

Francisco Javier Díaz Pérez

Shakespeare in Galician and Spanish: On the Translation of Puns in *Hamlet*

As is well known, in the English speaking countries, and particularly in the United Kingdom, there exists a long tradition of punning, which is reflected nowadays in fields such as advertising. It has been frequently said (Redfern, Tanaka) that the British are fonder of puns than any other European people. In this sense, Simon Anholt, who works for the multilingual copy-writing service *Translators in Advertising*, said in an interview that “[t]he British like humour, especially irony and puns. But you have to change this for the Germans and Swedes, who say that they do not buy from clowns.” (qtd. in Tanaka 62). As pointed out by Blake (70), in literature, up to a few centuries ago serious puns were not uncommon, and Shakespeare made much use of them, both serious and comic. With respect to the literary work which constitutes the aim of this study, it was said that *Hamlet* is a play in which “puns play a larger role [...] than in any other Shakespearean drama” (Sulick 132).

Puns fulfil a communicative function, mainly with a humoristic effect, and, at the same time, they reflect an essential characteristic of the linguistic system, namely the anisomorphism between the levels of signifier and signified, between form and content. The difficulty involved by the translation of puns has been very often highlighted. This difficulty, as Delabastita (1994: 223) points out, is due to the fact that

the semantic and pragmatic effects of source text wordplay find their origin in particular structural characteristics of the source language for which the target language more often than not fails to produce a counterpart, such as the existence of certain homophones, near-homophones, polysemic clusters, idioms or grammatical rules.

In this sense, Newfield and Lafford (85) say that, apart from a shared sociocultural context, for puns to be appreciated, there also has to be a high mutual understanding of the linguistic code. This necessity for a common linguistic and sociocultural knowledge explains why puns are difficult to identify by non-native speakers of any language and why they are so difficult to translate.

The main aim of this study involves analysing the strategies for the translation of the puns in *Hamlet* into Spanish and Galician. After presenting a definition and a typology of puns, the strategies for their translation in one

Galician version and four Spanish versions of *Hamlet* are examined, and, finally, the data obtained from the analysis of the corpus and the conclusions drawn from those data are expounded. Let it be clear that my intention is not to assess the translators' solutions; rather, this study aims at a non-evaluative description in order to come to a better understanding of the translation problem and some testified solutions. The approach, therefore, is not prescriptive or evaluative, but, on the contrary, empiric and descriptive. The point of departure is, then, Toury's (32) famous statement, according to which a translation is any text which is accepted as a translation in the target culture.

Wordplay

Definition

Among the existing definitions of wordplay, that offered by Delabastita (1996: 128) has been adopted here, for being precise and at the same time general enough to cover all the different types of wordplay:

Wordplay is the general name indicating the various *textual* phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a *communicatively significant confrontation* of two (or more) linguistic structures with *more or less similar forms* and *more or less different meanings*.

This definition is broad enough to refer to a greater or lesser degree of formal similarity, of similarity between the signifiers, instead of referring to identity, which allows to cover phenomena such as paronymy. As happens with the formal level, in the semantic level the degree of disparity can vary, which implies that for instance the difference between the literal and figurative senses of a word may give rise to a pun. Saying that a pun is a textual phenomenon implies that for all the potential ambiguities and associations of words and structures to become effective, they need to be employed in particular textual settings. Referring to puns as *communicatively significant* means that they are intentional – which allows to distinguish them from slips of the tongue or pen, malapropisms, unintentional ambiguities, awkward repetitions, etc. – and that they have a communicative effect, which can be humorous, attention-getting, persuasive, or of any other type.

Typology

Several criteria can be attended to carry out a classification of wordplay. The intention of this paper is not to offer an exhaustive classification.¹ Among the many criteria which could have been paid attention to, a formal criterion and the linguistic phenomenon which serves as basis of the pun have been selected here. According to the formal criterion, a distinction can be drawn between two types of puns, namely vertical pun and horizontal pun.

A *vertical pun* is that in which the relationship between the components is established in a paradigmatic level, or in other words, the components are represented in the same portion of text. In (1) two different meanings are simultaneously represented in the word *globe*. Probably the most obvious one is that of “world”, but there is a second simultaneous meaning, that of “famous London theatre”.

- (1) HAMLET: (...) Ay thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
in this distracted **globe**.² Remember thee? (1.5.96-97)

A *horizontal pun*, on the other hand, is that in which the relationship between the components is of a syntagmatic type, that is to say, the components are one after the other lineally in the sequence in which the pun is inscribed. In (2) the close occurrence of the signifier *maid* twice gives rise to a pun. Whereas in the first occurrence *maid* means “girl, young unmarried woman”, in the second one it refers to a “virgin”.

- (2) OPHELIA: [...] Let in the **maid**, that out a **maid**
Never departed more. (4.5.54-55)

As regards the linguistic phenomenon which serves as basis of the pun, the following types of puns can be distinguished:

- *The Phonologic pun* is formed by words which, not being related etymologically or semantically, share several phonemes. The relationships established between the components of a phonologic pun can be homophony, homonymy, and paronymy.

Homophony is a term used to refer to two or more words which are identical in their pronunciation but different in spelling. Thus, *air* (“mixture of gases that surrounds the Earth and that we breathe”) and *heir* (“legitimate successor”) in (3) are spelt in a different way but their pronunciation is exactly the same, or in other words, they are homophones:

¹ In this section, as in the following one, I will follow Delabastita (1993) with a slight variation. For different classifications of wordplay see Heller; Leech; and Sherzer.

² Bold type in the examples is mine. It indicates the word or textual fragment which contains the pun in the ST or the exact fragment in which the pun is translated in the TT.

- (3) HAMLET: Excellent i'faith, of the chamaleon's dish: I eat the **air**,
promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.
(3.2.83-84)

Two or more words which are identical in spelling as well as in pronunciation are said to be linked by *homonymy*. This is the case of the two meanings of the signifier *grave* (“serious” and “place of burial”) in (4):

- (4) HAMLET: [...] Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most **grave**,³
Who was in life a foolish prating knave. (3.4.214-216)

When two or more words are similar –but not identical– in spelling and pronunciation, they are called *paronyms*. Thus, in (5) the word *manner* (“custom, usage, fashion”) is similar in spelling and pronunciation to *manor* (“medieval landed estate under the feudal system”):

- (5) HAMLET: [...] But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the **manner** born, it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.
(1.4.14-16)

- *The Polysemic pun* involves the confrontation of the two or more different meanings which a given word has. Wordplay in (6) is based on the simultaneous realization of two different meanings of the word *honest*, namely “free of sin, respectable, good-living” and “chaste”.

- (6) HAMLET: Ha, ha! Are you **honest**?⁴ (3.1.103)

- *The Idiomatic pun* is constituted by an idiomatic expression. In (7) there is semantic ambiguity, since the idiomatic sense of the sequence *walk i'th' sun* –“go about in public, mingle with people”– and its literal sense –“walk in the sunshine”– are both present.

- (7) HAMLET: Let her not **walk i'th' sun**. Conception is a blessing, but
as your daughter may conceive – Friend, lok to't.
(2.2.182-183)⁵

- *The Syntactic pun* is constituted by a statement which can be analyzed syntactically in at least two different ways. The sequence *admit no discourse to*

³ Hamlet is here speaking about Polonius, whom he killed a moment ago, and that explains the reference to the meaning “place of burial”.

⁴ Hamlet is addressing Ophelia.

⁵ This fragment also contains a pun on the words *conception* and *conceive*.

your beauty in (8) has two possible syntactic analyses. In one of them the verb *admit* is being used as a ditransitive verb, that is to say, it has two complements: *no discourse* and *to your beauty*. In the other analysis, on the other hand, the verb *admit* has an only complement, which is *no discourse to your beauty*. In the first of those two interpretations the meaning is that “virtue must not allow beauty to acquaint with others”, and in the second one, the sense is that “beauty must not permit itself to mix with beauty”.

- (8) HAMLET: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should **admit no discourse to your beauty**.⁶ (3.1.107-108)

- *The Morphological pun* is composed by words which can be related to other words by means of morphological devices such as derivation or compounding. In the following example, three different meanings are confronted in the signifier *mistake* (“mistake, take wrongfully, err in the choice of, think wrongly that a person is someone else”, “mis-take, take misguidedly”, and “must take, have to accept”).

- (9) HAMLET: So you **mistake** your husbands. (...) (3.2.228)

Strategies for the translation of puns

From pun to pun

Perhaps the most obvious and often –but not always– considered the most desirable among the strategies for the translation of wordplay involves rendering the pun in the source text by means of another pun in the target text.⁷ Within this solution, several types can be identified, depending on the relations between both puns. In this sense, the TT pun may or may not reproduce the formal structure of the original and it may or may not share its semantic organization. In other words, the TT pun can show changes with respect to the ST pun in several aspects.

When the TT pun is based on the same linguistic mechanism as its ST counterpart and it reproduces the same semantic structure, both puns are said to be *congenial*. Thus, the ST pun in (10) has been rendered in the Spanish and Galician versions analyzed in this study by means of congenial puns. The original pun and the five TT puns are phonologic puns based on paronymy, all of them are horizontal puns and the semantic structure is the same in all the cases. Two meanings are confronted in each of the puns, namely “effect, the result of a cause” and “defect(ive), (suffering from a) shortcoming or deficiency”.

⁶ Hamlet addresses these words to Ophelia.

⁷ From now onwards source text and target text will be respectively referred to as ST and TT.

- (10) POLONIUS: [...] Mad let us grant him then. And now remains
That we find out the cause of this **effect**,
Or rather say the cause of this **defect**,
For this **effect defective** comes by the cause.
(2.2.100-103)

POLONIO: [...] Admitamos, pues, que está loco, y ahora queda por averiguar la causa de este **efecto**, o, mejor dicho, la causa de este **defecto**, toda vez que este **defectuoso efecto** proviene de una causa. (Astrana Marín 70)

POLONIO: [...] Entonces, supongamos que está loco, y ahora falta que descubramos la causa de ese **efecto**, o, mejor dicho, la causa de ese **defecto**; pues ese **efecto defectuoso** procede de una causa. (Valverde 36)

POLONIO: [...] Admitamos que está loco; sólo resta averiguar la causa del **efecto** o, mejor dicho, la causa del **defecto**, pues el **efecto defectivo** tiene causa. (Pujante 102)

POLONIO: [...] Convengamos, pues, en que está loco, y ahora falta descubrir la causa de este **efecto**, ó por mejor decir, la causa de este **defecto**: porque este **efecto defectuoso**, nace de una causa. (Moratín 70)

POLONIO: [...] Hai que admitir que está tolo. Agora resta descubri-la causa deste **efecto**, mellor dito, a causa deste **defecto**, pois este **efecto defectuoso** vén dunha causa. (Pérez Romero 115)

Likewise, the ST pun in (11) is rendered in the five versions which constitute my corpus by means of a congenial pun, although just Moratín's and Pujante's versions are used below to illustrate this point. In all cases, the pun is vertical, in formal terms, and polysemic, in linguistic terms. In addition, the semantic ambiguity is also identical in the original and in its TT counterparts, involving the co-occurrence of two different meanings of the word *man* and of its Spanish and Galician equivalents *-hombre* and *home-*, namely "the category of human beings" and "the category of male human beings".

- (11) HAMLET: [...] **Man** delights not me – no, nor woman
neither, though by your smiling you seem to say
so. (2.2.290-2)

HAMLET: [...] El **hombre** no me agrada; no, tampoco la mujer, aunque por tus sonrisas parece creer que sí. (Pujante 110)

HAMLET: [...] El **hombre** no me deleita... ni menos la muger... bien que ya veo en vuestra sonrisa que aprobais mi opinión. (Moratín 85)

However, as was said above, ST and TT puns do not always coincide. One of the aspects in which the TT pun can be different from the original pun is the *linguistic mechanism* which serves as basis to the pun. Thus, whereas in (12) the ST pun is a phonologic one –playing the adjective *strange* and the noun *stranger*, words between which a paronymic relation is established–, its Galician counterpart is of a polysemic type, as it confronts two meanings of the word *estraño* (“odd, not familiar” and “foreigner, unknown visitor”):

(12) HORATIO: O day and night, but this is wondrous **strange**!
HAMLET: And therefore as a **stranger** give it welcome.
(1.5.164-165)

HORACIO: ¡Día e noite, isto é prodixiosamente **estraño**!
HAMLET: Pois como a un **estraño** acólleo.
(Pérez Romero 1.5.164-5)

In the example below, (13), there is also a change in the linguistic mechanism, but the direction is, in this case, the opposite one. Thus, whereas the original pun is based on polysemy, on the simultaneous realization of two different meanings of the word *fashion* (“manner, way” and “pretence, mere form, just a fashionable way of behaving”), its translation into Galician, as well as one of the translations into Spanish analyzed in this study –specifically, Valverde’s translation– involve a paronymic pun on the words *modo*, whose meaning corresponds to the first meaning of *fashion*, and *moda*, corresponding to the second sense realized in the ST pun.

(13) OPHELIA: My lord, he hath importun’d me with love
In honourable **fashion**.

POLONIUS: Ay, **fashion** you may call it. Go to, go to.
(1.3.110-112)

OFELIA: Señor, me ha importunado con su amor de **modo** honorable.

- POLONIO: ¿De **modo**? De **moda**, mejor dicho; vamos, vamos. (Valverde 20)
- OFELIA: Señor, faime as beiras dun **modo** honorable.
- POLONIO: Si, chámalle **moda**. Vai, vai de aí. (Pérez Romero 67)

Another aspect in which ST and TT puns may differ is their respective *formal structures*. The changes can take place both in the horizontal-vertical axis as well as in the axis homonymy-homography-homophony-paronymy. An example of a change in the horizontal-vertical axis may be found in one of the translations of the ST pun in (14) into Spanish, namely that by Astrana Marín. Whereas the original pun is horizontal, the TT contains a vertical pun. The semantic structure, however, is the same in both puns, which confront the same meanings, which, as said above, are “girl, young unmarried woman” and “virgin”.

- (14) OPHELIA: [...] Then up he rose, and donned his clothes
And dupp'd the chamber door;
Let in the **maid** that out a **maid**
Never departed more. (4.5.52-55)
- OFELIA: [...] Entonces él se alza
y pónese aprisa ligero vestido;
... y, abriendo la puerta,
entró la **doncella**,
que tal no ha salido. (Astrana Marín 158)

In (15) the shift affects the other axis mentioned above. Both the ST and the TT puns are phonologic in this case, but whereas the original pun is based on the paronymy between *country* and *cunt*, the TT pun is based on the homonymy between *follaxe1* (“foliage, the leaves of a plant or tree”) and *follaxe2* (“sexual act in the colloquial language”):⁸

- (15) HAMLET: Do you think I meant **country** matters? (3.2.103)
- HAMLET: ¿Pensas que falaba da **follaxe**? (Pérez Romero 179)

⁸ Although this example is used to illustrate changes in the linguistic mechanism which serves as basis to the pun, the ST and TT puns also show differences with respect to their semantic structure.

The semantic structure may also involve differences between the ST and the TT puns. In this way, one of the semantic changes which can take place implies that the two meanings confronted in the TT pun belong to two semantic fields relatively equivalent to those of the ST pun, but one or both of them occupy a different position within those semantic fields, that is to say, the meanings are not exactly the same. Although *breath* and *aire* in (16) belong to the same semantic field and in fact their meanings are very close, in the case of the English noun there exists a nuance of meaning, that of “exhaled, going in and out the body through the nose or mouth”, which is not present in either of the meanings confronted in the Galician pun. The other meaning, “speak, express”, is roughly equivalent in both puns:

(16) QUEEN: Be thou assured, if words be made of **breath**,
And **breath** of life, I have no life to **breathe**
What thou hast said to me. (3.4.198-200)

RAÍÑA: Non temas. Se as palabras son **aire**
e o **aire** vida, non teño vida para **airea**-lo
que me dixeches. (Pérez Romero 196 & 198)

Similarly, in (17), one of the meanings is shared by both the ST and the TT puns, namely that of “make a false statement”, whereas the other meanings belong to the same semantic field, in the sense that both of them refer to a spatial position, but they are not identical. In the ST pun *lie* means “be in a horizontal resting position”, whereas in the TT pun *metido*, past participle of the verb *meterse*, means “get into somewhere”.

(17) HAMLET: I think that be thine indeed, for thou **liest** in't.
CLOWN: You **lie** out on't sir, and therefore 'tis not
yours. For my part, I do not **lie** in't, yet it
is mine.

HAMLET: Thou dost **lie** in't, to be in't and say 'tis
thine. (5.1.103-106)

HAMLET: Será tuya porque te has **metido** dentro.
ENTERRADOR: Y como vos estáis fuera, no es vuestra.
Yo en esto nome he **metido**, pero es mía.
HAMLET: Te has **metido** y has **mentido** diciendo
que es tuya. (Pujante 190)

In a different type of semantic change at least one of the meanings confronted in the TT pun belongs to a semantic field which is not equivalent to either of the semantic fields involved in the ST pun. In the original pun in (18),

carp simultaneously means “large freshwater fish” and “talk, discourse”. One of the meanings of the TT pun, “person who behaves spitefully”, belongs to a semantic field totally different from the semantic fields comprising the components of the original pun:

(18) POLONIUS: [...] Your bait of falsehood takes this **carp** of truth, (...)
(2.1.61)

POLONIO: [...] Co anzol da falsidade collerás un **peixe** de verdade.
(...) (Pérez Romero 101)

The following example, (19), portrays the same type of semantic shift. The meanings realized in the ST pun are “relative” and “showing the mutuality and kindness of feeling natural among blood relations”. In the Spanish pun, on the other hand, the confronted meanings are that corresponding to the signifier *primo*, “cousin” –which belongs to a semantic field shared by one of the meanings of the original pun– and “having pre-eminence or superiority over other members of the same class” –which corresponds to the signifier *primado*–. The semantic field to which this second sense belongs is totally different from either of the semantic fields involved in the ST pun.

(19) HAMLET: (*Aside*) A little more than **kin**, and less than
kind! (1.2.65)

HAMLET: (*Aparte*) Un poco menos que **primado** y un poco
más que **primo**. (Astrana Marín 27)

From pun to no pun

Another strategy adopted by translators involves offering as a translation of the original pun a textual fragment which does not contain any pun. With respect to the semantic structure when this strategy is selected, three different possibilities may be distinguished.

The first of those possibilities is *nonselective*, in the sense that the two or more meanings realized in the original pun are taken to the TT. In example (20), the two meanings which respectively correspond to the signifiers *longed* and *long* confronted in the original horizontal pun are respectively present in *quería* and *hai moito* in the Galician translation:

(20) OPHELIA: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have **longed long** to redeliver. (3.1.92-93)

OFELIA: Teño recordos vosos, señor,
que **hai moito quería** devolver. (Pérez Romero 163)

An illustration of another case in which the ST pun has been translated by means of a fragment which contains no pun and which reproduces the two meanings present in the original may be found in the translation of the ST pun in (21) in Astrana Marín's version. There is semantic ambiguity in the original *unimproved*, which means at the same time "unrebuked, undisciplined, ill-regulated" and "untried, untested". Both meanings are present in the TT respectively in *indómito* and *inexperto*.

(21) HORATIO: [...] Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of **unimproved** mettle, hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute [...] (1.1.95-98)

HORACIO: [...] Ahora, señor, Fortinbrás el joven, henchido de un carácter **indómito** e **inexperto**, ha ido reclutando aquí y allá, en las fronteras de Noruega, una turba de desheredados, [...] (Astrana Marín 21)

The second possibility is *selective*, since only one of the two meanings confronted in the original pun remains in the TT. In (22) the translator –Pérez Romero in this case–, in his Galician version, kept only one of the two meanings confronted in the ST pun, that of "in the sun, in the glare of public notice, in the sunshine", leaving aside that of "in the son, in a natural, filial relationship":

(22) HAMLET: Not so, my lord. I am too much **i'th'sun**. (1.2.67)

HAMLET: Nada diso, señor. Estou demasiado **ó sol**
(Pérez Romero 41)

Similarly, in (23) the original pun on the noun *canon* –meaning "divine prohibition, biblical injunction" – and on its paronym *cannon* – "piece of artillery" – is translated into Spanish by both Moratín and Pujante by means of a TT which contains no pun, but in each of the versions the meaning is different. Thus, in Pujante's version the meaning corresponds to the first sense of the ST pun, whereas in his version Moratín opted for the second sense.

(23) HAMLET: [...] Or that the Everlasting had not fixed his **canon** 'gainst self-slaughter. (1.2.131-132)

HAMLET: [...] ó el Todopoderoso no asestara el **cañon** contra el homicida de sí mismo! (Moratín 26)

HAMLET: [...] o el Eterno no hubiera promulgado una **ley** contra el suicidio! (Pujante 69)

In offering a *diffuse paraphrase* in which none of the meanings realized in the ST pun appears in the textual fragment which can be identified as its translation. In (24) the original pun on *part* conveys the meanings “ability, accomplishment” and “region, portion of the world”, but neither of these two meanings appears in the TT, which offers as a translation of the sequence containing the pun *todo aquello*, meaning “all that”.

(24) OSRIC: [...] Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the calendar of gentry. For you shall find in him the continent of what **part** a gentleman would see.⁹ (5.2.103-105)

OSRIC: [...] De feito, para falar del cumpridamente, é mapa e guía de nobreza. Pois descubriredes nel o continente de **todo aquilo** que un cabaleiro gustaría de ver. (Pérez Romero 329)

The same type of strategy may be found in (25). The ST contains a pun on the noun *hawk*, which means both “bird of prey” and “tool used by plasterers” and another pun on *handsaw*, which refers not only to a “tool used by carpenters”, but also to the paronymic noun *heronshaw*, “a young heron”, which is a potential prey for a hawk. Neither of the two senses in each of the puns, however, is present in *huevo*, which means “egg” or in *castaña*, whose meaning is “chestnut”.

(25) HAMLET: I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a **hawk** from a **handsaw**. (2.2.347-348)

HAMLET: Yo no estoy loco, sino cuando sopla el nornordeste; pero cuando corre el sud, distingo muy bien un **huevo** de una **castaña**. (Moratín 87)

Punoid

The translator may also try to recreate the effect of the original pun by means of a figure of speech such as repetition, rhyme, alliteration, etc. This strategy is referred to as *punoid* after Delabastita (1993: 207). An example in

⁹ Osric addresses these words to Hamlet and is speaking about Laertes.

which the translator has resorted to consonant rhyme can be found in Pérez Romero's Galician version, in (26):

(26) HAMLET: A little more than **kin**, and less than **kind!**
(1.2.65)

HAMLET: Canto máis achegado, menos amado.
(Pérez Romero 41)

The example presented in (27) contains alliteration of nasal sounds. The original pun is based on the presence of two meanings of the adverb *abominably*, namely “extremely badly” and “inhumanly, beastly, away from the nature of man”. The TT does not contain any pun, but the translator has tried to recreate the effect of the ST pun by means of the alliteration of nasal sounds.

(27) HAMLET: [...] they imitated humanity so **abominably**
(3.2.28-29)

HAMLET: [...] tan **inhumanamente** imitaban a la
humanidad. (Valverde 57)

Omission

On other occasions, the textual fragment which contains the original pun is simply omitted in the translation, as in (28) below. Hamlet has just killed Polonius and when he says “*This man shall set me packing*”, he is transmitting three different meanings: (i) “this man (Polonius) will send me off in a hurry”, (ii) “this man will make me begin plotting, conspiring”, and (iii) “I will have to load up with this man's body”. Nevertheless, the fragment which contains the pun simply disappears in the Galician version.

(28) HAMLET: [...] This man shall set me **packing**.
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room. (...)
(3.4.212-213)

HAMLET: [...] Ø
Arrastrarei este refugallo ó cuarto veciño.¹⁰ (...)
(Pérez Romero 231)

¹⁰ The symbol Ø indicates the place in which the fragment has been omitted.

Another case in which the selected strategy is the omission of the fragment containing wordplay is the following one. The original pun is on the word *cock*, and the meanings involved in this instance of wordplay are “God” and “male sexual organ”. In Valverde’s version the textual fragment containing the pun is removed, as may be seen in (29).

- (29) OPHELIA: Young men will do’t if they come to’t –
By **Cock**, they are to blame. (4.5.60-61)
- OFELIA: Los mozos lo hacen siempre, en cuanto pueden,
Ø ¡qué gente tan infame! (Valverde 86)

Transference

A solution rarely adopted by the translators of the analyzed versions is that called *transference*, by means of which TT words or sequences acquire meanings of the source language which do not correspond to the meanings which those words or sequences would normally have in the target language. In example (30) the English verb *commend* was translated into Galician as *recomendar*, acquiring one of the original expression meanings (“present to your favourable regard, offer respectfully”), as the other one, “praise, recommend”, is the common meaning of that Galician verb:

- (30) OSRIC: I **commend** my duty to your lordship.
HAMLET: Yours, yours.
He does well to **commend** it himself. There are
no tongues else for’s turn. (5.2.160-163)
- OSRIC: **Recomendo** os meus respetos á vosa señoría.
HAMLET: Sempre voso.
Fai ben en **recomendarse** el mesmo, que non hai
lingua allea que o faga por el. (Pérez Romero
335)

In (31) the transference strategy has also been applied. As has been said above, in the ST pun *carp* means both “a large freshwater fish” and “talk, discourse”. Although the first of those meanings is shared by the noun *carpa* in Spanish, the second one is not, although in this fragment of the TT, it seems to acquire that meaning of the source language.

- (31) POLONIUS: [...] Your bait of falsehood takes this **carp** of
truth, (...) (2.1.61)

POLONIO: [...] con el anzuelo de vuestra mentira pescáis la **carpa** de la verdad. (Astrana Marín 62)

Editorial techniques

Finally, I will refer to the so-called editorial techniques. Among these techniques we can find commentaries about the translation by means of an introduction or epilogue, footnotes, endnotes or parenthesis within the main text. In the versions which constitute the object of this study, only footnotes and endnotes were found, which fulfil the functions of explaining or commenting the ST pun, which the translator reproduces literally, paraphrases or explains. In this way, (32) and (33) respectively reproduce two footnotes in which the ST puns are explained:

- (32) Hamlet xoga coa ambigüidade entre *sun* e *son* que se pronuncian igual e significan respectivamente, sol e fillo. (Valverde 41)

[Hamlet plays on the ambiguity between *sun* and *son*, which are pronounced the same and respectively mean, “sun” and “son”]¹¹

- (33) Juego de palabras basado en la coincidencia entre “worms” (gusanos) con Worms, ciudad alemana en la que el emperador Carlos V convocó una Dieta (asamblea) en 1521 para tratar de resolver pacíficamente el problema de la Reforma protestante. (Pujante 164)

[Pun based on the coincidence between worms and Worms, German city in which Emperor Charles V called a Diet (assembly) in 1521 to try to solve the problem of the Protestant Reformation in a peaceful way.]

Footnotes and endnotes, by their very nature, are always used not on their own but in combination with another translation strategy, very often that in which the textual fragment containing the pun in the ST is translated by means of a textual fragment which contains no pun at all. This is probably due to the fact that the translator feels that he/she needs to give the information that the ST contained wordplay in the textual fragment which corresponds to a TT in which there is no wordplay. However, several cases have been found in which the footnote is combined with the strategy in which the ST pun is rendered by means of a TT pun, normally when both puns are not congenial. This is the case of the

¹¹ The translations of the footnotes and endnotes are mine.

footnote reproduced in (34), which explicitly reflects on the relationship between the ST and the TT.

- (34) Damos un rodeo sustituyendo un juego con *arms*, como “brazos” y como “armas” (Valverde 97)

[We take a way around by replacing a pun with *arms*, as “upper limbs of the body” and as “coats of arms”]

On other occasions, the note may even contain not only an explanation of the original pun, but also an assessment of its literary value. Thus, in the endnote reproduced in (35), the translator –Moratín in this case– passes an evaluative judgement on the ST pun, coherent with the norms of the target polysystem in the late eighteenth century.

- (35) *Pues qué, Adan fue caballero?* Aquí hay un juego de palabras que no puede conservarse en la traducción. La voz inglesa *arms* significa igualmente armas y brazos. [...] Los apasionados de Shakespeare hallarán poco que admirar en este pasage. (Moratín 274)

[*Was Adam a gentleman?* There is a pun here which cannot be maintained in the translation. The English word *arms* means both “coats of arms” and “upper limbs of the body.” [...] Shakespeare’s admirers will not find much to praise in this passage.]

In this sense, Zaro (46) says with respect to Moratín’s version, and particularly to the endnotes he includes, that they reflect the tension which exists between the neoclassical drama paradigm, which he fussily applies to his own works, and his admiration for Shakespeare.

Results

As the table presented below displays, in the greatest part of the 873 TT extracts in the five versions corresponding to original textual fragments which had a pun,¹² particularly in 489 cases –which represent 56.01 % of the total

¹² Two pages were lost in Moratín’s manuscript. Those two pages contained the textual fragments corresponding to two ST puns, which explains why the total number of textual fragments identified as translations of original puns totals 873 rather than 875.

number of instances–, there is no pun at all. The strategy which consists in offering a pun in the TT as a translation of the original pun –which represents 39.63 %, with 346 cases– was used on fewer occasions than one would expect. A possible explanation could be that the translator may have considered that the puns did not fulfil a really important function in the ST and that their presence was simply anecdotic. In addition, in the target polysystems and, particularly in Galician and Spanish literatures, there is not a tradition of puns equivalent to that of English literature. That would suggest an adaptation to the norms of the target polysystems. There is also the possibility that many of the ST puns simply went unnoticed to the translators.

Apart from these general observations about the corpus analyzed in this paper, an obvious difference may be observed between Moratín's translation, belonging to the neoclassical paradigm and the rest of the translations, all of them firstly published in the twentieth century. As shown in a note included in his version and reproduced above, in (35), Moratín does not strive to conceal his dislike of Shakespeare's punning. He considers that for a serious genre such as drama an overabundance of puns is not appropriate at all. The following note is also a good example which serves to illustrate his attitude towards wordplay:

- (36) *Muy bruto fue el que cometi6. Estas puerilidades y equívocos necios no son propios de la tragedia, ni de la comedia, ni de obra ninguna escrita con gusto y juicio. En tiempo de Shakespeare se hizo tan común esta corrupción, que los mas graves predicadores llenaban sus oraciones de tales frialdades, y no es de admirar que se usara en el teatro lo que se aplaudía en el púlpito. (Moratín 263)*

[It was a brute part of him to kill. These childish things and foolish plays on words are not suitable for tragedy, comedy, or any work written with taste and good sense. In Shakespeare's age this corruption was so common that the most serious preachers filled their prayers with such unemotional issues, and it is no surprise that what was praised in the pulpit were also to be used in drama.]

This low acceptability of wordplay as a text feature can also be perceived in other European neoclassical translations, such as that by Ducis into French or that by Cambon van der Werken into Dutch.¹³ However, this consideration of Shakespeare's punning as unfit for reproduction in the target culture in the neoclassical period is not the only reason for the low frequency of the pun-to-pun strategy, as mentioned above. In fact, in the translations corresponding to the twentieth century, although the frequency of puns used to render ST

¹³ See Delabastita (1993: 270) in this point.

wordplay is much higher than in Moratín's version, it is not the most frequent strategy. Apart from the two main strategies, other minor strategies for the translation of puns recorded in my corpus are *omission* –also referred to as *zero translation*–, *transference*, and *punoid*, with percentages ranging between 2.52 %, and 0.46 %.

Editorial techniques, in particular footnotes and endnotes, as mentioned above, are used always in combination with another strategy. The resort to these editorial techniques mainly occurs when the TT does not offer a pun as a solution for the translation of the original pun, probably because the translator feels that it is necessary to justify why his version differs in that point from the ST.

	From-Pun-To-Pun		From-Pun-To-No-Pun		Transference		Punoid		Omission		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pérez Romero (Galician)	74	42.29	92	52.57	2	1.14	1	0.57	6	3.43	175	100
Astrana Marín (Spanish)	72	41.14	98	56.00	4	2.29	1	0.57	0	0	175	100
Valverde (Spanish)	76	43.43	92	52.57	4	2.29	1	0.57	2	1.14	175	100
Pujante (Spanish)	74	42.29	94	53.71	1	0.58	1	0.58	5	2.86	175	100
Moratín (Spanish)	50	28.90	113	65.32	1	0.58	0	0	9	5.20	173	100
Total	346	39.63	489	56.01	12	1.37	4	0.46	22	2.52	873	100

Table. Strategies used for the translation of puns in *Hamlet* into Spanish and Galician

Conclusions

There is a variety of reasons which explain why in the corpus analyzed in this study more than half of the extracts containing a pun in the ST were translated by means of textual fragments which contained no pun, as has been already pointed out. Among those reasons, probably the most obvious one is related to the fact that the asymmetry between the signs of a language and the extralinguistic entities and their conceptualizations does not reflect an identical pattern across languages, which is also seen as an explanation for the difficulty involved by the translation of puns (Alexieva 140-141). Some other reasons had

to do with an adaptation to the norms of the target culture, with the lack of awareness of the existence of certain puns on the part of the translator, or even with his dislike of wordplay. However, even though most of the ST puns do not have a counterpart in the TT, this does not imply that puns are untranslatable. In fact, a considerable number of them do have a counterpart, which calls to question those positions which defend the untranslatability of wordplay. Apart from that, the other solutions adopted must be considered as other valid options and do not indicate that puns are untranslatable at all.

Among those authors who defend the untranslatability of wordplay, Catford, for instance, said that “linguistic untranslatability occurs typically in cases where an *ambiguity* peculiar to the SL text is a functionally relevant feature- e.g. in SL puns” (Catford 94), and House stated that “a third instance of untranslatability also concerns cases in which language is used differently from its communicative function: cases of plays on language, i.e. puns or intentional ambiguities, which are so closely tied to the semantic peculiarities of a particular language that they cannot be translated” (House 167).¹⁴

All the positions which defend the untranslatability of puns, as those which have just been referred to, are based on an ideal and preconceived notion of what a translation should be. The very fact that puns are translated, no matter the strategy selected, comes to invalidate the concept of their untranslatability. I agree with Delabastita (1993: 190) on that

what seems to be called for is an approach to wordplay translation that stops favouring ideal notions of translation and translatability and that addresses instead the rules and norms that govern the translation of puns in actual reality.

In this paper, instead of giving opinions about the translatability or untranslatability of wordplay based on intuition, the strategies used in several versions which function as translations in the target cultures –Spanish and Galician– have been analyzed, since actual translations are the only, or at least the most important, observable fact we have.

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¹⁴ These two quotations were extracted from Delabastita (1993), who presents in pages 173 to 177 a great number of quotations, belonging to many translation studies, concerning the untranslatability of puns.

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