

DEVELOPING TRANSLATION STUDIES TO  
BETTER ACCOUNT FOR AUDIOVISUAL  
TEXTS: AND OTHER NEW FORMS  
OF TEXT PRODUCTION

## 10.4. TRANSLATION PROCEDURES IN THE CHALLENGE<sup>1</sup>

### 10.4.1. APPLYING NEWMARK'S TRANSLATION PROCEDURES

Newmark tells us that "while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language" (1988: 81). The following are some of the most common translation procedures as described by Newmark in *Approaches to Translation* and *A Textbook of Translation*. We find that it might be convenient to label them for easy reference. In the same way we talk of vowel #3, in English phonology, we could talk of procedure p12 instead of *paraphrase*. Such a system would have the advantage of superseding (or, at least, coexisting with) cumbersome and sometimes ambiguous terminology (especially when they are translated!). Variations within procedures could have a small letter added to the number (e.g. p6a could refer to transposition involving a change from singular to plural or vice versa, and p6b accounting for an SL grammatical structure that does not exist in the TL).

- P1. *Transcription*, or *transference*: "loan words", adoption, transfer.
- P2. *One-to-one translation*, e.g. *la casa => the house*.
- P3. *Through-translation* ("loan-translation"). The literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, the components of compounds (e.g. *superman*, *ciència ficció*) and perhaps phrases. This procedure is also known as *calque* or loan translation.
- P4. *Lexical synonymy* (interlingual).
- P5. *Componential analysis*. The application of componential analysis for the practical purposes of translating.
- P6. *Shift* or *Transposition*, the replacement of one grammatical unit by another.
  - (a) change from singular to plural (e.g. *furniture => mobles*).
  - (b) an SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL (English *gerund*, modals or question tags).

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the programmes of the BBC comedy production *Yes, Minister*.

- (c) literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL (e.g. English passive to Catalan passive).
- (d) the replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure.
- (e) I suggest grammatical synonymy be included in this procedure, e.g. (from "The Challenge")  
 "...the dangers of speaking to people in the Department." =>  
 "...parlar amb la gent del Ministeri pot ser molt perillós."

Standard transposition is the most recurrent kind of transposition, and is nearly always mandatory in any context.

- P7. *Modulation* - or variation in point of view.  
 (g') "negated contrary" or rather "positive for double negative" is a concrete translation procedure and its appropriateness must depend on its formulation and the context.
- P8. *Compensation*. Compensation for the inability to account for some kind of Priority in one part of the text in another part of the text.
- P9. *Cultural equivalence*, e.g. (C.O.U. => A-level), & *Functional equivalence*. In the light of the findings of Hatim and Mason (1990), on the one hand, and Hewson and Martin (1991) on the other, we would want to add *semiotic equivalence* (e.g. the 57 varieties example).
- P10. *Translation label*, i.e. an approximate equivalent.
- P11. *Definition*.
- P12. *Paraphrase*.
- P13. *Expansion (étoffement)* -- grammatical expansion.
- P14. *Contraction* -- grammatical reduction.
- P15. *Recasting sentences*.
- P16. *Rearrangement, improvements*.
- P17. *Translation couplet*.
- P18. *Over-translation*, or increased detail.



- P19. *Under-translation*, or increased generalization.
- P20. *Notes, additions, glosses*. Supplementary information and explanation can also be included in this translation procedure. Newmark (1982: 21) "*The translator has to decide whether or not the reader requires, or is entitled to, supplementary information and explanation.*"

The last procedure is partly to blame for the whole existence of this thesis. It is clear that procedure p20. (footnotes and glosses) can never be used in dubbing. Then, why can't there be other specific procedures for certain kinds of text-types, or translating activities (e.g. liaison interpreting and dubbing), that are only (and justifiably) valid for certain areas of translation or text-types?

*Expansion* (p13) and *contraction* (p14), are not really translation procedures in a strict sense. They are a result of measuring the length (in time or space, or in number of words) of the solutions reached by applying other translation procedures. Only *transcription* (p1) or pure coincidence can prevent a rendering from being an example of either expansion or contraction. As such, expansion and contraction, and with them 'same length of segment' are probably better suited to the lists of potential Priorities (be brief, etc.) and/or Restrictions (e.g. timing, total number of words or characters allowed).

Expansion and contraction, then, may be in one of the following situations:

- (a) **allowed** (the result of some other procedure or Priority)
- (b) one or both of them are **disallowed** (the result of some Restriction)
- (c) one of them is **sought for** (i.e. it becomes a Priority, usually Local, possibly to accommodate some form of compensation).

A list of procedures such as the one presented above can never be taken as a classification because, unlike a description of English vowel phonemes, there is far too much overlap. 'Fuzzy sets' should not be mistaken for such a tremendous degree of overlap that allows four or five different procedure labels to be applicable to a single rendering. For example, there is no theoretical constraint to prevent a translator from thinking of a solution that could be at once an instance of, say, *cultural equivalent* (p9), *modulation* (p7), *transposition* (p6) and *expansion* (p13). More work needs to be done before a comprehensive taxonomy of procedures can be produced.

Many trainees take some time in assimilating the proper nature of most procedures; i.e. a translator does not usually tackle a problem by thinking to him or herself, "now, which is the correct procedure for this situation? I think I'll use a modulation", or even worse, "I haven't used a cultural equivalence yet, so I'll throw one in now." The correct approach is to do whatever you feel you can do (if there is a choice), or whatever you have to do (if a

solution for a given problem is anticipated in the style-book) in order to produce the most appropriate rendering that could reasonably have been expected, considering all of the operative Factors, Priorities and Restrictions of the process.

The identification and characterization of procedures is usually the work of the critic and the scholar who look at a series of finished translations and try to find certain regularities or patterns in the various results and solutions. So, in the light of all this we can draw the following three conclusions:

- (1) A full account of translation procedures is not the translator's responsibility, but the theoretician's
- (2) An in-depth study of translation procedures is more useful to the trainee than to the experienced translator, because its main purpose should be to enhance the translator's awareness of the variety of ways in which different problems can be tackled.
- (3) There can be no prescriptiveness in procedures unless they are included in the style-book for a particular translation job.

Newmark (1982: 32) tells us that all translation procedures vary between *constraint* (mandatory, due to the different forms of different languages and differences in lexical "mapping"; however, we will rephrase this as mandatory according to the operative Restrictions) and *option* (optional, thanks to lexical and grammatical synonymy, and metaphor; also optional by taking into account the Restrictions Reversed). Strictly speaking, this does not mean that some procedures are always mandatory while others are always optional (we must remember there are no absolutes in translation), although there is probably a definite bent towards one or the other for each procedure (e.g. *standard transposition* is nearly always mandatory). It means that, depending on the context, the application of a certain translation procedure is the only sound way of rendering a given word or expression (because of a constraint), whereas in other cases the translator is freer to choose whether or not he or she applies one procedure or another, or even choose from several different solutions within the same procedure (e.g. having a range of different synonyms to choose from in lexical synonymy). I would almost go so far as to say that first one must translate an item of the text in strict agreement to a pre-set scale of Priorities and afterwards, on looking back at what one has done, call it *modulation* or *contraction* or whatever.

Newmark's original descriptions of these procedures (1982: 30-32) have been extended and commented upon to fit in with this study. The examples that illustrate these procedures are taken almost entirely from The Challenge in order to see how well and how frequently they can be applied to foreign language dubbing for television.

#### 10.4.2. EXAMPLES FROM THE CHALLENGE

P1. *Transcription*, or *transference* ("loan words", adoption, transfer), which may or may not be required for LCI institutional or cultural words to provide authenticity or local colour respectively. Some of these remain in the TL permanently -*détente*, *démarche* ("adopted words" in English); others are "loans" - *kolkhoz*, *glasnost*, *sputnik*- they will not stay. *Naturalization* is the next step and adapts the LCI word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL (e.g. *futbol*, *mitin*, *bistec*, in Catalan).

From The Challenge we have the following examples:

- (1) The characters' names (e.g. Hacker)
- (2) The Daily Mirror.
- (3) Thames Marsh.
- (4) Gay => gai.
- (5) BBC (adapted phonetically), but not ITV, which is rendered as *la televisió privada* (definition).
- (6) Ascot, Wimbledon, Lords, Covent Garden, but not 'the Proms'. I would suggest the following order from most to least familiar to a Catalan TV audience: Wimbledon, Ascot, Covent Garden, the Proms (possibly culturally equivalent to the summer festival 'El Grec'), and Lords (a cricket stadium, possibly culturally equivalent to going to see 'Els Xiquets de Valls').

-----

P2. *One-to-one translation*, e.g. government => govern, urgent => urgent. Cognates should never be classified as *transcriptions*! I would also include in this category a number of expressions, taken as a unit ("exocentric" expressions in Nida's terminology), such as the following: once a fortnight => *cada quinze dies*.

-----

P3. *Through-translation* ("loan-translation"), e.g. House of Commons => *Cambra dels Comuns*, European Community => *Comunitat Europea*, a common procedure for international institutional terms. The literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, the components of compounds (e.g. Iron curtain => *Teló d'acer*, Thanksgiving Day => *Dia d'Acció de Gràcies*) and perhaps

phrases, is also known as *calque* or loan translation. In theory a translator should not "initiate" a through-translation, they should normally be used only when they are already recognised terms. The most obvious examples of through-translations are the names of international organizations which often consist of "universal" words which may be transparent for English and Romance languages, and semantically motivated for German and Slavonic: e.g. EEC, Comunitat Econòmica Europea. In *Yes, Minister*, some international institutions are mentioned, but most frequently we are dealing with British institutions.

- (1) Minister for Administrative Affairs => Ministre d'Administració Territorial. This might seem like a case of through-translation, but it is unacceptable in the context it appears in, for we are translating a fictitious Ministry in the English version, the epitome of bureaucracy, for a real Department in the Catalan Government. The fact that *Administració* sounds like 'Administrative' is important, but it is not enough to justify the presence of *Territorial* afterwards. The translator (or later on the TL scriptwriter or revisor) only needs to take into account a similarity of lip movement, and not a similarity of spelling or even sound (see "translation label" below).
- (2) Permanent Secretary => Secretari Permanent.
- (3) Prime Minister => Primer Ministre.
- (4) Local official => funcionari local (I suggest funcionari municipal).

-----

P4. *Lexical synonymy*, translation by a close TL equivalent. It is often possible to achieve closer interlingual than intralingual synonymy, particularly in reference to objects and actions. 'To die, to sleep, to dream' can be translated literally into any language, and therefore is hardly synonymy. Objects with identical functions, e.g. 'a house' 'a window', 'a bath', can usually be translated literally provided there is cultural overlap, although the objects may have a different shape, size and/or composition in and within the LC1 and TL culture. Similarly, general (non-specific) qualities can often be translated. There are, however, many specific objects, actions and qualities, often defined by inadequate and inaccurate synonyms both in mono- and bilingual dictionaries, where a neat componential analysis will give the translator a somewhat more satisfactory version. This procedure is used where there is no clear one-to-one equivalent, and the word is not important in the text. Here economy precedes accuracy (when dubbing we will have to say synchronization precedes accuracy). A translator cannot do without synonymy; he has

to make do with it as a compromise, but unnecessary use of synonyms is a mark of many poor translations.

- (1) Government reshuffle => la reorganització del govern: (reshuffle is a synonym of reorganization, but more specific to the context).
- (2) Department => Ministeri. (In the English text *Ministry* and *Department* are used as synonyms as well).
- (3) What figure do you have? => quin és el tant per cent?<sup>1</sup>
- (4) Cut ruthlessly => reduir dràsticament.
- (5) [I'm an expert] on the whole thing. => [sóc un expert] en la matèria.
- (6) I am going to insist => Exigiré.
- (7) A ministerial visit => Una visita oficial.
- (8) No quarrel with the USSR => cap conflicte amb la URS.
- (9) His next idea => una altra idea.
- (10) Transmission (of the interview) => (emetre) l'entrevista.
- (11) The responsible course. => la solució més sensata<sup>2</sup>.

-----

P5. *Componential analysis*. Some form of componential analysis should always be preferred to synonymy as a provisional translation procedure, particularly if the lexical unit is a key-word or is important in the context (not much room when dubbing). Synonymy is more acceptable for 'peripheral' words not directly related to the main argument of the text. But, in general, the use of synonymy, is the ruin of accurate translation, and paraphrase is even worse.

- (1) Borough => ajuntament.

Borough council => ajuntament also! (and consistori).

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples (3) - (12) are samples of contextual synonymy.

<sup>2</sup> I would suggest 'assenyada' here.



- (2) Are you saying he failed? => Insinua que ha fracassat?  
And what did you say? => Ah, i què va contestar?
- (3) (...) whether you would agree => si considera.
- (4) Why hasn't it been done before? => Per què no s'ha posat en pràctica?
- (5) Pre-set performance standards => resultats previstos.
- (6) Council projects => contractes municipals.
- (7) That is completely different => Això no hi té res a veure.
- (8) Out of date => [ha] perdut actualitat.
- 

P6. *Shift or Transposition*, the replacement of one grammatical unit by another. Types:

P6a Change from singular to plural:

e.g. Local Authorities. => Administració Local.

P6b An SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL (English gerund).

P6c Literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL (e.g. English passive to Catalan passive).

P6d The replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure.

- (1) Nonsense (noun) => absurd (adjective).
- (2) Certainly not => No és pas veritat.
- (3) Nine point nine seven per cent => un nou coma noranta-nou per cent (punctuation).
- (4) This is my top priority reading for the weekend. => Aquest final de setmana m'ho llegiré sens falta. (noun phrase => verb phrase; prepositional clause => adverbial clause).
- (5) (...) isn't it? => No ho troba? (question tags).
- (6) A very real vote-winner => que li farà guanyar molts vots.  
Noun phrase => relative clause.

- (7) Those things that might have embarrassed the PM. => allò tan comprometedor per al Primer Ministre. Verb => adjective.
- (8) Do you, Minister? => No dorm, diu? English pro-verbs, modals and auxiliaries.
- (9) Thames Marsh has no... => A Thames Marsh no tenim... Thames Marsh = subject => Thames Marsh = adverbial.
- (10) I *do* want => De debò<sup>1</sup> que vull.

-----

P7. *Modulation* = variation in point of view: e.g. perill de mort => mortally dangerous (i.e. *no* English equivalent); assegurança de malaltia => health insurance. "Negated contrary" or rather "positive for double negative" is a concrete translation procedure and its appropriateness must depend on its formulation and the context.

- (1) Yes, I think I was dropped right in it. => (From passive to active image)  
Sí. Estic convençut que hi vaig caure de ple.
- (2) You see, it has been suggested =>  
Crec que tot sembla indicar (I suggest: 's'ha insinuat').
- (3) Yes, I think I was dropped right in it. =>  
Sí. Estic convençut que hi vaig caure de ple.  
From passive to active sense and idiomatic equivalence.
- (4) Well I'm sure he won't be able to. Nobody else has. =>  
Estic segur que no serà capaç, igual que els altres.
- (5) Yes, I know, but the Minister wants to know. =>  
Jo sí, però el senyor Ministre potser no (= no ho sap).

---

<sup>1</sup> possibly: 'i tant'

- (6) What do you mean? =>  
Què vol dir?
- (7) It was always welcomed most warmly. => (passive to active)  
Ha provocat sempre entusiasme.
- (8) But, if you can't censor them =>  
Però, si no els podem censurar...

This would not have been necessary if there had been a 'vostè' as I have already suggested. This could then be rendered as: 'si no els pot censurar.'

- (9) It's to protect us against the French. =>  
L'amenança són els francesos.
- (10) He sounded as though (...) =>  
Em va semblar que (...)
- (11) You can't be serious! => (Positive for double negative)  
Ho deu dir de broma!
- (12) He kept calling it a challenge => (Positive for double negative)  
No parava de dir que era un repte.

-----

P8. *Compensation*, when loss of meaning or sound effect or metaphor in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part, or in a contiguous sentence. Compensating stress, intonation, and alliteration.

- (1) Compensating stress: J.H. *I* can tell you => Jo li puc explicar  
(compensation for 'you' in the next line)

B.S. You can?

B.S. Sí? ('you' is not translated here, but is compensated for by the optional inclusion of 'jo' in the previous line).

J.H. Yes... Tell him, Dr Cartwright.

J.H. Sí... Li expliqui, Dr Cartwright. (the joke is that James Hacker himself is really unable to tell Mr S.)

- (2) Compensating stress: Yes, *I* know, ... => Jo sí, ...
- (3) Stress and need for compensation: Do you mean you *can* (stress) stop the broadcast? => Vol dir que el pot aturar aquest programa? I suggest, sí que el pot..., or, vostè el pot..., as a means of "compensation".
- (4) Stress: the BBC wouldn't *want* (stress) to put the interview *out* (stress) => la BBC seria la primera (rendering of English stress) de no emetre l'entrevista.
- (5) Compensating intonation: I can't *understand* => No ho entenc en absolut.
- (6) Cultural background: H.A. Minister! You're not a *unilateralist*? (intonation)  
H.A. Ministre! No serà pacifista, oi?  
(compensating intonation => 'oi?').
- (7) Oh, I say, you've come out very well there => Que bé ha quedat vostè aquí, no troba?
- (8) Alliteration: 'It's not just the USSR we're frightened of, it could be the Fr (Fr = French or frogs)...' => Oh. No és pas només la URSS el que ens fa por. Podrien ser els gava... (gava = gavatxos).  
The who? => Els qui? (or rather 'Els què?', or simply 'qui?')
- J.H. The fr.. frigging Chinese. => Els gavadals de xinesos.
- (9) Alliteration: 'I got into a bit of bother over Ben Stanley's bunker.' => primer vaig criticar una mica el refugi ('búnker', using Nida's terminology, here we have a natural equivalent, but not the closest natural equivalent) d'en Ben Stanley. (I suggest a solution along the lines of: 'vaig bategar una mica el búnker d'en Ben Stanley').

---

P9. *Cultural equivalence*, e.g. (C.O.U., 'A-level'). *Functional equivalence*: this common procedure, applied to cultural words, requires the use of a culture-free word, sometimes with a new specific term; it therefore neutralizes or generalizes the LC1 word; and sometimes adds a particular thus: C.O.U. => Spanish secondary school leaving exam. This procedure is a cultural componential analysis, and it deculturalizes a cultural word. A similar procedure is used when a LC1 technical word has no TL equivalent. This

procedure occupies the middle, sometimes the universal, area between the ST language or culture and the TT language or culture. If practised one to one, it is an under-translation (e.g. French 'dégringoler' => tumble). If practised one to two, it may be over-translation.

An example of cultural equivalence: 'Civil Defence' => 'Protecció Civil'. This is not a good rendering through cultural equivalence; 'Protecció Civil' portrays a mental picture of civilians helping to control demonstrations, put out fires, evacuate a disaster area and so on. So when the characters say 'Protecció Civil? Vol dir això dels refugis nuclears?' it does not make sense to the Catalan viewers because this is not the first thing that would come to mind. So, the second question clarifies the meaning actually intended by the translator, the audience may be mildly surprised that the Minister should make such an inference. Therefore, I suggest: 'Defensa Civil'.

-----

P10. *Translation label*, i.e. an approximate equivalent. A provisional translation, usually of a new institutional term, sometimes proposed as a collocation in inverted commas, which may later be accepted: e.g. French promotion sociale => *social advancement*; French autogestion => *worker management* or *self-management at all levels*.

"The Challenge" provides us with the following example:

- (1) Minister for Administrative Affairs => Ministre d'Administració Territorial. We have seen how this translation cannot be accepted as an appropriate through-translation. Nor can it be accepted as an example of cultural equivalence for the same reason mentioned above. I suggest the expression be rendered as Ministre d'Afers Administratius, which vaguely rings of Ministre d'Afers Estrangers. This solution might possibly be regarded as some sort of translation label. Also the double lip movement of articulating the 'A' at the beginning of two words is kept.

-----

P11. *Definition*, usually recast as a descriptive noun-phrase or adjectival clause.

- (1) This is what was needed in the case of 'Ascot, Covent Garden and Lords', which should not have been transcribed as they were in TV3's version but 'defined' as Hipòdrom, l'òpera i el cricket; and likewise for
- (2) 'The Daily Mail' should have become something like: la premsa

sensacionalista, or even a change of phrase: el partit de l'oposició.

---

P12. *Paraphrase*. an amplification or free rendering of the meaning of a sentence: the translator's last resort for written texts, according to Newmark. However, the free rendering of the meaning of a sentence might be appropriate if it can be justified by a given system of Priorities; for example, where the Priority of the presence of a joke (the vocative function) at a certain point in the text were higher than the accurate transmission of lexical meaning.

---

P13. *Expansion*. Although we have already explained that *expansion* and *contraction* are more likely to be the inescapable result of some other translation procedure (e.g. transposition or modulation) than a proper procedure, at times, they may be considered lower-order Priorities, when space is a Restriction, and/or formal presentation and layout is fairly high Priority. Below are a few examples of expanded and contracted segments of text from The Challenge.

- (1) I just wanted => Però jo només volia.
  - (2) on the contrary => i ara, al contrari.
  - (3) typed => passat a màquina.
  - (4) I have a plan. => Resulta que tinc un pla.
  - (5) halve => reduir a la meitat.
  - (6) I know my duty => Sé quina és la meva obligació.
- 

P14. *Contraction* :

- (1) the wispy moustache. => el bigotet. Here, 'wispy' has become a suffix.
- (2) (blend): the council's weekly newspaper and monthly magazine => la revista setmanal de l'ajuntament.
- (3) (deletion): this Thursday p.m. => aquest dijous.



Deletion: ...extravagant, overstaffed and incompetent => *malgastadora, incompetent.*

Deletion: ...if he does need... => *I si necessita* (could have been *Si de debò necessita*).

Because of the presence of lip movement and the inescapable Restriction of synchronization, it is logical to expect that *contraction* will be just as rare a procedure as *expansion*, and that one of the Higher-order, Global Priorities in translating the script of a moving picture, an audiovisual text, is that it must be of the same length as the original, or as near to that as possible. In this sense, this kind of translation is quite different to the translation of other texts where the TT nearly always tends to be either longer or shorter, depending on the LC1 and the LC2. At this level, dubbing can be seen to be as a sort of interlinear translation. After close inspection *contraction* and *expansion* are not resorted to as infrequently as one might at first expect; it is only **the degree** to which an utterance can be expanded or contracted that has to be restricted, i.e. only a couple of syllables<sup>1</sup> are deleted from or added to an utterance.

---

P15. *Recasting sentences.* Romance language complex sentences are sometimes recast as English co-ordinate sentences. German complex sentences are sometimes rendered as two or more TL sentences.

In dubbing, this procedure can only be applied under certain conditions. Due to the fact that we are dealing almost entirely with dialogue and colloquial varieties of language, there will be a lower frequency of complex structures. This is an instance of a Restriction Reversed. In comedy, the presence of so-called **punch lines** will often make any restructuring totally impossible if the comic effect is to be retained, but I suspect that on a few occasions the whole joke might have to be rephrased in order to draw a smile or a laugh from the TT audience.

---

P16. *Rearrangement, improvements* (jargon, mistakes, misprints, idiolect, clumsy writing, etc.). Only justified if (a) the LC1 text is concerned mainly with facts, or (b) the writing is defective. Rearrangement of dialogue is out of the question in dubbing, and as far as improvements are concerned, there is also usually very little room for them, and if they involve something like improving a joke, they are probably a very risky matter. The

---

<sup>1</sup> The precise margins in which one can play with are better given in fractions of a second, since the spoken words of an audiovisual text are presented chronologically and not spacially.

original text must always be dealt with the utmost respect. However, I have pointed out that in comedy there might sometimes be a case for *restructuring* or *rephrasing* a joke, due to the priority of humorous effect.

-----

P17. *Translation couplet*, literal translation or translation label *plus* transcription. Another quite inadequate procedure for dubbing, but we must always work according to Priorities, so, exceptionally, this procedure could be a solution for explaining the meaning of a character's name or nickname, where it is also important to retain the original form of the name because it is also important for sound effect. It is probably easier to find this procedure being used in non-fictional dubbing. There are no examples of this procedure in The Challenge.

-----

P18. *Over-translation*, or increased detail. As over-translation usually involves expansion it is also difficult to apply, although it might often seem totally justified. It is often the result of componential analysis. Here is one example from The Challenge.

(1) How do you propose to extinguish local government bureaucracy? =>

Què farà per apagar el foc de la burocràcia a l'administració local? (this version must be understood in the wider context in which it is uttered).

-----

P19. *Under-translation*, or increased generalization. This can be said to happen, for example, when a superordinate is chosen as the translation of a given word.

(1) Half of them are self-important busybodies on an ego trip =>

Alguns són uns egoistes i uns creguts.

-----

P20. *Notes, additions, glosses*. Not very advisable in a humorous piece if it is to make us laugh, for, as we all know, a joke that has to be explained is not nearly half as funny. Moreover, this procedure is totally impossible when translating a text for audiovisual communication, unless we consider it as a means of clarifying certain points for the dubbing director and actors concerning intonation or other aspects of the 'delivery' of the translated script.

## 10.5. METAPHORS AND METONYMS IN THE CHALLENGE

### 10.5.1. METAPHORS

Nida (1964: 93) says that within componential techniques, we must account for figurative extensions of meaning. In attempting to deal with referential meanings we are constantly troubled by problems of figurative extensions of meaning. Nevertheless, these various extensions of meaning are part and parcel of the semantic structure of a word. He goes on to say that figurative extensions of meaning arise primarily from the process of selecting one or more components of the meaning of a particular term and extending them to cover some object which has not been within the domain of such a word. New expressions and fresh figures of speech have much greater impact upon the receptor than old clichés and trite sayings, and impact is an important Factor in mass media communication.

Not all societies or speech communities make the same extensions (Nida; 1964: 94). Languages<sup>1</sup> may also differ in the extent to which they employ metaphorical extensions, especially in certain areas of vocabulary. For example, English has nothing like the number of metaphors based on animals common in Brazilian Portuguese (it is quite clear that these differences arise from the differences in the environments and not in any structural or morphological constraints of either of the two languages). Languages differ also in the readiness with which they admit new figures of speech.

Nida does acknowledge that the metaphors in a language are often closely related to the actual experience of the people. If semantically exocentric expressions (a group of words that function as a lexical unit) in the LC1 are translated literally (each word taken separately), they are generally interpreted as endocentric (the meaning of each word is understood regardless of the surrounding words), i.e. more or less literally word for word (probably with the exception of original metaphors). Metaphors must often be translated as nonmetaphors, according to Nida, since the particular extensions of meaning which occur in the LC1 have no parallel (or a different one) in the LC2.

The essential problem posed by metaphors in translation, says Mary Snell-Hornby in

---

<sup>1</sup> Nida talks of 'languages' as purely linguistic objects, but it is much more useful, as well as accurate, to talk of language cultures, as Hewson and Martin (1991) do. A term such as *language culture*, or the *language variety* + the cultural context of a given community, accounts better for differences between languages that are not due to structural or morphological features but to sociocultural environments and patterns of behaviour.

*Translation Studies* (1988: 56), is that different cultures, hence different languages, conceptualize and create symbols in varying ways, and therefore **the sense of the metaphor is frequently culture-specific**. Such is the case, she points out, with metaphors involving animals. An example of my own stock would be that in English a foxy lady is a sexy lady, a vixen is a spiteful or quarrelsome woman, whereas in Spanish and Catalan a man who is a fox is cunning and a woman who is a vixen is no better than a prostitute.

Newmark (1982: 46) divides metaphors into five types:

- (1) **Dead** (practically undiscernable)
- (2) **Cliché** (abused metaphors)
- (3) **Stock** (popular, idiomatic)
- (4) **Recent**
- (5) **Original**

His procedures for translating metaphor, in order of preference are the following<sup>1</sup>:

- (A) Reproducing the same image in the TT provided the image has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate register of the LC2.
- (B) The translator may replace the ST image with a standard LC2 image which does not clash with the TT culture.
- (C) Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image.
- (D) Translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense (or occasionally a metaphor plus sense).
- (E) Conversion of metaphor to sense.
- (F) Deletion. A deletion of metaphor can be justified empirically only on the ground that the metaphor's function is being fulfilled elsewhere in the text.
- (G) Same metaphor combined with an explanation.

---

<sup>1</sup> I have changed the original 'SL' (source language) and 'TL' (target language) and for ST (source text) and TT (target text), not used by Newmark, in the places where I consider them to be terminologically more accurate.

### 10.5.2. METAPHORS FROM THE CHALLENGE AND HOW THEY ARE TRANSLATED IN THE TV3 VERSION

The capital letters in brackets, correspond to Newmark's methods as outlined above.

- (1) 'his new empire' (cliché) =>  
'les seves noves atribucions.' (E).

Undertranslation produces a loss of the implied criticism of a power-hungry, interfering Minister. There is no apparent reason why 'empire' could not have been translated literally.

- (2) 'You have to take on more firemen to extinguish more fires.'  
(stock, metaphor) =>  
'Per curar més malalts s'han de contractar més metges,  
per apagar més focs, més bombers, i... ' (A)

This metaphor is fairly noncultural, especially from English to Catalan, and can therefore be translated literally. Next, we find the following:

'And how do you propose to extinguish local government bureaucracy?'

=>

'I què farà per apagar el foc de la burocràcia a la adminstració local?' (A).

Although the same image is reproduced the translator has felt the need to overtranslate 'extinguish' as 'apagar el foc de'.

- (3) '...when the national cake has been divided up...' (stock metaphor) =>  
'...quan s'hagin repartit els privilegis...' (E).

I think here the meaning of the metaphor would have been rendered more appropriately as '...quan s'hagi repartit la riquesa nacional...' only if it was considered that the TT audience would be incapable of understanding a reproduction of the ST metaphor, e.g.

'...quan s'hagi repartit el pastís...'

The translator might have considered it was a stock metaphor in English, but not in Catalan. In this case, when a stock metaphor is more unusual in the LC2, it is often more convenient than harmful to retain the same metaphor, provided it can readily be understood, as it will cause greater impact.

- (4) 'all Local Government reforms rebound on us.' (dead metaphor) =>  
les reformes de la Administració Local ens afecten. (E).

I suggest something along the lines of: '...ens afecten de retruc.'

- (5) 'Anyhow. I'm going to get a grip on them.' (stock, idiomatic) =>  
'En fi. Hauran de filar prim.' (B).

This is also an example of modulation; the object of the verb in the original becomes the subject in the translation.

- (6) 'I implore you to stay out of the minefield of local government.  
It is a political graveyard.' (cliché) =>  
'Li suplico que no entri en aquest camp de mines  
que és la administració local, és un cementiri  
de polítics.' (A).

I am not sure whether a more literal translation ('és un cementiri polític') would not have been a more appropriate translation because it makes better use of figurative language.

- (7) 'Local authorities are dragging their feet.' (stock, idiomatic) =>  
'les autoritats locals no fan gairebé res.' (E).

Here the translator should have looked for a standard LC2 metaphor or idiom to account for the Priority of character portrayal through the character's speech. It is a feature of the politician's speech to use such a high proportion of stock metaphors and clichés.

- (8) 'swanning down here from Whitehall' (stock) =>  
'venir amb aires de grandesa.' (E)/(F).

This translation explains the meaning of 'swanning' in this context (E), and deletes the expression 'Whitehall', which is a metonym of Central Government (F). A good example of undertranslation.

- (9) 'I thought that Gordon had squashed it.' (dead) =>  
'Que no l'havia liquidat en Gordon?' (B).

This looks like a case of replacing one dead metaphor for another, although the original has more visual impact than the translation.

- (10) 'He slipped it to the Minister privately, under plain cover. Brown envelope job.'  
(Culturally bound stock metaphor) =>  
'Ha passat el projecte al Ministre directament,  
en privat, de sotamà, m'entén?' (B).



The English image 'brown envelope job' is a rather complicated one to translate because it brings together two separate images; first, *brown envelope* which surely refers to material that is sent through the post in a plain envelope so the neighbours (or the postal service) do not know what sort of purchases one makes by mail order, e.g. pornography. Second, *job* that is reminiscent of a certain type of discourse associated with criminal actions, as in the expression *an inside job*. So, the combined effect of the two images (plus *slip* and *plain cover*) produce an impression of a serious case of subversiveness and disloyalty. Part of the humour is derived from the cruel irony of describing an honest action as a *brown envelope job*. It is an important illustration of the twisted Civil Servant logic.

- (11) 'criteria for failure before they were given the go-ahead.' (dead) =>  
'uns criteris d'execució abans que se'ls doni llum verda.' (B).
- (12) 'Well you can scrap the plans ...' (stock) =>  
'renunciar al projecte...' (E).
- (13) 'I've made an appalling cock-up.' (stock, idiomatic) =>  
'm'he ficat de peus a la galleda.' (B).
- (14) 'Yes, I think I was dropped right in it.' (stock, idiomatic) =>  
'Sí. Estic convençut que hi vaig caure de ple.' (B).

This is also an example of modulation from passive to active.

### 10.5.3. METONYMS

- (1) 'You are now *Mr Town Hall* as well as *Mr Whitehall*.' (cliché) =>  
'ara dirigità l'Administració Local i també l'Admnistració Central'. (E).

Here the whole effect of the next ten or twelve lines is lost because of this kind of translation. What is required is (i.e there seems to be a Local Priority for) some kind of image or nickname, which must carry a negative connotation, in order to make the dialogue work. I suggest something like:

'ara serà l'amo dels funcionaris municipals a més dels governamentals', or,

'es diu que ja és l'Administrador Suprem dels funcionaris governamentals i municipals.

- (2) 'Whitehall' (standard) =>  
'L'administració central.' (E).

- (3) 'I've come here directly from Number Ten.' (cliché) =>  
'He vingut aquí directament des del número deu.' (A).

This procedure does not work in this instance, because the TT audience cannot be expected to know that 'number ten' is a way of referring to the Prime Minister (even though some of them may actually know).

- (4) 'Ascot, Wimbledon, Lord's, Covent Garden, the Proms.' (standard) => (E).  
'Ascot, Wimbledon, Lords, Covent Garden i els concerts.'

I suggest the following, on the grounds of textual cohesion:

'Les curses de cavalls, el tennis, el cricket,  
l'opera, i els concerts d'estiu.'

Here full comprehension has been sacrificed, and the method is not consistent, for 'the Proms' is explained while the rest are not, but should have been. Here, there is no room for explanatory footnotes.

## 10.6. MORE EXAMPLES FROM THE TV3 VERSION OF THE CHALLENGE

- (1) '...the Right Honourable James Hacker, MP.' =>  
'l'honorable James Hacker, diputat.'

LC1 interference. Here we have an example of standardized language in English, and the formula is forced into the Catalan language. There is no proof elsewhere that the translators are trying to show the TT audience what English formulaic language is like. Here the Priority is to achieve functional equivalence and to use an LC2 expression that is appropriate to the tenor of discourse, i.e. a BBC reporter interviewing a Minister.

- (2) '...this country's chief bureaucrat.' =>  
'el més gran buròcrata del país.'

In this example there is an obvious lack of equivalent effect. 'Chief' in this context does not necessarily mean 'head' or 'boss', but is more readily understood as an adjective meaning 'biggest', with a clearly negative connotation. However, in the translation, the word 'cap' sounds almost positive. I propose: 'el buròcrata capdavanter del país'.

- (3) 'I beg your pardon?' =>  
'Com es menja això?'

The English and Catalan versions may have the same pragmatic meaning, but I find the English formula less aggressive and more polite. I suggest:

'Com diu?'

(4) Seven examples of equivalent idiom

- a: 'Sí, Ministre' should normally be 'Sí, Senyor Ministre.' so as to reproduce tenor of discourse. The fact that this version is not used may be justified in terms of the Restriction of timing.
- b: 'At the end of the day' => 'al capdavall.'
- c: 'You can't trust the Frogs!' => 'Sí, els gavatxos són de guardar.'
- d: 'You can say that again.' => 'Oh, ja ho ben pot dir.'
- e: 'Get onto it straight away' => 'Anem per feina de seguida.'
- f: 'But er, oh well, truth will out.' => 'Però en fi. Tard o d'hora tot se sap.' The original version sounds slightly more proverbial.
- g: 'We haven't tried that on them before, have we?' =>  
'No em provat mai d'enredar-los així, oi que no?'

The result is expansion.

(5) Cultural equivalents:

- a: 'The House of Commons' =>  
'El Parlament': institutional equivalent.

As Parliament consists of two Houses, the proper cultural equivalent would be 'el Congrés dels Diputats' or 'el Congrés'. Unless we can interpret that there is a will to draw the closest possible parallel to Catalan institutions.

- b: 'Minister, you do know that the borough in question contains the PM's constituency. And that the PM's election agent was the councillor who led the delegation.' =>

'Ministre, no ho sap que en el municipi en qüestió hi ha el col·legi electoral del Primer Ministre, i que l'interventor del Primer Ministre era el regidor que encapçalava la delegació?'

- c: 'The Russians, the Americans, the French'.

In many respects, although not entirely, these people are perceived in a very similar way in England and in Catalunya.

- d: 'the ITV' => 'la televisió privada.'

- (6) '...the policies...' => 'el programa.'

A fitting translation for the context (because they have the same contextual same meaning), since 'a programme' is the sum of all the policies.

- (7) 'Exactly.' => 'Això mateix.'

Colloquial and pragmatic equivalence.

- (8) '...Humpty...' => 'Humphrey.'

Possibly the most difficult part of the whole text to render in Catalan. Not very important anyway. A thorough translator would probably search for compensation somewhere else in the TT. The English 'Humpty' for 'Humphrey' sounds downgrading and patronising. It is a reminder of Arnold's superior position in relation to Humphrey. At a semiotic, intertextual level, 'Humpty' might even remind some of the ST listeners of Humpty Dumpty. Alternative solutions might be:

'fill meu!' or, 'Humphrey meu'.

- (9) 'He sounded as though he wanted to *do*<sup>1</sup> things about your new Local Government remit. He kept calling it *a challenge*.' =>

'I em va semblar que volia fer coses relacionades amb la reforma de l'administració local. No parava de dir que era un repte.'

Serious mistake of interpretation here. The meaning of 'about' has been rendered without taking any notice of the context. A better version would be:

'volia (realment) **fer** coses per reformar l'administració local.'

- (10) 'I know my duty, Arnold.' =>

'Sé quina és la meva obligació.'

'Arnold' is probably deleted here because the Catalan sentence is longer and the translator could afford to sacrifice it. Here is an example of the Restriction of timing, that is so characteristic of audiovisual texts. Another solution might have been 'Sé quin és el meu paper.' / 'Sé que em toca fer.' because the TV3 version sounds a little out of place.

- (11) 'I'm C of E.' =>

'Sóc anglicà.'<sup>2</sup>

Background information filled in by translator. Here the translator has clearly done his homework, and found out that 'C of E' stands for Church of England, and explained its meaning to the TT audience. 'Sóc C de E' would have been irrefutable evidence that the translator did not know what he was translating (a Restriction on the process imposed by poor translator competence). Too often TT readers and TT TV audiences have to put up with this sort of translation. I have deliberately chosen this example to make this statement as I have already said that this study is not meant to be a criticism of TV3's version of The Challenge.

- (12) Questions of intonation:

In this point, the informal labels for the various 'types' of intonation are only meant to show how the utterance is expected to be perceived by the ST audience; it is quite possible that the same 'acoustic' intonation patterns will have different terminological labels, but at

---

<sup>1</sup> This word is very heavily stressed, the implication being that Ministers should not be allowed to actually do anything worthwhile.

<sup>2</sup> I suggest *sóc cristià* for humorous effect.

this stage of my research I have not wished to go into a detailed study intonation patterns. We might say that the labels proposed below correspond more specifically to the pragmatic, illocutionary force of the intonation:

a: 'patronizing' intonation:

'Oh, really, Minister.' =>

'Oh, però què diu, Ministre?'

b: 'surprised reaction' intonation, compensated for with words:

'I can't understand' =>

'No ho entenc en absolut.'

c: 'cynical' intonation:

'Well, I will now!' =>

'A partir d'ara.'

I suggest the intonation be rendered by:

'Almenys a partir d'ara', or 'A partir d'ara, sí.'

d: 'sarcastic' intonation:

'Oh that's great. Stop school meals? Buy no textbooks? Turn the OAPs out into the cold?' =>

'Oh. Això rai. Podem suprimir els menjars de les escoles públiques i deixar els avis a la intempèrie.'

e: 'childish reaction' intonation:

'We didn't build it.' =>

'No ho vam fer nosaltres.'

'But you maintain it?' =>

'Però bé el conserven.'

'It's only a very small one' =>

'És molt petitet.'

f: 'feigned surprise' intonation:

'Did you?' =>

'Ah, sí?' alternatively 'Què em diu, ara?'





g: 'reassuring' intonation:

'Oh, Ludovic Kennedy tried to trap you. Yes, well, I'm sure he did.'

=>

'Ah, en Ludovic Kennedy va intentar atrapar·lo.  
Sí, n'estic segur.'

(13) '...all this waste and extravagance that's going on.' =>

'...tota aquesta dilapidació espantosa, tota  
aquesta malversació.'

This is a rather 'free' rendering of the original, which would certainly not pass the 'back-translation test'<sup>1</sup>.

(14) 'A popularity poll for the government here in Westminster.' =>

'un sondeig de la popularitat del govern de la  
nació.'

Isn't the common expression in Catalan: 'el govern central'? Again, we can see that the translator is confronted with the interesting dilemma of establishing equivalence of British institutions at the level of Spain or only Catalonia. Is Catalonia seen by the translator as being a political equal to the United Kingdom, or to Scotland, for example? The answer to such an ideologically loaded question should probably be provided by the TI, the client, TV3 dubbing department in this particular case,

(15) 'ten thousand pounds' =>

'deu mil lliures.'

Here we have to hope that the Catalan audience will have a rough idea of the buying power of £10,000, or the exchange rate. The translation of amounts of money in different currencies, in different buying-power contexts, and in different historical periods, is a recurrent problem in translating, and there are a variety of solutions available, depending on the operative Factors, the Restrictions of the process, and the Priorities of the translation order. The solution provided above (literal translation) is hardly ever appropriate, especially in fiction, unless there are other compensatory procedures to give the TT receptors an idea of the buying power of each sum of money.

---

<sup>1</sup> The TL version is translated back into the SL to see if one comes up with the original version again.

- (16) 'With what?' =>  
'Presentin què?'

Maintaining the textual cohesion of the dialogue, because the end of the previous sentence was:

'... accompany it with failure standards' =>  
'... també presentin unes normes d'execució.'

- (17) 'Well, you got me this job.' =>  
'Va ser vostè qui em va donar aquest càrrec.'

For reasons of textual coherence I would say that a Permanent Secretary is not in a position to 'give' a Minister a job (=post), so I would suggest 'aconseguir' instead of 'donar'.

- (18) Questions of dialect:

- 1: 'frightfully well.' =>  
'molt bé.'

The Minister and his aids speak in a marked RP accent with upper-class expressions such as this one. This feature of their speech does not often come through in the translation.

- 2: 'Look mate, what makes you think...' =>  
'Escolti, què li fa suposar...'

The English version sounds like London working class, in sharp contrast to the Minister's abovementioned RP. A possible solution for the Catalan version could be:

Escolteu mestre, què us fa...'

- (19) Textual coherence

- a: '...the disadvantaged of indispensable services.' =>  
'Perquè això significaria privar els minusvàlids de serveis indispensables.'  
'Jacuzzi pools?' =>  
'Les pistes d'esquí?'

In this case, if the translator had translated 'Jacuzzi pools' as 'piscines de hidromassatge', the question would not have been funny at all, the illocutionary force of the utterance would have been lost, because there would be a logic in providing 'piscines de hidromassatge' for 'minusvàlids' which needs to be absent

and sound ridiculous. This is why the translator has gone for the incongruence of 'minusvàlids' and 'les pistes d'esquí'. However, if 'the disadvantaged' had been translated more accurately in the first place as 'les classes menys afavorides' this change would have been unnecessary.

b: 'How?' =>

'Com?'

'How' here means 'how is it different?'. However, 'Com?' could mean, 'I beg your pardon?', or even an angry echo 'com, que no té res a veure?' I suggest:

'Ah, no?' or 'Per què no?'

especially as the answer includes 'perquè':

'Well, there has to be someone to, run the ... you know.' =>

'Bé, perquè, bé, hi ha d'haver algú per, em, governar... el...'

(20) 'His new responsibilities were for enjoying, not for exercising'

'les noves atribucions eren perquè es divertís, no perquè s'hi capfiquès.'

Wrong! misinterpretation of 'enjoy' for its primary meaning; 'es divertís' should have been something along the lines of: 's'hi sentís bé'.

This is one instance where the translator would have benefited from Newmark's (1982) distinction between four different types of meaning: primary, secondary, collocational and nonce meaning, depending on the frequency of an item's appearance with a given meaning and the degree of independence of the word-sense relationship from the contextual Factors for its correct interpretation. In this case the meaning of 'enjoying' is its collocational meaning, because it depends on 'responsibilities' for its correct interpretation.

(21) '...a change of policy?' =>

'una tàctica nova?'

We cannot agree with this rendering, because it is not the closest equivalent and there is no apparent (Restriction that would serve as a) justification. The translation should be: 'un canvi de política?'

(22) 'Well, what about Thames Marsh?' =>

'I què va passar amb Thames Marsh?'

The verb 'passar' must be considered as an instance of overtranslation that is very difficult to justify in the context in which it appears. Maybe something like the following would be more fitting:

'i què em pot dir de Thames Marsh?' or 'I a T.M. què?'

(23) 'Number Ten have been trying to keep it quiet' =>

'Els del número Deu feien el que podien per mantenir-lo en secret.'

Here is a good example of what Nida would call the Priority of formal equivalence over dynamic equivalence. Here 'Number Ten' is a way of referring to the PM's aides. Most of the TT audience cannot be expected to grasp this easily.

(24) 'the BBC's Director of Policy' =>

'el Cap de Programació de la BBC.'

This is one instance of the political terminology that is used in the series. This particular solution can be considered as a very free application of the *through translation* procedure.

(25) 'volia tractar d'atrapar-me?'

Here the style of the translation could be improved. I suggest 'volia atrapar-me' or even better 'miraria d'empaitar-me.'

## Chapter Eleven

### Translating TV Comedy

Having seen the basic features of a descriptive Priority-oriented model of the translating process, we will now proceed to see how it can be applied to the specific case of translating television situation comedy. First of all, we will look at the basic **Factors** involved in translating this type of text.

One of the aims of this thesis has been to discover what **all translations and translating processes** have in common and what makes each translation different from the rest. In the case of translating television situation comedies, we will first want to say that because they involve translating, they can be described and analysed in terms of Factors, Priorities and Restrictions. Some of these will overlap with the Factors, Priorities and Restrictions of other translating processes and contexts, while others will be unique to, and therefore characteristic of, this text-type and context for translation.

**Coherence** can only be achieved in this kind of translating activity, as in any other translating context, by a careful analysis of as many operative Factors as possible, of both the ST and the TT, by a keen **awareness** of available strategies, an accurate **identification** of problem areas, but also of more fruitful situations where such problems are not operative. **Faithfulness**, as we have defended in previous chapters, will be a matter of keeping as closely as possible at all times to a **realistically attainable goal expressed in clear terms**. This is what all translation processes have in common, according to the results of this research, and this chapter is meant to look at the way translations of television scripts can be more successful.

### 11.1. POTENTIAL SHORTCOMINGS IN TV DUBBING AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

- (1) There is always the danger of **interference** from some aspect of the ST, which is often related to LCI lexical or structural Factors. But the translator will have to watch out for other potential pitfalls in any other area such as those illustrated in the three dimensions of discourse described by Hatim and Mason (1990). This kind of TT weakness can be put down to Restrictions in the *translator competence* department, and also the difficulties involved in adapting or manipulating the dynamics of on-screen dialogue and conversational conventions of the LCI.

One of the most unfortunate consequences of widespread, seemingly-systematic interference or borrowing of features (that are characteristic of the audiovisual ST) may be that the resulting product (i.e. the dubbed foreign version) will be offensive to a portion of the TT audience who are sensitive to the so-called "imperialism" of foreign programmes on their culture and language. A number of intellectuals and politicians have acted as mouthpiece for such reactions. Their argument is that a high percentage of foreign programmes (typically from the USA) is not only propagandistic regarding the themes, sociocultural values, and messages contained in them, but also pernicious regarding the way in which they influence and change the forms and expressions of the vernacular.

These problems could be prevented by improving the translators' ST reading skills (or by providing more knowledgeable LCI informants) and TT writing skills (and/or better proof reading) and by creating a greater awareness of potential pitfalls through the existence of specialized handbooks and style-books.

- (2) Other weaknesses are the result of applying **an unsuitable** (or an incoherent, or inconsistent) **set of Priorities** for the original purpose of the translation. In traditional terms we would have said that the wrong method / approach was being used on the text as a whole, and that in certain areas the procedures being applied were not consistent, either with the method or other procedures used elsewhere in the translation. The latter case is what our model would describe as a *misidentification of Local Priorities*. We have already mentioned that when problems arise the translator frequently falls back on literal translation when more adequate solutions cannot be thought of. The importance of lip-synchronization must be carefully weighed against all the other Factors of the moment.



Among the potential consequences of weaknesses of this sort we envisage the following in the case of television comedy:

- (a) There may be a lack of coherence and a loss of intelligibility; certain parts of the TT will be unnecessarily obscure, vague or ambiguous.
  - (b) A number of jokes may be lost, entirely or partially. Either the intention to joke will not be identified or the impact of the joke will be considerably diminished.
  - (c) One of the most recurrent weaknesses is a loss of naturalness. In certain parts of the programme, the text will sound odd because the type of language used will be inappropriate to the tenor of discourse, or even the mode of discourse. Many examples of this point can be found when the ST makes frequent use of a variety of textually meaningful social dialects, idiolects and registers.
- (3) If the two types of problem areas outlined above are really very bad the text may even result in **incomplete** (or naught) **understanding**, or **misinterpretation** of the ST (its denotative / connotative / referential / textual / meaning): i.e. TT ambiguity or nonsense. TT nonsense in comedies refers to situations where a comedy is hardly perceived as a comedy at all, but as a serious criticism or a failed attempt at some sort of style or effect, among other disastrous consequences. In the case of the *Yes, Minister* series, for example, it would not be very far-fetched to imagine a bad translation producing an impression on the TT receptors that the programme is seriously undermining the whole Parliamentary democracy of the United Kingdom, or even of all other similar forms of Government.

## 11.2. FACTORS INVOLVED IN DUBBING TELEVISION COMEDY

We will now propose a list of those Factors that have to be taken into consideration when producing or analysing translations into Catalan of situation comedies produced by British television

- (1) The common ground of all translations: approaches to translation (theories and methodologies), training (e.g. schools, diplomas), tendencies, translator competence. This point includes a comparative study of all of the linguistic, communicative and sociocultural Factors of the ST / TT producers and receptors. This point has been studied in depth in the previous Chapters.

- (2) Dubbing techniques, means, and technologies available at the moment, potential Restrictions and Restrictions Reversed.
- (3) The Factors involved in television production, programming and broadcasting; television as mass media, audio-visual communication, a social phenomenon, as a professional activity.
- (4) The professional context. The degree of necessary and actual team work, including the stage of translating the verbal signs and the later stages of adjusting, editing and performing. The specific translating conditions and the whole process of producing a Catalan version of a British situation comedy. Points 2 - 4 will be studied in this Chapter.
- (5) Humour and comedy: its language, how it works, its varieties. Similarities and differences between the two, ST and TT (in this case British and Catalan), intended audiences. The universals and special cases of humour and comedy. This point is analysed in Chapter 12.

Hewson and Martin (1991: 100) provide us with an example of the importance of identifying specific operative Factors and Priorities for specific translating processes. They write that in a play like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* the communicational strategies (i.e. the communicational Factor) are at least as important (i.e. become a Higher-order Priority) for the reception of the play as the (semantic) content of the words exchanged by the characters. Considering the differences in expressive emphases (what we identify as a Restriction) and theatrical conventions (these are to be included in a hypothetical theatrical translator's style-book) between LC1 and LC2, the problem confronting the translator, according to Hewson and Martin, is to decide to what extent and in what forms he or she is going to stimulate these structures (according to our model the decisions should be expressed in the form of a hierarchy of Priorities). Will he, ask Hewson and Martin, just rely on the actor's talent for meaningfully highlighting these passages or on the audience's recognition of pragmatic consequences, or will the translation be inflected towards a more textually explicit version? These are some of the options raised by identification of strategic objectives (i.e. context-sensitive sets Priorities). Like the rest of the linguistic or referencing determinations, they constitute ranges of paraphrastic choices according to Hewson and Martin's model but, in the circumstances, they do not concern the content or the coherence of the ST homologon but its overall orientation.

We can see that it is fairly easy to anticipate that there will be certain common Factors involved in translating a play for stage production and translating television fiction. The obvious one is the *performance Factor*, that any writer or translator depends on for the full success of communicative intention. In a way, stage productions are also 'audiovisual', if we refer to our classification of texts according to mode of perception. Both on the stage and on the air the audience receive the text through their eyes and their ears, and the text

unfolds chronologically and cannot be turned back (if we forget for a moment the existence of videotape recorders).

Hewson and Martin (1991: 100) point out the vital role that the **discourse family** plays as a focusing element within the so-called Cultural Equation. In this particular instance, we are comparing the discourse of television situation-comedies in the two languages, and, of course, the textual strategies available to a producer of discourse.

Hewson and Martin (1991: 187) also remind us that a dramatic text is by nature incomplete. The play's text is sometimes accompanied by '**stage directions**' providing hints as to contextualization. For these cases, they say that the translator must make the character's expressions compatible with speech patterns, inflections, and idiomatic idiosyncrasies more or less identifiable in keeping with potential audiences. This kind of Priority can obviously be just as valid for audiovisual fiction.

We are particularly interested in picking up the following reflection by Hewson and Martin (1991: 195). They say that one either focuses more sharply on the LC1 text, or one simulates the LC2-receiving situation. According to the options defined in the Cultural Equation, the translator might find him/herself applying modifications to the original which go far beyond the scope of predictable forms - which is probably why so many translations of plays are in fact presented as 'adaptations' rather than 'translations'. This should be a fundamental consideration to be taken into account when it comes to dubbing. The TI (some division of the television management) will have to decide whether the translation is going to be a *philological* study of the original or, a stimulating TT receiving situation. How much will it matter that the translation is different in certain respects to the original programme if the original purpose of the translation (supposedly, to fill a certain time-slot with a certain type of programme that will be as popular as possible) is better fulfilled in that manner?

To support our position we will now resort to Hatim and Mason (1990: 79), who acknowledge the importance of the more recent approach to the analysis of discourse known as **conversational analysis** which is wholly empirical, looking at recurring patterns in many records of naturally occurring conversations. They say that where the intention of the producer of an ST is to sell a product, any translation of the **text as an advertisement** must be evaluated in terms of how well it serves that purpose (i.e. the persuasive text act involved), rather than on the basis of narrow linguistic comparison. Further on, they say that different interpretations of pragmatics could also be evaluated on the basis of their applicability to translating activity. *The apparent purpose for translating a television comedy* would logically be to produce a comedy in Catalan (although we have already insisted that this not for the theory to say). If this is the case the translator will establish '**laughter**' and '**light entertainment**' as his/her **Top Global Priority** and will do all that is possible and necessary to fulfil that Priority, and from this point of view may be justified in making certain changes, omissions or additions.

Ernst Gutt (1991: 64) will help us to back up our claim that in dubbing the translator does not control **the whole dubbing process** unlike other cases of translating, such as poems. He says that another case might be the production of advertisements. Here one usually knows from the beginning what kind of effects one wants to achieve, but it might take a group of specialists from marketing and the advertising industry to design and produce an appropriate stimulus, and the stimulus may not necessarily involve a single medium, like printing, but may take the form of a multi-media show. In all these cases the process of **stimulus production is complex** because the original communicator him/herself does not possess all the know-how, skills and equipment necessary to produce the stimulus he/she wants.

Unfortunately, there is a noticeable presence of a **selling Priority** in more and more television productions nowadays (expressed in terms of television **popularity ratings**). We say 'unfortunately' because we feel that the didactic and informative, and even the purely entertaining capabilities of the media are being put aside in the name of popularity ratings at any cost. Ernst Gutt (1991: 119), quoting George Mounin (1967: 137), writes that prior to<sup>1</sup> faithfulness to the wording, to grammar, to syntax and even to the style of each individual sentence in the text must be faithfulness to that which made this piece a success in its original country. One has to translate its effectiveness on stage first<sup>2</sup> before giving consideration to the reproduction of its literary or poetic qualities, and if in this conflicts should arise, then Priority must be given to the effectiveness on stage. It must be said that such a statement is also true for bestsellers, some propaganda and texts used in advertising, even more so because literary and poetic qualities are a few and far between.

---

<sup>1</sup> This wording illustrates a clear example of an awareness of a need for a hierarchy of Priorities.

<sup>2</sup> It is easy to see that this could be rephrased as 'it effectiveness on television...'

### 11.3. JUSTIFYING DUBBING

Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin (1991: 16) in their interesting introduction on the ideological representations of translation, where they write about various past and present myths about translation, among other things say that paradoxically, the original and most persistent myth about translation is precisely that there is **no justification** for translation.

"The original or Edenic state of man is one optimal and unrestricted expression and intercomprehension."

This myth has had just as much force in the speciality of film translating (dubbing) as in any other area of translation. However, some the arguments are different, and reflect the different nature of the texts. Below is a brief account of the pros and cons of foreign dubbed versions of audiovisual texts from a descriptive point of view. Just as when we dealt with Newmark's procedures, we were not trying to prove which ones are right and which ones are wrong. All we are trying to show here is that each way of dealing with a film or television programme has to be validated in terms of what is trying to be achieved and in what conditions.

#### 11.3.1. DUBBING VS ORIGINAL VERSION

- (a) One argument says that the cinema-goer is expected to know foreign languages. The immediate counterargument to this claim is that one cannot be expected to know the languages of every foreign series that is shown on TV, or at the cinema for that matter. Although it is true that the vast majority of film and television productions are written in English, this should not force productions in other languages into the corner and out of the view of the mainstream public, who, by the way, would all have to understand a wide range of English dialects spreading across both hemispheres and at least four continents.
- (b) The second argument against dubbed versions claims that the enjoyment of hearing the actors' original voices is denied to foreign audiences. On the other end of the balance we would have the situation whereby dubbing actors are selected almost entirely because of the quality and range of pitch of their voices and their performing (acting) skills, while their physical appearance and expressiveness is, in principle, totally disregarded. In actual fact, notwithstanding, there are actual professional and budgetary **Restrictions**: there are too few actors and the audience frequently

recognizes different characters as having the same voice. Also, a personal appreciation is that many studios as well as TV3 seem to like most of the men (who do not have particularly ridiculous or effeminate roles) to have deep macho voices and the women also seem to fit into a fairly standardized voice range; hence, the voices are often too similar, despite the undeniable fact that there are hardly any instances of regional accents. It is also worth remembering at this point that even in original versions the voices of soemactors and actresses are dubbed for various different reasons.

### 11.3.2. DUBBING VS SUBTITLES

- (a) In favour of translating a film by using the technique of subtitles, we can state the enjoyment of hearing the actors' original voice, but one can also criticise this technique by using reports of some people who find subtitles distracting. Another criticism that can be made of subtitles is that due to the *reading speed* Restriction sometimes dramatic timing is not so effective because a character's words are sometimes read on the screen too early or too late to create the same dramatic effect (regardless of whether the effect is one of humour, suspense, tension, or whatever). The Priority of timing is usually more faithfully followed in dubbing than in subtitling.
- (b) The general quality of subtitles in Spain is very poor, or at least has been until very recently. Henry the V was one of the first films in Spain where the credits for the subtitling studio were not only given a prominent place on the screen, but even appeared. This is sometimes due to the economic Factor behind subtitled productions. Subtitling is much cheaper and faster than producing dubbed versions. So, if a subtitled version is produced because of such Restrictions as a tight budget and/or an impossible deadline, foreseeable side effects will include a poorer quality of the product in certain textual and linguistic areas, not to mention aesthetic and artistic goals. On the other hand, if the reason for producing a subtitled version is not based on a financial or deadline Restriction, but is honestly considered to be the most convenient way of presenting the film in the TT environment, then there is no reason to prevent subtitles from aiming for a much higher standard than they often actually achieve, even after taking into account the inescapable Restrictions of this type of translating, such as timing, reading as if heard, etc.
- (c) When considering the TT audience, it is convenient to remember that subtitles are ideal for the deaf (or people who suffer from bad hearing), of course, and no good for the poor-sighted, or bad readers (either as the result of some sort of handicap or simply because of a lack of a sound education).

### 11.3.3. 'BILINGUAL' TELEVISION

Television, unlike the cinema, has introduced a number of alternatives to the old alternatives whereby the public had to choose (when there was a choice) between going to a theatre where the film was shown (a) in its original version, (b) with subtitles, or (c) dubbed. Here is an account of some of the innovations that have appeared over the last six or seven years.

- (a) The introduction of stereo sound systems for television broadcasts allowed the appearance of bilingual stereo system broadcasting of foreign productions. Television viewers with the right kind of equipment can now listen to either one language or the other, which can be heard separately through each one of the stereo speakers. This system means that the whole argument about whether the original version or the dubbed version is more convenient (point #1) no longer makes any sense for television, because each viewer can listen to the programme in whichever language he/she likes. Moreover, with a television that allows the use of earphones, two different people<sup>1</sup> can watch the same programme in two different languages. This kind of technology would justify the dubbing of programmes on the grounds of offering a greater choice to the public. Why not translate if those who do not like it do not have to put up with it anyway if they do not want to?
- (b) Television obviously poses no problem regarding showing the original version with on-screen subtitles in LC2 (language culture of the TT). If a dubbed version were shown as well, say at a different time or on a different channel, this would eliminate the controversy of (point #2).
- (c) Television technology has also progressed in the area of subtitles because they can now be shown optionally by means of the teletext. Teletext subtitles were originally thought up for the deaf so that they could follow any programme, foreign or otherwise. However, the same principle could be used as optional subtitles for foreign programmes in combination with the abovementioned point (a). This would introduce a multiple choice for the viewer, and there are cases where this already happens. The viewer can see a film, for example in any of the permutations resulting from combining the bilingual stereo output and the having the teletext subtitles on or off (i.e. original version with subtitles, original version without subtitles, dubbed version with subtitles, dubbed version without subtitles). Which of all these

---

<sup>1</sup> Or even two different groups of people, if they use cordless earphones.

permutations is better? Does it matter? The fact is that you can choose exactly how you want to receive the programme. It is now a case of live and let live.

- (d) Before this kind of technology was available TVE used to have the original soundtrack broadcast over the radio. This just goes to show that some myths in translation really are a waste of time because it is a question of waiting for the necessary technological know-how to come along and solve it. This is the advantage of bringing metaphysical questions down to the scientific plain.

#### 11.3.4. ALTERNATIVE

Of course there are other alternatives which show a more political reasoning behind them. One could advocate for no importing of programmes in foreign languages in order to protect the language and the culture of the community, or, if that sounds slightly too radical, at least control what percentage of national productions or programmes in the vernacular are shown on television and/or in the cinemas. In the United Kingdom the vast majority of programmes are purchased from the USA, like many other Western countries, including Spain and Catalonia, but (obviously) unlike Spain there is no dubbing. The USA is probably the only country in the world that can afford not to import any foreign productions at all, if it so wished, and still offer a wide variety of all sorts of television programmes. This means that all of the English-speaking countries could probably go without having to produce any dubbed versions of programmes originally produced in another language. And this actually what happens in many cases. So, those programmes that are imported are subtitled instead of being dubbed. This also the case of countries where the high level of education can allow television managers to expect that within reason a large part of the viewers will be capable of understanding and films that may be broadcast in any one of three or four different languages with the aid of subtitles, and because of this they will also be more receptive to seeing any foreign film with subtitles rather than dubbed. This means that dubbing and subtitles on television are almost a question of national habit and taste.



#### 11.4. FACTORS INVOLVED IN DUBBING

- (a) **Dubbing v. alternatives.** In some countries dubbed versions are practically unheard of, and in others they are the norm. So, the social perception and acceptance of dubbing is a Factor to take into account. (see the above points for a detailed explanation of some of the related issues). Obviously, the production of low quality dubbings will do no good to its case. An important Factor in the success of a dubbed version is how used the TT audience are to dubbed versions. Some communities (and individuals for that matter) are more tolerant to dubbed versions than others.
- (b) **Audiovisual cohesion and coherence.** The technical and linguistic problems of combining words, sounds, and images. This is what is unique about dubbing; it is the aspect that this form of translating does not share with any other form of translating, not even the translation of plays or the production of subtitles.
- (c) As a result of the point immediately above, we must say that the translation (a process performed only on the verbal signs) is only one part of the dubbing process (which should take into account verbal and nonverbal signs); the words are just a part of the final product. This fact calls the division of intralinguistic, interlinguistic and intersemiotic types of translation into question. It is probably more accurate to consider all translation semiotic, much of which involves principally verbal (language) signs of different languages. In other words, the translating process (of the script) is, in turn, only **one of the Factors of the dubbing process**. Points (b) and (c) are inseparable. The dubbing process is something like this:
- (1) There is a selection of programmes to be purchased. Programmes are not always chosen entirely on their own merit, but also certain kinds of programmes are sought to fill in certain kinds of gaps in what the channel offers to ensure variety.
  - (2) There is a decision as to whether the programme should be dubbed or subtitled or not touched. This decision is often almost automatic, in the sense that it depends on the country of destination, the type of programme that has been chosen, and the type of time-slot it has been chosen to fill (prime time or thought for a minority group).
  - (3) The script and a copy of the original version on tape is given to a translator or a number of translators. In the particular case of TV3, the translator is always a freelance worker who receives very little guidance and no specific training for

the job provided by any of the studios. Nowadays, Francesc Vallverdú<sup>1</sup> reports that the whole process is left in the hands of the dubbing studio, who contract the translators themselves.

- (4) The translation is adjusted and acted out by the dubbing actors under the directions of the dubbing director. Then the new soundtrack is dubbed onto the film or tape. Sometimes certain special effects are lost if they are not reproduced (e.g. in *The Duchess of Duke Street*, Wednesday 17th of February 1993, there was a distinct sound of howling wind in the background in the original version which could not be heard at all in the dubbed version although it was important in creating an eerie atmosphere and the characters mentioned the fact).
- (d) **Words and Sound:** the words are part of the sound, but there are other sounds on the soundtrack as we have just illustrated with the above example from *The Duchess of Duke Street*.
- (1) **'Oral' sounds:** the role of the phonological and phonetic aspects of the words and interjections; suprasegmental features for special effects or disambiguation, voice quality (**range of actors & actresses**). The semiotic values that might be associated to certain types of voice.
- (2) **Other sounds:** Special effects can be either directly related to the words or not.
- (e) **Words and Picture:**
- (1) Images directly related to the words: e.g. (i) lip movement, (ii) reacting to/miming out words, (iii) objects that are spoken of.
- (2) Pictures which are not directly related to the words. For example, the visual context often helps to establish the genre and set the mood better than the words, this point includes the *visual joke*<sup>2</sup>.
- (f) **Timing** of delivery is an important Factor for:
- (1) Lip movement.
- (2) For certain situations that call for special responses with a special timing. e.g. a joke (or an emotional scene) that depends on a hesitation, or one character waiting for something to *sink in* some other character's mind.

---

<sup>1</sup> In an interview on February 20, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 13.

- (g) **Units of Translation.** There are specific units of translation for dubbing, which have to be carefully combined according to each scene and each programme (e.g. *Yes, Minister*) and its requirements: thus, we identify the following segments as interrelated 'units' for the case of situation comedies. The units are to be thought of as being on a scale from smallest to largest:
- (1) **Lip movement:** According to Nida it is necessary to keep synchronization within a range of one-fifth of a second for general purposes in order to obtain satisfactory results. This 'unit' is only worth considering for full-faced close-ups with obvious vowel + bilabial consonant or other such combinations, and certain situations where the spectator can reasonably be expected to concentrate on the actor or actresses face or mouth, a good example being when a character says something like 'read my lips', or starts speaking in a strange or funny manner. lip movement as a Restriction is more constraining in some sorts of programmes than in others. The translator must be aware that this Restriction is alternately operative and Reversed (when the speaker's mouth cannot be clearly seen regardless of the reason why).
  - (2) **Utterance:** from the moment one character begins to speak to the moment he/she stops speaking. The exact boundaries of this kind of unit need to be strictly observed (they become a Restriction) depending on two other Restrictions:
    - 2a) the speaker is in clear view at a reasonably close distance (i.e. not only strict lip movement but even any noticeable mouth movement)
    - 2b) other sounds (verbal or otherwise) that need to be discriminated as being heard before, after or simultaneously).
  - (3) **Pause:** a moment or stretch of time when none of the characters are actually saying anything (here we are disregarding certain background effects such as music, animal sounds or explosions), which may have semiotic content, and the translator or person responsible will have to see if the pause can be reproduced or has to be compensated for.
  - (4) **Exchange:** a series of utterances that form a communication act of some sort, and may be subject to the same sort of Restrictions as an utterance, but where the Restriction(s) are operative on the series of utterances as a whole.
  - (5) **Scene (also sequence):** as defined by the script or director of the original.
  - (6) **Chapter:** a complete programme in its own right that forms part of a series (e.g. The Challenge in *Yes, Minister*), or a subdivision of a longer serial that is shown a chapter at a time (e.g. a chapter of *Neighbours*, *Eastenders*, or *Dallas*).

- (7) **Whole series or whole serial:** this unit needs to be taken into consideration in order to maintain coherence, cohesion and consistency throughout the series or serial. Global Priorities will be operative at this level. They will help to define the general method to be used and set the tone and objectives of the series.
- (h) **Professional considerations:** Dubbing actors' **schools & policies** for selecting dubbing actors: what kind of voices are wanted? (all men macho-sounding, non-dialectal, etc.)
- h1) **Actors and directors are required.** Unlike the communicative context of other forms of translation, the ultimate communicator (the dubbing actor) need know nothing about the SL (except, at times, its pronunciation, for cases when transcription has been used in the translation) and nothing about translation. The dubbing actors have to "translate", so to speak, tones of voice, intonation, loudness, coughs, laughs, etc. bearing in mind at all times, that the same tone of voice may communicate different things in different languages, and these features often have to be adapted. In a sense we may also regard the dubbing actor as an interpreter of the original, especially if ST rhetorical purpose is to be maintained.
- h2) There are **common elements** in the original and in the dubbed version:
- 2.1. **The picture** remains the same: both audiences see the same actors performing and the same scenes. This is only occasionally modified. A typical example is a translated version of a letter that is meant to be read by the audience. The two most frequent solutions in this case are for a voice to read the letter in translation, or for the letter to be substituted for a written translation.
  - 2.2. Usually the ST and TT audiences also hear the same **sound-track** (music, gunshots, special effects etc.) except for the voices, and even then they hear the same voices when the lyrics of a song are not relevant to the story, or if the words are important sometimes **subtitles** are used and other times they are dubbed. I was once told of a film where the subtitles for a nonsense song said "what they are singing is as if they were singing such-and-such a song in our language". Another example that this is not always so can be seen in the programme shown on TV3 called 'De Què Vas?' in Catalan, but originally a French production. In the Catalan version the background music and songs have not been translated but entirely substituted, the words and the music. The overriding Priority here has been to present a kind of music that the TT audience could easily identify with as part of the Global top Priority which is to make the dubbed version as popular as possible and certainly not show the Catalans what sorts of songs the French like.

Our conclusion is that the true success of a dubbed version in many types of programmes can be measured according to the following requirement: **the final product must never "sound" like a translation** despite the fact that the audience is nearly always aware that it is. The ideal situation would be one where the dubbed version was received as if it were **a national product shot abroad, on location.**

Here is Mallafrè's (1991: 88) account of the Factors involved in dubbing:

"Encara que compti amb el suport escrit del guió, el doblatge «interpreta» en el doble sentit d'interpret i actor, les paraules de la pel·lícula original. (...) Cal:

- (1) controlar el temps de síl·labes i pauses;
- (2) sincronitzar consonants i vocals amb els moviments dels llavis (*lip sync*);
- (3) emprar mots apropiats als gests (certs mots no s'adapten a un arronsament d'espatlles, per exemple);
- (4) resoldre, quan són significatives, les diferències dialectals característiques dels actors, i
- (5) controlar les expressions humorístiques o d'altres que produeixen respostes especials d'altres personatges.

Es produirà així l'efecte equivalent total, que pot exigir alguna adaptació, algun ajustament parcial, a part de les diferències d'ús idiomàtic de la llengua receptora."

From this and other accounts of dubbing we can see that adjusting the words to the picture is a specific *procedure* for this type of translating activity.

## 11.5. INTONATION, TEXT COHERENCE AND LIP MOVEMENT

### (1) Questions of intonation:

"Cada llengua té una entonació pròpia. Els silencis de Kafka o de Pinter poden ser essencials, com ja hem dit." Mallafrè (1991: 122)

Intonation, like stress and rhythm, is a very sticky, albeit important, question in the translation of audiovisual texts, just as the question of coherence between verbal and visual signs. Sometimes intonation is important to meaning (especially "ironical" meaning, polysemy and implicature) and/or sometimes to force of delivery in creating the the right atmosphere and tone. We have already presented a number of examples of the kind of Factor we believe intonation is in Chapter 10. Its difficulty lies in that sometimes it has to be dealt with by the translator and on other occasions it is up to the dubbing actor to utter the words with an equivalent intonation in the TL. Ernst Gutt (1991: 127) says that

according to Sperber and Wilson's (1986: 262) account. the function of focal stress in English is not linguistically encoded but can be explained in terms of reducing processing effort.

## (2) Textual coherence

1: "...the **disadvantaged** of indispensable services."

"**Jacuzzi pools?**" =>

Per què això significaria privar els **minusvàlids** de serveis indispensables.

J.H. **Les pistes d'esquí?**

In this case, if the translator had translated "Jacuzzi pools" as 'piscines de hidromassatge', the question would not have been funny at all, because there would be a logic in it which needs to be absent. This is why the translator has gone for the incongruence of *minusvàlids* and *les pistes d'esquí*. However, if "the disadvantaged" had been translated more accurately in the first place as *les classes menys afavorides* this change would have been unnecessary.

## (3) lip synchronization

J.H. It's not just the USSR we're frightened of, it could be the **Fr ...**

B.S. The who?

J.H. The **fr .. frigging Chinese.**

J.H. Oh. No és pas només la URS el que ens fa por.  
Podrien ser els **gava...**

B.S. Els qui? (which would probably be better rendered as Els què?  
or Qui?)

J.H. Els **gavadals de xinesos.**

In this example, "frigging" and **gavadals** have a very different lip movement (especially "fr..." and **gava...**), and they are hardly close in meaning; they do not have the same emotional force or belong to corresponding registers. So what could possibly justify such a rendering? Or, in other words, what is the top priority in this case? The fact is that J.H., the Minister, was about to make a major political blunder by suggesting that the real threat for Britain was posed by the French, he might even have been about to use the more derogatory term "frogs" (hence **gava** for **gavatxos**). He checks himself in time, but has to think of a quick way of covering up the slip. So, on the spur of the moment he must think up something that begins with "fr" (**gava => gavadals**)

and is less scandalous. The translator's top priorities are to make the dialogue work, and as far as possible, render the joke in Catalan. In this case, lip movement and content are less important Priorities.

I am not implying that the solution here is perfect, because it is the translator's duty to try and cater for the lesser priorities as well, when he can. Maybe something could have been done with **fr = francesos** more in keeping with the lip movement, possibly **els frisosos (freturosos or fressosos) xinesos**. It is not even imperative that the translator retain the "Chinese"; the idea is that the Minister says the first thing that comes into his head with the only restriction that it must start in the same way as he had started the previous sentence. The top priority is still the humorous effect, and this is what the translator, or at a later stage, some professional comedy scriptwriter, should constantly bear in mind.

## 11.6. FACTORS INVOLVED IN TRANSLATING FOR TELEVISION

- (a) Political Restrictions and censorship and management **policies**.
  - (b) Speed and Depth of **assimilation** by the audience.
  - (c) **Associations** and allusions between one programme and another, either implicit or explicit, this being part of the required 'shared knowledge'.
  - (d) **Market** economy and Popularity ratings.
  - (e) Can dubbing actors become TV celebrities? or Translators become recognised as scriptwriters?
  - (f) **Advertising**: either in the form of interruptions or incorporated into the programme (sponsorship).
-

### 11.7. THE DUBBING PROCESS DESCRIBED BY FREDERIC CHAUME

Below is a description of the dubbing process, audiovisual translation, as described by an experienced translator in this area who is also a lecturer at the University Jaume I, Castelló de la Plana. I am grateful to him for being allowed to reproduce the text here as it is subject to copyright.

#### PROCÉS IDEAL DE TRADUCCIÓ AUDIOVISUAL

EMPRESA  
(TV, productora, etc.)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE

TRADUCTOR  
(traducció i ajust)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE  
(doblatge)

EMPRESA

#### VARIANT

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE  
ajust

EMPRESA  
(revisió *lingüística de la traducció*)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE  
(doblatge)

EMPRESA  
(revisió del doblatge -- represa (*retakes*) --  
)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE  
(fa les repeses)

EMPRESA



**DESCRIPCIÓ DELS MATERIALS, LES TASQUES I ELS OBJECTIUS  
QUE S'HAN DE REALITZAR**

**ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE**

MATERIALS	TASQUES
(guió) còpia mestra	director: càsting assignació de la traducció

**TRADUCTOR**

MATERIALS	TASQUES
<p><i>Material que rep:</i> (guió) còpia mestra</p> <p><i>Material que usa:</i> material bibliogràfic (bàsic i específic) ordinador</p> <p><i>Material que retorna:</i> guió còpia mestra disquet una còpia impresa</p>	<p>traducció i ajust</p>

**PROCÉS DE TRADUCCIÓ  
AUDIOVISUAL (I)**

EMPRESA  
(TV, productora, etc.)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE

TRADUCTOR

AJUSTADOR

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE  
(doblatge)

EMPRESA

**PROCÉS DE TRADUCCIÓ  
AUDIOVISUAL (II)**

EMPRESA  
(TV, productora, etc.)

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE

TRADUCTOR

ESTUDI DE DOBLATGE

ajust  
(doblatge)

EMPRESA

**QÜESTIONS TÈCNIQUES**

**PRESA** (*take*): màxim 10 línies de 60 caràcters  
màxim 5 línies per personatge (més de 5, presa doble)  
màxim 15 segons

**PISTES** (generalment 8):

-1 pista: TCR (*time code record*). Codi de temps

01:15:57:25

01: hores

15: minuts

57: segons

25: quadres (*frames*)

-1 pista: pista de so (*soundtrack*)

-banda sonora

-efectes especials

-sons

-1 pista: versió original

-5 pistes: doblatge

## EXTRACTE DEL CONVENI DE DOBLATGE

### ARTICLE 5. Dimensions de la presa (*take*) i de la línia

Les preses tindran, com a màxim, 10 línies en total i cinc per cada prsonatge, sense perdre en cap cas la continuïtat del text i de la imatge. Si per necessitats tècniques hom ultrapassés aquestes mesures, es comptabilitzarà una presa més a cada personatge que repetesca intervenció en les línies següents.

El pautat de la producció que s'ha de doblar (distribució de preses) s'haurà de realitzar tenint en compte criteris interpretatius, és a dir, continuïtat de text i imatge.

La presa no podrà contenir originals de més de 15 segons.

En cap cas una presa no podrà restar dividida en diferents fulls o pàgines.

Els textos hauran d'arribar en perfectes condicions d'ajust i adaptació a la sala.

#### De la línia

- a) Una línia equival a 60 espais mecanografiats.
- b) Una línia incompleta es considerarà sencera, encara que sols continga una paraula o una fracció.
- c) Hom no completarà línies afegint-hi peus de diàleg.
- d) Els guions seran mecanografiats a dos espais.
- e) Qualsevol expressió sonora del personatge que s'està doblant (rialles, plors, respiracions... ) es comptabilitzarà a raó d'una línia per presa.

## Chapter Twelve

### The Question of Humour and Comedy

We have already pointed out that although it may sound tautologically redundant, a complete account of the process of translating with a view to producing dubbed versions of television comedy can only come about by a detailed study of all of the Factors, Priorities and Restrictions imposed on the translation by the very nature of the following areas;

Translation Studies

Television as mass media and professional environment

Technology and techniques of dubbing

The nature of humour and comedy

In this chapter we will look into some of the most salient Factors of the language of humour in the hope that it will help us to complete the picture of the specific Priorities and Restrictions that are entailed in dubbing television situation comedy. The present study does not pretend to be an exhaustive study in humour and comedy; it merely proposes to describe enough of the nature of humour and comedy to show, firstly, the importance of knowing more about how they work, and secondly, possible translation procedures that are characteristic of this type of texts.

In achieving our goal for this chapter Walter Nash's book *The Language of Humour* has revealed itself as essential and much of what is said about the language of humour and many examples are drawn from this book. However, there is room for personal

innovation as well. in extending the usefulness of Nash's discoveries and classifications to the field of translating and dubbing of comedy, aspects that Nash does not stop to consider at all. Probably a more accurate title for his book might have been "The Language of Humour in English". This is not meant as a criticism, but merely illustrates the point where the book has left off and where this study has attempted to pick up and make some further progress.

## **12.1. EXPLAINING THE JOKE**

Nash begins by giving an account of the stages of explanation. Essential Factors to start with are the following six sections:

### **12.1.1. THE CULTURE OF THE JOKE**

Nash opens his study of humour by saying that not everybody finds the same things funny. He provides an example of a joke which he says is often received by foreign students with embarrassment or puzzled looks, and on the other hand some native speakers find it boring. This is a very important Factor when it comes to translating because we will have to know in each case whether this can be put down to individual or collective tastes. What is important, however, is to recognize and accept the *intention* to joke; from that recognition we can proceed through explanatory stages that take us from the cultural history of the specimen down to its actual wording.

### **12.1.2. MATERIAL FACTS**

Humour nearly always supposes some piece of factual knowledge shared by humorist and audience. It may be a matter of common historic information - e.g. that Henry the VIII had six wives, or that Nelson had one eye. More often, however, it is simply a question of domestic acquaintance with the world and with the ordinary substance of living - knowing, say, that Coventry is a place in the English Midlands, knowing that in most British towns there are double deckers, knowing that the Pope presides over a city called the Vatican, etc.

"To understand the broadest humour one must be broadly informed, not with the stuff of scholarship but with the things that one ought to know before being allowed to board the Clapham omnibus." Nash (1985: 4)

Here we can see that Nash is thinking in monocultural and monolingual terms, for in translation the TT receptors can usually be more easily expected to know that Henry the VIII had six wives (which is a fact of world History) than the exact geographical location of Coventry and what it stands for, not to mention a host of things that can only be found out by actually living in England for a number of years and by experiencing social intercourse with a lot of different people and keeping oneself well informed about current affairs. Assumed shared knowledge which is an important Factor in any translation becomes particularly important when it comes to translating jokes.

### 12.1.3. LOGIC AND LIKELIHOOD

The sender and the receptor(s) in linguistic accounts of communication take on special roles in certain cases. So, according to Nash, in the transaction of any tale, there is an *executant*, who fixes the rules, and a *respondent*, who accepts the conditions offered, and paradoxically allows himself to be duped in order to enjoy the superiority of his insight. A joke can be a perverse experience, psychologically; the understanding is degraded so that it may rise again. The tenor of discourse therefore has to be assessed among other things to whether the sender is acting as joke/storyteller or not.

### 12.1.4. THE DIRECTIVE FORM

Jokes are often announced, sometimes with a crude forewarning signal (*Have you heard this one?; That reminds me of... ; A funny thing happened...*), sometimes more subtly, through the actual form in which they are presented. The listener or reader recognizes a convention, realizes that he has met something like this before, understands that his wits are being keyed and preconditioned to the acceptance of humour. Let us note the importance of signalling the *intention* to joke. Its importance is in sanctioning laughter, in helping to overcome any scruples or reservations we might have. When it comes to translating this act of signalling our intention to joke may become a useful procedure to help anticipate jokes that otherwise might be difficult to identify as such by the TT receptors. This device also prompts us to put on the social smile when the joke eludes us. In television a widely used signalling device is off-screen laughter, which helps to set the mood and point out the jokes for the not-so-alert viewers.

### 12.1.5. LANGUAGE

Nash tells us that the language of humour dances most often on the points of some dual principle, an ambiguity, a figure and ground, an overt appearance and a covert reality.

The trick of many jokes lies in the management of carefully prepared ambiguity. The location of 'charged' elements at carefully-arranged points in a structure (what comedians call 'timing'), and the play with various dualities, e.g. ambiguity, polysemy, statement and implication. Before the joke can be discharged in all its swiftness there is much to be apprehended about cultural and social facts, about shared beliefs and attitudes, about the pragmatic bases of communication. We share our humour with those who have shared our history and who understand our way of interpreting experience. There is a fund of common knowledge and recollection, upon which all jokes draw with instantaneous effect. All of this brings about an obvious Restriction when it comes to translation, but it is the translator's duty to either cancel out these Restrictions or overcome them as best he/she can.

### 12.1.6. THE ACT OF HUMOUR

For Walter Nash, the 'act' of humour has three principle references:

- (a) A 'genus', or derivation, in culture, institutions, attitudes, beliefs, typical practices, characteristic artefacts, etc.
- (b) A characterized design, presentation, or verbal packaging, by virtue of which humorous intention is indicated and recognized.
- (c) A locus in language, some word or phrase that is indispensable to the joke; the point at which humour is held and discharged.

The generic reference, firstly, is very broad. It includes the social and historical facts which most of us can be assumed to know, the customary patterns of behaviour, the dominant or traditional attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes, the conventional themes and *theme-related designs of literature and art*. From this reservoir we draw, to begin with, our notions of what is funny *per se*: provincials, foreigners, mothers-in-law, politicians, homosexuals, clerics and many others. From such notions of the inherently humorous we derive our **joke-stereotypes**: 'drunk' jokes, 'Irish' jokes, 'asylum' jokes, etc. As far as bearing on translation is concerned this is a question of culture and habit and can we believe that just as new joke-stereotypes can be introduced and old ones can fall out of

favour, it is just possible that at least some joke-stereotypes can be exported and internationalized.

Intertextuality and semiotic values are extremely important ingredients in many jokes and comedies. Academic humour is often a game of recognize-the-quote; but there are ordinary, unacademic, man-in-the-street jokes that also rely on textual allusion, i.e. on references to things said or written in political speeches, advertisements, TV shows, etc. The slogan, catchword, or much-quoted remark becomes a model for cleverly-pointed variations. Larger texts offer scope for essays in parody, lampoon, burlesque, etc. and this is yet another aspect of the generic game. The translator would do well to explore the intertextual and semiotic possibilities of the TL, or more precisely, the LC2, as a compensating device.

There is a kind of ritual associated with the joke, **a pattern of predictability and a licence for variation**, connected also to many other microforms, such as: one-liners, 'question-and-answer jokes', aphorisms and many others. Nash points out that one feature of such jokes is that they generate many others of the same model. They are often tiny models of much bigger comic structures. A whole story may be an expansion of one or two joke-types. These are the kind of features that the translator of comedies has to identify in his/her ST analysis. Like any other variety of usage, the language of humour has to draw on the patterns and implications of phonology and graphology, of syntactic structure, of lexical form, of semantic field. Humour characterizes the interaction of persons in situations and cultures, and our responses to it must be understood in that broad context, whether it makes the sudden demand of wit, or whether it has the more discursive appeal of description and anecdote.

## 12.2. WITTY COMPRESSION, COMIC EXPANSION

Two Factors that have to be outlined in the description of the language of humour are witty compression and comic expansion. Compression is a classic element in the technique of humour, and must often be regarded by the translator as a High-order Priority; 'brevity', we are inevitably reminded, 'is the soul of wit'. The effect of a joke is often to put us in a state of pleasurable instability that welcomes, craves, indeed *courts* the impact of another joke. This is the requisite of comedy, which depends on *expansion*.

A characterization of the type of compression shows that we are not required to have the *specific* experience to which the witticism refers, but only to grasp a category (this is a case where a potential contextual Restriction may sometimes become 'reversed'), to recognize the *kind* of image that is raised. The 'Coventry' joke, for example, has its



genesis in traditional attitudes to regional cities and provincial life. Commonly, this type of joke simply suggests that such-and-such a place is tedious and unattractive, or that it is lost in provincial self-absorption (*The Titanic struck an iceberg, Aberdeen woman feared drowned*). In translation, especially of light entertainment comedies, what really matters is that the translator identify the type of joke that is being used, and then decide which procedure will best retain the substance of the joke rather than the actual words of the joke.

Regarding form, there are well-established formulae such as A = B. An extension of the pattern is the 'verdictive' definition', X is Y *Newcastle is the pits*. Nash tells us that a characteristic of the formula (which must also be considered as a translation procedure) is the possibility of free substitution. Thus, for *Newcastle* read the name of any town in the neighbourhood of a coal-mining community. Here, then is a made-up wit-recipe, in which the chief ingredient can be the name of whatever town the joker happens to dislike. So if the nature of the text allows, the translator might want to look for one adapted to the target culture. This is not always possible, of course, since we cannot imagine certain characters of an ST culture cracking jokes about certain foreign towns based on features that they would not normally be expected to be familiar with. However, another procedure would be to try and fit in some sort of internationalized compromise on which both the ST community and the TT community could share a basis for a common joke.

An essential Factor in any joke is what Nash calls the locus, or the punch-line (or 'punch-word' if the reader will allow such an expression). So, due to the very nature of some of the Factors of dubbing, it will often be difficult or even impossible to change the position of the punch-line in the translation, and the translator will have to write a TT joke that will find its climax at exactly the same time as the original ST joke.

### 12.2.1. EXPANSION

In the case of expansion, the implications of the joke are spelt out in the preceding text; the humour is presented in expansion. A typical element of expansion is parody. The humour of the piece is enhanced by our recognition that these images *are* fictional, that they *are* the happenings of life reworked by the imagination.

### 12.2.2. ORAL AND TEXTUAL HUMOUR

One difference, of direct concern for Nash, is that textual humour expands through elaborative networks rarely if ever found in oral humour<sup>1</sup>. When oral humour is expanded, its commonest course is the repetition of a joke-type, or the assiduous 'working' of some evident situation or theme. A company of friends may fall to punning, and will try to out-pun each other in variants of increasing extravagance; In the expansions of oral humour there is often an element of competitiveness, of opportunism, of response to the immediate and emergent situation.

Textual humour (including the humour of audiovisual texts) expands in ways more subtle and comprehensive, sustaining itself through devices that converge and react upon each other. What begins as a game, ends as an art, with diverse elements wrought together in a scrupulous design.

### 12.2.3. MODES OF EXPANSION

It is important to realize that Nash also recognizes that it is largely through the study of texts (we have already defended the text as the most important unit of translation), then, that we are able to observe the modes of humorous expansion. Through Nash, three types emerge, identifiable as generic, linguistic, and interactional.

- (a) **Generic** in: allusion to facts, social conventions and traditions, culture, literary works. Generic, in Nash's classification refers not only literary forms and conventions, but also cultural facts.
- (b) **Interactional** in: the pragmatics of response, i.e. the 'Speech Act' aspects; the writer's control of his reader; the signalling of an intention to joke; the predictability or otherwise of reactions; its requirement on the reader to make certain suppositions; its implications if accepted at face value.
- (c) **Linguistic** in: structural mimesis - e.g. the recurrence and variation of joke-bearing syntactic structures. Coupling mechanisms - e.g. features such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration, or pointed antithesis. Semantic concords and dissonances - e.g. in synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy, or in 'normal' and 'deviant' collocations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nash is surely not including elaborately constructed scripts of plays, which are broadcast over the radio or television

An important Factor of humour is that many passages of expansive comedy are packed with witty compressions; the two aspects of humour are certainly not mutually exclusive. The translator will have to be aware of this to identify the proper value of each item within the text.

The stylistic importance of syntactic imitation and syntactic variation appears clearly in many humorous texts, as well as other devices such as alliterative coupling and semantic contrast e.g. repetition of basic structures (premodifier - head - postmodifier), prepositional constructions, variations on the noun phrase.

We can sum up our account of expansion of textual humour as *the diverse elements wrought together in a scrupulous design*. So we might characterize the language of comedy at large; yet the same characteristics of patterning, of careful arrangement, of well-timed emphasis, of generic complexity, may indeed be discerned in the common joke, the epigram, the slogan, the muffled wisecrack, the most trivial component of the humorist's craft.

### 12.3. THE DESIGN OF THE JOKE

There are two aspects of joke design, one having to do with the method of extended narration (what Nash calls the 'narrative shape'), the other with the construction of witticisms in formulaic patterns (the 'locative witticism'). Narrative predictions are frustrated, and the tale apparently collapses into rigmarole shapelessness, as though the essential inner frame of counterpoised elements had been knocked away. In fact it is symmetrically constructed; what has been removed is the possibility of a convincing moment of asymmetry, and with it such an outcome as we are expected to in many simple tales.

With the narrative that is presented to them in mind, the readers are primed to understand the commentary joke, and see that its locus is in a certain punch-line that draws its force from preceding events or phrases. For example, at the end of a given story the question is "*Where do we go from here?*" and the answer: "*We get on to the next stage.*" The meaning is derived from a stagecoach story, and is presented as a punning response.

A similar thing happens in *Yes, Minister* where the audience can expect the story to lead up to a somebody saying "*Yes, Minister*" as the final words of each chapter, nearly always with a different pragmatic meaning, besides the fact that the audience derives some

pleasure from hearing those words at the expected place, in a similar way to children who enjoy hearing stories that they already know by heart retold.

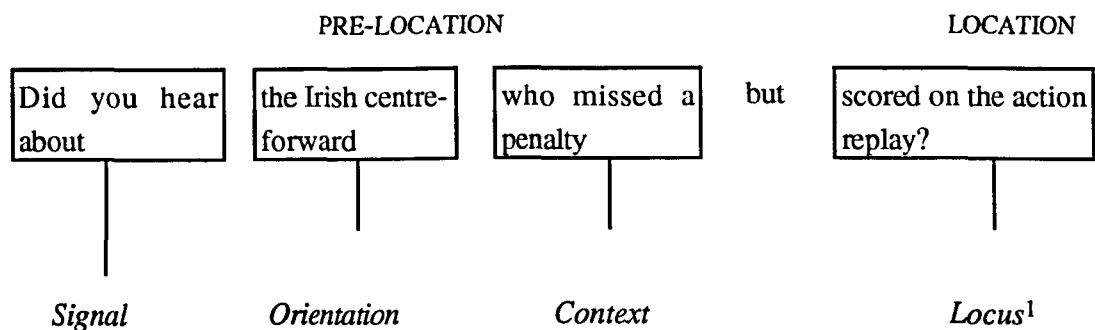
All jokes that use language are (obviously, one might say) superstructures with some underlay of reference which the reader/listener needs to have in his/her grasp. In oral humour (as opposed to textual humour) there is usually a simple relationship between the formulaic superstructure of the joke and a substructure of generic detail.

The relationship that most commonly operates when jokes are told and laughter is raised is the following. The listener/reader has spontaneous resort to his 'generic' knowledge for the particles of information that make sense of the verbal superstructure. The quicker the subtracted response to the verbal stimulus, the greater the likelihood of laughter; we are not tickled or prodded into mirth when we must scan the understanding like an encyclopaedia though it is possible to relish in meditative retrospect by discovering more items in the substructure. This quick-reaction Factor has to be taken into account when translating jokes, and must be considered a Top Priority when translating situation-comedy, unlike certain texts that may seek some sort of 'delayed reaction' or may need to be read or viewed several times before full appreciation can be attained.

### 12.3.1. THE LOCATIVE FORMULAE

Nash sees a joke as being composed of:

SIGNAL (of the intention to joke) + ORIENTATION (to the type of joke) + CONTEXT (in which the joke operates) + LOCUS (word or phrase which clinches or discharges the joke).



There are forms of words that warn us of (signal) the advent of a joke, in some cases all the more emphatically because they are only used for joking purposes. More widely, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Nash (1985): *The Language of Humour*, London: Longman, p. 34.

*signal* of intent may embrace the whole form of the joke, as immediately perceived by the recipient.

*Orientation* is an element that may be omitted. It indicates, as a rule, that the joke will belong to a thematic type, e.g. that it will be an 'Irish' joke, a 'banana' joke, or a 'waiter' joke, or an 'elephant' joke. In a less specific way, the orientation of a joke may be established by peculiarities of language. For instance<sup>1</sup>:

*Why didn't the viper vipe 'er nose?*

tells the addressee that this is going to be a joke about funny pronunciation, and that he is not to expect a quibbling answer such as

*Because she thought she could wriggle out of it,*

or a lunatic-logical response of the type

*Because her hands were full.*

The answer is

*Because the adder 'ad 'er 'andkerchief.*

In an **audiovisual text**, the *orientation* of the joke may be given by the pictures (e.g. if it is a 'waiter' joke, the scene will be set in a restaurant; this is typical of a 'Benny Hill' sort of programme) or the soundtrack (e.g. a parody of a thriller or horror film).

The *context* is the playing surface of the joke; a background, a condition, a set of limiting facts. In humour, context may be verbally represented, or may be perceived extralinguistically, in the understood situation or the general cultural assumption (in **television dubbing** it will usually be perceived in the pictures).

Two versions offered by Nash (1985: 36) of the same joke show how context can be implied or defined:

*Come back Guy Fawkes, all is forgiven* => implied context.

*Guy Fawkes where are you, now that we need you?* => hints at a definition of context.

There are many different ways of telling practically the same joke; comparative strengths and weaknesses of formulation might point to a grading different versions in order of effectiveness ('this raises a grudging laugh', 'this produces a knowing smile', 'I see that this is supposed to be funny').

---

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 35.

Of course we cannot wholly judge the effectiveness of a translated joke without knowing something about the differences and similarities between the ST and TT audiences, and the background of the telling, but we can perhaps learn a little by looking at a variety of technical models. If this seems a coldly mechanical approach to humour, we will do well to remember Nash's words on this point:

"the professional humorist must often assess his jokes coldly, as mechanics for raising laughter." Nash (1985: 38)

In a way the translator as text producer will sometimes need to take on the role of a professional humorist. This is one good argument in favour of a greater specialization within the profession, and a reason why specific stylebooks that include formulae mechanics and mechanisms of certain types of texts are so badly needed.

## 12.4. VARIETIES OF FORMULATION

Among the varieties of formulation, Nash admits that attempts at classification can hardly be more than tentative. The wheels are lively, and leap the categorical rails; compositional and semantic features overlap, and some simple types have complex variations.

### (F1) DEFINITIONS AND VERDICTS

A is B: *The Eskimos are God's frozen people*

A 'verbs' B: *Education kills by degrees*

A = B: *Karl Marx's grave - another communist plot*

### (F2) CAPTIONS AND ANNOTATIONS

These one-liners are like cartoon captions, or laconic remarks 'annotating' aspects of behaviour, current events or trends in politics, society and the arts, etc.

Group I 'Quaint Conjectures':

(a) *Maybe the Joneses are trying to keep up with you,* (the inversion needs to be marked orally by a pattern of intonation and stress that puts a focusing accent on *you*)

(b) *I think sex is better than logic but I can't prove it.*

Group II 'Vexed Questions' Typical of TV sit-coms:

- (a) *Why is it that the only people capable of running this country are either driving taxis or cutting hair?*
- (b) *How will I know if I am enlightened?*

Group III 'Complaints, accusations, grouses':

- (a) *Stop the world, I want to get off.*
- (b) *Down with early Byzantine church music.*
- (c) *All this drinking will be the urination of me.*

Group IV 'Maxims, bywords, pseudoproverbs':

- (a) *We have been standing on an economic precipice, and we have taken a great step forward* (Said with reference to the policies of Mrs Thatcher's government).

Such jokes are often political. It is this sort of mixed up metaphor that becomes a character trait of James Hacker in the *Yes, Minister* series, and a character trait of his Principal Private Secretary, Bernard Woolly is an irresistible urge to correct a mixed up metaphor whenever he hears one, which is usually at some awkward moment.

### (F3) GLOSSED PROPOSITIONS

These are one-line jokes consisting of an enigmatic proposition followed by an explanatory comment. Often a form of insult, they depend heavily on the device of making semantic transfers from one field of usage to another.

- (a) *Her face was like a million dollars - all green and crinkly.*
- (b) *You have a mind like a mineral railway - one-track and dirty.*

Many of these examples can be adapted into riddling question-and-answer exchanges "Why is her face like a million dollars?"

### (F4) TRANSFORMING TAGS

One of the easiest ways to signal a joke - indeed to enforce the notion of joke when no joke is apparent - is to attribute a form of words to some dubious authority: *as the man said...*

*Wellerisms* are delayed action jokes:

- (a) *I guess he'll re-wive, as the gentleman said when his friend fainted at his wife's funeral.*

In translation, apart from the joke itself, the translator could benefit from a specialized handbook that included cultural and functional equivalents of such devices as: *as the man said...*

(F5) CATCHWORD FORMS

- (a) *She was only a baker's daughter, but she never went short of dough; updated alternative ... but she could always make the bread.*

Nash (1985: 44) tells us that the wording of jokes can change with the language itself, in this case with current slang; *dough*, once the knockabout word for 'money', has been overtaken and largely replaced by *bread*. Although Nash says this referring to diachronical change within a single language the same can sometimes apply from one language to the next, especially language that share common standard or dead metaphors.

The 'daughter' routine, obscure in origin, is conceivably an irreverent comment on nineteenth-century romantic iconography. Comely daughters abound in Victorian literature and balladry. This could be a cultural contextual Restriction, but it could be reversed if the translator manages to convey an impression of a comely innocent young woman who might be coveted by artful or lustful men, which can be reproduced in most cultures. On this point it is possible that many supposedly unique cultural idiosyncracies are variations of the same phenomenon or value.

- (b) *Wanted: coffins for the dead of night.*

- (c) *Wanted: pockets for a coat of paint.*

*Wanted* jokes make simple fun of everyday idiom, so they are nearly always impossible to translate literally, just as idioms are. The structure of these jokes is rudimentary: a conventional signal - *Wanted* - a context-defining term - *coffins* - and a locus - *the dead of night*. These jokes are a clear case of 'language-dependent' jokes<sup>1</sup>.

*They call .... because* jokes. They are like one-line riddles

- (d) *They call him 'Pilgrim', because every time he takes her out he makes a little progress.*

This joke also depends on assumed familiarity with the book *Pilgrim's Progress*. In cases like (b, c, d) the translator will see if the Factors allow him/her to substitute the exact words and idiom of the joke for a different idiom and play on words that will serve the same rhetorical purpose. Benny Hill sometimes uses this device for making jokes and their Spanish renderings are nearly always literal, thus losing the effect.

(F6) PARODIC ALLUSIONS

---

<sup>1</sup> See the section of the following chapter entitled *The Language-dependent Joke* (13.3.4).



There are one-liners that allude wittily to some common saying or well-known piece of text. Punning and more or less cumbersome verbal substitutions are frequent:

- (a) *Red sky at night, shepherd's house is on fire.*

Here, again we are up against a kind of joke that may be impossible to translate out of context, but as part of a script it can be translated if for no other reason than the fact that it must be translated. Comic effect is the Top Priority. If this cannot be achieved at the same point the translator will do well to attempt compensation elsewhere.

#### (F7) EXHORTATIONS

Here is another type of joke that feeds parodically on the forms of public notices.

- (a) *Help save our forests - eat more beavers.*

A cultural equivalent, or a joke based on the same principles would be something like:

La feina mal feta no té futur - així que deixa-ho córrer.

#### (F8) JONATHANISMS

'X is so Y that Z': *My uncle is so tall that he has to climb a ladder to shave himself.*

Jonathan's narrative logic notes a state of affairs, describes a result, and adds a reason. This is one of those productive formulae, on which invention can freely elaborate. This is where the creative side of translation comes into play.

#### (F9) FALSE PREMISES AND FLAWED INFERENCES

A form of academic humour is the logic-boggling one-liner that probes linguistic equivalences, ambiguities, and irregularities of semantic fit: usually readily translatable.

- (a) *My doctor says if I do nothing for my cold it'll last for seven days, but if he treats it, it'll go away in a week.*

#### (F10) TEXT AND REJOINER

This two-line form is an expansion of the glossed proposition; it implies a dialogue between one who propounds and one who answers with mischievous comment:

- (a) *The family that prays together stays together*  
*- Thank God my mother-in-law's an atheist*

One can account for this joke as probably aiming at either producing a string of 'mother-in-law' jokes, or making some witticism at the expense of the idiom *the family that prays together stays together*. Here translatability will often derive from the Reversed Restriction

of both language cultures sharing the same glossed proposition, or popular wisdom. But such a circumstance cannot be expected as a necessary condition.

(F11) QUESTION AND ANSWER

The classic two-line form embraces riddles, comedian-and-straightman jokes and the whole range of bananas, elephants, waiters, what-do-you-dos, and how-can-you-tells: many of these are readily translatable, like the one below, though not all, since some of them can be based on puns or sociocultural facts.

- (a) *Waiter is this a dead fly in my soup? -Yes sir, it's the hot water that kills them.*

(F12) RHYMED FORMS

Some formulaic jokes take prosodic shape in a rhymed couplet or quatrain. Rhyme may be a point of locative strength; it may serve a rhetorical purpose as it is described by Hatim and Mason (1990).

Absurd though pedantic commentary may be, such rhymes will bear analysis, like any other formulation.

The form of the limerick is also one that is recognized virtually from the moment the recital begins:

*A gentleman dining at Crewe  
Found quite a large mouse in his stew;  
Said the waiter, 'Don't shout  
And wave it about,  
Or the rest will be wanting one, too!'*

Nash claims that it would not be too difficult to produce an expanded prose version of this limerick, running to half a page or more, telling the same tale with small excursions, reflections, and additional stretches of conversation.

On the other hand, the joke in this limerick might easily be reduced in form. Recipes for brevity are available. Variation is the key to both translation and joke production.

- V1 *'Waiter, there's a mouse in my stew.'  
--'Don't shout sir, they'll all be wanting one.'*

- V2 *'A mouse in my stew! At Claridge's! How am I supposed to get rid of it?  
-'Give it a good tip.'*

- V3 *'Someone's bound to smell a rat', as the diner said when he found a mouse in his stew.*

V4 *The mouse in my stew was so big that when I pointed it out they charged me extra.*

Among formulaic jokes, the possibilities of equivalence and pattern-switching are considerable. This is how jokes survive and grow old and become veterans of many a company and campaign; this, too, is how the techniques of joking are explored, as formulae are replicated and expanded and revised and cross-connected with other formulae. But beyond that is a narrative art that calls for marshalling powers of a different order. All of this that is based on Nash's account of humour within the boundaries of a single language can be applied to the translation of many jokes, especially if they are an integral part of a larger text. Thus, specific procedures need to be devised for improved renderings of jokes in comedy, or even in other contexts. Before translators can produce really funny translations, which at the end of the day is what should be expected of them, they need to understand the nature and mechanics (no matter how cold and planned that may seem to those who have a more romantic vision of comic production) of a whole range of different kinds of jokes.

## 12.5. THE DESIGN OF THE JOKE. THE OUTGROWTH OF ANECDOTE

### 12.5.1. THE REPLICATED JOKE

Some formulae are extremely useful, as productive mechanisms for word-play and witty definition; once established, they are seen or heard everywhere, and become, indeed, keywords to popular culture, expressing national instincts and obsessions. slogan-type *X rules, OK*.

*Cowardice rules - if that's OK with you*  
*Procrastination will rule one day, OK?*  
*Sceptics may or may not rule, OK*  
*Dyslexia lures, KO*  
*Personal Problems rule, BO*

The formula is teased this way and that, in a competitive drive to exact from it all its humorous possibilities. Although Nash says that some of these examples can be understood quite easily by a foreigner knowing the general background of the formula and having an elementary competence in English, and that others demand, for the uninitiated, a specific socio-cultural commentary, he is most likely referring to foreigners residing in England. This sort of spontaneous popular creativity and ingenuity is very deeply rooted

in the source culture, and cannot be readily exported without a supporting context or a certain period of naturalization.

It must be noted here that graffiti is not translated precisely because there is no occasion for it to be translated, there is no client, and no initiator unless it is in a certain kind of bilingual or bicultural social environment. Writing on the wall can also be ascribed to a very different mode, channel and even tenor of discourse ('anonymous frequently-insulting writer' to 'random occasionally-replicating reader'). The problem arises when there are allusions to this sort of communication in written texts, and on this point we must remember that great writers make use of the most surprising resources, references and instances of language of their communities or of another community that has caught their interest. In such cases the Restriction of difference in cultural background is not only operative but has a tremendous force that is extremely difficult to overcome.

### 12.5.2. THE JOKE AS A RECITAL

There is such a Factor as an expanding formula; the joke grows as it is re-told, with cumulative points that acquire force from a developing, progressively articulated context. This is well illustrated by an anonymous masterpiece called the *Academic Hierarchy*, in which narrative logic predicts an ending of the recital at the bottom of the academic ladder, but the final step reverses the prediction. Certain features of humorous narrative are expectation, prediction, and continuity, to which we might assign the role of *plot*.

### 12.5.3. THE JOKE AS A ROUTINE

In music-hall practice a 'routine' is the conventional structure of a sketch, monologue, etc.; each routine has its typical gags, its costumes, its props. Translated into literary terms, the comic routine is the working and re-working of jokes that characterize the 'infrastructure' of the narrative.

### 12.5.4. THE PATTERNED ANECDOTE

The old ritual of three occurrences plus the crucial consequence.

Many humorous anecdotes adopt this kind of phasing, generally suggestive of the 'external' viewpoint of a narrator who is not involved in the plot and is free to demonstrate to his audience the compulsive symmetry of events.

- (1) the pieces of information that mark the onset of successive phases,
- (2) the adverbial 'pegs' that locate the story from phase to phase, and
- (3) the speeches of the characters.

Sometimes these anecdotes are drawn out enough to provide sufficient material for a chapter of a given TV series. Sometimes the same sort of anecdote can be used in apparently very different series by simply changing the setting and the props. So, this is another instance where the translator could benefit from acquiring a certain amount of experience in these sort of stories so as better to understand their mechanics.

### **12.5.5. 'FREE' ANECDOTAL STRUCTURE**

Fairy-tales, folk-stories, parables and popular yarns frequently have structures that enable an audience to predict the course of a narration, follow its turns, and anticipate the sort of outcome it will have. Thus, there is a high degree of predictability in the framing of certain anecdotes, and possibly this is an important part of the pleasure it is intended to afford; the listener becomes involved in the process of joke-making. In literary narrative of a more ambitious kind, anecdotes are as a rule more flexibly constructed, and their turns and transitions are not so clearly evident. Though guidelines certainly exist, the literary art consists in masking them, presenting what is on the face of it a casually-told tale. The intertextuality in these cases may often become a serious Restriction if the allusion is very strong and necessary for the full enjoyment of the story in the translation.

It is the meticulous cultivation of style that most obviously distinguishes the literary anecdote from the narrative of popular culture - the jokes told in pubs and clubs, the strip cartoon sequence, the folk tale in the oral tradition. Humorous narrative in the popular vein necessarily marks its presentation with readily perceptible conventions of structure and expression. Literary anecdote, with its apparently 'free' structure, both acknowledges and revises conventional methods of patterning, and allows for the play of individual creativity in style.

### 12.5.6. TOWARDS THE LARGER FORM

It seems that we have psychological access to stocks and patterns of joking, and that in our experience of humour we make connective reference to this stock. This often makes for a peculiar resonance in the reading of humorous narrative, when the reader creates a relationship between an actual piece of text and a recollected joke or a verbal parallel that seems appropriate to the narrative but that does not appear in so many words in the story.

Here there is fertile ground for the translator to explore the possibilities of cultural adaptation as a valid procedure to allow the TT audience to enjoy the intertextual references *in the same way as the ST audience did*, even if that involves not laughing at *exactly the same references*, especially in cases like television situation comedy, where laughter is the Top Priority.

The power of many TV situation comedies ensures that even a foreign viewer can hardly miss the root joke of the programme. Much of the stringent, mocking humour of the stories, moreover, is articulated in the verbal games and lunatic logics for which the scripts seem to have a particular fondness; so that a first-hand sociological knowledge of British culture (in the case of BBC or ITV productions), whether the topics dealt with or the background knowledge required, is not a prerequisite to the general understanding of the series. The fact remains, however, that TV sit-coms, like other comedies, do reflect a society, a history, an experience, and is consequently full of allusions and hints of parody which give depth to the joke, but which are in great measure lost to the outsider. Problems of narrative structure may be mastered, but the teasing allusiveness of humour and the parodic challenge of comedy are difficulties (or delights, according to one's point of view) that persist.

## 12.6. ALLUSION AND PARODY

### 12.6.1. THE CONTROLLING ALLUSION

Allusion in the very broadest sense is never absent from our discourse; always there is some fact of shared experience, some circumstance implicit in the common culture, to which participants in a conversation may confidently allude. In some texts allusion plays a more important role than in others. This is the case of much of the humour that is produced, whether it is spontaneously generated in conversation or carefully planned in literature. The more important allusion is in the ST, the stronger it acts as a restricting force in the translating process.

What we often understand by 'allusion', however, is something more explicit and overt, for which the word 'citation' might be a more accurate name. These citations often have a function that goes beyond the mere decoration of a conversational exchange. They are a kind of test, proving the credentials of the initiated, baffling the outsider. In effect, they are a device of power, enabling the speaker to control a situation and authoritatively turn it to his own advantage.

### 12.6.2. THE CONTENT ELEMENT

Most allusions make some demand on our competence as social beings with ready access to certain facts and commonplaces; when we lack such access, the allusion misfires, and becomes material for expository comment

### 12.6.3. THE LINGUISTIC ELEMENT

Failure to appreciate the 'content element' undermines the allusive joke. Equally, the humorous effect must lapse if the textual form of the allusion goes unrecognized, or is misunderstood in its peculiar relationship to the content.

Many allusions turn on quotations from literary works:

- Languid recruit: *'Now more than ever seems it rich to die.'*
- Ferocious drill sergeant: *'WHO SAID THAT!!'*
- Languid recruit: *'Keats, wasn't it?'*

The languid one controls the situation with a quotation and a twist in the entailment of a question; asked, in effect, '*Who spoke?*', he answers the query '*Who was the author of that line?*' What the translator of such jokes would want to retain is the intellectual superiority of the recruit over the sergeant as well as his wittiness in flouting of the Gricean maxim of relevance. The exclusiveness defines a group of adept insiders, and in so doing confirms feelings of privilege, not to say of superiority.

What the translator of television productions needs to be aware of is that in an allusion, however, the cited text need not be from a poem or any other recognized piece of literature. Virtually any well known form of words - from the language of politics, of advertising, or journalism, of law or social administration - will serve the requirements of wit. We can regard the allusion as a controlling element in discourse.

Two Factors need to be considered at this point. First, should some part of the TT audience miss the allusion, they may still be satisfied by the visual comedy and the general absurdity of the situation. Second, the translator might sometimes find that is possible to insert a different allusion that the TT audience can be expected to grasp with considerably less effort since it is more relevant to them.

Humorous allusions can evidently be used to comment on society and manners. In this respect the translator will have to either make the allusion more transparent, or more universal or change it for a cultural equivalent.

Wherever allusions occur, Nash (1985: 80) tells us some excursion into parody is possible; the parodic line often begins with the allusive point. Below we will look into some of the aspects of parody.

#### 12.6.4. PARODY AS APPRAISAL

##### (I) PERSONAL STYLES

A test of good parody is not how closely it imitates or reproduces certain turns of phrase, but how well it *generates* a style convincingly like that of the parodied author, producing the sort of phrases and sentences he might have produced. It is not solely or even primarily an exercise in specific allusion to certain textual loci, but an attempt at a *creative allusiveness* that generates the designated style. Here is a good example of the need for a translator to be a good writer as well if such features of parody are to be retained in translation.



## (II) THE HOSTILE STANCE

In some cases the burlesque has sardonic overtones. It may be aimed at a pretentiously mannered style, or, more often, it may attack the content *through* a style. Parody and satire are not the same thing, but parody becomes a satirical weapon when the parodist is angered by an author's philosophies and arguments, or recurrent attitudes. Priorities that will have to be very carefully ordered and graded in such situations are:

- (1) the humorous effect of parody
- (2) the clarity of the intention to criticise
- (3) the informative and referential value of the criticism

### 12.6.5. THE RECOGNITION OF PARODY

There arises the question of how we recognize a parody or a parodic intention; for here, as in other forms of humour, laughter depends on some sort of framework of expectancy. Nash (1985: 87) most commonly, a title makes the directive signal, even suggesting the structure of the parodic joke. In the case of situation comedies this is often done in the individual titles of each chapter. Some examples from *The Black Adder* are the following: 'Dish and Dishonesty', 'Ink and Incapability' and 'Nob and Nobility', which the English audience can easily understand to be a parody of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Yet in the absence of a title, even when the reader is not sure just what is being parodied, it may still be possible to recognize parodic intention. The parodist takes care as a rule to create notable discrepancies: discrepancies of 'fit' between expression and content, and discrepancies of style on the plane of expression itself. The mismatch of expression and content is often boldly obvious. It is this aspect that the translator can hang on to if all other attempts at alluding fail. Perception of stylistic discrepancy confirms one's assumptions about the wayward content; what one has before one is either a piece of absurdly ill-judged writing, or an essay in buffoonery, *probably* of a parodic nature.

Why that cautious qualifier, *probably*? It is because humorous writing may have a parodic semblance without being a parody of anything (or anybody) in particular, and because we can hugely enjoy a text without being able to identify a parodic source. This Factor reverses the Restriction of having to know what is being parodied.

### 12.6.6. THE PARODY OF PERIOD STYLES

The recognition of a parody may be difficult if the target is an author or a particular work unknown to the reader. There is so much that we have not read. Out of the continued practice of writing from generation to generation, there arises something we call 'literary language', representing the stylistic character of whole periods in our culture - 'mediaeval', Elizabethan', 'Restoration', *etc.* Dependence on 'the sort of thing I mean' underlies certain parodies, and this Factor is usually the obvious candidate to become the translator's Priority.

### 12.6.7. COMPLEX PARODIC SCHEMES

There are, indeed, many parodies that represent a conjoining of models. Parodic complexity is achieved when, for instance, the content of one text is mocked in a style imitative of another. Certain texts like *The Black Adder* are full of anachronic expressions, references and jokes.

### 12.6.8. PSEUDOPARODY AND INTERTEXTUALITY

The domain of parody is, to be sure, a large and varied one - so much so, that we inevitably come across texts that are not centrally parodic, in terms of a clearly definable model, but which wear parodic *aura*, and are full of echoes of half-remembered writings. They might be called *pseudoparodies*. The television productions *Yes, Minister* and *Black Adder* make ample use of pseudoparody. In translation, certain parodies of the ST might have to become pseudoparodies in the TT due to the characteristics of the Restrictions and Priorities.

The comedian frequently shifts the ground of probability and subverts the rules of argument, and is able to do this very often with the help of parodic style. Parody accommodates and even excuses the mockery of logic; the unlikely circumstance is made acceptable by the amusing distortions of parodic expression. Parodic style and subverted logic together define one essential quality of comic narrative; the integrity of its artifice - the 'artefactuality', to coin a monstrous word, that leads us to consider it purely in its own terms, as something distanced from all that is involved in the word *realism*. This may appear to be a paradoxical conclusion, since humour and comedy often have reference to social institutions and interactions, and are therefore commonly supposed to be realistic.

They may be *truthful* in their reflections on human nature, but *realistic* is seldom the word for their style and narrative method. At their funniest, their wisest, their most revelatory, they transcend realism and require us to acquiesce in the laws of the surreal.

## 12.7. LIKELIHOODS AND LOGICS

### 12.7.1. THE LIKELIHOOD FACTOR

In many comedies and tall tales, the idea that 'anything can happen', the 'likelihood' Factor is an important ingredient. We are glad to accept the condition *as if*. In many flights of humorous fantasy, the point and power of the anecdote lie not so much in the reader/listener's reaction to some gross departure from likelihood, as in the responses of characters within the story. This often characterizes 'shaggy dog' jokes.

The fact that anything can happen, however, does not mean that nothing will be perceived as remarkable. It is part of the joke that even in the world of suspended physics people are expected to follow common patterns of minor behaviour; or as Nash (1985: 108) says, 'the law of gravity may lapse but the force of habit remains'. Unlikelihood does not provoke in us an astonishment from which we cannot free our minds. We accept the impossible as a theoretical postulate, the necessary condition of the joke.

### 12.7.2. THE PRAGMATIC FACTOR

Together with the shifted likelihood and the dislocated logic goes a third major source of humour: the waywardness of words missing their mark in ordinary conversational interactions. Because much of Austin's Speech Act Theory and Grice's Maxims still have to be proved not to be 'universal' in the main thrust of what is said, humour based on literal meaning v. illocutionary meaning can often be translated, if not by using exactly the same words, at least by using the same 'literal v. pragmatic' principle.

One can make a joke by ignoring or 'by-passing' the pragmatic significance of one's interlocutor's words and drawing attention to their referential, rather than pragmatic, meaning. Humour of this kind is very common. Here are some examples from Nash (1985: 114).

(1) *Clergyman* : 'I now pronounce you man and wife.'

*Bride* : 'And you pronounce it beautifully, Vector.'

(2) *Clerk of the Court* : 'How do you find the defendant? Guilty or not guilty?'

*Foreman of the Jury* : 'Guilty isn't the word.'

(3) *Diner* : 'Waiter, what's this fly doing in my soup?'

*Waiter* : 'Looks like the breast-stroke, sir.'<sup>1</sup>

The joke sports with a peculiarity of English social usage, which resorts to the meaningfully oblique question in the expression of directives, reservations, or complaints. But nonetheless these jokes are usually translatable, although rarely on a word-for-word basis. In example (3) it is clear that the waiter's answer can be substituted for other activities that subvert the pragmatic intention of the original question, e.g. 'Drowning?' 'Looks like he's learning to swim'. If such a joke had to be translated for a dubbed version in a film or television programme, various solutions could be explored to fit in the constraints of timing and lip movements. The translation of (1) in dubbing might differ greatly in the TT by some sort of compensation, when the pun on 'pronounce' cannot be reproduced literally, retaining merely the inappropriateness of the bride's remark, which would surely be better than a literal (and therefore incomprehensible) rendering, or speech defect of the clergyman shared by the bride if such a solution were thought to be funny:

Clergue: Jo, us declaro marit i muller

Núvia: I els testimonis? No declaren res?

The work of Grice, of Austin, and of J.R. Searle, puts into theoretical terms what we already know intuitively about conversation, i.e. that it is a contract involving the agreed conduct of various acts of assertion, direction, performance, verdict-giving, promising, inviting, requesting, etc. When the contract is broken, whether innocently or designedly, the effect may be funny; may illuminate a character or situation; or may designate some critical defect in a relationship. Not surprisingly, the humour of psychological and social satire is expressed to a very great extent through the flaws and missed connections of speech acts, the contractual failures of parties to conversation.

#### **Four Paradigms of Defective Exchange<sup>2</sup>**

##### **(1) The Runaround**

A: 'And where do you work, Mr Jones?'

B: 'Oh, you know, at the Town Hall.'

A: 'And what do you do there?'

---

<sup>1</sup> Sembla que hi neda, oi?

<sup>2</sup> As described in Nash (1985: 117).



B: 'Oh, you know, Town Hall work.'

**(2) The 'Skid'**

A: 'Now you take the whale, that's just about the oldest fish in the ocean.'

B: 'It isn't a fish. It's a mammal. The whale is a mammal.'

A: 'Well, the Bible says it's a fish. The oldest book in the world says the whale is a fish.'

B: 'Look, they just didn't know enough in those days. They had a naive taxonomy. If it swam in the sea, they classified it as a fish. We know better now, we know the whale is a mammal.'

A: 'You're telling me the author of the Bible didn't know what he was doing? The Bible? The book you swear on in court?'

**(3) The 'Backhander'**

A: 'Let's go for a picnic.'

B: 'A picnic! In this weather! You must be out of your mind.'

A: 'Alright, let's stay home and listen to some records.'

B: 'That's just like you - no drive, no imagination.'

**(4) The 'Googly' (or 'Spitball')**

A: 'How would you like to spend seven days in a Portuguese villa?'

B: 'I'd *love* it!'

A: 'Good, then you can envy me all next week.'

It is quite clear that each one of these examples are readily translatable as they do not depend on a pun, but on a social relationship.

**The Defective Exchange as a Characterizing Motif in Comic Fiction**

Some works of fiction exploit the defective exchange, (Bernard Wooly in *Yes, Minister*, Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*, Baldrick in *The Black Adder*) not simply as an occasional device of humour, but as an element in the very fabric of the work, expressing character, typifying relationships, and framing situations. This is an important feature that the translator will do well to identify as a Priority.

Nash (1985: 123) reminds us that to claim that the whole content and texture of a complex novel might be expounded in terms of typical conversational patterns is patently absurd, although we must not forget that in the case of television situation comedies conversational patterns are a very important Priority indeed.

## 12.8. MANIPULATIONS OF MEANING

In chapter 7 of his book, Nash offers some interesting analyses of the way some humour is produced and in them there are some helpful clues that point to potentially useful procedures.

### 12.8.1. LAYERING

To serve rhetorical purpose the translator must master this technique of comedy. As an example, let us consider possible transformations of a sentence not in itself strikingly humorous:

1. *My watch fell into the river.*

From this emerges, with a little playful tinkering:

2. *My timepiece toppled into the Thames.*

And again:

3. *Into the Thames toppled my timepiece.*

In version 3, the element of a distinctive syntax is incorporated with a distinctive lexicon and a distinctive pattern of sound. This humorous language is thus layered.

However, a sentence unremarkable in itself might function significantly as an element in the language of comedy. This implies a distinction between the *language of comedy* and *humorous language*. The larger term concerns a discursive relationship between all the parts of a text and its infrastructure; the narrower concept denotes the stylistic properties of particular utterances. Needless to say they are not mutually exclusive. There is nothing to prevent an utterance from being both 'humorous' and *comedic*.

### 12.8.2. THE 'EXTRINSIC' DEFINITION OF HUMOROUS LANGUAGE

Nash (1985: 126) proves how the search for the intrinsically funny, like the search for the intrinsically poetic, is a forlorn enterprise. Certain examples we might want to suggest have no humorous power in their own right, but they are *residually* humorous, i.e. they have a colouring from repeated use in jokes and comic narrative. There are clichés of

comic expression, which cannot always be readily translated, but have to be substituted by LC2 equivalences.

We are on safer ground, according to Nash (1985: 127) if we assume that the properties of humorous expression are defined extrinsically; words and phrases seem funny because of their contextual linkages and semantic relationships (potentially both syntagmatic and paradigmatic).

### 12.8.3. SETS SEQUENCES AND SCALES

Into the design of his/her text the humorist incorporates various kinds of rhetorical sequence: sequences of syntactic constructions with their variations, parallels and antitheses, sequences of ideas or 'notions', with points of reference and interrelationship located in important words. These syntactic and semantic sequences can be phonetically defined, e.g. in patterns of alliteration (*'two terribly tired toads'*). Another kind of manipulation is that of choosing from semantic sets an odd or unusual synonym, or forcing unnatural but humorous collocations:

*Mr Brown's bull mastiff bayed at the bread man,*

*Mrs Thompson's Terrier taunted a passing tramp.*

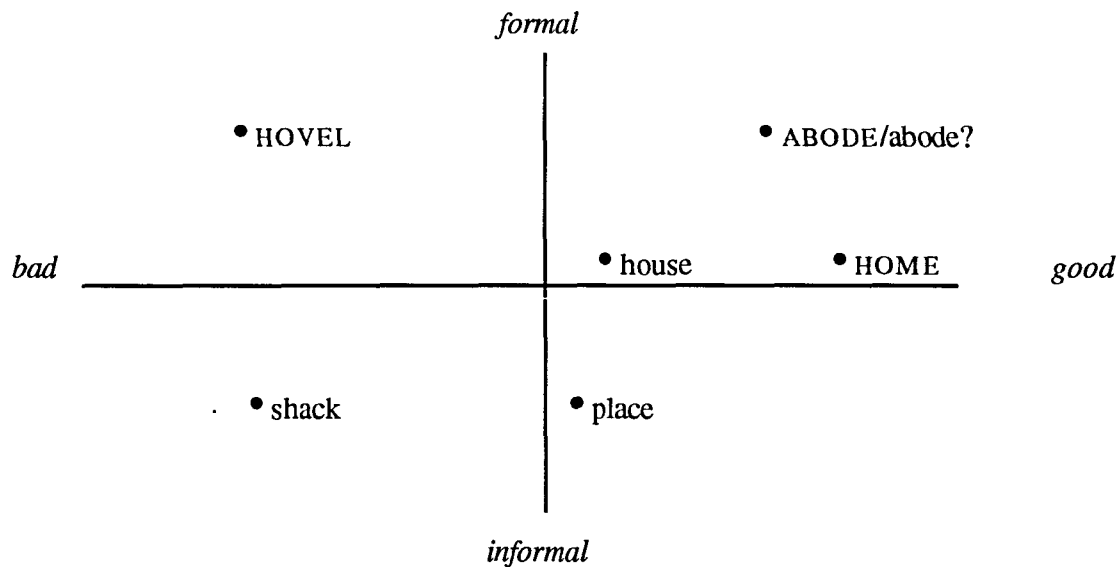
*Mrs Dempster's Great Dane denounced the dustmen.*

*Mrs Harris's hound haranged a hawker.*

*Mr Carter's Corgi cursed all callers.*

Nash (1985: 134) shows how the humorist can exploit the full ranges of synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms and superordinates of a semantic field, as well as scales of formality, potency (strength of affective responses) and evaluation in order to find humoristic combinations.

The semantic space (Osgood's terminology, 1957) defined coordinately by two or more scales is illustrated below as in Nash (1985: 136). The scale of *formality* forms the vertical axis, the scale of *evaluation* makes a horizontal; the third scale, that of *potency*, is less precisely expressed, lower case letters indicating 'weak', capitals denoting 'strong':



If the humorist (and the translator who translates comedy) is aware of such scales he/she can produce humorous passages by making striking combinations of strong and weak, formal and informal, good and bad with incongruous effects, as in the example below provided by Nash (1985: 137):

*Shall we proceed to my pad for a spot of liquid refreshment?; let us sally forth to my domicile and imbibe a few snorts; We'll trek to my shack and put a few back; Haste with locomotive zeal to yon mansion, where possets of fermented liquor shall be our portion; Let's skedaddle to my seat and rape the grape; Leg it, lads, to my residence, where the bonny booze awaits; We'll push off to poppa's palace and ingurgitate the odd potation.*

Nash tells us that the game of whimsy is so easy if one knows the simple rules of set and scale: weak / strong; formal / informal; bad / good. The translator might want to remember these rules of set and scale when translating humorous pieces in order to maintain the tone of the original, if not in exactly the same places, at least through compensation.

#### 12.8.4. PUNNING DEVICES, IRONY, AMBIGUITY AND POSSIBLE TRANSLATING PROCEDURES

(A) **Homophones:** pairs of words with the same sound but different meaning. Only occasionally does a homophonic one-word pun lend itself readily to translation even into the most closely related languages. Substitution for a different pun (or for even a different humoristic device; e.g. a silly rhyme) is a recommendable procedure when humour is a Higher-order Priority.

(B) **Homophonic phrases:** syllable for syllable, phrases sound alike, but the sum of the meaning is different. Unlike homophonic words, they are not readily available in the



stock of the language, and practically always untranslatable by retaining any of the original words. Whereas a certain degree homophony can be expected of the vocabulary of most languages, it seems that some languages will be more prone to producing homophonic phrases than others. Nash (1985: 139), for example, says that while phrasal homophony has to be forced, a further constraint on the homophonic phrase in English may be the rhythm and stress-timing of the language. French, with its syllable-timing, according to him, possibly creates more favourable conditions for phrasal homophony. Substitution for a different homophonic phrase or compensation by introducing a different kind of pun or humorous effect appear to be the most recommendable procedures for translating homophonic phrases. Example in English, from Nash (1985: 139):

*Where did Humpty Dumpty leave his hat?*

*Humpty dumped 'is hat on a wall.*

(C) **Mimes:** phonetic similitudes, usually rhymes, with the appeal of homophones. They make for a particularly outrageous kind of pun, because they bend the rules of punning itself. The central principle of punning is *homomorphic*, but mimes are impudently *allomorphic*.

*What do policemen have in their sandwiches?*

*Truncheon meat.* (Nash, 1985: 139)

'Truncheon' mimes the word 'luncheon'.

*What do cats read?*

*The Mews of the World.* ('Mews' mimes 'news') (Nash, 1985: 139)

This kind of variation of the traditional definition of what a pun is, might be a useful translating procedure: ST puns might become TT mimes if the humorous effect is retained.

(D) **Mimetic phrases:** mimetic phrasing of the Bible, Shakespeare, etc. is a staple of wit, and generally reflects the humorist's reading in primary texts.

*Hollywood, land of milk and money.*

(mimetic of the Biblical 'land of milk and honey' (Nash, 1985: 140)

(E) **Homonyms:** the homonym is a companion device to the homophone; homonyms share a spelling split a meaning.

(F) **Homonymic phrases.**

*'I have designs on you', as the tattooist said to his girl.* (Nash, 1985: 141)

'I have designs on you' = 'I intend to make you mine' and 'I have tattooed you.'

The homonymic phrase is greatly favoured by skittish sub-editors composing newspaper headlines.

(G) **Contacts and blends:** some turns of phrase echo other idioms and take a colour of meaning from them; there is a casual contact of ideas, or a blending of semantic components. Consequently, they are practically impossible to translate in their original form and must usually be compensated for, either elsewhere or with a different device. Some blends are knowingly devised; others are sheer malapropisms. The translator will have to assess the importance of recurrency of such features as character traits or some other rhetorical purpose.

(H) **Pseudomorphs**, like the following (from Nash, 1985: 143)

*Samson was distressed by Delilah.*

'Distressed' because 'dis-tressed'. There is no verb to 'distress' in English, it has been invented to make a homonymic pun. Prefixes like 'dis-' and 'ex-' lend themselves to this game. The translator will have to explore similar possibilities offered by morphological features of the target language. The difference from one version to another will surely depend on the translator competence Factor, in particular the aspect of translator as writer of the TT, in our case the translator as script writer and creator of TT jokes.

(I) **Portmanteaux:** the coinage that packs two meanings into one word.

*If buttercups are yellow, what colour are hiccups? - Burple.*

Obviously, even more complicated to translate than regular puns, because of an additional Restriction that make these totally impossible to translate out of the context of a longer text. In the case of situation-comedies it becomes necessary to propose solutions along the lines that such jokes be substituted for entirely new jokes in the TT, with the only Restriction that they fit into the 'time slot' (as well as the normally-expected Restrictions of coherence and lip-synchronization).

(J) **Etymological puns** like the one below (Nash, 1985: 144):

*Nero made Rome the focus (Latin for 'fireplace') of his artistic attention.*

As a social footnote, it may be remarked that etymological puns are often coldly, even angrily received, being regarded as pretentious and undemocratic. This facilitates snobbery in joking; the play on *focus* is a coterie quip, for those in the know. By contrast, we may consider German, where the same joke could be made, using the word *Brennpunkt* (literally and obviously 'burning point'); but then the pun would be overt, whereas the charm of the pun on *focus* is its covert, audience-defining character.

(K) **Bilingual puns:** the bilingual pun is another demonstration of cute pedantry.

*At Yury Andropov's funeral: President Felipe González offers his condolences and says "I'm sorry". Vice President Alfonso Guerra, following his boss's example says "I'm sorry too". The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando Morán, follows suit and says "I'm sorry three".*

In the above example the pun is not strictly bilingual, only the joke is meant to be since this joke only really works in Catalan or in Spanish (except for the words in quotation marks, of course), because the pun is understandable by Spanish or Catalan students of English, but is too obvious to be funny for a native English-speaking audience, besides the obvious fact that the characters belong to Spanish politics.

(L) **Pun Metaphors:** frisky trick of journalism is the headline that shakes a cliché to rattle a metaphor to ring a pun:

*Council puts brake on progress of cycle path scheme.*

*Murky consequences of washing our hands of Europe.*

A poetic metaphor is precise, and in its precision illuminating. Pun-metaphors are often deliberately sloppy. At the heart of all this word-play seems to be a concern with two ancient and related processes: naming and riddling. This kind of pun metaphor is quite characteristic of the series *Yes, Minister*.

Regarding the acceptability of certain devices for producing jokes or humorous effects Nash (1985:147) reminds us that all humour commands a moment of absolute surrender on the part of the receptor who must be willing to play the game by the joker's rules.

(M) **Graphologies:** anagrams may suggest connections hitherto unperceived. An anagram is a free play with a limited set of letters. Puns and anagrams represent an element of code-breaking in humour. The anagram presents a further analogy, in its affinity with the semantic process of rhyme. An anagram can be seen as a kind of semantic matching expressed in letters instead of sounds, the re-patterned phrase suggesting some arbitrary but momentarily convincing link with the original. One might not expect to see anagrams in audiovisual texts, and while it is true that they do not usually appear, there are occasional examples, but as in the case of the recent film *The Silence of the Lambs*, they are usually found in thrillers and not in comedy.

(N) **Lucky Lapses:** There are formulations that have no design and no creative history; lucky lapses. Often the originators of these are people whose conceptual reach slightly exceeds their linguistic grasp; who know well enough what they want to say, but through ignorance, or failure of memory, or through sheer pretentiousness, or for any other reason, cannot quite manage to say it; funny malapropisms. Some of these tumblers in language achieve name and fame. (*I'll-damn-you-for-sewages; You have deliberately*

*tasted two worms and you can leave Oxford by the town drain; In two words: impossible; Comparisons are odorous*). The concept of lucky lapses is probably easily enough reflected in any language. The translator will normally have to adapt the 'lucky lapse' to the TT.

A funny misprint is often a casual invitation to irreverence. The unfortunate fact is that many examples of casual humour can be found in misprints and inappropriate renderings in translated texts. Mistranslations (excessively literal or misguidedly ambitious) are a fine source of the unconscious humour that can sometimes be worked into conscious designs. Julio César Santoyo's book, *El Delito de Traducir*<sup>1</sup>, provides a fruitful source of such instances. Foreign accents are another source of this sort of humour. A weakness of many dubbed versions is that funny ways of speaking are often not rendered or accounted for in the dubbed version, unless it is absolutely indispensable; *The Black Adder* is a case in point.

Nash (1985: 151) concludes on this point:

"Thus mistakes have their heuristic value; through them we may discover paradoxes, epigrams, metaphors, ironies, singularly beautiful and grotesque forms of humour, sculpted by chance usage like pieces of wood on the beach."

(O) **Ironies**: the consensus appears to be that the ironist insincerely states something he does not mean, but through the manner of his statement - whether through its formulation, or its delivery, or both - is able to encode a counter-proposition, his 'real meaning', which may be interpreted by the attentive listener or reader. The counter-code may take the form of a fulsome intonation and vocal timbre or may depend on the operation of understatement.

Irony *mal-codes*, designedly choosing forms of words that misrepresent the content of the message. In spoken communication irony may be additionally coded by a tone of voice, a special intonation, tempo, and timbre identifiable within the confines of a certain speech community. In situation-comedies irony is usually quite easy to interpret and often borders on insulting sarcasm.

However, as Nash points out (1985: 153), it is always possible for irony to fail transactionally, because the recipient is ignorant of, or does not acknowledge, the suppositions underlying the message. There is also a risk of failure in fine irony, when the ironist so hones and reduces the features of counter-coding that the recipient is at times led to wonder whether the message is, after all, seriously intended and formulated. An operative Restriction in all irony is that it is a vulnerable mode of humorous composition,

---

<sup>1</sup> SANTOYO, J. (1989): *El Delito de Traducir*, León: Universidad de León.

partly because long passages of ironic writing weary and discompose the reader, suggesting in the end a morbid rather than a healthily humorous spirit.

(P) **Ambiguities**, ambivalence, the couplings and contrasts of meaning, all characterize the exploratory and creative procedures of humorous language. The humorist tries by every means in his power to elicit from the system of language potential significances, co-significances, counter-significances, the play of values, the coincidences or oppositions of points in a network of choices. This exploitation of dualities inherent in resources and usage is one important aspect of language in its humour, but it is not the whole account of the subject; there remains the matter of language as a stage for humorous recitals.

## 12.9. THE STAGING OF RECITALS

### 12.9.1. RHYME AND RHYTHM

Humour has its prosodic laws that command the resources (alliteration, rhyme, rhythm) but flout the principles of 'serious' poetics. In comic versifying, rhyme and rhythm have, potentially, a dual function: decorative and directional, not entirely unlike lyric poetry although the direction and the nature of the decoration are different. Nash offers the following classification to explain the role of rhyme and rhythm in English humour.

- (a) Comic rhymes are effective because they are banal and easily predictable, or because they are so remote as to defy expectation.
- (b) The serious poet must try to avoid both the tendency towards banality in masculine rhyme and the danger of stilted contrivance in the feminine pattern. The business of the humorous writer is quite the reverse.
- (c) Density of rhyme, like density of alliteration, is to the English reader either wearisome or downright comic. These densities are a blemish on would-be-serious verse.
- (d) No rhythm is humorous *per se*, but rhythms can become humorous contextually, by virtue of their banality, or their lawlessness, or their residual associations.

While point (a) can be said of any language, what Nash says about feminine rhyme in point (b) and density of rhyme (c) is only true for English, so the translator will have to assess feminine rhyme for what it means and not for its own sake. This sort of difference from one language to another regarding types of rhyme is probably just as true for serious poetry. Regarding point (d), a banal rhythm is one that marches exactly, in relentless

synchronization, with its governing metre. A 'lawless' rhythm is one that accepts or discards metrical rule, as the rhymster's convenience dictates.

### 12.9.2. FRAMES

Humorous intention is made apparent through the construction of a setting, or frame, which sanctions the joke ('given these conditions you may laugh') and also suggests an interpretative process. Nash (1985: 164) suggests the following three comments:

- (a) Prosodic frames: often it is the the apparatus of rhythm and rhyme that makes a declaration of comic intent, and in such cases it might also be said that the prosody *is* the joke. In dubbing this aspect would have to be accounted for by the form (the words and collocations) the translator gave to his/her version and the performance of the dubbing actor.
- (b) Syntactic frames: the ordering of elements in a clause, the contrivance of parallel constructions, the imposition of a cohesive syntactic pattern on a sequence of sentences in a text, are all ways of creating, in prose, a frame for comic narrative comparable to prosodic framing of humorous verse.
- (c) Authorial comment: the 'inquit'. Another kind of frame is created by the author's interventions in the comic narrative, with comment on events and on the behaviour and feelings of his characters. The inquit is a kind of stage-direction. In a comic extension of these techniques of authorial commentary, characters in a story or play are allowed to comment 'objectively' on their own actions, motives and involvements. The character, eerily, self-aware, is allowed to be his/her own author. Frequent examples of this are found in the situation-comedy *Allo Allo*, where each chapter starts with an 'authorial comment' on the situation that will help to explain future events.

### 12.9.3. OVERSTATEMENT, UNDERSTATEMENT, COUNTERSTATEMENT

Overstatement and understatement are major principles of comic staging. Along with counterstatement they are cohesive devices as well. A narrator may frame his/her recital consistently in overstatement; or he/she may regularly underplay, thereby constructing a different kind of humorous frame and encouraging in the audience a different set of suppositions and anticipations. Counterstatement, as a recurrent device, has the effect of constantly shifting or unsettling the frame, disturbing perspective till the audience is not quite sure how to respond to a narrative.

#### 12.9.4. THE PERFORMANCE ELEMENT

Nash (1985: 170) tells us that a popular song of the 1930s declared to the world that *It ain't what you do, it's the way you do it*, with the corollary *It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it*. This applies to humour as much as to anything, including television humour. Everyone knows that jokes are made or marred in the telling; for which reason, the inexperienced teller accepts and respects formulae handed down to him, seldom daring to attempt variations in the pattern of a locative joke, or to practise improvisations in the structure of an anecdote. Professionals originate and improvise; laymen follow a script.

There is indeed, a 'performance element' in humour. In the case of dubbed versions this element must be accounted for through a careful balance of the translator's work and the dubbing actor's performance, within the Restrictions of the original actors' expressions and gestures, as well as the surrounding props and other performers.

According to Walter Nash (1985: 170), a skilled comic actor can read aloud a set of names culled from the telephone catalogue, and by intonations, by exquisitely judged pauses, by sensuous variations of vocal timbre, by a magisterial solemnity of countenance, can make the onlooker smile. Skilled comic actors, however, are seldom required to exercise their arts of interpretation on such unlikely material. As a rule they are provided with scripts into which the notations of humour have been more or less emphatically written by authors concerned with the vocal implications of their writing.

No script is so exhaustively prepared as to leave nothing to the interpreter, and there is many a good joke or story that depends on a good performance. A performer with the right command of the stage intonation, of the plummy timbre, of an adequate 'peculiarity of emphasis' might enforce laughter. In the last analysis the language of humour is powerless without the *speech* of humour. Jokes are *told*; scripts are acted out; somewhere beyond the text is a voice, telling, delivering, timing. We can never recognize the bliss of humour until we can recognize its voices. This is a fundamental Factor in dubbing, and it is much more important than in written texts meant to be read, where the reader may be expected to 'hear' the words in his/her own mind.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Translating Jokes for Television

#### 13.1. COMEDY AND TEXT TYPES

The classifications of texts previously mentioned in other chapters (or any classification that might be useful to the professional translator) must be able to account for those texts whose main function is to make the reader or audience laugh, i.e. comedy. We will say that a text is a comedy when it can be assigned to the group of texts where laughter is one of the ST author's Top Priorities. There are humorous effects in Shakespeare's tragedies, but in translation they may sometimes be sacrificed to achieve a better rendering of other aspects that are more crucial to the total structure of the plays. Even if actual jokes or puns are not sacrificed, they will at least be expected to fit in with the general tone and coherence of the play they appear in.

Newmark (1988: 41) says that he understands the term "vocative", within the functions of language model, to mean "calling upon" the readership to act, think or feel, to "react" in the way intended by the text. Newmark includes, among other typical "vocative" texts, popular fiction, whose purpose is to sell the book/entertain the reader. From this angle it might be possible to include television comedy in this category.

In Mary Snell-Hornby's classification (1988: 32), her class "stage/film" (squarely placed under "literary translation") appears to be clearly removed from the class "light fiction" (which comes much nearer to "general language translation"). Comedy is not accounted for, so we might be expected to believe that it can appear anywhere, right across the whole



range of texts, and if this were the case it could be quite easily represented on the diagram by means of an arrow covering as many text types as she felt necessary. Either she was not willing to commit herself to such a classification or she believes the humorous aspects of a text are a subdivision of one of her labels, though there is no obvious candidate.

A translator must be able to assess at all times whether any part of a text has a straight meaning, an ironical one or is simply nonsense (here we are referring to deliberately intended nonsense!). However, this does not help towards a better understanding of how to translate humorous effects since humour may be present or absent in any of the three kinds of meaning, since humour can be produced in a multitude of ways and contexts; by sound effects, by puns, by illogical or surprising syllogisms, and by twists in the plot. Some part of a text, then, can have a "straight" meaning but still be funny. Irony can be funny or bitter (or both), philosophical or unintended. Nonsense passages can have a purely aesthetic function, or a solely comic one (or a combination of both).

It is because of all this that I consider that when humour is the main effect intended by the author, i.e. the text's Top Priority, it needs to be looked at by the translator as a phenomenon worthy of consideration in its own right, and not as a marginal instance of some other aspect of a theory of translation. What I am driving at is that as translating involves making choices and sacrifices, when comic effect is the main reason for the existence of a text, as is the case of almost every television sit-com, then the translator will have to deal first and foremost with the problems that arise out of trying to get a laugh from the TT audience.

All aspects of translation theory will either have to be proved to work for the translation of humour or otherwise be revised. The translator of a humorous text will be looking for a different kind of unit of translation other than (or as well as) the word, the sentence or the paragraph: namely the joke, which can be as small as the change of one phoneme for another for comic effect, or as large as the whole text when dealing with dramatic irony or a funny plot. At certain crucial points (like a punch line, a pun or an exciting climax) equivalence, or equivalent effect must be seen as equivalent comic effect above all other considerations. Metaphor can be used comically (and in the whole series of *Yes, Minister* there are many instances of this), and must be retained or changed according to the Priority of comic effect.

The cultural and ethnic Factors of humour are at the same time elusive and very important when it comes to translating humour. The more obvious cases are those jokes that depend on the receptor's perception of certain ethnic groups (in "The Challenge" it is interesting to note how "*frogs*" can easily be translated as "*gavatxos*". Therefore, in a translation of a BBC production for TV3, it is important to know if the British and the Catalans perceive a number of aspects of the programme in the same way, such as:

- (1) the French (as they are both neighbours)

- (2) social classes (e.g. I suppose everybody gets a laugh out of politicians, albeit censorship)
- (3) public institutions
- (4) cultural and political taboos

What might be frequently used as the butt of many a joke in the ST culture might be considered as either unmentionable in the TT receptors' culture, or may simply be unknown, uninteresting or old fashioned, i.e. in some way or other irrelevant (try translating jokes about cricket into Catalan, in the best of cases they will have to be adapted).

One question that must be asked is the following: Is there a British (collective, culture-bound, national identity) sense of humour? If there is a different sense of humour for different countries, what problems does this pose for translation and how can they be solved? A full answer to these questions goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but it will suffice to point out that these are Factors that must be analysed as objectively as possible. At this point all I will say is that I think there are many different ways to make people laugh (and there are many ways to make them feel offended or bored), and as this has a lot to do with the area of people's tastes along with their collective and individual likes and dislikes; one can safely imagine that different people are amused in different ways. So it will be interesting to see what kind of humour (or joke) is not "exportable" and why. Those who disagree with this approach are probably the ones who like to think that humour, like love, is one of the things in life that knows no barriers of culture and language.

It is important at this point to remember the following words by Mallafrè (1991: 109):

"Pot haver-hi estudis preliminars, notes a peu de pàgina, etc., però en la mesura en què proliferin s'acostarà més a una traducció didàctica que artística. En una traducció que pretén un efecte equivalent en el lector, substitutiva, s'ha de procurar crear l'impacte directament, en el text, per exemple d'un joc de paraules, i no posar al peu de la *N. del T.*: «en angles aixó té molta gràcia perquè tal paraula pot ser interpretada de dues maneres». Malament quan s'han d'explicar els acudits."

### 13.2. FACTORS, PRIORITIES AND RESTRICTIONS INVOLVED IN TRANSLATING HUMOUR

Anyone wishing to take on the task of producing or criticising translations of jokes and comic ironies that appear in television situation comedies will naturally have to consider all of the Factors that we have outlined in the previous chapters. However, due to the importance of the variable nature of the translating process, we have already argued the point that certain Factors are more important or *operative* in some processes and not so much or not at all in others. So, the Factors that seem to be particularly important in the translation of humour are presented below.

Relevant **Factors** when translating humour and comedy:

- (a) The degree of implicature that is involved in humour requires that the receptors of a joke can be expected to share a very clearly defined '**referential knowledge and cultural background**'.
- (b) Closely related to number 1 is the recurrent need for a shared system of moral, social and cultural values. This Factor is even more important if the joke is to be heartily laughed at, and not simply recognised as a joke, without being funny, especially if the joke is more than purely linguistic exercise.
- (c) It is useful (i.e. a Reversed Restriction situation can be created) that the translator be able to assign a given joke to a certain joke-type, in order to better exploit the whole range of possible choices.
- (d) A given language and/or culture may have a series of **stocks** of traditional jokes, which create a strong intertextuality as well as a means of producing new jokes by applying variation formulae on old themes and structures.
- (e) An important Factor in humour is the precise **role** of humour in a text. What kind of a Priority is it for the author or the translator? Here is a brief account -on a scale of importance- of the sort of roles humour can play as a Global Priority in a text, along with illustrating examples:
  - (1) **Top:** TV comedy, a joke-story, one-liners, etc.
  - (2) **Middle:** happy-ending love/adventure stories, TV quiz shows.
  - (3) **Marginal:** as pedagogical device, Shakespeare's tragedies.
  - (4) **To be avoided:** certain moments of drama, tragedy, horror texts, or in parts of letters of business, condolence or otherwise inappropriate situations.

(f) Another Factor is the **direction** of humour. By this we mean the tone and the ultimate goals that lie behind it. From this point of view different instances of humour can be described as belonging to one of the points below. The list is probably incomplete, but, as in all other aspects of translation, what matters is that the translator be **aware** of the sort of Factors that are involved.

- (1) '**light entertainment**', as an instance of story-telling or putting on a show to entertain an audience.
- (2) '**morbid**', producing humour or comedy by making use of tragic ironies or themes or events usually considered tragic or taboo. We could include in this type (and the following one) racist, sexist and other discriminating, degrading or politically-oriented jokes.
- (3) '**caustic**' (cynical, bitter, etc.), humour that is only apparent, but really expresses some negative or outraged feeling on the part of the storyteller. Typical examples would be jokes about oneself or one's own misfortunes in war or crime, or some other personal, family or social plight. I would include sarcastic political jokes in this type.
- (4) '**harmless**' (especially jokes that play exclusively on purely linguistic phenomena such as homophony), considerable amount of overlap number 1, only stressing the fact that this sort of humour serves absolutely no other purpose than to 'have a bit of fun', and that no offence can be taken by anyone present or absent. This kind of humour is seen as explicitly excluding any possible criticism, discrimination, or in any other way thought-provoking with the exception of certain features of language. No television comedy can ever be said to be entirely 'harmless' in this sense. It seems that entirely innocent humour is never the funniest.
- (5) '**pedagogical**' (jokes that are used to keep an audience alert or as an instance of some point of discussion "an example of this can be seen in the following joke . . . ", where the joke is not told for the sake of making somebody laugh, but primarily to make a point of some sort. The typical 'teacher's joke', that rarely appears on television.

Jokes type 4, would be typically opposed to types 2, 3 and even 5.

-----

**Restrictions** for the translation of a given joke appear when:

- (a) There is little or no overlap in the knowledge and experiences that are necessary for a full appreciation of the joke.
- (b) For certain kinds of jokes, especially those belonging to the *morbid*, and *caustic* varieties and those that reveal some sort of political bias, the receptors of the original and the receptors of the TT will need to share the same sort of moral, social and cultural values (e.g. some people will find racist jokes funny, others will not). So, what may originally have been conceived as 'harmless' fun, may be received quite differently by the TT audience unless the translator is aware of this Restriction. In such cases the translator will usually have to decide whether he/she wants the TT joke to be equivalently harmless, and adapt it accordingly, or, on the other hand, the translator may want to show what a racist or sexist or anti-whatever the author of the original is.
- (c) The ST joke may echo other jokes of the same sort, or be a variation of a typical formula or popular theme, or even an old joke many times retold. This kind of joke may have no tradition in the LC2.
- (d) The translator may have no experience of translating humour or jokes. This Restriction might be partially **reversed** if he/she can have access to a source of information that classifies jokes, explains their mechanics and gives helpful examples and tips.
- (e) The combined effect of the Restrictions outlined above will probably help to identify possible differences in the sense of humour of different communities, why people laugh at different things and react differently to the same things. The translator of comedy will do well to be aware of this potential kind of Restriction.
- (f) The relative importance of a joke in a text can be more or less of a Restriction. The words and contents of some jokes that cannot be subtracted from the text/story (because they are too important to the facts or plot of other parts of the text) even if the joke itself cannot be rendered. On the other hand, some jokes can be isolated from the mainstream of the text and substituted for entirely new ones that serve the same Priority of the original joke in the ST (the same overall rhetorical purpose, have the same illocutionary force and achieve the same perlocutionary and communicative goals), which is usually simply "to make a joke at this point" so that either one of the characters in the story laughs, or to elicit laughter from the TT audience.

Mallafre (1991: 119) says on this point:

"De vegades certs jocs de paraules són senzillament intraduïbles. Les connotacions o la polisèmia dels mots d'una llengua no sempre es poden traduir i s'ha de recórrer a la nota a peu de pàgina o a ajustaments especials. Però s'han d'esgotar abans totes les possibilitats."

Mallafre follows up with a fine example of Machado's *Tomate con judías* which depends for its humour on a pun on the double meaning of *judía*.

Newmark, like most of the specialised literature does not have very much to say about the translation of humour and much less on how to translate certain jokes in longer texts. What Newmark (1982: 106-7) does say is that translating word-play in literary and non-literary texts embraces (exceptionally) two different problems: in non-literary texts, the reader usually requires all possible information. We have already said that it is a fundamental fact of the nature of translating that when the Factors of a translation change so does the product. For Newmark (1982: 107) *all* jokes are translatable, but they do not always have the same impact. Our comment on this is that Newmark offers no proof that all jokes are translatable as jokes, and the change in impact may simply be a cover for simply saying that it is always possible to translate the words of a joke even if you cannot translate the joke. But what is the point in doing such a stupid thing? What is the translator to do when 'impact' is a Higher-order Priority? The present thesis claims that regardless of whether *all* jokes can be translated, the translator can sometimes justify changing the words and maybe even the subject-matter of a given joke in terms of the Global or Local Priorities and Restrictions of a larger text in which the original joke was a part of.

Another of Newmark's (1982: 107) few remarks on the subject is on the point of word-play in texts where 'dramatic illusion' is essential, that is, in plays and poems, and desirably other literary works. Here, Newmark claims that most frequently, the translator can only capture one of the two senses. But sometimes 'one of the two senses' is no good, because the real 'sense' is precisely the combined effect of the two. In this case it may be justifiable to sacrifice both sense recreate the total effect by some other means.

For our description of the nature of translation we find Hatim and Mason much more useful. They (1990: 201) say that in *Astérix*. much of the humour depends on **untranslatable puns**. So, we are told, the translators abandon the attempt to relay the puns as such and, instead, compensate by inserting English puns of their own which are no part of the source text. But **equivalence of intention** has been maintained. This is a correct assessment of Priorities for this case. It would have been wrong to have attempted to maintain at least one of the senses of the original puns, because there would have been no rendering of intention or rhetorical purpose.

The purpose of the previous chapter was to prove the importance of understanding the way jokes are made in order to translate them appropriately. And in this respect, the actual

words and referents of the joke are only relatively important in certain kinds of jokes, which can consequently be told in many different ways.

According to Ernst Gutt (1991: 30-31), whenever someone shows that he/she wishes to communicate, he/she implicitly and automatically conveys the assumption that the hearer can expect to derive adequate contextual effects without spending unnecessary effort. Gutt claims that there is never more than one interpretation that fulfils this condition. The adequate contextual effects of comedies must surely be the laughter of the receptors, and that should be attained at any cost by the translator, without demanding any particular effort from the receptors.

Grassegger (1985: 100), as quoted in Gutt (1991: 130), says the following

"The invariant element in such a transfer is evidently not the specific form nor the content, but the *idea of a play on words*, in favour of which one is often satisfied with a translation only partly equivalent in content."

The invariant element surely means the Top Priority is always the intended kind of equivalence, which in the case of punning is the *idea* of a play on words as Top Priority rather than the actual word(s) pun itself, which we regard as a Lower-order Priority only to be aimed for once some sort of pun or joke can be guaranteed.

For Ernst Gutt (1991: 151) proverbs need to be recognized as proverbs. This means that they are to be recognized as an illustration of point. Jokes also need to be recognized as jokes above all other considerations, that is their meaning.

### **13.3. A NEW CLASSIFICATION OF JOKES FOR TRANSLATION, WITH EXAMPLES FROM "THE CHALLENGE"**

#### **(1) THE "INTERNATIONAL JOKE"**

The international joke must be understood as a funny story, joke, or one-liner that can be readily translated into the LC2 because the effect does not depend on a feature of the LC1 (e.g. a pun), nor is it so closely related to the ST culture that it cannot be readily understood by the the TT audience.

Example 1: I think here we could include the general light-hearted mood of the *Yes, Minister* series, which derives most of its humour at the expense of the political class of Great Britain. In the case of the ST audience it is clear that they are laughing at their own politicians and bureaucrats, but it would be interesting to

know to what extent the TT audience are laughing at the contradictions and weaknesses of a foreign form of Government and how much they identify the failings of others with the system or goings-on of their own country.

Example 2: *"A Minister with two ideas. I can't remember when we last had one of those."*

-> "Un Ministre amb dues idees. No recordo qui va ser l'últim que vam tenir."

Example 3: What Nash describes as JONATHANISMS (F8) are fairly international as far as translation is concerned

'X is so Y that Z': *My uncle is so tall that he has to climb a ladder to shave himself.* => could be translated as:

El meu oncle és tan alt que ha de pujar a una escala per afaitar-se.\*<sup>1</sup>

Besides, this is one of those productive formulae, on which invention can freely elaborate.

Example 4: False premises and flawed inferences (F9) may also be regarded as "international" jokes.

*My doctor says if I do nothing for my cold it'll last for seven days, but if he treats it, it'll go away in a week.* =>

El meu metge diu que si no faig res pel meu refredat em durarà set dies, però que si me'l tracta ell em posaré bé en una setmana.\*

Example 5: *Question and Answer* jokes<sup>2</sup>, based on flouting one or more of Grice's principles of cooperation,

*Waiter is this a dead fly in my soup?* =>

No ho digui tan fort que tothom en voldrà una. or

És l'aigua bullent que les mata, sap? or

Vol que li'n porti una altra? or

---

<sup>1</sup> An asterisk (\*) henceforth means that the translation is a suggestion of my own. These suggestions are not meant as definitive versions, but as illustrations of the sort of thing that can (and often should) be done.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 12. section 12.4., joke type F11.



No tingui por que no li cobrarem pas.

## (2) THE "NATIONAL-CULTURE-&-INSTITUTIONS JOKE"

In this kind of joke, the effect (or punchline) does not rest on any play on words; however, there is a need to adapt the national, cultural or institutional references of the original to retain the humorous effect in the translation, since the TT receptors can not reasonably be expected to be familiar with the referents alluded to. (e.g. SL "There was an Irishman, an Englishman and a Frenchman..." => Hi havia un madrileny, un andalús, i un català...").

Example 1: "*It wasn't me who put it that way, it was the Daily Mirror.*" =>

"No sóc pas jo qui ho diu això, és el Daily Mirror."

Here the joke (Hacker thinks he is being flattered when he is really being criticised) is lost because the background knowledge required to appreciate it cannot be expected of the TT audience. Therefore, I suggest =>

"L'expressió no és meva sinó del líder de l'oposició."\*

Example 2: "*...sell the Mayor's second Daimler,*" =>

"...vendre's el seu segon Mercedes,"

A Daimler is a luxury car and virtually an institution in England but practically unknown in Catalunya. In this case, unlike other instances, the translator has taken the needs of the TT audience into account.

Example 3: The term "*unilateralist*" in "The Challenge" refers to an aspect of British politics. Those who support unconditional nuclear disarmament for Britain are called "*unilateralists*". In Spain there are no nuclear weapons, so this has never been a political issue. The term has quite cleverly been rendered in Catalan as "pacifista".

Example 4: The Minister, "I've come here directly from Number Ten."

The radio interviewer, "From number 9.97 perhaps."

Here, when the Minister says he has just come from seeing the Prime Minister and uses the well-known expression "*Number Ten*" (the Prime Minister's official residence is at 10 Downing Street), Ludovic Kennedy, the interviewer gets his own back on the Minister for correcting his figure of a 10% increase in Departmental staff by saying that it was *only* 9.97%. The TV3 version is a translation of the meaning of the words, but few Catalan

viewers can be expected to be quick enough to identify "el número deu" with the Prime Minister, and many would probably never make the association without being told. I propose that in this kind of situation the translator accept this simple fact and forget for a minute the words of the original, to establish as his/her Top Priorities synchronicity and the existence of a joke. Then the audience would probably benefit from a less literal but more entertaining version. Compare the following:

TV3 version:-

J.H.: "És massa aviat per plantejar propostes concretes. Pensi que he vingut aquí directament des del número deu."

L.K.: "Des del nou coma noranta-set, vol dir."

A possible solution in view of ensuring understanding and laughter, as well as conversational coherence:-

J.H.: "es massa aviat per plantejar propostes concretes. Tot just fa deu hores que m'han donat aquesta responsabilitat."

L.K.: "O potser només 9,97?"

Example 5: This example<sup>1</sup> is from Walter Nash (1985: 77)

Languid recruit: *'Now more than ever seems it rich to die'*.  
 Ferocious drill sergeant: *'WHO SAID THAT!!'*  
 Languid recruit: *'Keats, wasn't it?'*

In translation for TV, if this joke were inserted in a dialogue which were part of a chapter of a series, the question to ask would be: must the author quoted be the proper one, especially if he is not known to the TT audience? For such cases I would suggest either an undertranslation like:

'un poeta anglès'

instead of '...Keats...', or, alternatively, some kind of cultural equivalence when the author is meant as a symbol or other such generalization of some human or professional trait.

---

<sup>1</sup> Example repeated from chapter 12, section 12.6.3.

### (3) THE "NATIONAL-SENSE-OF-HUMOUR JOKE"

Some jokes are more popular in one country than in another. Usually this depends on their culture, their religion, their neighbours and their political views and system. This category still needs a lot of research, and is probably the most controversial one. Most Catalans tend to have a high, positive opinion of themselves, collectively, as a Nation, especially within the context of the Iberian Peninsula. It is difficult to find examples of how this can affect a translation of a series like *Yes, Minister*, but when translating the series *Fawlty Towers*, the character Manuel, from Barcelona, is a silly clown who is incapable of stringing two correct words of English not even to save his life; he is constantly being excused for his strange behaviour with the following "logical" explanation "*Well, he is from Barcelona.*". This character becomes 'Manuel from Mexico' in the translation. Even if this category is found to have no objective justification, it might still be useful from the point of view of audience's (or even the TI's) perception of such things as a national or collective sense of humour.

Advertising slogans, as Nash tells us (1985: 45) are frequently parodied, even by the advertisers themselves. In Britain the advertising slogan is the new wit-object, to be tested, twisted, turned, much as the Elizabethans manipulated commonplace puns. There is no real tradition of this in Catalonia, but there is no reason why it could not be gradually introduced into the discourse of advertising in Catalan.

### (4) THE "LANGUAGE-DEPENDENT JOKE"

Jokes that depend on polisemy, homophony and other features of natural language for their effect, but are otherwise (i.e. regarding their referents) fairly "international", and might be easily translated when LC1 and LC2 are very closely related, or may be substituted for another joke of the same kind in the LC2, when sound effect is important, or it is a nonsense joke. The series *Yes, Minister* does not play very heavily on this sort of joke.

(1) "...the other half are **in** it for what they can get **out** of it." =>

"i els altres només procuren omplir-se les butxaques."

Here the meaning of the sentence is rendered but the humorous effect is lost, because it depends on a combination of meaning and the play on the opposition of **in** and **out**. In Catalan it sounds more like a humourless criticism.

- (2) *All this drinking will be the urination of me.*<sup>1</sup> =>

Tot aquest alcohol em portarà a l'orina.\*

- (3) *You have a mind like a mineral railway - one-track and dirty*<sup>2</sup> =>

Tens una mentalitat com un tren de la RENFE, de via estreta i retardada.\*

This version of mine makes use of the procedure of cultural equivalence plus a change of parallelisms. The solution depends on whether the Priority is to draw a comparison with something to do with railways, simply be offensive, or the fact that the victim really must be portrayed as a sex maniac.

- (4) *She was only a baker's daughter, but she never went short of dough; updated alternative ... but she could always make the bread.*<sup>3</sup> =>

El seu pare només tenia una pizzeria però ella sempre feia molta pasta.\*

The Priorities of my version here are to make a pun on 'dough' in Catalan, and in so doing I have managed to retain the 'daughter' but I have changed the 'baker' for the owner of a Pizzeria.

Rhymed forms (F12): Rhyme included in jokes is possibly not so much of a Restriction as in more 'authoritative texts. In translation it is often a question of finding what is being parodied or what kind of absurd logic is operative and build a completely new set of rhyming words around it as a greater cohesive device and maybe even producing a result that provides an extra amount of humour or satisfaction.

## (5) THE "NATIONAL-&-LANGUAGE-DEPENDENT JOKE"

A combination of the resources used in both (2) and (4). The translator will often have to adapt the cultural/institutional aspects and tackle features of the LC1 at the same time if has any hope of solving such a difficult problem. Solutions would have to be sought along the lines exposed in example 4, where the joke would have to be completely restructured or an entirely new joke inserted in the time and dialogue sequence slot.

- (1) *They call him 'Pilgrim', because every time he takes her out he makes a little*

---

<sup>1</sup> Example from chapter 12, F2 group III (c), from Nash (1985: 39).

<sup>2</sup> Example from chapter 12, F3 (b), from Nash (1985: 41).

<sup>3</sup> Example from chapter 12, F5 (a), from Nash (1985: 44).

*progress.* =>

Li diuen 'Tirantlo' perquè quan es lliga una noia sempre dóna en el blanc.\*

This is a modest attempt at showing the sort of thing that might be done. The specific Factors involved in television productions seem to justify a wider use of this kind of solution in the future, which does not mean that as a translation procedure it can be used liberally in many other types of texts.

## (6) THE "VISUAL JOKE"

In this case there are two possibilities:

(6-a)

The joke is entirely "visual" that is to say, the humour is derived solely from what one sees: gestures, accidents, 'pie-in-the-face' and so on. In this case the translator can do practically nothing, not to say nothing at all.

There is one kind of joke that may seem entirely visual but is really the visualization of metaphor, and therefore is language-dependent. I am referring to making jokes by using a similar method to the one used in producing newspaper-style hieroglyphics; where the image of a button, for example, would not represent the word "button", but where its appearance would mean "be quiet" from the idiom "button your lip".

(6-b)

The laughs come from a combination of image (e.g. cartoon, photo, video) and words (which may include any of the abovementioned kinds of jokes). In the case of films and video, the picture cannot, obviously, be changed or adapted in any way, so the translator can only change the words to fit in with the picture so it makes as much as sense as possible.

Example 1: Bernard Woolley explains that you cannot have a minefield in a graveyard because all the corpses would... He does not finish the sentence but makes a rising movement with his hands to indicate that all the bones would fly up into the air. The TV3 version is:

"No hi pot haver cap cementiri en un camp de mines perquè tots els cadàvers..."

and the actor's gesture means exactly the same for the Catalan audience as it did for the English-speaking viewers. If this had not been the case, or if the meaning of the actor's

hands were not clear to the TT audience the translator might have been forced to finish the sentence in order to help them understand the message.

Example 2:

*"But, but, you must see my position. The BBC cannot give in to government pressure." =>*

"Però compregui la meva situació. La BBC no pot cedir a les pressions del Govern."

When he says *"you must see my position"* he is talking figuratively, but the joke is that it can be interpreted literally: he is in an embarrassing position in the photograph being shown to him.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Conclusions

In this chapter we will look back on what we have said so far, and the amount of work that is still to be done.

#### 14.1. LOOKING BACK

One of the most serious problems that besets Translation Studies is the absence of a universally-accepted definition of the term *translation*, so that we can begin to define what *is* and what *is not* translation. This thesis has built a descriptive model of translation based on the understanding that translation is what translators do as the only descriptively correct starting point. For me, a translation is *a version*, and this rather anticlimactic conclusion seems to be reinforced by the loose idiomatic use of the verb *translate*, not only in English but in many languages, meaning "to offer an alternative version that will be communicatively more effective given the circumstances of the communication act". What I have tried to achieve in this doctoral dissertation has been to approach the issue of translation in such a way that would enable me to understand the enormous variety that we have to account for in the body of existing translations free from the prejudice of subjective opinions. This study of translation is also based on an eclectic approach to the subject and aims at being flexible enough to be able to assimilate new discoveries in the

area that are to be expected in the future. While accepting the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, I hope to have argued convincingly the need for a model of translation that is independent, however closely related, from other kinds of studies and disciplines. Just as someone once said that poetry is the part of a poem that cannot be translated, I now say that translation theory deals with what cannot be effectively dealt with by any of the studies that are related to translation but are not unique to translation.

Another of the cornerstones of the present model is the arbitrary nature of translation and the need for objective accounts of the process and the product. In this respect, translating is seen as not being essentially different from other areas of human activity, particularly in the specific areas of language and communication. The margins of the translating process are its arbitrariness on one side and the need for accuracy (a term that needs defining in each new process) and high-quality workmanship on the other.

The idiosyncracies of translating television comedies has opened my eyes to more general problems in the theory and practice of translation. It is important to realise that dubbing is an entirely professional sort of translating activity. On the other end of the scale we could place the translation of poetry which is hardly ever done for entirely mercenary motivations. However, the professional and social factors are still of fundamental importance in order to give a complete, objective account of the general characteristics of translation. In the final analysis the title of this thesis explains what I have been trying to do here: review the most outstanding insights as well as the truisms that are related to the craft and profession of translation on the one hand, and the specific characteristics of audiovisual texts, on the other, in order to promote better foreign versions of films and television productions.

Among other aspects this thesis has been meant as a tribute to and a justified defense of the translator as a human professional, who should be regarded as such when working in a professional environment as a freelance or staff translator of audiovisual texts. The intention of this is to point out that when we realise that a great number of translations are very poor, offensive even, we must look again and admit that this kind of situation is often due, not to something lacking in the nature of the translating process or to unsurmountable differences between the participants of the communication act, but rather to deficiencies accountable to the actual context in which the translation is produced, the professional environment and its limitations. Improved translating conditions will, thus, undoubtedly result in better translations.

Newmark (1986: 18) tells us that translation shares with the arts and other crafts the feature that its **standards of excellence** can be determined only through the informed discussion of experts or exceptionally intelligent laymen; no popular acclaim can stamp the value of a translation any more than of a vase or a new piece of music. However, in a professional environment, a client or company with the right understanding of what translating involves may fix their own standards of excellence.



The Goals of Translation theory according to Newmark (1986: 19):

- 1- Translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or text-categories.
- 2- It provides a framework of principles, restricted rules and hints for translating texts and criticizing translations, a background for problem solving. (...) The theory demonstrates the possible translation procedures.
- 3- It is concerned with choices and decisions, not with the mechanics of either the SL or the TL.
- 4- Translation theory attempts to give some insight into the relation between thought, meaning and language.

Of these four points we find that we can only really agree with two (#3 and #4). We believe that translation theory's main concerns are to describe accurately what really goes on in the translation process and to help create an awareness in the translator, the trainer and the critic of the sort of Factors involved. We agree with the main thrust of #2, but not the mention of *restricted rules*.

## 14.2. LOOKING FORWARD

"És dubtós que la teoria de la traducció pugui fer per si sola bons traductors, que en dominin l'art tant com la ciència, però sí que pot donar infinits suggeriments i ensenyar a treballar amb cura. Després encara quedarà el problema de les exigències editorials, de la consideració social<sup>1</sup> que això mereix, dels sous desproporcionadament baixos que tenen en molts països els traductors professionals, o de la precària capacitat de molts traductors circumstancials."  
Mallafre (1991: 54)

Translators can only benefit from translation theory to a certain extent. Much of what the descriptive theory has to say needs to be complemented in actual translating contexts by well-thought and well-written style-books which are currently conspicuously missing from the shelves of bookshops and this situation is hardly ever overcome by a clear detailed list of instructions and guidelines provided by employers. It is in this area that there is still a lot of work to be done. The translator needs to have access to information on exactly what kind of TT is expected of him or her.

"No hi pot haver un «diccionari del traductor». Cada obra, cada context, exigeix enfocaments diversos." Mallafre (1991: 64)

---

<sup>1</sup> Important factor for audiovisual translation

We have already seen the truth of Mallafrè's words; however, the translator never has enough reference sources and can also benefit from style-books and similar publications. Mallafrè himself (1991: 93) offers an example of this:

"La unificació dels termes matemàtics, físics, lingüístics, etc., és absolutament indefugible si el traductor ha de comptar amb una eina eficaç que, a més, li estalviarà moltes hores de feina."

and on p. 107:

"En fer la traducció de l'obra completa d'un autor, penso que val la pena que els editors segueixin un criteri unitari per tal de no desorientar el lector, que es troba, en un poema (o en un conte o en un capítol), amb una traducció didàctica i, en el següent, amb una d'artística."

More work needs to be done in the area of devising specific context-sensitive translation techniques and procedures for specific areas of translation. A considerable contribution might be made in devising a descriptive taxonomy of procedures and translating techniques. In the area of dubbing, it will be interesting and fruitful to look for (by a thorough review of existing material) and maybe even devise specific procedures for specific situations (definable in terms of Factors, Priorities and Restrictions). We are already beginning to feel that some people are using more imaginative techniques and solutions, and it is purely a matter of taste, habit and personal prejudice whether one likes them or not. They merely prove the arbitrary nature of text manipulation. Not all of them are *strictly* translation. For example, *Humor Amarillo*, shown on TELE 5, is dubbed in Spanish but not translated, i.e. an entirely new script is written for the Spanish version. The title song of the series *De què vas?*, shown on TV3, is an entirely different one to the original song, even the *type* of music is different, but the rest of the programme is translated. The titles of feature films shown at the cinemas are very often not translated by translators at all, but by the distributors themselves, who look for an eye-catching title with *no respect* for literary or linguistic questions.

Translators of audiovisual texts, then, must be regarded as professionals who work in a professional environment, but because they are not responsible for the whole process of producing a foreign version, not even for the final version, they can only improve their work by a greater awareness of their own role and by closer contact with the other members of the dubbing team, if we can call it that.

As professionals, translators will produce better results according to the degree to which they are able or are allowed to specialize. This will enable the translator to be much more knowledgeable in the subject-matter of his / her texts, have a better command of the field of discourse, and develop a keener eye for the right occasion for each translation procedure or technique. Future work in translation can be done towards publishing specialised and technical translators' handbooks with a sufficient number of useful

meaningful examples and suggestions for solving recurrent problems that appear in a given text-type, considering a given pair of languages (or even better, a given pair of LCs), and even for a given professional context if that is going to make the information more relevant and context-specific.

For the translation of television situation-comedy from English into Catalan, surely translators would benefit from a guide that illustrated the basic mechanisms of joke production, a stock of jokes, themes and joke-types that are popular and recurrent in the English-speaking world, an account of the language of humour and traditional joke-types and joke-themes in Catalan, and suggestions for potentially useful procedures and techniques in order to achieve a similar level of illocutionary and perlocutionary force in the foreign version. In time, if a translator can afford to specialise in this sort of work, experience and practice will also begin to play an important role in helping him / her produce really interesting results.

As far as Translation Studies, or the theory of translation is concerned, it can benefit greatly from studying the whole spectrum of text production, just as it benefited from becoming aware of the different kinds of problems involved in translating as many different pairs of languages as possible, and later on by including the cultural ingredient. Now it is time to study the diversity of environments in which a translator may have to work, and secondly pay more academic attention to the mass of audiovisual material that is currently being produced and will probably increase even more. It is our duty to help to make these texts gradually better, through a detailed study and imaginative proposals. It will be the industry's responsibility to try and incorporate suggestions that are the result of clearthinking, methodical analysis.

From a pedagogical point of view, I hope that the awareness-rousing approach proposed in our model for explaining the translating process can be of some methodological use in systematizing intuitions by making students and trainees ask the right questions and realising the importance of knowing where to look for the answers if they do not ~~already~~ already know them. We have already insisted enough on the point that ninety per cent of translating involves intelligent reading and careful accurate writing, but there is probably an important ten per cent that has to do with an awareness of the real nature of translation and its procedures and techniques and it is in this area that Translation Studies must make its most useful contributions and discoveries.

I also believe that translation critics should begin to follow the kind of approach presented in the previous chapters to the texts they have chosen to analyse and evaluate. It is unfair to evaluate a translation without considering all of the intervening factors, including the translator's motivations, goals, constraints, the general social understanding of possibilities, difficulty, value and purpose of translating.



## Appendix

### A BILINGUAL TRANSCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE

from the *Yes, Minister* series

**The Challenge**

=>

**El Repte**

#### SCENE 1: THE BBC RADIO INTERVIEW

L.K. ... And the main news this Thursday p.m. is the big government reshuffle. And I have with me in the studio to discuss his new empire the Minister for Administrative Affairs, the Right Honourable James Hacker, MP. It has been said, Mr Hacker, that you are now Mr Town Hall as well as Mr Whitehall?

J.H. Well, it's very flattering of you to put it that way...

L.K. It wasn't me who put it that way, Mr Hacker, it was the Daily Mirror. I just wanted to confirm that you are now this country's chief bureaucrat.

L.K. ...i la notícia més important d'aquest dijous és la reorganització del govern. Aquí a l'estudi hi tenim per parlar de les seves noves atribucions el Ministre d'Administració Territorial, l'honorable James Hacker, diputat. S'ha dit, senyor Hacker, que ara dirigirà l'Administració Local i també l'Administració Central.

J.H. Bé, dit així resulta molt afalagador...

L.K. No sóc pas jo qui ho diu així, senyor Hacker, és el Daily Mirror. Però jo només volia confirmar si ara el cap de la burocràcia del país és vostè.

- J.H. Well, of course, that's nonsense.  
This government believes in reducing  
bureaucracy.
- L.K. Well, figures I have here say that  
your Department's staff has risen by  
ten per cent.
- J.H. Certainly not.
- L.K. Well, what figure do you have?
- J.H. I believe the figure was much more  
like 9.97%.
- L.K. You see, it has been suggested, Mr  
Hacker, that your department is less  
interested in reducing bureaucracy than  
in increasing it.
- J.H. Yes, but that's because we've had to  
take on staff to reduce staff.
- L.K. I beg your pardon?
- J.H. It's common sense. You have to  
take on more doctors to cure more  
patients. You have to take on more  
firemen to extinguish more fires.
- L.K. (INTERRUPTION) And how do  
you propose to extinguish local  
government bureaucracy?
- J.H. Well, it's a challenge, and I'm  
looking forward to it.
- L.K. Would you agree that there is even  
more bureaucratic waste there than  
there is in Whitehall?
- J.H. Well, yes, that's what makes it a  
challenge.
- L.K. And how are you going to meet the  
challenge?
- J.H. Oh, no, no, no, això és  
absurd. Aquest govern és  
partidari de reduir la  
burocràcia.
- L.K. Doncs, les xifres que  
tinc aquí indiquen que el  
personal del seu Ministre  
ha augmentat un 10%.
- J.H. No és pas veritat.
- L.K. Doncs, quin és el tant  
per cent?
- J.H. Crec que aproximadament  
és un 9,97 %.
- L.K. Crec que tot sembla  
indicar, senyor Hacker,  
que el Ministre que vostè  
dirigeix no tendeix a  
reduir la burocràcia sinó  
a augmentar-la.
- J.H. Sí, però tingui present  
que per reduir personal  
hem hagut de contractar  
personal.
- L.K. Com es menja això?
- J.H. Sí, és de sentit comú.  
Per curar més malalts  
s'han de contractar més  
metges, per apagar més  
focs, més bombers, i...
- L.K. I què farà per apagar  
el foc de la burocràcia a  
l'administració local?
- J.H. Doncs, és un repte i em  
fa molta il·lusió.
- L.K. Però no creu que hi ha  
una dilapidació fins i tot  
més gran que en  
l'Administració Central?
- J.H. Sí, és clar. D'aquí vé  
que sigui un repte.
- L.K. De quina manera s'hi  
pensa enfrontar?

J.H. Ah, it's far too early to announce detailed proposals. After all, I've come here directly from Number Ten.

*J.H.* És massa aviat per plantejar propostes concretes. Pensi que he vingut aquí directament des del número deu.

L.K. From Number 9.97 perhaps.

*L.K.* Des del 9,97, vol dir.

J.H. The broad strategy is to cut ruthlessly at waste while leaving services intact...

*J.H.* Però l'estratègia global serà reduir les despeses dràsticament deixant intactes els serveis essencials.

L.K. That's just what your predecessor said when he was appointed. Are you saying he failed?

*L.K.* Això ja ho deia el seu predecessor. Insinua que ha fracassat?

J.H. Please let me finish. Because we must be absolutely clear about this. And I want to be quite frank with you. The plain fact of the matter is, that, at the end of the day, it is the right - nay, the duty - of the elected government, in the House of Commons, to ensure that government policy, the policies on which we were elected and for which we have a mandate, the policies, after all, for which the people voted..., are the policies which, finally, when the national cake has been divided up - and, may I remind you, we as a nation don't have unlimited wealth. You know, we can't pay ourselves more than we've earned - are the policies ... er, I'm sorry what was the question again?

*J.H.* Em, per favor. Deixi'm acabar, perquè això vull que quedi molt clar, i vull ser-li absolutament franc. Al capdavall, la veritat és que el govern que ha sortit del Parlament té el dret, millor dit, el deure, ja que som un govern democràtic, d'assegurar que la política del govern, el programa pel qual vam ser elegits i hem de governar, el programa, en definitiva, que va votar la gent, sigui el programa, que finalment, quan s'hagin repartit els privilegis i, si em permet recordar-li en aquesta nació no som il.limitadament rics, i no ens podem pagar pas més del que guanyem, sigui el programa... em podria repetir la pregunta?

L.K. I was just asking you, Mr Hacker, whether you would agree that your immediate predecessor had failed?

*L.K.* Miri, només li preguntava, senyor Hacker, si considera que el seu predecessor ha fracassat?

J.H. No, on the contrary, it's just that  
this job is a really enormous, er...

*J.H.* No, i ara, al contrari,  
és només que aquesta feina  
és un enorme...

L.K. Challenge?

*L.K.* Repte?

J.H. Exactly.

*J.H.* Això mateix.

END OF SCENE 1.

**SCENE 2: THE CIVIL SERVANTS' LUNCH**

A.R. Incidentally, I heard your chap on the radio yesterday, Humpy. He sounded as though he wanted to do (stress) things about your new Local Government remit. He kept calling it a challenge.

Man: Congratulations, Humphrey.

H.A. Oh, how very kind of you.

Man: You'll soon be even more important than Arnold, here.

H.A. Yes, I expect so ... No, no, no ...

A.R. I do want to be quite clear about this, Humphrey. I would never have given you Local Government if I thought you were going to let Hacker do anything about it.

H.A. Well I'm sure he won't be able to. Nobody else has.

A.R. That's not the point, Humpy. We found in the past that all Local Government reforms rebound on us. Whenever anybody finds a way of saving money or cutting staff in Local Government, you will find it works for Whitehall just as well.

A.R. Per cert ahir vaig escoltar aquell milhomes de Ministre per la ràdio. I em va semblar que volia fer coses relacionades amb la reforma de l'Administració Local. No parava de dir que era un repte.

Senyor : Enhorabona, Humphrey.

H.A. És molt amable, gràcies.

Senyor: Serà fins i tot més important que l'Arnold, eh.

H.A. Això espero. ... No, no...

A.R. De debò que vull que això quedi ben clar, no li hauria donat mai l'Administració Local si m'hagués pensat que deixaria fer alguna cosa a en Hacker.

H.A. Estic segur que no serà capaç, igual que els altres.

A.R. No és pas aquest el problema Humphrey. Sabem per experiència que totes les reformes de l'Administració Local ens afecten. Que algú troba algun sistema per a estalviar diners o per a reduir plantilla resulta que aplicat a l'Administració Central també funciona.



H.A. Yes, but local government is extravagant, overstaffed and incompetent. Whereas we ...

A.R. Exactly so.

H.A. I know my duty, Arnold.

A.R. And if he does need something to keep him busy, you know what to do? Get him to look into Civil Defence.

H.A. Civil Defence? You mean fall-out shelters?

A.R. Governments long ago decided that Civil Defence was not a serious issue.

H.A. Merely a desperate one.

A.R. And is therefore best left to those whose incompetence can be relied upon.

H.A. Local Authorities.

A.R. But, the highest duty of government is to protect its citizens.

H.A. Presumably that is why they leave it to the Borough Councils.

H.A. Sí, però és que l'Administració Local és malgastadora, incompetent, mentre que nosaltres...

A.R. Exactament igual.

H.A. Sé quina és la meva obligació.

A.R. I si necessita alguna cosa per entretenir-se, sap que pot fer? Que es dediqui a Protecció Civil.

H.A. Protecció Civil? Allò dels refugis nuclears?

A.R. Sí. Fa temps que el govern va decidir que la Protecció Civil no era un problema greu.

H.A. Greu no, gravíssim. (rialla)

A.R. Val més que s'encarregui a aquells que han demostrat una incompetència infal·lible.

H.A. Els ajuntaments, ha ha.

A.R. El deure més important del govern és protegir els ciutadans.

H.A. Per això l'han traspassat a les associacions de veïns, ha ha.

END OF SCENE 2.

## SCENE 3: THE MINISTER'S "IDEA"

J.H. ...Thank you, gentlemen.

Dr C. Minister, may I have a brief word.  
It's about a proposal I worked out  
before we were transferred to this  
Department.

J.H. And you are ...?

Dr C. I am ... what?

J.H. Yes, you are what?

Dr C. What?

J.H. What?

Dr C. I'm Dr Cartwright.

B.W. But if I may put it another way,  
Minister... what are you?

Dr C. I'm C of E.

B.W. No. I think the Minister means,  
what function do you perform in the  
Department.

Dr C. Don't you know (intonation)?

B.W. Yes, I (stress) know, but the  
Minister wants to know.

Dr C. Ah. I'm a professional economist,  
Director of Local Administration  
Statistics.

J.H. And you were running the Local  
Authority Directorate before we took it  
over?

*J.H.* I gràcies.

*Dr C.* Senyor Ministre, que  
té un moment? Li voldria  
ensenyar un projecte que  
vaig elaborar abans que  
ens traslladessin aquí.

*J.H.* Vostè és ...?

*Dr C.* Jo sóc ... què?

*J.H.* Sí, vostè és què?

*Dr C.* Què?

*J.H.* Què?

*Dr C.* Sóc el Dr Cartwright.

*B.W.* Si m'ho permet de dir a  
mi, senyor Ministre, vosté  
què és?

*Dr C.* Sóc anglicà.

*B.W.* Crec que el senyor  
Ministre es refereix a  
quina feina fa en el  
Ministre.

*Dr C.* Que no ho sap? (less  
emphatic intonation)

*B.W.* Jo sí, però el senyor  
Ministre potser no.

*Dr C.* Sóc economista de  
professió. Director  
d'estadístiques de  
l'Administració Local.

*J.H.* I abans que ens ho  
transferissin era el  
director de  
l'Administració Local?

- Dr C. Dear me, no. Sir Gordon Reid was the Permanent Secretary. No, I'm just Under Secretary rank. I fear that I shall rise no higher.
- J.H. Why not?
- Dr C. Alas! I am an expert.
- J.H. On what?
- Dr C. On the whole thing, it's all in here.
- J.H. What, what's this all about?
- Dr C. Controlling Council expenditure. I'm proposing that all council officials responsible for a new project would have to list their criteria for failure before they were given the go-ahead.
- J.H. What do you mean?
- Dr C. It's a basic scientific approach. You must first establish a method of measuring the success or failure of an experiment. Then, when it's completed you can tell whether it has succeeded..., or failed. A proposal would have to state: "This scheme will be a failure if it lasts longer than this" or "costs more than that" or " it employs more staff than these" or "fails to meet those pre-set performance standards".
- J.H. That's fantastic, but you could never make it work.
- Dr C. Of course you can. It's all in there.
- Dr C. No, no, i ara! El secretari permanent és Sir Gordon Reid, només sóc subsecretari, i em temo que no pujaré pas més.
- J.H. Mmm i per què no?
- Dr C. Perquè sóc un expert.
- J.H. En què?
- Dr C. En la matèria, aquí ho explico.
- J.H. De què tracta això?
- Dr C. Control de despeses municipals. Proposo que els funcionaris locals que es facin responsables d'un projecte, estableixin uns criteris d'execució abans que se'ls doni llum verda.
- J.H. Què vol dir?
- Dr C. És un procediment científic elemental. Primer s'ha d'establir un mètode per mesurar l'èxit o el fracàs d'un experiment. Així, un cop realitzat, es pot dir si ha sortit bé o malament. Sempre s'hauria de fer constar "Aquest seria un fracàs si durés més de tant temps o si costés més de tants diners o si requerís més de tantes persones o si no aconsegueix aquests resultats previstos".
- J.H. És fantàstic. Però és impossible que funcioni.
- Dr C. Sí que és possible, aquí ho explico.

J.H. Bernard, this is my top priority reading for the weekend. Why hasn't it been done before?

*J.H.* Bernard, aquest final de setmana m'ho llegiré sens falta. Per què no s'ha posat en pràctica?

Dr C. I can't understand (intonation). I put it up several times and it was always welcomed most warmly. But Sir Gordon always seemed to have something more urgent on when were due to discuss it.

*Dr C.* No ho entenc en absolut. Cada vegada que ho he presentat, ha provocat sempre entusiasme, però quan ho havíem de discutir, Sir Gordon sempre tenia alguna cosa més urgent.

J.H. Well, you have come to the right place this time. Thank you very much indeed.

*J.H.* Doncs aquesta vegada ha caigut en bones mans. Moltíssimes gràcies.

Dr C. Thank you, Minister. (exit Dr C.)

*Dr C.* Gràcies a vostè. (surten el Dr C.)

J.H. This is marvellous, isn't it Bernard? ... isn't it?

*J.H.* Això és meravellós, no ho troba, Bernard?... No ho troba?

B.W. Oh, Yes, well, it's er, that is, er it's very well presented, Minister.

*B.W.* Ah ... sí... doncs... és que és... trobo que està molt ben presentat.

J.H. Humphrey will be fascinated, don't you think?

*J.H.* Sir Humphrey quedarà impressionat, no li sembla?

B.W. Well, he's on his way here now. I'm sure he'll give you his views.

*B.W.* Ara ve cap aquí. Ja li donarà la seva opinió.

J.H. What are you saying, Bernard?

*J.H.* Què vol dir, Bernard?

B.W. Yes, well, as I say, um ... I think that he'll think that it's er, beautifully ... typed (intonation).

*B.W.* Sí, doncs és a dir, penso que pensarà que està molt ben passat a màquina.

H.A. Ah, Minister ...

*H.A.* Ei, Ministre...

J.H. Ah, Humphrey. Come in. Sit down.

*J.H.* Ah, hola Humphrey. Entri, segui (he's already well inside the office).

H.A. Thank you, Minister.

*H.A.* Gràcies, Ministre.

J.H. Now. Local Authorities. What are we going to do?

*J.H.* Veiem. Administració Local. Què hem de fer?

H.A. Minister, this new remit gives you more influence, more Cabinet seniority - but you do not let it have to give you any more work or worry. That would be foolishness.

H.A. Ministre, aquest nou càrrec li proporciona més prestigi en el govern, més influència però no ha de consentir que li proporcionin ni més feina ni més maldecaps. Seria idiota.

J.H. Look, Humphrey. We have to put a stop to all this appalling waste and extravagance that's going on.

J.H. Però, Humphrey bé hem d'impedir tota aquesta dilapidació espantosa, tota aquesta malversació.

H.A. Why?

H.A. Per què?

J.H. Why?

J.H. Per què?

H.A. Yes, why?

H.A. Sí, per què?

J.H. Well, it's my job, we're the government, we were elected to govern.

J.H. És la meva feina. Suposo que vam ser elegits per a governar.

H.A. Oh, really, Minister (intonation). Surely you don't intend to tamper with the democratic rights of freely-elected local government representatives?

H.A. Oh, però què diu, Ministre? M'imagino que no pretén manipular els drets democràtics dels representants de l'Administració Local lliurement elegits.

J.H. Well, no. Of course not. Local government isn't democratic. Local democracy is a farce. And the vast majority of the people don't even know who their councillor is. And they never vote in a local election. And those who do, just treat it as a popularity poll for the government here in Westminster. Local Councillors, in practice, are accountable to nobody.

J.H. Doncs, no... és clar que no. Els ajuntaments no són democràtics. La democràcia local és una farsa i la majoria de la gent no sap ni qui són els seus regidors. No vota mai quan hi ha eleccions locals, i els que voten fan com si es tractés d'un sondeig de la popularitat del govern de la nació. Els regidors en la pràctica no són responsables davant de ningú.

- H.A. They are public-spirited citizens, selflessly sacrificing their spare time.
- J.H. Have you ever met any?
- H.A. Occasionally. When there was no alternative.
- J.H. Half of them are self-important busy bodies on an ego trip and the other half are in it for what they can get out of it.
- H.A. Perhaps they ought to be in the House of Commons. .... I mean, to see how a proper legislative assembly behaves.
- J.H. Anyhow, I'm going to get a grip on them. I have a plan.
- H.A. You have a plan? (intonation)
- J.H. Yes, I am going to insist that any local official who puts up a plan costing more than, say, £10,000, must accompany it with failure standards.
- H.A. With what?
- J.H. With a statement saying that he will have failed if his project does not achieve certain pre-set results or exceeds fixed time or staff or budget limits.
- H.A. Minister, where did you get the idea for this dangerous nonsense.
- J.H. From someone in the Department.
- H.A. Però són ciutadans actius que sacrificuen de bon grat el seu temps lliure.
- J.H. No n'ha conegut mai cap?
- H.A. Alguna vegada, quan no he tingut més remei.
- J.H. Alguns són uns egoistes i uns creguts i els altres només procuren omplir-se les butxaques.
- H.A. Sí. Potser haurien de ser tots al Parlament. ...Sí, vull dir per a veure com funciona una assemblea legislativa de veritat.
- J.H. En fi. Hauran de filar prim. Resulta que tinc un pla.
- H.A. Vostè té un pla?
- J.H. Sí. Exigiré que tots els funcionaris locals que presentin un projecte que hagi de costar més de, diem, deu mil lliures, també presentin unes normes d'execució.
- H.A. Presentin què?!
- J.H. Un informe explicitant que hauran fracassat si el seu projecte no aconsegueix uns resultats determinats o si ultrapassa els límits preestablerts de temps, personal o pressupost.
- H.A. Però es pot saber d'on ha tret aquesta idea tan absurda i perillosa?
- J.H. OOOOh...doncs, d'algú del Ministre.

H.A. Minister, I have warned you before about the dangers of speaking to people in the Department. I implore you to stay out of the minefield of local government. It is a political graveyard.

H.A. En més d'una ocasió ja li he advertit que parlar amb la gent del Ministre pot ser molt perillós. Li suplico que no entri en aquest camp de mines que és l'Administració Local, és un cementiri de polítics.

B.W. But, excuse me, Sir Humphrey, you cannot have a graveyard in a minefield, because all the corpses would ...(gesture).

B.W. Perdoni, Sir Humphrey no hi pot pas haver cap cementiri en un camp de mines perquè tots els cadàvers....(deletion of "would")

J.H. Well, you got me this job.

J.H. Va ser vostè qui em va donar aquest càrrec.

H.A. Um .. yes, but, I didn't expect you to do anything. I mean, you've never done anything before.

H.A. Sí, però jo no esperava pas que vostè fes res. Com que no ha fet mai res fins ara.

J.H. Really! I am deaf to your complaints.

J.H. Ja n'hi ha prou Humphrey. Prou d'aquest rebombori.

H.A. Please, I beg you....

H.A. Faci'm el favor Ministre.

J.H. No, no, no, Humphrey. I want specific proposals, straight away. And immediate plans for their implementation by local government. I don't know why you are in such a fuss about it anyway. I'm only proposing failure standards for local (stress) government, not here in Whitehall (stress). Though, come to think of it...

J.H. No, no, no, no. Vull propostes concretes immediatament i que l'Administració Local les posi en pràctica ara mateix. Què signifiquen tants escarafalls? Només demano normes d'execució a l'Administració Local, no en el Govern. Però, és clar que ben pensat...

H.A. Minister, if you insist on interfering in local government, may I make a suggestion that could prove a very real vote-winner?

H.A. Ep ep. No. Si insisteix a intervenir en l'Administració Local em permet un suggeriment que estic segur que li farà guanyar molts vots?

- J.H. Humphrey, I want to hear no more about it. (...) Vote-winner?
- J.H. No vull sentir ni una paraula més, em sent? (...) Molts vots?
- H.A. There is an area of local government that needs urgent attention.
- H.A. Un sector de l'Administració Local que demana atenció urgent.
- J.H. What?
- J.H. Quin?
- H.A. Civil Defence.
- H.A. Protecció Civil.
- J.H. Do you mean fall-out shelters? Surely they're just a joke.
- J.H. Vol dir refugis nuclears? Vostè està de broma.
- H.A. Precisely, Minister, at the moment they are a joke. Local authorities are dragging their feet. But the highest duty of any government is to protect its citizens. (intonation)
- H.A. Precisament perquè ara com ara són una broma les autoritats locals no fan gairebé res. El deure més important d'un govern és protegir els ciutadans.
- J.H. Some people think that the building of shelters makes nuclear war more likely.
- J.H. Hi ha qui pensa que la construcció de refugis fa més probable la guerra nuclear.
- H.A. Well, if you have the weapons you must have the shelters.
- H.A. Si hi ha les armes hi ha d'haver refugis.
- J.H. But I sometimes wonder why we need the weapons.
- J.H. De vegades em pregunto per què en necessitem d'armes.
- H.A. Minister! You're not a unilateralist? (intonation)
- H.A. Ministre! No deu pas ser pacifista, oi? (oi = intonation)
- J.H. I sometimes wonder, I don't know.
- J.H. De vegades ho dubto, no ho sé.
- H.A. But, then you must resign from the Government.
- H.A. Però, aleshores ha de dimitir.
- J.H. No, no, no, no. I'm not that (stress) unilateralist. But, after all, Humphrey, the Americans will always protect us from the Russians, won't they?
- J.H. Ah, no, no, no, no ho sóc pas de pacifista. A part que els americans sempre ens protegiran dels russos, no?
- H.A. The Russians. Who's talking about the Russians?
- H.A. Els russos? Qui parla dels russos?
- J.H. Well, the independent (nuclear arms) deterrent ...
- J.H. Bé, de les altres potències.



- H.A. It's to protect us against the French.
- J.H. The French? But that's astounding!
- H.A. Why?
- J.H. They are our allies, our partners.
- H.A. They are now (stress). But they've been our enemies for most of the past nine hundred years. If they have got the bomb we must have the bomb! (childish)
- J.H. Well, if it's the French, of course that's a different. That makes a lot of sense.
- H.A. You can't trust the Frogs!
- J.H. You can say that again. Of course, there is increasing public concern about the bomb. And if I were to be seen to be doing something about it, Yes, I see what you mean.
- H.A. And, Ludovic Kennedy is preparing a BBC documentary on Civil Defence, and it's bound to be critical of the current situation. But, if you were seen to be taking decisive measures... (stress) ...
- J.H. Yes. I always handle Ludo so frightfully well. Yes, right, well. When do we start?
- H.A. Well, Minister, just a suggestion. The London Borough of Thames Marsh has spent less on Civil Defence than any authority in the country. (intonation)
- H.A. L'amença són els francesos.
- J.H. Els francesos!? Però és sorprenent.
- H.A. Per què?
- J.H. Però, si som aliats, som amics.
- H.A. Ara sí, però hem estat enemics la major part dels últims mil anys. Si ells tenen la bomba, nosaltres també.
- J.H. Si és pels francesos, la cosa ja canvia. És molt raonable.
- H.A. Sí, els gavatxos són de guardar.
- J.H. Oh, ja ho ben pot dir. Naturalment la inquietud pública per "la bomba" va en augment. I si em veiessin fer alguna cosa concreta en aquest sentit. Sí, té tota la raó.
- H.A. Sé que en Ludovic Kennedy prepara un documental per a la BBC sobre la protecció civil que segurament serà crítica amb la situació actual, però si la gent veiés que vostè pren mesures dràstiques...
- J.H. És clar. Sí... Sé portar molt bé en Ludovic, precisament. Sí, això, per on comencem?
- H.A. Voldria fer-li un suggeriment. Em consta que el barri de Thames Marsh és l'ajuntament que ha gastat menys diners en Protecció Civil del país.

J.H. A Ministreal visit, do you think?

*J.H.* Una visita oficial li sembla oportuna?

B.W. Isn't that Ben Stanley's borough, Minister. The one with the wispy moustache. The one all the press hate?

*B.W.* No és l'ajuntament d'en Ben Stanley, aquell del bigotet, aquell que odia tota la premsa?

J.H. Good point, Bernard. Get onto it straight away. And get Bill to make sure that the Press knows all about this visit. Tell them "I lie awake at night worrying about the defenceless citizens of Thames Marsh".

*J.H.* Molt interessant Bernard. Anem per feina de seguida. I que en Bill s'asseguri que la premsa coneix tots els detalls d'aquesta visita. Que digui que a les nits no dormo preocupat per la indefensió dels ciutadans de Thames Marsh.

B.W. Do you, Minister?

*B.W.* No dorm diu?

J.H. Well, I will now! (intonation)

*J.H.* A partir d'ara.

**END OF SCENE 3.**

**SCENE 4: THE MINISTERIAL VISIT**

**B.S.** Look mate, what makes you think you can come swanning down here (regional accent, London) from Whitehall, and tell us how to run our borough.

**J.H.** I'm not swanning down from Whitehall. I'm simply asking you why you have done less than any other borough in Great Britain to protect the people who elected you.

**B.S.** Simple, we can't find the money.

**J.H.** Why don't you try looking for it?

**B.S.** Oh that's great. Stop school meals? Buy no textbooks? Turn the OAPs out into the cold?

**J.H.** I can tell you exactly where you can find it.

**B.S.** You can?

**J.H.** Yes... Tell him, Dr Cartwright.

**B.S.** Escolti, què li fa suposar que pot venir amb aires de grandesa i dir-nos com hem de portar l'ajuntament?

**J.H.** No vinc pas amb aires de grandesa. Només pregunto: per què han fet menys que tots els altres ajuntaments del país per protegir les persones que els van elegir?

**B.S.** Molt senzill, perquè no tenim diners.

**J.H.** Per què no miren de trobar-ne?

**B.S.** Oh. Això rai. Podem suprimir els menjars de les escoles públiques i deixar els avis a la intempèrie.

**J.H.** Jo li puc explicar com trobar-ne.

**B.S.** Sí?

**J.H.** Sí... Li expliqui, Dr Cartwright.

Dr C. Well you can scrap the plans for the new Exhibition Centre with the artificial ski slope and jacuzzi pool. You can close down the feminist drama centre, the council's weekly newspaper, monthly magazine, and the welfare rights research department. You can halve the members and management entertainment allowance, sell the Mayor's second Daimler, postpone the building of the new Town Hall and Cancel the twenty councillors' tourism factfinding mission to Jamaica, and close the Gay Bereavement Centre. That'll save 21 millions on capital account over five years, and 750,000 a year on revenue account.

J.H. Revenue account.

B.S. That's just stupid.

J.H. Why?

B.S. Well, it's depriving the disadvantaged of indispensable services.

J.H. Jacuzzi pools?

B.S. Look, I don't care whether we can afford a fall-out shelter. This is a unilateralist borough. We do not believe in nuclear war in Thames Marsh.

Dr C. Doncs, poden renunciar al projecte del nou centre d'exposicions amb pista d'esquí artificial i hidromassatge. Poden tancar el centre dramàtic feminista, la revista setmanal de l'ajuntament, i el departament d'investigació per al benestar social, per exemple. Es poden reduir a la meitat les despeses de representació, vendre's el seu segon Mercedes, ajornar la construcció del nou ajuntament i cancel·lar el viatge d'exploració turística a Jamaica de vint regidors, i poden tancar el centre d'Afflicció (Atenció) Gai. Al cap de cinc anys hauran estalviat 21 milions de lliures i cada any tindran 750 mil lliures d'interessos.

J.H. D'interessos.

B.S. Això és estúpid.

J.H. Per què?

B.S. Per què això significaria privar els minusvàlids de serveis indispensables.

J.H. Les pistes d'esquí?

B.S. A part que és igual tenir diners per un refugi nuclear. Això és un ajuntament pacifista. No creiem en la guerra nuclear a Thames Marsh.

- J.H. Mr Stanley, I don't believe in nuclear war either. No sane man does. But the provision of fall-out shelters is government policy.
- B.S. It is not Thames Marsh policy. Thames Marsh has no quarrel with the USSR.
- J.H. It's not just the USSR we're frightened of, it could be the Fr ...
- B.S. The who?
- J.H. The fr .. frigging Chinese. If the Russians do invade us, I suppose they'll stop at the borough boundaries, and say: Hold on, we're not at war with the London Borough of Thames Marsh. Right wheel Comrades. Let's annex Chelsea instead.
- B.W. Excuse Minister, I think you may be interested ...
- J.H. What? Mmm ... Mr Stanley, it appears that you would not be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice, in any case.
- B.S. What do you mean?
- J.H. I understand that there is a fall-out shelter here, under the Town Hall. Well, is there?
- B.S. We didn't build it. (childish reaction)
- J.H. But you maintain it?
- B.S. It's only a very small one (childish!)
- J.H. And there is a place reserved in it for you?
- J.H. Sr Stanley, jo tampoc hi crec en la guerra nuclear, però fer refugis nuclears és una política del govern.
- B.S. Però no és pas la política de Thames Marsh. A Thames Marsh no tenim cap conflicte amb l'URS.
- J.H. Oh. No és pas només l'URS el que ens fa por. Podrien ser els gava...
- B.S. Els qui?
- J.H. Els gavadals de xinesos. Si els russos ens envaeixen s'aturaran als límits del municipi i diran "Un moment, que no estem pas en guerra amb el municipi de Thames Marsh. A la dreta, camarades, anem cap a Chelsea.
- B.W. Sr. Ministre, potser li interessa saber que...
- J.H. Què? Mmm... Sr Stanley, sembla que de totes maneres vostè no seria cridat a fer el sacrifici suprem.
- B.S. Què vol dir?
- J.H. Que sembla ser que tenen un refugi nuclear precisament aquí, sota l'ajuntament. És veritat?
- B.S. No ho vam fer nosaltres.
- J.H. Però bé el conserven.
- B.S. És molt petitet.
- J.H. I vostè hi té un lloc reservat, m'imagino.

B.S. I was persuaded with deep reluctance that my preservation was a necessity in the interest of the ratepayers of Thames Marsh.

B.S. Em van convèncer, contra la meva voluntat, que la meva supervivència era necessària per als interessos dels contribuents de Thames Marsh.

J.H. What provision have you made for other essential persons: doctors, nurses, ambulance men, firemen, people who might be almost as important as councillors?

J.H. ¿Quants llocs hi tenen reservats altres persones essencials, com ara metges, infermeres, tècnics, bombers, gent que podria ser gairebé tan útil com els regidors?

B.S. One of them's a chemist.

B.S. Un és farmacèutic.<sup>1</sup>

J.H. Oh great, Nothing like an aspirin for a nuclear holocaust.

J.H. Genial. No hi ha res com l'aspirina en ple holocaust nuclear.

END OF SCENE 4.

---

<sup>1</sup> not 'un químic' ! as the context shows below