A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE TRANSLATION OF METONYMY-BASED HUMOR

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Abstract: This paper proposes an approach to the translation of humorous texts based on Cognitive Linguistics, one of the few linguistic theories which have attempted to unveil and understand the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the use of language for humorous purposes. More specifically, we argue that a model focused on the frames or knowledge structures activated in the text and on the metonymical mappings that guide humorous inferences may help us gain useful insights into the cognitive mechanisms used during humor production and understanding. This model is applied to the analysis of a number of examples from three different novels and their translations into Spanish: *Small World* by David Lodge, *Money* by Martin Amis, and *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi.

The approach suggested here has centered on the metonymical patterns which have been most relevant to explain the humorous examples found in our corpus. In this sense, we have specifically focused on the analysis of four of the most productive types of metonymical mappings: PART FOR WHOLE, MATERIAL FOR OBJECT, CAUSE FOR EFFECT and PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT. Following Peirsman and Geeraerts' (2006) prototypical organization of conceptual contiguity, these mappings have been classified into two different domains: a) contiguity in the spatial and material domain and b) contiguity in the domain of actions, events and processes. We will argue that such a model can guide translators, helping them to develop a systematic method to solve the problems implied in the translation of humor. In this way, it will be easier to adjust the comprehension mechanisms of the ST audience and those of the TT audience and elaborate a translation that achieves an equivalent effect to that of the ST.

Keywords: metonymical mapping, cultural frame, Cognitive Linguistics, Cognitive Theory of Metonymy, Frame Semantics, humor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is a complex singularity that defines the essence of the human being. As a central ingredient of human nature, humor has been studied from many different perspectives within the social sciences (e.g. Chapman and Foot 1976; Freud 1973). But the type of humor that interests us here is the one which is (at least partly) accomplished by language.

Humor is, without any doubt, one of the biggest problems translators face. The difficulties in translating humor arise from its complex, multifaceted nature and its intrinsic dependence on context. But, despite the inherent complexity of the topic, the issue has become one of increasing interest among researchers, who have not given up their quest for a methodological approach to translate humor (Attardo 2002; Chiaro 2005; Delabastista 1997; Laurian and Nilsen 1989; Vandaele 2002). From a practical point of view, authors have either concentrated on finding local solutions to concrete translation examples (cf. Steiner 1975/1992: 290), or focused on establishing a number of guidelines or procedures that can be useful in the practice of translation (cf. Mateo 1995). From a theoretical point of view, scholars have adopted different linguistic approaches to account for the translation of humor. The main caveat to structuralist approaches was to base their study on the linguistic categories used in the humorous expression, leaving aside social and cognitive factors. Later on, pragmatic approaches (e.g. Nida 1995; Reiss 1977/1989; Vermeer 1989) went beyond this linguistic barrier to foreground the importance of the equivalence in the effect both texts have on their respective audiences. In this sense, a successful translation of an utterance that leads to laughter should have an equivalent effect on the target audience to that the ST has on its audience, that is, to make them laugh. The importance of pragmatic equivalence in the translation of humor is undeniable; however, pragmatic factors still fail to account for further questions relating to the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the production and reception of humorous language, or to the contribution of the study of humor to general language processing.

1.2. Cognitive Linguistics and Humor

Cognitive Linguistics (*henceforth* CL) has proven particularly useful to provide answers to these types of questions. Humor presents cognitive linguists with a challenge they are eager to face.[1] The suitability of CL to the study of humor lies mainly in two of its postulates: on the one hand, the emphasis on the study of language as part of our cognitive system makes humor an interesting ground to extrapolate its mechanisms to more general linguistic processing. On the other, the emphasis of CL on the study of language as it is actually used fits in

particularly well with the analysis of humor as a phenomenon that emanates from the interaction of particular individuals in particular situations and cultures. Humor needs a common ground or frame where interlocutors share a history and a way to interpret experience. It is by referring to this frame or store of shared knowledge and memories that humorous emissions achieve their intended effect. A recent approach to the translation of jokes that acknowledges the role cognitive mechanisms play in the production of humor is that developed by Attardo (2002). In line with his General Theory of Verbal Humor, Attardo (2002: 184–192) states that an ideal translation of a joke should share the same script opposition, logical mechanism, target and narrative strategy as the original.

In our analysis, we will attempt to demonstrate that the translation of humor entails adjusting the comprehension mechanisms of both the ST and TT audience on the basis of the frames or scripts activated in the text and the metonymical mappings that conduct the inferential process leading to a humorous effect. We specifically analyze the implications that the Cognitive Theory of Metonymy and Fillmore's 'Frame Semantics'[2] may have for the translation of humor. We aim to show how these theories can provide practical suggestions that may be of use to translators and translation scholars when dealing with humor. With this objective in mind, the article has been structured in the following way: firstly, we expose the particular postulates of the approach to language proposed by Frame Semantics and the Theory of Metonymy. Once the theoretical foundations have been laid, the second part of the article illustrates the implementation of a method of analysis for the translation of humor based on the notions of 'frame' and 'metonymy' and on the principles of the CL theories that postulate them. The last part includes the conclusions deduced from the approach suggested.

1.2.1. Frame-based knowledge in Frame Semantics

Frame-based knowledge is an essential component of linguistic knowledge in cognitive theories of language (e.g. Fillmore's Frame Semantics[3]). Frames — also known as *scripts* (Schank and Abelson 1977) — are chunks of interrelated knowledge about entities and their interactions. One of Fillmore's best known examples is the COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION FRAME[4], which is structured as a scenario where we can identify a series of semantic roles, such as *buyer, seller, goods* and *money.* Moreover, the transaction event is subdivided into the following sequence of actions: the buyer spends some money and takes the goods, and the seller hands in the goods and takes the money. Any word related to the event allows us access to the whole frame. Thus, any English speaker who finds and understands any of the words *buy, sell, cost, charge*, etc. will be

able to activate the whole frame of the commercial event, even when each term only highlights a small section of the frame. In this sense, frames demonstrate that linguistic knowledge is grounded in the experiences that underlie conceptual structures.

Frames structure our knowledge of people, objects, actions and even whole situations. Some belong to a given individual (e.g. I can have my own personal frame of how to organize a holiday trip or what to take as hand luggage), but some constitute idealized cultural models. In this work we will attempt to suggest how these idealized mental structures can be helpful when dealing with the translation of the cultural information involved in humorous utterances. In fact, the relevance of frames for translation has already been underlined by a number of authors that grant special importance to the comprehension process (e.g. Hietaranta 1993; Kussmaul 1995; Neubert and Shreve 1992; Snell-Hornby 1988/1995; Wilss 1996). In the same way, frame-based knowledge has been acknowledged to be an important part of humor (e.g. Coulson 2000; Coulson and Kutas 2001). Given that humor relies so much on background knowledge, it is logical to assume that understanding a humorous expression involves the activation of frames. Also, if the humorous expression is to be rendered into a different language to an audience that has no access to the relevant background knowledge, translating it would involve adjusting the activation of frames to ensure it achieves a humorous effect.

Although most works on Frame Semantics have focused on the lexical level, the theory is also applicable to higher levels.[5] In Fillmore's (1981) approach, frames are also the basic structures that guide text interpretation; yet, the approach presented here is sustained in the belief that a complete account of text comprehension processes often requires reference to other mechanisms of imagery construal that also contribute to an efficient interpretation (e.g. metaphorical and metonymical mapping). More specifically, we argue that the processing of humorous texts frequently depends on the role of one of those mechanisms (i.e. metonymical mapping) as a conductor of the inferential process that leads to humorous effects.

1.2.2. The Cognitive Theory of Metonymy

In non-cognitive approaches to language, metonymy has been traditionally viewed as a rhetorical figure in which the name of a referent is used to point to another it replaces and with which it has a relation of contiguity in the real world. This approach differs appreciably from the definition proposed by CL, which sees metonymy as a phenomenon of a conceptual and cognitive nature that pervades our way of thinking and expressing ourselves linguistically. Kövecses and Radden (1998: 39) propose one of the most widely accepted

definitions of metonymy as a cognitive process in which one entity provides mental access to another within the same domain:

> A cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or ICM. (Kövecses and Radden 1998: 39)

But this definition of metonymy is not free from problems. In CL, the key notion that distinguishes between metonymy and metaphor is that metonymy is viewed as a shift within one domain whereas metaphor is a shift across domains. However, as popular as this single-domain approach is, it has also been the object of some criticism. The main objections against this type of approach have been the need to provide a more precise definition of 'domain' and the need to account for the fact that metonymies habitually cross domain boundaries (Peirsman and Geeraerts 2006: 271). In order to find better criteria to overcome these problems, two different approaches have been adopted. Some authors have concentrated on defining more precisely the conceptual entities involved in metonymy, suggesting, for instance, the replacement of 'domain' for either a more complex domain structure or matrix (Croft 2002), or for other entities easier to define, such as frames or ICMs (Barcelona 2002; Kövecses and Radden 1998). On the other hand, there are authors who have rather focused on the specific nature of the conceptual relationship or mapping. In this line, Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006) propose to go back to the definition of metonymy in terms of conceptual contiguity (as opposed to conceptual similarity in metaphor). Unlike other approaches based on contiguity, their proposal suggests a novel prototypical classification of metonymical patterns based on the different types of contiguity that motivate them.[6]

The discussion of metonymy in the context of CL has been most fruitful, leading to a countless series of works that have studied the role of metonymy not only on semantics, but also on grammar and pragmatics. Focusing on the role metonymy plays on discourse interpretation, metonymies have been analyzed as the basis of pragmatic inference (cf. Coulson and Oakley 2003; Panther and Thornburg 2003; Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez Hernández 2003). From this perspective, Barcelona (2003: 97) maintains that conceptual metonymies provide pre-established clues that serve as a guide towards possible inferences in the interpretation of humorous discourse. But even though Barcelona insists that metonymy makes up the skeleton or framework of pragmatic inference, he also admits that there are other important aspects of such inference that cannot be explained solely in terms of metonymical connections (e.g. constructional meaning or other components of mental imagery, such as motor imagery or metaphor).[7] In addition, although his work focuses on the interpretation of jokes and anecdotes typical of spoken humor, he

states that the same principles apply to other types of discourse as well. In what follows, we will attempt to demonstrate that the cognitive notions of frame and metonymy also constitute the basis of the pragmatic inferences that guide the understanding of humorous utterances in literary discourse. Novelists often exploit metonymy as an effective means of pointing indirectly to the crucial meaning which gives rise to the humorous effect. After all, a joke or humorous comment is always funnier if, instead of being directly communicated, receptors manage to decipher it themselves.

2. ANALYZING HUMOR

We will next apply the notions of frame and metonymy to the analysis of a series of humorous utterances whose comprehension requires metonymical reasoning and the knowledge of the cultural frame that underlies the concept.

2.1. Corpus

The humorous utterances analyzed have been extracted from three different novels and their respective translations into Spanish. We aimed at selecting contemporary books with plots set in Great Britain or the USA with a wealth of cultural elements and a prominent sense of humor. The novels chosen were the following:

> (1) *Small World* by David Lodge [S.W] *El mundo es un pañuelo* [translated by Esteban Riambau Saurí] [M.P]
> (2) *Money* by Martin Amis [MONEY] *Dinero* [translated by Enrique Murillo] [DINERO]
> (3) *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi [B.O.S] *El buda de los suburbios* [translated by Mónica Martín Berdagué] [B.D.S]

2.2. Method

Humor is interpreted here as a situation intended to produce laughter or amusement and in which the reader's ability to perceive and enjoy what is amusing, comical, incongruous, or absurd depends on his/her ability to draw the necessary inferences on the basis of existing metonymical patterns. The examples have been classified according to the metonymical pattern which guides the pragmatic inferences relevant to understanding the humor of the utterance. The metonymical patterns used in our analysis are based on Peirsman and Geeraerts' (2006) prototypical classification of conceptual contiguity. Their

taxonomy has been mainly selected for methodological reasons. Their novel and exhaustive classification of metonymies provides a comprehensive taxonomy that allows us to describe and explain all the examples found in our corpus. Moreover, their emphasis on the prototypical organization of metonymical relationships provides a flexible taxonomy which highlights the connections among the examples. Peirsman and Geeraerts establish four different domains a) space, b) time, c) actions, events and processes, and d) assemblies and collections, and distinguish different types of contiguity that motivate the metonymical patterns within each domain. In this way, although the notion of domain is still used, the attention is now placed on the contiguous relationships within these domains rather than on the domains themselves.

In our corpus, we have not found examples of humor that rely on metonymies within the temporal domain. The lack of this type of examples is congruent with Peirsman and Geeraerts' (2006: 289) observation that the temporal domain of metonymical patterns is not as productive as the spatial one. They even comment that many of the examples they quote in the temporal domain constitute historical evolutions that nowadays are not considered metonymical any more. It is then logical to assume that this type of metonymical pattern is also going to be less productive in the elaboration of humorous utterances. Due to space restrictions, we are going to limit our work to the analysis of four examples, two of them illustrating a humorous effect based on metonymies within the spatial and material domain, and the other two exemplifying humor which relies on metonymies within the domain of actions, events and processes. We have selected those examples which demonstrate most clearly the role of metonymy in the production of humor.

2.3. ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES

2.3.1. Contiguity in the spatial and material domain

Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006: 278) propose spatial or material contiguity as the prototypical core of metonymy, since space is a basic domain in our conceptualization. They postulate part-whole contiguity to be the prototypical spatial contiguity relation and assume that all the other metonymical patterns are related to it. Moreover, they establish two dimensions that organize the classification of spatial metonymies: a vertical dimension of 'strength of contact' and a horizontal dimension of 'boundedness'. Thus, they find four metonymical patterns that can be placed on the vertical dimension along a continuum that goes from those patterns in which the relation or contact between the entities is the strongest (PART & WHOLE) to those in which the strength of contact is progressively weakened in the direction of containment

(CONTAINER & CONTAINED), contact (LOCATION & LOCATED) and adjacency (ENTITY & ADJACENT ENTITY). They also define a metonymical pattern (MATERIAL & OBJECT) that they place on the horizontal dimension together with the PART & WHOLE pattern along a 'boundedness' continuum, in which the two entities in the PART & WHOLE relationship are bounded while the material in the MATERIAL & OBJECT relationship is unbounded.

To illustrate these types of metonymical patterns, we have selected one example in which the production of humor involves a PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy and one which involves a MATERIAL FOR OBJECT metonymy.

2.3.1.1. Part for the whole

PART & WHOLE metonymies are probably the most frequent and familiar metonymical pattern, since parts and wholes are basic categories in our conceptualization of the world (Kövecses and Radden 1998). They are also a typical pattern authors resort to in producing humor. For instance, part-whole relations are commonly exploited in the invention of humorous proper nouns in novels. Writers frequently use proper nouns as a means of communicating their readers certain information about the characters or places that appear in the novel. The information conveyed in the proper noun often draws a smile on the face of readers when meeting the name of a character defined by a personality trait or a physical feature. This strategy frequently involves the use of a metonymy in which the character's most relevant personality trait or physical feature stands for the character itself. When the name is built on a body part, we have classified the metonymical pattern as PART FOR WHOLE, since body parts are bound entities. However, when the name is built on a personality trait, the metonymy has been classified as CHARACTERISTIC FOR ENTITY, since characteristics are unbound entities (cf. Peirsman and Geeraerts 2006: 303).

The problem of the translation of proper nouns is certainly a complex question (cf. Aixelá 2000). In the case of proper nouns with real meaning, translation is possible, since there is semantic information that can be transferred to the other language. However, we must take into account that the translation of proper nouns may affect the relevance of the fictitious world described in a novel. For this reason, the most widely used and accepted strategy for translating proper nouns is nowadays that of transcribing the source term, trying to compensate for the loss of information and effects in other parts of the text. The situation becomes more complicated when humor is involved, since not translating the proper noun will prevent TT readers from getting the joke. For instance, most of the proper nouns in *Small World* pose serious problems for translators, since the names chosen by David Lodge have been carefully designed at the service of humor and irony. In the following example,

the proper noun is the objective of a joke or pun based on the meaning of the name:

(1)
'What happened to Lily?' Persse demanded.
'Who?'
Persse pointed at the photograph.
'Oh, you mean *Lily Papps*.'
Frobisher guffawed. '*Good name for a stripper*.'
'Is that what she calls herself?' Persse asked.
'*Yeah, Lily Papps, with two pees*. She left a few weeks back. We haven't got round to doing a photo of the new girl.' [S.W.: 189]

—¿Qué ha sido de Lily? —inquirió a su vez Persse.
—¿Quién?
Persse señaló la fotografía.
—Ah, se refiere a *Lily Papps*...
Frobisher soltó una risita.
—*Buen nombre para una artista de striptease.*
(N. del T.) En argot inglés, pap significa 'teta' o 'pezón'. [M.P.: 241]

In the novel *Small World, Angelica Pabst* is the name of the intelligent and beautiful girl Persse McGarrigle pursues around the world after meeting her at Rummidge university conference. *Pabst* is also the real surname of Angelica's twin sister *Lily*, who adopts the artistic name of *Papps* (*Lily Papps*) when working as a stripper. Taking into account that the slang use of the word *pap* is rather unusual, the play on words with Lily's artistic name becomes really obvious when Frobisher makes the joke '*Good name for a stripper*.' Such a comment allows British readers to relate the surname to the slang word *paps* and activate a SEXUAL FRAME by highlighting the element of a woman's bust. The humor depends partly on the interpretation of the surname on the basis of a metonymy in which a PART (in this case, the stripper's BREASTS as one of the prominent attributes of a stripper) stands for the WHOLE (that is, the STRIPPER). Part of the humor also turns on the choice of the girl's name *Lily,* which contributes to increase the humorous effect of the comment on the basis of another metonymy in which an ENTITY (a lily) stands for a CHARACTERISTIC (whiteness or purity). As it is, the incongruity of relating purity and sex in the same name is already witty, but the comical effect is further increased when the name is related to the girl's job as a stripper.

Frobisher's joke is impossible to understand for Spanish readers that do not speak English and are, therefore, unable to associate Lily's first name with the qualities symbolized by the flower and her surname with the slang term. A

solution to transmit to Spanish readers the play on words and the joke would be to substitute Lily's surname with one they could associate to a woman's breasts (or, at least, with another term that would activate a sexual frame) and that would resemble Lily's real surname *Pabst*. However, there seem to be no Spanish terms that allow for such a recreation. Another option would be to change both the real and the artistic surname. In that line, there are several daring possibilities. It would be possible to use, for instance, the French term '*tête-à-tête*', that exists both in English and in Spanish and is normally used to designate a situation (often a conversation) that takes place in private with only two people together. Hence, in a context with clear sexual implications, this term could easily evoke a sexual frame, letting Spanish readers understand the joke. In addition, the graphic resemblance with the expression '*teta a teta*' would also facilitate the association with a woman's breast. We could thus speak of *Angelica Tets* and *Lily Tête-à-tête*. A similar possibility would be the names of *Angelica Penhose* and *Lily Penthouse*, since *Penthouse* is the title of an international pornographic magazine.

Nevertheless, although it is possible to find alternatives that allow Spanish readers to understand the joke, as can be assumed, the options are somehow forced. None of the proposed surnames exist in the real world and they do not even look authentic. What is more, to substitute the ST surnames in this example would imply replacing them throughout the whole novel, including the surname of the girls' father. Considering that such intrusion into the ST fictional world does not seem to be justified by the loss of humorous effects in one particular example, inserting an explanatory footnote is thus a good solution to convey humor to readers.

2.3.1.2. Material for object

MATERIAL & OBJECT metonymies have traditionally been considered a type of PART & WHOLE, since substances or materials can be conceived of as parts which make up physical objects. However, Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006: 283–4) distinguish between the two metonymical patterns on the basis of a difference in the 'boundedness' of the contiguous entities: while in PART & WHOLE patterns the entities are bound, in MATERIAL & OBJECT, the material is unbound.

MATERIAL & OBJECTS metonymies are commonly exploited by literary authors when dealing with aspects related to 'physical or material culture', that is, the different facets of domestic and public life, including aspects such as entertainment, means of transport, communication media, and also public institutions like administration, politics or education. On the one hand, these terms contribute to creating a feeling of realism that helps readers recognize the

author's description of society. On the other hand, writers make use of many of these terms to evoke the cultural knowledge they share with their readers and create a given effect. In this section, we include one example in which the writer exploits a cultural element pertaining to the British educational system to produce a humorous effect. In this case, the humor depends on the audience's ability to activate the pertinent cultural frames and establish the relevant inferences.

Given that both British and Spanish culture belong to Western civilization, numerous coincidences are to be expected in their institutional organization. Yet, there are also terms that reflect special features of British institutions that have no exact equivalent in Spanish culture. For instance, in the case of Spain and Great Britain, the lack of equivalence between the educational systems of both countries causes great problems for a translator who must resolve the existing cultural differences. The example below requires a metonymical interpretation and knowledge of the British educational system:

(2)
Rudyard Parkinson curled his lip over this missive and glanced at the book with lukewarm interest. He had never heard of Philip Swallow, and a first book by a *redbrick professor* did not promise much. [S.W.: 161]

Rudyard Parkinson frunció los labios al leer esta misiva y miró el libro con muy tibio interés. Nunca había oído hablar de Philip Swallow, y un primer libro de *un profesor de universidad moderna* no prometía mucho. [M.P.: 208]

This example illustrates the lack of equivalence between the Spanish and the British education system and the type of problems translators must face to iron out these cultural differences. Understanding the expression '*redbrick professor*' demands a metonymical interpretation and knowledge of THE BRITISH UNIVERSITY frame. In general terms, English universities can be organized into a prototypical model defined by their age, prestige and building material. In this sense, we can distinguish three types of English universities: the first type is the oldest and is represented by Oxford and Cambridge; it is a university of secular tradition, huge prestige and monumental stone buildings. They are the most representative ones and can be considered the core of the prototype. The second type appears in the late 19th and early 20th centuries after lay universities in big industrial urban centres, such as Birmingham, Manchester or Liverpool, and is given the label *redbrick universities* because their construction material is primarily red bricks. This adjective serves to distinguish this type of university from the older ones such as Oxford or Cambridge. The third type of universities can be named *glass universities*, since these edifices

substitute glass for bricks as their principal building material. These universities have been mainly erected since the 90s.

In possession of this knowledge, the term *redbrick* activates in British readers' minds the TYPE OF UNIVERSITY BUILT WITH RED BRICKS POSTERIOR TO OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE. Still, this does not explain why a book by a teacher from this type of university would not be very promising. To interpret the expression correctly, it is necessary to resort to a metonymy we could formulate as MATERIAL (in this case, REDBRICK as the building material) for OBJECT (in this case, UNIVERSITIES OTHER THAN CAMBRIDGE AND OXFORD). In this example, David Lodge exploits the distinction between Oxford and Cambridge and the rest of British universities in order to show the snobbery of Parkinson through his contempt for any college that is not his own. Parkinson is a renowned professor from Oxford University characterized by his indifference and contempt for all those he considers intellectually inferior. The humor of this example lies precisely in his snobbish and scornful attitude, which is also the most prominent humorous feature of the character throughout the whole novel.

The Spanish translation '*un profesor de universidad moderna*' attempts to explain the lower status of the other professor by implying the distinction between old and new universities, but reduces the humorous effect, since it does not wholly evoke Parkinson's snobbery. Being a new university in Spain does not necessarily imply being worse or having a lower status than an old one. In Spain there are no clear equivalents of universities like Oxford and Cambridge, that constitute indisputable prototypical members of the university category. Unfortunately, the impossibility to reproduce the metonymy in Spanish decreases the humor and forces translators to make the relevant information explicit in order to ensure the correct interpretation of the example. An alternative translation with a greater humorous impact could be to express explicitly the contemptuous attitude through the pejorative postmodifier use of the demonstrative pronoun *ésas* in a sentence such as '*un profesor de una universidad moderna de ésas*'. Another possibility that could still lead readers to infer the negative attitude could be the comment '*un profesor que no era de Oxford*'. Taking into account that readers know Parkinson works at Oxford and that most Spanish people are also aware that nowadays there are high-quality English universities other than Oxford and Cambridge, the comment allows readers to effortlessly deduce Parkinson's arrogance.

2.3.2. Contiguity in actions, events and processes

The structure of the metonymical patterns within the domain of actions, events and processes mirrors the one found in the spatial domain. Thus, the core of the domain is made up by part and whole relations and can be extended into two

directions: a 'strength of contact' dimension, which leads us from metonymies based on part-whole relations to those of containment, contact and adjacency, and a 'boundedness' dimension, which takes us from metonymies with bounded entities to those which involve unbounded states or participants. A particular feature of this domain is that it combines elements from the temporal and the spatial domains, containing relationships between the temporal entities of actions, events and processes and between their spatial participants. Thanks to this combination, the domain has a rich structure that makes it a prolific source for metonymies. These metonymies go from a) COMPLEX EVENT & SUBEVENT to b) ACTION/EVENT/PROCESS & STATE, c) ACTION/EVENT/PROCESS & PARTICIPANT, d) CAUSE & EFFECT and e) PARTICIPANT & PARTICIPANT (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006: 289– 301).

In what follows, we will analyze two examples of humor that rely on two of the most fruitful metonymical relationships within this domain: CAUSE & EFFECT and PARTICIPANT & PARTICIPANT.

2.3.2.1. Cause for effect

In CAUSE & EFFECT metonymies, the entities involved can be bounded or unbounded, and the relationship between them is that of contact contiguity. This type of metonymical pattern is frequently exploited by novelists in the description of feelings or emotions. Based on our experience as living creatures with the capacity to feel and experience emotions, human beings are able to connect a certain behaviour with a particular feeling. For example, we know that sadness usually fills our eyes with tears and causes dejection and apathy, on the contrary, happiness draws a smile on our faces and arouses energy and strength. Literary authors often exploit this capacity to communicate certain feelings by using a CAUSE & EFFECT metonymy. We analyze below an example in which part of the humorous effect of the passage depends on a CAUSE for EFFECT metonymy:

(3)
White wine, me: trying to stay in shape here. It's my first piece of alcohol for – what? – nearly two days. After all that tearful confusion, after *feeling like a one-year old* out on the street that night, I couldn't get anything down on me. [MONEY: 43]

Yo tomé vino blanco: quería mantenerme en forma. Era el primer alcohol que ingería en, no sé, quizá dos días. Después de toda esa lacrimógena confusión, después de *haberme sentido* la noche anterior, cuando salí a la calle, *como un niño de meses*, fui incapaz de tragar nada. [DINERO: 52]

With the expression *'feeling like a one-year old'* Martin Amis uses the comparison with a one-year-old boy to invite readers to infer the feeling of the protagonist John Self on the basis of a metonymy we could formulate as CAUSE (in this case, the character's PHYSICAL AGE) for EFFECT (that is, his DEGREE OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY). That day, after drinking heavily the night before, Self had woken up thinking it was nine o'clock. All excited, he turned up for his appointment to have breakfast with a girl at half past nine in the morning, but, to his surprise, he found out that it was already half past nine in the evening and the girl was no longer there. This previous context provides the necessary information to interpret correctly the metonymy and infer that, when Self made the mistake, he felt as disconcerted, helpless and clumsy as a one-year-old boy lost at night in town. In this case, using a simile with an infant is more humorous than expressing explicitly the character's feelings. On the one hand, the mapping of an adult's world onto that of a child assigns the adult infantile attributes that are mostly funny. On the other, using a comparison is always a more indirect way to conduct readers to the relevant inferences and is, therefore, funnier than communicating them directly.

The Spanish translator has chosen to keep the simile reducing even more the age of the comparison by selecting the expression *'un niño de meses'*. Although the implications and the humorous impact are virtually the same, the expression is somehow artificial, since in Spanish a child who is only a few months old is commonly referred to as a baby (i.e. *'un bebé'*). Another possibility would be to use the expression *'como un tierno infante'*, which is frequently used in Spanish to evoke feelings similar to those involved in this example.

2.3.2.2. Producer for product

According to Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006: 296), the relationship between the entities in PARTICIPANT & PARTICIPANT metonymies corresponds to that of adjacency in metonymies within the spatial domain. They argue that the relationship between two participants in an action is quite loose, since they are *'only indirectly related via the action, event or process in which they both participate'*. Nevertheless, they also acknowledge that, despite the weakness of the contiguity between the entities, this type of metonymical pattern is very common, probably due to the fact that it involves both spatial and temporal contiguity. Peirsman & Geeraerts (2006: 297) postulate five subpatterns of PARTICIPANT & PARTICIPANT metonymies: a) CONTROLLER & CONTROLLED, b) POSSESSOR & POSSESSED, c) PRODUCER & PRODUCT, d) LOCATION & PRODUCT, and e) INSTRUMENT & RESULT.

In this section, we have included an example of humor that relies on a PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy. This type of metonymical pattern is habitually exploited by literary authors, who constantly use terms that allude to different aspects of the daily life they try to describe. As previously mentioned, these terms contribute to creating a feeling of realism and help them evoke the cultural knowledge they share with their readers and create a given effect. In the example below, the humor depends on the audience's ability to activate the pertinent cultural frames and establish the relevant inferences on the basis of a PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy:

(4)
'Why has our Eva brought this brown Indian here? Aren't we going to get pissed?'
'He's going to give us a demonstration of the mystic arts!'
'And has he got his camel parked outside?'
'No, he came on a magic carpet'
'*Cyril Lord* or *Debenhams*?' [B.O.S: 12]

–¿Por qué se habrá traído Eva a este indio morenito? ¿Es que no vamos a agarrar una cogorza?
–¡Nos va a hacer una demostración de arte místico!
–¿Y ha dejado aparcado el camello a la puerta?
–No, ha venido en su alfombra voladora.
–¿De *Cyril Lord* o de *Debenhams*? [B.D.S: 21]

In this example, Hanif Kureishi uses the name of a prestigious carpet manufacturer *Cyril Lord* and a well-known department store *Debenhams* as the source of humorous inferences. Hence, when one of the speakers asks if the supposedly magic carpet would be from *Cyril Lord* or from *Debenhams,* he is actually making a joke that we can only understand in the context of the novel and in possession of some general knowledge of the world and the cultural frames involved. The humor of this example emanates essentially from the activation of a humorous stereotype of an INDIAN. Step by step, the joke introduces three features that define a humorous stereotype of Indians: THEY ARE EXPERTS IN THE MYSTIC ARTS, THEY TRAVEL BY CAMEL, and THEY CAN ALSO TRAVEL ON MAGIC CARPETS. The humor of these features lies in their unlikelihood, since we know the majority of real Indians do not fit the stereotype: only some are experts in the mystic arts, only a minority still uses camels, and none can travel on magic carpets because they only exist in children's stories and folk tales. From the context, we know that Karim's dad goes to the party to give a demonstration in mystic arts, which gives the two

guests the chance to activate the other two features of the stereotype in order to make fun of the Indian guest.

The humor is served from the beginning since we know he cannot possibly fit any of these features: he lives in London and people there do not travel by camel, and magic carpets are only a product of imagination. But it is precisely the implausibility of the comments that places the conversation in the world of the absurd and makes the conversation extremely funny. The foolishness of the situation culminates in a remark that uses the names of two real rug suppliers (*Cyril Lord* and *Debenhams*) to mock Karim's dad and reveal the silliness of the comment that he arrived on a magic carpet. By enquiring if the magic carpet was from either of the two British businesses, the speaker is using a metonymy PRODUCER (here *Cyril Lord* and *Debenhams* as carpet suppliers or manufacturers) FOR PRODUCT (that is, the real carpets they sell), which allows us to infer that the only 'magic' carpets Karim's dad could have would be the ones acquired in a shop.

Furthermore, the humor of the joke is reinforced by choosing two carpet suppliers with a different clientele. *Cyril Lord* is the name of a prestigious carpet manufacturer from the 60s and 70s. The success of this business, that made high-quality carpets constituted a marketing phenomenon at the time. *Debenhams* is the name of a well-known department store with a wide range of products and with a clientele that is for the most part working and middle class. With this background knowledge, British readers cannot help but laugh at a comment that plays on the absurdity of the conversation and scoffs at the social status of Karim's dad by leading to the inference that, if possible, this working-class Indian that wears M&S clothes would have undoubtedly acquired his flying carpet in a department store.

The problem with the transcription of the ST names in the translated text is that Spanish readers who do not know these places will not be able to draw the relevant inferences. An option would be to keep the humor by making explicit reference to any characteristic of real carpets using, for instance, a comment like *¿artesana o sintética?* This translation is based on a different type of metonymical pattern that we could formulate as CHARACTERISTIC (in this case, the type of manufacturing process used) FOR ENTITY (that is, the real carpets). But, despite using a different metonymy, the comment still guides readers to draw the relevant inference, that is, that the only 'magic' carpet Karim's dad is likely to have is a real, and thus non-flying one. Moreover, since each type of manufacturing is associated with a different carpet quality, the comment still allows us to establish the inference that a working-class Indian like Karim's dad would be most likely to have acquired the lowest quality carpet. Even so, translators should bear in mind the fact that the mention of both suppliers contributes to setting the novel in the London of the 70s.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have attempted to demonstrate that CL postulates are applicable to the analysis of linguistic humor. The emphasis of CL on the study of language as part of our cognitive system makes this theory specially appropriate to unveil the mechanisms involved in the processing of humorous language. More specifically, since humor makes use – amongst some other mechanisms – of frames and metonymy, the theories of Frame Semantics and the Cognitive Theory of Metonymy are especially useful to help elucidate how language is used to produce and understand humor and, thus, to facilitate translation into a different language.

Irrespective of the linguistic approach adopted, any work on the translation of humor has a common objective, that is, to unveil the mechanisms that underlie the production and understanding of humor and to establish the strategies that best help to transmit the humorous effect to a different language and culture. The study carried out in this work presupposes a certain schematic organization of the cultural knowledge involved in humor, and uses a methodological strategy based on adjusting the comprehension mechanisms of the ST audience and those of the TT audience in order to elaborate a translation that achieves a humorous effect.

The notion of 'frame' has been imported from Frame Semantics as an idealized mental structure which demonstrates that linguistic knowledge is grounded in the experiences which underlie conceptual structures. The frame as a link that connects linguistic form and the underlying concept may become a useful analytical tool for translators who have to deal with humor in two different languages imbued with two different cultures. Being aware of the cultural prototypes that determine the meaning of humorous expressions may help translators comprehend the role of such frame-based knowledge in the production and understanding of humor, assisting them in adjusting the comprehension mechanisms of both audiences and elaborating a translation that leads to the activation of the relevant frames necessary to achieve a humorous effect.

The view of metonymy as a basic cognitive phenomenon that constitutes the basis of pragmatic inference has been adopted from the Cognitive Theory of Metonymy. We have aimed to demonstrate that metonymies provide pre-determined clues that serve as a guide when establishing possible inferences in the interpretation of certain humorous expressions. An analysis based on the notion of metonymy can help translators to determine the mechanisms which conduct the inferential process in the ST culture, assisting them in reconstructing such a process for the readers of the translation in the TT culture.

The naming and categorization of the metonymical patterns discussed here is not the only taxonomy possible. Our classification does not preclude

alternative conceptualizations, and the metonymies proposed here can be analyzed as examples of different metonymical patterns. For instance, using a person's physical feature to create a character's name can be conceptualized as PART FOR WHOLE or as CHARACTERISTIC FOR ENTITY. In our analysis, we have followed the model proposed by Peirsman and Geeraerts, differentiating between the two patterns on the basis on the boundedness of the entities involved (see ex. 1). But the possibility of alternative classifications does not invalidate the present ones. What matters is not so much the specific labels assigned to the metonymical patterns, but the fact that the analysis proposed here allows for multiple motivations to be fitted into the model.

Many of the problems of a proposal like the one presented in this paper originate from the fact that both Frame Semantics and the Cognitive Theory of Metonymy are still evolving theories. But despite their limitations, it is impossible to deny that their premises appeal to our common sense and basic cognitive abilities. In theory, they provide us with a view of language totally coherent with the most recent discoveries about human cognition. In practice, the notions of 'frame' and 'metonymy' can help translators uncover the background frames and imagery mechanisms involved in the 'cognitive contrual' of humor and recreate them in a different language.

Notes

[1] From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that, in recent years, cognitive linguists have paid increasing attention to the study of humorous language (e.g. Attardo 2002; Barcelona 2003; Bergen and Binsted 2004; Bergen and Coulson 2006; Brône and Feyaerts 2004; Giora 1991; Tuggy 2007; Veale, Feyaerts and Brône 2006).

[2] Cognitive Linguistics, the Cognitive Theory of Metonymy and Frame Semantics are written in capitals to highlight the theories that are the object of study in our work.

[3] 'Frame Semantics' is a theory about meaning initiated by Charles Fillmore in the 70s that is still being currently developed in several fields, such as lexicography (e.g. Fillmore 1975, 1976, 1978, 1982, 1985; Fillmore and Atkins 1992, 1994), discourse analysis (e.g. Epstein 1997; Emmott 1994) or translation (Kussmaul 1995; Rojo 2000, 2002a, 2002b, *in press*; Rojo and Valenzuela 2005).

[4] All through this work prototypical frames, stereotypes and metonymies are represented in small capitals.

[5] For a revision of the usefulness of Frame Semantics for text analysis, see Fillmore (1981).

[6] Peirsman and Geeraerts' model will be described in greater detail in section 5.2.

[7] See Bergen and Binsted (forthcoming) for a complete account of the role of these mechanisms in humor processing.

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