

THE INTERACTION OF CODES IN DUBBING: WORDPLAY AND VISUAL RESTRICTIONS¹

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Abstract

The following paper delves into the complex transfer of humour focusing on a recurring problem that appears when dubbing comedies: wordplay partially transmitted by image. It analyses the factors that have a bearing on translation and illustrates the various translation techniques with scenes from the Marx Brothers' filmography. Finally, it details the conclusions obtained from the analysis of the dubbing of 74 puns with visual restriction and its comparison with 116 cases where there is no such restriction.

Resumen

El siguiente artículo profundiza en la complejidad del trasvase del humor, basándose en un problema recurrente en el doblaje de comedias: los juegos de palabras transmitidos parcialmente a través de la imagen. El estudio analiza los factores que inciden en su traducción e ilustra las distintas técnicas de traducción con escenas de la filmografía de los Hermanos Marx. Finalmente, muestra las conclusiones obtenidas a partir del análisis del doblaje de 74 juegos de palabras con restricción visual y su comparación con 116 casos en los que no hay dicha restricción.

Keywords: Audiovisual translation (AVT). Dubbing. Humour. Wordplay. Visual restrictions.

Palabras clave: Traducción audiovisual. Doblaje. Humor. Juegos de palabras. Restricciones visuales.

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1. Introduction

One of the main characteristics of audiovisual texts is that the message is transmitted through two different channels: the acoustic and the visual. Spectators receive stimuli via two sources of information that generally complement each other in the creation of meanings. The image is usually a helpful tool in the translation process, not only to understand the elements of the original version, but also to transfer them: since part of the information appears in the image, it is not necessary to explicit it in the translation. However, this combination of codes may also create problems; for instance, when each code expresses a different meaning in order to create wordplay. The result is the contrast between what is heard and what is seen. As only one of the channels can be modified in the dubbing process, the other one —the image— constrains the translator's leeway. Which techniques use the translator when his or her priority is to convey the humorous intention but this is based in the linguistic manipulation and the simultaneous exploitation of the acoustic and visual channels?

In order to answer to this question, this paper analyzes 74 examples of wordplay based on visual restrictions. The corpus has been selected from the 240 examples analyzed in the doctoral thesis in which this article is based (Martínez-Tejerina 2008), which compares the original English version with the Spanish dubbed version of the 13 films from the Marx Brothers' filmography. Due to the limited extension of this article, only 6 illustrative examples will be shown here. Nevertheless, the conclusions will be extracted from the 74 examples mentioned above.

2. Humour and wordplay based on polysemy

Wordplay based on polysemy exploits the formal similitude between linguistic structures that semantically differ. This association of words that are formally similar but semantically different breaks the spectators' expectative. They are surprised, and doubt between two possible interpretations:

All humour, and much intelligence, entails an ability to think on two plans at once. [...] In the pun, there are always two or more levels, manifest and latent, in some kind of coexistence, sequence, alternation or tension. [...] The key movement of the pun is pivotal [...] This pivotal wordplay enables the story to bifurcate [...] it generally involves a shift of emphasis (Redfern 1984: 26-27).

According to the incongruity theories of humour (Raskin 1985; Attardo and Raskin 1991), the surprise element is paramount in the creation of the joke. Humour arises from the conflict between what is expected and what really happens. The incongruity appears between two disparate concepts, situations or ideas that are unexpectedly related. What happens with wordplay? First, a deliberate phonological, graphological, morphological, lexical or syntactical ambiguity misleads the spectator. This ambiguity is called trigger and may oppose different realms such as real/unreal, true /false, normal / abnormal, possible /impossible, good / bad, alive/ dead, sexual/not sexual. Secondly, the punchline resolves the conflict.

Puns need at least two elements in order to be successful. Firstly, they have to be plausible and properly adapted to the context. Secondly, they must create a "displacement of psychical accent" (Freud 1905: 45). In other words, wordplay needs to divert the mental process to a

different subject, to a faraway realm of thought. Freud (1905: 106) adds that the pleasure produced by puns will increase the further the listener is moved by this displacement, that is to say, the further the topics joined by wordplay are and the more efficient the shortcut from one thought to the other is.

In conclusion, comic intention will be more effective the more plausible and natural the meanings expressed by wordplay in a given context are, and the further the mental process is diverted.

3. Audiovisual text semiotics: codes interaction and visual restrictions

As we have already mentioned, one of the main characteristics of the audiovisual text is the simultaneous production of meanings by different codes and channels. The extra meaning (Chaume 2004: 26) or “valeur ajoutée” (Chion 1990: 205) produced by the interaction of codes is indeed one of the most noticeable specificities of audiovisual texts. All the codes have influence on the text and on its interpretation; in fact, Chaume (2004: 26) highlights that the linguistic code –despite its predominant role– is but one more code at play in the construction and later transfer of meanings in audiovisual texts.

This diversity of codes may lead to two different results. Sometimes the vast semiotic information offered simultaneously by the different codes may boost the viewer's (and the translator's) comprehension (Martínez Sierra 2008). In other cases, the diversity of codes may constrain the translator's leeway and even become an obstacle for the translation process since the text to be translated is in fact a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes from which only one can be modified by the translator. Therefore, as it can not be modified, the image is the code that imposes time, space and semantic restrictions. The physical presence of elements from the original version in the translated version is called “total or partial co-occurrence of the original” (Gottlieb 2005: 88).

Every dialogue inserted on an audiovisual text is linked to what happens on screen. Nevertheless this link does not always have the same strength. Therefore we understand “visual restriction” as those images that subordinate text. Applying this principle to wordplay, we distinguish between those puns relatively independent from visual elements on screen and those inextricably linked to the visual code. The second type of puns involves the reiteration of a word and its iconic referent. Chaume (2004: 238-243) explains that one of the meanings of the pun is expressed by the oral code and the other one by the image.

When wordplay is partially transmitted by the image one of the meanings of the word is conveyed by the visual code in the form of actions or objects. Therefore, the audiovisual text shows two different interpretations of the same word or phraseological unit. The possibility of interpreting the joke on more than one level creates a contradiction between the linguistic and the iconographic code. The image shows an unexpected semantic load creating the humorous effect. Obviously the restriction will be bigger, the more visible the semantic load expressed by the image is. Therefore the planning code, one of the multiple signifying codes that form the audiovisual text, becomes a paramount factor in the translation of the linguistic code. Let us exemplify the relevance of planning with sequences from the Marx Brothers' filmography in which the unexpected object appears either in a close-up shot or in a wide shot (and therefore it is not easily recognizable). The following sequence of *Horse Feathers* (1932) illustrates the first situation. Groucho warns Harpo: *Young man, as you grow older you'll find that you can't burn the candle at both ends*. Harpo answers showing a close-up of a candle lit at both ends. The following scene from *Go West* (1940) illustrates the second situation. A businessman, tired of trying to reach an agreement with Groucho, shouts: *I wash my hands on this whole deal!* Groucho answers throwing a soap bar: *Try this soap. We are having a special on it*. The soap bar is not clearly seen because a wide shot is used in the scene. Regarding the translation of both scenes, it seems clear that in the first case the translator is tightly tied to the object and therefore needs to mention a candle or at least fire, while in the second example the translator is given much more leeway since he or she may refer to any object similar in shape, but not necessarily a bar soap.

Another interesting aspect about the relation between the planning code and wordplay in audiovisual texts is that a mid shot allows including in an image the primary context as well as the punchline. It is very likely that such a result was not intended in the Marx Brothers' filmography and that it has more to do with the conventions of the time as well as theatre reminiscences. In any case, this type of shots invites comedy of intrigue and comedy of situation, as well as encouraging the simultaneous appearance on screen of the meanings exploited on wordplay. The following hilarious sequence from *Horse Feathers* (1932) illustrates this peculiarity. Groucho and Chico have decided to sign an agreement, but they are not able to find the object they need to legalize it. They shout several times: *Wait a minute. Wait a minute. This isn't legal. There's no seal on it. Where's the seal?* Harpo brings an animal. The mid shot used in this scene includes in the same image both the context (a lawyer's office) of one of the meanings from the polisemous word *seal* and the representation of the unexpected meaning (the mammal).

As it has already been mentioned, these visual restrictions may be an obstacle for the translator. Chaume (2004: 27) comments that the translator normally express the meaning provided by the interaction of codes, but sometimes, when he or she is tied to the meaning expressed by the image, he or she will just try and avoid that what is said contradicts what is seen.

Besides, the translator tries to get over these obstacles without being noticed because the quality of dubbing is often measured by the translation's degree of invisibility. Scholars such as Agost (1999: 52), Castro (2001: 42) or Brehm (2005: 190) agree that the translation must go unnoticed, in other words, the translation will be successful if the spectators do not realize that they are watching the dubbed version of a product.

4. Humour and dubbing

Many factors affect humour audiovisual translation (AVT). This section will start dealing with general factors such as cultural barriers and coincidences, the communicative capacity of the audiovisual media and the nature of the film industry. Then, it will analyze linguistic characteristics that affect humour translation.

4.1 Dubbing comedies

Comedies are dubbed everyday and, normally, in a satisfactory way. The success of comedies is partly due to humour coincidences between cultures, quality translations and the communicative capacity of the audiovisual text.

Firstly, the target audience laughs thanks to common humour features between cultures; for instance, universal gags and physical humour, cultural coincidences (cultural differences are not as wide as it may be predicted, especially between the American and the Spanish society) or references to traditions or cultural elements known in both cultures. Globalization and the United States supremacy in every sector –including cinema– considerably enhances the understanding of signs and symbols of the original culture by the target spectator.

Secondly, an effective translation manages to go over most of the obstacles that translating humour involves or, at least, it manages to compensate them. Besides, Spanish dubbing quality is very well-known.

Thirdly, the communicative capacity of audiovisual texts is such that the translating process loses some relevance. Regarding the translation of comedies, Rabadán (1991) maintains that comic literature does not travel, while Díaz-Cintas (2003: 254) defends the opposite about comic films. The author suggests that one of the reasons for this discrepancy is the vast semiotic information included in the image. Some scholars relativize the relevance of the linguistic code due to the context and the vast range of factors that affect the audiovisual text reception:

Comic films are successful in many cultures, yet for different reasons. Translation must surely play an important role. However, even if we may quite safely hypothesize that quality of translation can either make or break a comedy, it is only one single factor among many which

contributes to a film's success [...] such as the actors, screenplay, other films on the circuit at a particular moment in time, socio-economic factors regarding audiences, advertising campaigns, and the psychological state of spectators themselves. (Chiaro 2006: 205-206).

In spite of this, it is important to admit that comedies often trip over linguistic and cultural barriers, which may cause the target audience astonishment or detachment. Chiaro (1998) underlines that most comedians' success is limited to one culture. The author wonders if a cause for this limitation may be the use of wordplay and highlights the success of films such as *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), or *The Full Monty* (1997), which exploit very few puns and which humour is based on comic situations, parodies and other kinds of humour unrelated to linguistic ambiguity.

Thus, we could begin to hypothesize that humour on screen tends to be more successful within the borders of its country of origin and less successful abroad when the type of wordplay it contains is of the punning variety simply because of translational difficulty (Chiaro 2005: 138).

The effect of the target text is even more important in AVT, especially in film translation, because cinema is an industry and, therefore, the reaction of the client /audience is extremely important for economic and market reasons. Norms are more explicit on AVT than in other types of translation because the audiovisual text is conceived as a commercial product that has to be consumed. This is the reason why the receptor/consumer becomes more relevant and his/her likes, dislikes and preferences become paramount. Ivarsson (1992: 66) points out that "viewers are creatures of habit". Therefore, it seems advisable to respect the audience habits.

While scholars such as Whitman (2001) consider that American producers only take into account the local audience, others (Delabastita 1989; Chaves 2000; or Martínez Sierra 2008) maintain that many producers do take into account today's context of economic and cultural globalization, in other words, the aim of many films is to reach the wide international market. In my opinion, many films and series, especially big productions, aspire to reach an international success and to do so strategies such as promotion and marketing are used. However, most films include cultural references and puns the humour of which may be lost in translations due to lack of shared knowledge and linguistic peculiarities. Therefore producers do not seem to limit their creative capacity for fear of not overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. The Marx Brothers is a case in point. They tried to use jokes that were not too local so that their tours around the USA were successful. However, these precautions were not enough to guarantee the success in another country with the same language but different culture: Great Britain (Bego 2001: 35).

4.2 Puns and cinema

In order to convey the comic impact of the original text, the translator needs to detect every pun. The humour interpretation process may be summarized as follows: the meanings that have been activated during the information process are rejected by incongruity, that is to say, when meaning stops fitting in the context, the spectator understands that the ambiguity is intentional and reinterpret the message knowing that there is a humorous intention.

This is not such an easy task. Wordplay is not always as recognizable in the Marx comedies due to diachronic factors: the passage of decades has eliminated some of the meanings exploited with a comic intention. Therefore the translator needs to be alert to every clue offered in the original version. These clues may be common to all kinds of communication acts or specific of the audiovisual text. Non verbal meanings are used to complete, reduce, enhance or cancel propositional meanings (Alcaraz 1990: 146). In the Marx Brothers films the visual code frequently expresses kinesics information in order to make puns explicit. For instance, Groucho tends to raise his eyebrows whenever his comments include sexual innuendo. Besides, there are other signs that only appear in audiovisual texts such as visual restrictions and canned laughter. The use of the image or audio to highlight humorous acts conditions the translation technique because if the humorous intention is not conveyed in the target message, the spectator will see incoherence or imbalance between the audiovisual product codes.

Another feature of audiovisual translation that substantially affects the transfer of puns is the rhythm: “The relentless advance of stimuli in a film adds an extra effort to the spectator's memory and inference processes” [my translation] (Bordwell 1996: 33).

Audiovisual products impose a speed that makes difficult the presence of complicated puns that require a lot of effort by the target audience. It is important to remember that the receiver is willing to make efforts to process information in exchange for a reward in the form of contextual implications (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1982) or humorous effect. However, this process takes time. An overly complex wordplay would require the recipient's effort; this effort requires time, but time is not available on this kind of products. Therefore, film products – unlike other media such as books, which allow readers to stop and think about what they have read – impose a brisk pace of interpretation. It is true that it is possible to pause videos and DVDs, but constantly having to stop the player in order to discover the comic intention would be annoying and counterproductive.

In addition, audiovisual texts hinder the use of one common solution for puns: footnotes. Footnotes eliminate the effect and hamper the flow of the text but, by explaining the problem, they guarantee the consistency of the target text and therefore avoid the spectator's astonishment or detachment.

Finally, it is possible for the translator to adopt creative translation techniques that deviate from the original text in order to solve the problems of humour translation. Since dubbing deletes the original soundtrack and provided that there are no visual restrictions on the image, the audience will not be aware of these modifications.

5. Dubbing visual restrictions

Whenever there is no parallelism between the source and the target languages and the humorous intention of the original text needs to be conveyed, the translator will be forced to manipulate the original text. This manipulation may be hindered by semantic redundancy caused by visual restrictions because they convey additional information about the original text. Therefore, the translator's leeway may be limited by the fact that the target spectator receives the translation as well as the original visual message. Unlike other fields such as advertising translation, image is not modified in cinema translation. Therefore, the target text must be consistent with the original image and aim to express via the audio track what it is seen or at least not to contradict it. The problem arises when the code symbiosis which fluidly works on the original product is broken in the target text (Díaz-Cintas 2001: 122).

There is a wide range of techniques used to solve wordplay translation: from using the same resources as the original text to omitting wordplay or resort to recreation. The techniques may be a consequence of etymological parallelism between languages or the translator's creative effort. That is to say, there are puns with and without linguistic restriction (cf. Brehm 2005). While puns without linguistic restriction are easily conveyed, those with linguistic restriction require the translator's inventiveness and creativity. The manipulation of the original text may lead to variable semantic modification; the target text semantic load may be identical, similar or different to the original semantic load. Nevertheless, comic intention is not always transferred either because it goes unnoticed, because of time pressure or any other cause. In those cases, the translator may resort to a neutral phrase that loses all trace of humour, or a literal translation, which may cause the neutrality or inconsistency with the context.

After analyzing a corpus of 240 cases of humorous exploitation of polysemy, the PhD thesis on which this article is based, proposed the following taxonomy: literal translation by polysemous unit, literal translation by a non polysemous unit, neutralization, substitution, recreation and omission. These six translation techniques may lead to widely varied results: the same semantic load, an analogous humorous intention, inconsistency, in coherence within the semiotic construction of the target text, neutrality, etc. The reason behind this variety is that each technique focuses on different levels of speech and it conveys some to the detriment of others. This phenomenon shows that translation is not able to transfer absolutely all the features of the source text, especially if those features are linked to the original language or culture. Whenever this happens, the translator is forced to give up those features that are less relevant in

each context. The three fundamental characteristics found in the source text are the form, the humorous resource and the humorous intention.

When assessing these translation techniques, it is problematic to determine when the effect has been conveyed. This is mainly due to the fact that humour reception depends on contextual factors such as individual assessment. The analysis presented on this paper is quantitative, not qualitative; therefore, instead of analyzing which version produces more humour, we analyze if the humorous intention has been conveyed. We note that, in general terms, the humorous intention is transferred by three techniques —literal translation by polysemous unit, substitution and recreation— and lost in another three —literal translation by not polysemous unit, neutralization and omission.

Therefore literal translation by polysemous unit conveys form, intention and the polysemous resource; literal translation by non polysemous unit preserves the formal level of the source text, but introduces an alien form in the target text; neutralization gives up form, intention and resource, in order to express a neutral message that goes unnoticed; substitution conveys the resource as well as the intention by changing the form, at least partially; recreation conveys a similar perlocutionary intention modifying the resource and the form (at least partially); and finally omission gives up any transfer.

Consequently, the intention is conveyed by three techniques: literal translation by polysemous unit, substitution and recreation; the resource is preserved by two techniques: literal translation by polysemous unit and substitution; and form is completely preserved by literal translation (though when this literal translation leads to a non polysemous unit it results on an alien form) and partially in some cases of substitution and recreation.

	FORM	RESOURCE	INTENTION
LITERAL TRANSLATION BY POLYSEMOUS UNIT	X	X	X
LITERAL TRANSLATION BY NON POLYSEMOUS UNIT	X (incorrect)		
NEUTRALIZATION			
SUBSTITUTION	(X partial)	X	X
RECREATION	(X partial)		X
OMISSION			

Taking into account the preservation of the different features of the original version and giving priority to the humorous intention, these translation techniques may be arranged as follows: literal translation by polysemous unit > substitution > recreation > neutralization > translation by polysemous unit > omission. The next sections will explain each of these techniques and illustrate them with sequences from the Marx Brothers films which include visual restrictions.

5.1 *Literal translation by polysemous unit*

Whenever a unit of the target language offers the same meanings as its formal equivalent in the original language thanks to linguistic coincidence we label it as literal translation by polysemous unit. This label does not imply that those units come from a common source or that they etymologically evolve in a similar way, since we include loans on this category.

Two men are playing cards in a bar (*Horse Feathers* 1932). The one that is shuffling says:

O.V. *Cut the cards.*
 S.D.V. Corta. ['Cut']

Harpo breaks the pack of cards with an axe.

Because the dialogue takes place in a recreational context, the meaning "to divide a set of playing cards into two piles" (*MacMillan Dictionary*) is activated. Harpo's intervention recovers the primary meaning of the verb. Since the Spanish verb *cortar* covers the same semantic loads as *cut*, the literal translation is effective in conveying the meanings as well as the intention.

5.2 *Literal translation by non polysemous unit*

This technique consists on using a unit in the target language that is only formally equivalent, that is to say, it conveys only one of the semantic loads expressed in the original text. This translation technique gives up humorous intention and may lead to two different situations: it may produce neutrality (though it is not very common) or incoherence, which may cause the audience's astonishment or detachment.

In the comedy *Monkey Business* (1931) a sailor is looking for stowaways. He comments to Chico and Harpo:

O.V. *I'm looking for a couple of mugs.*
 S.D.V. Estamos buscando a un par de caraduras. ['We are looking for a couple of crooks']

Harpo hands him two cups.

In this scene, the image and the sound exploit the polysemy of the word *mug*. While the sailor uses the word to despise the stowaways, the stowaway himself activates another semantic load by showing the object. The Spanish dubbed version uses a literal translation that only conveys one of the meanings (crook) which causes not only the loss of the humorous intention, but also semiotic incoherence. The incongruity among codes may lead to the audience's astonishment or to the audience's assumption that Harpo's character is absurd and ridiculous.

We believe that research should not only describe, but also offer solutions, in Gottlieb's words (2000: 77):

Descriptive Translation Studies may go in the wrong direction if the prescriptive 'what should be done' is replaced only by the armchair translator's 'what is done, and why' and never supplemented by 'what could be done'.

This is reason why we suggest translation alternatives aiming to show that translating humour and wordplay is not only feasible, but also that there are many possibilities. The alternatives shown in this article have been taken from the subtitled version, my own ideas, and proposals suggested by colleagues and Translation students. Our intention is not to despise the work done by the translator, but to use techniques that have been used in other examples of the dubbed version and that show possible alternatives to the translations that were finally chosen.

Going back to the example of literal translation by non polysemous unit, Harpo's reaction would have been more understandable if the sailor had said: *Cuando pille a esos polizones me los meriendo*. In this context, two meanings of the verb "merendar" would be activated by the spectator: 1) the colloquial meaning of "defeating, dominating"; 2) "to have a snack in the afternoon". This activity is very typical in Spain and it consists often on a cup of coffee and a little pastry.

5.3 *Neutralization*

When conveying polysemy is complicated, the translator may opt for neutrality in order to avoid the audience astonishment or detachment. This technique lies on resources such as ellipsis or formal or semantic modification of the original text. It consists therefore on maintain the communication process eliminating the humorous intention, that is, the translator opts for a

illocutive vacuum that allows the communication fluency and avoids the audience's astonishment or detachment.

A few minutes after the scene commented in the previous example, Chico and Harpo, disguised as barbers, try to arrange the sailor's moustache. In order to measure what needs to be cut, they measure the distance between the moustache and the wall. Chico points out:

O.V. *It's about a foot too much*

S.D.V. Treinta centímetros de más. ['30 centimetres too much']

Harpo grabs an axe and pretends to cut the sailor's foot.

Here again several meanings of a polysemous word are expressed by different channels. Chico expresses the unit of measure with a word that Harpo interprets as a part of the body. The dubbed version opts for domestication, and converts the unit of measure "feet" to "centimetres". This domestication omits the polysemy and therefore the pun exploited in the original text, but the spectator could interpret this scene as another example of the Marx Brothers absurd behaviour: they are so crazy that in order to trim a moustache they measure the distance between it and the wall, and when this distance happens to be too much they decide to cut something as "trivial" as a foot.

Another option could be to use a literal translation by polysemous unit in order to maintain the polysemy. The unit of measure "foot / pie" is rarely used in Spain but it is known: *Sobra un pie o Hay un pie de más* ['It's about a foot too much'].

5.4 Substitution

This technique consists on the semantic modification of the original version, but maintaining the same recourse in which the original pun is based: polysemy. Keeping in mind that the dialogues appear in an audiovisual text and that the image conveys a lot of semantic information, semantic modification tends to be discreet. Normally the dubbed version will express common features or related concepts in order to avoid incoherence with the meanings expressed by the image as well as to guarantee the coherence with the context. Three degrees of modification may be distinguished:

- One of the meanings of the original polysemous unit is kept;
- Similar meanings to the ones expressed by the original text are conveyed. The translator may resort to specific terms or superordinates.
- A polysemous unit with different meanings to the ones expressed in the original version is used.

In the next scene from *At the Circus* (1939) the image recovers the literal meaning of a phraseological unit. Groucho introduces himself to Harpo. The famous mute reacts blowing a party blower to his face. Groucho answers:

O.V. *I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head, not in mine.*

S.D.V. Le aseguro que yo también tengo la lengua larga, cuando es preciso. ['I assure you that I also have a longue tongue (be indiscreet) when I need to'.]

In the original version Groucho recovers part of the literal meaning (keep the tongue in your mouth) of this idiom which is normally used for telling someone not to be rude (*MacMillan Dictionary*). In the dubbed version the translator uses a Spanish idiom based on the metaphor of a long tongue to express the tendency to talk too much, be indiscreet and say tactless remarks. This creativity modifies the original message, but much more importantly the dialogue fits naturally in the context, the humorous intention is conveyed and the translation is consistent with the image. The subtitled version uses efficiently a similar strategy: *Te agradecería que sujetaras esa lengua* ['I will thank you to hold that tongue'].

5.5 Recreation

This translation technique substitutes the resource on which the original pun is based for a different humorous resource such as paronymy, similitude, false etymology or irony. As happened with substitution, the semantic modification of the original version caused by this creative technique may have different degrees.

In *Go West* (1940) Groucho, Harpo and Chico travel on a stagecoach with a woman carrying a non-stop crying baby. The mother explains to her travelling companions:

O.V. *He can't stand the jerks in the coach.*

Groucho expresses his surprise with his eyes wide open, while Harpo and Chico open the door to try and leave the stagecoach. Groucho stops them:

No, wait a minute boys, it was nothing personal. She didn't mean it.

S.D.V. Es que no puede resistir los baches. ['He can't stand the pot holes']

No, un momento, muchachos. Ha dicho baches no cachivaches. ['No, wait a minute, boys. She has said pot holes not piece of junk'.]

This scene activates two meanings of the polysemous word *jerk*; firstly, the context of a stagecoach trip, activates the meaning 'a quick sudden movement'. However, Harpo's and Chico's reaction, as well as Groucho's comment and facial movement recover the meaning "someone who does stupid, annoying, or unkind things" (*MacMillan Dictionary*). The dubbed version aims to achieve a similar effect by using not a polysemous word but a false etymology and paronymy, which relates "pot holes" and "piece of junk". In spite of the translator's creative effort, the lack of plausibility (it is not likely to confuse those two words) minimizes the humorous effect.

5.6 Omission

This translation technique consists on the complete elision of the message. When the image is tied to the verbal text, omissions are often noted by the spectator. This technique appears only twice in the Marx Brothers' films. One sequence in *The Big Store* (1941) starts with a close-up of Groucho's office door. The spectator sees the name and position. Then, the camera tilts down to show the following message: *Bloodhounds transfused, fingerprints manicured and gin rummy*.

This insert is not translated in the dubbed version and therefore the humorous intention is lost. The omission can not be justified in this example because the message appears on a close-up shot for several seconds and the scene is silent. Therefore it is perfectly plausible to use a voice-over or a subtitle to convey this information. In fact, the previous insert (Groucho's name and position) has been translated by a voice-over.

In order to avoid the loss of humour as well as the spectator's uneasiness (caused by a coded message), the polysemy and paronymy of words related to the semantic field of blood (*sangre* in Spanish) could have been exploited. For instance: *Transfusiones de purasangres, manicura de huellas dactilares y juegos de cartas* ['thoroughbred transfused, fingerprints manicured and card games']. This proposal substitutes the original dog for a horse in order to use a name of an animal that contains the word blood/sangre and, therefore, maintains the humorous intention.

5.7 Quantitative results

The combination of wordplay and visual restrictions is a common phenomenon in the Marx Brothers' filmography. In fact, visual restrictions appear in nearly a third part of the wordplay based on polysemy found in their comedies (30.8%). The following table shows the number of examples and percentages in which the dubbed version has opted for the six different translation techniques mentioned in the taxonomy. Therefore, the following table displays the translation norm followed in the corpus when facing this characteristic phenomenon of AVT.

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES		EXAMPLES	%
LITERAL TRANSLATION	POLYSEMOUS	13	17.57
	NON POLYSEMOUS	18	24.32
NEUTRALIZATION		13	17.57
SUBSTITUTION		15	20.27
RECREATION		13	17.57
OMISSION		2	2.7
	TOTAL	74	100

These numbers show that the dubbed version manages to convey the humorous intention in a scarce majority of examples (41 occasions; 55.4%). In 13 examples (that is, 17.57%), combination of codes is not a major obstacle thanks to the equivalence between the polysemous units of the two languages. Nevertheless, the humorous intention is mainly achieved thanks to the translator's creative effort, who moves away from the original text in 28 occasions (37.83%) in order to convey the intention to the detriment of the form (13 recreations and 15 substitutions). It should not be forgotten that the translator's leeway is limited by the semantic redundancy: since the image gives the target spectator additional information about the original text, the target text needs to be coherent with it and try and express what is seen or, at least, not to contradict it. Wordplay in audiovisual texts is a challenge to the translator's creativity because the creation of a different humorous resource related to what is seen on screen is often the more efficient option.

According to our quantitative analysis, humour intention is lost in nearly half of the occasions, specifically in 33 (18 literal translations for non polysemous unit, 13 neutralizations and two omissions). It is bizarre that two of these examples could have been effectively conveyed by literal translation, but they have been translated using other techniques that eliminate semantic duplicity.

The following table separates the examples with visual restrictions from those that do not have visual restrictions, and shows the percentage in which the different translation techniques are used. The aim of this separation is to analyze if the fact that a pun is partially expressed by the image affects the translation norm.

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES (%)		VISUAL RESTRICTION	NO VISUAL RESTRICTION
LITERAL TRANSLATION	POLYSEMOUS	17.57	33.13
	NON POLYSEMOUS	24.32	18.67
NEUTRALIZATION		17.57	10.24
SUBSTITUTION		20.27	18.67
RECREATION		17.57	18.67
OMISSION		2.7	0.60

In spite of the differences that could have been foreseen, the percentages of translation techniques used are quite similar. The predominant solution is literal translation (41.89% and 51.8% respectively). Substitution and recreation present similar percentages. Neutralization appears less when there are no visual restrictions (10.24% compared to 17.57%). Finally, omission is virtually insignificant in both scenarios.

Nevertheless, the consequences of the translation techniques further differ. Polysemy is conveyed 51.8% of the occasions in which there are no visual restrictions, compared to the 37.84% of the occasions in which there are visual restrictions. Therefore, semantic multiplicity is conveyed a 13.96% more when meanings are not conveyed by the image.

Regarding the translation of the intention, it is striking that while humour is conveyed in 70.5% of the examples without visual restriction, the percentage reduces to 55.4% when a visual restriction appears. This reduction of humour is fundamentally due to an increase in the use of neutralization (a rise of 7.33%) and literal translation by non polysemous unit (a rise of 5.05%).

This difference is wider if we do not consider etymological parallelisms. Whenever formal equivalents do not share the same meanings in English and Spanish, the humorous intention is lost in 44.59% of the sequences which include visual restrictions compared to the 29.5% of the sequences without visual restrictions. Therefore, in those cases, humour loss increases 15.09% in scenes which convey part of the semantic load via the image.

Conclusions

In spite of the limited scope of this paper (which has analyzed the dubbing of only 13 films), the numbers obtained seem to show that the appearance of visual restrictions in comedies tend to cause an increase in humour loss. These data corroborates the hypothesis that visual restrictions considerably complicate the translation of wordplay when there is no etymological parallelism. In these cases the translator is forced to express, or at least not to contradict, what is shown on screen in order to avoid semiotic incoherence and the astonishment or detachment of the target audience. In other words, the translator feels more tied to the meaning expressed in the original version or, more specifically, to the possible meanings conveyed by the image.

Humour loss in audiovisual texts with visual restrictions may lead to widely varied consequences: sometimes, the spectator may not be aware of this loss due to different reasons such as, for instance, dialogue speed; in other occasions, the incoherence between image and sound astonishes the viewers and makes them uncomfortable, because the loss of humour is obvious and it makes clear that the product has been manipulated; and in many other occasions, a curious phenomenon takes place: incoherence leads to humour. Let us analyze these consequences.

Firstly, incongruity may go unnoticed when wordplay appears in a scene full of humorous resources (puns, visual jokes —falls, gestures, disguises, blows and mockeries—, absurd situations and so on). The elimination of the intention of one of these comic resources or even the contradictions that may appear between codes loses relevance in this scenario.

Secondly, the loss of humour is likely to make the viewers aware of the contradiction between the codes and cause their astonishment, because they remember that the product they are watching has been manipulated. As the image may affect the semantic transmission in different degrees, the incoherence between image and sound do not always present the same intensity. In the worst cases, it may even break the tacit agreement called "suspension of disbelief".

But sometimes, the viewers believe that this inconsistency is due to the absurd nature of the product. This understanding provokes humorous effect in the target audience, although the humour is based on a resource different to the original. Interestingly, the preference for literal translation makes characters and situations much more absurd in the dubbed version. The target audience enjoys their nonsense unaware that this nonsense has been increased by the Spanish translation. Studies such as Fuentes (2001) have also reached this conclusion. It is true that the original Marx Brothers' humour also fits into the genre of the absurd, but their foolishness is often based on puns, i.e. their madness derives from double meanings of the language, it does not appear gratuitously as sometimes happens in the dubbed version. Therefore, the translation modifies the type of humour used by the Marx Brothers: the source version focuses on the resolution of the incongruity while the target text focuses on absurdity. That is to say, both versions exploit incongruity, but while it is resolved in the original version, in the dubbed version it is not. It is curious that the translation has caused these changes in the fundamental characteristics of the Marx Brothers' humour and that at the same time it has managed to successfully spread their work all over the world.

One of the factors that may have encouraged the audience's acceptance is the typical cooperation of the spectators of comedies. When including a film in the genre of comedy the emotional effect that it seeks is highlighted. The spectator gets ready to interpret the inconsistency as humour, in other words, the context pushes the audience to react to the incongruity laughing. Just as comedians prepare their audience for the reception of jokes, Spanish spectators know that they are going to watch a comedy and get ready for it.

Besides, it is a widespread belief in Spain that the Marx Brothers do absurd humour. This belief encourages the audience to accept a text full of incongruence that is not a faithful

reflection of the original version but partly the consequence of literal translations that lead to non sense.

Another factor that may have encouraged the popularization of these comedies is the monopoly of Hollywood cinema. Chiaro (2006) compares the Marx Brothers' success all over the world with that of Totò, a contemporary comedian with a similar style but who never crossed the Italian borders in spite of a "perfectly adequate" subtitling (Chiaro 2006: 204).

Anyway, the fact that the target audience includes the Marx Brothers' filmography in the comedy genre shows that, at least from a descriptivist and functional point of view, their humour is translatable. We may find examples of wordplay that have not been successfully translated in the microtextual level, but the main objective of their films –make people laugh– is achieved.

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BIONOTE / NOTA BIOGRÁFICA

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Anjana Martínez Tejerina, PhD, obtained her Degree in Translation and Interpretation at the University of Alicante in 2003 and was certified as a sworn translator in 2004, when she received a Leonardo grant to work as a teaching assistant in London for two years. She finished her Master's in Screen Translation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2007 and

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La doctora Anjana Martínez Tejerina se licenció en Traducción e Interpretación en la Universidad de Alicante en 2003 y obtuvo el título de traductora jurada en 2004, año en el que también le fue concedida una beca Leonardo para trabajar como auxiliar de conversación en Londres. Realizó un máster en Traducción Audiovisual en la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona en 2007, universidad en la que trabajó como profesora asociada al año siguiente, siendo responsable de dos asignaturas de la Licenciatura de Traducción. Obtuvo el título de doctor en 2008. En la actualidad trabaja como traductora autónoma en el ámbito de la subtitulación, imparte varias asignaturas en la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, donde es profesora asociada desde 2010, y es miembro del grupo de investigación CAIAC (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). Además, colabora como profesora en el Postgrado de Traducción Audiovisual del IDEC-UPF y como tutora y evaluadora externa en el máster en Traducción Audiovisual de la UAB.