has not been studied in depth. Because of the examples collected, and their characteristic and comparable structure, it is legitimate to think that the dynamics of certain kinds of humor might be very similar regardless of the language, something that will be amply illustrated in the following chapter.

Besides the taxonomic approach to puns, and upon recognizing that his four taxonomies might not be enough, Attardo also considers it necessary to clarify a few points in order to understand the very nature of punning, which I will quote here:

> 1. Puns invoke significantly the surface structure (the signifier) of language, but this claim can be generalized to non-verbal linguistic forms (e.g. signed languages) and in general to semiotic systems (e.g., graphic signs).

2. Puns are non-casual speech forms; in casual speech the speaker is unconcerned by the surface structure of the forms he/she is uttering.

3. Puns involve the presence of (minimally) two senses, but need not to involve two "words," the two senses can come about via the interpretation of any string and can come about as a result of a syntactic, as well as morphological, ambiguity (lexical ambiguity falls in this category).

4. Furthermore, alliterative puns involve the repetition of a given (group of phonemes) and may be scattered along (parts of) the relevant text, as opposed to the punctual location of the punning material in morphological and syntactic puns.

5. Not any ambiguous string is a pun. Ambiguity is generally eliminated by semantic and pragmatic disambiguation. Puns preserve (at least) two meanings/interpretations. Hence puns exist only as a byproduct of disambiguation and therefore only in context.

6. Once two meanings have been brought together, the two senses may either coexist, or one of the two may win out. There are attested cases in which the meaning accessed first subsists, and cases which the meaning accessed second subsists.

7. The (usually lexical) unit that allows the two senses to coexist is called a *connector*, while the unit that forces the presence of the second sense is called a *disjunctor*. Connector and disjunctor may be distinct (i.e., be manifested in the text as two separate entities) or they may be non-distinct (i.e., be manifested as one entity).

8. The incongruity aspect of puns is fairly obvious (a string having two incompatible senses). [. . .] I proposed the controversial hypothesis that the resolution aspect of humor of puns was provided by a folk-theory of language as a motivated sign (in

> which sounds correspond to meaning by some reason). In other words, speakers assume the same (or similar) sound should carry the same meanings and that therefore, if two strings sound the same, it is legitimate to bring together their two meanings, as puns do. Strangely, no challenge of this claim has been advanced at least in print. (Attardo 2008: 105-106)

From these clarifications, it is clear that puns have some features in common with phonological jokes, namely that they are non-casual speech forms; that they can be complemented by non-verbal linguistic forms; and that there is also incongruity that arises in the production of the joke. Nevertheless, even though some puns might have a phonological component, it is important to bear in mind that puns are constructions of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning. Hence their primary role is at the lexical level, which constitutes a semantic play on words with the (minimal) presence of two meanings or the preservation of (at least) two meanings/interpretations.

As we have read in Attardo's text above (2008: 105), the lexical level seems to be more prevalent than the sound component in the production of the pun. Related to this point, it is certainly revealing that Attardo realizes that the sound aspect of puns remains somehow unexplored and that there seems to be a 'shared perception' among speakers on the value of sound as carrier of meaning.

According to all these different taxonomies, when considering if phonological jokes can be categorized under one of the different categories of punning, an easy classification would have been to call them 'fake puns,' meaning not genuine or authentic. However, besides possessing the explicit ludic purpose that is normally attributed to puns, the jokes analyzed in the present study are normally constructed as part of a question and answer

pattern, i.e., having a fixed structure.[44] In this sense the term 'fake pun,' did not fully portray their purpose or their linguistic framework and was not helpful from a terminological point of view. In addition, it is important to discover that the words in most of these jokes need not have more than one possible literal interpretation, whereas in a pun multiple meanings can often be found. To illustrate this point we can refer to Anatol Stefanowitsch's study on bilingual puns, in which he discusses their linguistic frame by stating that this type of pun uses:

> homonymy across languages [. . .] to efficiently evoke two semantic domains at the same time in order to arrive at a message that tightly integrates these two domains. Bilingual puns are formally constrained. First, they require a highly entrenched word or a well-known phrase (a proverb, a famous song title, a pragmatic routine, etc.) which can serve as a linguistic frame; thus, they are like to occur in speech communities with a large number of loan words and/or well-established practices of code-mixing. (Stefanowitsch 2002: 12)

After all, the best term for the type of sequence that is the focus of my analysis seems to be 'phonological joke' since it works well by showing that sound—and its constituent elements to be found in the peculiar morphology of words to imitate a specific language, i.e., such as the use of certain prefixes, suffixes, etc.—can play in many instances a central role in both the syntactic and the semantic structure of the joke. As the name suggests, the term 'phonological

[44] However, although the primary goal of phonological jokes is to elicit laughter in the listener they do not primarily present an explicit ludic component, or at least this is not how they are normally used in communication. However, since this type of humor is in many cases created or reproduced by children, who at the same time may find some amusement in the creation of phonological humor as a playful device, it could be argued that there might be also a ludic aspect associated with the creation of this type of humor. For more information on this topic, see the last section within this chapter on the different contexts of humor and how these apply to phonological jokes.

joke' embodies the phonological and humorous aspects (Adrjan and Muñoz-Basols 2003). This term has been used by Lew (1996; 1997) to identify jokes that possess a phonological feature that is inherent to the linguistic structure of the text, "any joke in which the ambiguous fragment of a joke's text might typically have non-identical phonetic forms for the two interpretations" (1997: 133). Also, Gieszinger defines it in general terms as "either based on the phonological identity or on the phonological similarity of two words" (2001: 184). Additionally, this term has also been used in scientific jargon to contrast with semantic and non-verbal jokes. In psychological studies phonological jokes are regarded somewhat like puns, as in the case of Goel and Dolan (2001), who use the term in a research study in which they analyze the cognitive and affective components of humor. They are also used in scientific studies as semantic jokes that identify a type of joke beyond wordplay, while non-verbal jokes identify texts such as cartoons and slapstick.

Tom Veatch (1999) has also explained that there seems to be a connection between puns and the creation of jokes as both imply an exercise of discovering the elements that may contribute to the same goal of semantic ambiguity so that it can be used with a specific purpose. As he explains, "in creating a pun, the speaker discovers a linguistic ambiguity and a way of exploiting it in constructing a described situation that contains a moral violation of some kind but that appears normal because of the ambiguity. This intellectual feat, like that of creating any joke, is grounds for a creative glow of accomplishment."[45] As it has been explained above, the category of pun may represent some of the features of the type of sequence that my study centers on such as, to use Veatch's words, the 'linguistic ambiguity' and the 'glow of accomplishment' that is derived from the deliberate use of sound in the creation of humor. These characteristics can be perfectly applied, as we will see next, to phonological jokes.

[45] For information on Veatch's research see: http://www.tomveatch.com/else/humor/paper/node29.html

4.4. Phonological Jokes as Perception and Representation of Foreignness

Many of these jokes use sound-based humor in myriad ways in order to achieve specific goals. Therefore the term 'phonological joke' describes such jokes and the way in which sound generates or portrays its humorous effect. The adjective 'phonological' added to 'jokes' clarifies the content of these linguistic sequences, which sometimes can also be integrated into a longer narrative, while framing the fixed structure that is characteristic of them.

As I will illustrate through examples, the main reason for choosing to analyze this type of humor is that based on the examples collected it can be said that they constitute, unlike other types of jokes or joke cycles, a distinct category reflecting a variety of cultural assumptions in short linguistic sequences. In some cases, because of its economy of expression, instead of a word answer to the phonological joke, an onomatopoeic sound can also be used. In this way, the encapsulated information contained in the phonological sequence makes it a valuable source of linguistic and cultural information about a specific community of speakers, and its particular sociocultural perspective regarding a different or foreign community of speakers. There are several reasons for this:

1. Analyzing the specific combination of a humorous script in which different phonemes contribute to elicit laughter by virtue of having been selected as representative of a specific language or culture is a revealing exercise. This is an important aspect, in view of the fact that many other jokes need to be presented as part of a story: as long narratives, an appeal to tradition, through cultural stereotypes, or a story or a particular individual who is the butt of the joke. There does not necessarily need to be a phonological component in order for the joke to be meaningful or achieve its punch line. In contrast, phonological jokes are characterized by their use of sound as an integral component in the configuration of humor, clearly illustrated by those examples where an onomatopoeia is enough to create meaning and amuse the listener. Hence,

phonological jokes use sound deliberately and purposefully, making it the centerpiece or inextricable part of the joke. And while it might be difficult to ascertain what comes first in the creation of a phonological joke, the purely semantic or the phonological component, since they both come together to create meaning and laughter, it is sound which is the key element that must function within the second part of the joke; and it is its enunciation that represents the parodied language in the joke. In other words, phonological jokes use sound deliberately and purposefully: sound is the *sine qua non* of the joke.

2. In many jokes of this type, the teller presents the joke as 'a translation,' e.g. "What do you call X in Y (a language)?" or "How do you say X in Y (a language)?" by way of an attempt to mediate between the two languages or cultures. In this way the humorous context of the communication is made understandable for the listener, who may be surprised or puzzled upon hearing the question even though—because of the communicative context—it is obvious that it is a joke. Given the speaker's ability to make a logical connection between the language mentioned in the question and the resolution or punch line of the joke, it is clear that there are cultural assumptions shared by both the joke-teller and the listener that confirm the particular combination of sounds as identifiable or, more importantly, seeming to belong to a particular foreign culture. In other words, in view of the fact that a communicative act or joke occurs not in a vacuum, but in a pre-prepared humorous context, the sounds of the phonological joke may be exaggerated and therefore not entirely accurate regarding the foreign culture invoked in the question, especially since the shared assumption regarding how this other language sounds originates in the language of the joke. Therefore, a large part of the fun or humor involved implies the listener's awareness of listening to a 'fake translation' or parody, so that the very act of 'translating' or imitating the exaggerated sound or sounds

functions as an attention catcher by establishing a direct connection between the information presented in the question and the joke's punch line.

Some scholars have noted this phenomenon, which underlines the coexistence of phonemes that reproduce understandable sequences in a language as an imitation of a foreign language. However, so far, phonological jokes have not been studied from the point of view of mechanisms that are connected with both the perception and representation of foreignness. Neal Norrick (1993) for instance has commented on similar examples, as can be shown in the following quote:

> Clearly, poking fun at a foreign phrase, whether with a stock punning response or with some other method of eliciting laughter about it, differs radically from making an allusion or telling a joke which turns on understanding a foreign language. [...] Thus saying *Harry Verderchi* to take leave as a supposed mispronunciation of *arrivederci* makes a punning comment on the use of Italian. (1993: 98)

The example provided by Norrick is similar to what an answer to a phonological joke would be like, i.e., an imitation of a foreign language. Accordingly, a following joke could be easily created: What's the name of the most famous Italian traveler? 'Harry Verderchi,' as explained above. This phenomenon is what Norrick (2007) identified under the category of 'merging,' i.e., taking into consideration the linguistic knowledge that both the speaker and the listener possess. This would function as a cross-cultural or bilingual joke in which a necessary knowledge of the different codes involved, in this case English and Italian, is necessary in order to interpret the sequence correctly.

> In the strategy of contrast, the humorist adopts an outsider's perspective on languages or cultures, but in merging, the humorist must be a bilingual and/or bicultural insider and use two discourse systems in tandem. Instead of drawing on confusion and misunderstanding between dialects, languages and cultures as in the strategy of contrast, merging creates a dual perspective. Nevertheless, by switching from one language or dialect to another, a speaker signals commitment to the group associated with the system switched to, if only for purposes of the current topic or interaction. (Norrick 2007: 397)

Consequently, the joke-teller presupposes that the recipient of the text is familiar with the meaning of an actual Italian word *arrivederci* ('good bye'), and therefore an implicit knowledge of this language, which is not normally required in many phonological jokes, is indispensable in order to understand this particular example. Notwithstanding, since the Italian word equivalent to 'good bye' in English appears in many famous Italian songs, or in other elements of popular culture, it might not be difficult for many speakers to establish this semantic association between the name in the joke and the actual Italian word. However, the main difference with what Norrick points out lies in the speaker's deliberate attempt to reproduce, imitate and more importantly 'act as a translator' in parody form of a language that can be completely unknown to the addressee, as we have seen in the Chinese example provided above. Moreover, as per the data gathered, as opposed to a pun sequence, in a phonological joke only one interpretation is normally to be inferred, i.e., that of the actual meaning of the words used.

If we agree that laughter implies an established communication of sorts, we can presume that to laugh at a phonological joke—one that attempts to reproduce the sounds of a specific language—means that the interlocutor possesses the necessary knowledge to retrieve the encoded cultural

information. This prerequisite makes phonological jokes difficult to be understood in another language, a constraint that prevents them from being readily translated into other languages, as it happens for instance with informative meaning. In other words, if we try to decode one of these humorous sentences by means of translation into a new code or language, the product will not necessarily be the same. The effectiveness of the joke depends on its wit, the core of which is a sequence of sounds that poses a real challenge in translation and whose semantic association causes laughter, "a universal experiential response to jokes" (Wilson 1979: 2).

Many scholars have noted the strong link between culture and language. Nida and Taber's famous quotation, "Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message" (1982: 4) accounts for the translatability of texts in which the linguistic form of the message does not constrict the translation process. However, the linguistic form of the message is not the sole factor that can prevent a text from being transferable to another language, since it frequently happens that a kind of humor that belongs to a specific culture or country may be of no interest to another culture. Therefore, translating that particular type of humor from one culture and language into another may bring with it the challenge of an "added requirement that the translation must be better than the original" (Nilsen 1989: 123). Such being the case, the translator has to preserve the sense of the source language in such a way that the target language also preserves the same wit that causes the humor. Additionally, the translator has "to convey a whole store of added meaning belonging to the culture of the original language" (Chiaro 1992: 77). If this is not done, the listener is not likely to find the joke humorous. A viable translation must enable the recipient to at least retrieve the semantic aspect of the joke. In other words, a mere literal translation would only constitute an explanation of how the joke is syntactically constructed, instead of functioning as an effective and successful translation of humor:

> Translation is not a mechanical process of decoding the message of the source text and then re-coding it in equivalent terms. If there are social reasons for the misunderstanding and misreadings inscribed in any communicative and translative situation, there also exist linguistic reasons for the fundamental inadequacy of the textual structures to the referentialized reality. (Tack 2000: 224)

As Tack points out, the process of decoding from the SL into the TL is impacted by a series of cultural and linguistic factors. Therefore, a literal translation of this type of joke would not contain both aspects for representing the original.

> Visual Humor cuts through international boundaries like a hot knife through butter. The comedies of Mack Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy and the Three Stooges can be shown on any cinema or T.V. screen in the world and get a laugh. But verbal humour smacks straight into the language barrier. Not even Bob Hope would raise a titter if he stood up and wisecracked in English in Novosibirsk. Nor would he do much better if he delivered his jokes in a straight Russian translation: things which are funny in America may not be at all funny in Russia, and vice versa. An American comedian, for instance, can make jokes about deep freezes, drive-in cinemas, and central heating. An audience in a country where none of these things existed would be left wondering what the man was going on about. Commercial traveller jokes may be hilariously funny in countries where he is a familiar figure. In countries which have never seen a commercial traveller, the joke suddenly has no point.
> For a joke to translate, therefore, it must be:
> (a) Basic, and

> (b) Given a free, and not literal, translation
> This we have tried to do, choosing those jokes which apply to the universal human conditions – man and wife jokes, drinking jokes, etc. and which do not rely for their appeal on a special set of local circumstances. (*The International Joke Dictionary* 1969: 4)

Within the act of translating humor, the translation of verbal humor plays an important role inherent in the translatability of humorous texts. Whereas in a written text humor is elicited from the context itself, and from the way the characters of the story frame have been displayed, the translation of verbal humor adds a more challenging factor that needs to be mastered by the translator in order to keep the humorous meaning of the source text. Verbal humor is characterized by being readily recognizable by a listener. At the same time, the performer of the joke needs to present the linguistic sequence in such a way that the listener is aware of the humorous nature of the text that is going to be produced, as "when recipients are faced with a joke, they do not apply the information-processing procedures appropriate to serious discourse" (Mulkay 1988: 37; quoted in Kuipers 2008: 377).

Normally, the listener does not contribute to the creation of laughter unless there is dialogue involved. Thus the performer of the joke has to verbalize the linguistic sequence in such a way that it intensifies the effect of laughter on the listener. Such intensification is achieved by imitating or parodying a peculiar accent; deliberately changing the tone of the voice; making gestures; or by creating a visual scenario as part of the humorous atmosphere. Besides, joke performance plays a vital role in phonological jokes since they depend on how the joke is presented, while the phonological aspect displayed in each sequence regulates the joke's success in creating laughter. In other words, the person who produces the joke has to make an effort to pronounce the words in such a way that the listener is able to recognize both the language presented in the question and the language the joke is aiming to imitate. As

described in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language,* phonological humor is: "a deviation from the normal use of sounds, by adding, deleting, substituting, […] transposing vowels and consonants […] and using similarities in pronunciation to mix up words" (Crystal 2003: 406). Accordingly, since phonological jokes elicit humor based on sound, they rely on these factors to create their humor structure. Therefore, in all the instances that we will analyze next, some of these characteristics are applicable in order to understand their inner structure. However there are other factors equally important that may lead to the creation of a joke that imitates a foreign language such as the degree of exposure that a community of speakers may have had to other languages, i.e., language contact.

4.5. Language Contact

In the previous chapters, I made reference to globalization as a medium that favors the contact between cultures and individuals. The advertising examples presented in chapter 3 have amply demonstrated that because of the Internet, the mass media, etc., we are no longer societies where the local culture is the sole medium of cultural exchange. At the end of the 1980s, Lambert (1989: 216) already anticipated this condition as being an important aspect that needed to be taken into account in the study of languages: "Grace notablement à la télévision, au cinéma et à la publicité, le discours international s'est installé dans la plupart des foyers du monde entier. Très peu de sociétés peuvent ainsi continuer à se qualifier de « monolingues »" (Lambert 1989: 218). (Thanks mainly to television, film and advertising, international discourse has found its way into most homes around the world. Very few societies can continue to be qualified as being 'monolingual') (My translation). This aspect of international discourse is applicable to the case of humor, which has also been internationalized through the mass media:

> Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, mass media were limited to newspapers, film and television, but the Internet and digitalization have radically widened and increased our access to information, so much so that television and the Internet have established themselves as in a position of cultural dominance in much of the world. This, it should not come as a surprise that, like any other aspect of life, humor has also been touched by both changes and the ascendancy of mass media. (Chiaro 2010: 12-13)

Certainly, the global aspect of our 21st-century culture is also affecting the configuration of humor, since humor is based not just on a series of cultural assumptions but on its translatability as well. And given the wider panorama of cultural exposure, we often find that humor travels more frequently and rapidly across cultures than it used to when we look at the many comic TV series that have been popularized more or less successfully for the entertainment of viewers across different cultures.

As Hasselblatt, de Jonge and Norde (2010: 1) explain, there have traditionally been three main areas dealing with language contact situations. First, there has been the study of language contact comprising no more than two languages from the perspective of historical comparative linguistics: such as for instance the use of Spanish in certain communities in the United States. Second, there has been a cross-linguistic analysis of languages in larger areas, comparing the similarities and the changes that have taken place, e.g., a study of the languages spoken in Europe (Heine and Kuteva 2006). And third, some studies have focused on the negative effects of language contact, such as for instance the dialect or language death that could take place as a possible result.

Indeed, globalization and the use of the English language as a *lingua franca* have contributed to reducing the number of societies that can be considered monolingual, which is one of the factors behind making 'language contact' a noticeable feature of everyday life thanks to the mass media. Taking a

step beyond the traditional approaches to language contact, in this study we will treat language contact not only from a historical or geographic point of view, but also from a linguistic point of view in terms of how different communication channels, "such as Internet, TV, radio, telecommunication, films have all crossed the national borders, have wider reach, and are globally accessible, viewable and have impact on people's personal and professional lives" (Narula 2008: 39), and are also impacting the creation of humor, more specifically phonological humor. Being in some degree of virtual contact with other languages and communities of speakers on a daily basis, favored by the mass media, has also exerted an influence on how speakers tailor their speech content to their audience by resorting to specific linguistic devices to create phonological jokes, as we will see next.

4.6. Phonological Jokes as an Example of the Role of Sound in the Configuration and the Translation of Humor: Characteristics and Classification of Spanish Phonological Jokes

Now that we possess a better understanding of the term *phonological joke* in order to correctly categorize and name these sequences, I will proceed to enumerate the main characteristics that I have extracted from the data analyzed. I will show examples that illustrate the different categories of a possible preliminary classification. Along with the explanation of the linguistic sequences, I will comment on the translatability of the most representative examples by providing a literal English translation (L.T.) of each joke. I understand the term literal translation as similar to what Mona Baker calls back-translation, which "involves taking a text (original or translated) which is written in a language with which the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar and translating it as literally as possible [. . .] how literally depends on the point being illustrated, whether it is morphological, syntactic or lexical for instance. [. . .] A back-translation can give some insight into aspects of the structure, if not

the meaning of the original" (2001b: 8). Overall, it has to be mentioned that, apart from a few examples that I have been able to collect, the phonological dependence in creating the semantic script renders most of the sequences presented very difficult to translate.

4.6.1. Main Characteristics of Phonological Jokes

The following are some of the most important characteristics of phonological jokes, based on the analysis of more than 100 Spanish samples, some of which will be commented on later.

4.6.1.1. General Structure

The first sequence of jokes of this type is normally an interrogative that follows one of these patterns: "What do you call X in Y?", "How do you say X in Y?" or "What is the name of X from country Z?" The joke structure usually fits within one of these patterns, as there has to be an explicit mention of either the language or the country whose language the joke refers to. The answer part of the joke has to portray a sequence whose phonemes are easily identifiable by a listener as relating to the language presented in the interrogative part.

4.6.1.2. Phonological Selection

Creating new phonological jokes constitutes a challenging task because the field in which the speaker can act may sometimes be limited. Some wit is involved in finding and selecting a sequence of sounds that can sound like another language so that the sounds in both languages—the language the joke is in and the language imitated—resemble each other's phonemic structure or at least are inferred by the listener as characteristic of the language imitated. In other words, both the language of the joke and the imitated language need to

possess a phoneme that partly reproduces the linguistic feature introduced in the question part. These sounds may share similarities, i.e., similar points of articulation in two different phonological systems. Consequently, speakers carry out a phonological selection of phonemes that will be particularly useful for representing the language in question. This will be amply illustrated in the different examples below, but as we will see, these selected sounds tend to be similar in many cases; i.e., nasal sounds and consonant clusters or the voiced bilabial stop [b] and the bilabial nasal [m] to imitate an African language; the voiceless postalveolar affricate [t ʃ] sound to imitate the Chinese language; or the voiceless velar fricative phoneme [x] and the alveolar lateral phoneme [l] to emulate typical Arabic sounds.

4.6.1.3. Economy of Expression

A high concentration of slang terms, because of their shortness and economy of expression, is sometimes needed to optimize the foreign sounds parodied. As it happens with humor in other media, this type of joke sometimes contains words that find their origin in colloquial speech. These colloquialisms or slang words as well as uncompleted or ambiguous terms are restricted to listeners able to retrieve the encoded information. These features facilitate the memorization of the jokes. As Rachel Giora (1991: 478) pertinently notes, because of "the restrictions on the capacity of working memory, it is widely agreed that understanding involves the reduction of multiple readings. The principle of economy thus explains why we would rather open [fewer] entries where possible." In a way, it could be said that these short jokes function as mnemonic devices that easily establish the connection between the item, person or idea asked about in the question and the combination of sounds given in the answer. This is more evident if we think, for instance, of how this would differ from having to memorize a long humorous narrative, or a joke with a more complicated structure. Also, one of the clearest examples of economy of

expression lies in the fact that some jokes may use an onomatopoeia as the answer, i.e., a sound which will have the function of providing both expression of the intended meaning and the representation of the foreign language in question. As we will see later, the onomatopoeic sound Ding, dong!, which identifies the sound of a door bell, may serve as a way of portraying sounds that imitate the Chinese language while expressing the intended meaning attributed in the joke where it appears.

4.6.1.4. Distortion of Words

Words are often distorted to obtain a better humorous result. This distortion can be visual, i.e., for jokes found on the Internet, or it can also be a phonological distortion for the purpose of prioritizing the effect of the sounds over the correct spelling of the words. In some cases the sentences are changed in a way that can only be understood once they are pronounced, otherwise they lose their graphic coherence. This aspect has been presented in the example of "Wei Wan Tan" which actually correspond to the English words "weigh one ton."

4.6.1.5. Use of Culture-Specific Realia

Culture-specific realia possess a notorious cultural meaning that can accentuate the humorous effect. These culturally inserted words range from geographical realia (toponyms and microtoponyms), historical events, names of public figures (actors, politicians, writers, athletes, terrorists, etc., or people who are constantly in the public eye), to commercial brand names or words from other sources characterized by the presence of a referential cultural element that can be introduced either in the question or as part of the answer. With regards to names, for instance, Attardo (2001: 153) speaks of 'onomastic puns' as sequences in which there is an aspect of 'inside joke.' In this respect, I would

argue that although in phonological jokes the recipient of the text must also decipher the 'inside message' of the parody contained within a proper noun, on the other hand, in most phonological jokes there is no explicit intention to create a 'double reading' of such a name, as is characteristic with puns. In one of the examples analyzed below—with the goal of imitating an African language—the joke makes use of the word "Bimbo," which corresponds to a well-known Spanish commercial brand of sliced bread.

4.6.1.6. Joke Performance

The way the joke is reproduced plays an important role in achieving the desired humorous effect and reaction in the listener. It is interesting that in *The International Joke Dictionary* there is a section called "Notes on pronunciation by the translator," which gives specific instructions for the telling of the joke depending on the language:

> to adapt your delivery to the national characteristics of the listener. In telling a joke to a German, for instance, the delivery should be loud, robust, and not too fast. It is permissible, in German, to laugh heartily at one's own joke. (This is also to help the listener – at least he knows then when you've reached the punch line.) In French, the delivery should be saucy, with lots of eye rolling, eyebrow waggling and a few Chevalier type throaty chortles. Italian jokes are accompanied by plenty of flamboyant gestures, lots of *simpatico* and as much expression as you can muster. Spanish jokes come over best with a dignified, but explosive delivery. Although you are the funny man, the dignity must still be there. You must lead on the listener as the matador leads on the bull–and hope for a laugh at the moment of truth" (1969: 5)

Since in sound-based humor the joke itself constitutes a play on sounds, there must be a special emphasis when reproducing the humorous sequence. While this is not that important in the question that introduces the joke, it is the punch line that must be optimally reproduced in order to provoke laughter in the listener, whose "presence or absence may be taken to directly correlate with the presence or absence of humor" (Attardo 2003: 1288). The speaker must demonstrate a high degree of semantic motivation, which is characteristic of verbal humor, in order to trigger laugher in the listener. As Norrick notes with regards to joke performance, "a lack of laughter shows that something has gone awry, but it remains initially ambiguous: either the recipient has failed to get the joke, or they are withholding laughter purposely to show that they did not appreciate the performance" (2003: 1344). On the other hand, the listener does not expect the joke-teller to present factual or informative meaning during the enunciation, since joke performance takes place in a non-bona-fide mood of communication (Raskin 1985).[46]

The examples that follow must be read according to the way a speaker would verbalize these jokes in a given situation. This is the main characteristic that constricts the translation of this type of joke, since sounds leading to a particular meaning or understandable sequence in a language do not necessarily denote the same thing in other languages. Additionally, an explanation of the joke may be required for a listener to retrieve the meaning. In so doing, the humorous effect will not prevail along with the translation. Hence the translation is accompanied by a series of explanations in order to portray: the literal meaning of the joke; its structure and its phonemic organization; the intralinguistic as well as the extralinguistic components of the language; and its

[46] As Critchley explains, "With this in mind, some anthropologists like Mary Douglas have compared jokes with rites. As rite is here understood as a symbolic act that derives its meaning from a cluster of socially legitimated symbols, such as a funeral. But in so far as the joke plays with the symbolic forms of society [. . .] jokes might be thought as anti-rites. They mock, parody or deride the ritual practices of a given society, as the Czech Milan Kundera describes in the following story: someone's hat falls on the coffin in a freshly dug grave, the funeral loses its meaning and laughter is born" (2002: 46).

semantic purpose; the cultural inserted ideas evoked within the joke, and the interrelation between all of these components.

4.6.2. Classification and Analysis of Spanish Phonological Jokes

The process of gathering data through interviews with native speakers demonstrates the difficulties in obtaining the pertinent linguistic sequences which are the core of my research. The following steps were followed to collect the information for the analysis:

Steps	Process
1	First, the researcher explained the background of the research to the potential informant.
2	Second, the researcher presented evidence of a phonological joke in a language of communication familiar to the interlocutor. In this part of the research Spanish was selected as the common language.
3	Third, the informant had to think of an example that would come to mind immediately after comprehending the type of text being asked for.
4	Fourth, if the informant knew of an example at that moment, the researcher asked the informant to write it down in order not to modify how the original text (spelling of imitated sounds) was understood. Since the native tongue and language of communication between the researcher and the informant was the same (Spanish), the researcher usually did not require an immediate explanation of the joke.
5	Fifth, the researcher and the informant analyzed the joke and agreed on where the punch line was to be found. They also discussed some of the cultural and contextual implications that could be inferred from the text.

The analysis that follows discusses a possible classification of some of the most representative examples of phonological jokes collected, describing this type of text as an interesting case study to for the analysis of humor. As we will

see, these texts are likely to imitate languages that are geographically close, as well as those that are not necessarily linguistically related to Spanish, e.g., monosyllabic languages such as Chinese or Japanese, or widely spoken languages such as Arabic or Russian but that for some reason are broadly identifiable far outside of the borders of where they are spoken. "Borders between nations/cultures are not natural but man-made, and perceived cultural (or linguistic) differences and similarities many be caused by historical contingency (e.g. Luxembourg vs. Alsace), political ambition (minority cultures) or administrative necessity (the unity of multi-ethnic societies)" (Koskinen 2004: 144-145).

Based on the Spanish jokes collected, I have found five main categories whose goal is to emphasize one or multiple semantic devices within this classification. As will be illustrated, different strategies have been followed by speakers in order to create phonological humor.

4.6.2.1. Jokes that Emphasize the Use of Off-color Humor and Obscenity

This group contains jokes that manifest a sexual connotation in identifying a particular part of the body, an implicit or explicit action, or a garment that either defines femininity or is used to cover masculine or feminine genitalia. Let us consider the following examples:

(2) ¿Cómo se dice wonderbra en swahili?
Dominga Kontongo
L. T.: How do you say 'wonderbra' in Swahili?
Female fixed breast

In this joke, sounds are written according to the language imitated, in this case Swahili. These sounds pronounced quickly are easily identified by a listener as a sequence with the occurrence of the voiceless velar stop [k], the

voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t], the velar nasal [ŋ], and the voiced velar stop [g]. Since the whole phrase uses colloquialisms, the listener must possess this knowledge in order to retrieve the optimal meaning of the text. The first word *dominga* is used colloquially to refer to female breasts, and it has been shortened to the singular form since it is normally used as *domingas*. This term is believed to come from *la jerga cheli* (the cheli jargon), which was an urban slang used by young people during Madrid the 1980s and which is a mixture of the jargon of lower-class urban youth and drug dealers. The word *domingas* is used similarly to the word *orejas* (ears), which is sometimes used metaphorically to refer to this part of the female anatomy with the meaning of objects that are pending or hanging. The word *kon* has the meaning of the preposition *con* (with), but its spelling has been modified to resemble how African languages are transcribed in the Latin alphabet. The word *tongo* is a widely used colloquialism that expresses the meaning of something that has been "fixed," i.e., as an exclamation in the expression "*¡hay tongo!*" (It's been fixed!), used especially in sport events to show disapproval of a referee's decision. Thus, the literal translation of the joke in English would have the meaning of "female fixed breast." Humor here arises when the two ideas clash and become one in order to portray how a "wonderbra" gives the appearance of a breast that has been falsely enhanced.

It is important to bear in mind that in this joke Swahili functions for Spanish speakers as a reference to any African language. One of the possible reasons of why Swahili is the language chosen for many jokes may be due to a shared phonological representation of a series of phonemes that could pertain to this language, or at least this is how it could be perceived among native speakers of Spanish. This shared perception may have been acquired by cultural assimilation through elements of popular culture, i.e., history, music, famous films, etc., or other more specific cultural elements, e.g., names of cities, last names of important people in the African continent (names of presidents, etc.), and that would have often appeared in the mass media, helping to create

this phonological representation. Consequently, such cultural assimilation could have favored the configuration of this connection between the language imitated and its actual meaning in the joke.

A similar sequence in English could probably not be established in this joke especially since "the use of slang can also present problems because of the difficulties inherent to the linguistic medium itself" (Russo Bachelli 1991: 99), and the humor would be lost in translation. However it is interesting to note that there are certain consonant clusters in English that resemble sounds from Swahili such as [nd]; bantu languages are characterized by having many nasal sounds (Lipski 2005: 214). Therefore, also because of popular culture elements in English it should at least be possible to find some words that could attempt to create a similar sound effect to imitate an African language, although the semantic script of the joke would probably need to be substituted.

(3) ¿Cómo se dice prostituta en árabe?
¡Hala maja bájate la faja!
L. T.: How do you say 'prostitute' in Arabic?
Come on girl take off you corset!

This joke associates different terms using a command in the answer partly in order to create a dynamic humorous effect. The sentence begins with the expression *¡hala!* equivalent to the English interjections "wow! come on! let's go! get on with it! hurry up!" used to show surprise, or to hurry or call someone. In the joke the word is used with the meaning of "hurry up!" or as a way of addressing a woman so as to catch her attention. Moreover, this expression finds its origin precisely in Arabic and is also reminiscent of the God of the Muslims (*Allah*). This way of addressing someone in Spanish is used when the speaker wants to catch someone's attention by making an introductory remark about something or to express a command. The word *maja*, which was already a colloquial term in the 18th and 19th centuries, is currently

used to identify two of the most famous paintings by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828), *La maja vestida* (The Clothed Maja) and *La maja desnuda* (The Naked Maja): "El nombre de 'majas' con que se conoce a estas dos pinturas es una denominación reciente, aun cuando ciertamente el término era del siglo XVIII; con él se denominaba a las mujeres de esa clase social baja madrileña que se caracterizaba por una cierta libertad de costumbres y un típico desparpajo popular en el trato" (Museo del Prado website) (The name 'majas,' by which these two paintings are known, is a recent term, even though the word itself dates from the 18th century; it denoted women from Madrid's lower classes, characterized by their self-confidence and typically informal manners) (My translation). Nowadays, the term *maja* is mainly used either its in masculine or feminine form to refer to someone who is "charming" or "friendly," although as in the past it can also refer to a person's beauty.

The rest of the sentence ends with the word *faja* (corset), which underscores the off-color tone of the joke. This female garment—often associated with the image of a voluptuous woman—comically evokes the tedious task of putting it on and taking it off, as well as an explicit sexual connotation in the words "take off." Its effect is intensified with the command *bájate* or "put it down, lower it" that phonetically reinforces the sonority of the voiceless velar fricative phoneme [x] to emulate the Arabic voiceless pharyngeal fricative [ħ], and the alveolar lateral phoneme [l] also present in the sequence. As Adam points out: "un même effet esthétique ne s'exprime pas nécessairement, tant s'en faut, de la même façon d'une langue à l'autre" (1998: 6) (The same aesthetic effect is not necessarily expressed, far from it, in the same manner in one language compared to another) (My translation). Consequently, due to the many phonetic and contextual implications that operate in the joke, it would be extremely difficult to reconstruct the aesthetics of the source text in a translation that would result in the same phonetic and semantic effect, as evidenced by the English literal translation.

4.6.2.2. Jokes that Emphasize the Use of Colloquialisms

As in previous jokes, there are many colloquialisms that operate as the central idea of the joke to reinforce its humorous effect. Some of these jokes use colloquialisms as the main lexical unit of the answer to emphasize a colloquial meaning that may be semantically relevant only to a reduced number of speakers within the same linguistic community. These words also display a referential meaning that is transmitted orally, which makes the translation of these texts into other languages even more difficult. Some examples are:

(4) ¿Cómo se dice frío en ruso?
Raska
L.T.: How do you say 'cold' in Russian?
Very chilly

Here, the colloquial term *raska*, correctly spelled *rasca*, is used colloquially to denote the idea of intense cold. Also, the combination of the alveolar trill [r], the voiced alveolar fricative [z], and the voiceless velar stop [k] represents the Spanish speaker's idea of what the Russian language sounds like. The phonetic similarity with the actual Russian word русский (ruski), which means "Russian"—a word present in many products of popular culture, such as Cold War novels or films—could also be another reason why the Spanish speaker might relate *rasca* to this language. The joke's punch line hinges on associating the idea of cold weather, which is easy to imagine in connection with the region where this Slavic language is spoken, and with the actual use of the Spanish word. This joke can only be translated provided an English word is found having a combination of sounds that connote the idea of the Russian language for English speakers and expresses a similar semantic script.

(5) ¿Cómo se dice paraguas en árabe?
Panomojamé
L.T.: How do you say 'umbrella' in Arabic?
Not to get wet

The condensation of the Spanish expression *Para no mojarme* "not to get wet" creates laughter, since here the function of an umbrella is linked to the voiceless velar fricative phoneme [x] to emulate the Arabic voiceless pharyngeal fricative [ħ] and the bilabial nasal [m] identified with Arabic. Also, the preposition *para* is colloquially shortened to *pa* to optimize both the humorous intention and the sounds imitated. By stressing the sequence in the last syllable there is also a desire to make this word sound similar to the Arabic name *Mohammed*.

(6) ¿Cómo se dice indigestión en japonés?
Take ruta
L.T.: How do you say 'indigestion' in Japanese?
It makes me belch

The resolution of the joke alone shows that *take ruta* corresponds to the intentionally distorted form of *Está que erupta*, "it makes me belch;" in other words, the effect that an *indigestión*, or "indigestion" may produce in someone. The answer has been distorted in order to optimize the pronunciation of the voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t] and the voiced velar stop [k], which recall for the listener sounds similar to those present in Japanese. To translate this joke into English there would have to be a sequence of English sounds that could evoke a similar phonetic and semantic script.

4.6.2.3. Jokes that Emphasize the Use of Onomatopoeias

I have found that some of the jokes that belong to this group may be partially translatable. In the answer part these jokes contain an onomatopoeic representation that encapsulates both sound and meaning. While it is true that most onomatopoeias are not identical across languages, some of them can be easily recognized by speakers from different cultures because of their universal aspects of sound symbolism. As Bahíllo Sphonix-Rust and Martínez Peñas discuss:

> Onomatopoeia is difficult to define in view of the imitative nature of its formation into multiple nuances. While it may be simple to describe the conversion of the onomatopoeia concept into a single sounded word, it is more difficult to determine the origin of the sound from which the onomatopoeia is inspired, keeping in mind that, in many cases, the process of conversion yields a rather vague idea of the sound imitated. Indeed, in terms of a linguistic-semantic analysis, it is not a matter of simply imitating natural sounds but rather of transforming and adapting these sounds to the phonetic and alphabetic filter of the individual language, which in turn produces the divergence of onomatopoeias among different languages. (My translation, 2009: 669-670)

Unlike the onomatopoeias in comics, where there is a direct link between the image and the text, the onomatopoeias that form part of phonological jokes rely more on the speaker's performance and their contextual use.[47] These jokes can usually be translated by recoding the question and, depending on the type of onomatopoeia, by preserving or adapting the answer. While some of these

[47] For a study on the use and translation of onomatopoeias in comics, see the article by Micaela Muñoz-Calvo (2012, forthcoming) on the translation of Asterix into all the languages of the Iberian Peninsula.

sounds may be correctly retrieved in a wide number of languages, this may not be the case in cultural terms. A more direct inference by the listener is characteristic of this group of jokes because of the rapid pronunciation of the sound.

(7) ¿Cómo se llama el chino más rápido de China?
¡Chiunnn!
L.T.: What's the name of the fastest man from China?
Chiunnn!

The onomatopoeia in this joke is inferred by the listener as a simulation of the sound of speed. The effect is achieved by using the voiceless postalveolar affricate [tʃ] that is usually identified with the Chinese language. In this case, the literal translation of the joke provides exactly the same type of text that would constitute an optimal way of transforming the message from Spanish into English.

(8) ¿Cómo se dice suegra en alemán?
¡Ajjj!
L.T.: How do you say 'mother-in-law' in German?
Ouch!

In this example, the graphemes *Ajjj*, exaggerated in Spanish by means of a repeated use of the voiceless velar fricative [x], are meant to sound like the German word *Buch* (book) for instance. Likewise, by connecting this sound to what one would call a mother-in-law in German, one senses a desire to relate it to the onomatopoeic representation emitted by someone experiencing something unpleasant. This joke portrays a common cultural feature present in most Western civilizations, especially the representation of the mother-in-law as an overprotective member of the family. Besides, "it must be kept in mind that

the meaning of a word [. . .] is the combination of its objective meaning and its pragmatic implications (stylistic and evaluative associations) and, therefore, the translator's lexical choices condition and must be conditioned by the maintenance of a series of expressive choices present in the original text" (Pérez Quintero et al. 2001: 187-188). Hence this joke can be translated into English since, as the literal translation shows, the expressiveness of the source text is maintained in the target language by means of onomatopoeic graphemes that are modified accordingly.

(9) ¿Cómo se dice testigo de Jehová en chino?
¡Ding, dong!
L.T.: What do you call a Jehovah's Witness in Chinese?
Ding, dong!

Here a religious group, Jehovah's Witnesses, is represented in parody form by an onomatopoeic sound. The punch line in this joke has to do with the way people of this faith proselytize by going from house to house. Thus the onomatopoeic *¡Ding, dong!* captures the sound of a door bell announcing the arrival of a Jehovah's Witness at someone's house. In this case a translation into English could indeed keep the joke's structure intact and with the same humorous effect on the listener. While this joke might not translate into some cultures, it should at least be translatable into a number of languages spoken by people acquainted with Jehovah's Witnesses and who have a similar onomatopoeic representation for how the doorbell sounds. As Laurian points out, this will not be the case in all cultures:

> Jehovah's Witnesses are not as frequent in France as in the United States. Who would go door-to-door? Many years ago, some people from North Africa or the Middle East sold carpets that way. Little by little most front doors have been closed by key or

> by code in the city, so there are fewer now. Encyclopedia salesmen and art-book sellers are now more common as door-to-door vendors. In exchanging objects for religion and a process of selling for a person of convincing, we lose an important part of the humor. The cultural differences impede a satisfactory translation. (1992: 123)

Interestingly, Giselinde Kuipers documents the following disaster joke about this religious group in the Netherlands in 1987:

> "Did you know how the *Herald of Free Enterprise* sank?
> A Jehovah's Witness put his foot in when the door was closing." (2002: 454)

By way of an example other than in English, the onomatopoeic sound of the doorbell associated with the sound of the Chinese language—together with the cultural references—achieves the same humorous effect in a Danish joke, one found to exist already and not created for this research:

> Hvad kalder man Jehovas i Kina?
> Ding-Dong
> L.T.: What do you call a Jehovah's Witness in Chinese?
> Ding, dong!

4.6.2.4. Jokes that Emphasize the Use of Culture-Specific Realia

Under this classification we find jokes that emphasize a cultural idea that may only be relevant and, therefore, humorous in the language in which the text is produced. This cultural element may be present in a specific society as shared common knowledge, e.g., popular culture products at a given period of time or in a particular geographical area. Therefore, to retrieve the humorous

intention and cultural meaning of this type of joke a listener may have to be a native speaker of a language who possesses the sociolinguistic knowledge of the culture in which the joke originated.

(10) ¿Cómo se dice pan en swahili?
¡Bimbo, bimbo!
L.T.: How do you say 'bread' in Swahili?
(A brand of bread)

This joke introduces the reduplication of a well-known Spanish commercial brand of bread in the answer part: "Bimbo." The repetitive presence of the voiced bilabial stop [b] and the bilabial nasal [m]—homorganic segments with the same point of articulation—represents the Spanish speaker's idea of what an African language sounds like. Due to the cultural assumptions, a translation of this joke could lead to a miscommunication between the SL and the TL. An optimal translation could only be one that would provide a similar idea in which the word would phonetically resemble the one in the SL.

(11) ¿Cómo se dice suegra en griego?
Storba
L.T.: How do you say 'mother-in-law' in Greek?
Someone who gets in the way

As in example (8), this joke parodies the role of the mother-in-law in society. The word *storba*, correctly spelled *estorba*, corresponds to the third person singular of the Spanish verb *estorbar*, "to get in someone's way" or "to be an obstacle." The combination in this word of the voiced alveolar fricative [z] and of the voiced bilabial stop [b] is identified by a Spanish speaker with the Greek language. This association with Greek may have to do with the relationship between the sound of the word *storba* and the name of the

protagonist of the famous film *Zorba the Greek* (1964) directed by Michael Cacoyannis. In addition, in Spanish society a comical way of identifying a *suegra*, or mother-in-law, is to think of her as a person who tends to interfere in the husband-wife relationship. Going from the idea of a family member who in many ways bothers, one can see why such person would seem to be an "obstacle." Thus the imitation of Greek sounds plus the deeply rooted cultural assumption lead to a humorous effect when the two ideas clash. To translate this joke into English, there would have to be a sequence that would reproduce sounds easily identifiable by an English speaker as Greek-sounding. But these sounds would also have to identify a semantic script within the same thematic field.

(12) ¿Cómo se dice macarra en griego?
De Móstoles
L.T.: How do you say 'bully' in Greek?
From Móstoles

To understand this joke we need to possess the cultural assumptions that go with a town called *Móstoles* in southern Madrid. The word *macarra* itself is very difficult to translate, since it can refer to someone who behaves as a: "lout, thug, vulgar or flashy type." For instance, if we speak about someone who looks like a *macarra*, we would probably make the following remark: "he looks very vulgar and flashy." However, the Spanish word could also be used to refer to a "pimp." What creates laughter here as well is to describe an inhabitant from *Móstoles* as someone who by living in the periphery of the capital cannot afford to live in the center of Madrid. Consequently, there is a tendency to consider people from this town and others around Madrid as less wealthy than the people from the capital. The bilabial nasal [m] and the alveolar sibilant [s] phonemes resemble some of the most prominent sounds of the Greek language in which we find many adjectives and nouns, e.g., the word κρισις (crisis). The

sequence *De Móstoles* also sounds like the name of the famous Greek orator *Demostenes* (384/385-322) B.C., thus creating a more authentic effect in the joke with respect to the sounds of the Greek language. As evidenced by the literal translation, and because of all the above-explained reasons, this joke makes no sense in English. Although in this case a translator could substitute this toponym by a relevant one in English, the phonetic sequence of the geographical name would also have to imitate Greek sounds in order to achieve the same effect as in the source text.

4.6.2.5. Jokes that Emphasize the Use of Unmodified Words

In this group there are jokes that use actual unmodified words of the language in the answer that are considered to be humorous without any modification. Frequently, there is a semantic association between the words in the question and the answer, since they usually belong to the same semantic field. Hence, the meaning of both parts of the joke expresses a similar concept. Let us consider the following examples:

(13) ¿Cómo se dice cementerio en swahili?
Tumba
L.T.: How do you say 'cemetery' in Swahili?
Tomb

In this joke there is a close semantic relationship between the word *cementerio* (cemetery) and the word *tumba* (tomb), given that the latter denotes one of the essential items found in a cemetery. In other words, the element that is the answer to the question forms part of the general idea presented in the question, i.e., tombs constitute cemeteries. Besides, the word *tumba* has not been modified to create a humorous effect since it has its actual spelling. The presence of the voiced bilabial stop [b] and the bilabial nasal [m]—homorganic

segments with the same point of articulation—represent the Spanish speaker's idea of what an African language sounds like. In this case the literal translation of the sequence might work as a written joke because of the similarity with the Spanish graphemes. However, the translation would have to be tested with native speakers of English to see if they find it humorous.

(14) ¿Cómo se dice embarazo en swahili?
Bombo
L.T.: How do you say 'pregnancy' in Swahili?
Bass drum

In this example pregnancy is identified with an object such as a *bass drum*, a humorous play on the fact that this type of drum is carried just like a baby during pregnancy. In addition, the word *bombo* is used colloquially in Spanish to describe a woman in advanced stages of pregnancy. Again, the presence the voiced bilabial stop [b] and the bilabial nasal [m]—homorganic segments with the same point of articulation—represents the Spanish speaker's idea of what an African language sounds like. In English there is no such semantic connection between a "bass drum" and "pregnancy." Nor would the phonological structure of this word elicit the same response in the listener. Consequently, it would be very difficult to translate this joke into English.

(15) ¿Cómo se dice oferta en swahili?
Ganga
L.T.: How do you say 'sale' in Swahili?
Bargain

In this joke we identify a semantic affinity between the word *oferta* (sale), and the word *ganga* which means "bargain." Since the degree of identification

between the two terms is so close, we can speak of the two words as synonyms. In addition to providing an answer that constitutes a play on sounds, the punch line in this joke lies precisely in the closeness in meaning of the two terms.

The classification appearing in this chapter is not meant to be definitive; nor is it an exhaustive list of all the types of phonological jokes—an impossible task given the multiplicity of semantic scripts that often operate within a single sequence. Therefore, it is by no means meant to include all the different types of phonological jokes a researcher may encounter. On the other hand, this chapter does present a primary framework to better understand how phonological jokes may function from a semantic point of view. At the same time, it also exemplifies the most important aspects involved in the translation of phonological jokes, while casting some light on the difficulty associated with translating humor in view of the fact that only a few of the texts displayed could work as jokes in their English translation.

4.7. Humor Contexts and the Dynamics of Joking in Phonological Jokes

In this section, I follow Elliott Oring's explanation (2008: 196) of the main categories or contexts that anthropologists and folklorists have used to interpret humor: cultural context, social context, individual context and comparative context. Applying these categories, I will explore how phonological jokes fit into them so as to better understand the factors that constitute the creation of this type of humor.

4.7.1. Cultural Context

Under this category we can identify the cultural knowledge, values, concepts and attitudes necessary for the understanding of humor. In the case of phonological jokes, in this chapter I have used Spanish as the language of reference for my preliminary classification of phonological jokes since, as a

native Spanish speaker, I could be more accurate in my research of the cultural and phonological implications present in each example. In the case of phonological jokes, we are dealing with humorous sequences wherein sound is part of the inner structure of the joke. At the same time, we are conveying a clear cultural message, i.e., how speakers of a particular language imitate those of another language, or what specific combination of sounds is perceived by the speaker of a particular language as being similar to another language. Some similarities across languages and cultures may exist, as we will see in the following chapter, in how speakers imitate the sounds of monosyllabic languages such as Chinese or Japanese. However, the phonological or verbal representation of Chinese, for instance, is not necessarily exactly the same in different languages. One of the reasons for this may be related to the degree of exposure experienced by a given culture to a given foreign language. Another, more important reason, may be that the repertoire of sounds characteristic of one language may not function in the same way, from an articulatory point of view, as in another language. For instance, in the analysis of jokes, we have seen several examples in Spanish which were attempting to imitate the Arabic language and in which different phonological strategies had been used, e.g., words starting by "al-," similar to the Arabic article or the voiceless velar fricative phoneme [x], represented in writing by the grapheme "j," and whose sound realization is used to emulate the Arabic voiceless pharyngeal fricative [ħ], or is perceived as such. In this particular case, another important factor of why this sound is often linked to Arabic may be the exposure of the Spanish-speaking population from the Iberian Peninsula to the Arabic culture and language, given the history of the Iberian Peninsula and, especially, because of the linguistic heritage from Arabic, i.e., words incorporated into Castilian and still in use, or the many toponyms on the Iberian Peninsula which contain these sounds, e.g., Albacete, Alcalá, Guadalajara, Guadalquivir, etc.

As a result, it is important to note that the degree of funniness would probably not be perceived in the same way by a Spanish speaker from Latin

America, with its lack of direct contact and geographic and cultural proximity to Arabic-speaking countries. This is a good example of how the cultural context in which the joke originates may determine both its creation and degree of success. Oring seems to suggest this condition in his reference to the Jewish jokes Freud collected in his 1905 book on jokes: "Only the awareness of the jokes' cultural context would suggest that it probably resonated quite differently for people a century ago than it does for people today" (2008: 199). However, as regards phonological jokes, we have seen in the examples analyzed that, even though the cultural and societal information about what makes the joke funny may have been lost in some cases, the phonological aspect of the sequence is very likely to still be valid as representative of the language or culture imitated or parodied in the joke.

4.7.2. Social Context

Under this category we can include diverse aspects such as circumstances, situation and the specific context in which the joke is performed, in which "time, setting, personnel, the relationship among the participants, the nature of their conversation and interaction are relevant to the description of social context" (Oring 2008: 199). In this regard, phonological jokes are characterized by being in many cases typical of children's speech or, at least, how this type of humor is perceived by many adults. Indeed, phonological humor is a form of playful creativity with its roots in earliest childhood babble resulting from exposure to adults. Young children listen to the sounds of adult language without knowing or understanding their meaning, intent on imitating sounds by repeating them, playing with them, and listening to themselves repeat them over and over, thereby reconstructing, reinventing, reformulating communicable language and making it their own. This ludic aspect of child play through imitation and sound-making is essential to learning, not only in order to construct their relationship to the world around them but also, as

Piaget or von Glasersfeld emphasized (Allford and Pachler 2007: 231), to create new things rather than repeat the work of others. Huizinga (1949) tells us, in his classic work *Homo Ludens* that play is a civilizing function. He is more interested in showing not the element of play in culture but rather the play of culture (Mandoki 2007: 90). Free instead of fixed, play is an interlude, a recreation, in the same way that laughter is both interlude and recreation, triggered by fresh, new perceptions.

As Françoise Bariaud (1989: 15) indicates, there are clear differences in the humor that children produce and appreciate at various stages between the ages of 2 to 11, and it is indeed a mode of communication more obvious for adults that are in direct contact with children, such as teachers, medical staff, social workers, parents, etc. She also maintains that by studying children's humor we can better understand the complexity associated with the humor found both in adolescence and adulthood. This is especially relevant for our study if we take into consideration that in the interviews conducted with informants from diverse cultures, and who spoke different languages, as I will present in chapter 5, there was a general agreement that, despite the fact that this type of humor was typical of children, adults in a relaxed setting, and often under the influence of alcohol were prone to produce it as well—by playing with sounds and combinations of sounds, making puns and other language games as if they were regressing into childhood.[48] The informants also commented that once one of the group members started telling a phonological joke, it was not difficult for the rest to remember other such jokes from their childhood. And since phonological jokes normally follow a pattern of question and answer, the informants explained, it was much easier for all of them to contribute to the conversation by using this pattern to make the humorous communication more effective, with all participants interacting in what seemed

[48] This attitude would correspond to how jokes are understood in Freudian terms. For Freud, "jokes [. . .] were a way to avoid the 'censor,' or the internalized social restrictions, thus enabling the expression (and enjoyment) of drives otherwise inhibited by society, [which] were mostly sex and aggression" (Kuipers 2008: 363).

like a long humorous narrative, since the vast majority of these jokes are normally displayed by uttering a short combination of sounds used as the punchline, which is interpreted as a funny or witty semantic association.

Regarding the social context, Oring (2008) makes reference to a study by Alf Walle (1976) on the dynamics of joking at a diner in upstate New York. He indicates that:

> each type of joke signaled a different degree of intimacy in the interaction between customer and waitress. Thus 'general humor' like elephant and Polish jokes were relatively impersonal and were used to establish friendly relations between customer and waitress. They indicated no more than a general friendliness. Were such jokes refused by the waitress, however, the possibility for greater intimacy was unlikely. (Oring 2008: 199)

Likewise, the informants in this study agreed that in the phonological jokes told by adults a 'degree of intimacy' is generally sought. When these informants were asked about the dynamics of the phonological jokes, they often said that they would wait for someone else from the group to tell an off-color phonological joke. This is in spite the fact that they acknowledged that they would often remember some jokes of this type before those on other topics, but were embarrassed to be the first to produce one on a topic related to sex, for instance. As a result, people in the group normally started with the most inoffensive jokes since the general perception was that this was children's humor. Once someone in the group broke this barrier of political correctness or lack of intimacy, they would all proceed to remember other off-color jokes. What is noteworthy is that, although this type of humor tends to be attributed to children, some of the topics of the jokes involved a greater degree of cultural knowledge and awareness, e.g., those jokes having to do with political or sexual subjects, which may well have been created or introduced into the language by

adults. Consequently, children may have incorporated some of these jokes into their repertoire after hearing them, for instance on TV, or from adults, and may have focused on the phonological aspect of the joke, i.e., imitating a language as is normally done when producing linguistic games, rather than on the topic itself or trying to understand why it would be funny. Besides, the fact that these jokes normally follow a simple pattern of question and answer would have made it easier for children to memorize the entire joke.

The question of delivery, or how the joke is told, is an important factor here, since "[it] is a way of speaking indicating that communication is to be examined and appraised for its form and style—that is, as art" (Oring 2008: 200). How the joke is performed is especially relevant for phonological jokes since it may condition the success or failure of its humorousness vis-à-vis an audience that expects a surprising and/or witty resolution to the joke. Indeed,

> 'Keying' is the framing of words and actions as performance. Performance may be keyed by special codes and formulas, paralinguistic features, appeals to tradition [. . .]. Jokes, for example, may be keyed by stereotypic actors and locales ("Guy goes into a bar"); a pervasive present tense ("Asks the bartender for a martini"); formulaic introductions ("Have you heard the one about..."); appeals to tradition ("Here's an old chestnut"). (Oring 2008: 200)

As mentioned, in phonological jokes, 'keying' is mostly created using formulaic introductions, which normally consist of an interrogative that follows one of these patterns: "What do you call X in Y?", "How do you say X in Y?" or "What is the name of X from country Z?" In so doing, the joke-teller seeks to surprise the audience by translating the sequence presented in the question, a task which in many cases seems almost impossible to accomplish because of the linguistic sequence *per se* or its meaning, or because of the language chosen. In reality,

however, the audience is aware that the word(s) the joke-teller purports to present as a translation are not genuine, and that the purpose of the question is to catch the audience's attention. In some cases, phonological jokes can also be found as part of a long humorous narrative or, for instance, in the form of proper nouns or sequences that appear to belong to a particular culture or relate to a specific language.

4.7.3. Individual Context

This category refers to how the individual develops a preference for a type of humor or joke based on his/her personal experience: "questions as to why certain jokes are adopted into the repertoires of particular individuals; why they change in content, shape and style [. . .]; why certain jokes become favorites; and certain performers tend to tell jokes that focus on a few particular themes" (Oring 2008: 201). During the interviews conducted for this study, as already mentioned, some informants thought that this type of humor was 'childish,' that such jokes would not be funny for adults. Because of this some informants did not want to make the effort to think about examples of phonological jokes, as they felt they would not constitute good examples. On the other hand, other informants were more willing to help and were able to easily come up with several examples, which they said they still told from time to time.

As regards the subject matter of phonological jokes, the focus on sound and on its form, rather than on a specific trend or specific topic, as for instance in the case of disaster jokes, makes it easier to find a vast number of jokes that can only be classified in general terms. For this reason, the topics around which the phonological joke originates can differ greatly. Notwithstanding, as illustrated through the classification provided, there are common trends that allow us to classify phonological jokes according to how they are constructed, or what specific elements are prevalent in their configuration, rather than based

on their subject matter. In any case, we find phonological jokes that attempt to surprise the listener with a witty combination of sounds, or even just one sound such as an onomatopoeia, as well as other jokes that are off-color, or about current affairs, politics, economics, etc. In most cases, it is the sound or combination of sounds that determines the subject matter, rather than the phonological sequence being created to suit a specific subject. As far as the gender of the joke-teller is concerned, it was not possible to determine whether this type of humor would be more susceptible to being performed by men or by women, since both types of informants were able to come up with good examples. However, as per the data gathered during the interviews, men were generally more prone to come up with off-color examples.

4.7.4. Comparative Context

This category "does not itself bear on the real-time situation of humor. Rather it refers to those traditions of humor that are equivalent, analogous, or otherwise interconnected to those under investigation" (Oring 2008: 202). One of the most notable examples of comparative contexts is the research carried out by Christie Davies (1990), whose books *Ethnic Humor around the World: A Comparative Analysis* and *The Mirth of Nations* (2002) have proved that there are common features as far as humor is concerned. These need to be compared in order to obtain a faithful picture of how humor is manifested in different cultures while responding to a similar pattern. To this end, "[Davies has] compared Polish jokes with jokes about "stupid" populations in [such diverse places as] Britain, France, the Netherlands, Turkey, Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Nigeria. Determining who got called "stupid" and by whom in these various countries proved critical to the formulation of his theory for these kinds of jokes" (Oring 2008: 202). Likewise, a comparative context of phonological jokes was crucial to understanding how they operate. This is precisely what we will see in the following chapter, where I carry out a multilingual comparison of

phonological jokes. We will see that the use of sound in parody form and the very nature of this type of joke, its structure, and use of sound to elicit laughter make it possible to compare the characteristics of jokes in different languages and cultural traditions.

Interestingly enough, in many languages there are examples of phonological jokes that try to imitate monosyllabic languages (Chinese or Japanese) or languages that are widely spoken (Arabic or Russian). When comparing jokes in different languages, it also appeared to be more difficult to obtain examples of off-color phonological jokes in certain languages depending on the origin of the informants. Even though they acknowledged that they knew some off-color examples, they tended to prefer to think of other examples of the same type of joke in order to avoid embarrassment, which could often be related to the particular culture to which the informants belonged. For them, the mere act of collecting this type of information was perceived as not being politically correct. Referring to ethnic humor, Christie Davies points out that:

> In general the jokes taken from different types of source do not differ systematically from one another in content. The only exceptions are those jokes which touch on a taboo subject, such as sexual behavior. There has always been a wealth of spoken jokes about sex, including ethnic ones, but censorship or other, more diffuse social pressures have ensured that many of these never get into print. These pressures are of different intensity, both between countries and within a given country or culture over time. (1990: 5)

The following and final chapter builds on the information provided thus far on phonological jokes, while broadening the scope of this study to incorporate other languages. Through the analysis of original jokes that have been collected in the process of my ethnographic research interviewing

informants in many different languages, I will attempt to demonstrate that the use of sound-based humor in phonological jokes is a widespread phenomenon existing in many unrelated languages and cultures around the world.

Chapter 5. Crossing Cultural Boundaries in the Analysis of Humor: Phonological Jokes as a Widespread Phenomenon

5.1. Introduction

This final chapter provides an overview of the extensive corpus of phonological jokes that I have collected by conducting interviews with informants or native speakers in direct contact with their respective cultures. As I gathered the data sample, it became clear to me that its size and breadth demonstrated the presence of this type of phonological humor in many unrelated languages and cultures around the world.

Accordingly, I give evidence of phonological jokes in a multitude of languages: Afrikaans, Basque, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Italian, Korean, Macedonian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Turkish. I also comment on several other languages where this type of humor is known to exist (Arabic, Chinese, Hausa, Japanese, Malagasy, Tagalog and Taiwanese), although it has not been possible to locate specific examples to date. Each joke is accompanied by its literal translation into English, the language that typically functioned as the language of communication between the researcher and the informant(s) when the data was collected. Each of the representative examples of phonological jokes is then analyzed in context and in light of linguistic and cultural information provided by the informants.

Cultural and phonological factors that would facilitate or hinder each joke's translation into English are discussed in the most representative examples and, where relevant, an attempt is made to find connections among jokes in different languages. All in all I show how, by enabling a review of theoretical points having to do with the translatability of humor, and more

specifically verbal humor, phonological jokes constitute an interesting example of a humorous text. Finally, the data is summarized in a contrastive chart of all the languages referred to in this study. What it demonstrates is that the imitation of foreign languages and the perception and representation of foreignness through phonological humor exist across a broad range of languages and cultures.

5.2. Data

Fascinated by what seems to be a widespread humorous practice regarding the semantic mechanism of using names or words that in parody form reproduce how a language sounds, or imitating sounds of other languages by using words and sounds from one's own language, I began collecting jokes in different languages through ethnographic research in order to investigate this phenomenon. During my research, I found that the kind of joke that is the subject of my present inquiry exists across multiple languages and cultures.

For this study, I have selected different examples in a variety of languages for the purpose of representing how phonological jokes operate in different languages and cultural contexts. A literal translation (LT) of each joke has been added to show its syntactical structure. I understand the term literal translation as similar to what Mona Baker calls back-translation, that is, a translation that "involves taking a text (original or translated) which is written in a language with which the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar and translating it as literally as possible [. . .] how literally depends on the point being illustrated, whether it is morphological, syntactic or lexical for instance. [. . .] A back-translation can give some insight into aspects of the structure, if not the meaning of the original" (2001b: 8). This information will help us to get a glimpse into the culture where the joke has originated, while providing important information on the many constraints that these sequences have as regards their translatability. Also, even though some of the themes in the jokes,

as well as their content, might be similar in the languages presented, the cultural information that is retrieved by the receptor varies from one language to another.

Unlike written literature, oral literature as well as verbal humor poses the challenge of not having immediate access to a given text. "Jokes do not spread internationally only through books; these contain solely a censored selection from the repertoire. Many jokes circulating internationally are not published anywhere [. . .] The wide international transmission of exactly the same jokes, at least prior to the existence of the Internet, must thus have been oral" (Kuipers 2006: 26-27).[49] Thus, the researcher needs to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in order to find oral texts by conducting interviews with appropriate informants who can provide data for the research. Hence, combining humor research and translation studies, I would like to present an in-depth analysis of this type of humor. To date, through interviews with native speakers in close contact with their respective cultures, I have collected as many as 1000 jokes of this type and have found evidence of such jokes in at least 37 different languages.

Some of them I will present below to illustrate the widespread nature of this verbal phenomenon. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these jokes are essentially formed by using words or phonemes of one's own language to imitate and parody the sounds of another language. While multilingual scholarship tends to be restricted to researchers who are proficient in a variety of languages, my research demonstrates that, in spite of this limitation, scholars are able to analyze linguistic and cultural phenomena, such as humor, in unfamiliar languages by taking advantage of the available resources. Needless to say, I do not speak all of the languages represented in my repertoire of phonological jokes. But in performing a cross-linguistic analysis in this study, I was able to ascertain the absence of a substantive difference in the structure of

[49] For an insightful historical study on censorship, see the article by Raquel Merino Álvarez (2009) on the TRACE project.

this type of joke across a wide sample of languages. And since I did most of my research in Philadelphia, New York City, London and Oxford, I had the benefit of accessing the linguistic diversity of these cities by relying on interviews with native speakers as my main source of material for analysis. Because humor can be challenging to discuss and explain, I found it was sometimes problematic to find speakers of a specific language willing and able to help with the project, so that I often needed to turn to other sources, such as the Internet, to find examples of jokes in languages unknown to me yet in the public domain.

5.3. Research Method

In this particular part of the study the process of gathering the data followed a series of steps:

Steps	Process
1	First, the researcher explained the background of the research to the potential informant.
2	Second, the researcher presented evidence of a phonological joke in a language of communication familiar to the interlocutor, e.g., English.
3	Third, the informant had to think of an example that would come to mind immediately after comprehending the type of text being asked for.
4	Fourth, if the informant knew of an example at that moment, the researcher asked the informant to write it down in order not to modify how the original text (spelling of imitated sounds) was understood.
5	Fifth, since the language of communication was usually English, the informant was asked to give a literal English translation of the text.
6	Sixth, the informant was asked to explain the grammatical function of the individual components of the text so that the researcher could understand how the linguistic elements operate in the text at the lexical and phonological levels.

7	Seventh, the informant was asked to give an explanation of what makes the joke humorous, where the punch line lies, and what contextual and cultural implications can be inferred from the text.

Characteristically, these oral texts given by informants are produced instantly and unexpectedly, such that the verbal quality of these jokes encapsulates a series of communicative and phonological strategies that in many cases restrict their translatability. After all, jokes rely on the speaker's spontaneity to trigger laughter in the listener. Thus when resorting to a native speaker for help, it is necessary to understand and explain what evokes humor, while retrieving as much cultural knowledge as possible in order to interpret the joke correctly. In other words, the researcher must investigate the aesthetics of the text, that is, the way in which various languages are able to express certain contexts. In this regard, Salvatore Attardo (1994) refers to the linguistic components of humor using "what anthropologists call 'emic', i.e., the native point of view on what is funny, playful, or artistic (this native point can be expressed meta-linguistically or by means of actions or reactions, such as laughter or applause)" (Sherzer 1996: 132).

As already mentioned, age considerations are also important in humor, and especially in verbal humor, since some types of humor do not apply to all age groups. For instance, the informants used in my research were between 14 and 40 years old. Older people were often more reluctant to produce jokes, especially off-color ones. As Kuipers notes, "age difference in appreciating humor is mainly a question of phase difference. Social-cultural changes are reflected in the norms, values and world-views of different age groups – and in their humor as well" (2006: 236). Additionally, since humor is not always comprehensible across generations, some informants in other age groups felt obliged to over-explain the extra-linguistic meaning of jokes they recalled, while others were not very informative. In this regard, as pointed out by Delabastita:

> certain generations or groups of readers are more responsive to [. . .] double readings and verbal associations with a semantic substance, and communicative value, and a form of intentionality they did not possess before, perhaps not even in the mind of the text's author or most immediate audience. Other generations or groups of readers may again be less alive to semantic plurality, if not downright hostile to it. (1996: 7)

5.4. Contrastive Analysis of Phonological Jokes

The main reasons for selecting a corpus composed of so many different languages have to do with the following:

1. In first instance because, as I have explained in chapters 3 and 4, humor is a phenomenon inherent to the human condition. Because of this universality, the study of humor begs for both and an interdisciplinary and a multicultural (multilingual) study in order to elaborate plausible ideas that can confirm the validity of the data analyzed. Given the complexity that is often associated with humor, it is appropriate, as in the case of this dissertation, to select a specific type of humor or pattern so that it can be easily studied and contrasted. Consequently, the more we are able to show how a type of humor functions in many different languages and cultures, the closer we can get to extracting valuable information that can shed light on the common parameters that exist in the production of humor from a global perspective.

2. The second main reason has to do with the fact that, as in the case of translation and humor studies, as pointed out in chapters 1 and 2, there has been a tendency by scholars to elaborate theories from a more Eurocentric perspective, in which data was mostly collected and contrasted for European languages, rather than taking into consideration very different cultural

traditions and languages, e.g., languages with tonal patterns. Probably because of the difficulty in collecting data, this concentration on European languages has also occurred with humor studies, where the diversity of humor from a global perspective has been studied mostly in the field of ethnic humor. However, phonological humor has not been studied in depth, which is why I am presenting here a rich sampling of the use of sound within a humorous context in various different languages and cultural traditions. The analysis of humorous texts, such as phonological jokes, can shed light on how humor operates across different languages and cultures from a global perspective. Hence these jokes constitute an heuristic tool to help us better understand the interrelationship between sound and meaning within a humorous context, while examining verbal humor in its natural context, and by surveying the range of cultural linguistic factors present in the jokes. For this reason a minimum of cultural context information has been added to interpret and comprehend each joke.

The following are some representative phonological jokes in Afrikaans, Basque, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Italian, Korean, Macedonian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Turkish.

5.4.1. Afrikaans

(1) Wat is die naam van die Japannese minister van bevolkingsbeheer?
Zip i kuki tu (Zip die koekie toe)
L. T.: What's the name of the Japanese minister of population control?
Zip the female private part

This joke surprises the listener by asking the name of the Japanese minister of "birth control," certainly a difficult question. In the first part of the joke the form that has been used literally translates as "population control." If such a minister existed, it would probably not be in a country such as Japan where the birth rate is in fact very low. However it does sound culturally appropriate for a minister to have such a job in a place like South Africa, a country where unlike Japan the birth rate is much higher. To make the punch line of the joke more effective in parodying what could be perceived as Japanese sounds by Afrikaans speakers, some of these sounds have been condensed or assimilated in the answer.

Thus the sequence used in the answer of the question is constructed with the colloquial verb borrowed from English, "Zip," the article "die," the noun "koekie" in its diminutive form, and the particle "toe" from the verb "Toezip." Consequently, the phrase "Zip die koekie toe," which would constitute the correct grammatical form for the whole sentence, has been shortened to "Zip i kuki tu." This not only facilitates the joke-teller's pronunciation of the words to make them sound more Japanese, it also contributes to making it more humorous. The combination of sounds used in the answer, especially the combination of the consonants such as "t" and "k," and the confluence of vowels such as "u" and "i" in the two-syllable word "kuki," may remind speakers of Afrikaans of the Japanese food "sushi," thereby facilitating the phonological association with this culture.

The humor in this joke arises from imagining this funny name for a minister of birth control whose name would read, "Keep the female private part zipped or locked," or what is the same, "if the female part is closed there will be no sexual intercourse." What is interesting is that the creation of this joke, besides the evident play on sounds, may have been motivated by the socially rooted fact that South Africa has been one of the countries most affected by the AIDS epidemic, and there have been numerous campaigns there to create awareness among the population. In this regard, this joke might perhaps serve

to mitigate the distress this social problem is causing among the South African population by presenting a related scenario in a comical way, especially since humor has been known to work peripherally by helping to change attitudes (Earleywine 2011: 121).

(2) Wat is die naam van die Engels minister van bevolkingsbeheer?
Mr. Sta Soft
L. T.: What's the name of the English minister of population control?
Mr. Stay Soft

This interesting example follows a very similar pattern as far as the main topic of the joke is concerned. As suggested above, this may again be due to the importance of AIDS awareness in South African society. Accordingly, a phonological joke around the same theme was created also to refer to the name of "the minister of population control," although in this case it is the English nationality of such a minister that is being asked in the question. Also, even though the same topic is presented, here the joke makes reference to male genitalia. But likewise, the joke sounds like a recommendation to follow, such as one that a "minister of birth control" might give to people, and which coincides with the alleged name of such a minister, "Sta Soft," (stay soft), or what is the same, "the lack of erection" clearly opposite to "stay hard," i.e., if there is no erection no sexual intercourse can be performed. We can see that the phonological component in this joke imitates English sounds by combining two words that can be easily recognizable as English by speakers of Afrikaans given the influence of the mass media, but above all because of the historical influence of this language in South Africa. Since the words in this joke sound genuinely English, as can be seen in the literal translation, they can be easily understood if actually translated into English. Nonetheless, the cultural references mentioned in the question would need to be substituted, while culturally the joke would

also not be as meaningful in English as it is for speakers of Afrikaans because of its particular relevance in South African society.

5.4.2. Basque

(3) Nola esaten da 'amona marisko intoxikazioz hil' da arabez?
Amona ganba janda junda
L. T.: How do you say 'grandma died from shellfish poisoning' in Arabic?
Grandma ate shrimp and died (is gone)

Even in the Basque language, whose origins are uncertain, it is possible to find this type of humor. What is interesting about this particular example is that it illustrates how in phonological jokes, besides using one or a few words in the question or answer part of the joke, it is possible to represent the imitated language by using a long sentence. Since the answer in this particular joke is longer than in many other jokes, its effect is to surprise the listener and thus make the whole situation even more humorous. It would certainly be more difficult to provide an immediate translation for such a long sequence of how to say "grandma died from shellfish poisoning" into Arabic. However, because of the repeated use of the easily identifiable velar fricative sound "j," as for instance the Arabic voiceless velar fricative [x] similar to the English or Scottish sound in the word 'loch' [lɔx], in the sequence "Amona ganba janda junda," it is easy for Basque speakers to associate this sentence with Arabic as the language parodied in the joke. In this regard, there is also another interesting change here behind the creation of this joke that has to do with the Gipuzkoan dialect of Basque, spoken in the province of Gipuzkoa and also in a small part of northern Navarre. It is the use of the word "junda," correctly used in Basque as "jun da," which means "gone away in the sense of to die," and which is preferred here instead of what would be the standardized form of Basque, or Euskara Batua, as

stan "joan da," whose pronunciation would have been different and probably not as successful in triggering laughter. In fact, unlike other Basque dialects, the Gipuzkoan dialect is characterized, for instance, by the pronunciation of grapheme 'j' which tends to vary in the different Basque dialects, and which in Gipuzkoan is generally pronounced [x], e.g., as in the verb "jun" (to go) whose pronunciation is [xun], different from the most common form in Euskara Batua "joan" [joan]. These changes show how humor can be crafted in such a way as to optimize the result so that a humorous narrative is presented in as funny a manner as possible.

Because of the influence of Spanish in the Basque language, and also because they are languages that are constantly in contact with each other, the example above can be adapted to produce a very similar joke in Spanish.[50] Interestingly, however, whereas in the Basque joke the language parodied is Arabic, in the Spanish one the phonological combination of sounds in the punch line reminds the listener of an African language such as Swahili:

> ¿Cómo se dice en swahili 'la abuela ha muerto por una intoxicación de marisco'?
> Gamba Chunga Yaya Tumba.
> L. T.: Bad shrimp grandma grave

(4) Nola esaten da japonieraz 'nekatuta nago'?
Nekatu Tanago
L. T.: How do you say 'I am tired' in Japanese?
I am tired

[50] This can be seen in the following examples in which the punch line, except for some spelling changes, is the same in both Basque and Spanish: "Nor da Arabiako 'lan-ministroa'? Ali Kate" / "¿Quién es el ministro de trabajo de Arabia Saudí? Alicate" (Who is the minister of work in Saudi Arabia? Pliers); "Nola esaten da txineraz 'abarka'? Txankleta" / "¿Cómo se dice 'abarka' en chino? Chancleta" (How do you say 'abarka' in Chinese? Slipper). 'Abarka' is a typical Basque shoe.

In this example the joke-teller seeks to surprise the listener by posing what initially seems to be a difficult question, how to say "I am tired" in Japanese. The interesting thing about it is that the answer is almost identical to the information been mentioned in the question. While in the questions the sequence needs to be separated in Basque as "nekatuta nago," in the answer the sequence has been modified or divided as "Nekatu Tanago" to make it sound more Japanese. One of the reasons behind this specific combination of sounds may be due to the popularization in the late 1990s of an electronic toy for children, called "Tamagotchi," of which 400 million were sold worldwide (Steinberg et al. 2006: 175). The name for this toy was a portmanteau word which is a blend of two or more morphemes or words into a newly created term. Consequently, the name "Tamagotchi" was a mixture of the Japanese words "tamago" (egg), as this is the shape of the toy, and the adaptation of the English word "watch" into Japanese, "uocchi," an electronic toy functioning as a watch to tell the time. "A user raises a virtual creature on the pocket machine with a small display, which would hatch from an egg and start growing, depending on the way it is taken care of. The main interaction a user would take is as follows: feed, clean the toilet, play with or ignore, praise or scold, let it go to sleep or wake up, and give medicine when it's sick" (Steinberg et al. 2006: 176).

The popularity of the name of this electronic toy, besides the combination of certain consonants such as "n", "k", and "t," might be one of the reasons that may have led to the creation of the joke. The way of performing the joke would also be of importance here, as it can effectively contribute to making the resemblance to the language imitated in the answer part of the joke more successful for the creation of humor. To achieve this, a change in the stressing of the words or in intonation may be a useful device to achieve this purpose.

(5) Nola esaten da arabieraz 'hamaiketakoa'?
Hemen salda ba al da?
L. T.: How do you say 'hamaiketakoa' in Arabic?
Is there soup here?

This example uses a question in the first part of the joke as well as in the answer. The confluence of certain letters and sounds such as "h," "n," "l," and "al" makes it sound Arabic to Basque speakers. This joke would be very difficult to translate or adapt into another language as it asks for the meaning of a typical Basque tradition, "hamaiketako," which literally means "that of eleven." This consists of a slight meal some hours before lunch, usually around 11 or 12 o'clock. As a culturally bound term, it would be difficult to find an equivalent, and speakers of Spanish who live in the Basque Country do normally use this word in Basque rather than one in Spanish. Besides, there is a traditional soup that is normally served during the "hamaiketako." It can be found in many restaurants and some bars, and one usually finds a sign outside places where they serve this soup which it says "salda badago" (there is soup). A fact that may also have contributed to making this idea more meaningful is a famous rock song in Basque with the same name, and which may have also reinforced the phonological combination of the joke. The punch line in the joke has been designed so that "salda badago" is transformed into "salda ba al da," to make it more representative of how the Arabic language could sound. Humor arises by establishing an association between the time when this typical soup is consumed and the name of the soup, which may sound Arabic depending on how it is pronounced.

5.4.3. Bosnian

(6) Kako se na japanskom kaze 'Neko mi je ukrao odjelo'?
Neko mako sako

L. T.: How do you say 'Someone stole my suit' in Japanese?
Someone nick suit

Instead of asking the listener how to give an answer consisting of a proper noun, a single item, or an object in a foreign language, this joke tries to translate a complete sentence: "Someone stole my suit." As we have seen in other examples above, in this type of humor it is also possible to use a whole sentence to imitate a particular language. The answer given in Bosnian with "Neko mako sako," has been modified accordingly so that the words and their repertoire of sounds—in which the sound "k" predominates—, represent Japanese sounds for Bosnian speakers. With this purpose in mind, the verb form "mak'o" or "makao," which normally carries the meaning of "moved" has been used with the colloquial meaning of "stolen." Therefore the answer to the joke, "Neko mako sako" can be translated as "Someone nick suit," which is almost a retranslation of the information presented in the question, "Neko mi je ukrao odjelo" (Someone stole my suit) but with the appropriate modifications to make it sound Japanese. Here, the joke—unlike other examples illustrated—does not primarily depend on a cultural script for its configuration, i.e., Japanese people are not known to be thieves or suit robbers. What the joke does try to do is provide the equivalent information of the question in the punch line, thereby making the phonological component its main vehicle for creating humor.

Interestingly, an English translation of this joke can be achieved. The lack of a clear cultural barrier, i.e., cultural and humorous assumptions that would be restricted to Bosnian society, may facilitate this task. However, the phonological difficulty of evoking the same Japanese sounds, i.e., with a quasi-similar phonological structure, would still persist. In this particular example, the phonological challenge that arises in finding a similar effect in translation can be overcome by looking for a way, for instance, to maintain the monosyllabic feature of many of these jokes that imitate Asian languages, like

Chinese or Japanese. To achieve this, the spelling of some of the words in the English translation of the joke could be changed to facilitate the reading of the sequence as the language portrayed in the question. Thus, a resemblance to the Chinese language and its translation into English could be accomplished by dividing the first word into two separate syllables, "sum-one," an aspect that could be reinforced by the use of sounds that may remind English speakers of Chinese "dim sum," or "a kind of meal consisting of snacks ordered and served one by one" (Benson 2002: 163), that has been incorporated into English through the different varieties of English spoken in Asia.[51] Similarly, the second syllable of the English word "sum-one" also seems to suggest a resemblance to Chinese food, for instance, the famous "wonton" soup, which has been illustrated in an English joke in the previous chapter. In this regard it is interesting to observe how we are gradually becoming more exposed to new foreign words which we incorporate into our own repertoire, "English has borrowed or adapted relatively few words from the languages of China. [. . .] Most familiar are those adapted from the culinary sphere, to refer to dishes initially brought by Chinese immigrants, mainly from Canton, and hence from Cantonese: *chop suey*, *bok choy*, *dim sum*, *wonton*" (Dunton-Downer and Goodfellow 2010). These names of foods are only an example of some of the possibilities which could help the listener perceive a phonological similarity between English and Chinese.

To translate the rest of the sentence, the colloquial form "nick," which happens to be monosyllabic, could be used with the meaning of "to steal," to help the reader put emphasis on the monosyllabic feature of the joke in such a way that "Someone stole my suit" becomes "Sum one nick suit," to mean the

[51] Cantonese speakers prefer to use the words "yam cha" to refer to this type of food. However, it is the name "dim sum" that has popularized abroad (Benson 2002: 163).

same as the phrase: "Someone stole my suit."[52] Having explained the whole process, here is the original joke in Bosnian rendered for English speakers:

Translation: How do you say 'Someone stole my suit' in Chinese?
Sum one nick suit (Someone nick suit)

(7) Znas li kako se na kineskom kaze Crnogorac?
Li Jen Çi Na
L. T.: Do you know how to say a Montenegrin in Chinese?
Lazy Bones

Unlike the previous example, besides the phonological component present in the joke, here there is also a cultural aspect that would also need to be considered in translating the joke into English. This could be done from a linguistic point of view, as interestingly, even by maintaining the same language as in the original Bosnian version of the joke, in Chinese the word "Lazy" in English happens to have two syllables that are easy to divide into two different monosyllabic sounds, "La-zy." And there are also many Chinese words that start with the letter "l," like the Chinese last name "Li." In any case, the English joke-teller would have to perform the joke by imitating the monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language, i.e., "La-Zy," and using the intonation to reinforce this idea.

Notwithstanding, from a semantic point of view, it would not be at all meaningful for an English speaker to make reference to someone from Montenegro so that the cultural reference mentioned in the joke would be lost in translation, unless substituted by a culture whose stereotype of "being lazy" could work as equivalent. As Christie Davies has demonstrated in his exhaustive comparative studies on ethnic humor across different cultures (1990;

[52] The use of "one" also in a phonological joke about Chinese has appeared in the example that has been used when analyzing the overall structure of this type of joke: What do you call an overweight person in Chinese? Wei Wan Tan (Weigh One Ton).

2002), in almost any given culture there is usually a community that tends to be the butt of jokes. In this particular example, although the Bosnian joke attempts to establish a play on sounds in the configuration of humor, there is a clear ethnic script available for this purpose. As a result, in order to translate this joke into English adequately, an equivalent culture about "people who are lazy or do not like to work" meaningful to English speakers would need to be found in order to establish a complete semantic link between the question and the punch line. For a British audience as the target of the joke, this could be achieved by using a reference to the PIIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) which was a label created in 2008 to identify the five laggards among the different countries of the Eurozone (Chorafas 2010: 213). Here is a possible translation of this joke into English:

Translation: How do you say 'Italian' in Chinese?
La Zy

5.4.4. Bulgarian

(8) Как е на чешки 'газирана вода'?
Напурдена водичка
Translit. Kak e na cheshki gazirana vodá?
Napúrdena vodíchka
L. T.: How do you say 'sparkling water' in Czech?
Water released with wind (farted water)

Using the idea of how to translate the words "sparkling water" into Czech, this joke creates humor by establishing a play on sounds that attempts to imitate the Czech language for the ears of Bulgarian speakers. Unlike other examples where there is a coincidence between phonemes that sounds characteristic of another language, here the ending "дичка" (díchka) has been

deliberately used so that the answer of the joke sounds like nouns that end with similarly in Czech. As will be explained below, during the analysis of jokes in Czech in some communities of speakers that are geographically close, there seems to be one or several phonological features that tend to be perceived as characteristic of a specific culture. In the case of Czech, this corresponds to the ending of many words which sound like the diminutive of a word. Interestingly, such a phonological strategy to imitate Czech seems also to have been followed in this joke in Bulgarian by using the word "vodíchka." As will be illustrated, for Polish speakers one phonological feature of the Czech language, which would be identified as easily characteristic by Polish speakers, can be found in many Czech words which resemble actual diminutive suffixes in Polish.

Besides the phonological component of the joke, the idea of describing sparking water as "water released with wind," or the scatological reference that can also be inferred here that likens sparkling water to "fart" in the punch line, is self-explanatory. It is interesting to note that as this type of humor is often produced by children, in many of these jokes we will find scatological references that tend to be in jokes actually told by children, as opposed to those told by adults, and which normally deal with off-color humor or themes that are more abstract. As pointed out before, the mnemonic nature of many of these jokes, their simple format of question and answer, and an almost fixed structure in the question is what enables children to remember them easily, by concentrating on the entertaining feature of their distinctive phonological nature rather on their actual meaning.

5.4.5. Catalan

(9) Com es diu sord en anglès?
Just d'o-it
L. T.: How do you say deaf in English?

Hard of hearing

This joke is a good example of how words or phrases from elements of popular culture can be used to create humorous messages. Many of the linguistic sequences present in this type of joke belong to the collective memory, having spread through the mass media or, as in this case, become popularized through advertising. The famous phrase in question here corresponds to "Just do it," a well-known slogan used in advertising by the Nike sports company in the early 1990s. Dunton-Downer and Goodfellow (2010) provide a good example of how some words or phrases can be popularized in other languages in an indirect way. Such was the case, as they explain, with the nowadays widely used word "guru," which

> in the late 1960s, thanks largely to the Beatles' appearances with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a large number of English speakers were introduced to the Hindi term guru. While one could simply have called this person a 'teacher' or 'spiritual guide,' guru nonetheless gained currency in English to capture the then highly distinctive concept of a Hindu master of disciples' spiritual pursuits. Guru later won appeal as a word for all manner of valued individuals [. . .], one can see how quickly a foreign word can be retreaded once it circulated in one nation's English and becomes a specimen of America's not-that-spiritual culture. (2010) (no pagination).

As often happens with the humorous appropriation of phrases having a collective semantic value, they are adapted or given new meaning as part of the new messages to which they belong. Here, instead of looking for a specific combination of sounds to imitate English, the joke has been created around the famous English phrase or slogan, "Just do it," very similar to the Catalan expression ("Anar just d'oïda"). For this reason the expression is cleverly used

in Catalan in answer to how to say "sord" (deaf) in English, as "just d'oïda" which means "hard of hearing" and can be used in Catalan to describe a person who is either deaf or does not have a good ear. Also, in this particular case the imitation of the language is done not merely phonologically in the sense that, as in many other jokes, the selected sounds that elicit laughter simply sound like a language, and have no other intention than to amuse the listener with the parody or imitation.

On the contrary, the Catalan words here sound similar to the English slogan but with no explicit intention to imitate this language. In this sense, the way in which the sequence "Just d'oit" has been used in Catalan in this joke is closer to punning than to the use of sounds meant to imitate the language, as is sometimes the case of many jokes of this type. Besides, it is also noteworthy that, despite the fact that Catalan is a Romance language and many of the jokes can easily be adapted or translated into Spanish, some of them at the linguistic and cultural levels, it would be difficult to achieve the same phonological effect in Spanish because the equivalent sequence in Spanish, "Justo de oído," would obviously break the similarity with the English slogan that takes place in the Catalan language.[53]

(10) Com es diu porter de discoteca en grec?
Niuscoleu Niuscolareus
L. T.: What do you call the doorman of a discotheque in Greek?
You don't sneak in and you won't

[53] Here are some examples of jokes in Catalan that can be translated into Spanish both culturally and phonologically. The only differences between the two languages lies in the fact that some changes in the spelling of words have been made to facilitate the respective pronunciation of the two languages: "Com es diu metge en japonès? Botikín" / "¿Cómo se dice médico en japonés? Botiquín" (How do you say 'doctor' in Japanese? First aid kit; "Com t'acomiades a d'una dona en xinès? Xao Xoxin" / "¿Cómo te despides de una mujer en chino? Chao Chochín" (How do you say goodbye to a woman in Chinese? Goodbye little pussy). However, it is interesting here that the terms "chochín" and "botiquín" are actually word loans from Spanish.

The use of a proper noun is also a common resource in jokes of this type, since names may function as reminders of specific languages or cultural traditions. This is also connected to how the mass media contributes to relating some of these nouns to certain cultures—as we are constantly exposed to names of people, ranging from celebrities to political figures—and to how we store these sounds in our short-and long-term memory to give them specific meanings. For instance, a good example is how difficult it still is to find children in Germany with the name 'Adolf,' for obvious reasons, since this name which is merely a combination of sounds and is used in other countries, still holds tragic memories related to European history.

However, a proper noun can also be perceived as funny or amusing, and it is often a linguistic device used by many writers who strive to create appealing names or specific combination of complete names, first name and last name, that are meaningful as part of the technique they use in their novels. Likewise, the representation of the foreign language through what appears to be a name, but with a humorous hidden message, is presented in this joke as an imitation of the Greek language. Indeed, the name "Nicoleu Niuscolareus" far from being an authentic Greek name literally means, "You don't sneak in and you won't" ("Ni us coleu ni us colareu"). To make this supposed name sound Greek a confluence of sounds, like the sound "s," is used in the supposed last name, "Niuscolareus," to identify the profession of "a doorman of a discotheque" in Greek. Indeed, many Greek last names end in "eu" or in "s," such as Papandreu or Papadopoulos, which seems a plausible imitation of this language for the purpose of the joke. Also, the idea of a doorman who takes his job very seriously, given that his name already contains a warning that nobody will be able to enter a place, is what semantically helps create the humorous narrative here.

(11) Com es diu WC en swahili?
Akumula Kaka

L. T.: How do you say WC in Swahili?

It accumulates poo

In this joke, to imitate how an African language would sound to Catalan speakers—in this case represented by Swahili as one possible African language—the joke makes use of the repeated consonant "k," and the vowels "a" and "u." Besides eliciting laughter through the evident scatological reference, as well as the deliberately chosen combination of sounds and modified spelling to facilitate the reading of the sequence, "Akumula Kaka" ("Acumula caca"), this humorous script is created by associating a WC as a place full of "kaka," correctly spelled "caca," which is the word used by children to refer to 'excrement.' This association is actually an inherent characteristic of such a place, and the scatological word used in the answer part is a term many children would use and that is common or at least easily recognizable in many languages. Because of the topic chosen, it is a joke that is probably typical of children, and since it is inoffensive in its configuration and its main intention is to surprise and entertain the listener, its sounds can remind a Catalan speaker of an African language. Both from a thematic point of view and also related to how sound is manipulated by children, this is related, for instance, to what Bariaud points out when talking about linguistic humor in children, since "certain forms of ritualized language games accessible to young children make use of the manipulation of sounds such as nursery rhymes or strings of nonsense words and rhyming games. [. . .] Tongue twisters are a more mature version of these first word sound games, but the procedure here is placed into a more complex structure since it adds the pleasure of getting another person to fall into the trap of mispronunciation [. . .] 'I slit a sheet, a sheet I slit, upon the slitted sheet I sit'" (1989: 31-33)

5.4.6. Czech

(12) Vite jak se řekne polsky tchyně?
Baba nepotrzebna
L. T.: How do you say mother-in-law in Polish?
Unnecessary old woman

This joke reproduces how the Polish language would sound to a Czech native speaker. Since both languages belong to the western branch of Slavic languages there are many similarities between them, such as syntax, morphology and even phonetics. Many Polish speakers would say that the Czech language sounds to them like the speech of little children, since many word endings resemble Polish diminutives. However there might be also historical reasons for this semantic association which illustrate how both countries have had a history in common. According to Mazierska (2010), the importance of the use of the diminutive to talk about the Czechs dates back to the 19th century:

> when a large number of Czechs moved to Galicia, the part of Poland that was taken by Austro-Hungary in the partitions. Many of them were clerks, tax collectors and policemen [. . .]. Although their role can be regarded as positive, they were deeply disliked by the Polish noblemen who were hostile to any form of bureaucracy [. . .]. Symbolic of this attitude were the numerous nicknames given to Czech such as 'bohmaki,' 'wencliczki' and most commonly used, even till now, 'pepiczki.' These terms, referring to the food with which Czechs were associated and to some common Czech names, are not particularly derogatory, as none of them refers to any real vice of Czechs, but they are all

> diminutive, suggesting that Poles regard their neighbours as 'small people.' (Mazierska 2010: 20-21)

Besides the different historical reasons that may be relevant to the phonological perception of the Czech language for Polish speakers on the use of the diminutive, it is clear that the fact that many Czech words have endings that sound similar to how the diminutive would be used in Polish helps to reinforce this phonological assumption, making it easy as a phonological strategy to follow to create humor. Likewise, Czechs also possess a general phonological perception with which they would identify the Polish language, as many Czechs would state that the Polish language is full of consonant clusters, such as the consonants "rz" used in the joke above that, according to what many Czechs would state, makes many Polish words unpronounceable, especially in those cases when consonants that are combined produce sibilant sounds. If this were to be used in a joke as a phonological strategy to elicit laughter, it would make Czechs laugh due to the sequence that reproduces Polish sounds and it would be easy for them to establish a semantic association. However, in the joke above there also social implications present which make the joke doubly humorous. In the Czech Republic there are many stereotypes about mothers-in-law,—a common cultural feature found in most Western civilizations—especially about a mother-in-law as an overprotective member of the family.[54] In this sense, the punch line in the joke is based on the idea that having a mother-in-law is not only unnecessary but also a burden that one is saddled with. As evidenced by the literal translation, this joke could not be translated effectively into English.

(13) Vite jak se řekne japonsky Bill Clinton?
Seme No Nasaku

[54] A good example of the figure of the mother-in-law in contemporary Czech society can be seen in the Czech film *Nuda v Brne* (2003) directed by Vladimír Morávek.

L. T.: How do you say Bill Clinton in Japanese?

Sperm on a jacket

What makes a Czech person laugh in this joke is that the answer part of it sounds like Japanese. Depending on how you pronounce the sequence, the listener may even think that the answer consists of a genuine Japanese sentence, rather than just some Czech words whose combination sounds Japanese. The joke clearly refers to the Monica Lewinsky scandal that hit the media in 1998. The story revealed that Bill Clinton while being president of the United States reportedly had an affair with the 24-year-old White House intern. The proof of Bill Clinton's guilt was a trace of semen that was found on one of Monica's dresses. Consequently, the joke uses this anecdote to attempt to translate Bill Clinton's name into Japanese, which at a first glance may seem a little odd, by simply using the words that mean "sperm on a jacket." In this context, it is important to point out that those who are not familiar with the Lewinsky affair, even Czech speakers, will not be able to retrieve all the information so as to fully understand the joke. This type of humor has a limited social life, since it is inevitably linked to the cultural elements present at a time that led to the creation of the joke and is part of the joke cycle which constitutes "a single phenomenon to be conceptualized, analyzed, and interpreted as a whole. They appear to be the unified expression of a culture responding to the exigencies of time and circumstance" (Oring 2003: 129). On the other hand, although it might be easy for a foreign listener to at least retrieve the cultural information contained in the joke because of the repercussion that this news item had in the global media, it might be difficult to achieve a similar effect in another language.

(14) Jak se řekne slovensky veverka?

Drevokocur

L. T.: What do you call a squirrel in Slovak?

Woodcat

This joke functions as a parody of Slovak society and customs by imitating the Slovak language. There is a historical background to this joke. On January 1st, 1993, the Czechoslovak federation was dissolved into two distinct countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia—a fact that intensified the differences between the two nations that originally led to their separation. There are not many morphological or syntactical differences between the Czech and the Slovak languages. However, both languages have found a way to differentiate[55] themselves from each other. In this particular joke the punch line becomes apparent in the pronunciation of the words *drevo* (wood) and *kocur* (cat), combined into one, *Drevokocur*. What is funny about this joke is that it presents the Slovak word for "squirrel" to mean "a kind of cat that is on a tree," emphasizing the idea that new words have been created in Slovak for the express purpose of sounding different from Czech, giving it thus a nonsensical quality. As Elliott Oring indicates regarding stupidity jokes, "in a broad comparative study of those ethnic jokes that ascribed stupidity to one or another ethnic group, Christie Davies (1990) showed that such jokes were not told about groups that were adversaries but about groups that were peripheral to the mainstream: geographically peripheral provincials, cultural peripheral ethnics, or economically peripheral proletarians" (2008: 194).

5.4.7. Danish

(15) Hvad hedder Frankrigs mest forfulgte person?
Lamine Revère!
L. T.: What's the name of France's most followed person?
Leave my ass alone!

[55] This is also applicable to the jokes that can be found in Serbian and Macedonian about the New Croatian language, since all these languages coexisted for many years within the same borders.

The punch line here comes from the unexpected and difficult to translate answer that turns out to be, both phonologically and semantically, a command establishing a connection between the verb "to follow" and a part of the human anatomy appearing in many idiomatic expressions. The two words, *Lamine Revère*, give the impression of being a French name all the while that their pronunciation corresponds to four words in Danish. This effect is achieved by combining the authentic Danish sequence *lad min røv være*, and changing the way it is written in Danish in order to create a more accurate imitation of French. In the phrase *lad…være*, meaning "to leave something alone," the possessive pronoun *min* stands for "my" and the noun *røv* for "ass." All these words answer the question about the name of the most followed person in France. A native speaker of Danish reading the words *Lamine Revère* would probably not be able to relate them to his/her language. However, once these words are pronounced with a French accent, they actually say something naughty and amusing. As is often the case with jokes: "when perceived auditively the punch line is easier to catch" (Lendvai 1996: 92). This is certainly true here.

(16) Hvad hedder Limfjorden på Norsk?
Klisterkanalen
L. T.: How do you say "Limfjorden" (the Glue-fjord) in Norwegian?
The Sticky Canal

Limfjorden is the name of a fjord called *Jylland* in Danish or *Jütland* in German that exists both in continental Denmark and in the North-Schleswig-Holstein state of Germany. The humorous effect in this joke is formed by the juxtaposition of the words *klister* (glue), a synonym of the word *Lim*, which also means "glue," and *fjorden*, which means "fjord," a synonym of *Kanalen* "canal."

The sounds in the answer, especially the ending *–en*, resemble the sound of many Norwegian words. There is an implicit idea in this joke that humor tends to originate among neighboring nations for the purpose of underscoring the differences between and among them. This is typical of Scandinavian countries in which there are many cultural stereotypes that distinguish one culture from another. As Gundelach points out, "these stereotypes form one basis for the construction of national identity. But stereotypes are shared cultural descriptions of social groups, and jokes are one of the narrative forms that the Scandinavians use among themselves when they describe what is typically Danish, Norwegian or Swedish" (2000: 113).

(17) Hvad hedder 'Dødens Gab' på Norsk?
Kæmpe torsken
L. T.: How do you say *Jaws* in Norwegian?
The Giant Codfish

This type of joke once again exploits the linguistic similarities between Danish and Norwegian to create its punch line. As Gundelach puts it:

> Other Danish jokes about the Norwegians play with the language similarity between the two nations. One type of joke shows how Norwegian language uses primitive, or old-fashioned, expressions for modern phenomena. For instance, in Norwegian, a skyscraper is said to be called '*hytta-på-hytta*' (cottage upon cottage), and the Norwegian name for James Bond is '*Fjell-Åke*' (Åke from the mountains). These examples show how Danish jokes perceive Norway as a provincial nation. (2000: 117)

Following the same line of thought, in example (7) the joke-teller presents a title of a film to challenge the listener's imagination. The speaker asks

about the translation into Norwegian of the horror film *Jaws* (1975), directed by Steven Spielberg. In the answer, the humor emanates from the fact that the title of the film in Norwegian is derived by transforming "a shark" into "a codfish," which substitutes an exotic and dangerous predator for a harmless edible fish. The idea of making fun of the stupidity of using such a name in Norwegian for a horror film is reinforced by imitating the sounds of the Norwegian language, since "la coexistence de différentes practiques linguistiques à l'intérieur d'une langue ainsi que l'intéraction entre différentes langues est le fait de toutes les sociétés" (Lambert 1989: 219) (the coexistence of different linguistic practices within a language and the interaction between different languages is a fact in all societies) (My translation).

5.4.8. Dutch

(18) Wat is het Japans voor schoonmoeder?
Tang
L. T.: What do you call a mother-in-law in Japanese?
A shrew

As in examples in Czech (12), Greek (33), and Spanish (67), this joke in Dutch presents a question about a word in Japanese that serves as a translation for the word "mother-in-law." The answer to the question is the monosyllabic word *tang* which in Dutch means "shrew," or what is the same, "a woman with a violent, scolding, or nagging temperament." As I have discussed previously, this family member is very often the topic of jokes. The humorous effect here is created precisely by the stereotype of the mother-in-law, as well as by making the one-syllable answer sound like Japanese. The word *Tang* also corresponds phonetically to the name of the Tang dynasty which ruled China from 618 AD to 907 AD, thus reinforcing the oriental connotation for those speakers who are familiar with this information.

(19) Wat is het Japans voor schoonvader?
Bangvantang
L. T.: What do you call a father-in-law in Japanese?
Scared of a shrew

This example is related to the previous one, since the question is about the word in Japanese for "father-in-law." Humor in the joke arises either because the previous joke has been mentioned to a listener, or because of the true meaning of the sequence *bangvantang*, which is formed with the adjective *bang* "scared," the preposition *van* "of," and the noun *tang* "shrew." To explain why this joke is funny for a Dutch speaker, we have to think that people in general might be scared of mothers-in-law because of all the connotations and stereotypes having to do with these women. Thus a man who lives with one would be constantly "scared of a shrew." The presence of the voiced velar stop [g], the voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t], and the central open vowel [a], contribute to the sonorous, Japanese effect of the expression which is not maintained in translation.

5.4.9. English

(20) How do you say 'I stepped in excrement' in Chinese?
Dung On Mai Shu
(Dung on my shoe)

Despite their appearance of genuine Chinese, these sounds only have meaning in the language of the joke, in this case, English. The joke produces humor in the listener primarily because of its effectiveness in providing the Chinese "translation" for the expression "I stepped in excrement." In addition, the explicit scatological meaning contributes to the humorous effect of the answer. This is achieved by using the word "dung," which refers to the

excrements of animals. Part of the sentence has also been modified to better represent the language parodied. "My" has been modified to *Mai* and "Shoe" to *Shu* to create a visual effect and also to favor the pronunciation. The Anglophone listener readily recognizes that the expression *Dung On Mai Shu* is a parody of the monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language but corresponds phonologically to the English words "Dung on my shoe."

(21) How do you say 'you're late' in Chinese?
Wai Yu Kum Nao!
(Why you come now!)

As in the previous joke, the answer was constructed with a series of semantic units representing sounds identifiable as characteristic of Chinese. Yet despite appearing to be genuinely Chinese, these sounds only have meaning in the language of the joke, in this case English. The Anglophone listener readily recognizes that the expression *Wai Yu Kum Nao* is a parody of the monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language but corresponds phonologically to the English indirect question "Why do you come now!" Chinese and English are languages which are more in contact nowadays than they used to be in the past, and it seems that in the future this contact will keep on growing, especially with regard to new Chinese words in the English language and vice versa:

> There is another good reason to guess that Chinese words could play a significant role in the future of English: Chinese speakers are slated to outnumber native speakers of the language by the time a child born in 2010 graduates from high school. History has taught us that when a critical mass of speakers adopts a new language and remains in unbroken contact with those for whom it is a mother tongue, the new group's native language can play a

> prominent role in the evolution of their adopted language (Dunton-Downer and Goodfellow 2010; no pagination).

Incidentally, the English phrase of the joke above is grammatically incorrect, which makes it sound all the more like the speech of a foreigner who does not have a good command of the English language.

5.4.10. Finnish

(22) Mikä on japanilainen autokorjaamo?
Hajosiko tojotasi
L. T.: What do you call a Japanese car repair?
Did your Toyota break down?

In this example, as in the others, the humorous effect is created by the use of words present in the source language that are similar in form and sound to those in the language imitated. The sequence *hajosiko tojotasi* attempts to reproduce the combination of graphemes and sounds in Japanese. However, it is a sequence of utterances constructed in perfect Finnish with the meaning "did your Toyota break down?" Yet this joke makes no sense in literal translation because the phonological aspect of the original is not preserved, and its full meaning cannot be retrieved by people whose language is not Finnish.

(23) Mikä on Japaniksi nyrkkeilijä?
Jo Koha Mä Huma Hutan
L. T.: How do you say 'boxer' in Japanese?
Should I punch you already?

This joke plays with a sequence that tries to imitate Japanese sounds, while at the same time the listener can recognize in the first four syllables the

name of a large city in Japan, Yokohama. The combination of the word *jokoha* which means "already," plus the interrogative particle *ko* and the particle *ha*, which also has an interrogative function, is only used to create the effect of real Japanese words. In this case, *mä* stands for "I," and the word *humahutan* is the first person singular of the verb "to punch," a word not frequently used with this meaning. In order to make the sentence sound Japanese, and also make it more exotic, *humahutan* is used here instead of the more common verb *lyödä* (to hit or to punch), which would not have the same phonetic effect. From the analysis it is clear that due to the sound-restricted sequence constructed to cause the effect of sounding Japanese, it would be almost impossible to create a similar sequence that would function as a translation of this joke into another language with the same semantic script.

(24) Mikä on japaniksi maatila?
Sika kusi taka nasi
L. T.: How do you say 'farm' in Japanese?
Pig piss behind you

This joke humorously attempts to provide the Japanese translation for the Finnish word *maatila* which means "farm." If the sentence is pronounced quickly, it has the sound of Japanese phonemes easily identifiable by the listener due to their rhythmic and bisyllabic nature. In the answer *sika* means "pig," and *kusi* stands for "piss." The word *takana* has the prepositional meaning of "behind, beyond or after," and the particle *si* corresponds to the possessive suffix for the second person singular. I would like to point out that, because of the structure of its phonological system, Finnish is a language that enables the creation of multiple jokes, especially those that recall sounds from monosyllabic languages like Japanese or Chinese. The joke featured above causes laughter because it combines the idea of a farm, normally a dirty place, with dirty animals. To add to the satire, the word "piss" is likely to cause

additional amusement. And yet this joke makes no sense in literal translation, since the phonological aspect of the original is not preserved, and its full meaning cannot be retrieved by people whose language is not Finnish. In this sense, many of these jokes show a play on words and sounds that does not necessarily evoke a stereotype, nor do they lead the listener to infer any other information besides the linguistic playfulness contained in the sentence—although there are some exceptions.

5.4.11. French

The three off-color jokes that follow all have the same objective: translating the word "mini-skirt," which has an erotic connotation in and of itself, into different languages. In the first example, the question asks for the Japanese version of this feminine garment:

(25) *Comment dit-on mini jupe en japonais?*
La raie du cul t'as qu'à tâter
L. T.: How do you say 'miniskirt' in Japanese?
The buttcrack that can be caressed

As we have seen in the previous example, in Japanese the voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t] and the voiced velar stop [k] phonemes are perceived to be frequent occurrences. To achieve the desired effect a speaker must imitate the intonation and rhythm of the Japanese language. The word *raie*, meaning "crack," is here used intentionally because of its shortness, as in formal speech it designates "a line." The term *cul*, meaning "butt," used together with the previous word creates the visual effect of the joke. A listener can easily establish the connection with the word "mini-skirt" as a type of garment consisting of a very small piece of cloth that does not cover much. The second part of the answer introduces a purpose-clause that reinforces the idea of this type of

clothing. The colloquial shortened form *t'as* is a second person singular of the present indicative of the verb *avoir* "to have," and *qu'à* is a French expression used to mean purpose, "for," while the verb *tâter* is a verb meaning "to touch or to caress" in an intentional way, and may even have a sexual connotation. As evidenced by the literal translation, this joke is difficult to translate effectively into English.

(26) *Comment dit-on mini jupe en allemand?*
Ote ta gaine que j'tâte
L. T.: How do you say 'miniskirt' in German?
Take off your corset for me to caress!

In German the same process can be observed. The key phoneme now is that of the French grapheme "ch." This phoneme is quite similar to the German one represented by the cluster "sch." The grapheme "j'" represents a sound that is quite similar to the phonetic sound of the French personal pronoun standing for the masculine first person singular: "je." All these elements make the speaker sound more German. Besides, the way the sentence is pronounced resembles the pronunciation of two popular German words *Tagen* (days) and *Stadt* (city). Most people who have heard German may identify some of these pronunciation aspects. Colloquial French has also been used here as in "ôte," an imperative verb form that suggests the same idea as the verb "to take off," and "gaine," a noun whose meaning is parallel to that of the English term "corset."

(27) *Comment dit-on mini jupe en arabe?*
Rhalatouf
L. T.: How do you say miniskirt in Arabic?
On the edge of pubic hair

In this example the answer to the joke, *Rhalatouf*, is a distortion of the French sequence *Raz la touffe*. The spelling of the words is modified to achieve a visual effect that corresponds to the transliteration of Arabic words. The humorous emphasis in this joke is again placed on the idea of a "miniskirt" as a garment that allows one to see partly what it is supposed to cover. Consequently, the expression *Rhalatouf*, which means in French "on the edge of pubic hair," makes reference to the shortness of this type of skirt. Besides, the ending –*touf* sounds similar to an Arabic word ending. To translate this joke we would have to come up with a phonetic sequence that would contain the same idea, while also reproducing sounds that sound Arabic. It would be very difficult to achieve this double effect in the translation of the joke because, while people in France are used to the sound of Arabic due to its Arabic-speaking population, this is not so common in many English-speaking countries.

With regards to examples (25), (26) and (27), I would like to draw attention to the fact that it may not be possible to evoke the resemblance to Japanese, German or Arabic pronunciation in other languages with the same semantic script, a fact that renders these jokes very difficult to translate. Also, in all these examples it is interesting to note how the idea of a mini-skirt is reproduced to portray three different phonological realizations, which happens when a sheer coincidence of phonemes enables the creation of such jokes under the same thematic category. A joke with a similar theme and structure is mentioned by Christie Davies (1990), extracted from Clements (1973), in talking about ethnic humor and stupidity jokes. This kind of joke, which presents the same topic as the previous ones, is constructed in such a way as to mix two languages while, at the same time, expressing a desire to make it sound like one of them.

"What was the name of the Polack who invented the mini-skirt?
Seymour Dupa" (Davies 1990: 58)

The answer to the joke, "Seymour Dupa," stands for 'See more dupa,' this last word meaning "ass" in Polish but having no meaning in English. The punch line here is that the name "Seymour" corresponds to a real English name, and it is interesting to see how a play on sounds enables the overall humorous effect of the joke. As Davies also notes, in spite of the popularity of "Polish jokes" in America, there are very few that use authentic Polish words since only Polish Americans who have a good command of both languages can understand them.[56] Interestingly, Oring (2008: 193) comments on how the analysis of Polish jokes was in a way a dilemma for many theorists. Welsch (1967: 183) saw this type of humor, which portrayed the Polish community living in the United States as the butt of the joke, as an aggression against this particular people based on historical precedents of other Poles who had immigrated there:

> In the United States the numskull tale has taken on an interesting aberration, perhaps reflecting the geographic, economic, and ethnic mobility of American society; because of this, these tales often escape the attention of the folklorist. Some ethnic enclaves have retained native numskull tales with autochthonous settings, and a few geographically fixed, though structurally vague, numskull-like reputations have arisen in this country, for example, 'hillbillies' and 'Brooklynites,' but in general numskull tales have been associated with various immigrant groups. In part this probably represents a reaction to the imagined threats posed by a sudden influx of an immigrant group at a particular point in

[56] The same idea behind the creation of the joke is applicable to the following one in Bosnian, although here the knowledge of English is not directly linked to the contact of Bosnian society with this language as a vehicle of communication but with Shakespeare's literature as an element of popular culture: "Dosao Shakespeare u butigu kupiti majonezu i prodavac ga pita: "U tubi or not tu bi?" (Literal Translation: Shakespeare went into a shop to buy mayonnaise and the shopkeeper asked him: "In a tube or not in a tube?" Although there is some phonological resemblance in this case between the English language and words in Bosnian that sound similar to Hamlet's famous phrase "To be or not to be," this is more evident in Bosnian than in English.

> history. Thus, Pat and Mike jokes gained particular prominence in the mid-nineteenth century because of the great Irish immigration following the potato famine; and Hans and Fritz jokes (outside of the influences of the two World Wars) reflected the insecurity of the American public in the face of the mid- to late-nineteenth century German immigrations. The Polack joke is probably a parallel phenomenon. (Welsch 1967: 183)

On the other hand Dundes (1987) explained this type of humor as the creation of a stereotype based on the socioeconomic reality of the new emigrants rather than on any direct hostility against them:

> [Dundes (1987)] did not see the jokes as aggressions against American Poles because he had no sense that such hostility existed. He suggested instead that Polish jokes took the heat off blacks. The jokes were directed against the lower class, giving the middle class outlet for aggression and the means for feeling superior—presumably because explicit anti-black jokes were no longer acceptable at that time. [. . .] Rather, Poles were perceived to hold blue-collar occupations and to remain rooted in ethnic neighborhoods. The jokes were about a group that seemed to reject the intellectual, cultural and social advancement that the American marketplace opened to individuals of all backgrounds. The jokes were about these progressive values, and the Poles were simply the signifier of those who chose not to pursue them. (Oring 2008: 194 referring to Dundes 1987)

This is interesting because it shows the cyclic nature of humor and jokes, and the fact that jokes evolve and transform in the same way as society does. Besides, if this pattern of the bona-fide purpose of humor may be applicable to

jokes that belong to an established cultural tradition, such as Polish jokes which originated as a result of the socioeconomic differences between the Polish who emigrated to the United States and the inhabitants who were already living in a territory composed mainly of emigrants, it also demonstrates that the bona-fide purpose of the joke is even more evident in phonological jokes. As we have already seen in different examples, the use of sounds in many phonological jokes shows a bona-fide use of language which materializes by playing with sounds to elicit laughter, rather than exploiting the possible use of stereotypes or connotations that can be derived from the language or culture parodied.

5.4.12. German

(28) Was heiβt Sonnenuntergang auf Finnisch?
Helsinki!
L. T.: How do you say 'sunset' in Finnish?
Helsinki!

The German term *Sonnenuntergang* means "sunset." The comic effect lies in the meaning of the different parts of the word *Helsinki* in that language. *Hell* is a German adjective used to refer to something bright; *sinken* is a verb, which means "to sink / go down." Anyone coming across the word *Helsinki* would automatically think of the capital of Finland. Only a German speaker could deconstruct this word into two and uncover another meaning, i.e., "sunset." As a result, there is a loss in the transmission of meaning from the SL to other languages.

(29) Was heiβt Kuhstall auf Arabisch?
Muh-barak
L. T.: How do you say 'cowshed' in Arabic?
Moo barrack

This is a clear example of extralinguistic references operating in this type of joke. The German term *Kuhstall* in English means "cowshed," in other words, a structure to shelter cows. On the other hand, the expression *Muh-barak* combines the following meanings: *muh*, which is the German onomatopoeic representation of the sound cows make, and *barak*, which is a distortion of the German word *Baracke* meaning "hut" in English. Apart from its meaning, the invented word, *Muhbarak*, is easily identifiable as sounding Arabic. Both the external form and the phonetic sequence are similar to the ending of many words in Arabic since –*ak* in this language is a possessive suffix that is the equivalent to "your" in English. Although English and German are historically related languages, and a translation of this joke could be achieved in English, the English pronunciation of this joke does not sound as "Arabic" as it does in German due to the diagraph "rr." In addition to all these factors that contribute to the humorous effect of the joke, the answer part reminds the listener of the name of Egypt's former president Hosny Mubarak, whose last name accidentally possesses a similar phonetic sequence. In fact, the international status of this political figure may have led to the creation of this joke by mixing both the cultural and the phonological assumptions that are needed to elicit laughter. Interestingly in relation to this joke, the former Egyptian president is humorously referred to in France as "La vache qui rit."

Translation: How do you say cowshed in Arabic?
Moo-barrack

(30) Was heiβt bäcker auf Arabisch?
Bagdad!
L. T.: How do you say baker in Arabic?
Bake that!

Once again, we come across geographical realia relevant to understanding the purpose of the joke. In this example, the speaker wants to establish an identification between the name of a place and the language or the culture of that geographical area. As far as meaning is concerned, the word *Bagdad* is composed of two different elements that are easily identifiable in German. These words are the verb *backen* or "to bake," shortened to *bag*, as a distorted element of oral speech expressing the correct imperative form *backe*. It is intentionally created and pronounced to resemble Iraq's capital city, while –*dad*, the ending of the answer, is a distorted form of the German deictic *das* or "that." In this case, although the phonetic sequence in English "Bake that!" seems graphically similar to the one in German, it would be more difficult to translate the joke into English, as the effect would not be the same given the difference in pronunciation between the English imperative "bake" [beɪk] and the first syllable of the word Bagdad [bāg].

An interesting and related point can be raised here since the use of sound in this case relies more on a sheer coincidence of sounds connected with realia, i.e., the city of Bagdad and the sounds contained therein, and in examples like this one, it could be argued that since the sequence has this double reading it would therefore function in a similar way to a pun, although there are implications related to how the joke is performed that could make it different. This contrasts, for instance, with the English example presented above, "Dung on mai shu" (Dung on my shoe), where there is only one possible reading which is clearly enhanced by the selection of sounds which imitate the Chinese language. Both examples, however, illustrate how speakers resort to an array of different phonological strategies available in their language.

5.4.13. Greek

(31) Πως λέγεται στα Τουρκικά η τηλεόραση;
Μπανιστιρ Ντουλαπ

Translit. Pós légēte sta turkiká i tileórasi?
Banistir Dulap
L. T.: How do you say T.V. in Turkish?
Peeping Box

Πως λέγεται στα Τουρκικά η τηλεόραση;
Σαματά κουτί
Translit. Pos légēte sta turkiká i tileórasi?
Samatá Koutí
L. T.: How do you say T.V. in Turkish?
Noisy Box

This joke has two different humorous resolutions. There is an attempt to reproduce sounds that would sound like Turkish to a Greek speaker. In the sequence Μπανιστιρ Ντουλαπ, the listener laughs after having established the connection between a TV and the image presented in its translation, "a peeping box." The punch line here lies in the fact that for Greeks, in general, Turkish men are considered peeping Toms, especially as regards women. In the second joke, the words Σαματά κουτί refer to the idea of Turks being loud. In both cases there is an intention not only to portray a stereotype through sounds that recall the language but also to articulate a humorous cultural assumption about Turkish society that may not be translatable into other languages.

(32) Πως λέγεται στα Τουρκικά η βέρα;
Μπουνταλά Χαλκα
Translit. Pós légēte sta turkiká i vera?
Boudalá halka
L. T.: How do you say 'engagement ring' in Turkish?
Stupid man's circle

Unlike the previous joke, this one is based on the explicit meaning that it has within Greek culture, as opposed to offering a stereotype of Turks. Again, by using sounds that constitute a parody of the Turkish language in the words Μπουνταλά Χαλκα, meaning "stupid man's circle," the joke evokes the idea of a man losing his freedom and individuality when he marries a woman. Hence, it ironically stipulates that getting married is a stupid action that leads to obtaining just a circular piece of metal.

(33) Πως λέγεται στα Τουρκικά η πεθερά;
Σιχτήρ Χανούμ
Translit. Pós légēte sta turkiká i petherá?
Sihtēr Hanoum
L. T.: How do you say 'mother-in-law' in Turkish?
Cursed Woman

This example is related to the one above, since it refers to the consequences of getting married. As in the examples in Czech (12), Dutch (18) and Spanish (67), it seems that there tends to be a common idea in Western civilization about the role of the mother-in-law within the family. In many cultures she is a nuisance that a married couple has to deal with. In this sense Σιχτήρ Χανούμ, or in other words "cursed woman," establishes a parallelism between the role of this family member and how her "cursed presence" can ruin the happiness of a couple.

5.4.14. Hungarian

(34) Hogy hívják a kínai hentest?
Csak Mócsing Csüng
L. T.: What do you call a butcher in Chinese?
Only fat hanging

This joke presents sounds that try to imitate how the Chinese language sounds for a Hungarian-speaking person. The punch line here lies in the alliterative repetition of the voiceless postalveolar affricate [tʃ] easily identifiable with Chinese. Humor arises when the listener establishes a connection between the question about how to say "butcher" in Chinese and the answer: *Csak Mócsing Csüng*, which even a person whose native language is not Hungarian would recognize as sounding a bit like Chinese. In addition the answer, "only fat hanging," enhances the humorous effect of the joke since it underscores how we usually tend to imagine a butcher surrounded by hanging meat. Related to how alliteration is used in this joke to achieve a desired humorous effect, it may be interesting to mention what Delabastita explains (1996: 5) when referring to puns, and which is perfectly applicable in this case. "What looks like a mere alliteration may—by the interplay of grammatical symmetry, metrical patterning and/or semantic contrast—[. . .] [may acquire] the allure of a semantically very effective pun."

(35) Hogy hívják a lengyel bolt tulajdonost?
Igor Mikornyitszki
L. T.: What do you call a "shop owner" in Polish?
Igor, when do you open?

For a native Hungarian speaker it is easy to retrieve the cultural assumptions inherent in this joke. The answer of this joke makes reference to the typical ending of a Polish last name (suffix *–szki*) and a Polish first name, Igor. The punch line in this joke is contained in the last name *Mikornyitszki*, where *Mikor* is the adverb "when," and *nyitsz* corresponds to the second person singular indefinite form of the verb "to open." On other hand, *ki* has the prepositional meaning of "out" that does not need to be translated into English. The whole sentence, "when do you open?" in Hungarian sounds like a Polish last name, which makes the idea presented in the question and then in the

answer clash humorously—something very difficult to accomplish in English with exactly the same cultural and phonological effects.

5.4.15. Icelandic

(36) Hvað heitir vega- og valtaramálaráðherra Rússlands?
Valtarofskí Kremjanonoff
L. T.: What's the name of the Russian bulldozer minister?
Bulldozer Squash

This joke is an interesting case because it has added two phonological endings to make the whole sequence sound more authentic, and consequently more "Russian" sounding. This is achieved by combining the Icelandic words "valtari" (bulldozer) and the verb "kremja" (to squash), which can be associated with Russian through its similarity to the word 'Kremlin.' The endings "ofskí" and "nonoff" are used deliberately to help the listener imagine what a Russian name might sound like, thus contributing only at the phonological level and not at the lexical one. These selected endings may well have been chosen because of the different Russian last names that end very similarly, and could have been popularized and become perceived as easily identifiable with Russian culture for a variety of different reasons. Some of them can be found in music, such as the composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, or in literature thanks to the novel *Michael Strogoff: The Courier of the Czar* (1876) by Jules Verne, or in food through beef Stroganoff. These are only some examples of popular names which have this typical Russian patronymic suffix. Other possible examples are well-known product brands, for instance the brand of vodka "Smirnoff," which act as an element of popular culture that helps to semantically reinforce the idea behind the joke. As Mark Tungate explains:

> The brand was created in 1850 by Pyotr Arsenyevitch Smirnov, who later passed the distillery to his sons. During the Russian revolution, the distillery was confiscated by the State and the Smirnovs were arrested. Nicolai died in prison, but Vladimir managed to escape during the short-lived-counter-revolution. He reestablished the Smirnov distillery in France under the westernized name Smirnoff. [. . .] Politics aided Smirnoff during the Cold War, when Russia stopped exporting vodka to the West. The brand found itself with a monopoly on what became one of the most popular cocktail ingredients of the sixties. Notably, it was the choice of that most obliging of brand champions, James Bond, who required it to make his vodka martinis. Smirnoff has benefitted from the association ever since (2008: 189).

Besides being the phonological component of the joke, the humor here comes in the punch line by suggesting that "the Russian bulldozer minister," which it is obviously a non-existent ministry deliberately created for the joke, has a name that encapsulates the idea of a "bulldozer that squashes the pavement," which is in fact what we often see during road construction.

(37) Hvað heitir sterkasti maður Kína?
Svaka Jaki
L. T.: What's the name of China's strongest man?
Very Iceberg

This joke presents a cultural element from Icelandic society: "Jaki" (an iceberg), which besides identifying this natural feature, is also a proper noun that according to Icelanders is perceived as being masculine. That is why it makes sense to create a joke to talk about the name of the "strongest Chinese man." The sounds used for this joke follow the pattern of short words of a

maximum of two syllables to resemble the monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language, although it can be argued that this phrase could also sound more Japanese, given its similarity to words like "teriyaki." Perhaps speakers sometimes confuse the two languages as they are so unfamiliar and distant. This effect to make the sound seem even more Chinese or Japanese can be effectively increased by the joke-teller adding a special intonation to the performance.

(38) Veistu Hvað aðal gleðikonan í Helsinki heitir?
Totta Tillana
L. T.: What's the name of the most famous prostitute in Helsinki?
Suck the cocks

This off-color joke uses what is supposed to be a proper noun to parody how the Finnish language could sound to Icelandic speakers. To effect such a parody, certain features representative of the Finnish language are used, such as the double consonants "tt" or "ll" or the repetitive use of certain vowels like the vowel "a." While it seems evident why this joke would be humorous, the success of the punch line has to do with establishing the invented name and the meaning derived from it, since for Icelandic speakers it sounds authentically Finnish.

5.4.16. Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)

(39) Apakah nana restoran Jepang dengan harga yang rendah?
Takashimura
L. T.: What do you call a cheap Japanese restaurant?
I will give cheap

As in many other examples we have seen, in this one the authentic structure of the language has been modified slightly so that it closely resembles the language imitated in the question more, i.e., Japanese. To achieve this, the answer has been written as only one word: "Takashimura," to resemble what a Japanese last name would sound like, even though in the sequence three different words are used: "Tak" (I will), "kasih" (give), and "murah" (cheap). The joke is humorous because it is not difficult to establish a semantic relationship between the information in the question and in the answer, since "a cheap restaurant" where someone says "I will give cheap" will certainly be one that fulfills the characteristic of not being expensive.

5.3.17. Italian

(40) Come si chiama il più pagato dentista Giaponese?
Tekuro Nakarie
L. T.: What's the name of the best-paid Japanese dentist?
I cure your cavity

The parody in this Italian joke is created by means of words that imitate the sounds of a Japanese name. However, this name has been transcribed into a sequence that looks like a transcription of Japanese rather than Italian. The first part of the answer, *Tekuro*, is formed from the Italian pronoun *te* or "you" and the first person singular of the verb *curare* or "to heal or to cure." The second part is an abbreviated form of the indefinite feminine singular pronoun *unna*, "a," shortened to *na* in order to make it sound more Japanese, and *karie*, which stands for the word *carie*, "cavity." The punch line in this joke comes from the association of the name of the best-paid Japanese dentist's specialty, and the actual activity that he carries out, or "curing cavities." According to Newmark, it is easier to translate linguistic sequences based on "Graeco-latinisms that

have near-equivalents in the source and target languages" (1988: 217). Therefore, here is a possible translation for the joke into Spanish:

Translation: ¿Cómo se llama el dentista japonés mejor pagado?
Tekuro Nakarie

Hence, while in this case an accurate English translation might not be an easy task, due to the phonetic similarities between Spanish and Italian this joke can be translated into Spanish by just preserving the answer and translating the question. On the other hand this translation would need to be tested as a joke to see whether it is as effective as it is in the original, since as Nida explains, "where the linguistic and cultural distances between source and receptor codes are least, one should expect to encounter the least number of serious problems, but as a matter of fact if languages are too closely related one is likely to be badly deceived by the superficial similarities, with the result that translations done under these circumstances are often quite poor" (2000: 130).

(41) Come si chiama il più noto giocatore di calcio giapponese?
Joco Poco Majoco
L. T.: What's the best-known Japanese football player?
I play a little, but I do play

This example, like the previous one, presents sounds that imitate the Japanese language. The spelling in Italian has been modified accordingly: *gioco*, the first person singular of the verb *giocare*, "to play or to compete," has been changed to *joco* at the beginning and at the end of the sentence. The adverb *poco* means "a little bit" and the conjunction *ma* stands for "but." In this joke humor is created when thinking that the best-known football player only plays a little bit and whenever he wants to, but at least he plays.

(42) Come si chiama il più famoso saltatore arabo?
Dali' allah
L. T.: What's the name of the most famous Arabic jumper?
From there to over there

This expression recalls sounds from Arabic because of the presence of the alveolar lateral phoneme [l] and some syllables that in their combined form remind us of other words in that language. These words are *Ali*, which is an Arabic name, and *Allah*, the God of the Muslims. However, in spite of seeming to be a transcription of Arabic, the expression *Dali' allah* corresponds to the Italian prepositions and adverbs *da li a là* with the meaning "from there to over there." The humorous effect in this joke occurs when we try to think of an Arabic name to represent the idea of the most famous Arabic jumper portrayed in the question, the resolution of the joke being that it is someone who jumps from one place to another.

5.4.18. Korean

These jokes have been extracted from the 2004 Korean TV Series *Full House* and are a good example of how sound plays a central role in the semantics of a text. As can be evidenced in the examples below, Korean viewers are familiar with this type of humor. In the examples that appear in this TV series, sound is humorously used in different proper nouns according to how the Chinese, Dutch, French, and Japanese languages sound to speakers of Korean.

(43) 프랑스에서 제일 유명한 도둑 이름이 뭔지 아세요?
담 훌쩍 이불 몽땅
Translit. Pu-lang-sue-e-seo je-il eyu-myung-han do-duk ee-leum-ee moen-ji a-se-yo?

Dam hul-chuk ee-bul mong-tang

L. T.: Do you know the name of the most famous thief in France?

Over the fence takes all blankets

This joke in Korean certainly surprises for two reasons. On the one hand, it confirms the existence of phonological jokes in Asian languages. On the other hand, the fact that the language imitated in the joke is French, rather than an Asian language closer to Korean, makes one wonder how this phonological and semantic association could have originated. In the second part of the joke, "Dam hul-chuk ee-bul mong-tang," the last part of the sequence is especially relevant to understanding the configuration of the joke, since the Korean words "ee-bul mong-tang" remind Korean speakers of the name of French actor and singer Yves Montand.

(44) 소련에서 제일 키 큰 사람 이름이 뭔지 아세요?

스카이 푹 찔러

Translit. So-lyun-e-seo je-il kee-keun sa-ram ee-leum-ee moen-ji a-se-yo?

s-ka-ee puk chil-leo

L. T.: Do you know the name of the tallest person in the Soviet Union?

Reach up sky so high

Here the language imitated is Russian and, consequently, the combination of sounds used needs to sound meaningful to Korean speakers. To this end, the performance of the joke is crucial in making it representative so that humor can be created by pronouncing "s-ka-ee puk chil-leo." Besides, the idea of the tallest person in the Soviet Union called "reach up sky so high" makes it easy to find the whole sequence humorous.

(45) 일본에서 제일 삐쩍 마른 사람 이름이 뭐게요?
비 사이로 막 가

Translit. Il-bon-e-seo je-il pi-chuk ma-leun sa-ram ee-leum-ee meo-gye-yo?
Bi sa-ee-lo mak ga
L. T.: What is the name of the skinniest person in Japan?
Walk freely through (between) the rain

In this example, as in the case of French, the representation of the Japanese language by the combination of sounds does not surprise that much, since Japan is a country that is not far from Korea, and they are cultures that are in contact with each other especially from a commercial stand-point. For instance, the first part of the answer "Bi sa-ee-lo" sounds like the name of the famous Japanese city Hokkaido in the northern part of the country, and therefore makes it easier for Korean speakers to connect these sounds to the Japanese language. Presenting the "skinniest Japanese person" as someone who would be able to "walk freely through (between) the rain," responds to the information asked in the question while eliciting laughter in the listener.

5.4.19. Macedonian

(46) Како се вика приватизација на Јапонски?
КојЏапиЏапи

Translit. Kako se vika privatizacija na japonski?
Ko Japi Japi
L. T.: How do you say privatization in Japanese?
Who takes, takes

This joke once again produces a humorous effect through words that imitate Japanese sounds. The sequence *Ko Japi Japi* with the meaning "who

takes, takes" functions as a parody of the word 'privatization.' It may recall for the addressee of the joke the economic measures adopted in the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, with its associated irregularities, when the country became independent from Yugoslavia in September 1991.

(47) Како се вика на Холандски Киро Глигоров?
Око ван Глава

Translit. Kako se vika na holandski Kiro Gligorov?
Oko van Glava
L. T.: What's the name of Kiro Gligorov in Dutch?
Eye-out-of-head

This joke is semantically relevant only to someone who knows who Kiro Gligorov is. By presenting the name of a real person, this joke presupposes a series of cultural assumptions that the listener has to correctly retrieve in order to understand the comic effect. Unless the person hearing the joke recognizes why this proper noun should be the theme of the joke, the text loses its humorous intention. The joke makes reference to an event that took place in October 1995 when the president of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, was the victim of a car bomb planted by Macedonian extremists in Skopje. As a consequence he was seriously injured and lost one eye. This tragic event, presented with a humorous angle, is the theme of the joke, similar to what we know as 'disaster jokes,' which are humorous texts that "usually cause outrage as well as amusement; deliberately offensive, they are also highly popular" (Kuipers 2002: 450) and these jokes usually "make light of accidents and the deaths of celebrities. Such jokes are extremely popular and huge cycles of them regularly appear" (Davies 2005: 6).[57] As Christie Davies explains:

[57] Referring to 'disaster jokes,' Elliott Oring explains that some scholars "regarded [these] jokes as a mechanism for coping with the tragedy and distancing oneself from disaster." (2008: 195).

> cycles of disaster jokes did not exist before the second half of the 20th century. The important principle in explaining the jokes is to ask what has changed in the society that could plausibly be regarded as the source of this new kind of joke. The answer suggested both by the timing of their arrival and by internal evidence from the texts of the jokes is that the key factor was the arrival of television and its growth to become a dominant source of information. In particular we can now see disasters happening and not as mere still pictures: sometimes we see them as they happen. (2005: 10)

Consequently, the punch line here lies in the fact that the sequence *Oko van Glava*, which in the Macedonian language means "Eye-out-of-head," sounds similar to many Dutch last names that take the preposition "van." This type of culturally inserted element is the most difficult to translate. In a text like this a translator would have to be sure that the public figure presented in translation is known in the target culture and has similar assumptions.

(48) Како се вика Брза помош на Турски?
Турбо Еким
Translit. Kako Se Vika Brza Pomos Na Turski?
Turbo Ekim
L. T.: What do you call an ambulance in Turkish?
Turbo Doctor

For a Macedonian speaker, the word *Ekim* sounds Turkish since there are many words and last names in that language that have endings with identical phonemes. This is the word that is used in Macedonian to refer to a doctor, and to enhance the effect the term "turbo" is added in the answer part of the joke.

Both elements combined encapsulate the idea of how a "Turbo Doctor" should be at least as fast as an ambulance.

5.4.20. Norwegian

(49) Hva heter tyven i Kina?[58]
Lang Fing
L. T.: What do you call a thief in Chinese?
Long Fingers

It is interesting to see that even if the answer to this joke may look similar in English to the Norwegian words "Lang Fing" (Long Fingers), the fact that in English the second word has two syllables, instead of one, would make it more difficult to translate directly into English. Here it is also worth noticing that the sequence makes reference to the idiomatic expression "langfingret" (long-fingered) which is used to refer to someone who is prone to stealing. To refer to someone who would actually have "long fingers," the phrase "har lange fingre" would be used instead. As we have seen in other examples where Asian languages such as Chinese or Japanese are imitated, it is important that words in the answer part of the joke have a monosyllabic feature, or at least be performed in this way, so that they can successfully evoke the sounds of the Asian language in question. Humor arises by describing "a thief" as someone with "long fingers," an idea that is not difficult to imagine.

(50) Hva heter Kinas sterkeste mann?
Dop Ing
L. T.: What's the name of the strongest Chinese man?
Dop Ing

[58] There is an interesting variation of this joke in Norwegian in which instead of asking about how to say "thief" in Chinese, this profession is replaced by the word 'policeman': Hva heter politiet i Kina? Lang Fing Fang (Long Fingers Catch).

Unlike the previous example which was more difficult to translate into English, in this case since the word used in the answer is an actual English word, "doping," and because it can also be separated into two independent syllables so that it resembles the monosyllabic feature of the Chinese language, it is easier to adapt to English. As "doping" is an English word borrowed by many languages, it can also probably be adapted to different purposes even though the degree of the joke's humorousness might be different from culture to culture. The idea behind the joke is that "the strongest Chinese man" is someone who would use doping as a means to obtain strength.

5.4.21. Polish

(51) Jak się nazywa japoński wynalazca namiotów?
Nacomi Tachata!
L. T.: What's the name of the Japanese man who invented the tent?
What do I need this house for!

This joke reproduces sounds that imitate the Japanese language. The words *Nacomi Tachata* sound like a Japanese name but they correspond both graphically and phonologically to Polish words and sounds. The first word *Nacomi* is the combination of the preposition *na*, or "in," the interrogative pronoun *co*, or "what," and the personal pronoun *mi*, or "me." The second part of the answer: *Tachata*, results from the combination of the deictic *ta*, "this," and the colloquial word *chata*, or "hut cabin," used colloquially used by young people in Poland to refer to one's house. The punch line of this joke results with the listener imagining this supposed Japanese person who invented the tent, a portable shelter, exclaiming, "What do I need this house for!" Regarding the translatability of this joke, we can say that it would be very difficult to find similar words with the same 'Japanese effect' on an English listener or, for that

matter, in any other language. The presence of the colloquialism *chata* is especially relevant here, since it contributes to the joke's humor through its meaning, and also because it sounds Japanese for Polish speakers. Hence, it would be very difficult to come up with a colloquial term combining similar semantic and phonological functions.

(52) Jak się nazywa najszybszy rosyjski biegacz?
Naskrutow
L. T.: What's the name of the fastest Russian runner?
Shortcut

This example establishes a parody of features easily identifiable for a Polish speaker as characteristic of the Russian language. The answer to the question about the name of the fastest Russian runner, *Naskrutow*, is a combination of the preposition *na* and the noun *skrót* "abbreviation or shortcut," which together give the expression *Na skróty*, meaning "through a shortcut." The ending *–ow*, which does not add any semantic value in Polish, is only added to make the whole expression sound like a Russian last name. The punch line in this joke comes from the idea of the fastest person knowing how to take shortcuts during a race. Since the ending *–ow* is only added to create a phonological effect, this joke could probably be translated into a variety of languages in which the same ending could be identified as Russian-sounding, as is the case of a possible translation of this joke into English:

Translation: What's the name of the fastest Russian runner?
Shortcutov

(53) Jak się nazywa największy ukraiński karateka?
Iwan Waliwdrewienko
L. T.: What's the name of the Ukrainian karate champion?

Ivan pounds a piece of wood

This joke emphasizes humor by imitating the sound of a Ukrainian last name. Many last names from this country take the ending –*yenko*, a sound that in this joke is coincident with a Polish word having the same phonetic ending. The first name *Iwan* is also a popular name in the Ukraine, thus reinforcing the same idea. The combination *Waliwdrewienko* corresponds to the third person singular of the verb *walić* "to strike or to pound." The preposition *w* stands for its English equivalents: "on, in, into, at." The word *drewienko* coincides with the phonetic form of the Ukrainian suffix used in last names, but it also corresponds to the diminutive form of the word *drewno* or "wood, log," and as such it means: "a small piece of wood." With all this information, we can understand the punch line of the joke about the Ukrainian karate champion whose name is "Ivan pounds a piece of wood." The translation of this joke into other languages would be complicated by the ending –*yenko* since, unlike the previous example in which the ending –*ow* was merely added to create the effect of sounding Russian, here this ending corresponds to the actual diminutive form of a Polish word. Thus, if we were to translate this joke into another language, we would have to find a phonological form with a sound similar to this Ukrainian suffix.

5.4.22. Portuguese

(54) Como se diz bicicleta em japonês?
Kasimoto
L. T.: How do you say 'bicycle' in Japanese?
Almost a motorbike

This joke imitates Japanese sounds by using a suffix present in many Japanese last names, *moto*. Coincidentally, *moto* corresponds in many languages

to the short form of "motorbike," and the same happens in Portuguese. The word *kasi*, whose spelling has been changed from its correct form *quase*, or "almost," visually enhances the effect of seeming Japanese. Thus the punch line in this joke comes from associating the word "bicycle," which was invented first, with a motorbike that possesses "almost" the same characteristics, except for its speed. Due to the phonetic similarities between Spanish and Portuguese, this joke could be translated into Spanish by just preserving the sequence of the answer and translating the phrase in the question:

Translation: ¿Cómo se dice bicicleta en japonés?
Kasimoto

(55) Como se diz veneno em chinês?
Bay Gon
L. T.: How do you say poison in Chinese?
(A brand of insecticide)

In this example we observe a type of joke that emphasizes the use of culturally marked elements. In this case it is the brand of insecticide *Bay Gon* that, due to its bisyllabic composition, gives the impression of being a transcription of Chinese sounds. This joke could only be translated into those languages and cultures where this brand of insecticide is sold. Due to the monosyllabic feature of Chinese, it would not be very difficult for the joke to cause laughter in other languages where the cultural assumption can be maintained.

(56) Como se diz caminhar em guaraní?
Andaré Porai
L. T.: How do you say 'to walk' in Guarani?
I will be walking over there

This Portuguese joke is more likely to have originated from the dialectal variant spoken in Brazil rather than the one in Portugal, since Brazil shares geographical borders with Paraguay where Guarani is spoken. Guarani is an American Indian language of the *tupí-guaraní* family that has equal official status with Spanish. It is also present in some parts of Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia. A Brazilian, especially in the southern part of the country, may find this joke funny since it sounds like a sentence in Guarani. In this language there are many words with the accent placed on the last syllable. Consequently, the Portuguese sequence is built with the verb *andaré*, future tense of "to walk," the preposition *por* or "by," and the deictic *aí,* which means "there." All these words combined follow a double purpose: on the one hand they represent the idea of how Guarani sounds to a native speaker of Portuguese. But on the other hand, the answer part of the joke that I translate into the English as "I will walk over there," is funny because it is just a more complicated way to express the idea of "to walk." Due to the similarity between Portuguese and Spanish, this joke can be retrieved in part by native speakers of Spanish. However, if the addressee does not have any notion of what the Guarani language sounds like, the joke cannot be fully understood.

5.4.23. Romanian

(57) Cum se numeste un copil arab?
Ashalisalamdanam (As hali salam da' n-am)
L. T.: What do you call 'a child' in Arabic?
I would eat some salami, but I haven't got any

In this joke all the words have been put together so that in its reading the sequence sounds like an imitation of the Arabic language. As we have seen in other examples, sounds represented by letters such as "h," "l," "al," or "m," are

often used to create this phonological similarity. Besides the long sentence that constitutes the punch line of the joke, simply to say the word "child" in Arabic results in humor, linking the fact that Arabic cultures do not consume pork products such as salami with the cultural incongruity implied by this type of meat. As can be seen in the answer to the joke, "Ashalisalamdanam," the words chosen are especially relevant as the phonological configuration of the word "salami" with its confluence of sounds may be one of the reasons this joke was created. In addition, this word resembles the well-known Arabic word "salaam" (peace), often used as a greeting. Hence some of the plausible reasons for this joke and its humorous effect. One of the most recent studies about Romanian humor can be found in the research of Carmen Popescu (2011), who has concentrated on the analysis of ethnic humor in the changing sphere of the Romanian society. As she explains: "The fall of communism brought about a different political and social reality, and Romania, like all the other countries of the former Soviet bloc, started the long and difficult journey of transition from a totalitarian regime to democracy. Catching up, adapting, redefining values, and identifying and rediscovering tradition [. . .]. Globalisation and the beginning of the Internet era have added to the difficulties that the country has with its identity" (2011: 174). This aspect that has transformed the country has likewise permeated into humor and therefore has been reflected in numerous jokes on different cultural communities. Popescu cites different websites where she has found ethnic jokes and the one analyzed above could also be related to the country's exposure to new cultures, languages, etc. As she elucidates, what is interesting about ethnic humor is that there is an "assumption that what we joke about and how says more about us than about the targets of the jokes and that the analysis of ethnic jokes directed at others can shed light on changing social realities" (2011: 174).

5.4.24. Russian

(58) Как зовут самого пьяного человека в Армении?
Мистер Сутрапьян

Translit. Kak zovut samogo p'yanogo cheloveka v Armenii?
Mr. Sutrapian
L. T.: What's the name of the drunkest man in Armenia?
Mr. Drunk in the morning

This joke is a parody of what an Armenian last name might sound like. Many Armenian last names take the ending –*ian* or –*yan*, and consequently the name of the drunkest Armenian in the joke must follow the same pattern. This is the easiest way to evoke a name easily identifiable by a Russian speaker as being an Armenian one. The name *Sutrapian* is formed by the preposition *s* and the genitive noun *utra*, which together mean "in the morning" in Russian, and the adjective *pian* or *piany* meaning "drunk." In the second word, the short form of the adjective is preferred since it achieves the desired effect. Besides the wit that went into in creating this last name, it is suggestive of what the Armenian culture represents for Russians in general. For the Russian listener, probably the cultural assumption that best fits this joke is the well-known quality of Armenian brandy. Thus, humor in this joke results when the listener mentally combines all this information and not only retrieves a name that serves as a parody of an Armenian last name but also the supposition that "Mr. Drunk in the morning" would be certainly drunk the next morning too.

Although it is related to an imitation of a different language, it is worth mentioning here what Draitser (1998: 174) says with regard to how Roback (1944: 315) perceptively finds this type of humor influenced by the phonetic resemblance of Russian words to Japanese ones. As he explains: "There are several comic routines for Russian schoolchildren that parody the Japanese

language (among others); most such parodies are scatological. For instance: khochu-pisi, khochu-kaki ("I want to piss, I want to shit")" (1998: 174).

5.4.25. Serbian

(59) Како се на јапанском каже инфлација?
Тошиба колудо

Translit. Kako se na japanskom kaže inflacija?
Toshiba koludo
L. T.: How do you say inflation in Japanese?
It goes like crazy

This example uses a well-known brand of Japanese electronics in the answer to present the sequence in Serbian as authentic Japanese words. The word *toshiba* corresponds to the deictic *to*, or "that" and the verb of motion "shiba" with the colloquial meaning of "that something goes." The second part of the answer, *koludo,* is formed by the adverb *ko*, or "like," and the adjective *ludo*, or "crazy." The punch line in this joke is the idea of how *inflacija*, or "inflation," started "going up like crazy" when Serbia became an independent country after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. Thus a Serbian speaker hearing this joke is able to retrieve the idea connecting the rise of inflation with *Toshiba* computers.

(60) Како се у мађарској зове ружни дечак?
Габор

Translit. Kako se u madjarskoj zove ruzni dečak?
Gabor
L. T.: What do you call an ugly boy in Hungarian?
(An expression to refer to something ugly or unpleasant)

Gabor, the answer to this question, is a colloquial expression in Serbian that is used to refer to something ugly or visually unpleasant. On the other hand, the ending of this adjective sounds like a Hungarian word, e.g., *mikor* meaning "when," or *bator* meaning "brave." Another contextual reason one can offer for the interpretation of this joke is that *Gabor* is a Hungarian first name as well as the last name of the famous Hungarian actress Zsa Zsa Gabor. All these cultural assumptions reinforce the effect of the joke on the listener and help establish a connection between the meaning of the joke and the Hungarian language.

(61) Како се на новохрватском каже пас?
Околокућни домобран
Translit. Kako se na novohratskom kaže pas?
Okolokučni domobran
L. T.: How do you say 'dog' in New Croatian?
Around-the-house

In contrast to the many cases we have seen so far, this example does not really fit into the phonological joke category, since even though there is an attempt to translate the word "dog" into another language, *novohrvatski* or "New Croatian," this language does not really exist. Yet it is interesting to observe that while the whole joke is in Serbian, a Serbian speaker would find the differences existing between Serbian and Croatian comical, especially since both languages are usually called Serbo-Croatian. These differences did not appear because of a distinction in usage or dialectal form, but because of a desire for the two communities of speakers to distinguish themselves from one another:

> That Croatian and Serbian nowadays are two different standard languages cannot seriously be denied, due to the Croatian

> language policy, which has been trying to modify Croatian since the independence of the country: morphosyntactic constructions which 'sound' Serbian are no longer accepted in the official language [...] 'Serbian' words are dropped in Serbo-Croatian, an old word from the Croatian linguistic heritage is revived, often after having long been in disuse, or, if there is none, a new word has to be found. (Jahn 1999: 330)

Thus, as in the example above, we find jokes that show this playful and amusing task of creating texts that make fun of this so-called 'new language.' In this sense, many jokes in Serbian show a peculiar way of articulating the language, by using word twists. Consequently, the answer to how to call a "dog" in New Croatian in abother example is *Okolokucni domobran*, in other words, something that is "around the house." The humorous effect in this joke lies in the ridiculous way of naming something as simple as 'a dog.'

Here, there is not the explicit intention of making the words sound like Croatian, as in jokes in other languages. However, the word *domobran* is worth exploring in order to understand other cultural assumptions present in the text. During the World War II there was a group of Croatians who were in charge of guarding Hitler's warehouse. They were called the *Hrvatski Domobran* (Home Defenders) and "its goal was to organize political pressure within the United States and to raise support in the colonies for the Uštaša. Domobran members wore blue shirts and modeled themselves after Mussolini's Fascist legions. They claimed that their new strategy for Croatian independence made sense in terms of the rapidly changing European situation" (Kivisto 1989: 107). Hence, the presence of such a name in this joke may well refer to this historical fact. However, while this joke would probably not be fully accessible to a person unfamiliar with this political group, it could still produce laughter in someone who understands the parody of the New Croatian language. But, all things

considered, the translatability of this joke is probably very limited because of all the cultural aspects that operate within it.

5.4.26. Slovenian

(62) Kako se imenuje najhitrejši Italijan?
Petardo Mavriti
L. T.: What do you call the fastest Italian?
Firecracker in his ass

This joke presents a parody of Italian by trying to establish what an Italian name would sound like. In fact, part of the answer is the Italian word *Petardo*, or "firecracker," borrowed by Slovenian. The word *Petardo* may also remind the listener of the Italian first name *Ricardo*. What makes a listener laugh in this joke is the mixture of these sounds, especially the accumulation of the front closed unrounded vowel [i] in the word *Mavriti*, which sounds similar to an Italian last name. However, *Mavriti* corresponds to the Slovenian words for "in his ass," thus focusing on the idea of someone who would be the fastest Italian because of a firecracker in his behind.

(63) Kako se reče čakalnica po kitajsko?
Tukičiči pačaki (tukaj sedi in čakaj)
L. T.: How do you say 'waiting room' in Chinese?
Sit here and wait

As we have seen in Spanish and Hungarian examples of phonological humor, the punch line here lies in the alliterative repetition of the voiceless postalveolar affricate [tʃ] usually associated with the Chinese language. Since this joke is constructed using colloquialisms in Slovene, the sequence used in the answer part of the question corresponds to the modification of the words

"Tukaj sedi in čakaj" into "Tukičiči pačaki" which is transformed into a phonological strategy that facilitates the task of the listener to establish an association with the sequence and the Chinese language. As in many other examples, the joke surprises by using in the answer a related idea to the element whose translation was asked in the question. In this case, "waiting room" is given the humorous equivalent of "sit here and wait" which is what people normally do in such a place.

(64) Kako se reče ženski, ki že nekaj časa hujša, po japonsko?
Takura Pahira
L. T.: What do you call 'a woman who is in a diet' in Japanese?
This chick is on a diet

In this example, the idea of being on a diet is the main theme of the joke. So when the joke-teller asks how to say this in Japanese, a combination of sounds which can be identified as such language needs to be used so that the joke can be successful in eliciting laughter. On the one hand, part of the answer "Takura" sounds similar to some well-known Japanese words like "Tempura," a typically Japanese way of cooking, or "Sakura," which means 'cherry blossom' and is a tourist attraction for many people traveling to Japan in the spring. Also, as we have seen in other examples, many foreign words related to food have become popular and therefore have in many cases been incorporated into different languages. Also noteworthy here is the fact that there are two possible readings of the word "kura" in Slovenian, meaning either "a diet" or "stupid," which makes the joke subject to different interpretations.

5.4.27. Spanish

(65) ¿Cómo se dice embarazo en swahili?
Bombo

L.T.: How do you say 'pregnancy' in Swahili?
Bass drum

In this example pregnancy is identified with an object such as a *bass drum*, a humorous play on the fact that this type of drum is carried just like a baby during pregnancy. In addition, the word *bombo* is used colloquially in Spanish to describe a woman in advanced stages of pregnancy. Again, the presence of the voiced bilabial stop [b] and the bilabial nasal [m]—homorganic segments with the same point of articulation—represents for the Spanish speaker the idea of what an African language sounds like. In English, since there is no such semantic connection between a "bass drum" and "pregnancy," so the phonological structure of this word would not elicit the same response in the listener. Consequently, it would be a challenge to preserve both the phonological and the cultural scripts in order to come up with a translation of this joke into English.

(66) ¿Cómo se dice wonderbra en swahili?
Dominga Kontongo
L. T.: How do you say 'wonderbra' in Swahili?
Female fixed breast

In this joke, sounds are written according to the language imitated, in this case Swahili. Pronounced fast, these sounds are easily identified by a listener as a sequence with the occurrence of the voiceless velar stop [k], the voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t], the velar nasal [ŋ], and the voiced velar stop [g]. Since the whole phrase uses colloquialisms, the listener must possess this knowledge in order to retrieve the full meaning of the text. The first word *dominga*, is used colloquially to refer to female breasts, but shortened to the singular form since it is normally used as *domingas*. This term comes from *la jerga cheli* "the cheli jargon" —an urban slang used in Madrid—and like the

word *orejas* "ears," it is used colloquially to refer to this part of the female anatomy to mean objects that are pending or hanging. The word *kon* has the meaning of the preposition *con*, "with," but its spelling has been modified to resemble the way that African languages are transcribed in the Latin alphabet. The word *tongo* is a widely used colloquialism to express that something is "fixed," i.e., as the exclamation "*¡hay tongo!*" "It's been fixed!" used especially in sports events to show disapproval of a referee's decision. Thus, the literal translation of the joke in English would have the meaning of "female fixed breast." The humor here results when the two ideas clash and become one to portray how a "wonderbra" shows a breast that has been falsely enhanced. In English a similar sequence could perhaps not be easily established, especially since "the use of slang can also present problems because of the difficulties inherent to the linguistic medium itself" (Russo Bachelli 1991: 99). Hence the specific effect of the language imitated in this joke might be lost in translation.

(67) ¿Cómo se dice suegra en griego?
Storba
L.T.: How do you say 'mother-in-law' in Greek?
Someone who is in one's way

As in the Czech (12), Dutch (18), and Greek (33) examples, this joke parodies the role of the mother-in-law in society. The word *storba*, correctly spelled *estorba*, corresponds to the third person singular of the Spanish verb *estorbar*, "to get in someone's way" or "to bother." The combination in this word of the voiced alveolar fricative [z] and the voiced bilabial stop [b] is identifiable by a Spanish speaker with the Greek language. This may have to do with the relationship between the sound of the word *storba* and *Zorba the Greek* (1964), the famous film directed by Michael Cacoyannis. In addition, a comical way of characterizing a *suegra*, or mother-in-law in Spanish culture, is as a person who tends to interfere in the husband-wife relationship. Given the idea of such a

bothersome family member, one can see how this person behaves as an "obstacle." Thus the imitation of Greek sounds plus the deeply rooted cultural assumptions create a humorous effect when the two notions clash. To translate this joke into English one would need a sequence reproducing sounds easily identifiable by an English speaker as 'Greek' sounding but which would also have to identify a similar semantic script or thematic field.

5.4.28. Swedish

(68) Vad heter Finlands näst bästa skidåkare?
Hakki Hälinen
L.T.: What's the name of the second-best Finnish endurance skier?
To follow at one's heels

This joke can only be understood by Swedish speakers who are familiar with the patterns of the Finnish language. The example also illustrates how "joking relationships are common among neighboring and culturally similar countries" (Gundelach 2000: 121). In this sense, Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996) speaks about dubbed jokes in the visual media referring to a type of joke that he defines as the national-sense-of-humor joke and characterizes as:

> Certain joke types and joke themes are apparently more popular in some countries or communities than in others and constitute a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding. For example, some communities like to make fun of themselves, whereas others do not and prefer to laugh at somebody else's expense. Local preferences of this kind may depend on culture, religion or historical and political connections with neighboring nations. This category of jokes still needs a lot of research and is probably the most controversial. (Zabalbeascoa 1996: 253)

As in previous examples, people from other cultures would need an explanation in order to decode the meaning of this joke. In Swedish *hack häl* means "on / at one's heels." Taking these two Swedish words as a basis, one sees a process of transformation into something that appears to be a Finnish name. In Finnish there are many first names that end in *-i*, so that *hack* (whose final graphemes *-ck* correspond to the Finnish *-kk*) becomes *Hakki*. Besides, the suffix *-nen* is common in many family names, and following that rule *häl* has changed into *Hälinen*. The combination of the resulting words, *Hakki Hälinen*, seems at first glance simply to be a Finnish proper noun; yet in Swedish it means "to follow at one's heels."

(69) Vad heter kinas fattigaste man?
Tom Peng Pung
L.T.: What's the name of the poorest Chinese person?
Bag empty of money

A native English speaker who hears this joke in the source version will identify the monosyllabic feature of the sequence as related to an Asian language. In addition, the presence of the voiceless alveolar or dental stop [t], the voiceless bilabial stop [p] as endings, and especially the consonant cluster "ng," present in many Asian last names, give the impression of sounding Chinese. The words used to form this hypothetical Chinese name, *Tom Peng Pung*, correspond to several Swedish words: *Tom* (empty, void or vacant), *Peng* (coin or money), and *Pung* (bag, pouch or purse). In English this could be translated word-for-word as "empty money bag." But because of the monosyllabic characteristics of these words, it would be very difficult to achieve an English translation that could elicit the same meaning and humorous effect. Thus the imitation of the prototypical sounds that remind a listener of Asian languages might be lost in translation.

(70) Vad heter Finlands sämsta bärplockare?
Maski Hallonen
L.T.: What's the name of the worst Finnish berry picker?
Raspberry worm

Swedish people may find no difficulty in inferring the humorous intention of this joke. This supposed name, *Maski Hallonen*, is a distortion of an expression in Swedish that means something other than just a name. The expression *maski hallonen* means "raspberry worm." Although there are some variations in the way names and surnames are formed in Finnish, the first word *Maski*, because of its ending in *–i*, sounds like a typical Finnish first name, e.g., *Erkki*. By the same token, the last name *Hallonen* may well remind the listener of the first Finnish female prime minister, *Tarja Kaarina Halonen*, whose last name has almost the same spelling, all of which reinforces the similarity to the Finnish language. Although it is certainly humorous to think that someone called "Raspberry worm" would be "the worst berry picker," this joke cannot really be fully translated into English, since an English speaker lacking the necessary information about Finnish culture would not be able to retrieve all the cultural and humorous implications in the joke.

5.4.29. Thai

(71) คำใดในภาษาญี่ปุ่นแปลว่า "สวย"
คิเระ

Translit. Kham dai nai phasa yipun plaewa "suay"?
Khirei
L. T.: How do you say "pretty" in Japanese?
Ugly

This joke in Thai imitates the Japanese language by using an actual Japanese word "Khirei." However what is interesting here is that the word in question resembles the Thai word "khire" (ขี้เหร่), which means "ugly." Incongruity arises by combining the information in the question about how to say "beautiful" in Japanese and the answer, which is clearly the opposite: "ugly." Related to the Thai language, Haring observes that:

> the Thai, for example—a people who have been exposed for many years to English-speaking strangers—practice rhyming word games that provide for their children's linguistic needs by reinforcing knowledge of both Thai and English. One of these, the "rhyming translation" game, involves displaying one's skill in both languages by alternating between the two languages and rhyming them. The player "gives a Thai word and its English translation. The next player must produce another Thai word which rhymes with the English translation of the first word" (Haas 1957: 173-175). [. . .] Such a game imparts in Thai children the mastery of two alternative codes; it makes an art of switching between the two and rewards the capacity to do so with laughter." (Haring 1985: 185)

Therefore it would be interesting to survey different phonological jokes in which English appears as the language parodied or imitated. Although it is not the case in the example analyzed, Thai jokes "are quite bawdy and full of innuendo. Overall Thais have a very broad and developed sense of humor. This is very much part of *sanuk*, or fun, and in keeping with the *jai yen*, or cool heart" (Kislenko 2004: 162-163).

5.4.30. Turkish

(72) Bir suudi dinciye ne denir?
Elamdan Mahrum
L. T.: What do you call a Saudi fundamentalist?
Someone whose hand is prevented from having access to a pussy

In this example, the humorous effect is created by the presence of two main ideas: the resemblance of source language words to those in the language imitated that results in a mixing of the behavior of a fundamentalist with a sexual theme. Turkey is a country in which many cultures coexist; yet it is always presented as the geographical bridge between Europe and the Middle East. It is also a society with a large Muslim influence. Therefore, it is not surprising that jokes like the one should come directly from its people.

The idea of fundamentalism has been prevalent in some of the minor political parties that would like Turkish society to be more influenced by Muslim culture, rather than following the European model. The majority has always supported the integration with Europe, a fact evident in the country's secular constitution despite its Muslim traditions. In addition Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for membership in the European Union in 1999, and it prides itself on being the only secular republic in the Islamic world.

To adapt this joke to a new linguistic reality, specific information is required in order to provide an accurate version of the original. The punch line in this joke inheres in combining fundamentalism, Saudi Arabia—the spiritual place of the Islamic world and probably one of the most conservative Muslim countries—the Arabic language and off-color humor. The sequence *Elamdan Mahrum* attempts to reproduce the combination of graphemes and sounds of an Arabic name. Borrowed from Arabic, the word *El* is used in Arabic to refer to "someone you do not know," while in Turkish it means "hand." The expression *amdan* is a compound word formed by the word *am*, or "pussy," and the

prepositional suffix *dan*, which stands for "from." The word *Mahrum*, also borrowed from Arabic, means "prevented." Yet in a literal translation this joke does not convey the humorous intention of the original, since the phonological aspect of the original is lost. The original is a sequence of utterances constructed in perfect Turkish meaning "someone whose hand is prevented from having access to a pussy." This translation, which is more like an explanation, demonstrates the cultural parameters operating in the joke and therefore the translator's inability to transfer them. The text is a good example of how a minimal number of sounds, combined with a humorous purpose, can lead to an array of cultural elements that amuse the listener when combined.

(73) Frasizca'da orospu nasil denir?
Madame Bolam
L. T.: What do you call a prostitute in French?
Madame loose pussy

This joke attempts to reproduce the idea of how the French language sounds to a native Turkish speaker. In this example, "madame" is one of the many words in Turkish borrowed from French that is easily identifiable by any listener. The linguistic sequence here is formed by the adjective *bol*, meaning both "plenty or loose," and the noun *am* which refers to female genitalia. Humor arises when the listener connects the words that imitate a French last name with the off-color explicitness of such categorization.

(74) Kirli yunan erkeğine ne denir?
Dimitris Pipisipis
L. T.: What do you call a dirty Greek man?
Dimitris dirty penis

This example is a Turkish joke that constitutes a parody of the Greek language. It is understandable that it should be the reverse of the Greek joke mentioned above, since Turkish people are used to the sound of Greek and have stereotypes of Greek people, and vice versa. As shown in examples (31), (32), and (33), Greek people can easily identify words whose phonetic structure resembles Turkish sounds. In addition, both cultures have shared centuries of common history and traditions, and both languages have borrowed words from each other. In this joke the emphasis is put on the combination of a popular Greek name "Dimitris," which reinforces the phonetic elements of the sequence by reduplicating the vowel *i*, with the words that act as the person's last name: *pipi*, meaning "penis," *pis*, or "dirty," and the possessive suffix *si*, which stands for the corresponding English possessive pronoun "his." I opted not to translate the possessive in the literal translation because it is implicit in English.

In spite of the historical disputes between the two nations, the intention here is not to downgrade the Greeks by portraying them as dirty. On the contrary, the joke innocently displays a phonological play on words in order to answer the question about "the dirtiest Greek." In this particular case a similar effect could be achieved in English with the translation of "Dimitris Dirtipinis." But it would be necessary to modify the spelling and the pronunciation of the word, so that it can emphasize the repetition of vowels, as well as the ending in –*s* that is characteristic of many Greek last names.

Translation: What do you call a dirty Greek man?
Dimitris Dirtipinis

5.5. Phonological Jokes: A Widespread Phenomenon in Languages and about Languages

That phonological jokes exist in distinct cultures has been amply demonstrated through the analysis of examples in 30 different languages,

providing strong empirical evidence for the widespread nature of sound-based humor. In all the languages presented in this study, the comic effect inheres in the association of words and sounds displayed in a simple syntactic structure of question-answer. The similarity of linguistic purpose present in the different jokes, clearly identifiable regardless of the language, corresponds to how these jokes contribute to the perception and representation of foreignness by attempting to parody or imitate a specific language.

The very fact of the existence of this type of joke in so many diverse languages underlines the importance of humor in human communication. Humor can be used in myriad ways: to express disagreement, to create sarcasm or irony, to mitigate a difficult situation, to overcome shyness, as a way of socializing, to put someone at ease and so forth. As we have also seen, in all the texts analyzed there is a strong link between culture and language, since culture finds its expression both in language and through language: "Unlike taste differences within society, national differences cannot be interpreted in terms of distinction and emulation. Instead, they are the result of a complex interplay of cultural traditions; and of structural factors such as the influence of institutions like government, education, or church, and the relations between various groups within one society" (Kuipers 2006: 239). It follows that the cultural characteristics of a text translated into a target language may influence not only the way textual units are organized in discourse but, more importantly, how they are understood, and as we have seen in different examples this is perfectly applicable to humor.

Humor is universal at the same time as it is strongly linked to individual cultures, but: "whereas phonology, morphology, and syntax are language specific, [the] pragmatics [of humor] is more universal in scope" (Nilsen, 1989: 121). Speaking about the universality of humor, Debra Raphaelson-West states that "it is difficult to say whether there is such a thing as a 'universal joke.' Perhaps a universal joke is a bicultural joke. Not being aware of every culture, there is no way for me to know whether there are any situations of universal

humor. However, there are semantic universals" (1989: 130-131). While there may not be such a thing as a universal joke, taking as a proof the above examples of phonological jokes, i.e., texts that portray how a language is phonetically understood, it is plausible to think that this type of humor and this mode of perception and representation of foreignness is likely to be found in numerous other languages and cultures as well.

Indeed, despite all the cultural differences that we have noted in analyzing jokes in different languages, the very existence of phonological jokes across diverse cultures confirms their similar structure and purpose as a widespread phenomenon. It is clear that many of these joke possess semantic scripts in common, not only in their imitation of a series of specific languages but also, as we have seen, in the similarity of their subject matter. It is important to note that, although in some of the examples certain stereotypes may have been used in the creation of specific jokes, the use of stereotypes does not seem to play a central role in the configuration of this type of humor. On the contrary: in the majority of jokes analyzed the play on sounds seems to be more important than the possible cultural stereotype that the joke might contain, something that contrasts with ethnic humor.

> Jokes about peoples consist of short narratives or riddles with comic endings which impute a particular ludicrous trait or pattern of behavior to the butts of the joke. Such jokes are a very old phenomenon indeed but they are particularly widespread and popular in the modern world, where they are often known as ethnic jokes. The term *ethnic* tends to be used in a broad way about a group that sees itself and is seen by others as a 'people' with a common cultural tradition, a real or imagined common descent, and a distinctive identity. This judgment is usually related to objective factors such as territory or language, though both of

> these may relate to the group's past, and to the life led by its members' ancestors rather than today's members. (Davies 1990: 1)

Unlike most phonological jokes, in ethnic humor stereotypes are the driving force leading to the creation of humor. If we agree that the main purpose of phonological jokes is not to portray a stereotype of a country—which is how ethnic humor has been traditionally studied—but rather to create funny combinations of sounds that attempt to imitate the language spoken in another country or community of speakers, this classification does not appear to be the most suitable one. While it is true that we will always find examples where the linguistic play on sounds and the ethnic connotation clash to articulate the humorous intention present in a phonological joke, the former has been more prevalent in the examples analyzed. Consequently, we may be in a position to say that while stereotypes may have been used in the creation of some phonological jokes, those jokes should not all be classified under the taxonomy of ethnic humor.

Neither does the type of joke that represents the core of our inquiry seem to belong to a cycle of jokes. Examples of this classification would include: Polish jokes, blonde jokes (Oring 2008), or disaster jokes (Kuipers 2002). In this regard, Attardo indicates that:

> the notion of joke cycle originates in folklore studies. At a basic (an intuitive) level a joke cycle is a set of jokes that are related. The prevalent relationship seems to be that of thematic links between the jokes [. . .]. While the subject matter of the jokes is clearly important, the GTVH [General Theory of Verbal Humor] has argued that this is not the only link among the jokes, and moreover that it is not the most important link among the jokes. (2001: 69)

Also important to note here is that it is usually easier to trace why or when some joke cycles may have originated, since they can often be linked to an historical moment in time, and as such they tend to present data that can relate the joke to a particular historical moment.

Although we have seen several examples of phonological jokes where history is both present and necessary in retrieving the overall meaning of the humor behind the linguistic sequence used, many of these jokes did not originate from a specific historical moment in time. Instead, the use of phonological patterns to create humor, as well as the amusement one gets from playing with language, seem to be inherent aspects of language and of culture in general.

In dealing with the question of classifying phonological jokes, it could be argued whether these could be identified as being pseudo-ethnic jokes which, according to Raskin (1985: 205-206), are jokes that carry such a name because they fail to evoke a specific ethnic script. Christie Davies (1990: 321), quoting Raskin (1985: 207), discusses this problem of certain jokes that do not completely match the definition of ethnic humor by saying that:

> [a] joke is truly ethnic if and only if its main opposition or one of its main oppositions involves at least one truly ethnic script. The ethnic scripts are [. . .] a set of pseudo-encyclopaedic scripts which have to be internalized prior to the production or consumption of ethnic jokes [. . .] if the joke is truly ethnic the removal of the evoked ethnic script renders it incomprehensible [. . .] [and] the targeted group may be substituted for only by another group which shares the evoked ethnic script with it. (1985: 207)

Notwithstanding, in consideration of the above, I categorize phonological jokes as sound-based linguistic humor since they constitute sequences composed of words in one's own language whose objective is to

provide humorous or 'fake translations' in multiple languages. Thus their main purpose is to create a play on sounds, and in most cases, they lack an ethnic script. Their widespread existence among different cultural systems has been proved, but the following questions arise here: Can we determine whether or not establishing a parody of how a language sounds like is at least as consistent and widespread as ethnic humor? And if so, how many more languages would we need in order to substantiate this claim?

So far the existence of phonological jokes as sound-based humor has been demonstrated in a diverse set of cultures, and unrelated languages, but there are many more that remain to be explored, and evidence of this can be found in research on similar cases in less-studied languages. This type of phonological humor appears to exist also in cultures and languages where the dynamics of joking may differ greatly from the Western patterns. This is for instance what Ntihirageza (2007: 69) observes when talking about the Hausa language, which is an African language spoken by "more first-language speakers than any other sub-Saharan African language—an estimated 30 million or more—most of whom live in nothern Nigeria and in southern areas of the neighbouring Republic of Niger, where Hausa represents the majority language" (Jaggar 2001: 1). In this sense, evidence has been found of how children play with the phonological aspect of language to imitate another African language, the Fula language "a member of the West Atlantic branch of the Niger-Kordofanian family. It is the first language of approximately twenty million people in West Africa, from Senegal and Mauritania" (*Nordic Journal of African Studies* 1993: 57) spoken in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Chad, Sierra Leone, Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Liberia, Gabon. As she explains:

> the Hausa word game that is similar to the Kirundi /´μ sV/ game is referred to as the ásàdásà word game. According to Alidou

> (1997: 42), it is played by Hausa teenagers in the Dogon Doutchi area for fun and is intended to mimic the sounds of the Fula language. Unlike the other types of suffixation games discussed above, this game inserts the suffix /sV/ after the coda of each syllable including the last and shortens all original monophthongal long vowels including word ending long vowels. (Ntihirageza 2007: 69)

The way children who are native speakers of Hausa mimic the sounds of the Fula language clearly resembles some of the phonological strategies that we have seen in the jokes that have been analyzed such as those in which a suffix or an ending had been added to make it sound like a specific language.

Besides, this common trend of a humorous imitation of other languages can also take place at a dialectal level. One example is the case of Mandarin Chinese, as Roy Ouyang indicates, where there are jokes that make fun of the pronunciation of Cantonese words and vice versa:

> Dialectal expressions when used in standard language can often cause laughter. A large number of jokes come from the different pronunciation of the same expression in Mandarin and Cantonese. Needless to say, dialectal expressions are one of the main sources of humor in the West. Since dialectal expressions are often used in particular communities, they each have distinctive features. [. . .] When the natives of Wuhan pronounce the word 小水壶 (little kettle), it sounds like the word 小媳婦 (newly-wed young lady) in Mandarin. It's the same case with the words 流氓 (rascal) and 六毛 (sixty cents). (Ouyang 2003)

This idea is also seen in Haring's comment on Malagasy riddling, where he explains that this phenomenon of playing with language may be related to code-switching among children:[59]

> Of course, the Malagasy are not alone in making use of riddles and other childlore as a learning model for the complexities of language. All over Africa and the Indian Ocean linguistic routines or repertoires—sequences more complex than the sentence—are provided to children as a means to develop communicative skill and as material for them to parody. The child must both recall lexical items and produce them in a way that is artistically marked, for instance by rhyme. He or she may need to know how natural it is to switch from one code to another. As ethnographers begin to recognize the sophistication of "their" people, the ethnographic literature begins to take note of code-switching. Variation among codes now seems to be the rule rather than the exception among Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian peoples. (1985: 185)

He offers the following example to illustrate this point:

> In Imerina, in modern times, a child could learn about code-switching through a "catch": One of my classmates, usually a very smart girl, played me a very naughty trick when she abruptly but seriously asked me, "How do you say vitsika [ant] in French?" Despite my surprise, I answered, "Fourmi." "And how do you say tortoise in Malagasy?" I was mixed up and nervous, suspecting some trap. I looked at her questioningly and hard, but she was still

[59] For a study on the use of code-switching and linguistic jokes please see Van Boeschoten (2006) for an analysis of how code-switching can be used to develop a discourse of ethnicity in the case of among Slav-speakers in the Florina area of northern Greece.

> serious, awaiting my answer with an innocent air. Shrugging one shoulder to show both my good humor and my incomprehension, I muttered, "Sokatra, what else?" That brought a malicious flash to my friend's face, which was immediately followed by a stern look and an outraged air. "Well! I didn't think you could be so gross!" Fourmi and sokatra, said one after the other in Malagasy, can mean 'open vulva.' (Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 1983: 296; quoted in Haring 1985: 185-186).

Phonological humor also exists in the Japanese language. One example is the popular TV program *Tamori Club*. It contains a section called *Soramini Hour* where the lyrics of different songs, normally in English, are modified to exhibit different meanings in Japanese while still sounding like English. This illustrates how creativity can be used as part of language-play. "When language play is incorporated in the concept of communication, the relationship between the meaning and linguistic form is seen as reciprocal. Given that choices are no longer constrained by reality in language play, it may become easier to impose some grammatical or phonological patterns upon intended meanings of actions" (Maynard 2007: 28). This type of humor in Japanese might also be manifested through a frequently observed technique for provoking laughter called '*sha-re*,' directly related to linguistic creativity, which corresponds more or less to the equivalent of 'punning' in the West, both in terms of its social use and the expected response from the listener. More specifically, following Akira Nakamura's definition, '*sha-re*' is "a rhetorical manipulation of a language that makes the indicative function of utterance complicated, introducing words whose pronunciations are homonyms, or very similar, but whose meaning differ" (Nagashima 2006: 75). An interesting point is that *sha-re* is used in everyday conversation and what is or is not considered *sha-re* has to do with the listener's ability to perceive it. Consequently, "to provoke this perception, the complex manipulations by the speaker are often deliberately allowed to create

misunderstanding so that laughter will be evoked both by the confusion and by the correct understanding of the confusion" (Nagashima 2006: 77). It is interesting to note that conversational exchanges differ in Japanese, as jokes normally form part of a conversation and are not normally presented in an unexpected manner as it may happen in many Western countries, where it is acceptable for a speaker to initiate a conversation with a joke. Consequently, the concept of 'joke' in Japanese culture does not exactly correspond to what we normally understand it to be. On the contrary, humor is normally integrated in a longer narrative or as part of a given scenario. In any case, the above-mentioned TV programs are a good example of sound-based humor in this language.

I am willing to predict that my future research will uncover phonological jokes in an even larger number of languages, and thus confirm the existence of this type of text in additional cultures. In most modern societies with access to global communication tools and migrations, increasingly frequent exposure to the dissemination of linguistic units from other cultures facilitated by globalization and the mass media will inevitably also bring with it some of the characteristic sounds of those previously less familiar languages. This idea can be illustrated with what is happening to English as a *lingua franca*, and to a lesser degree with other languages: "With foreign speakers and users of English now outnumbering native speakers by more than six, and with the ratio projected to widen in coming decades, Chinese but also Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, and other languages, including English's close cousins German, French and Spanish, will possibly alter vocabulary" (Dunton-Downer and Goodfellow 2010, no pagination). Therefore it is reasonable to suppose that many societies will continue to be exposed to the influence of other languages and cultures. It is thus clear that in-depth research on phonological jokes in other linguistic communities is still needed. I can only hope that such research will be forthcoming in the near future.

5.6. Contrastive Chart of Phonological Jokes

Language of the joke	Language(s) imitated
1. Afrikaans	English, Japanese
2. Arabic	Evidence found (Algerian Arabic, Ethiopian, Italian, Romanian, Russian)
3. Basque	Arabic, Chinese, Japanese
4. Bosnian	Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, English, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Macedonian, New Croatian, Slovenian, Swahili (African)
5. Bulgarian	Czech
6. Catalan	Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili (African)
7. Chinese	Evidence found (Wuhanese and other Chinese dialects)
8. Czech	Chinese, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Polynesian, Slovak, Spanish, Vietnamese
9. Danish	Arabic, Chinese, Finnish, French, Greenlandic, Norwegian, Russian
10. Dutch	Chinese, Japanese
11. English	Bulgarian, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish
12. Finnish	Chinese, Estonian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Swedish
13. French	Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Russian
14. German	Arabic, Chinese, Finnish, Russian, Turkish
15. Greek	Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German,

	Italian, Japanese, Swahili (African), Turkish
16. Hausa	Evidence found (Fula language)
17. Hungarian	Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, German, Japanese, Polish
18. Icelandic	Chinese, Faroese, Finnish, Japanese, Russian
19. Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)	Japanese
20. Italian	Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Congolese (African), German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish
21. Japanese	Evidence found (English)
22. Korean	Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian
23. Macedonian	Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, Turkish
24. Malagasy	Evidence found (French)
25. Norwegian	Chinese, Finnish
26. Polish	Arabic, Chinese, French, Georgian, Hungarian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian
27. Portuguese	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Guarani, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Romanian, Russian, Zulu (African)
28. Romanian	Arabic, Chinese, Moldovan
29. Russian	Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Chechen, Chinese, Czech, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Vietnamese
30. Serbian	Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Macedonian, New Croatian, Turkish

31. Slovenian	Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Macedonian, Romanian
32. Spanish	Arabic, Basque, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili (African)
33. Swedish	Chinese, Finnish, Norwegian, Russian
34. Tagalog	Evidence found (French, Japanese)
35. Taiwanese	Evidence found (Japanese)
36. Thai	English, Japanese, Laotian
37. Turkish	Arabic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belorussian, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish

Preliminary Conclusions Based on the Chart

1. Some languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese or Russian are consistently parodied by many other languages, even though the cultures may be geographically distant from each other. While these cultures may not share a common border or history, the perception regarding certain phonemes as pertaining to, or easily associated with, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian may be due, among other reasons, to the influence of the mass media and, consequently, the degree of exposure that speakers of some languages may have had in contrast to others. These perceptions may also have to do with elements of popular culture like consumer products. Such is the case of well-known Japanese toys, foods, or car brands, which have been popularized worldwide. Another possible explanation for the use of phonemes associated with Asian languages like Chinese and Japanese may be their monosyllabic features, which seem to have favored the creation of this type of sequences and humor. In the case of Arabic, which also appears in many cultures as a

language targeted for the creation of phonological jokes, the explanation may lie in the easily identifiable and characteristic voiceless velar fricative [x] sound frequent in this language, and which is similar to the English or Scottish sound in the word 'loch' [lɔx].

2. At the same time, it is worth noting that there tends to be a characteristic and, in some languages, a predictable tendency to parody a particular linguistic group or community of speakers that is geographically or politically close. Thus it is not surprising that the Danish imitate the Norwegian and Greenlandic languages, while the Taiwanese make fun of Japanese. Similarly, we find jokes in Spanish about Portuguese and Italian; jokes in Finnish about Swedish and Estonian; in Polish about Lithuanian and Ukrainian; and in Turkish about the languages spoken in Armenia and Azerbaijan. As we have seen, this phenomenon also occurs in dialects among the different language groups, as in the case of Chinese (Wuhanese).

3. Remarkably, in several examples unrelated and less commonly spoken languages also seem to lend themselves for imitation. For instance, jokes about Polynesian or Vietnamese languages in Czech; about French in Korean; or about Portuguese in Turkish. It would be interesting to study each example separately and thus to retrace the idea behind the creation of each joke in two *a priori* unrelated cultures having no evident cultural or historical connection.

As illustrated through this analysis, based as they are on making and hearing 'funny' sounds, phonological jokes may be one of the most basic kinds of humor, reflecting an irrepressible 'carnivalesque spirit.' A throwback to earliest sound imitations but now based on cultural-bound perceptions of what constitutes 'foreignness' from the particular standpoint of our own well-developed language system influenced by the mass media, phonological jokes produce laughter by colliding cultures and words, by mixing sound and

meaning in new and surprising ways. For in creating a phonological joke we imitate what a particular foreign language and its community of speakers sound like to us, having grouped its common features into our schema. We reproduce the dynamics of play. Performing the roles of teller and listener, evoking new voices, we take on that fluidity that is the capacity to surprise and astonish by reinventing, reconstructing and retransmitting specific 'foreign' sounds that we have exaggerated and distorted—a collection of different phonological strategies to pretend to sound like that foreign language.

The listener, in turn, by sharing in this repertoire of sounds and voices with his interlocutor, is able to appreciate this play because of his own associative memory of sounds. Hence the interactive and 'dialogic' imperative of phonological jokes—and for that matter of all jokes, with its basis not just in the 'shared perception' of sound inventiveness, but also in a kind of mischievous 'complicity' whereby the teller and listener together poke fun at a language they consider 'foreign.' As we have seen, this complicity also has its roots in a challenge to power and authority by violating social conventions and taboos, the fear of the alien and of the unknown. Understandably, the form this complicity takes is often scatological and sexual in response to the imperative of our own physicality and its diverse manifestations.

Given the wide variety of humorous texts, I have examined the ludic aspect of phonological humor and explored the challenging nature of this type of minimal text as a communicative event generating meaning through verbal imagery. To this end I have been able to establish a multilingual comparison of phonological jokes, through the lens of translation, focusing on the cultural messages that they carry and transmit. I hope that this study has provided researchers with an *entrée* into how particular languages or cultures may be perceived and represented by another language or community of speakers.

6. Conclusion

This study has emphasized the relationship between language and culture by describing the problematic associated with the configuration of humor in linguistic sequences, more precisely in phonological humor, using jokes as an example. A review of translation theory and humor theory within the context of cultural studies has established a connection between translatability and sociocultural phenomena, and yielded an insight into the function of humor and language as filters for cultural expression.

As we have seen, this relationship is especially important in phonological jokes, which depend on a series of linguistic and cultural assumptions that have to be retrieved in order for the joke to be understood. Indeed, when jokes in other languages are translated literally, in many cases a contextual explanation is necessary to correctly interpret their humorous intention. This is because phonological jokes are constrained, both semantically and formally, in requiring an association of sounds in one language that imitate phonemes of a different language. In turn, this use of sounds in parody form portraying a specific foreign language demonstrates the existence of a humorous perception in the source language that may not necessarily appear reflected in the target language when the joke is translated.

As amply demonstrated throughout this dissertation, jokes are very useful to translation theory as short, compact texts that facilitate the study and analysis of humor and culture. This makes it possible for translators to use these minimal texts to readily explore cultural components that would require much more effort to tease out in a larger text. Besides, as containers of semantic, ethnic, and interdisciplinary lore, jokes are a source of valuable data contributing to a range of diverse fields such as Anthropology, Translation Studies, Humor Studies, Phonetics, Contrastive Linguistics, and Cultural and Intercultural Studies. In spite of their condensed form, they are replete with significant and far-reaching cultural implications. It follows that analyzing such

humorous texts to find their encoded information constitutes an important linguistic and cultural endeavor.

Additionally, in view of the fact that sound-based humor exists in different languages, the widespread phenomenon of phonological jokes makes clear their prodigious capacity for yielding important information on how sound-based humor operates. Moreover, evidence from a wide spectrum of languages that have been presented in this study makes it plausible to think that the phonological component of language can play an important role in the configuration of humor in different cultures. Indeed, we have seen that 'sound' is a relevant component of humor; that it is used for a variety of purposes; and that it appears in different textual forms as having a specific sociolinguistic role that is integral to the phenomenon of social communication. Accordingly, by providing new data on how diverse languages and cultures are perceived, and how the translation of humor operates across languages and peoples, the analysis of humorous texts can shed light not just on language itself but also on what it is that we understand by the notion of 'culture.'

More to the point, the translation of phonological humor—perhaps more than any other type of humor—enables a review of theoretical elements that relate to the translatability or non-translatability of texts, as well as to the nature of translation itself. It constitutes a revealing exercise concerning the nature of a specific language and how it reflects its community of speakers: specifically, how the values, attitudes, idiosyncrasies of one culture are filtered through its language, as well as how one culture perceives another culture in different social contexts. Thus, since humor is an ongoing and ever-changing intellectual and emotional process that appears to be ubiquitous as well as specific to a time and place, the translation of humor becomes a fertile field that calls for substantial new investigation.

Among my particular contributions to this research on the interrelationship of humor and sound has been the establishment of a multilingual, multicultural comparison of phonological jokes. I also hope to

have contributed to the field by highlighting phonological jokes as a very specific type of linguistic sequence, which not only demonstrates a way of creating differences based on distinctive peculiarities found among the various languages presented in this study but, far more importantly, highlights our interconnectedness. This is evidenced in the examples of those jokes that could be readily translatable, from one language into another and that use humorous elements valid in different cultures. In effect, what such interconnectedness demonstrates is how, despite linguistic differences, there are some topics or themes that generate laughter in different cultures. Also demonstrated in my study of multiple languages is the fact that speakers of one language are shown to develop a common interest in imitating sounds of other languages based on their shared perception of the particular linguistic community in question.

Like an intricate piece of machinery, phonological jokes are composed of many interrelated elements that together constitute a complex interplay of phonological, morphological, semantic, contextual, and cultural factors. Not surprisingly, they possess many intriguing aspects that need further investigation. Paradoxically, as we have seen, it is often through the translation process and its many constraints that we become aware of the intricacies of this type of humor. While often difficult to explain and analyze in translation, phonological humor remains a fascinating enigma-puzzle: a play of, and on, words and sounds that can seduce and delight interlocutors of many different languages and cultures. As I have illustrated, sound can be deliberately culturally-bound: that is, it can influence the cultural distinctiveness of phonological humor which, in most instances, constitutes an inherent component of language, and thus the sociolinguistic idiosyncrasy of a particular community of speakers. On the other hand, sound-based humor also accounts for the almost universally shared assumption that humor can be created through sounds as mechanisms to enhance, reinforce or even define the punch-line of a humorous text.

Unlike other types of humor inherent in jokes or other humorous narratives, phonological humor seems to be a characteristic form that has not only prevailed over time but which shows increasingly frequent manifestations. Because of the influence of the mass media in today's globalized world, it can be predicted that—as already seen in diverse examples in various languages—this type of humor will continue to prevail, while incorporating the names of products, people, places, etc., disseminated across borders and around the globe. Consequently, in view of modern societies' constant and inevitable contact with other languages and cultures, and exposure to new words and sounds, foods and fashions, etc., it can be expected that humor will continue to manifest new trends as it incorporates more and more of these perceptions popularized as elements of everyday life. At the same time, such humor will keep on revealing how such elements are incorporated into new cultures both through language itself as well as through the perception of foreign languages.

Besides the cultural component or sociolinguistic references present in each phonological joke, there is inevitably a sound constraint that makes most of these sequences of difficult accessibility for the translator. In effect, the use of sounds in parody form underscores the existence of a humorous reality in one language that does not necessarily exist in another language. Given the exclusivity of these linguistic sequences to each specific culture, we observe that this feature of difficult access is particularly pertinent to languages that do not belong to the same group, origin or linguistic branch. On the other hand, the translatability of phonological jokes is sometimes related to the relationships among the linguistic branches to which the languages belong. Such a situation is likely to occur when the source language, target language, and their respective cultures are geographically and linguistically close, as well as when the languages parodied are for some reason, widely identifiable, e.g., monosyllabic languages. In fact, many of the different cultures featured here offer jokes that attempt to imitate widely spoken languages, such as Arabic, Japanese, Chinese or Russian, in spite of geographic distances and linguistic

differences. However, as we have seen, this does not guarantee 'easy' translatability since the phenomenon depends on myriad specific cultural factors, as well as linguistic ones.

In this sense, it goes without saying that in the 21st century we are profoundly affected by globalization and its incessant influx of foreignness in our lives. Exposed to constant news and information through social networks, travel, film, television, Youtube, the Internet, etc., social and work-related exchanges with new people, cultures and languages, not to mention exposure to countless advertisements of brand names and products reaching our stores and supermarkets from around the globe, we are constantly being brought in touch not just with popular culture but also with a variety of foreign cultures. So much so that we have gotten used to hearing new sounds and intonations that we perceive as foreign and yet consciously or subconsciously integrate into our own culture and daily lives. A good example that helps to explain why Japanese seems to be a popular language targeted in this type of joke is the Japanese words popularized through brand names like Toyota and Toshiba, or foods like *sushi*, *shashimi*, *teriyaki*, which as recently as 30 years ago were completely unknown and meaningless in many Western countries (see chapter 5). Small wonder then that with our spontaneous ability to parody peculiar accents, sounds, or linguistic sequences that trigger laughter in listeners, the repertoire of jokes using phonological humor as a linguistic device should be so vast and growing, if not inexhaustible.

A phonological joke tends to require the accompaniment of the speaker's creativity during its production, i.e., a change in the tone of voice, a deliberate distortion of a word, a set of gestures and facial expressions, etc., which help to bring out not just the wit inherent in the text itself but also the speaker's particular skill in producing the joke. Such are the considerations to be taken into account when examining the translation and interpretation of linguistic humor, and especially the translation of jokes and other verbal humor. We are, after all, dealing primarily with oral texts produced under a variety of specific

contextual circumstances. As a result, some topics that could be of great interest and which represent areas of potential future research have to do with joke performance—i.e., how the speaker reproduces the text—and a classification of sounds imitated in relation to languages parodied. Worth further exploration, these two aspects need to be looked at in conjunction with the translatability or untranslatability of jokes, especially given the dearth of research on the phonological components of language in translation and humor studies—a fascinating field with a lot potential for future investigation.

One possible application of such investigation, as well as of the research contained in this dissertation, is that of helping translators and scholars become more aware of different translation problems that may arise in the context of phonological humor. Given the increased demand for translated humorous media products marketed in multilingual and multicultural versions for cable television and DVDs, both for children and for the general public, it would be interesting to survey to what extent translators are aware of translating the sound component in such products; what kinds of decisions they are actually making; and especially what strategies they are consistently using in their translation of different texts. Are they paying attention to the semantics of sound within humorous scenes in subtitled and dubbed versions of films? In the absence of definite answers to these questions, future directions in the research of phonological jokes through the lens of translation would certainly contribute to a better understanding of humor within the field of translation studies. It would make the results of the analysis of specific examples relevant to the global entertainment industry while enhancing the quality of the translation and adaptation of these products. Needless to say, such an analysis of humor would also serve translators as a tool for exploring their own creativity.

Another potential field of research suggested through this study is the use of phonological humor and its effectiveness for persuasive communication, specifically advertising. The contrastive analysis of phonological humor across

cultures could help devise innovative strategies and techniques using such humor as part of their configuration, especially since humor messages are often employed in advertising to catch or engage the consumers' attention, as well as simply for playful and entertaining purposes.

Through the different examples of phonological humor analyzed, I hope to have demonstrated that sound is an idiosyncratic and complex phenomenon. Indeed, in an increasingly diverse and globalized world that demands high accountability for translation, there are plenty of examples that can demonstrate how translators could benefit from acknowledging the importance and interdependence of sound and meaning, and particularly from studying how sound operates from one language to another, as described in chapter 3 through examples of translation gaffes in marketing. For in an attempt to strike a balance between reproducing both the literal language and the spirit of any linguistic sequence, careful not to betray either, it is important for the translator to be aware of the wider range of phonological implications that the chosen terms may carry into the target language(s), as this may affect—and even defeat—the very purpose of the translation. At stake is nothing less than the difference between communication and miscommunication.

Based on the different examples presented, I have amply demonstrated not just the uniformity but also the absence of substantive differences, in the characteristics, general structure, and *raison d'être* of phonological jokes regardless of the language. The sounds produced are representative of the way in which humor is organized in one culture while, at the same time, crossing intercultural boundaries. It is, therefore, logical to expect that the rapidity of information transmission by the mass media, and its influence on our perception of a culture, combined with globalization and our exposure to new sounds and ideas, will help create new manifestations of phonological humor. Above all, from an ethnographic point of view, what this study has done is to present a wide spectrum of languages that belong to very different linguistic branches, thus underscoring the importance of the interaction of sound and

humor and, by extrapolation, emphasizing the plausibility of the claim that sound plays an important role in the creation and configuration of certain humor types across cultures.

To conclude, this dissertation has linked phonological jokes to childhood play as essential experiences of human development. I have demonstrated how the phonological aspect of language can be crafted into a culturally-bound humorous message, and how sound-based humor uses shared cultural assumptions among cultures and languages to create phonological jokes. I have shown that these manifestations operate in a variety of contexts: cultural, social, individual, and comparative. My goal throughout has been to see how the actual language contact between and among cultures contributes to the collective perception and representation of the 'foreign' element in phonological jokes; and how through the use of selected phonemes this 'foreign' element constitutes a mirror through which complex themes and subjects can be reflected in the ludic process, that is, through playfulness. My hope is that, by means of this research, I have taken scholars to the other side of the 'sound barrier,' that is, one step closer to future research on the sound components of language in both translation and humor studies, a field that shows much potential for future growth. It is this holistic approach to the phenomenon of sound as creator of meaning, and meaning expressed through sound, that must be a priority for researchers in view of the universality of humor as a sociocultural aspect of human experience.

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