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Cultural Difficulties in the Translation of English Humour into Spanish for a Cuban Context: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy*

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM FOR THE
DEGREE OF MA BY RESEARCH IN HISPANIC AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
(R40R)**

**DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH, PORTUGUESE AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF CULTURES LANGUAGES AND AREA STUDIES**

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SUBMISSION DATE: June 27, 2018

To my parents.

To Alberto.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my family (my parents Jesús and Odalys, my husband Alberto, my sister Odalys Jr. and my paternal grandmother Rosa) for their unfaltering love and support.

I would also like to make acknowledgement of the invaluable assistance provided by my supervisors, professors Jean Andrews and Patricia García, who guided me through this fascinating world of humour translation.

There were many others who contributed, even unknowingly, to this research. Among them, and hoping none are forgot, I must mention Antoni Kapcia, my English family (Stephen Jeffreys, Annabel Ardeen, Jack and Ralph Jeffreys), Jeremy Lawrance, Dirk Götsche, Alberto Martí, Isabel Story, Manuel Lagares, Louis Cotgrove, Anthony Esteban, Jacob and Sawako Runner, Margarita Escobar, Emilio Martínez Baniela, Omar González, Maricel Bauza, Tomás Acosta, and Niurka Fernández.

ABSTRACT

In Cuba, the literary translation of humour in works of science fiction or fantasy rarely occurs, so readers must turn to foreign editions that have a different cultural background and therefore a different sense of humour. That is why this study focuses on the need of translating English humour for a Cuban context. The hypothesis is that English humour presents culture-bound elements unintelligible for a Cuban audience and that a combination of translation strategies and extensive knowledge of the two cultures is the key for its successful translation. The aim of this research is to identify the main obstacles for the intercultural translation of English humour and the strategies to recreate it in a Cuban context. This research includes an exploration of both humour variants and a case analysis of culture-bound jokes from the novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The cultural problems identified include *culture-specific concepts*, *intertextuality*, *slang*, and *understatement*. The most efficient strategies to solve them were *cultural substitution*, *explicitation* and *loan words*. The present study can raise intercultural awareness and highlight the key role of translators as cultural mediators.

Keywords: literary translation, humor translation, English humor, Cuban humour, cultural difficulties, translation strategies

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INTRODUCTION

The present study belongs to the field of Translation Studies and its specific interest is the literary translation of English humour for a Cuban audience. It is especially concerned with the cultural problems that arise during the translation process, and it focuses on a particular variant of humour, the English, because of the marked differences between this culture and the Cuban one. Cultural aspects in general are considered among the most complex elements to translate; humour is a special case, because it relies heavily on cultural context. Thus, the intercultural translation of humour poses the ultimate challenge for both scholars and translators.

Humour is highly dependent on the cultural background of the audience, so that at times speakers of the same language but belonging to different cultures will find it difficult to understand each other's humour. This fact acquires a higher degree of relevance when different cultures and different languages are involved, adding more layers to the complexity of the phenomenon and affecting its translation from one culture to the other. This would require a double translation: that of the language and of the particular cultural elements humour relies on, which is the basic problem translators face when dealing with texts of this nature. The context of literary translation also adds to the difficulty of the task, since it presents a set of conventions in terms of style and narrative techniques that must be respected.

Due to the complex natures of humour and culture, this study will be greatly interdisciplinary, drawing from various fields of research in the social sciences such as Humour Studies, psychology, sociology, historiography, sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, and literary studies to achieve a thorough understanding of the specific principles under which culture and humour operate, their theoretical models and concepts, and the role humour has in the specific cultures to be studied.

Regarding the context in which this research takes place, the translation of humour is still an unexplored territory in many ways, although there have been notable works on the matter. The patterns of humour and its mechanisms were studied by Hazlitt (1819/1907), Morreall (1982),

Raskin (1985), Raskin and Attardo (1991), Attardo (1994), and Berger (1997) (1998), providing humour theories, classifications and methodologies for its analysis from a linguistic point of view, such as Raskin's Script-based Semantic Theory of Humour and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humour. The problems of humour translation were studied by Nida (1964), Nida and Taber (1969), Newmark (1981) (1991) and Bell (1991).

Due to globalization and to the need for international communication, the twenty-first century brought new approaches to Translation Studies and an increased interest in its cultural aspects. Studies on humour were carried out by Attardo (2002), Chiaro (2010) and Berger (2010); also, a considerable number of publications, especially in journals like *The Translator* 8(2) (2002), *Metaphor and Symbol* 17(2) (2002), and *Language and Linguistics Compass* 3(5) (2009) have explored the nature of humour, the translation problems it presents and the theories and strategies that could aid its translation. The most significant studies in this area have been conducted by Jeroen Vandaele (2002) (2010) (2012), Jeremy Munday (2001) (2004), Dirk Delabastita (2006), Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996) (2005) and Delia Chiaro (2005) (2010). Jeroen Vandaele's personal interest in the fields of humour in general, and within Translation Studies, has been very significant to this field. The special issue of *The Translator* (Volume 8 in 2002), devoted entirely to humour translation and edited by him, marked a turning point for the research on humour translation, creating awareness of the topic and providing a set of tools and theoretical frameworks from which many translation scholars, students and practitioners would greatly benefit and would use to deepen the research and produce other studies on the subject.

Translation theories that have been applied to the translation of cultural humour include the functional (dynamic) equivalence, advocated by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972), Nida (1964), Vázquez-Ayora (1977), Newmark (1981) (1988), and Pym (1992) (2014). The *skopos* theory created by Hans J. Vermeer (1978) (1996) and the functionalist approach developed by Katharina Reiss (1971) (1976), Vermeer and Reiss (1984) and by Christiane Nord (1991) (1997). Delabastita and Vandaele relate historical translation practices to immediate effects (the degree of comical effect achieved), causes (ideological, linguistic or reportorial) and further consequences (differences in the perception of a message). Attardo makes strong suggestions for the translation of texts with primarily humorous intention and effect.

In contemporary Translation Studies, the most popular areas within humour translation research are those related to the audiovisual format (both subtitling and dubbing) and to the linguistic difficulties, like puns. The cultural difficulties have also been addressed, but in a much lesser degree. There are, however, a considerable number of dissertations, and papers in conferences about the problems (both linguistic and cultural) existing in humour translation. Regarding studies on intercultural translation of humour in literature with an emphasis on cultural difficulties, Baranauskienė & Pociūtė (2012) present an article on the difficulties of intercultural translation of English humour into Lithuanian, using as a corpus Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Bummel*, and comparing the source text with the target text. Another example is Omri Asscher's (2010) analysis of British humour translation into Hebrew, based on the strategies of amplification and overstatement. Studies such as these generally include case studies, some focusing on the critical analyses of existing translations, others proposing models for such analysis or for finding solutions to the translation problems. However, most researchers overlook the particularities of the two cultures involved, their socio-historic context and their way to perceive humour.

After decades of research, studies on the topic are far from enough, the creation of a theoretical framework for this area is still in its early stages, and the bibliography available to conduct them is scarce, especially in Cuba. Regarding the Cuban academic context, the only studies on humour translation are two undergraduate dissertations at the School of Foreign Languages of the University of Havana. The first was aimed at the adaptation of the Cuban animated film *Vampiros en la Habana* (Carballo & Martínez: 2004) into French as the Target Language; and the second focused on the translation of humour in audiovisual aids (Monzote & Jordán: 2009) and presented a practical methodology for the analysis and translation (from English to Spanish) of jokes with linguistic difficulties in the sit-com *Friends*.

After this overview of the research on the intercultural translation of humour, it has become clear that, to this moment, there are no studies on the literary translation of English humour to a Cuban context. That fact is one of the main problems this study will have to face and address, since this dissertation will constitute the first step to discover the main traits and needs of this very

specific area. There are also other problems directly related to this research: the current situation of literary translation and the translation of science fiction comedy in Cuba.

Literary translation in Cuba has a very long tradition, playing an important role in the formation of the nation's cultural identity in colonial times, through the literary *tertulias* organized by Domingo del Monte. Traditionally, it has been carried out not only by professional translators, but also by prestigious writers (like Virgilio Piñera and Cintio Vitier), poets (like José María Heredia and Julián del Casal) and other renowned scholars and personalities of Cuban history (like José de la Luz y Caballero and José Martí) (Suárez León 2007).

However, currently literary translation in Cuba is not given the attention and the credit it deserves. It has almost no presence in the undergraduate curriculum of the English B.A. at the School of Foreign Languages of the University of Havana; and it is only included sporadically as postgraduate courses. Furthermore, it is officially represented only by the Translation Department within the Instituto Cubano del Libro,¹ the Instituto Cubano de Periodismo,² and a section within the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba³ (UNEAC).

Contemporary English humorous works of fiction are rarely translated in Cuba, mainly because humour and non-main stream genres like science fiction are not seen as a priority by Cuban publishers or by literary translators. Access to those works is only possible through the policy of buying books already translated by other Spanish-speaking countries (mainly Spain and Mexico). This tendency prevents a full appreciation of the humorous content by the Cuban readers, who not only have to decipher the cultural codes upon which English humour is based, but also can be exposed to a second set of codes (like vocabulary and referents) belonging to the culture of the foreign translators.

Those circumstances point to the main motivations for this research: the many difficulties cultural humour present for translators, and the lack of translations of contemporary English

¹ 'Cuban Book Institute'. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are provided by the author.

² 'Cuban Journalism Institute'

³ 'National Association of Cuban Writers and Artist', a professional cultural and social organization.

humorous works of fiction intended for a Cuban audience. Another motivating factor is the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, the intercultural translation of humour (and specifically the English) for a Cuban context has not been addressed in any study.

The hypothesis to be confirmed by this research is that English humour presents culture-bound elements that will not be understood by a Cuban audience and that will require for its successful translation a combination of translation strategies and a vast knowledge of the source and target cultures and their ways to perceive humour.

The translation of humour based on cultural referents is often challenging due to the specific culture and context of the two countries involved, and to their particular ways of appreciating and using humour. That is why the aim of this study is to identify the main obstacles in the intercultural translation of English humour and the best strategies for its translation into Spanish for a Cuban audience.

This study will adopt a communicative and functionalist approach to the translation of humour, in which the analysis and translation strategies will be based on achieving in the target text a similar humorous effect as that produced by the source text. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research includes an analysis of the functionalist approaches based on Nida's dynamic (functional) equivalence (1964), Vermeer's *skopos* theory (1996), Nord's functional translation (1991) (1997), and Venuti's foreignization strategy (1995). Also, the typology of problems found in cultural translation and some translation strategies proposed by Baker (2011) and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972).

There are several research questions derived from the goal of this study, namely: What is humour and how does it work? What are the characteristics of the English and Cuban variants of humour? What are other important aspects to consider when translating humour in a literary work like *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (*THHGG*)? What are the areas within *THHGG* that pose cultural problems for translation to a Cuban context? Which translation strategies are the most efficient to achieve an accurate and effective translation of the English humour in *THHGG*?

To answer said questions, various research methods will be used, including the *bibliographical* and *historical methods*, as well as the *critical analysis of information sources*. The nature of this study requires great familiarity with the specific socio-historic context of the two countries involved; therefore, it is necessary to consult bibliography that covers the period of English history during which the corpus was written, as well as the evolution of humour in both cultures. The *comparative method* will also be used, in order to analyse the differences between the possible solutions proposed in this study and the ones given in the only official Spanish translation of the corpus selected. Finally, *research synthesis* will be used to present the theory, the analysis of the case study and the results, thus completing this dissertation.

The means through which the goal of the present research will be achieved will include a componential analysis (with successive steps) in which I will use two complementary procedures suggested by Zabalbeascoa (2005): ‘mapping’, i.e. locate and analyse instances of humour in the corpus according to the type of cultural difficulties they present; and ‘prioritising’, i.e. I will determine what is important for each case, and how important each item and aspect is, in order to have a clear set of criteria for making translation choices.

The corpus selected to conduct the analysis was the science fiction comedy *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The selection criteria were contemporaneity, cultural representativeness of English humour and the scarcity of translations into Spanish. *THHGG* is a cult classic of contemporary English humour and it has not been approached from a translation angle. There is only one official translation into Spanish, made by translators from Spain. No reliable sources were found that described the readers’ response to the Spanish translation, especially in Latin America, but comments on blogs about literature and science fiction criticized bitterly the translation. The quality of said translation is debatable and does not provide satisfactory solutions to most cultural problems.

This dissertation will cover a wide range of aspects, including the nature of humour as a phenomenon and in the field of Translation Studies. It will also present the main characteristics of English and Cuban humour, especially regarding its differences and similarities. It must be noted that this study does not intend to define what English or Cuban humour are, just to learn the

different ways in which they work, hoping that knowledge can make a difference during the translation process and help to recreate as best as possible the jokes and humorous situations from one culture into the other. In addition, this research will address some of the most important aspects that affect the translation process, such as the role of the translator; the medium, mode and means of communication; the nature of the text; the target audience, the needs and demands of the client(s) or translation initiator(s). These aspects will be discussed in general but with special emphasis on the specific aim and case study of this research. Finally, some of the cultural problems found in *THHGG* and various translation strategies to solve them will be discussed in the analysis section.

The validity of this research is confirmed by several factors. To begin with, it will be a pioneer in the area, since there are no other studies that address the cultural difficulties of translating English humour for a Cuban context. Additionally, this research could contribute to the creation of new approaches and methodologies for the intercultural translation of humour, since it proves that cultural awareness and knowledge of humour's role in the two cultures involved are determining factors in the translation process. Another positive outcome from this research is that it would encourage Cuban translators to take an interest in humorous texts and point out their relevance to the publishers. This would result in a richer and more varied literary culture and would make the works more accessible and enjoyable to Cuban readers.

The present dissertation will be structured as follows: an *Introduction*, defining the object of study, presenting the motivations for research and the main methodological categories; *Chapter I*, providing the theoretical background and an analysis of English and Cuban humour; and *Chapter II*, analyzing the historic and socio-cultural context in which the corpus was written, as well as the analysis of the case study; *the Conclusions*, offering a summary of the results and impressions derived from the study; the *Bibliography* used during its production; and some relevant *Appendixes*, such as the excerpts and tools used for the analysis, and a historic overview of Cuban humour, to obtain a clearer vision of its evolution and the role it plays in contemporary Cuban society.

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1- Humour Definition and Theories

‘Humour moves in mysterious but traceable ways.’

J. Vandaele

Humour is a phenomenon that humans have experienced for centuries, and whose nature continues to elude us. There is a shared opinion that the humorous loses its appeal the moment it is explained. However, in the context of Translation Studies and in the daily practice of translators, to successfully conduct an analysis of the translation of humour and the cultural problems it can present, it is crucial to first understand its nature and the principles under which it operates. ‘A knowledge of how humor works is an important asset for any translator and so it is also necessary for translation scholars’ (Zabalbeascoa, 2005, p.25). Vandaele (2002) insists on the need for taking into account the mechanics of humour and how they affect its translation: ‘Many writings on humour translation lack a definition or description of humour, especially in relation to its ‘translation’’ (p.150). Thus, an examination of the cognitive and linguistic processes involved in the production of humour will be carried out first, to provide the knowledge and tools necessary to adopt a definition of humor suitable for the field of Translation Studies and the aim of this research.

The original meaning of the term *humour* was ‘bodily fluid’, due to the Greek and Roman theory that the human body is composed of four basic liquids or ‘humors’ that need to be in balance for a person to be healthy. In Medieval times, this theory was used to explain not only health problems, but also people’s behaviour and mood: ‘attempting to make people feel better came to be known as humouring them’ (McDonald, 2012, p.9). This tendency was finally consolidated in the sixteenth century when ‘good humour’ became a synonym for cheerfulness. ‘Later one of its connotations was eccentricity, or behaviour incompatible with social norms, and it is this sense of the word that underpins its associations with the comic; by the eighteenth century it denoted funniness and the state of being amused’ (ibid.).

As for how and why humour is produced, the historical tendency to identify the different elements involved in humor with the phenomenon itself and the inconsistent terminology used to refer to it are no doubt some of the main reasons why humor has proved so difficult to explain. For centuries, humor was studied with a superficial approach, only referring to laughter and the comical effect. However, humor and laughter are by no means coterminous and they might even not happen together. According to Vandaele (2010), laughter is a primitive physical reaction of which not only humans but also some primates are capable. Humour, on the other hand, requires cognitive skills: it involves complex mental processes, so laughter is merely its occasional physical manifestation.

In the linguistic sense, due to the fact that humour in general is a phenomenon, it is clear that it cannot be ‘articulated in the sense of a conventionally coded linguistic unit per se, a semantic meaning attached to lexicalized linguistic forms (words, phrases, etc.)’ (Vandaele, 2002, p.151).

Theories of Humor

The various conceptions about humour were grouped by D.H. Monroe, in his *Argument of Laughter*, into three major theories: **(The) Superiority Theory, The Incongruity Theory, and The Relief Theory** (Bardon, 2005). These categories encompass the three major historical tendencies in Humour Studies, and appear repeatedly in contemporary academic literature, although there are some variations in the terminology. Raskin (1985) characterises them from a psychological perspective as cognitive-perceptual (**incongruity**), social-behavioral (**superiority**), and psychoanalytical (**relief**). Vandaele (2010) groups them into **social theories** and **incongruity theories**. The terminology proposed by D.H. Monroe was adopted for this research, since it is the most widely accepted and the less ambiguous one. ‘Throughout the centuries, the two most general concepts used in humour research, as ways to characterize humour, have been incongruity and superiority’ (Vandaele, 2002, p.156); thus, they will be the ones used for this study.

The Superiority Theory

This theory is the sum of the social theories of humour (named thus because they see human relationships are central for the occurrence of humour). The principle it establishes is that humour is achieved through the ridicule of a person or object, and the feeling of superiority experienced by those who are not the object of the joke. Only when a person is not feeling morally attacked and can feel superior to those who are being mocked, will he or she find a situation amusing.

This theory is based on the recurrent presence in humour of an element (known as the target or butt) around which the humorous situation is built, often involving criticism and ridicule. As Vandaele (2010) explains, humour seems to encourage a curious form of socialization between people: the ability to create and understand jokes can create exclusion, inclusion or hierarchies.

In ordinary language, superiority (as in ‘a feeling of superiority’) clearly relates to the effect of humour [...] I suggest broadening the meaning of ‘superiority’ to include in it any (anti)social effect, intention, or cause that humour may have, either interpersonal and socially visible, or ‘private’ but with reference to the social world. (Vandaele, 2002, pp.156-157)

The Incongruity Theory

This theory states that humour is the result of understanding an unexpected, often sudden, shift in perspective, known as incongruity. Based on this theory, Vandaele (2010) defines humour as the process carried out ‘by our symbolic mind (and the enabling prefrontal cortex)’ (p.148), in response to uncertainty and surprises. Similarly, Victor Raskin (1985) explains this theory stating that humour is the result of understanding the incongruity between the expected, and the achieved result. This theory ‘tend[s] to focus on [humour’s] ‘cognitive’ features’ and state that incongruity ‘happens when cognitive rules are not being followed’ (Vandaele, 2010, p.148). It is important to highlight that, despite its name, the definition of humour this theory suggests is not incongruity *per se*, but its realization and resolution (i.e. noticing what rules have been altered and rearranging the

facts to understand the new connections). That is why this is also known as the incongruity-resolution theory.

Important components of this theory are the elements of expectation and surprise. Expectations are built upon engrained cognitive rules; when those rules are not followed, or are altered, the unexpected causes surprise, an important component of humour (Deacon, 1997), which then results in amusement. Also, what makes people appreciate jokes that apparently do not make sense is precisely the latter understanding of those ‘new rules’ that the joke is suggesting. Here lies another key element of this theory: the existence of a ‘special, alternative logic to the incongruity of humour’ (Vandaele, 2010, p.148) which is the solution we come up with when a given situation does not follow the established patterns.

Humour Studies’ scholars have not reached a consensus regarding which of these theories is more accurate and comprehensive. The most current position is to admit that each theory generally covers its own area of focus, and that in fact many instances of humour can be explained by more than one theory. Vandaele defends the idea that humour can be defined in a more accurate and comprehensive way by a combination of the theories of superiority (with his personal additions) and incongruity:

If we define superiority as any possible social effect of a social meaning of humour (from overtly aggressive effects to fairly harmless and private feelings of arousal) [...] then superiority can be said to relate to incongruity in the following ways (based on Vandaele 2002a): in terms of superiority, (1) incongruity can be seen as abnormality (inferiority). [...] (2) ironic incongruity is controlled abnormality as a sign of superiority. [...] (3) incongruity can in most cases be resolved and overcome [...], thus creating superiority. The ability to understand humour is commonly accepted as an important index of intelligence. Each time we laugh at humour, we demonstrate our wit to our peers and diminish the social pressure they may exercise on us. (Vandaele, 2002, p.157)

Two fundamental theories of humour are the **Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH)** and the **General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)**. The SSTH, introduced by Victor

Raskin in 1985, is a variation of the **Incongruity theory** and the first theory with an exclusively linguistic approach. Thus, it focuses only on verbal humor (i.e. written and spoken words used in narrative or riddle jokes concluding with a punch line). To reproduce the humour of a verbal joke, Raskin (1985) presents two conditions that must be met: (1) The text should be compatible, completely or partially, with two different semantic scripts⁴ and (2) The two scripts with which the text is compatible must be opposite and must overlap entirely or partially on this text. To fulfill these conditions, Raskin points out the existence of ‘standard, universally funny scripts’ which tend to produce a more basic, ‘primitive’ kind of humour when they overlap with other scripts. He introduces different categories of script opposition, which include: actual (non-actual), normal (abnormal), possible (impossible), good (bad), life (death), etc. (Raskin, 1985). A complete list of possible script oppositions for jokes is finite and culturally dependent. For example, Cuban humour does not use all the same scripts to be found in English humour.

The **GTVH**, proposed by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (1991), meant an evolution in the studies of humour, since it successfully integrates Raskin’s ideas of Script Opposition into the **GTVH** as one of six levels of independent **Knowledge Resources (KRs)**⁵, namely knowledge concerning them. The **GTVH** includes a metric of similarity between texts which is very useful to identify the criterion for discovering ‘similarity of meaning/force in the domain of texts whose perlocutionary goal is the perception of humour’ (Attardo & Raskin, 1991, p.175). This theory allows us to relate perceived differences between jokes to the six hierarchically ordered **KRs**. Thus, according to the GTVH, each joke can be viewed as a 6-tuple, specifying the instantiation of each **KR**.

EXAMPLE OF AN ANALYSIS:

How many Poles does it take to empty the ashtray of a car? Ten, to turn the car upside down.

⁴ Semantic information surrounding the word and evoked by it; cognitive structures internalized by the native speaker (Raskin, 1985). Thus, native speakers will have similar but not identical scripts for words they have in common.

⁵ **Language, Narrative strategies, Target(s), Situation, Logical Mechanism(s), and Script Opposition(s).**

Script Opposition (SMART/DUMB, NORMAL/ABNORMAL), Logical Mechanism (figure-ground reversal), Narrative Strategy (question and answer), Target (Poles), Situation ('emptying an ashtray'). (Attardo, 2002, p.187)

One of the advantages of the **GTVH** over Raskin's script-based semantic theory (**SSTH**) is that through the inclusion of the Narrative Strategy (**NS**) any and all humorous texts can be categorized. Whereas Raskin's **SSTH** only deals with jokes, the **GTVH** considers all humorous text from spontaneous one-liners to funny stories and literature. This theory can also, by identifying how many of the **KRs** are identical for any two humorous pieces, begin to define the degree of similarity between the two.

After analyzing the different concepts and theories of humour, it has become clear that, for the purposes of intercultural translation of humour, the ones offered by **The Incongruity Theory** and the **General Theory of Verbal Humour** are the most suitable. They offer comprehensive explanations and can account for and be applied to most of the forms in which cultural humour manifests itself. Moreover, their flexibility allows a considerable degree of freedom to the translator.

The contribution of [the **GTVH**] to the theory of humour translation is taken to consist of the metric of similarity across jokes [...]. Based on that metric, the translator can estimate how different the translated joke is from the original, and adjust his/her/its translation strategy accordingly. (Attardo, 2002, p.192)

In conclusion, humour can be defined as a phenomenon that involves and is the result of complex mental processes that take place to make sense of the incongruities and involves a range of discursive strategies that are the tools to create it.

Humour occurs when a rule has not been followed, when an expectation is set-up and not confirmed, when the incongruity is resolved in an alternative way. Humour thereby produces superiority feelings which may be mitigated if participants agree that the humour is essentially a form of social play rather than outright aggression. And the humour event

is very visible due to physiological correlates: laughter, smiling, arousal. (Vandaele, 2010, p.149)

1.2- Humour Translation Theories and Challenges in Fiction

Most translation scholars define translation both as a process and as its result. This process generally occurs between two different written languages when a translator changes an original or Source Text (ST) in the original verbal language or Source Language (SL) into a written Target Text (TT) in a different verbal language known as Target Language (TL) (Munday, 2001, pp.4-5). Translation is extremely complex and can even be chaotic because of the many variables involved, ranging from linguistic differences to the great variety in context and cultures.

The areas within Translation Studies that frequently elicit researchers and professionals' interest are those that present obstacles for the translation, traditionally divided into linguistic and cultural. The issue of translatability (the extent to which meaning can be adequately expressed across languages) has always been more directly associated to cultural than to linguistic aspects. Cultural differences have been a constant source of puzzlement for translation scholars and of distress for professional translators. One of the most famously 'untranslatable' elements in this area is humour, precisely because it not only relies on, but is essentially formed by, culture.

The translator of humour has to cope with the fact that the 'rules', 'expectations', 'solutions', and agreements on 'social play' are often group- or culture-specific. Parody, for instance, is only accessible to those who are at least vaguely acquainted with the parodied discourse. (Vandaele, 2010, p.149)

Hurtado Albir (2004) notes that literary texts are also closely bound to the literary and cultural traditions of the Source Culture (SC) and therefore contain multiple cultural references (p.63). Thus, the combination of intercultural translation of humour in literature poses one of the greatest challenges for scholars and translators alike.

This type of translation is thought by many to be impossible since, traditionally, the quality and success of a translation has been measured by its ‘fidelity’ to the form and content of the ST and by its ‘naturalness’, i.e. the Target Audience (TA) does not perceive it as a translation at all, but as if it had been written in the TL. However, the first criterion basically describes a literal translation, which would utterly fail to accurately translate literature and humour; they can only be appreciated by other cultures if their function and effect are recreated, regardless of the linguistic forms used. As for the second criterion:

If translations are supposed to bring in information that is new to a language or culture, then they cannot be expected to be ‘natural’. Since new things will eventually require new terms and expressions, the translations are going to be marked in ways that their start texts are not. (Pym, 2014, p.19)

The translator is a mediator of cultures, rather than just languages, therefore alterations in the TT (such as explanations and clarifications) are needed in order to bridge the cultural gap as much as possible. Thus, the present study will adopt a communicative approach to translation, since it will focus on finding the most suitable strategies to recreate in the TT the intended effect of the humorous instances in the ST, rather than their literal meaning.

Consequently, the theoretical framework deemed more suitable for the nature of this research will include the functionalist approaches based on Nida’s dynamic (functional) equivalence (1964), Vermeer’s *skopos* theory (1996), Nord’s functional translation (1991) (1997), and Venuti’s foreignization (1995). It will also draw from some of Zabalbeascoa’s (2005) ‘ABC of translation variables’ in order to address the main theoretical and practical aspects that would affect the intercultural translation of English humour for a Cuban context, with emphasis on the case study chosen.

Nida’s dynamic (functional) equivalence

Usually, the reason for considering a linguistic or cultural element as untranslatable is that no evident equivalent word or phrase can be found for it in the TT. The equivalence paradigm states that all languages have the same expressive capacity, and therefore it is possible to find terms

and structures in the SL with the ‘same value’ (function) in the TL. This research will adopt the definition of equivalence advocated by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972) and Vázquez-Ayora (1977), which Pym (2014) summarizes by stating that ‘two terms are equivalent because they are considered to activate approximately the same cultural function’ (p.8). The American linguist and Bible scholar Eugene Nida (1964) developed this theory by presenting the concepts of ‘formal’ and ‘dynamic’ equivalence. **Formal equivalence** prioritizes the message’s form and content, so that the TT preserves as much as possible the ST’s grammatical elements and its main ideas (Nida, 1964, p.159); for example, a formal equivalent of the Spanish ‘martes 13’ would be ‘Tuesday the thirteenth’ (Pym, 2014). **Dynamic equivalence** – which Nida later renamed ‘functional’ equivalence (Venuti, 2000) – is based on achieving an equivalent effect, so that the TT and TA can have the same relationship existing between ST and Source Audience (SA) (Nida, 1964, p.159); thus, an instance of functional equivalence for ‘martes 13’ would be ‘Friday the thirteenth’, which has the same cultural meaning in the Anglophone world (Pym, 2014).

Functionalist Approaches

Functionalist approaches to translation focus on the social functions and interactions of translation. They are derived from the *skopos* theory created by Vermeer during the late seventies and early eighties (Nord, 1997) and developed by him and Reiss in 1984. This theory advocates the importance of identifying the reason/need to translate a text and the function the TT will have in the new context. Since the latter is a crucial factor to identify the new function of the translation, Vermeer also pointed out that the *skopos* model can produce different versions of a same ST if translated in different contexts (Venuti, 2000). According to Nord, translation from a functionalist perspective is:

[...] the production of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text (translation *skopos*). Translation allows a communicative act to take place which because of existing linguistic and cultural barriers would not have been possible without it. (1991, p.28)

An interesting aspect is the degree to which the same function could be recreated in the TT. It is very unlikely that a translation can have the exact same effect and elicit the same response in two different cultural spheres or at different time. However, exactness can rarely be expected in translation since not only languages but also cultures are asymmetrical. In the case of humour translation, a similar effect can be relatively possible: if a text is meant to be funny, it might still be so in a TL but maybe not to the same degree. As for the same response, the way to express amusement in the SC and TC can be very different (a laughter outburst can be natural in one, while the other prefers a brief laughter or even just a grin); yet, that does not necessarily mean it is a bad translation. If the intended effect (to amuse, to criticize, to irritate, to shock, etc.) can be reproduced in the TT, the response it may have can be as varied as the readers of said text, and therefore should not be considered as a criterion for assessing the quality or success of a translation.

To discover the function of the TT it is necessary to start by determining the function of the ST and later proceed to analyse whether the new context of the TT could maintain the same function or if it would have to be given a new one. However, this alone will not suffice, as the translator has to be aware also of the practical elements of every new situation in which that text will operate, which will condition the purpose of the intercultural communication (Nord, 1991).

In literature, it is often difficult to identify the true intentions of the writer and the effect he/she wanted to create with their work. Several interpretations, depending on the reader and the context, can of course be made, but they might be nothing more than speculations, which can be dangerous for translators working in an intercultural context. In modern times, when commissioned with literary translations professionals usually have contact with the author. In the specific case of the corpus selected for this study that is no longer possible, due to the unfortunate passing of its creator, Douglas Adams, in 2001. There is, however, abundant material (both literary and audio-visual⁶) that can be consulted to learn about the creative process involved in the making of *THHGG*, in all of its formats. For example, when author Neil Gaiman interviewed Adams, in order to write a ‘companion’ to *THHGG*, he asked him if there was any particular message he

⁶ The BBC documentary *The Making of The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, about the TV series, released in 1993. Also, Radio 4 broadcasted and released on cassette a one-hour documentary about the radio series, entitled *Douglas Adams’ Guide to The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, in 1998 (Gaiman, 2009, pp.188-190).

wanted to convey with the first radio series of Hitchhiker's (from which the material for the novels emerged). Adams replied:

I just wanted to do stuff I thought was funny. But on the other hand, whatever I find funny is going to be conditioned by what I think about, what my concerns or preoccupations are. You may not set out to make a point, but points probably come across because they tend to be the things that preoccupy you, and therefore find a way into your writing. (Gaiman, 2009, pp.32-33)

From this statement it can be concluded that the ultimate purpose of *THHGG* is to present the audiences with humorous situations and its intended effect is therefore to amuse and elicit all the possible responses humour can have (laughter, grin, etc.).

This general effect can of course be recreated in the TT; the difficulty will lie in those instances of humour that have specific functions besides general comedy. Vandaele (2002) acknowledges this problem when he claims that humour presents a 'complex semiotic situation' in which 'its conceptual structure is 'double' (what causes humour and the humorous effect), and its meaning is potentially 'multiple' (further effects of the humorous effect)' (Vandaele, 2002, p.155). That is why he recommends that 'humour should also be subdivided into more specific types, each with its own tangible ('perlocutionary') effects, its own types of laughter (or even other reactions)' (ibid.). Vandaele (2002) provides satire as an example, since this type of humour is also a form of criticism.

Venuti's foreignization

The translation strategies of **domestication** and **foreignization** (Venuti, 1995) refer to the positions the translator can adopt on how the cultural elements present in the ST will be translated in the TT. According to Venuti, **domestication** is 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring[ing] the author back home' (1995, p.20); whereas **foreignization** is 'an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad' (ibid.). Venuti uses the term

‘ethnodeviant’ to indicate that this strategy forces readers to distance themselves from their culture so that they acknowledge the ST cultural peculiarities.

These concepts are more than just translation strategies: they represent an approach to translation itself. To choose which one to follow will depend on the type of text, its function and on the specific contexts of the ST and TT. In the case of humour, sometimes it is best to domesticate, especially in television shows or films dubbed for children. In literary translation, however, when the setting of the story is foreign to the TA it cannot be changed, therefore a **foreignization** strategy would be advisable. There is also the possibility of combining these two strategies, if the characteristics of the text allow it and it does not affect the content of the ST or the effect intended. In the case of the translation of *THHGG*, this study will adopt the foreignization approach, due to the Cuban tradition in literary translation of showing the foreign culture to the readers in order to expand their cultural background. However, the option of combining both strategies will also be explored.

Translation Variables

This research will draw from some of Zabalbeascoa’s (2005) ‘ABC of translation variables’ to analyse the main elements that affect the translation process. Since this study is focused on the cultural aspect in humour translation, it will be analysed in general terms first, and the variables of **the culture(s) one is translating from** and **the culture(s) one is translating into** will be addressed more thoroughly in section 1.3 of this chapter.

- **Culture**

According to the digital encyclopedia Britannica, culture is the ‘behaviour peculiar to Homo sapiens, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behaviour. Thus, culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements’.

From a translation perspective, Pym defines the limits of a culture as:

[...] the points where transferred texts have had to be (intralingually or interlingually) translated. That is, if a text can adequately be transferred [moved in space and/or time] without translation, there is cultural continuity. And if a text has been translated, it represents distance between at least two cultures. (Pym, 1992, pp. 25-6)

Pym's definition is very useful, especially because it highlights the fact that texts move in time and space. Robinson (2003) expands this idea by stating:

Cultural difference is largely a function of the distance they move, the distance from the place or time in which they are written to the place or time in which they are read; and it can be marked by the act or fact of translation. (Robinson, 2003, p.189)

Thus, a text written in Old English would need to be translated for the modern reader. In the case of humour, the relevance of time and space distances is even greater, since they do not have to be very considerable to have an impact on the readers; for example, different generations in the same country are likely to disagree on what they consider to be funny.

Therefore, it can be concluded that culture is strongly conditioned by society and that it can belong to collectives and individuals. Each culture has its own set of values, customs, and accepted behaviour, so that what is perceived as incongruous and therefore humorous will vary in the different cultures.

[...] the perception or expression of humour is determined by the collective logic of a given community and the resultant private logic of each member of that community. Most of these members realize the limits within which an incongruous distortion is humorous. Trespassing beyond these limits may puzzle or upset the reader or the listener. (Niedzielski, 1991, p.140)

Cuba has a long literary tradition and most readers are generally quite knowledgeable; however, cultural background can vary greatly and it would be a mistake to expect all Cuban

booklovers to be familiar with the English culture. Humour tends to be more successful when it is universal, not culture-specific; to illustrate this, Zabalbeascoa (1996) comments on Delia Chiaro's study of the reception that some British comedy shows had in Italy, in which she discovered that the ones presenting culture-bound humour were the least popular. In the case of *THHGG*, there are several allusions to declining empires, like: 'The term Imperial is kept though it is now an anachronism. The hereditary Emperor is nearly dead and has been for many centuries' (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.32), which is a satirical reference to the former British Empire and the current state of the monarchy in the U.K. That joke is very likely to go unnoticed by the average Cuban reader, who is not expected to know about British history or politics.

Among the most important theories and trends to bear in mind when translating cultures are the polysystem theory and the cultural turn. The first approaches culture translation by focusing mainly on the political and social systems of those cultures, and on how said systems affect the practice of translation. One of the main principles advocated by this theory is that the translation process and result are controlled by the TC's beliefs, politics and literary and linguistic norms (Zabalbeascoa, 1996). The second theory, greatly influenced by feminist and postcolonial approaches to translation, contradicts this belief, hence its name of 'cultural turn'; it states that, from a historical and postcolonial perspective, it is clear that the SC holds control over translations. The cultural turn has been the ruling tendency in Translation studies for the last two decades (ibid.).

Intercultural awareness and immersion in cultural otherness are therefore essential to translate humour, as the only way to learn about the existing differences between cultures and the best way to overcome them to successfully recreate and transmit the cultural connotations and nuances that often go beyond words.

- **The role of the translator(s)**

The translator is a vital component in the translation process, since his/her personal and professional characteristics will have a direct impact on the resulting text. In general, and in the case of intercultural humour translation, aspects like the translators' moral, ethical and cultural values, background knowledge of the two audiences and contexts, and professional profiles are

relevant (Zabalbeascoa, 2005). For instance, if a humorous instance contains an element considered taboo by the translator, he/she might choose to change it or eliminate it altogether (of course, the translator's ethics will also play an important role in this decision). Also, if the translator specializes in scientific, religious or legal texts, for example, his/her translation of a humorous text will have a different approach than that of a translator used to work with cultural and literary texts.

Due to the culture-specific nature of humour, it is paramount that translators have a vast cultural knowledge, in general and specifically of the two cultures involved. Also, two other essential qualities for translating this type of texts are a good sense of humour and great creativity. 'Humor is an area that translators need a certain amount of guidance and practice' (Zabalbeascoa, 2005, p.24). The field of humour is intricate, with a great variety of humour types and techniques, each having its internal rules and implications, with which translators should be at least superficially familiar to successfully interpret and recreate them in the TT. Also, an innate predisposition to appreciate humour is very valuable but not always part of a translator's personality; even more rare is the ability to recreate humour in a creative way. 'A sensitive decoder of humour is not necessarily an inspired or talented reproducer of it' (Vandaele, 2002, p.169).

- **The medium, mode and means of communication**

In general, the various formats or media in which a text is produced affect the way audiences perceive it (Vandaele, 2002). In the specific case of literary humour, the latter is somewhat restrained, since it cannot use those signs that in an audiovisual context could indicate its presence (body language or voice inflections); this is even more significant in the case of specific types of humour, like irony or sarcasm, that without the voice inflections are more difficult to identify. To compensate for this, literary devices can be used, as in the case of *THHGG* where its author used capitalization (e.g. 'DON'T PANIC!' to indicate yelling), or words in italics (e.g. 'Zaphod Beeblebrox? *President?* Not *the* Zaphod Beeblebrox? Not *the* President?' [Adams, 1979/2016b, p.31]) to indicate emphasis and often, as in the example, irony.

- **The nature of the text, including parameters such as textuality, genre, style and discourse**

According to Hurtado Albir (2004, p.63), literary texts can have a great diversity of text types (narrative, descriptive, conceptual, etc.), thematic fields (scientific, artistic, linguistic, etc.), narrative techniques, and depict interpersonal relationships and through them many tones.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, the literary text chosen as case study for this research, is a novel belonging to the science fiction comedy (sub)genre. It was intended as general entertainment for a varied audience, so the reader is not required to be familiar with physics laws or science fiction conventions (unlike the works of Asimov, for example). It does, however, contain the basic elements associated to this genre, like alien races, spaceships, and references to astronomy, physics' concepts and technological devices – some real (like the 'Brownian Motion'), others possible (like the electronic nature of the Guide itself, later made reality with the Kindles and Tablets) and many others invented by the author (like the Infinite Improbability Drive, the Sub-Etha Sens-O-Matic and the Babel Fish, a creature that functions as a telepathic universal translator).

The novel has a third person, omniscient narrator, who besides telling the main events in the story also reports the contents of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (the fictional book that is an essential part of the plot, and which in the original radio show was a character in its own right, played by Peter Jones). The story is told through a combination of narration with dialogue; the literary style of the author consists in mixing high register (used by the narrator) with colloquial language and slang (used by the characters, especially the aliens Ford Prefect and Zaphod Beeblebrox [described as 'ex-hippy'], Eddie the shipboard computer, and the Guide itself, to depict the strong influence of the American culture of the sixties and seventies).

Vandaele refers to the implications of humour's interaction with specific generic codes explaining that 'Different genres generate different schemes of normality to be transgressed, where genre can be understood in a very broad sense of a text type with a minimal tradition, both fictional and non-fictional' (2002, pp.168-169). This means that the reader's expectations and reactions will

be conditioned by his/her awareness and acceptance of the conventions pertaining to the text's genre; therefore, the incongruity necessary to produce humour will result from the alteration of said established rules. For example, in a fantasy novel set in medieval times the reader will accept the existence of magic, but if a character suddenly brings out a smartphone at the request of sending an urgent message, this will completely break the reader's expectations of the rules of the world in the story (Mark Twain's classic *A Connecticut Yankee in King's Arthur's Court* follows this principle).

In the specific case of the relationship between humour and science fiction in *THHGG*, the author tends to parody the science fiction elements, making them sound silly and often absurd through funny names or associations, like 'a strong Brownian Motion producer' being 'a nice hot cup of tea' (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.74) and making up anything from theoretical physics concepts and machines ('Bambleweeny 57 Sub-Meson Brain') to new adjectives ('hoopy' 'froods').

- **The intended recipient(s)**

One of the most challenging aspects of translating [...] is undoubtedly the sensitivity of the target public to the presence of ironic lines, and entire passages, based on national stereotyping or, more precisely, the extent to which readers of the target text are likely to find these scenes funny. (Fusari, 2009)

Authors don't usually choose their TA deliberately (in terms of historical context or cultural background); however, they do expect that most of their readers will be acquainted with the referents employed. The intended audience will typically change from the SL to the TL; thus, the characteristics of both the SA in the SL and of the TA in the TL must be taken into account when translating. In the case of the present study, the original SA of the *THHGG* was the English people of the seventies and eighties in general; however, due to its genre, the issues dealt with and its overall playful tone, the novel was usually more appealing to a younger audience, ranging from children to young adults, belonging to middle and upper classes (who would have access to a better education and therefore would be able to appreciate the cultural and technological references). The TA in the Cuban context would probably not include small children, since the tone and foreign

cultural references would be beyond their comprehension; instead the TA most likely would be some teenagers but for the most part young adults, especially university students (who tend to have more interest in science fiction and foreign cultures). As for the social classes, even though they are not well defined in Cuba and do not affect the access to education, the cultural background of Cuban families tends to be higher among what could be identified as middle class (parents are university graduated professionals who encourage their children to follow their example).

The fact that the generation most likely to be attracted by the novel has remained the same could present a problem, both in the SC and the TC, but especially in the latter, since the novel was written over thirty years ago and without taking into account a Cuban audience. Therefore, translators' mediation will be even more frequent, since some of the references (especially historical) and nuances may not be understood by a young Cuban audience, hindered by both a spatial and historical distance.

- **The client(s) or translation initiator(s), their needs and demands**

Literary translation of foreign works in Cuba is a complicated and delicate matter; due to Cuba's special situation in foreign affairs, the policy regarding literary translation is somewhat obscure, arbitrary and highly circumstantial. Most works by foreign authors published in Cuba have been translated by Cuban translators; that has been possible due to the Ley Cubana de Derecho de Autor⁷, which authorizes the translation and or publishing of works without their copyrights. 'Effectively Cuba had abolished copyright laws inside Cuba (although this was not formalised until 1967) [AF], a decision arising from necessity' (Kumaraswami & Kapcia, 2012, p.84). According to this law, when the author is a foreigner and is interested in having his/her work published in Cuba, he/she must cede his/her copyright to the translator, the publisher or make it public domain. In the case of the classics, they are public dominion.

There are three possible ways in which the process of translating a foreign author's work can begin: In the first two ways, the translator is the central piece: generally, it is the translator who contacts (or is contacted by) the author or holder of the work's copyright and negotiates its

⁷ 'Cuban Copyright Law'

transference to him/her. Once in possession of the copyright and/or the author's permission, the translator approaches a publishing house with the proposal of the book he/she is interested in translating. The publishers present the proposal to an advisory board (composed by distinguished writers and intellectuals) who are responsible for the annual publishing plan (Kumaraswami & Kapcia, 2012). They decide whether the book qualifies to be published (if it holds a special interest for the country).

The third scenario is less frequent and is when an institution has a particular interest in a work and commissions its translation; for example, the Editorial Arte y Literatura publishing house commissioned in 2015 a translation of *1984*, by the British author George Orwell. A special case within this scenario is Casa de Las Américas: it holds a yearly literary contest, the Premio Literario Casa de Las Américas, that includes categories for Caribbean English and French-speaking authors among other languages. After selecting the winners, the Casa de Las Américas has their works translated by offering an award to translators. The Casa de Las Américas has an autonomous publishing house, which allows for the publication of said awarded works.

- **The purpose(s) of and justification(s) for the existence of the translated version**

In Cuba, there is a great demand (a need, even) for books, not only national but also international ones. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century and due to a greater access to the internet, Cuban readers have become aware of contemporary authors and works that have not been published in the country and the demand for their products has increased (Kumaraswami & Kapcia, 2012).

In the case of humour in science fiction, from 1977 to the late 1980s in Cuba the publishing house devoted to science fiction was the *Suspense* collection, belonging to Editorial Gente Nueva (Acevedo, 2016). It published many works and anthologies containing translated detective and science fiction short stories. However, to the best of my knowledge, during that time the only work translated that combines humour, fantasy and science fiction was Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. During the 1990s and early 2000s, resources were limited for

publishing, and translations of foreign works in general (and certainly those of humorous science fiction or fantasy) were not deemed a priority. Instead, to save paper, the policy was to buy a reduced number of copies (the closest to the genre in question have been some of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels, and Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*), already translated by other Spanish-speaking countries (mainly Spain and Mexico). Those copies were generally brought to the yearly Feria del Libro (Cubans' main source of access to international literature) by the various publishing houses invited, like *Ediciones B*, *Grijalbo* and *Minotauro*. However, this presents an inconvenience: since 1993 most books brought by foreign publishers are sold in CUC⁸, which turns those books into a commodity that many cannot afford (Kumaraswami & Kapcia, 2012). The copies not sold by the end of the Fair are sent to a few bookshops in Havana, like the Fernando Ortiz bookshop (located on L Street, between 27 and 25 Streets, in Vedado), to be sold also in CUC.

Although those foreign editions partially met the great demand for humorous science fiction and fantasy in Cuba, especially among young people, the fact that they were not translated by Cubans made them not entirely fit for the nation's readers. There are cases in which the only existing translations were made in Spain, a country more culturally and physically far from Cuba than Mexico, for example. That is the case of the novel chosen for this research, which has only been published by the Spanish Publishing House ANAGRAMA.

For all those reasons, there is a very real need for translations of humour and for publishing Cuban editions that will not only be more affordable but also will reach Cuban readers more directly. In the particular case of humour, this need is even greater, due to the cultural nature of humour that requires a deep knowledge of the TC, the Cuban one in this case.

⁸ (Cuba's strong currency, at an exchange rate of 1CUC for every twenty-five Pesos)

1.3- Specific cultural contexts

‘Humor[u]r, being ‘a social as well as a discursive phenomenon,’ is understood best within a distinct cultural context.’

Sara E. Cooper

As has been analysed, the translation possibilities of any given text depend on the degree of proximity of the two cultures involved. Therefore, in the specific case of intercultural translation of humour, attention to the traits of the SA and TA acquires even more relevance. Humour itself is yet another manifestation of a people’s culture, which in turn is the result of that peoples’ history. ‘Hay una relación de recíproca influencia entre el carácter y la experiencia de un pueblo. Si la idiosincrasia nacional modela a su manera la historia, también creo que la historia misma deja su impronta en el carácter’⁹ (Mañach, 1955). It is therefore paramount that translators have as much knowledge of the cultures being translated as possible, not just to decode the humour and referents used in the ST, but to determine how different or similar the two cultures are, the basis of those differences and how to minimize them in the translation, anticipating what would and would not work for the audience in the TL.

Humour is strongly influenced by culture, and there are humorous instances that have an even higher dependence on the culture and traditions of a specific country, region or group, and that will most certainly not seem funny to an outsider or anyone who does not share those same cultural referents or is at least familiar with them. ‘We share our humor with those who have shared our history and who understand our ways of interpreting the experience. There is a fund of common knowledge and recollection, upon which all jokes draw with instantaneous effect’ (Nash [1985] p.9; Chiaro [2008], p.585). Humour can also have many roles in social interactions, that vary depending on the country, and that evolve to be deemed as the accepted behavior and as part of their identity.

⁹ ‘There is a relationship of reciprocal influence between the character and the experience of a people. If national idiosyncrasy in its own way models history, I also believe that history itself leaves its mark on the character’.

This is particularly true for both England and Cuba, that is why it is vital to be aware of the particularities of English and Cuban humour, the relevance this phenomenon has for the two societies and the specific traits of those nations that affect and shape their respective senses of humour. In order to obtain such information, characteristics will be analysed according to three criteria: the way in which humour is manifested, the social function it has in the society, and the most recurrent themes through which it is manifested. The first criterion refers to the elements involved in the process of telling a joke or creating a humorous situation, which include method of delivery (body language of the speaker, modulation of the language), the reaction of the listener, techniques most commonly used to create humour, and the tone of the jokes. The second criterion involves the purpose (other than to amuse) with which humour is used by the English and the Cuban peoples; the information resulting from this point will be vital for the approach adopted in this study, providing the tools to accurately interpret the subtleties contained in the ST and choose appropriate translation strategies for each case. The third and final criterion focuses on the topics and situations that normally elicit amusement in England and in Cuba. This examination will shed light on the cultural elements that are shared and especially on those that are not and thus will most likely be problematic to translate, and on the reasons why they cannot be appreciated.

The following considerations and characteristics intend by no means to be absolute or to claim they describe every individual in England or in Cuba and their particular perceptions of humour. There are always exceptions and the danger of stereotypes, so abundantly used for humour itself. Also, as the prestigious Cuban scholar Jorge Mañach (1955) explained, national identity is not inalterable and can be modified by elements like transcendental political events, economic prosperity and variations in the norms of behavior. The traits presented here are generalizations, made by researchers, authors and professional comedians, based on the frequency of occurrence, since they are the most commonly observed in the population of both countries.

1.3.1- English Humour

‘To be British[English] is to be a comedian waiting to be discovered.’
Rosemarie Jarski

‘British humour’ is the general term used in popular culture to refer to certain types of comedy and comedic acts from the United Kingdom. This nomenclature is a result of the traditional association with the former British empire, created by England, which led its colonies and nearly the rest of the world to believe that the English were the sole inhabitants of Great Britain. That is the case in Italy, for example, where ‘the adjective 'britannico' is not very widely used: 'inglese' tends to be used as a general term, regardless of the fact that this excludes British citizens of non-English descent’ (Fusari, 2009). The same phenomenon exists in Cuba where, due to the lack of knowledge about English culture and especially due to the brief yet famous episode of the English occupation of Havana in 1762 (as part of the Seven Years War against France and Spain), the most common term for referring to UK’s people and anything related to them is ‘ingleses’ or ‘inglés’. However, each country within the kingdom has its own culture and customs, and the traits that characterise this type of humour are more accurately typical of the English. The Welsh, Scottish and Irish types of humour do not share all the peculiarities belonging to the English one, and have some of their own.

The present dissertation will only focus on the English sense of humour because the corpus chosen for the analysis is an English novel; in it, there is no intervention or mention of the Welsh, Scottish or Irish, and all the references made are related to England. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the term ‘British humour’ was regarded as a synonym for ‘English humour’ whenever it described features pertaining to the latter.

Humour is extremely important to the English and, in their own view, it is among the essential components of the English national identity. They are quite proud of their sense of humour, believing it to be unique, subtler and more developed than that of other countries. ‘Only in the English language is it an insult to accuse somebody of trying to be funny’ (Jarski, 2005).

Out of the many cultural variants of humour, the English one is unanimously famous for being difficult to understand. This is due to some peculiarities that set English humour apart, like

the social importance it has, the unique ways in which it is displayed, and its uses of the existing comic strategies and types of humour. Even for those who speak English as their first language but are not familiar with the English behaviour, the cultural differences alone can be problematic and can prevent the full understanding of a joke. Julian Tan, an international student who graduated from Oxford and obtained his PhD in Cambridge, admits he ‘didn’t understand the witty and sophisticated makeup of British humour’ (Tan, 2013), even when he is from a Commonwealth country.

Failing to appreciate and use English humour in the U.K. and particularly in England is a more serious matter than it would appear at first sight. In the U.K., humour is considered to be a necessary social skill. In an interview to contemporary and successful English author of comic novels Stephen Clarke, conducted by Ilaria Montagni on June 15, 2007, he explained that ‘We hate taking life seriously, we have to joke. A successful politician has to be able to make jokes, otherwise he or she won’t be respected in Parliament’ (Fusari, 2009).

Ways in which humour is manifested

Among the most puzzling aspects of English humour we can find that it is often difficult to recognize it as such, since it does not depict the signs the rest of the world associates with comedy. Instead, it has a series of traits almost exclusive to the English.

One of them is that it is not obviously funny and does not intend to make people laugh out loud. This might seem contradictory as humour is so often identified with (or even as) laughter, and the success of a joke is popularly believed to be directly proportional to the intensity of the laughter it elicits. However, due to the tendency most English people have of appearing reserved and in control of their emotions, and to the great value they give to mental agility, when they joke they aim at being amusing and witty, rather than at causing outbursts of laughter. That is why, according to anthropologist Kate Fox (2004), ‘At best a well-timed quip only raises a slight smirk’, while the listeners ponder on the cleverness of the joke and its creator.

Another feature of English humour that makes it very difficult for foreigners to identify as such is the lack of emotion typically displayed by the English people when they tell jokes, which has led to it being described as 'dry humour'. This type of humour differs from others, like the American or the Cuban, in the sense that while the latter are more emotive, the English dry humour is more sarcastic and less demonstrative. 'Generally speaking, sentimentality isn't easy for us. It makes us nervous and uncomfortable. We become edgy and dismissive of these brazen displays of emotion' (Pegg, 2007).

Normally, people can identify verbal jokes through a series of elements that include tone, intonation (mostly rising) and facial expressions like winks, laughter or at least a grin. In the case of the English, however, they tend to tell jokes without giving any clear sign that they are being humorous; on the contrary, their expressions remain calmed and monotone while they are joking, and they may even look mad or depressed. This attitude is known as 'deadpan delivery', which in its more general sense is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'playing a role with expressionless face'. The habit of keeping a straight face while telling a joke is one of the hallmarks of English humour and the reason why other people often wonder whether the English are being serious or not when they speak. 'The rule of thumb is therefore, if someone is saying something which makes absolutely no sense with a straight face, they're probably joking' (Scott, 2016). Stephen Clarke reflected, 'Having talked to lots of people about humour, though, I think there is a peculiarly English thing that others find funny, and that is our deadpan way of laughing at things, including ourselves' (Fusari, 2009).

Together with deadpan delivery, another important characteristic of dry humour is that often jokes do not have a punchline, thus lacking an evident climax. These elements of dry humour are some of the most notorious and puzzling for the rest of the world. In dry humour, the listener must look for humour in the contradiction between words, the delivery and the context to find the joke funny. Failure to include the context or to identify the contradiction results in the listener finding the dry humour unfunny.

'Mrs. Kennedy: "I don't think, Mr. Churchill, that I have told you anything about my grandchildren."

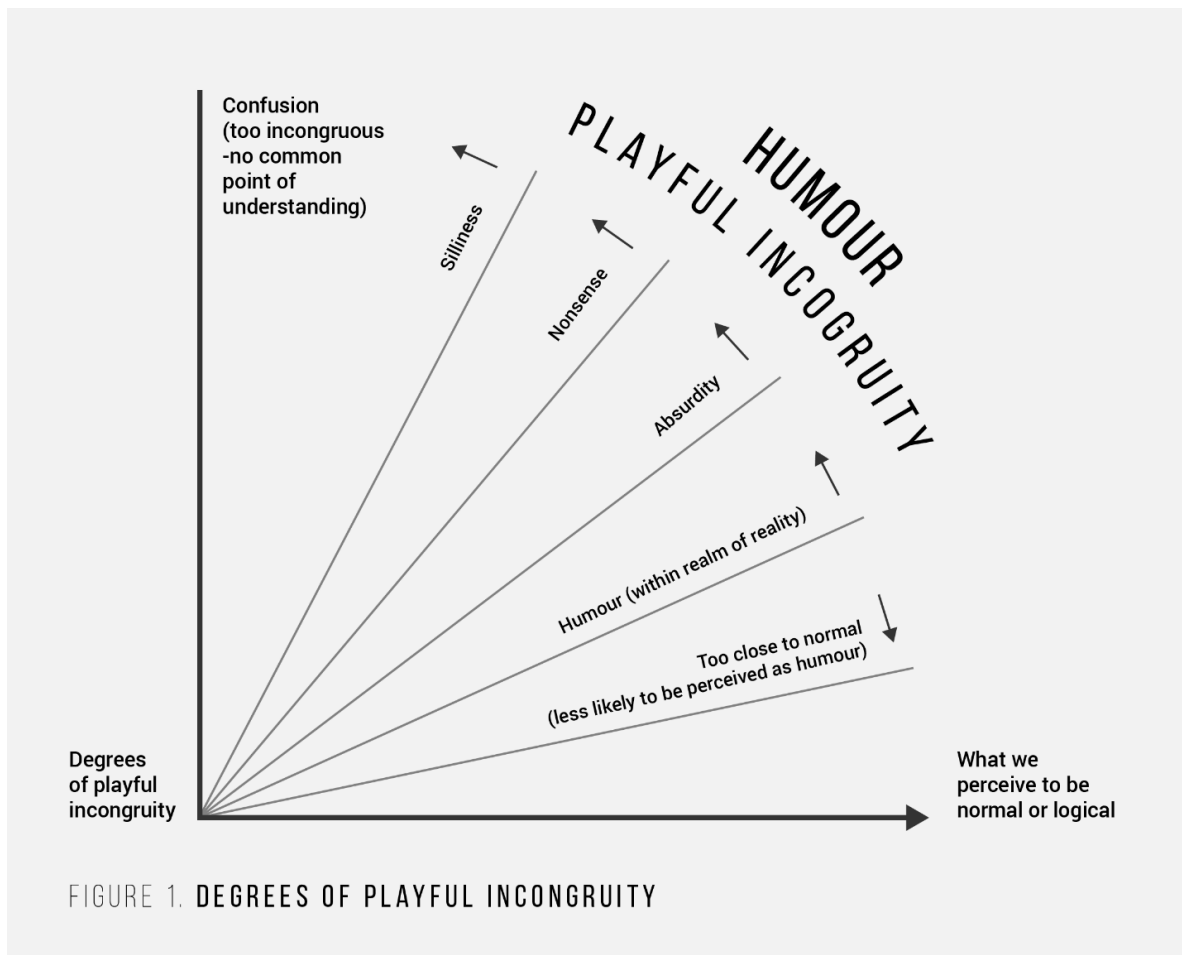
Winston Churchill: "For which, madam, I am infinitely grateful.'" (Mikes, 2016)

Another important trait is the typical subtlety of English humour, usually achieved through innuendo. Innuendo is an oblique allusion, an indirect remark usually suggesting something bad or rude. This custom enables the always-polite English to seem respectable and well-mannered while telling jokes that could include references to rude or even scandalous topics. For example, ‘smutty innuendo’, which refers to sexual innuendo ‘is a staple of British pantomime’¹⁰ (Only The Brits: Not Christmas Without Pantomime, 2011). The technique of innuendo is one of the oldest in English humour, used extensively in the humorous literature of the country in famous works like *Beowulf*, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, and Shakespeare’s comedies. Also in the theatre, King Charles II promoted what is known as Restoration comedy, famous for both its innuendo and its sexual explicitness. In radio shows after World War 2, innuendo was used by characters like Julian and Sandy on *Round the Horne* (Felsch, 2007). It was also used repeatedly in numerous British films and TV series of the late twentieth century, like the sitcom *Are You Being Served* of the seventies, the *Carry On* series and sketches of *The Two Ronnies* (ibid.). ‘By the end of the 20th century more subtlety in sexual humour became fashionable, as in *Not the Nine O’ Clock News* and *Blackadder*, while *Bottom* and *Viz* continued the smuttier trend’ (ibid.).

Another characteristic that makes it difficult for foreigners to appreciate or even find English jokes funny is the high degree of absurdity and surrealism they often contain. ‘British Humour is silly, sardonic, nasty, naughty, wry, surreal and nutty’ (Jarski, 2005). These traits not only reaffirm the concept and theory of humour adopted for this research (which define it as being the result of an incongruity) but they also take it to the extreme. In the chart (Figure 1) depicting the existing degrees of playful incongruity (Rishel, 2002), English humour can frequently be found fluctuating between the ‘absurdity’ and the ‘nonsense’ lines, and occasionally moving into the ‘silliness’ area. As the diagram shows, when that final line is breached, the joke becomes so surreal that any possibility for a humorous interpretation vanishes, since the audience is puzzled and struggling to find patterns they can understand. The English, however, manage to find humour in those extremes degrees of incongruity, not even trying to understand the jokes or situations but raveling in their very impossibility and silliness; what could be called ‘humour for humour’s sake’.

¹⁰ ‘British theatrical entertainment of the Christmas season based on a nursery tale and featuring topical songs, tableaux, and dances’ (Merriam-Webster’s, 2003).

The absurd and the surreal have had a strong presence on British radio from the fifties on; examples were *The Goon Show*, a tremendously influential and surreal radio show on the BBC Home Service (1951–1960); and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the radio series of six episodes, broadcasted by BBC Radio 4 from 1978 to 1980, which was the seed and essence of the novel chosen for the corpus of this research.



In television there was a remarkable number of shows that relied heavily on the absurd, such as *Q*, a sketch show (1969–1982) starring the comedian Spike Milligan. Also, the world famous comedy group known as *Monty Python*, who were influenced by *Q* and became notorious for their sketches without conclusions (1969–1983); the Pythons are among the greatest representatives of the English absurd and became a great influence for future comedians. Other

absurdity-based shows were *Count Duckula*, an animated show on ITV (1988–1993); the sitcoms *Red Dwarf*, a cult science fiction sitcom (1988-1999, 2009, 2012-); *Brittas Empire*; *Black Books* (2000–2004); and *Big Train* (1998–2002).

Social function in society

A tool for social interaction

‘The British are, by nature, a reserved and easily embarrassed people, so humour is the oil that lubricates the social wheels and keeps the motor running.’
Rosemarie Jarski

For most British people, and the English in particular, social interaction tends to be challenging. The English culture is permeated by rules of behaviour meant to set a standard for good manners (like appropriate topics of conversation and ways of addressing to others). These rules are the basis of the proverbial English politeness (found mostly in the middle and upper classes) and are the result of centuries of conditioning, so they are often unspoken but deeply engrained into their subconscious. However, these rules can at times work against the very purpose for which they were created, and hinder social interactions, among the English and especially with people who are not familiar with the English culture. Often, the English have been accused of being ‘cold’ and ‘distant’, since they avoid asking personal questions and try to maintain conversations on a superficial level; however, to them, this attitude is meant to convey respect for the others’ privacy and give them freedom to share what they deem necessary. Having their minds automatically set to this behaviour, they find humour to be the one context in which everything is allowed and they use it as a tool to express themselves without worrying about being socially appropriate.

One of the ways through which the English use humour to approach others is by making fun of them. For most people, mockery is usually perceived as an insult, but for the English it can also be used as a sign of affection or as an icebreaker.

A surefire sign that a Brit likes you is if they happily ‘offend’ you with the occasional witty, tongue-in-cheek comment [...]. These are not mean-spirited statements, but rather a playful exchange of verbal sparring delivered with a smiling face and no apology. (Simon, 2017)

This custom is yet another baffling characteristic of the English humour. Their extreme politeness is so well known that this blunt behaviour is almost certain to leave foreigners not knowing how to react at first. This particular way of ‘socializing’ can lead not only to not appreciating a joke, but also to hostility if the recipient of the joke fails to recognize it as such. ‘While classed as ‘negative humour’, for the British, to tease is to show approval and affection. The same holds true for taking the piss (or ‘taking the mickey’), which quite literally means to mock and make fun of someone’ (Scott, 2016). That is why, the English recommend not to take what they say too seriously.

Such advice is not always valid, however, since ‘the Brits are also known to ‘take the piss’ in an attempt to deflate somebody of their mistaken belief that they are special’ (Scott, 2016). ‘It’s almost a sign of affection if we like you, and ego bursting if we don’t. You just have to know which one it is’ (Gervais, 2011).

‘I can’t be seen in public with a Manchester United supporter!’

A philosophical approach to life

Comedy is an ever-present element for the English people and they are capable of finding opportunity for humour in nearly every situation imaginable. ‘Humour is not something we add to our lives, it is our take on life’ (Jarski, 2005). This is one of the reasons why English humour is so challenging for people from other countries. ‘When every word exchanged between Brits has an undercurrent of humour, it becomes difficult to decipher when a Brit is joking or being serious’ (Scott, 2016).

Another important role of humour in the English attitude towards life is its use as a defensive and ‘coping’ mechanism against misfortunes. Rosemarie Jarski (2005) refers to this as

‘our use of humour as a safety valve [...] The graver the situation, the keener our sense of humour’. English people refuse to let themselves be overwhelmed by life’s ordeals or to show any kind of strong emotion, so they channel all that through witty remarks about their adversities.

[The English] use humour to lighten even the most unfortunate, miserable moments. There are few subjects we don’t joke about. It’s not used to shock and offend but rather because Brits turn to laughter as a form of medicine when life knocks them and those around them down. (Simon, 2017)

‘I tripped and fell over in front of everyone but at least I didn’t embarrass myself!’

Black humour can thus be identified as another indispensable component of English humour, due to their habit of using serious or delicate matters as material for humour.

It might seem insensitive and if you were anywhere outside Britain, you would probably be right. But joking about your dead grandfather or your cousin’s dyslexia is completely acceptable in the country of tea and scones, so long as it is done in jest. (Tan, 2013)

‘Our determination to treat serious matters trivially and trivial matters seriously is one British tradition it would be tragic to lose’ (Jarski, 2005). The English tendency of using misfortune and failure as materials for comedy (Simon, 2017) is known as ‘gallows humour’, which Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines as ‘humor that makes fun of a life-threatening, disastrous, or terrifying situation’.

‘The American mindset – literal, sentimental, and hell-bent on happy endings, doesn’t sit comfortably with a British temperament soaked in cynicism and marinated in bile. It’s one reason why British sitcoms rarely ‘translate’ across the Atlantic’ (Jarski, 2005).

To defy authority

‘British wit is very often a salute to Authority – of the two-fingered variety.’
Rosemarie Jarski

The English have a history of confronting and rebelling against the government whenever it became too oppressive or did not answer to their needs: from the Magna Charta, in 1215, to the punk movement of the seventies, and anti-Brexit rallies since 2016. Even the result of the Brexit referendum is a clear example of defiance and rebellion, in this case of the British nation against the control of the European Union. ‘We like to bring authority down a peg or two. Just for the hell of it’ (Gervais, 2011). This attitude of openly expressing their disagreement and their demands to the establishment is one of the traditions the English hold dearest, and they often use humour to carry it out.

‘British humour carries a strong element of satire aimed at ‘the absurdity of everyday life’ (Laineste, 2014). Satire as a form of social criticism has traditionally been a fundamental trait of English humour. It flourished especially during the eighteenth century through political cartoons criticizing king George III and the Napoleonic wars. In 1867 the famous *Punch* magazine was released, depicting popular humour and satirizing the social and political events of the times.

Political satire, which had been exuberantly popular in Georgian times, had become duller during the noontide of Empire, and [in the fifties] returned in full force, from savage cartoons in the newspapers, staged lampoons, and the fortnightly mockery of the magazine *Private Eye*. [...] Among the two million regular listeners to *The Goon Show* in the mid-fifties were key members of the next generation of comics, [...] men such as Jonathan Miller and Peter Cook. (Marr, 2007, p.82)

During the fifties, the main satirists like Peter Cook and Richard Ingrams (owner and editor, respectively, of *Private Eye*) usually came from Oxbridge, because there its students cohabitated with their future political leaders from an early age (ibid.).

The day when the traditional Establishment decided it had to acknowledge its critical cousin, the comedy establishment, was 28 February 1962. The Queen visited *Beyond the*

Fringe in London's Fortune Theatre to see the vicious caricature of her prime minister by Peter Cook [...] [and she] roared with laughter. (ibid.)

Comedy in Britain could certainly be seen as a ball that is passed on in a game of football or rugby. 'The Goons pass to *Beyond the Fringe*; *Beyond the Fringe* passes to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*; they pass to *Little Britain* [...]. Each generation does indeed catch the humour of the previous one, changes it and throws it on' (ibid.).

[In the early sixties,] authority figures, police, teachers, judges and above all parents, were still clothed in the semi-military sense of order that derived from wartime experience. They were the butt of widespread mockery, in Alan Bennett's early plays, in newspaper cartoons by Giles of the *Daily Express*, in television sketches by John Cleese and David Frost or in film comedies about bus-drivers and diplomats. (ibid., p.87)

In the seventies, when *THHGG* was written, defiance and rejection to authority multiplied exponentially.

Defiance to members of the establishment and authority has also been shown in political sitcoms like *Yes Minister* (1980–1988) and through TV satires with news-reports format like *That Was the Week That Was* (1962–1966); and *Not the Nine O'Clock News* (1979–1982), a sketch show, for which now famous comedians like Rowan Atkinson became known.

A tool for social criticism

A more general form of satire, against society's rules and people's behaviour, is also typical of English humour. An example in literature can be found in *Discworld* (1983-2015), a series of comic fantasy books written by Terry Pratchett and full of heavy irony and criticism against various aspects of society.

The corpus chosen for this study, *THHGG*, is famous as a cutting satire on philosophy and religion, like in the passage “[...] we demand rigidly defined areas of doubt and uncertainty!”

(Adams, 1979/2016b, p.145). Adams also criticizes mankind's shallowness, since its happiness depends on the possession of 'small green pieces of paper'.

Finally, the general 'negative tone' of English humour is another of its defining traits. According to a study made by researchers from the University of Western Ontario, in Canada, a possible explanation for the uniqueness of British humour is that they have a genetic predisposition to enjoy 'cruel comedy at the expense of others' (Bloxham, 2008). Dr. Rod Martin, lead researcher of this study, believes that the various ways of appreciating humour are 'the results of [...] genetic and environmental differences. [...] The British may have a greater tolerance for a wide range of expressions of humour, including what many Americans might consider aggressively sarcastic or denigrating' (ibid.). The results of a survey conducted by these Canadian researchers in the UK and in North America showed that, while 'Positive humour' - which looked on the bright side of life - was found [...] on both sides of the Atlantic [...], 'negative humour', which ranged from gentle teasing to racist and sexist humiliation, was only genetically linked to Britain' (ibid.).

This 'negative humour' seems indeed to be the main characteristic of the English humour, and serves as an umbrella-term for its most significant types: it is a combination of **self-deprecation**, **irony** and almost undetectable, understated **sarcasm**, which are generally agreed to be 'the key ingredients of British humour' (Simon, 2017). In his book *English Humour for Beginners*, George Mikes (2016) also identifies **understatement**, **self-deprecation** and **plain cruelty**, as three elements essential to the English sense of humour.

Understatement

'Understatement is a species of irony and Brits aren't bad at that either.'
Rosemarie Jarski

Understatement is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as an action meant 'to represent as less than is the case' and 'to state or present with restraint especially for effect'. This second entry accurately describes the English characteristic stoical control: in the case of the English, 'Understatement can also mean underreacting' (Jarski, 2005). The English are very self-aware and believe that any strong emotion constitutes an undignified behaviour. As Rob Temple explains in his book *Very British problems*, the English feel 'acute embarrassment at the mere

notion of 'making a fuss' (Temple, 2014); Rosemarie Jarski (2005) also supports this claim by stating 'We'd still sooner die than make a scene'. This attitude makes them partial to understatement as a tool for concealing emotion, and has even led to the coinage of the term 'English understatement', to indicate an even higher degree of minimizing reactions, following the English way. Julian Tan (2013) describes them as 'a breed that express abhorrence for something by saying it is 'a bit much for their taste''. This tendency is well marked in the English speech: according to the Debretts guide to British social skills, etiquette and style, conversations among the English are full of moderating expressions like 'quite', 'rather', 'a bit', and 'actually'. For example, an English person would use the phrase 'a bit blowy' to describe a howling gale raging outside.

An important feature of English culture in general and of English humour is the use of *litotes*, in which understatement is used for emphasis and irony. The English are very fond of this rhetorical form in general, and use it often in phrases like 'not bad' when they intend to praise something.

In refusing to be overwhelmed by anything, the English resort to rather emotionless statements even at moments of crisis, when they use them to 'panic quietly' (Scott, 2016). Thus, a 'spot of bother' or 'a bit of a pickle' may understate that things are disastrous. Accordingly, this habit of restraining themselves in speech through understatement is used by the English also as a humorous technique. For example, in *Monty Python's* film *The Meaning of Life*, an Army officer has just lost his leg. When asked how he feels, he looks down at his bloody stump and responds, 'Stings a bit'.

'Humour may be used to bury emotions in a way that seems insensitive to other cultures' (Pegg, 2007). This is one more of the many contradictions English humour seems to have for the rest of the world, who find it difficult not to show strong emotions in such situations and to see anything comical about human misfortunes. However, for the English, the amusing element comes from the incongruity between the critical situation and the calm statements; they choose to focus on that incompatibility and find some comfort in laughter, following their philosophy of using humour as a coping mechanism.

Also, the use of understatement is perceived as a sign of refinement and as a way to assert superiority, to show that they are in control of the situation, no matter how critical. ‘The British believe that the underclass overstates and the upper class understates’ (Helitzer & Shatz, 2005).

Self-Deprecation

According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, deprecation means to criticize or devalue something or someone. The tendency to use this strategy against themselves is one of the staple traits of English humor. The English advise ‘not to take yourself too seriously’, and consider it as a healthy practice to belittle themselves: ‘Our default humour is to highlight our own flaws’ (Simon, 2017). ‘Self-mockery is at the heart of British humour [...] There is an element of ‘laugh at ourselves before anyone else can’ (Jarski, 2005).

However, this custom has a noble reason, that goes beyond marry-making and is linked to values held dear by the English. ‘We make light of our failures so as to appear [humbler], approachable and relatable’ (Simon, 2017). The same strategy is often used to cope with success and avoid looking arrogant: ‘We still prefer to play down our achievements’ (Jarski, 2005). Thus, by minimizing and even mocking their accomplishments ‘fellow Brits are able to read beneath the self-deprecation and admire them for their modesty’ (Scott, 2016). ‘To laugh at ourselves is [...] to acknowledge that we are not perfect, and might even be wrong. Tolerance, fair play and common sense – three qualities for which our nation is renowned – are all born of this ability’ (Jarski, 2005).

We’re walking, fleshly sacks of volatile madness, just barely held in check, concealed behind stiff upper lips; ready to burst open and bury the streets in a landslide of terrible rage if, heaven forbid, we ever run out of tea. (Temple, 2014)

‘We mercilessly take the piss out of people we like or dislike basically. And ourselves. This is very important. Our brashness and swagger is laden with equal portions of self-deprecation. This is our license to hand it out’ (Gervais, 2011).

Recurrent sources of self-deprecating humour for the English are ‘one’s accent, age, physical build, baldness, prominent features, geekiness or strange name’ (Scott, 2016). Also, ‘awkward encounters, clumsiness and embarrassing moments are all well-established self-deprecation material’ (Simon, 2017). Furthermore, they mercilessly mock themselves on account of their social behaviour: excessive politeness and good manners, their habits and traditions.

‘An Englishman, even if he is alone, forms an orderly queue of one.’ -- George Mikes

‘The nation's obsession with sarcasm and self-deprecation has long been the source of bafflement to other nations’ (Bloxham, 2008). It is only logical that this feature escapes the world’s understanding, since it is unusual in humor to rely so heavily on negative aspects and to have oneself as the butt of the joke. The English fondness for denigrating themselves as a strategy for humour is indeed uncommon; as Rosemarie Jarski explains:

[it is shared by] only two other societies: The Jews and the Poles. Both the Jewish and Polish peoples have a history of oppression so, for them, self-deprecation is a form of self-defense. The curious thing about the British is that we made fun of ourselves from a position of power. Even when the Empire was at its height, we made jokes at our own expense, smugly secure in our own superiority. (Jarski, 2005)

Science fiction, especially the European one, has the tendency to remind us that we are insignificant and to destroy the anthropocentric views. This is another form of self-deprecation that the English fully embrace, as can be seen in *THHGG*, where Humanity is utterly humiliated.

English comedians who can be identified with this type of humor are David Mitchell, Rowan Atkinson, Richard Ayoade and Hugh Grant. As for TV shows, *Would I Lie to You?*, *Black Adder*, *Mr. Bean* and *The I.T. Crowd* depict numerous instances of self-deprecation.

Irony and Sarcasm

It is generally acknowledged by the English that **irony** and **sarcasm** are the essence and the foundations of their humour (Scott, 2016) ‘Sarcasm and irony are ingrained in our DNA. They are produced with world-class timing’ (Simon, 2017).

‘The British make use of irony and its derivative, sarcasm, to say the opposite of what they mean in order to make a point’ (Scott, 2016). ‘We avoid sincerity until it's absolutely necessary’ (Gervais, 2011). ‘If it were pouring outside, the joke would be to comment on the lovely weather (an extremely stale English classic). It is as if it is 'Opposite Day' every day in Britain’ (Tan, 2013).

Among the various types of irony existing, **verbal irony** is a statement produced intentionally, in which:

[...] the meaning that a speaker employs is sharply different from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. [It] usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation. (Abrams & Harpham, 2009)

Irony therefore requires mental agility and considerable intelligence, to make the connections necessary to understand it. In order to be recognized and interpreted, verbal irony also requires signals that eliminate possible semantic ambiguities. These clues are usually paralinguistic markers such as prosody, tone, or pitch (Bryant & Fox, 2002), as well as nonverbal clues involving body language, like hand gesture, facial expression and eye gaze (González-Fuente, Escandell-Vidal & Prieto, 2015).

‘It’s great that you’ve started growing hair on your legs.’

Irony is considered as an essential element of English humour. ‘We use [irony] as liberally as prepositions in every day speech’ (Gervais, 2011). English comedians who can be identified

with this type of humor are Rowan Atkinson, Hugh Grant, Hugh Laurie. TV shows that are representative of this type of humor are *Blackadder*, *The I.T. Crowd*, and *Plebs*.

‘We use sarcasm as a shield and a weapon.’

Ricky Gervais

Sarcasm could be defined as an aggressive form of irony. ‘Although the term ‘sarcasm’ is sometimes used synonymously with irony, especially in American literature, the two should not be equated. The category of sarcasm captures any mordant critical comment not necessarily entailing oppositeness typical of irony’ (Dynel, 2009).

Sarcasm can be difficult to recognize in our mother tongues, even more so in a new language and a new culture. In England, the usual clues for identifying sarcasm, like hyperbole (exaggeration) and an overemphasis on adjectives are stressed even less, thus making it harder to notice sarcastic comments. However, it is used so frequently that in time it becomes visible to the untrained eye. Some indicators of English sarcasm are the content of the conversation ‘typically occurs when a Brit is confronted with a silly question’ (Scott, 2016); the tone with which it is said, pretending to be serious and usually with a falling intonation; and non-verbal elements like the satisfied grin the English just cannot resist when they have produced a successful and ‘perfectly timed sarcastic comment’ (Simon, 2017).

‘I know you have an open mind. I can feel the draught from where I’m sitting’.

Sarcasm is used by English comedians Jack Dee, David Mitchell and Stewart Lee, and is present in TV shows like *The Thick of It*, *The IT Crowd*, *The Office*, *Black Adder*.

The Absurd

Traditionally, the absurd has been a staple of English humour. The absurd could be defined, according to humour theories, as the ultimate instance of incongruity, since it is a strategy based on illogic, bending the rules of reality and context in a way that causes amusement. Since it disregards the conventions of society, physics and nearly everything else, absurd humour is

sometimes thought childish and silly; however, it has the prerogative to make connections and associations between the most remote elements (like the hookah-smoking caterpillars of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*). The latter is always seen as the classic example of the absurd in English literature.

The other classic example is precisely the corpus of this research, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in all of its forms (radio, book, TV series and film).

Common themes in English humour

Some of the most frequent topics used as the central or as one of the fundamental components of English jokes are: Embarrassment of social ineptitude; parodies of stereotypes; tolerance of, and affection for, the eccentric; the lovable rogue character; bullying and harsh sarcasm; and the English class system. The latter will be discussed in depth, as it is a social and cultural characteristic Cuban audiences are likely to be unfamiliar with, since such reality is not so marked in their society.

'Inequality exists in all societies, and is usually most apparent in the form of a hierarchy of aggregations of individuals – which, depending on historical circumstances may be described, to take the most distinctive examples, as 'caste', 'estate', or 'class' (Marwick, 2005, p.77).

Being a country with centuries of history, a former empire and one of the few remaining monarchies in the world, the U.K., and England in particular, is a place where social status has always had a tremendous importance and influence in the lives of its people. The traditional hierarchical division of the English society into **upper**, **middle** and **lower** class is determined by rank, power and/or wealth; it can be identified by the accents, education and the physical appearance. Modern social classes in England can be more specifically divided into:

[...] 'the working class' (a 44-year-old production-line worker at the Ford plant in Dagenham, east London), 'the middle class' (a young mother of two children who worked as a gardener and in her husband's computer consultancy), 'the upper middle class' (a

director of an exclusive merchant bank), and ‘the upper class’ (the eleventh duke of Devonshire). (ibid., p.85)

Most traits of this class system can be traced back to the Victorian era, when capitalism was consolidated and the stratification of society became more complex.

Traditional British class society was at its apogee in 1939. [...] Out of its own distinctive history had come the formation of a composite, variegated upper class, held together by common institutions and common privileges. [...] Britain, having had the first industrial revolution, had, of all the developed Western societies, the largest, most self-confident, and most class-aware working class, and no class of peasant proprietors. (ibid., p.78)

That situation of marked class division is as real and significant nowadays as it was centuries ago, with the changes that modernity brings but maintaining the same underlying principle of superiority of some and inferiority of others.

Since this is such a vital aspect of their lives, and for many a source of grief, the English naturally use humour to portray it in their jokes, through class tensions between characters and stereotypes associated with each social class; for instance, ‘pompous or dim-witted members of the upper/middle classes’ and the bad manners and cockney accent attributed to the lower classes.

[An] interview with the middle-class woman [...] exemplifies the variegated origins and education characteristic of [...] the middle classes; [...] It is absolutely clear that she perceives an upper class above her (to be mocked) and a working class below her (to be pitied and criticized for its inertia). (ibid., pp.85-86)

On the other hand, traits of the upper classes are exemplified in the interview with the merchant banker:

[It] soon becomes clear that, for all his protestations, he does feel himself to be in a class above most middle-class people, and he does recognize that the way he speaks is different

– in fact, though he doesn't like to say it, and continues to put himself in the upper middle class (in itself an indicator of upper-class good taste [...], he is upper-class. (ibid., p.87)

In British television many examples of comedy based on class differences can be found, with numerous series like *Fawlty Towers*, *You Rang, M'Lord?*, *Keeping Up Appearances*, *To the Manor Born*, *Blackadder*, *Yes Minister*, *Monty Python's Upper Class Twit of the Year* sketch, and *Are You Being Served*. Also, some sitcoms focus on working-class families or groups, such as: *Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps* and *The Royle Family*; and *Monty Python's Four Yorkshiremen* and *Coal Miner Son* sketches.

1.3.2- Cuban Humour

*'Hay países más propensos al humor que otros, y en ese sentido Cuba es especial.'*¹¹
Ernesto Acher (Argentinian musician and humorist)

Humour is a key feature of Cuban cultural identity, being present in almost every situation of daily life. The cheerful spirit and easy laughter so characteristic of the Cuban people are an intrinsic part of their sense of *cubanía*, the term used to refer to Cuban cultural identity. There is a willingness in the Cuban people to find humour in almost everything, since their subconscious is set to recognise and produce comedy-material.

El cubano medio posee una notoria vis cómica, como todos los pueblos de rápida actividad mental. Si no es, por lo común, nada profundo, percibe en cambio sin demora todos los alcances superficiales de un hecho cualquiera y efectúa velozmente aquellas aproximaciones mentales que producen el chispazo de lo cómico.¹² (Mañach, 1955)

¹¹ *'There are countries more prone to humour than others, and in that respect Cuba is special.'*

¹² *'On average, Cubans have a notorious sense of humour, as all peoples of swift mental activity do. While they are not, usually, at all profound, they do however immediately perceive all the superficial scope of any given fact and speedily carry out those mental approximations that produce the spark of the comic'.*

Traditionally, Cuban humour has held a privileged place in Cuban society and has always been very well represented throughout the country's history in almost every form of art and means of communication (see Appendix C for a historical overview of Cuban humour in theatre, press, literature, radio, television and cinema).

Ways in which humour is manifested

Starting with Jorge Mañach's seminal conference *Indagación del choteo* (1955), research conducted on the subject of Cuban humour identify two main manifestations: the *gracia criolla*¹³ and the *choteo*. According to Mañach, the *gracia criolla* is an innate trait, not determined by cultural background or awareness, involving a jolly, care-free attitude and an optimism that prevents it from being too affected by reality, using humour to evade life's difficult or painful aspects. It is important to note that the *gracia criolla*, although capable of light mockery, does not use humour to attack, but rather to evade (Mañach, 1955). On the other hand, the *choteo* is a continuous mocking, basic, superficial, at times pointless and always more aggressive than the *gracia*. It refers to the Cuban tendency to mock everything and everyone, even when there are no cognitive grounds for amusement: mockery for mockery's sake. The *choteo* is meant to annoy the receiver, by making jokes at people's expense and mocking them to try their patience and make them angry. That is why most Cubans advise one to be calm and play along with the jokes. This tendency has been referred to by many colloquial words and expressions (like 'chivar', 'dar cuero' 'quemar' and 'dar chuchó'), that change with time and generations, but which always use referents for physical aggression, as a metaphoric way to indicate psychological aggression.

The frequent use of *choteo* has been misinterpreted by many as the most defining feature of Cuban humour, and it has even been used as a synonymous umbrella term. However, Cuban humour also includes the more benign *gracia* and the more intellectually-based form of humour started in the eighties (see Appendix C).

¹³ 'creole charm'

Two very important characteristics of Cuban humour are its extremely local nature and temporality. Humour everywhere depends on context and shared referents; however, in the case of Cuba this is even more so. Very often, jokes and humorous situations in Cuba are built around very local events and referents, like a piece of local news or the specific traits of a neighborhood (e.g. a joke about a bus that takes a long time to arrive and is the object of satirical criticism by those who take it will not seem as funny to other Cubans who do not know or need that bus).

Humour in Cuba is also defined by the time that shared referents remain to be shared. In other words, said referents tend to come from very current sources, and their effectiveness to create a humorous response is limited to the period of time those sources are available and current, so that what might seem funny to some generations or groups within society might not be regarded as such by others, even when both are Cuban. For example, quotes from Cuban cartoons like *Elpidio Valdés* (‘¡Pártelo jaba’o!’) or *Chuncha* (‘¡Fumiga Paquito, fumiga!’) (see Appendix C), that have been broadcasted repeatedly since the eighties, will immediately make most Cubans smile. However, TV shows or soap operas are broadcast for shorter periods of time, and will not be common to all generations of Cubans (present-day Cuban teenagers will not react at all to phrases like ‘¡Oh, Charito!’ or ‘¡Niña, saluda a tu novio!’), two very famous quotes from the *Sol de Batey* and *Pasión y Prejuicio* soap operas, respectively). That is why Cuban humour can be hard to understand for foreigners or anyone who is not familiar with the referents used.

Mañach (1955) explains that *choteo* is also strictly conditioned by time and space, since we will not be amused by someone else’s account of an instance of *choteo* if we have not partaken in it. He notes that the *gracia* is equally conditioned, and that its charm and witticism is not universal but determined by the context in which it occurs. Thus, he concludes that these particularities make Cuban humour very difficult to translate.

Regarding Cubans’ way of delivering humorous statements, generally they do so in a very expressive way, most of the time accompanied by gestures, mimics of the actions and tone of voice of the characters involved (if they are telling a funny story).

[...] the sonic and gestural repertoire of cubanía – goes hand in hand with diversión. [...] Diversión can also be signaled by the body through gesticulation; it is the hand waving and the flip of the wrist that orchestrates the telling of the story. (Laguna, 2017, p.9)

There can be jokes that require certain degree of credibility, and in these cases Cubans are capable of keeping a straight face during the set-up, but when they reach the punchline, they will break character and be the first ones to laugh, thus making it obvious they were joking. The expected reaction to jokes is to be equally expressive, by laughing out loud or smiling broadly, depending on the context.

Social function in society

To facilitate social interaction

The *gracia* is very successful as a tool for social interaction, winning immediately the good will of strangers, subordinates, etc. *Choteo* can also be used as a form of socialization, through the nicknames Cubans are so fond of giving; they are very frequent among friends and also common among Cuban humorists (see Appendix C). The nicknames often originate from funny experiences, or make reference to a body part or physical flaw ('El manco', 'El Flaco', 'El quemao'). However, this practice will be perceived as friendly only if the people involved have a high level of familiarity. Otherwise, it may be used to verbally attack people by pointing out aspects of their appearance that are deemed embarrassing for them.

To defy authority

Humour is also used in Cuba to defy authority, not just referring to the institutionalized authority of the government, but to anything they perceive as oppressive. Actually, one of the most important characteristics of Cuban humour is that it is irreverent, and this is closely linked to the concept of *choteo*, which is the result of rejecting authority in any of its forms. Humour techniques and genres frequently used to show disregard for authority are satire and parody, and the most popular forms are political cartoons and TV shows. 'An irreverent tradition of political cartooning

extending back to the mid-nineteenth century has long utilized *choteo* to skewer the powerful' (Laguna, 2017:8), through characters like 'Liborio', 'El Bobo' and 'El Loquito' (see Appendix C). This tradition continued after the Cuban Revolution, with the works of cartoonists like 'Ares' and publications like *Palante* (see Appendix C). TV comedy shows are currently the favourite means for political and social criticism, especially after the nineties, with the show *¿Jura decir la verdad?* (2001) initiating a bolder trend that has latter been followed by other shows like *Deja que yo te cuente* and *Vivir del cuento* (see Appendix C).

[...] far from constituting a subversive or antirevolutionary discourse, parody and satire fall within both the spirit and the letter of the post-rectification Cuban [...] esthetic. The longstanding strategy of using humour to expose the gap between official policy and actual practice, or to ridicule self-proclaimed yet undeserved praise, is thus incorporated into the revolutionary dialectic. (Cooper, 2006, p.37)

As a coping mechanism

'Historically, the Cuban response to difficulty has been to joke, poke fun, and in general to not take things seriously' (Cooper, 2006, p.34). Cubans follow the philosophy that it is better to laugh at their misfortunes than to cry over them; and the popular saying 'a mal tiempo, buena cara' (roughly translated as 'best to keep a good attitude in bad times') is a motto to most people in the island. Making light of their problems and using humour as a shield against adversity 'to lessen the shock value, to heighten one's ability to resist and carry on' (ibid., p.41) are essential components of Cubans' national identity and have kept them afloat through the moments of political and economic crisis in their history. 'This recourse to humour [...] [has] also [made] light of the calamitous scarcity and isolation that continue unabated on the island since the onset of the U.S. economic [...] embargo' (ibid., p.37). An example of this can be found in the popularity of a monologue by the comedian 'Pánfilo' (Luis Silva) about the problems related to bread in Cuba (like its poor quality and the vicissitudes to procure it).

Among the most frequent techniques to create humour in Cuba are the use hyperbole, to exaggerate things out of proportion, and the double entendre, especially with sexual implications.

The latter is what Cuban people call ‘irse por el dos’ (which can be translated as ‘taking the second one’) referring to the fact that, if something can have two interpretations, Cubans naughtily choose the second and much spicier one.

Self-deprecation is also used by Cubans, but to a lesser extent and applied to a collective rather than to one-self. As previously discussed, Cubans are always willing to make fun of their common problems as a people, but do not use themselves or people they hold in high esteem as the butt of a joke. Such action would mean ridicule for one-self and will most likely be regarded as hostile if directed to others.

Common themes in Cuban humour

Frequent topics used to create humour in Cuba are parodies of stereotypes (e.g. jokes about people from the two extremes of the island: ‘pinareños’ and ‘orientales’); food and basic products’ prices, quality, availability, etc.; politics; elements of everyday life like transportation; and social problems like bureaucracy, corruption, vulgarity, etc.

On a final note, it is worth highlighting the fact that both variants of humor have been influenced and molded by the social conventions, and how these two countries have found in humour a way of expressing their respective identities. The English intelligence and their playful but also dignified spirit is reflected in the understatement, the constant but subtle irony and the deadpan delivery. On the other hand, the direct *choteo* as a way of openly defying authority in the Cuban one.

CHAPTER II – *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*

CASE ANALYSIS

The present chapter constitutes the practical side of this research. It includes the analysis of excerpts from a literary work containing English humour: namely, the comic science fiction novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, that presents cultural difficulties for its translation to Spanish in a Cuban context.

This novel was written by English author Douglas Adams (1952 – 2001) and it is an adaptation of the first four parts of a radio show of six episodes broadcast by BBC Radio 4 in 1978. The fact that this story was first told in another format (radio) must be taken into account during the analysis of the jokes because the characteristics of that medium influenced not only the setting up of the scenes, but also set the tone of the jokes and even the dialogues' composition. The radio show became so popular that a trilogy of novels was commissioned and in time it became a 'trilogy of five'¹⁴ (which is a recurrent source of amusement among fans of the series). Besides the novels, there is also a TV miniseries (of 6 episodes in BBC-2 in 1981), a theatre and film adaptations, and several videogames. This study will include the analysis of the first volume of the novels, entitled *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which was first published in 1979 by Pan Books. The edition that will be used is the 2016 special edition made by Pan Books for the Nottingham Reading Programme of the University of Nottingham.

This novel was chosen as the corpus for the analysis because it is one of the most representative examples of English humour and of the English contemporary tradition in fantasy and science fiction literature. This combination of humour and fantastic elements was one of the most important criteria when selecting the corpus, because it is an area very rarely explored within literary translation and Translation Studies in general. Also, this particular genre adds up to the overall humour of the novel, since the mixture of science fiction and humour creates an implausible universe, where the classic conventions of formal science fiction are altered and in which the absurd and improbability rule. However, the incongruity resulting from those situations will be the

¹⁴ There is a sixth volume, written by Irish author Eoin Colfer, entitled *And Another Thing...*, published in 2009, on the 30th anniversary of the publication of the original novel.

only aspect related to genre to be considered in this research, since it will not include the translation of the science fiction elements present in this novel (such as alien names and languages; technological devices and concepts; etc.). The fundamental criteria when selecting the corpus was that it should portray the English culture and its sense of humour. Douglas Adams was ‘one of the most popular, most influential, most important British humorists of the twentieth century’ (Gaiman, 2009, p.203), and in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* he brilliantly depicted the English nature through absurdly hilarious passages. The main character is an Englishman who is taken out of his comfort zone in the most radical way possible (he loses his house and his planet, all in one day) and even when he is in outer space and among aliens, he manages to remain utterly English in his behaviour, creating a contrast between his composure and the very absurd situations he encounters. As for the types of humour that can be found in the novel, and how they fit into the story, there is satire (mainly but subtly directed against religion), irony (against the English character), some parody (of the Golden Age of science fiction) and lots of the Absurd.

Another very important aspect that determined the selection of this novel was its outstanding lack of translations into Spanish. Presently, there is only one official Spanish translation of this work, by the Spanish Publishing House *ANAGRAMA*, which has also published the other volumes of the story. The first edition of the Spanish translation was first released by this publishing house in the *Contraseñas* collection, in March 1983, and translated by Benito Gómez Ibáñez. For the purposes of this research, it is necessary to also analyse the translation solutions to cultural problems given in this translation, since it is the only official attempt made to recreate this story in Spanish. The degree of effectiveness it achieved in conveying the humorous instances will be a good point of comparison for other possible solutions and to test what works and what does not. *ANAGRAMA* has released multiple editions since the one of 1983, and the one used in this research is the 12th edition, published in the *Compactos* collection, in October 2016. The particularity of the newer editions, including this one, is that they had two translators: the original one, Benito Gómez Ibáñez, and also Damián Alou. This is an interesting element to consider, because it must have inevitably made the newer editions different from the earlier ones, since another vision was added to that of the first translator. Thus, this last edition is presumably the best possible version of the Spanish translation of this novel, and therefore will help to identify all the

elements that have been successfully translated and the ones that, despite the many editions and multiple translators, continue to elude an effective translation.

To conduct a comprehensive and thorough analysis of any text, it is necessary to be familiar with the context in which it was written, since it can often be a result of specific circumstances and it is always (whether the author is aware of it or not) influenced by the events occurred during its creation. That is why the following section will discuss the historical, political and social conditions in which *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was written, as well as the ways (some more evident than others) in which the influence of that environment can be seen in the novel and the role this plays in creating the humorous instances.

2.1- Historic and Socio-cultural Context of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

For a better understanding of the references and allusions made in *THHGG*, it is necessary to take a closer look at the circumstances in which this novel was written. Thus, this section will focus on the main economic, political and social events that took place in the U.K. during the sixties and seventies, specially between 1977 and 1979, the years in which Douglas Adams first started to work on the idea for the BBC radio show and in which the story was written as a book and published, respectively.

During the sixties, the U.K. and especially England experienced a liberating trend in most aspects of life, mostly as a result of the American influence and of the hardships caused by the Second World War. 'In the sixties and seventies, Britain was becoming a more feminized, sexualized, rebellious and consumption-addicted society' (Marr, 2007, p.87), with a desire to 'escape from the seriousness of the immediate post-war period' (ibid.). Art forms became more accessible to the masses, 'shaped by working-class and lower-middle-class people who had never enjoyed this level of cultural power before' (ibid., p.96). The Civil Rights Movement and sexual liberation of the United States had an impact on the British, by raising awareness on issues like anti-racism, feminism and the gay liberation movement. Thus, a series of greatly significant social reforms to recognize human rights and end the power of the State over individual freedom were carried out by the Labour government during the mid and late sixties. These changes meant the

true modernization of British society: '[...] it was a formidable drum-roll of libertarian change, without precedent and never matched' (ibid., p.92).

The seventies, on the other hand, were characterised by a serious economic crisis and inflation; by a strong labour movement (resulting from the monetary difficulties) and by a strong sense of discontent and rebellion, that led to industrial mayhem and Irish terrorism on the mainland.

The economic crisis that reached its climax in the late seventies had been building up since the previous decade. When Labour won the elections in 1964, Prime Minister Harold Wilson, his Chancellor James Callaghan and the other ministers had to face an extremely difficult economic scenario. 'Britain under the Tories had been wildly overspending. It was living on borrowed money' (ibid., p.89). The Tories had left such an alarming deficit that Labour, instead of fulfilling the promises of a better welfare and more budget for social projects, was forced to raise taxes and cut expenses in order to keep the country afloat (ibid.).

In the early seventies, the political environment allowed for the thriving of the trade unions and the increase of their influence over the government. The U.K. had high levels of unionization in all the main industries (ibid., p.112) and Prime Minister Heath was fairly lenient toward them; he even passed a bill in 1971 'giving new rights to trade unionists' (ibid.). There was an atmosphere of political militancy, accurately reflected by the folk-rock band the *Strawbs* in their 1973 hit "Part of the Union"¹⁵ (ibid.). This reality is shown repeatedly in *THHGG*, through fragments like 'it was the bulldozer drivers' accepted role to sit around drinking coffee and experimenting with union regulations to see how they could turn the situation to their financial advantage' (Adams, 1979/2016b, pp.10-11).

The deteriorating British economy existing by 1976 made national economic survival a serious question, and the newly elected Labour government under Callaghan had to request

¹⁵ 'Its chorus ran, 'Oh you don't get me, I'm part of the union' and different verses spelt out why: 'With a hell of a shout, It's out brothers, out . . . And I always get my way, If I strike for higher pay . . . So though I'm a working man, I can ruin the government's plan'" (Marr 2007:112).

financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (*British History*, 2011). By mid-1977 the country was apparently stable; however, it was just a matter of time before it slowly sank into chaos. This situation was a result of both the economic crisis and Callaghan's mistakes, namely 'His sentimental failure to understand the aggression of the union challenge to elected power' (Marr, 2007, p.123); imposing 'a more drastic squeeze on public spending and thus on the poorest families, than was economically necessary'; and delaying the general election, which many thought would happen in the autumn of 1978, while Labour was still ahead in the polls (*ibid.*, pp.125-126).

By 1978, relationships between the government and unions had broken down completely. This led to a period known as the 'Winter of Discontent', a Shakespearean phrase that Callaghan used to describe the industrial and social chaos of the winter of 1978–79 in the United Kingdom. With economic and social unrest already affecting the country, the situation worsened when the Labour Party government tried to impose a five per cent maximum on pay rises to control inflation. As a result, fears over jobs and wages persisted and led to a rash of strikes from January 1979 on. The strikes demanded higher salaries, badly needed by poverty-stricken workers, and had severe consequences for the country: 'the schools closed, the ports blockaded, the rubbish rotting in the streets, the dead unburied' (*ibid.*, p.125). The impact was made worse by the severe winter, the coldest one of the last 16 years. On 22 January 1979, the workers from the four largest public-sector unions protested in the largest strike to take place in the country since the General Strike of 1926. The strike ended on February 14th, 1979 'with the 'Saint Valentine's Day Concordat' between Trades Union Congress and Government, The Economy, the Government, and Trade Union Responsibilities' (*ibid.*, p.376). That day also marked the end of the 'Winter of Discontent'. The situation of continuous strikes during that decade was portrayed and satirized in *THHGG* through a memorable passage about members of a Union of Philosophers threatening to go on strike (see Appendix A, excerpt 16).

There was 'chaos, and a direct challenge to the authority of the government. It was not a revolution, or an attempt to overthrow a government. Yet that is the effect it had' (Marr, 2007, p.126). While the strikes were largely over by February 1979, the government's inability to contain the strikes earlier and the serious damage caused by the 'Winter of Discontent' lowered Labour

popularity drastically and contributed to the election of Margaret Thatcher's conservative government in the general elections of May, 1979. Thatcher became the first female British Prime Minister, the longest serving (with three consecutive victories from 1979 to 1990) and one of the most controversial Prime Ministers of the century.

Another political issue that marked the seventies was the series of terrorist attacks carried out by the IRA. In the summer of 1969, tensions mounted until they turned into a civil war to end the English control and to unify Ireland. The IRA convinced Catholics in Belfast that they would protect them against the Loyalists and that the British Army would not hesitate to kill them all (Marr, 2007). The crisis of Northern Ireland had a tremendous impact on mainland British life. 'The 'troubles' in Northern Ireland itself would see endless tit-for-tat car bombings and shootings, routine murder, torture and knee-capping of suspected informers' (ibid., p.115).

Regarding economy, but on a different note, another significant aspect during the seventies was the role of the car industry. British-built products from Ford, British Leyland, Vauxhall and Chrysler UK were still the most popular. Throughout the seventies, Ford Motor Company was the leader: it produced Britain's best-selling car from 1972 to 1981, the Ford Cortina (Smith, 2013), and other affordable and practical models accessible to all, like the Ford Prefect. The latter was so popular and ubiquitous that in *THHGG* one of the aliens, wanting to blend in while on Earth, chose it as his name.

The atmosphere of rebellion and anarchy of the seventies was also reflected in the popular culture, through fashion, behavior and especially through the appearance of punk music. In the sixties, the main genres in English music were pop and rock, with marked American influence at first. 'Rock was about escape, mainly from the urban and suburban Britain of its young consumers. [...] Above all, the rate of experimentation and change in sixties pop itself was simply astonishing.' (Marr, 2007, p.98). During the seventies, all the diverse musical styles coexisting in the country shared the pessimism and disillusionment resulting from the deterioration of living standards that affected the UK from 1974 until the end of 1978. The prosperity enjoyed by the working-class in the sixties and the consequent optimism that powered pop culture and music was over, bringing 'a darker time in music and fashion, a nightmare inversion of the sixties dream' (ibid.). As the harsh

reality of unemployment and violence intensified, ‘the mood turned in the later sixties and seventies towards fantasy and escapism’ (ibid.). This was evidenced in the science fiction ‘ambiguities and glamour of Bowie, the gothic, mystical hokum of the heavy bad-boy bands like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, and the druggy obscurities of Yes’ (ibid.). In *THHGG*, the seventies’ rock and fashion styles are portrayed, especially through the alien character Zaphod Beeblebrox, whose extravagant appearance and behaviour resemble those of David Bowie and the punk bands.

Out of the many musical styles of the seventies, the most representative of the times’ rebellious spirit (certainly because it originated back then) was punk music. It was the controversial and radical British punk rock band *Sex Pistols*, with its hit “Anarchy in the UK” of 1976, that really launched the phenomenon in Britain, bringing a new aesthetic with their characteristic spiky hair and anarchic bondage-style fashion. The *Sex Pistols* were a symbol of the times, manifesting its self-loathing spirit ‘as the Beatles had expressed the geeky optimism of an earlier Britain’ (Marr, 2007, p.122). They actually portrayed themselves as the anti-Beatles, having as their primary function to shock ‘a still easily shocked nation’ (ibid.) with their extreme looks and violent behavior (vandalizing property and verbally abusing people). They even attacked one of Britain’s most sacred institutions, the monarchy, with their second single “God Save the Queen” in 1977. The great success of their first and only studio album *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here’s the Sex Pistols*, in October 1977, demonstrated that many British felt the band was voicing their feelings. Another important punk band that emerged in the late seventies was *The Clash*, who gave continuity, and at the same time closure, to the punk movement by releasing in December 1979 their post-punk album *London Calling*. Beyond the punk scene, the year of 1979 was also marked by the release of *Pink Floyd*’s concept album *The Wall*, which through a dark and depressive atmosphere also reflected the pessimism of the times (also portrayed in *THHGG* through the character of Marvin, the Paranoid Android).

In a technical sense, the music of the late seventies had a direct impact on *THHGG* in its radial origins. Douglas Adams had a very clear idea of the kind of show he wanted to create; as he described it, it was to be ‘full of detail, experimental – a ‘sound collage’, unlike anything done on radio before. [...] A milestone in radio comedy’ (Gaiman, 2009, p.31). He was convinced that

there were many innovations in the sound-effects area yet to be made, which would help to build and add credibility to the world in his story. He was encouraged in his belief by the new tendencies in music, 'The people who were exploring and exploiting where you could go with sound were people in the rock world – The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and so on' (Gaiman, 2009, p.33).

Regarding television in the sixties and seventies, comedies became one of the most popular forms of visual entertainment, with shows like *Are You Being Served?*, *Last of the Summer Wine* and *The Muppet Show*. The anarchic comedy was represented by the BBC series *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, in 1969. Characterised by its bizarre characters and absurd situations, the series became famous all over the world and influenced the next generation of humorists (*British History*, 2011, p. 297).

Douglas Adams was born in Cambridge, and in 1970 attended the city's prestigious university, to study English literature at St. John's College. His preference for this institution was not really based on its academic significance, but on the fact that Cambridge University had a society called 'Footlights', from which 'the writers and performers of such shows as *Beyond the Fringe*, *That Was the Week That Was*, *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again* and, of course, many of the *Mounty Python's Flying Circus* team had come' (Gaiman, 2009, p.8). He became a member of the 'Footlights' during a year; however, he never felt comfortable with them because their shows were run by the producer, instead of being a 'writer-performer show'. Besides, they would often find his ideas either 'hopelessly implausible' or 'not particularly funny' (ibid., pp.11-12). This experience led him to renounce his performing inclinations and devote himself entirely to writing (ibid.). After graduating in 1974, he collaborated briefly with *Mounty Python*-member Graham Chapman and did 'two walk-on parts in the last series of *Mounty Python's Flying Circus* [which] caused the original American promotion of *Hitchhiker's*, five years later, to bill him as a member of the *Python* team' (ibid., p.16). He was not, but the influence *Mounty Python* had on his writing style and ideas is undeniable.

Apart from comedy, during the second half of the seventies there was a great demand for science fiction, mainly due to the considerable advances in the world that increased even more the public interest in technology, space and the popularity of science fiction as a genre. For example,

the first Apple II computers went on sale; the first ever Quadraphonic concert was given in London by *Pink Floyd*; NASA space shuttle made its first test flight off the back of a jetliner; and Voyager I and Voyager II were launched unmanned to explore the outer solar system. Also during those times occurred the famous incident where a man, pretending to be part of an alien invasion, hijacked The ITN Nightly News at ITV Southern Television for six minutes. Furthermore, in 1963 the TV show *Doctor Who* was created, turning into a cult classic that run uninterruptedly until 1989 and then again in 2005 until present times. *Doctor Who* not only built in the English of those years a taste for science fiction, but also was very important for Douglas Adams. He actually sent the pilot script of the *THHG* radio show to the script editor of *Doctor Who*, because he was in desperate need of money and had not received confirmation from the BBC that the show had been commissioned (Gaiman 2009, p.30). While the *HHGG* radio show was made, Adams also wrote three *Doctor Who* stories (ibid., p.48). In the film industry, ‘the much-acclaimed Star Wars film, which has been a massive hit in the United States, was screened in British cinemas for the first time in December 1977’; also, in 1979 Python’s film *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* was released (*British History*, 2011, p.297).

In England, the most popular sports have traditionally been cricket and football, the first being somewhat elitist while the latter has always been closer to the masses. The sixties were a golden time for English football, ‘In England the Football Association estimated that there were 25,000 clubs when England won the World Cup at Wembley in 1966. This number rose steadily to around 40,000 by 1980’ (Holt, 2005, p.112). Among the many clubs, Arsenal F.C. from south London is one of the oldest (1886) and most loved. The early seventies were an outstanding period in the club’s history, winning its first European title in the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup of 1969-1970, followed by their eighth victory in the English Football League and their fourth in the FA Cup, both during the 1970-1971 season. However, this winning strike did not last and Arsenal spent most of the mid-seventies fixed in the mid-positions, with great discontent of their growingly pessimistic fans (as depicted in *THHG* through the remarks of a barman, see Appendix A, excerpt 8). Arsenal seemed to slowly recover during the last years of the decade, however, managing to reach three consecutive finals of the F.A. Cup (from 1978 to 1980) and to spectacularly win the 1979 one, defeating Manchester United at Wembley Stadium in what is considered as a classic match. The turmoil and chaos of that decade also reached English football, with the emergence of

the modern football hooligan in the mid-seventies; ‘by the eighties, English clubs were being banned from European competitions because of their followers’ (Marr, 2007, p.122).

In conclusion, all of the previous events and aspects had an influence on the creation of the novel *THHGG* and also on the reception it had.

The beauty of Hitchhiker’s was that it came at just the right time. The success of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had created a willingness among the public to regard science fiction as an acceptable form of entertainment; science fiction readers had long been in need of something that was actually funny; and the radio audience who picked up the book discovered very quickly that there was far more in the first book than there had been in the radio series. (Gaiman, 2009, p.58)

In turn, referring to the impact *THHGG* had, John Lloyd explained: ‘The title says it all for me – with hitchhiking and galaxies you have this curious mixture of post-hippie sensibilities and being interested in high tech, digital technology’ (ibid., p.59).

The previous analysis will prove useful in determining what elements and events are important for achieving the comic effect and up to which point. This is key to make the correct decisions in terms of translation strategies. Thus, this section can be used in the case analysis devoted to explaining how the comic effect is achieved in the excerpts chosen.

The next section will provide another fundamental tool for the analysis of the culturally problematic humorous situations: an organization system that can help to identify more easily what type of translation problems they present.

2.2- Humour Translation Problems in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Baranauskienė and Pociūnė (2012) (viz. Gallagher [1996, p.31]) define translation strategies as 'technical devices used to transfer meaning of a text in one language into a text in another language'. Since a set of tools is needed for the analysis of the humorous excerpts from the case study, this research will draw from the problems for non-equivalence at word-level and some translation strategies presented by Mona Baker (2011) and some by Vinay & Darbelnet (1958/1972). For space limitations, these tools are included in the Appendixes sections under Appendix B.

Due to the great variety of types of humour, two complementary procedures that could be of great benefit to scholar and translator alike are: 'mapping', i.e. locating and analysing textual items (e.g. instances of humour) according to relevant classifications (e.g. humour typologies); and 'prioritising', i.e. establishing what the intended comic effect is and how important each item and aspect of the ST is for its achievement. This will result in a clearer set of criteria for shaping the translation in one way rather than another.

This section analyses the instances of humour in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* that present cultural problems in its translation. These problems are grouped into two categories, according to the aspects on which the cultural problems are based: **1- Cultural referents** and **2- Types of humour**.

The first category includes all the concepts, traditions and behaviour inherent to English culture that are not shared by Cuban culture and which, therefore, can be an obstacle to the understanding of the joke; thus, limiting and even suppressing the intended comic effect. The elements in this category, taken out of context, are not inherently humorous; however, in the context of this novel they play an important role in the building up of a joke or humorous situation. That is why it is vital to ensure their intrinsic meaning is reflected in the translation, so that the Cuban audience can appreciate the humorous intention behind it. This category was further divided into the subcategories of *Culture-specific Concepts*, *Intertextuality*, and *Slang*. The subcategory of *Culture-specific Concepts* includes those aspects of everyday life particular to the English

culture, like governmental practices and institutions, traditions, sports, etc. The subcategory of *Intertextuality* includes references made in the novel to aspects of English pop culture (e.g. songs, etc.) that a Cuban audience will not be familiar with and therefore will not be able to make the connections necessary to appreciate the joke or humorous situation. The subcategory of *Slang* includes informal terms and expressions typically used by the English, which sometimes can have particular nuances that are used in this novel to create humour; this could be lost when translated into Spanish if these nuances are not recreated in a way that also elicits a humorous response in the Cuban readers.

The second category includes the types of humour present in the novel that embody the main traits of English humour: *English Understatement*, *English Irony* and *The Absurd*.

2.3- Case analysis

CULTURAL REFERENCES

Culture-specific Concepts:

1) the *pub* (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.4)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this case, the humorous effect is built up through a series of stages: the main character's initial puzzlement at his state of intoxication, the later realization of his presence in this kind of place the night before, and finally the punchline through the apprehensive expression that followed (which implies both the presence of alcohol and his embarrassment at the thought of what he might have done). This exemplifies the Superiority Theory of Humour, which postulates that humour occurs when someone is mocked and perceived as inferior by those who are not the object of the joke; they can find it funny because they are not affected by it.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The term ‘pub’ represents a translation challenge because of its cultural nature, since it is the name of one of England’s oldest traditional institutions. The word is a shortened form of ‘public house’ as it was originally known. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this refers to ‘A building whose principal business is the sale of alcoholic drinks to be consumed on the premises; a pub, a tavern. In the United Kingdom in the late 20th cent. many such establishments began to provide meals and sometimes entertainment also’. Currently, it is common for families to go to pubs and have lunch on Sundays. The pub is, therefore, a culture-specific concept that does not exist in Cuba, where the closest equivalent, bars, can sometimes offer entertainment, but rarely meals, and which mostly open at night.

A direct equivalent, both in the propositional and expressive meaning, would be ‘taberna’, which would constitute a *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, 29) and was the alternative used by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou for the Spanish translation (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.14). In that specific case, the solution is valid, because the ‘tabernas’ are also a very old Spanish tradition and function in almost the same way as pubs do. However, the term has become archaic and it is rarely used in everyday speech. In the case of the Cuban context, even when the ‘tabernas’ also existed in Cuba since the colonial times (sixteenth century) and they can still be found nowadays, the denomination changed with time in favor of the term ‘bar’¹⁶ and, very much like in Spain, the word ‘taberna’ has become archaic, with very little frequency of use, especially in a colloquial context like the one of the book.

Therefore, one possible strategy of translation would be to use the original term ‘**pub**’ as a *loan word*¹⁷ **plus explanation** in the body of the text (Baker, 2011, p.35). The advantage of this solution would be to achieve a more accurate recreation of the source culture and the immersion of the readers in it. The use of footnotes has not been considered as an option in this case because it could minimize the comic effect, since the readers would have to interrupt the flow of the narrative to read the footnote.

¹⁶ Due to the American influence over the island from the beginning of the twentieth century on.

¹⁷ Which in this case it already is, as it appears in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, although not so in the *Diccionario Latinoamericano de la Lengua Española*.

Another possible solution could be, through the strategy of *cultural substitution*, to use the word ‘**bar**’, which would be a more suitable equivalent for a Cuban audience, since it would not require an explanation and the readers could immediately associate it with drinks, which will strengthen the comic effect.

2) **the Council** (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.5)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, the comic effect is built on the incongruity resulting from the bureaucratic and absurd practices of the official authorities, specifically the institution of the City Council. In the United Kingdom, this institution is one of the types of local government that a city can have, and is normally in charge of services like rubbish collection, recycling, Council Tax collections, housing, and planning applications, the latter being the case dealt with in the novel.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

In general, this is a term that could be translated as ‘consejo municipal’ or ‘ayuntamiento’, which are the equivalent institutions in most Spanish speaking countries. However, the latter is not a term used in Cuba, and the first one includes ‘consejo’, which is not used in Cuba either. Due to the political structure of the UK, each city has a local government, or city council; however, Cuba’s geopolitical division is different: it is divided into provinces which in turn are divided into municipalities (instead of cities). There are governmental bodies for each, being La Asamblea Municipal del Poder Popular (the municipal government) the local form of government. Therefore, for the specific context of Cuba that institution would be the most appropriate translation, by means of *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29). However, since the main character only uses a shorter version of the official name to refer to the institution (because of the high level of familiarity that the intended audience has with this concept) and the same phenomenon occurs in Cuba, an even more effective translation could be ‘**el Municipio**’, which is how the Asamblea Municipal is popularly known. The strategy to capitalize this word will prevent any ambiguities or confusion with the other municipalities of the country.

3) *Ford Prefect* (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.9)

Production of the Comic Effect:

One of the most significant elements that create humour in the entire *Hitchhiker's* series of novels, is the name of one of its main characters: *Ford Prefect*. Being an alien and unaware of most of Earth's costumes, this character tried to choose an ordinary name that allowed him to blend into human culture. However, he did not realize that the combination he chose is not used to address persons, but is in fact the name of a line of cars produced for the British market between 1938 and 1961 by a British subsidiary of the Ford Motor Company. The incongruity resulting from using the name of a well-known object as the name of a person is what elicits a humorous response in the readers.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The translation problem present here is what Mona Baker (2011) identifies as a problem of non-equivalence caused by a culture-specific concept; although in this case the concept of car is shared, the specific model mentioned is not well known to Cuban readers.

There are three possible ways to effectively translate this into a Cuban context. The first one would be to maintain the original reference. This could be positive because it would avoid a complete change of the name of a main character from a worldly famous novel, which can result problematic. Also, this solution could work to an extent because this car model was sold in Cuba in the 1950s and some can still be seen in the streets. However, the full name of this model as such is not popular knowledge in contemporary Cuba, and only mechanics and car enthusiasts would understand the reference; thus, this is not the best option.

The second possibility would be to apply the strategy of *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29) and use a completely different car model that still maintains the general characteristics of the Ford Prefect (cheap, small and convenient), but that is more widely known among the Cuban people; for example, the Fiat Polski, produced in Poland between 1973 and 2000 and widely distributed and used in Cuba to this day. To adopt this model could effectively reproduce the comic

effect in the TL, since it is a referent every person in Cuba would understand and find amusing. However, there are two problems with this option: the first is the mix of Italian and Slavic origins in the name, which does not correspond with the English-speaking setting of the novel; the second problem is that a combination of two words is required so the character can use them as first and last name, but the name by which this car is popularly known in Cuba has only one word: ‘Polaquito’ (‘little Polish’, making reference to its size and origin), and only by using this nickname will most Cuban people be able to create the association with the car. Therefore, this second solution is not optimum either.

Finally, the third possibility would be to mix two car brands, maintaining the first word of the original set (i.e. **Ford**) and adding another brand like **Chevrolet**, which is widely known by all Cubans and that had models in the 1940s which resemble greatly the Ford Prefect models still circulating in the country nowadays. This combination also has the advantage of containing an extra incongruence, since those two brands were rivals, and Chevrolet eventually overtook Ford as the best-selling car in the United States by 1929. This also uses the strategy of *cultural substitution* and appears to be the best solution because, while it maintains a part of the original and allows for the audience to recognize this character in a wider context (if we consider the radio show, TV series and film), it also contains referents that Cuban readers can easily identify. A variation of this solution could be to substitute ‘Prefect’ with the Russian model Lada, a very popular type of cars that all Cubans are familiar with and which would have a highly humorous effect; the inconvenience this presents is the dissociation from the setting of the novel (England) by introducing a Russian referent.

4) “‘**I’m trying to, *baby*, I’m trying to**’”. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.10)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this situation, humour is achieved, firstly, by the contrast between the politeness and formality of the policeman’s question and the very informal answer given by Ford. To address a law enforcer with such a degree of familiarity is an incongruous behaviour that readers do not expect, and therefore find amusing. Secondly, and on a subtler level, it is also caused by the fact that Ford uses the term ‘baby’ and not a more typically English form of endearment. At the time

the book was written (the seventies), it was trendy among the youths in the U.K. to imitate the American culture of hippies and free-spirited behaviour and expressions. That is why this character attempts to seem cool and ‘earthly’, by using this recurrent American appellative.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The problem in this fragment is that the level of informality and ‘coolness’ in Ford’s answer is conveyed solely by his use of the affectionate word ‘baby’. The translation made by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou: ‘De eso se trata, quiero recogerme’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.20) does not recreate the expressive meaning of excessively familiar treatment given by Ford to the policeman; it also fails to convey the ‘fashionable’ nature of this term. Therefore, the comic effect is altogether lost. A much more effective translation strategy would be *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29), by using the term ‘**socio**’ (which means ‘buddy’ in Cuba and in other Latin-American countries). It can recreate the contrast between the policeman’s formality and Ford’s relaxed and care-free attitude. Yet another solution could be to use ‘**baby**’ as a *loan word* (ibid., p.36), which would not cause any conflicts in a Cuban context, already familiar with this term due to constant exposure to American films and TV series. Furthermore, many contemporary singers in Cuba use this term in their songs, so young readers would most certainly identify Ford’s original expressive meaning of ‘coolness’.

5) ‘[...] and get *lifts* from them’. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.10)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In the context of the novel, this word is an informal term to refer to ‘a free ride in another person's vehicle’, and has no inherent trait of comedy, other than its colloquial nature. The comic effect is produced by the incongruity of associating this concept to a spaceship instead of a car.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The difficulty in this fragment is created by a difference in expressive meaning. A possible strategy for this case could be translation by *a more neutral/less expressive word* (Baker, 2011, pp.25-26), like the word ‘aventón’¹⁸ or an even more neutral solution through the strategy of

¹⁸ Which is the Mexican variant but also the most generalized term in translations into Spanish.

paraphrasing using related words (ibid., p.36) like in the translation by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou: ‘y conseguir que lo llevaran’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.20). However, it neither fully recreates the colloquial nature of the phrase nor conveys a particularly strong sense of incongruence. Also, the word ‘aventón’ is not used in Cuba¹⁹. For a Cuban context, where this practice of asking for a ride is very frequent, the most effective strategy would be *cultural substitution* (ibid., p.29) by means of the phrase ‘**dar botella**’, a colloquial expression widely used in Cuba to refer to this action. The final result, ‘hacer señales a un platillo volador para que bajara y le **diera botella**’ successfully recreates both the informality and the incongruity of the situation and, therefore, the comic effect.

6) ‘[...] *’Oh don’t give me none more of that Old Janx Spirit/ No, don’t you give me none more of that Old Janx Spirit/ For my head will fly, my tongue will lie, my eyes will fry and I may die/ Won’t you pour me one more of that sinful Old Janx Spirit”*. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.12)

Production of the Comic Effect:

Humour in this fragment is achieved by imitating African-Americans’ Spiritual²⁰ (through both the syntax and the grammar associated with poor, uneducated people of the working class), with the purpose of giving the song a folksy nature.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

Young Cuban readers are not generally familiar with this musical genre, and will most likely fail to identify its elements and make the implied connection with poor workers. Therefore, this fragment presents two main problems for its translation: to accurately transmit the traits of poor education of the singer and folksy nature of the song, and to maintain the rhyme inherent to the latter. In the Spanish translation provided by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou, this fragment is rendered as: ‘¡Oh!, no me des más de ese añejo aguardiente Janx / No, no me des más de ese añejo aguardiente Janx / Pues mi cabeza echará a volar, mi lengua mentirá, mis ojos arderán y me pondré a morir / No me pongas otra copa de ese pecaminoso aguardiente añejo Janx’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, pp.22-23). On one hand, this is almost a literal translation of the ST, that fails to convey the folk

¹⁹ This practice is referred to with different expressions throughout Latin and South America (e.g. ‘dar la cola’ in Venezuela, ‘jalón’ in Honduras, ‘hacer dedo’ in Argentina and Chile, ‘dar un pon’ in Puerto Rico)

²⁰ ‘A religious song of a kind associated with black Christians of the southern U.S.’. Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Eleventh Edition.

style and low class elements that make this song humorous; on the other, the last phrase of the song seems to have been misinterpreted by the Spanish translators, who translated it with the opposite meaning.

In this song, Douglas Adams imitates a genre created by African-Americans and uses double negatives as a stereotype to build this connection. Thus, a solution could be, by means of *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29), to create a similar connection to Cuba's own African descendants also by means of stereotypes, like the particular pronunciation associated with them (e.g. omitting the end of words) and the use of colloquial phrases. The result would be: '**Ay no me de' no má' de ese viejo Lico' Janx / Que mi cabeza volará, mi lengua mentirá, mis ojo' arderá' y la pata vo' a estirá'/ Po' qué no me da' un trago má' de ese pecado' viejo Lico' Janx'**'. In the case of 'and I may die', it was translated as a colloquial phrase through *paraphrase using unrelated words* (ibid., p.38). The advantages of this solution are that it recreates the impression of an old typical song of the poorer classes, thus maintaining the comic effect, and that it also has rhythm.

7) “**Six pints of bitter**” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.18)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, the humorous situation is created by the incongruous behaviour of the two main characters, who go to a pub at noon and one of them insists that they should quickly drink several pints of beer, despite the hour.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The difficulty present in this phrase lies in the way the character makes reference to beer. The use of the adjective 'bitter' as a noun is a very common way to allude to 'a type of dark brown beer with a bitter taste' which is typical of the United Kingdom. Since this type of beer is known by all British (and most beer connoisseurs), it is possible to call it just by its most distinctive feature without needing further clarification.

The Spanish translation provided by Ibáñez and Alou does clarify this reference, using natural equivalence through the prosodic effect of *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9) by adding the word ‘cerveza’, having as a result ‘cerveza amarga’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.28), which is a good solution.

It is interesting to note that the term ‘bíter’ exists in Spanish, as a variation of the word ‘bitter’; however, its meaning is restricted to just one of the entries of the term in English, that of ‘Alcohol flavoured with bitter plant extracts, used as an additive in cocktails or as a medicinal substance to promote appetite or digestion’.

In the case of the Cuban context, there are quite a few varieties of beer and a possible strategy of translation in this case could be the one of domestication, by substituting the reference to a British type of beer with a Cuban one. However, one of the problems this solution could present is to create confusion in the readers and to interfere with their immersion into the new culture (the British) presented in this novel. Another strategy could be, through *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29), to find a beer referent that can be both popular and neutral for a Cuban audience. There are many colloquial ways to call beer in that country and one of the most widely known is ‘birra’, derived from the Italian, and which is also widely used in Latin America. This could be an effective translation because it would increase the comic effect, although it is slightly more colloquial than the one in the ST.

8) “‘**Lucky escape for Arsenal if it did.**’” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.18)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, the two main characters are in a pub conversing with the barman, and the comic effect is created by the incongruous attitude of the barman (and especially by his final remark), who shows more alarm at the possible outcome of a football match than at the event of the world coming to an end. This example shows the famous British passion for football, which overshadows all other sports in this nation.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The translation difficulty present in this fragment is caused by the culture-specific referents associated to football ('match' and 'Arsenal'²¹), without ever mentioning that is the sport they are referring to. The latter is a crucial piece of information, since it is the base on which the humorous situation is built. It could be argued that the strategy followed by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou of translating literally the terms into just 'partido' and 'el Arsenal' (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.28) is a valid one, since it is clearly stated in the text that the setting of the novel is in England and the readers could, even without great knowledge of sports, assume that the character is referring to a football match and that 'Arsenal' is one of the teams playing. However, in the case of Cuba this conclusion might not be so easy to come to for all readers alike. Even when the number of football fanatics in the Caribbean island has been grown considerably and consistently for the past two decades, the great majority are still male. Therefore, it is necessary to render a translation that clarifies these referents to all readers. A possible strategy could be to use the prosodic effect of *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9) by adding the prepositional phrase 'de fútbol', with the final result of '**el partido de fútbol**'. The same strategy could be used to clarify the term 'Arsenal', by placing the phrase 'el equipo del' in front of it, resulting in '**el equipo del Arsenal**'.

9) *Reader's Digest* (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.19)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, one of the main characters (Arthur Dent) is using sarcasm to mock another character (Ford Prefect) by falsely praising the philosophical value of Ford's attempted epigram. The sarcasm of Arthur's statement becomes apparent when he suggests Ford publish what he said in the *Reader's Digest*, an American magazine of great popularity. The punchline of the joke is Arthur's last phrase, which suggests a criticism of both Ford's epigram and of the quality of the aforementioned magazine (which could also imply criticism to the Americans).

²¹ A professional football club based in London.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The translation difficulty present in this fragment is the reference to the *Reader's Digest*, a culture-specific publication most Cubans are not familiar with (especially those born after 1959, when the Revolution triumphed and American products began to disappear from the market). For a more international audience the strategy of maintaining the original referent without any other element could be an option, as it was in the Spanish translation by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou. However, this is not possible for the Cuban context. One possible strategy could be to add before the name of the magazine the phrase 'la revista estadounidense', through the prosodic effect of *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9). This solution is neutral and clarifies the nature of the publication; however, it might sound slightly formal, and this could affect the humorous response of the readers. Another possible strategy could be translation by *paraphrase using related words* (Baker, 2011, p.36), in which the result would be 'deberías mandársela **a los americanos** para que la publiquen en **su revista** *Reader's Digest*'. This solution also uses the prosodic effect of *explicitation* by verbalizing the implicit information contained in the name of the magazine. Also, even when the term 'americanos' is not a direct equivalent of the English term, it would have a more natural and comic effect on the Cuban readers, who are used to refer to the Americans using that term; also, it recreates the implicit criticism of the Americans in the ST. A third possible strategy would be translation by *cultural substitution* (ibid., p.29), in which 'Reader's Digest' would be replaced by *Bohemia*, a publication that has some similarities with the ST referent, since it's Cuba's oldest and most popular general consumer magazine. This solution would definitely increase the comic effect for a Cuban audience; however, it has two major disadvantages: firstly, the intended criticism of the Americans would be lost (although replaced by self-deprecation, a trait that both English and Cuban humour share), and secondly, it would create confusion and affect the immersion of the readers into the English culture depicted in the novel.

10) 'The huge yellow somethings went unnoticed at *Goonhilly*, they passed over *Cape Canaveral* without a blip, *Woomers* and *Jodrell Bank* looked straight through them [...].'
(Adams, 1979/2016b, p.21)

Production of the Comic Effect:

The humour is achieved in this fragment by means of irony, derived from the fact that world-renowned places devoted to space research and to military activities failed to identify a great number of hostile alien spaceships approaching Earth.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The difficulty in this fragment is created by culture-specific concepts, namely: the existence, location and purpose of Goonhilly²²; Cape Canaveral²³; Woomers²⁴; and Jodrell Bank²⁵. Most of these places might be common knowledge to English-speakers and people from other countries, but they are not to a Cuban audience; except perhaps Cape Canaveral (due to the geographical proximity between Cuba and the USA and the references to it in American science fiction films and series). A possible solution for clarifying the general purpose of said places could be, through the strategy of *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29), to use other referents related to space research that a Cuban audience will be more familiar with, like the Hubble telescope and Area 51, both in USA. However, that option is not valid because it would be limited to just one country, when the author deliberately used places from different continents to indicate geographical span. Thus, the best solution would be, through *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9), to add the location of the places and their purpose. The result would be: ‘Los algos enormes y amarillos pasaron desapercibidos **en la estación satelital de Goonhilly en el suroeste de Inglaterra**; sobrevolaron **la base de lanzamientos espaciales de Cabo Cañaveral en Estados Unidos** sin causar ni un pitido de alarma; **el Campo de Experimentación de Projectiles de Woomera en Australia** y **el observatorio astronómico Jodrell Bank en Inglaterra** los miraron sin verlos – lo cual fue una lástima porque era exactamente el tipo de fenómeno que habían estado buscando todos estos años’.

²² Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station, in Cornwall, England; famous in the Space Industry for having been once the largest satellite earth station in the world and for transmitting important events like the Moon landings in 1969. <http://www.goonhilly.org/about-us/about-ges-ltd>

²³ Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, in Florida, USA, is one of the main facilities devoted to space exploration; controlled by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and by the United States Air Force. <http://www.nasa.gov/content/cape-canaveral-air-force-station/>

²⁴ Royal Australian Air Force Woomera Test Range, a military area for experimenting with missiles and atomic weapons; the largest of its kind in the western world (Dennis, Grey, Morris & Prior, 2008).

²⁵ Jodrell Bank Experimental Station, an astronomical observatory in Cheshire, part of the University of Manchester. <http://www.jodrellbank.manchester.ac.uk/>

11) *Visigoths* (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.24)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this example, the main character is yelling furiously at the bulldozer drivers who are knocking down his house. The comic effect is achieved by the crescendo of the name-calling, with the punchline being the reference to the Visigoths, a nomadic tribe of Germanic peoples, whose reputation for causing destruction wherever they went is the reason for the association Arthur makes between them and the bulldozer drivers.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The translation difficulty present in this fragment is the reference to the ‘Visigoths’, because the existence of those tribes and their characteristics are not common knowledge among the Cuban people. A possible strategy could be the literal translation of the term to ‘visigodos’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.35), which was the solution chosen by Gómez Ibáñez and Alou. Understanding will not be impaired by this choice, because even if the readers are not familiar with that part of history and fail to appreciate the cultural reference, they might still be able to infer some of its general meaning due to the other insults said by Arthur that are also related to destruction. However, the comic effect will be utterly lost. Another strategy could be to use a *superordinate* (Baker, 2011, pp.23-25), like ‘**bárbaros**’, to convey the message of “uncivilized people” the reference implies. For the Cuban context in specific, another strategy could be translation by *cultural substitution* (ibid., p.29), in which the adjective ‘**mongoloides**’ would be the result. This term also makes reference to a nomadic tribe, the Mongols, ‘a race of humankind native to Asia and classified according to physical features’²⁶, also characterised by its brutality and known by most Cubans; thus, the historic element is maintained, which will allow the Cuban readers to appreciate the association made by Arthur and will also allow the full recreation of the comic effect. Moreover, the latter might be intensified by the fact that the word ‘mongoloide’ is very similar to the term ‘mongo’ (which in Cuba is used as synonym for stupid) and is sometimes used with that sense too.

²⁶ Merriam-Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary, 2003

12) “[...] *just stuck out our thumbs*” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.43)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, Arthur struggles to understand how he ended up in a spaceship, and the comic effect is achieved by the incongruity of being able to get a lift from a flying saucer using the same method as with a car.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

In this fragment, the translation difficulty lies in the difference between the signaling methods English-speakers and Cubans use to hitchhike. Whereas ‘in North America, United Kingdom and most of Europe, the gesture involves extending the arm toward the road and sticking the thumb of the outstretched hand upward with the hand closed’, in Cuba the tendency is to extend the arm and use a gesture where the index finger is pointed at the road; this action is commonly known as ‘sacar la mano’. Thus, a possible solution could be, through the strategy of *paraphrasing using related words* (Baker, 2011, p.36), to change the description of the action in the ST to the phrase ‘**sacar la mano**’ in the target text. The Spanish translation ‘hemos puesto el pulgar’ (Adams, 2016a, p.53) is a literal translation of the ST, which in this case is not a good strategy, since that expression is not used in any Latin-American country and therefore sounds artificial.

13) “**I mean you may think it’s a long way down the road to *the chemist***”²⁷ (Adams, 2016b, p.66)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this phrase, the comic effect is created by the incongruence of describing the immensity of the Universe by using Earth referents of a very local nature.

²⁷ 3. Brit.

b. Originally in the genitive. A shop where medicinal drugs are dispensed and sold; (now esp.) such a shop in which toiletries and general health-care products may also be purchased.

The genitive use is elliptical for chemist's shop. (‘chemist, n.’ OED Online. Oxford University Press, March 2017. Web. 1 May 2017.)

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

This fragment presents a translation difficulty of non-equivalence at word level, because the term ‘chemist’ makes reference to a reality that is not entirely shared by the speakers of the TL. Firstly, in the UK the term ‘chemist’ was ‘originally in the genitive’ because, until the nineteenth century, pharmacies were local business owned and run by a chemist; and even when in modern times these establishments are typically part of big pharmacy chains, people in the U.K. still refer to them in general as ‘the chemist’. This British tendency to refer to the establishment through the person in charge is not shared in Cuba. Another important difference is that, while it is true that in Cuba there are local pharmacies, they are not especially popular establishments and therefore not commonly used as reference points²⁸. Therefore, a literal translation of this phrase would not activate the same cultural function it has in the ST. A possible strategy could be translation through *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29) by using another type of establishment closer to the target culture, like ‘**bodega**’²⁹. In Cuba, this term refers to local convenience stores specialized in distributing groceries and basic products. These establishments share many traits with the British concept of ‘the chemist’: they are local, have a very long tradition (initially established by Spanish immigrants since colonial times) and are frequented by people from all ages on a daily basis. This solution, besides activating in the TA the same cultural effect that the ST had, will also elicit a humorous response in the TL readers because they will be able to relate to it and to find the same degree of incongruity in the situation.

14) “*We’ll go on strike!*” yelled Vroomfondel.

“That’s right!” agreed Majikthise. “You’ll have a national Philosopher’s strike on your hands!” (Adams, 2016b, p.145)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this fragment, the humorous element is achieved through the incongruity of Philosophers acting like factory workers, rejecting machines that can substitute them and threatening to go on

²⁸ Probably because they only sell medicinal drugs, unlike the ones in the UK or the USA that also offer other products.

²⁹ ‘A usually small grocery stores in an urban area; specifically: one specializing in Hispanic groceries’ (“Bodega.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster. Web. 3 May 2017).

strike. Beyond the silliness of this threat (because philosophers' work does not affect production directly and therefore a government is unlikely to take it seriously), this fragment is meant as a satire to criticize the situation of England in the seventies, when the continuous strikes organized by the unions brought the country to the verge of chaos. This is an example of two English humour traits: defiance to authority and self-deprecation.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The problem in this fragment is caused by the culture-specific historical knowledge necessary to fully appreciate the connotations of the joke. Most Cuban readers (especially the young people most likely to be the TA) are not aware of the unions' strikes situation in England in the seventies, and will therefore not identify the implicit satire. The comic effect will not be lost, because the punch line in this joke (the last statements) is incongruous enough to produce, on its own, a humorous response; however, without transmitting the knowledge about historical context, this joke will not reach its full potential. A possible solution would be to introduce, by means of *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9), a phrase that hints to the generalized tendency of strikes in England and colloquial enough to enhance the comic effect. The result would be: '¡Haremos huelga, **que es lo que se usa aquí en Inglaterra!** gritó Vroomfondel'.

Intertextuality

1) 'The computer started to sing.

"When you walk through the storm..." it whined nasally, *"hold your head up high..."*

[...]

"And you'll never walk alone... Impact minus five seconds, [...] ... You'll ne...ver... walk... alone!" (Adams, 2016b, pp.109-111)

Production of the Comic Effect:

The humour in this fragment is achieved through the song the computer of the ship starts to sing when it and the main characters are about to be destroyed by two missiles. This song, entitled "You'll Never Walk Alone", was created as part of the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Carousel*; it has a sad tone but carries a message of hope, and it is meant to comfort and

encourage through difficult times. Thus, the fact that the computer sings it is an amusing way of indicating the gravity of the situation the characters are in. Also, this song is associated to football, because in 1963 Liverpool fans adopted it as the anthem of Liverpool F.C. and started the ongoing tradition of singing it before the start of the home games and when their team was losing. That tradition has also been followed by football clubs from all over the world; and in the U.K. the song can sometimes be heard in contexts involving large crowds.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

This fragment presents the problem of having culture-specific elements (Baker, 2011, p.18), namely, the lyrics of the song “You'll Never Walk Alone”, its message and its association to football. Despite its popularity, this song is not likely to be known in Cuba, except perhaps by devoted football fans; thus, this reference and its implication will most certainly go unnoticed by most Cuban readers. A possible solution could be, through the strategy of *explicitation* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9), to briefly explain the back story of the song and then translate the lyrics into Spanish (which is necessary to make evident the relevance of the song in that passage of the book, because the readers will not be familiar with the song and many cannot understand English). The result would be: **‘La computadora entonó la famosa canción con la que los seguidores del Liverpool animan a su equipo cuando les va mal. “Cuando caminas a través de la tormenta...” lloriqueó nasalmente, “mantén erguida la cabeza...” [...] “¡Y no...temas...a la oscuridad!” Aulló Eddie. [...] “Al final de la tormenta...” canturreó Eddie. [...] “...hay un cielo dorado...” [...] “Y el canto dulce y plateado de la alondra...” [...] “...Sigue caminando a través del viento...” [...] “...Sigue caminando a través de la lluvia...” cantó Eddie. [...] “Aunque a tus sueños los maltraten y estremezcan...” cantó Eddie. [...] “Sigue caminando, sigue caminando, con esperanza en tu corazón...” [...] “Y tú nunca caminarás solo...Impacto menos cinco segundos, [...] ... ¡nun...ca... caminarás... solo!”** Another possibility would be, through the strategy of translation by *cultural substitution* (Baker, 2011, p.29), to change this song for another in Spanish that the Cuban readers are more familiar with and that shares the sad tone of the original; however, that is not an optimum solution because it would interfere with the readers’ immersion in the English context of the novel.

Slang

- 1) “First he wiped a couple of windows and charged me *a fiver*.” (Adams, 2016b, p.7)

Production of the Comic Effect:

The humorous effect in this fragment is achieved by the incongruity of the workman's attitude when, instead of telling Arthur he is there to demolish his house, he offers his services as a window cleaner and makes extra money.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The problem present in this fragment is the colloquial way Arthur uses to refer to the amount of money he paid to the workman: ‘fiver’, a noun composed of the noun ‘five’ (referring to the amount of pounds paid) and the suffix –er (which in this case means ‘person or thing belonging to or associated with’). The problem lies on a difference in form (Baker, 2011, p.21), because in Spanish that construction cannot be used to refer to an amount of money in a colloquial way. The solution found by the Spanish translators Gómez Ibáñez and Alou was translation by *a more neutral/less expressive word* (ibid., p.26), with the result being ‘y me cobró cinco libras’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.17). This strategy is valid but not ideal, since it fails to recreate the expressive meaning of the word in the ST. In the Cuban context, a possible solution to recreate the informal traits of the ST could be, through *cultural substitution* (ibid., p.29), to use the term ‘moja’, which is a very informal way of referring to the Cuban five-pesos bill. The result would be ‘y me cobró **una moja**’, which maintains the colloquial element and also has the advantage of enhancing the comic effect of this fragment.

- 2) *boozer* (Adams, 2016b, p.9)

Production of the Comic Effect:

This word is a noun formed by the combination of another noun, ‘booze’ (an informal name for alcohol), and the suffix -er (that in this case is ‘added to nouns or adjectives to form nouns referring to people who are connected or involved with that particular thing’). The amusement is

produced by the word itself due to its unusual construction and by the level of informality it presents.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

The non-equivalence problem found in this example is produced by differences in expressive meaning (Baker, 2011, pp.20-21). The solution provided by the Spanish translators Gómez Ibáñez and Alou, through the strategy of translation by *a more neutral/less expressive word* (ibid., pp.25-26), was ‘bebedor’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.19), which is valid since it has the same propositional meaning as the word in the SL, and it even has a similar construction (a verb plus a suffix). However, the word ‘bebedor’ is a neutral term in Spanish and does not have the same expressive meaning (i.e. the informal connotation) of the ST. A more effective translation for the Cuban context could be achieved by finding a word with the same propositional and expressive meanings, like ‘**curda**’, which is a colloquial noun commonly used in Cuba to designate both the person who drinks heavily and the act of getting drunk.

TYPES OF HUMOUR

Understatement

1) ‘**Oh dear, the pub**’ (Adams, 2016b, p.4)

Production of the Comic Effect:

In this case, the character uses this expression to indicate anxiety, distress and regret, all at once, due to the events of the previous evening. The comic effect is created by the use of this phrase because it depicts the typically British attitude of showing alarm and concern in a very calm way, which to most of the other cultures in the world seems highly incongruent and, therefore, humorous.

Translation Problems, Strategies and Possible Solutions:

At first sight this looks like a very simple phrase in terms of its propositional meaning, but what makes it difficult to translate is its expressive meaning (Baker, 2011, pp.20-21). It is an

interjection very typical of English people, and can have various connotations depending on the context (like ‘expressing surprise, astonishment, anxiety, distress, regret, sympathy’), but its ultimate purpose is always to minimize the intensity of the emotion they intend to express.

Due to the great frequency with which this expression is used throughout the novel, and to the lack of just one word or phrase in Spanish that can convey all its different meanings, it will not be possible to provide just one solution that can be used every time it appears. Therefore, it will always be necessary to analyse the specific context in which it is used, in order to interpret its intended expressive meaning. In this case, it is important to note that the word ‘dear’ is void of its propositional meaning (which is therefore irrelevant for the translation); however, its expressive meaning is the corner stone of this phrase and must be transmitted.

The translation of this expression made by Ibáñez and Alou, ‘¡Santo Dios, la taberna!’ (Adams, 1979/2016a, p.14), is a valid solution in its propositional meaning and in that it correctly transmits the emotion of alarm, but it fails to transmit the other two very important feelings of embarrassment and regret contained in the original phrase. Alarm alone cannot recreate the comic effect; it is the subtle implication within this phrase that the character might have done something embarrassing while being intoxicated that elicits the humorous response in the readers. Also, the use of the exclamation marks changed the tone of the phrase from a contained lamentation (made in a truly English fashion) to a very expressive and alarmist expression. For an accurate translation of this phrase it is crucial to transmit the intensity of its expressive meaning; however, the most effective way to do this is to understate it (like the main character does), because the other main element responsible for the comic effect of this phrase is precisely the incongruity of acting so calmly in the prospect of such an alarming situation.

Since this expression is functioning as an interjection, a possible solution would be to use the expression ‘ay, no’. The Spanish interjection ‘ay’ is adequate because it can express various moods (like surprise, sorrow, physical pain, etc.); however, due to its multi-semantic nature, it often requires other words or punctuation marks to clarify its meaning. In this case, because the intended emotions are all negative (anxiety, distress and regret), a simple but effective solution would be to add the negative adverb ‘no’. However, this is not enough, since the intensity of the

expressive meaning is still not fully transmitted with this translation. A possible strategy would be to change the punctuation marks used in the phrase, substituting the comma with suspension points (ellipses), which will then add the calm and dramatic effect in Spanish that the word ‘dear’ naturally conveys in this phrase. The final result would be **‘Ay...no...el pub’**.

CONCLUSIONS

After completing the research and having conducted the analysis, several conclusions emerged.

Firstly, regarding the characteristics of the English and Cuban variants of humour, it came as a surprise to find that, while expected differences exist, there are also similarities. The first and most apparent is the great significance humour has for those two cultures: in both it is seen as one of the defining elements of their national identity. The rest of the similarities are found in the social functions humour is given in each society. Both cultures use humour as a tool for socializing (although some of the strategies employed by each are quite different, as it will be discussed below); as an approach to life (finding reason for laughter in the most unlikely situations); and as a defence and coping mechanism against distress (since both nations have been exposed to long difficult periods). Also, both English and Cuban humour have a subversive nature, and it is used by the two cultures to defy authority of any kind and to criticize individual and social flaws. Among the humorous techniques similar to both cultures innuendo is the most outstanding.

The differences, however, are more relevant for the purpose of this study, since they will help the translators understand and anticipate the possible translation problems. The main contrasts were found in the way in which humour is manifested, and they can be summarized in the fact that English humour minimizes while the Cuban humour maximizes. This can be seen in the lack of emotion and deadpan expression most English people usually have when they jest, contrasting with the smiling face and constant gesticulation that accompany most Cuban jokes and humorous instances. Also, in the expectations that each culture has about the humorous effect: while the English feel rewarded with a small smile, grin or even an appreciative nod as a sign of the joke's success, the Cubans expect their audience to roar with laughter and to loudly express it was good. The English use of understatement is yet another radical difference from the Cuban tendency to hyperbolize. This already hints to one of the translation strategies that could be used to bridge such cultural gaps.

One of the most important dissimilarities between the English and Cuban sense of humour is their use of irony, which is not as widespread in Cuba as it is in England. In tune with their

intrinsic politeness and to avoid direct confrontation, English people use irony as a subtler, society-approved way of mocking others. The majority of Cubans, on the other hand, prefer the more direct and somehow basic *choteo*. Irony requires a certain degree of intelligence to recognize the hidden meaning behind the apparently innocent remark, which is why the English value it so much (they see it as a sign of intelligence on both the speaker and the listener's part). Intelligent jokes are generally more valued in England; in Cuba there is also a taste for more elaborate forms of humour but in a smaller part of the population, usually with higher cultural background. The implication of this is that English jokes based on verbal irony or situational irony are most likely to present translation problems.

Absurd humour, although present in both cultures, is not approached in the same way (the Cuban reality is full of 'absurd' but very real situations, so when presented with absurdity, the first reaction of Cubans will be to try and make sense of it, assuming that it is somehow real, unlike the English who will immediately assume there is comedy involved). Also, English humour tends to favour silliness, while Cuban humour is more earth-bound and prone to double entendre.

The other set of differences refer to the social functions of humour. For example, when used as a tool for interaction with others, the English use humour as a 'friendly aggression' to break the ice. On the other hand, Cubans only use 'negative humour' when they dislike someone and then jokes are intentionally hurtful or embarrassing. That is why they are most likely to have a negative reaction to this kind of behaviour. A similar obstacle can be seen in the English tendency to self-deprecation, which is not used by Cubans, who are willing to laugh at their problems but not so much at themselves. Thus, an act of self-deprecation intended to show humbleness and approachability might be interpreted negatively by a Cuban audience, as a lack of self-confidence or self-respect.

As for the topics and situations generally used to create humour, there are several that are not shared by the English and Cuban cultures and societies. For example, Cuba does not have a marked class system like England, therefore jokes about social classes do not exist. In this case, depending on the specific context, the translator could include elements in the text that hint at a hierarchy or difference in status. In the case of parodies and stereotypes, both techniques are used

by both countries, but there is a cultural difference, namely in the referents chosen as target, which, if unknown by the reader/listener, will not result in a comic effect.

As for other important aspects to consider in the intercultural translation of humour in general and in the case of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, various were identified as crucial.

One of the most relevant ones is the need for translators of such texts to have intercultural competence and awareness, and as much knowledge of the cultures and humour variants involved as possible. Ideally, a high sense of humour and creativity are also very desirable for this specific area; however, those are often innate aptitudes, so it is up to the client or commissioner of the translation to ensure the right person is chosen for this task. An alternative is to hire a professional humorist to serve as a consultant to the translator; this strategy proved to be successful in the case of the dubbed translation of the film *Chicken Run* in Spain, in which the group *Gomaespuma* assisted with the comical aspects of the already translated script (Hernández Bartolomé & Mendiluce Cabrera, 2004). The implementation of said strategy in the case of literary translation is a question valid for a new study.

Another important element to consider is the medium in which the text will function, a novel in the case of this study. It can be concluded that this type of medium considerably reduces the number of techniques available for humour creation, so that the author (and then the translator) must find alternative ways of expression.

The nature of the text is yet another aspect to bear in mind, regarding the implications genre and style, among other things, can have for the creation of the comic effect and for its translation. This study did not cover the specific difficulties elements typical of science fiction (like technological devices or alien languages) can have in humour translation; however, a conclusion drawn was that the genres of science fiction and comedy are extremely compatible and that the conventions of the first can be used by the second as a source of humour (by parodying them).

As for the analysis of the corpus, several instances of cultural problems were identified in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and grouped according to the aspects on which the cultural

problems are based, namely: **Cultural referents** (including all English elements not shared by the Cuban culture) and **Types of Humor**.

Within the first category, the subcategories of *Culture-specific Concepts*, *Intertextuality*, and *Slang* were created. In this group, the largest number of instances was found in the subcategory of *Culture-specific Concepts*, in which fourteen examples were analysed. Within the second category, the most relevant subcategory was *Understatement*.

The translation strategies that proved most efficient to recreate the comic effect were *cultural substitution*, *explicitation* and *loan words*. It can be concluded that, from a functionalist approach in which the goal is to maintain the communicative function, the translation of English humour for a Cuban audience can be achieved. For this, it is essential the appropriate analysis of the general context and of the specific communicative situation.

Opponents of functionalist theories argue that achieving an equivalent effect is impossible, because there is no way of measuring the reception of a text. However, there are ways in which a translator can know if his/her work will produce the same effect intended in the ST. In the case of humour translation, the General Theory of Verbal Humour can be used as a theoretic tool to determine the degree of difference between the humorous instances in the ST and the TT, and therefore the possibilities of success they may have. In pragmatic terms, before a material is published there tends to be a period of revision by editors and of proof-reading by volunteers, which will also allow to assess, in a more 'real' way, the effectiveness of the TT with the new TA.

One important conclusion drawn from this research is that literary translation in Cuba is complicated: the nation already breaches international copyrights by reproducing and distributing foreign books, and Cuban professionals cannot translate contemporary works without the direct permission of the author or holder of the copyrights, which most of the times is the translator's task to secure. So an awareness of this reality, as well as actions to grant literary translation a more solid position in Cuba are in order.

Efforts on the part of translators and publishers for the translation of non-mainstream genres like comedy science fiction and fantasy are also needed. Humour is a vital part of the Cuban culture and the translation of works from English authors will be an effective way of introducing Cuban readers to other cultures (although different in each country, humour can work as a more pleasant bridge among cultures, especially for Cubans). In the case of this research, it can be a fun way in which young people in Cuba (most likely audience for this novel) can learn about England and its culture.

Fortunately, ‘the changes to Cuban publishing since 2000 have clearly enabled literary culture in Cuba to survive’ (Kumaraswami & Kapcia, 2012). In 2007, the collection *Ámbar* was created to retake *Suspense*’s role as a thematic collection devoted to the genres of detective stories, science fiction and also fantasy (Acevedo, 2016). This new collection has published works by Cuban and foreign authors, dead and contemporary, classic and new ones (ibid.). A good omen can be found in the recent translation and publication, for the first time in Cuba, of the book *1984*; this is a remarkable event because neither the topic nor the genre of this book are among the ones normally chosen to be translated. That fact combined with the existence of a publishing house willing to take a chance on these genres are encouraging signs that perhaps there are good times ahead for the literary translation of comedy (but the Cuban translators should see to it) and new and fun projects to the publishers. There are, for example, various humorous works by contemporary British authors, like Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman and Eoin Colfer,³⁰ that have not been published in Cuba. Let us hope they soon shall be.

³⁰ Very popular authors among the small number of Cubans fond of science fiction and fantasy who can read in English or have had access to the paperbacks or digital Spanish translations.

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APPENDIX A:

EXCERPTS FROM *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*

- 1) Passing the bathroom he stopped to drink a large glass of water, and another. He began to suspect that he was hung over. Why was he hung over? Had he been drinking the night before? He supposed that he must have been. He caught a glint in the shaving mirror. "Yellow," he thought and stomped on to the bedroom.
He stood and thought. **The pub**, he thought. **Oh dear**, the pub. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.4)
- 2) It would sort itself out, he'd decided, no one wanted a bypass, **the council** didn't have a leg to stand on. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.5)
- 3) He had made one careless blunder though, because he had skimmed a bit on his preparatory research. The information he had gathered had led him to choose the name '**Ford Prefect**' as being nicely inconspicuous. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.9)
- 4) "Six pints of **bitter**," said Ford Prefect to the barman of the Horse and Groom. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.18)
- 5) The policemen would usually say something like, "Don't you think it's about time you went off home sir?" "I'm trying to, **baby**, I'm trying to," is what Ford invariably replied on these occasions. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.10)
- 6) Ford wished that a flying saucer would arrive soon because he knew how to flag flying saucers down and get **lifts** from them. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.10)
- 7) Between them would be placed a bottle of Janx Spirit (as immortalized in that ancient Orion mining song '**Oh don't give me none more of that Old Janx Spirit/ No, don't you give me none more of that Old Janx Spirit/ For my head will fly, my tongue will lie, my eyes will fry and I may die/ Won't you pour me one more of that sinful Old Janx Spirit**'). (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.12)

8) “Going to watch the match this afternoon, then?”

Ford glanced round at him.

“No, no point,” he said, and looked back out of the window.

“What’s that, foregone conclusion then you reckon, sir?” said the barman.

“Arsenal without a chance?”

“No, no,” said Ford, “it’s just that the world’s about to end.” “Oh yes, sir, so you said,” said the barman, looking over his glasses this time at Arthur. “**Lucky escape for Arsenal if it did.**” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.18)

9) He said, “Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so.”

“Very deep,” said Arthur, “you should send that in to the **Reader’s Digest**. They’ve got a page for people like you.” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.19)

10) On this particular Thursday, something was moving quietly through the ionosphere many miles above the surface of the planet; several somethings in fact, several dozen huge yellow chunky slablike somethings, huge as office blocks, silent as birds. [...]

The planet beneath them was almost perfectly oblivious of their presence, which was just how they wanted it for the moment. The huge yellow somethings went unnoticed at **Goonhilly**, they passed over **Cape Canaveral** without a blip, **Woomers** and **Jodrell Bank** looked straight through them – which was a pity because it was exactly the sort of thing they’d been looking for all these years. (Adams, 1979/2016b, pp.20-21)

11) “Stop, you vandals! You home wreckers!” bawled Arthur. “You half-crazed **Visigoths**, stop, will you!” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.24)

12) “Are you trying to tell me that we **just stuck out our thumbs** and some green bug-eyed monster stuck his head out [...]

(Adams, 1979/2016b, p.43)

13) “Space,” it says, “is big. Really big. You just won’t believe how vastly hugely mindbogglingly big it is. I mean you may think it’s **a long way down the road to the chemist**, but that’s just peanuts to space.” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.66)

14) “The first I knew about it was when a workman arrived at my home yesterday. I asked him if he’d come to clean the windows and he said no he’d come to demolish the house. He didn’t tell me straight away of course. Oh no. First he wiped a couple of windows and charged me **a fiver**. Then he told me.” (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.7)

15) He struck most of the friends he had made on Earth as an eccentric, but a harmless one – an unruly **boozier** with some oddish habits. For instance he would often gatecrash university parties, get badly drunk and start making fun of any astrophysicist he could find till he got thrown out. (Adams, 1979/2016b, p.9)

16) “We are quite definitely here as representatives of the Amalgamated Union of Philosophers, Sages, Luminaries and Other Thinking Persons, and we want this machine off, and we want it off *now!*”
“What’s the problem?” said Lunkwill.

[...]

“You just let the machines get on with the adding up,” warned Majikthise, “and we’ll take care of the eternal verities, thank you very much. You want to check your legal position you do, mate. Under law the Quest for Ultimate Truth is quite clearly the inalienable prerogative of your working thinkers. Any bloody machine goes and actually *finds* it and we’re straight out of a job aren’t we?”

[...]

“We’ll go on strike!” yelled Vroomfondel.

“That’s right!” agreed Majikthise. “You’ll have a national Philosopher’s strike on your hands!” (Adams, 1979/2016b, pp.144-145)

17) With a subtle roar the engines cut back in, the ship smoothly flattened out of its dive and headed back towards the missiles again.

The computer started to sing.

“*When you walk through the storm...*” it whined nasally, “*hold your head up high...*”

Zaphod screamed at it to shut up, but his voice was lost in the din of what they quite naturally assumed was approaching destruction.

“*And don’t... be afraid... of the dark!*” Eddie wailed.

[...]

“At the end of the storm...” crooned Eddie.

The two missiles loomed massively on the screens as they thundered towards the ship.

“... is a golden sky...”

But by an extraordinarily lucky chance they had not yet fully corrected their flight paths to that of the erratically weaving ship, and they passed right under it.

“and the sweet silver song of the lark... Revised impact time fifteen seconds, fellas... Walk on through the wind...”

The missiles banked round in a screeching arc and plunged back into pursuit.

“This is it,” said Arthur watching them. “We are now quite definitely going to die, aren’t we?”

“I wish you’d stop saying that,” shouted Ford.

“Well we are, aren’t we?”

“Yes.”

“Walk on through the rain...” sang Eddie.

A thought struck Arthur. He struggled to his feet.

“Why doesn’t anyone turn on this Improbability Drive thing?” he said. “We could probably reach that.”

[...]

“Though your dreams be tossed and blown...” sang Eddie.

[...]

“Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart...”

“Does anyone know why Arthur can’t turn on the Improbability Drive?” shouted Trillian.

“And you’ll never walk alone...” Impact minus five seconds, it’s been great knowing you guys, God bless... ***You’ll ne...ver... walk... alone!”*** (Adams, 1979/2016b, pp.109-111)

APPENDIX B

CULTURAL PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

PROBLEMS:

Culture-specific concepts: SL word refers to a concept unknown in the TC. It can be abstract (e.g. the English idea of ‘**privacy**’), concrete (e.g. ‘**airing cupboard**’), related to religious beliefs, social customs, types of food, etc. (Baker, 2011, p.18).

SL concept is not lexicalized in the TL: The SL word refers to a concept known in the TC but ‘not lexicalized, that is not 'allocated' a target-language word to express it’. E.g. ‘**savoury**’ (has no equivalent in many languages) (ibid., pp.18-19).

The SL word is semantically complex: ‘[...] very concise forms for referring to complex concepts’. E.g. ‘**arruação**’ (a Brazilian word describing a method of ‘clearing the ground under coffee trees’) (ibid., p.19).

The SL and TL make different distinctions in meaning: Distinctions in meaning may be more or fewer in the TL than in the SL, depending on what is important for each language. Context is essential to appreciate and decipher such distinctions. E.g. In Indonesian: ‘**kehujanan**’ (going out in the rain without knowing it is raining) and ‘**hujanhujan**’ (going out in the rain knowing it is raining).

The TL lacks a superordinate: The TL ‘may have specific words (hyponyms) but no general word (superordinate) to head the semantic field’ (ibid., pp.19-20). E.g. In Russian there is no direct equivalent for ‘**facilities**’; instead, it has several specific words and expressions that could be seen as types of facilities.

The TL lacks a specific term (hyponym): Languages can have general words (superordinates) but lack specific ones (hyponyms) (ibid., p.20). E.g. In English: ‘**house**’ (superordinate); ‘**bungalow**’, ‘**cottage**’ (hyponyms with no equivalents in many languages).

Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective: Physical perspective (where things or people are in relation to one another or to a place) can be more important in one language than in another. ‘Perspective may also include the relationship between participants in the discourse (tenor)’ (ibid.). E.g. Japanese has six equivalents for ‘**give**’ (depending on who gives to whom): ‘**yaru**’, ‘**ageru**’, etc.

Differences in expressive meaning: A TL word with the same propositional meaning as the SL word, but with a different expressive meaning.

a) ‘It is usually easier to add expressive meaning than to subtract it’ (ibid., pp.20-21). E.g. ‘**batter**’ (as in child battering) would be translated in Japanese as ‘**tataku**’ (more neutral ‘to beat’) **plus a modifier equivalent to ‘savagely’**.

b) When the TL equivalent ‘is more emotionally loaded’ than the ST term, differences in expressive meaning are more complex, mostly in ‘sensitive issues such as religion, politics and sex’ (ibid.). E.g. English: ‘**homosexuality**’ (neutral), in Arabic: ‘**shithuth jinsi**’ (‘sexual perversion’, pejorative).

Differences in form: When there is no direct equivalent in the TL for a specific form in the ST:

a) ‘suffixes and prefixes which convey propositional and other types of meaning in English’ (ibid. p.21): e.g. **-ish** (‘boyish’), **-able** (‘conceivable’).

b) ‘affixes which contribute to expressive or evoked meaning’ (ibid.): e.g. ‘**washateria**’, ‘**grocceteria**’.

c) ‘[...] those which convey expressive meaning’ (ibid.): ‘**journalese**’, ‘**translationese**’ (**-ese** suggests disapproval of a muddled/stilted form of writing).

Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms: Even if a direct equivalent exists in the TL, ‘there may be a difference in the frequency with which it is used or the purpose for which it is used’ (ibid., p.22). E.g. in English: **-ing** form is more frequently used for binding clauses than in German. Using ‘an equivalent –ing form in a German [...] target text would result in stilted, unnatural style’ (ibid.).

The use of loan words in the ST: '[...] loan words [...] are often used for their prestige value [...] [and] air of sophistication [...]. This effect is often lost in translation, both into the language from which the loan word is originally borrowed and into other languages' (ibid.). When a language has no equivalent loan word, only the propositional meaning can be rendered in the translation. E.g. '**dilettante**' is a loan word in English, Russian and Japanese, but Arabic has no equivalent loan word' (ibid.).

STRATEGIES:

Translation by a more general word (*superordinate*): 'the use of a general word (superordinate) to overcome a relative lack of specificity' in the TL (Baker, 2011, pp.23-25), i.e. finding 'a more general word that covers the core propositional meaning of the missing hyponym in the target language' (ibid., p.25). E.g. '**shampoo**' (v) translates as '**lavar**'.

Translation by a *more neutral/less expressive word*:

- a) 'there is a noticeable difference in the expressive meaning' (ibid., pp.25-26). E.g. 'mumble' (confusion, embarrassment) has as nearest equivalent in Italian 'mugugnare' ('dissatisfaction'), so it works better '**suggerisce**' ('suggest').
- b) the equivalent closer to both the propositional and expressive meaning of the SL word can be 'too direct, too openly disapproving' by the standards of the TL culture (ibid., pp.26-27). E.g. the expressive meaning of '**archaic**' is lost in Japanese.
- c) the TC does not have the concept of a specific term (ibid., p.27). E.g. '**exotic**' does not exist as a concept in China.
- d) the TC does have an equivalent for the SL word, but it is used in a different context (ibid.). E.g. '**mystery**' in China is mostly associated with religion.
- e) there is no direct equivalent in the TL. E.g. '**home**' in Chinese can be replaced by near-equivalents like '**habitat**' (less expressive and more formal).
- f) It is sometimes possible to retain expressive meaning by adding a modifier" (ibid., p.28). E.g. '**ugly**' translates as '**falansteri**' (in Italian 'the word has a pejorative connotation') (ibid., pp.28-29).

Translation by *explicitation*: introduces in the translated text implicit information contained in the original text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.9). E.g. **‘students of St. Mary’s’** translates as **‘étudiantes de l’école St. Mary’** (ibid., p.117).

Translation by *cultural substitution*: ‘replacing a culture-specific item [...] with a target-language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader, for instance by evoking a similar context in the target culture. [...] this strategy [...] gives the reader a concept with which he or she can identify, something familiar and appealing’ (Baker, 2011, p.29). E.g. in *Merde Actually*: **‘Maybe it’s because I’m not a Londoner’** (a reference to a song title “Maybe it’s because I’m a Londoner”) is translated as **‘Ils sont fous, ces londoniens’** (a reference to a saying in *Asterix et Obelix*: ‘ils sont fous, ces Anglais’) (Fusari, 2009).

‘[...] the translator’s decision to use this strategy will largely depend on (a) how much license is given to him or her by those who commission the translation; (b) the purpose of the translation; and (c) the translator’s own judgement of the desirability or otherwise of obscuring the cultural specificity of the source text’ (Baker, 2011, p.29).

Translation using a *loan word* or *loan word plus explanation*:

a) The original SL word is used as a loan word when there is no natural equivalent in the TL (new technical processes or unknown concepts) (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1972, p.55). E.g. in English: **‘fuselage’** (from French).

b) The loan word can be followed by an explanation ‘based on modifying a superordinate/general word’ (Baker, 2011, p.35). ‘[...] common in dealing with culture-specific items, modern concepts and buzz words. [...]. Once explained, the loan word can then be used on its own’ (ibid., p.33). E.g. In Arabic: **‘cap’** (loan word from English) plus **‘that is a plastic hat which covers the hair’** (explanation).

c) Loan words can also be used ‘because they sound more modern, smart, high class. The emphasis here is on expressive and evoked rather than propositional meaning’ (ibid., p.36). E.g. **‘conservatory’** in Japanese.

Translation by *paraphrase using a related word*: '[...]' used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency [of use] in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language' (ibid.). E.g. '**overlooking**' is translated into German as '**which overlooks**'.

'Comparison [...]' can be used to deal with other types of non-equivalence' (ibid., p.37). E.g. '**creamy**' is translated into Arabic as '**that resembles cream**'.

Translation by *paraphrase using unrelated words*: 'If the concept expressed [...] is not lexicalized [...] in the target language, the paraphrase strategy can still be used in some contexts. [...] [by] modifying a superordinate or [by] unpacking the meaning of the source item, particularly if the item in question is semantically complex' (ibid., p.38). E.g. an Arabic translation of the English term '**affidavit**', as '**written communication supported by an oath**' (ibid., p.40).

Good strategy for 'specifying propositional meaning [but] a paraphrase [...] [is not] a lexical item and therefore cannot convey expressive, evoked or any kind of associative meaning' (ibid., p.41).

Translation by *omission*: 'If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital [...], translators can [...] omit translating [it] [...]. There is inevitably some loss of meaning [...]. It is [...] advisable to use this strategy only as a last resort' (ibid., pp.42-43). E.g. '[...] for younger visitors to see in **real-life detail** the way their parents [...]' can be translated as '[...] pour les plus jeunes de voir comment leurs parents [...]'

APPENDIX C

HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF CUBAN HUMOUR

Colony and Neo-Republic

Theatre:

Teatro bufo: ‘a form of Cuban comic vernacular theater that [...] appeared in the mid-nineteenth century’ (Laguna, 2017, pp.7-8).

- Originated from the transformation of Spanish musical genres and the substitution of typical Spanish characters with creole ones (Carpentier, 2015).
- Typical Cuban characters represented were the *guajiros*³¹ (Carpentier, 2015), rural guards, *caleseros*³² (Rozada Bestard, 2014), and the icons of the Cuban *bufo*: the *gallegos*³³, the ‘*negritos*’³⁴ (Lopez Civeira, 2016) (Rozada Bestard, 2014), and the saucy mulatto women.
- The Cuban *bufo* was popular in the island for most part of the twentieth century, although it declined after 1940.

Press:

- Cuban humour was mainly expressed through the political cartoons, a tradition originated in 1848.
- From 1875 on, the Spanish humorous press used cartoons to ridicule the Cuban uprisings against the colonial dominion, trying to minimize their importance. That strategy was in turn used by the Cubans in the following Independence War (1895-1898) (Tamayo, Blas Rodríguez & Hurtado, 1971).
- Political cartoons were a safety valve during the pseudo-Republic (1902-1959), when Cubans expressed their discontent through characters that represented the people, like ‘Liborio’ and ‘El Bobo’ (‘The Silly One’, created by Eduardo Abela) (ibid.).

³¹ Cuban term for peasants or people from the countryside in general.

³² Buggy drivers for the Cuban aristocracy, typically black.

³³ ‘Galician’, although in Cuba it has traditionally been used as a general term for all Spaniards, since most immigrants in the early twentieth century belonged to that Spanish region. In early Republican times it also had a derogatory use.

³⁴ A white man painted to represent a black one. The term means ‘black’ in the diminutive form, to make him seem endearing, but also to symbolize his low status.

Literature

- In Cuban literature, humour has also found a form of expression, and many revered authors, like Renée Méndez Capote and Dora Alonso, used it to reflect with irony the difficult times before the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

Radio:

- Cuban humour was represented mostly by the radio station CMK, through shows like *Rudesindo Rodriguez*, *Rudy Rod* (1937) and *Pepe el Cortao* (1940), both written by Cástor Vispo.
- The most famous comedy radio show was *La tremenda corte* (1942-1961), written by Cástor Vispo, broadcasted in Cuba and in many Latin American countries, and considered by the critics as the best radio comedy produced in Latin America back then.

Television

- Cuba was the first Latin American country to have television service, with regular transmissions starting in 1950 with Union Radio TV and followed by CMQ-TV, officially inaugurated in 1951.
- From those early stages to the present, there have always been numerous comedy shows on Cuban television; among the first ones were *Cuba ríe* (1951) and *El show de Pototo y Filomeno* (1955), broadcasted by CMQ-TV.

Revolution

Theatre:

- The presence of humour in the theatres declined during the following two decades after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.
- By the early 1980s, humour was rescued by Conjunto Nacional de Espectáculos³⁵ (CNE) (Quintero, 2013), which became a great company of theatrical humour thanks to its

³⁵ National Group for Entertainment

director, Alejandro García (a singer-songwriter humorist known as ‘Virulo’) and to the comedy writer Héctor Zumbado, who collaborated on the scripts (Pelayo, 2013).

- The CNE promoted unknown humorists, resulting in the creation and consolidation of many non-professional young groups like *La Señal del Humor* (the first and most influential, founded in 1984 in Matanzas province by Pepe Pelayo, Aramis Quintero and Moisés Rodríguez). Their work was different from the traditional Cuban *bufo* in the topics dealt with and in the performances, with careful staging and elaborated music played live by their own members (Pelayo, 2013).
- The mid-eighties were the golden age of the Cuban humour thanks to ‘Virulo’, the CNE and *La Señal*. They brought about a humour revival in the theatre and laid the foundations for the ‘Nuevo Humor Cubano’³⁶, a new way of creating and perceiving humour, with innovative and intelligent scripts and an utter rejection of vulgarity and of simplistic strategies. The young humorists of that decade had university education and connections to art (especially music), which were determining factors for this new type of humour (Quintero, 2013). They raised the quality standards for humorists and audiences, made Cuban humour more complex, intelligent, reflexive and turned it into a new way to make art (Valdés Sierra, 2014).
- By contrast, the nineties were dark times. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the imposition of the American trade embargo brought an economic crisis in Cuba, known as ‘The Special Period’. It brought cuts in the cultural budget, that limited humorists’ shows in theatres and reduced their income. Thus, many humorists turned from theatres to nightclubs where they were better paid but where audiences were less demanding and cultivated, which forced them to lower their standards by telling mediocre and vulgar jokes (Quintero, 2013).
- Exceptions to that tendency can be found in some of the comedians and groups from the previous decade still active in the nineties: Osvaldo Doimeadiós, Otto Ortiz, Ulises Toirac, *La Señal del Humor*, *Los Hepáticos* and *La Leña del Humor*. Also, new humorists and groups emerged during this decade: *Humoris Causa*; *Pagola la Paga*, with members like

³⁶ ‘New Cuban Humour’

Geonel Martin ('Gustavito') and 'Boncó Quiñongo'; *Post Data*, founded by Otto Ortiz; and *La Oveja Negra* (Pelayo, 2013).

- In 1990, the Centro Promotor del Humor³⁷ (CPH) was created to give representation and support to Cuban humorists. Among the events it promotes, the most important one is the National Humour Festival *Aquelarre*, a yearly event held in Havana during which the best humorists present their work in the Havana theatre circuit. At the closing of this event, the CPH gives the *Aquelarre* awards in the categories of literature, graphic arts and audiovisual, and a special award to the best show of the year (Bosch Taquechel, 2017). 'The *Aquelarre*' (as Cubans call it) is the biggest comedy event in Cuba and still attracts large audiences to the theatres.

Press

- Humor and political cartoons have been present in magazines like *Zig-Zag* (1959, 1962), *El Pitirre* (1960-1961), *Bohemia* (1969); and in newspapers like *Juventud Rebelde* (with humorist sections like "La Chicharra" (1968) and "Dedeté" (1970)), *Palante* (1964), *Revolución* (1960-1962), *El Sable* (1966), and *Hoy* (1962) (Tamayo, Blas Rodríguez & Hurtado, 1971).
- The character of 'El Loquito' ('The Little Crazy One'), created by René de la Nuez, appeared with the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, depicting the social achievements and mocking the American government that no longer controlled the island (ibid.).
- There were also comics with a humorous component, mainly intended for children and published in magazines like *Pionero*, *Zunzún*, *Cómicos*, and *El Muñe*. In 1970 in *Pionero* appeared the character of *Elpidio Valdés*, created by Juan Padrón,³⁸ whose adventures were published monthly in *Zunzún* during the 1980s and which became the most popular of Cuban comics.
- Currently, the cartoon presence remains strong, with most of the previously mentioned magazines still in circulation and the works of notorious cartoonists like Arístides Esteban Hernández Guerrero (1963-) known as 'Ares'.

³⁷ 'Humour Promoter Centre'

³⁸ Cartoonist and filmmaker, considered as the father of the cinematographic Cuban animation.

Literature

- In the sixties and seventies in Cuba, the literary aesthetic demanded a socially and politically committed prose, in which gravity was to prevail. Thus, not much humour was produced and ‘officially sanctioned writers attempted to move away from their legacy of lightheartedness’ (Cooper, 2006, p.34).
- Cuban authors that did create humour during those times were Samuel Feijóo Rodríguez, with the novel *Vida completa del poeta Wampampiro Timbereta* (1981); and Virgilio Piñera, a poet and playwright, master of irony, black humour and pioneer of the theatre of the absurd in Cuba, with his plays *Jesús* and *Falsa alarma*, written in the forties. Also, Onelio Jorge Cardoso (called ‘the greatest storyteller’), with short stories (often humorous) like “Francisca y la muerte”; and Guillermo Cabrera Infante, a successful writer (although virtually unknown in Cuba by the younger generations), who wrote *Tres tristes tigres* (1967). Cabrera Infante was considered the best representative of the Cuban literary style since his sense of humour, the Cuban *choteo*, reflected a behaviour deeply engrained in the island’s literature and way of life (Mario Santí, 2005).
- During the eighties, author Héctor Zumbado Argueta (known as ‘H. Zumbado’) was the most successful comedy writer, creating humorous stories for the important Cuban magazine *Bohemia* and two humorist sections (“Riflexiones” and “Limonada”) in the *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper, where he criticized the bureaucratic practices and other flaws of society. In 2014, the Alejo Carpentier Foundation held an event on Cuban humour where humorists from the eighties participated and acknowledged Zumbado’s influence in their work. As a tribute to his legacy, that event was called ‘Los ochenta que zumbaron’³⁹ (Fernández de Juan, 2016).
- Contemporary comedy authors are Enrique Núñez Rodríguez, the scriptwriter of the TV show *Casos y cosas de casa*, and collaborator of *Bohemia* magazine and humour periodicals like *Carteles*, *Palante* and *DDT*; Mirta Yáñez, whose irreverent humour and social criticism has a feminist touch (Cooper, 2006); and Eduardo del Llano, the most popular among the younger generations, as the author of short stories and short films (based

³⁹ An endearing wordplay, using the author’s last name (Zumbado) as the verb of the same spelling (‘zumbar’, which means to buzz or hum) to characterise the golden moment the eighties represented for Cuban humour.

on those stories and starring his famous character ‘Nicanor’), and co-author of several comedy books like *Cuentos de relaxo* and *Aventuras del caballero del miembro encogido* (Sánchez Gómez, 2009).

- The combination of humour and science fiction found in the corpus of this research has also been present in Cuban literary humour. In the eighties, science fiction became popular in Cuba and foreign authors were published by collections like *Dragón*, *Suspense* and *Radar* (Sánchez Gómez, 2009). This led a younger generation of writers to adopt science fiction as their genre of choice, often with a humorous tone, like Miguel Collazo, who greatly influenced this genre with his sarcastic novel *El libro fantástico de Oaj* (a parody inspired by Ray Bradbury’s *Martian Chronicles*). Del Llano is also included in this group, with books like *Los viajes de Nicanor* (a version of *Gulliver’s Travels*). One of the most famous contemporary Cuban science fiction writers, José Miguel Sánchez Gómez (‘Yoss’), is also known for his humorous tone and he even won the ‘Aquelarre’ Award in the category of humorous text in 2001 (Sánchez Gómez, 2009). The most successful writer of this style is Félix Mondéjar, best known by his pseudonym ‘F. Mond’. In his books, he often parodies history and the classics of literature and films; such is the case of his *Krónicas Koradianas* (an allusion to Ray Bradbury’s *Martian Chronicles*), divided in chapters with titles using wordplay and intertextuality (e.g. “La Perra de las Galaxias”, an allusion to George Lucas’ *Star Wars*).

Radio

- Cuban comedy shows slowly decreased after 1959. *La tremenda corte* was cancelled in 1962, after the CMQ radio station was nationalized due to the Cuban Revolution policy.
- By 1980, there was only one constant comedy show on the radio: the historic *Alegrías de Sobremesa* (1963-July 2017), broadcasted daily by Radio Progreso station and written by Alberto Luberta Noy. It had some of the best and most experienced comedians of the moment, like Enrique Arredondo, Marta Jimenez Oropesa and Aurorita Basnuevo (Pelayo, 2013) and for almost three more decades continued to be very popular in Cuba.

- The *Nuevo humor cubano* of the 1980s was represented by the shows *Teoréticas*, written and performed by *La Señal del Humor*, and *El Programa de Ramón*, written by Ramón Fernández Larrea (Quintero, 2013).
- The situation of humour in the radio has become critical during the twenty-first century. The only remaining comedy show, *Alegrías de Sobremesa*, was cancelled in July 2017, due to the deaths of two of its main actors and also of its writer, Luberta, in January 2017.

Television

- This was probably the medium in which comedy thrived the most after 1959.
- CMQ-TV was nationalized, renamed *Cubavisión* and it broadcasted famous and loved comedy shows like *San Nicolás del Peladero* (1963-1983), *Casos y Cosas de Casa* and *Detrás de la Fachada*, both from the mid-sixties.
- In the early 1980s, the situation of humour in television became critical (Pelayo 2013): one of its pillars, *San Nicolás del Peladero*, had recently ended, and although *Detrás de la Fachada* still remained, it would also end a few years later (Quintero, 2013).
- The *Nuevo Humor Cubano* did not have a fixed space or programme on television, although there were sporadic presentations of stand-up comedians like ‘Chaflán’, ‘Virulo’ and the talented monologist Carlos Ruiz de la Tejera (Pelayo, 2013). The *Nuevo Humor* was a movement formed around and centered in the theatrical format, so its members preferred a real interaction with the audience and the creative freedom from censorship that the theatre provides.
- Humour was best represented in the television of the 1980s through animated series, intended for children and teenagers but actually followed by all Cubans, the most famous and popular of all being *Elpidio Valdés* (1974-1992), based on the comic created by Juan Padrón and also written and produced by him. It tells the story of the Cuban war of Independence (1895-1898) through the character of Elpidio Valdés, a mambí⁴⁰ colonel who represents the Cuban peasants that joined some landowners and their freed slaves to form the Ejército Libertador (‘Liberating Army’). There were other popular humorous

⁴⁰ Name given to the Cuban rebels who fought in the wilderness, guerrilla-style, against the Spanish colonialism

animations like *Matojo*, *Chuncha*, *Cecilín y Coti* and a series of silent shorts called *Filminutos*.

- During the difficult decade of 1990, humour in the television tried to fill the gap left in the theatres, but there were very few comedy shows. During the first half of the nineties, the most popular show was *Sabadazo*, broadcasted by *Cubavisión* on Saturday nights and which grouped many of the gifted humorists from the eighties. There was also *Pateando la lata*, a show with far less artistic quality, but people followed it because for many years this was the only constant comedy show on television. The best show of that decade was *¿Y tú de qué te ríes?* written and presented by Ulises Toirac and broadcasted once a week by *Cubavisión* during the months of July and August. This programme featured brilliant sketches by all the experienced groups and individual comedians of the previous years, including Toirac himself.
- Humour's presence continued to be mainly through animated series, mostly reruns of the ones made in the eighties. As an alternative to the low production of national TV comedy, several foreign comedy shows were broadcasted during the 1990s, like the British programmes *Count Duckula* (translated as '*Conde Pátula*'), broadcasted in Cuba with Mexican dubbing and a tremendous success among the younger generations; and *Mr. Bean*, which was subtitled, but since Rowan Atkinson's character was mostly silent and his humour was visual and situational, it had an international appeal and it was highly admired and enjoyed by all Cubans.
- Throughout the 2000s, the tendency of broadcasting foreign comedies continued, with mainly American sit-coms like *Sainfield*, *Friends*, *How I met your mother*, *Scrubs* and *The Big Bang Theory*. There were several shows from other countries and another British one: *The I.T. Crowd*. In the present decade, the British show *Plebs* has also become known, although it has not been broadcasted by national television.
- As for the national production of comedy, the number and specially the quality of the shows have been low. The most successful shows of the last seventeen years have been *¿Jura decir la verdad?* (2001), meant as a tribute to the radio show *La Tremenda Corte* and created by Gustavo Fernandez-Larrea and Ulises Toirac, who also performed in it; *La neurona intranquila*, still broadcasted; *Deja que yo te cuente*; and *Vivir del cuento*, written

and starred by Luis Silva, among others, and which is currently the most popular comedy show in Cuba.

Cinema

- Cuban films have always had elements of humour in most of its productions.
- The best and most representative filmmakers of Cuban comedies after the Revolution are Tomás Gutiérrez Alea ('Titón') (1928-1996) and Juan Carlos Tabío (1943-).
- 'Titón' was the creator of classics like *La Muerte de un burócrata* ('Death of a Bureaucrat') (1966), a tribute to the history of comedy in films, with allusions to the works of Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, etc.; *Fresa y Chocolate* ('Strawberry and Chocolate') (1994); and *Guantanamera* (1997), which was Titón's last film.
- Tabío's first comedy was *Se permuta* ('The Exchange') (1983), followed by *Plaff o Demasiado miedo a la vida* ('Plaff or Too Afraid of Life') (1988), both very successful.
- Another classic of the Cuban comedies is *Los pájaros tirándole a la escopeta* ('Ducks Shooting the Hunter') (1984), directed by Rolando Díaz.
- Only three animated comedies were made, written and directed by Juan Padrón: *Elpidio Valdés* (1974), *¡Vampiros en La Habana!* ('Vampires in Havana!') (1985), co-written with Ernesto Padrón, and *¡Más Vampiros en La Habana!* ('More Vampires in Havana!') (2003).

From 2010 on, there has been a slow but evident recovery of the Cuban humour, with attempts to renovate it through some good quality TV programmes, a constant presence in the graphic arts and the press, and the work of the CPH. According to Octavio Rodríguez 'Churrisco'⁴¹, in terms of the quality of the material Cuban humour is presently in a much better situation than ten years ago, due to the return of comedy shows to the theatres and the presence of better writers in the CPH. However, low quality and vulgar shows still persist (Suzarte Medina, 2017).

⁴¹ Humorist, actor and current president of the humorists' section of the *Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba* (National Association of Cuban Writers and Artist') (UNEAC).