Pragmalinguistics in the Spanish Translation of Humorous Discourse

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the relevance of the pragmalinguistic factor in the processes of translation of humorous discourse from Arabic into Spanish, specifically in the work of the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz. The selection of this author's narrative as the basis of the present work is due to the increase in the number of published translations of his works into other languages, including Spanish, especially in the last two decades. On many occasions, the lack or difficulty of transferring the humorous discourse into Spanish as the target language is observed, due to the lack of involvement of the pragmalinguistic factor in the translation process. In this sense, we will carry out a pragmatic analysis of some fragments of the Egyptian writer's work, to verify the influence of this factor in the success or failure of the translation process of the humorous discourse. We will also provide answers to some of the difficulties encountered in the translation process, to guarantee the hilarious effect for the reader in the target language. The result of this analysis may help in future translations of the writer's works, as well as in the translation of humorous discourse in general.

Keywords

La pragmalingüística en la traducción al español del discurso humorístico

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es demostrar la relevancia del factor pragma lingüístico en los procesos de traducción del discurso humorístico del árabe al español, en concreto en la obra del escritor egipcio Naguib Mahfouz. La selección de la narrativa de este autor como base del presente trabajo se debe al aumento de las traducciones publicadas de sus obras a otras lenguas, entre ellas el español, sobre todo en las últimas dos décadas. En muchas ocasiones, se observa la carencia o la dificultad del trasvase del discurso humorístico al español como lengua meta, debido a la falta de implicación del factor pragmalingüístico en el proceso traslativo. En este sentido, realizaremos un análisis pragmático de algunos fragmentos de la obra del escritor egipcio, con el fin de constatar la influencia de este factor en el éxito o el fracaso del proceso de traducción del discurso humorístico. Asimismo, ofreceremos respuestas a algunas de las dificultades planteadas en el proceso traductológico, con el fin de garantizar el efecto hilarante para el lector en lengua meta. El resultado de este análisis podrá servir de ayuda para futuras traducciones de las obras del escritor, así como en la traducción del discurso humorístico en general.

Palabras clave

Naguib Mahfouz; pragmática; traducción del humor; traducción del árabe al español.

Recibido el 25/04/2022
Aceptado el 09/12/2022

1. Introduction

This paper starts from the premise that humorous discourse represents a certain deviation from the serious use –so to speak– that we make of language as a tool for social communication. This deviation takes the form of an infringement not only of the rules governing the use of language, but also of certain social norms. This fact further complicates the transfer of humour from one language to another, since social norms are closely linked to the use determined by each community to ensure its own integration. These rules are varied and are determined by the behaviour of the community in question; by the way, it understands the concepts of community coexistence, its way of acting and proceeding in social relations between its members, etc. Regarding these kinds of social rules, Mohamed Saad (2012, p. 43) reflections on this category of rules, which he calls social logic, are significant:

> As in the case of conversation –which is governed by a set of rules– what we call here social logic also has its own rules. The situation in this case is, however, much more complex, and therefore it is not easy to establish a small number of maxims. Nevertheless, we can divide these hypothetical rules into two categories, one that organises the direct relations between beings and the facts of external reality, and the other that brings order to beings and facts considered individually.

In this respect, and on social norms and their effect on the transfer of humorous discourse in the translation process, some researchers, such as Muñoz-Bassols and Muñoz Calvo (2015) and Mahmoud Y. (2019), emphasize the daily communication as a component of literary creation and remark on the difficulties involved in its translation process. Other researchers, such as El Madkouri Maataoui (2014, p. 247), specify that:

> In different cultures, people do not always laugh at the same thing or in the same way. The chromatic aspects of humorous discourse are not symmetrical from one language to another, nor from one culture to another. Moreover, not all languages have colours for jokes, and in those that do, they do not necessarily correspond to those of the source language. Nor is there necessarily a symmetry of significance (but not of meaning) between the lexicon of different languages.

For this study, we have selected some of Naguib Mahfouz's works, because it contains cultural and social richness. Mahfouz is an Egyptian writer, born in the city of Cairo, Egypt, on December 11, 1911, and died on August 30, 2006, at the age of 95. In 1988 he became the first Arab writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy for his novels The Trilogy, Sons of Our Neighbourhood and Talks on the Nile. In the same year he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Faculty of Letters of the University of Cairo[1].

The relevance of the pragmalinguistic factor in translation processes, particularly

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[1] For more information about the writer and his literary work, please consult the following sources:
Parilla, G.F. (2000). The translation of contemporary Arabic literature: Before and after Naguib Mahfouz. ARABE, E.P.L.L.N.L. (2003). Memories of the Mediterranean: A European space for the new Arabic literature. Garcés, et al. Panorama de la traducción de literatura de minorías en la España de comienzos de siglo: Literatura magrebí y literatura de países africanos.

in the case studied in this paper is based on the influence of Arab culture and Islamic religion on the Egyptian writer's work. For Mahfouz, the fact that his characters comply with Islamic precepts is not equivalent to having faith. This fact corresponds to a behaviour, a social image, and a status that the characters must carve out to guarantee their survival on many occasions. In relation to this reflection, Ḥasan 'Abdullah (2001, p. 66-68) is of the opinion that the idea of religion in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative does not represent an exclusively narrative axis, but goes beyond it, since the author adopts a way of narrating the lives of his characters considering the beliefs that marked the consciences of the Egyptian people for many centuries. The characters face difficult lives marked by poverty, wars, ignorance, social injustices, etc., where the solution is either resignation to the absolute destiny dictated by God, or in other cases, surrender to the instincts that lead to destruction. According to the researcher (Ibid.), the Egyptian novelist highlights the model character in his works, whose faith revolves around work and who, by adopting a positive philosophy as a way of life, shows the possible alternatives to "non-resignation" and the struggle for a dignified life.

Other qualities of the characters in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative consist in the abundance of "conversations in snack bars, gatherings between friends and family, etc. in which a large dose of hilarity is observed, as a faithful reflection of the humorous character of the Egyptians", according to (Saad-Helal, 2020a, p. 209). Needless to point out the pragmatic charge in the language wielded in the writer's narrative to convey such characteristics through a pragmatic language that is difficult to translate into other languages. Thus, considering the reference to the hilarious effect in Mahfouza's narrative on the Arabic reader should be a guide for the transfer of humour in a pragmatic way to the target language or Spanish, in this case, as the researcher states.

In accordance with the above, we believe that it is necessary to consider the effects of the pragmatic factor and its ambiguity in the process of translation of humorous discourse. This would avoid the failure of the translation results and the elimination of the hilarious effect of the source text. Also, it would help a correct transmission of the laughable effect to the target text, as deduced from the results of the different works of several researchers, among them: (Mohamed Saad 2019), (Saad-Helal 2020b), (El-Madkouri Maataoui, 1994) or (Saleh Hussein, 2017).

For the analysis of the selected fragments in this work, we have chosen the examples analysed in the following works by Naguib Mahfouz and their translations into Spanish[2]:

1. The trilogy, consisting of three novels:

    a. *Between two palaces* (*Entre dos palacios*), novel written in Arabic in 1956. Original title *Bain el-Qasrayn*. Ediciones Martínez Roca, S.A., Madrid, 2010. Translation Eugenio Gálvez Vázquez, Rodolfo Gil Grimau,

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[2]Due to the extensive and vast literary legacy of the writer Naguib Mahfouz, the task of analyzing his works is very difficult; logically, we cannot analyze each one of them, given the nature of the objectives we are pursuing in this study. The criteria for selecting these works focus on their relevance within Mahfouz's literary production.

Mª Dolores López Enamorado, Rafael Monclova Fernández and Clara Mª Thomás de Antonio.

b. *Palace of Desire* (*Palacio del deseo*)*,* novel written in arabic in 1957. Original title *Qasr el-Shawq*. Ediciones Martínez Roca, S.A., Madrid, 2009. Translation Eugenia Gálvez Vázquez, Carmen Gómez Camarero, Mª Dolores López Enamorado, Rafael Monclova Fernández, Clara Mª Thomás de Antonio and Rafael Valencia Rodríguez.

c. La Azucarera, novel written in arabic in 1957. Original title *El-Sukkariyya.* Ediciones Martínez Roca, S.A., Madrid, 1990.

2. *Khan Al-Khalili* (*Jan AlJalili*), novel written in arabic in 1945. Original title *Khan al-Khalili.* Ediciones Alianza Editorial, S.A., Madrid, 2007. Translated by Belén Campo.

3. *The alley of miracles* (*El Callejón de los Milagros*), novel written in Arabic in 1947. Original title *Zuqaq al-Midaqq*. Ediciones Planeta Madrid, S.A., 2006, translated by Helena Valentí.

The original Arabic versions are from the collection of the Library of the American Univesity in Cairo. [https://library.aucegypt.edu/]

2. Theoretical insights into theories of verbal humour

To approach the concept of the most relevant theories of verbal humour, it is necessary to review two of the main perspectives: the philosophical-psychological and the linguistic-pragmatic.

Although, in principle, the second perspective is the most useful when evaluating the hypothesis of this work, it is still necessary to know the most relevant theories that belong to the first perspective (philosophical-psychological), which have been approached, according to Llera J. (2003), by illustrious philosophers from three different points of view:

1. From the point of view of the nature of a subject's laughter. They represent the most relevant theories developed in this regard:

a. The theory of superiority, which focuses on the immoral and arrogant origin of laughter, as a gesture described as "sudden glory" by Hobbes (1651).

b. Psychoanalytical theories, based on the factor of saving, repression, and liberation, to Freud (1969). (Tauber, Alfred I, 2012).

c. Aesthetic theories, represented by Richter (1804), who bases his theory on the universality of humour.

2. From the point of view of the nature of the context in which the person laughing is situated:

   a. Anthropological and sociological theories, dealt with by anthropologists such as McDougall (1922), Hayworth (1928), Ludovici (1932) or Rapp (1951).

   b. Bergson's theory (1985), based on laughter as an immediate correction of individual or collective imperfections.

   c. Freud's theory (1905), which considers laughter as an escape valve that redirects the violent reactions of the individual.

3. from the perspective of the laughable object:

   a. Theories of incongruity; within these theories Aristotle considers humour as a reaction to the rupture of expectations. Cicero, for his part, places laughter within the genre of ridicule, as stated in Saleh Hussein's research (2017). Many other philosophers, among which the researcher highlights Schopenhauer's (1859) and Könisberg's (1977) later developed these theories.

Regarding the theories of the second perspective (linguistic pragmatic), on which we have based the practical analysis of this work, linguistic theories on humour are framed within the two models of linguistic analysis that have so far appeared in studies and research dedicated to this field of linguistic science: the code model and the inferential model. The characteristics of humorous discourse have been explored based on these two models, detailed in this section. Some of these theories are presented below, classified according to the model to which each strand of research belongs, as indicated above, and their ascription to the code model or the inferential model.

The code model, according to the theories of the researchers Milner GB (1972), Norrick N. (1993a) and Greimas J. (1987), consists of the linguistic coding of the message without considering the circumstances or situation of the discourse, which is made up of various pragmatic elements that, in turn, influence the interpretation of the message. Among these researchers, we briefly highlight the theory of Greimas J. (1987) since his studies have been of great relevance in subsequent works on the pragmatics of language.

Greimas J. published a study entitled The Standard Isotopic Structure in which he puts forward a proposal in which the isotopy is the sum of a minimum unit of meaning that form a semantic nucleus, and which, in turn, are responsible for determining the meaning of the utterance. This linguist states that to reflect on the conditions that a scientific work of linguistic relevance should meet, this would involve two difficulties: first consists in the theoretical order and second in the practical order. Moreover, the researcher considers semantics as "an attempt to describe the world of sensible qualities" and designates the name of signifier to the elements that make possible the appearance of signification at the level of perception. Thus, the existence of the signifier is conditioned by that of the signified. This meeting of *signifier* and *signified* is given the

name of *signifying set*. (Greimas J. 1987, p. 10-15).

According to Saleh Hussein (2017) research, in general terms, the code model presents certain limitations, as it is insufficient to justify the set of manifestations of humorous discourse. Saleh (ibid.) explains that this set of theories does not consider humour, namely the discourse situation.

By contrast, the inferential model views the discourse situation as an inferring element in the speech act process. This model considers the idea that, in the communicative process, a part of the messages is transmitted implicitly. This takes place through the identification of the concepts involved in decoding, by means of inferences. The receiver uses the information available in the discursive situation to decipher the exact intentions manifested by the sender through their communicative behaviour, according to Sperber D. and Wilson D. (2004, p. 237-286).

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, new studies began to emerge in the mid-twentieth century, which dealt with speech analysis based on *the inferential model*. In this way, a new research movement began which gave importance to the elements that constitute the discourse situation, to correct the defects detected in the analysis based on mere decoding (*the code model*). From this perspective, we mention the theories of Hancher (1980), Raskin V. (1987), Attardo S. (1990), and Yus Ramos (1997, 2003).

This group of theories owes its success, in large part, to the ideas of Paul Grice published in a study in 1975 in which he sets out one of the most relevant major theories established in the field of speech act research. In his study, Grice establishes four maxims that represent what he calls *the principle of cooperation*. According to the British philosopher, this principle is the rule that speakers must follow to achieve correct linguistic interaction (ibid.). Thus, the infringement of these maxims would be interpreted as a violation of the correctness of the speech act. In this respect, both Grice's theory and the maxims that comprise it are the most relevant theory in the study of the rule that governs the correct use of language. In this same study, Grice registers the term *the principle of cooperation* as a general law regulated by four maxims that order the communicative process between speakers (Yus Ramos 2003, p. 78-79). On these four maxims, we note the following summary (ibid):

> **The maxim of quantity** that is infringed by the scarcity of information provided in the utterance or by the excess of data.
>
> **The maxim of quality** that refers to the infringement in the speech act through information about facts that, because of the world around us, cannot raise any doubts about their falsity. The greater the falsehood in the information, the greater the degree of hilarity provoked by the locution.
>
> **The maxim of manner** occurs when there are obscure expressions in the act of conversation and when interlocutors do not respect the shared social code throughout their discourse.
>
> **The maxim of relation** which is infringed by providing irrelevant data or when it does not cooperate in the development of the dialogue throughout the

discourse: Forms such as the abrupt transition of a topic are also considered a type of infringement of this maxim.

At this argument, attention should be drawn to the point of view of the researchers Sperber D. and Wilson D. (1986). Their theory is a continuation of Grice's work, as it is based on *the principle of cooperation* and *the four conversational maxims*. Despite this, they make clear through their different works the opposition to some of the concepts that make up this theory. Sperber and Wilson criticise Grice's theory and consider that only the maxim of relevance (of all conversational maxims) is necessary for an adequate communication process. Instead, they try to establish mechanisms that empirically clarify the interpretation of utterances in communicative acts, considering the relationship between *what is said* and *what is meant*, following an order of relevance and pertinence in the communication process.

The researcher Mohamed Saad even states, "The same principle of cooperation mentioned by Grice is part of a broader one, which not only governs the verbal behaviour of the members of society but also any type of behaviour within it". This idea leads the researcher to formulate this other principle appropriate to the thoughts we have just presented: "be coherent in your behaviour with the logic of the society in which you move "and clarifies that with the term logic "we allude here to any type of protocol or norm that a given society imposes on its members when acting socially", (Mohamed Saad 2010, p. 69).

As a result of the above mentioned, we could say that the notion of Grice's maxims and, also, the extension of the researcher Mohamed Saad are, in our opinion, the most suitable framework for the realisation of the translation process of the hilarious discourse in the Egyptian writer's narrative.

3. The pragmatic factor in the humorous discourse of Naguib Mahfouz's narrative

In the words of Lirola Delgado (1996, p. 98), contemporary Arabic literature, like other literatures, is linked to the socio-political context of its society; many Arab writers have based their works on the political and historical events that have taken place around them.

> If this argument is applied to the field of Egyptian literature, Mahfouz's literary work is positioned as a valuable historical-literary resource that can guide us in understanding the reality of Egyptian society and the aspects that afflict its people. This information is relevant because it forms the context in which the humorous resources in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative are placed and, therefore, justifies our interest in attending to the pragmalinguistic factor in the translation process.

In line with the above, and to understand the nature of humorous language in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative, Lirola Delgado points out that the use of colloquial language is a characteristic feature of the Egyptian writer's narrative. This feature is

significant, as it highlights the ideology of Egypt's middle and lower classes[3] (Lirola Delgado 1996, p. 104-105).

The humorous discourse in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative is underlined by the peculiar humorous character of the Egyptian people; a people made up of groups with very diverse characters, who nuance their problems and concerns with a witty tone, and which Mahfouz knew how to reflect perfectly in his works, in the form of humorous discourse impregnated with environments, places and historical situations, political opinions, religious beliefs, customs and social and cultural traditions (ibid, p. 112).

4. Linguistic resources in the humorous discourse of Naguib Mahfouz's narrative

To understand the influence of social (pragmatic) rules on the speech act, this work is based on the idea of human knowledge enshrined in Chomsky N. and Otero C. (1972: 60), who affirms, in their work translated into Spanish, that "a system of knowledge and beliefs is the result of the combined action of innate mechanisms, genetically determined maturation processes and interaction with the social and physical environment". From this perspective, the role of the social environment in human language and in the act of communication between individuals who share the same code should be emphasised.

If, in addition to the above, we add that a pragmatic analysis links the relationship-based aspects of grammatical meaning and the facts and objects of the world to which these elements belong, we could affirm that the reality that links the rules of social character with the speech act represents an extremely important factor when analysing humorous utterances in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative. Researchers have referred to this reality as the extra-linguistic aspects of communication.

Likewise, a pragmatic analysis must consider the relationship between the form of the utterances and the attitudes of the speakers. This being so, we could justify that there are many hilarious utterances in Naguib Mahfouz's narrative which, although they do not violate Grice's conversational maxims, do violate other norms related to the common code shared by users or speakers of the Arabic language in Egyptian society. This is the basis of the analysis we intend to carry out in this paper. To this end, a series of statements are presented as examples that will help to understand the significant of infringing this norm in its different aspects and its consequences in the success or failure of the process of translating humorous discourse, following the approach developed by Mohamed Saad (2010).

Thus, and based on the idea that a literary text is distinguished from a non-literary text by the fact that the former is based on "communicative effects and institutionalized systems of norms and values, which are socially, culturally, and historically variable"

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[3] This characteristic feature was consolidated in the Egyptian novel after the Egyptian revolution of 1952, but not without opposition from intellectuals of the time, Villegas M. (1991).

(Van Dijk, 1987, p. 183-184), it can be argued that the literary texts of the Egyptian writer that form the corpus of our work represent a vast field of examples that will help to clarify the idea of the transgression of certain social rules, such as politeness and homogeneity, as well as their use as a humorous resource. Such examples can play an essential role in confirming the relevance of taking into consideration socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic factors in the translation process.

5. Difficulties in the process of translating humorous discourse in Mahfouz's narrative and possible alternatives

This section analyses aspect related to the pragmatic aspects of humorous discourse and the difficulties involved in the translation of such utterances from one language to another, especially due to the peculiarities and characteristics of the Arabic language and culture.

Given that humorous language usually involves several elements that are difficult to combine –language, religion, culture, etc.–, this part of the paper looks at these difficulties, as well as the different possibilities and mechanisms available to resolve the translation conflicts that arise throughout the translation process. It should be emphasised that, far from delving into the theories of translation, the aim of this study is to offer an empirical analysis of the techniques of translating humour, as well as the difficulties intrinsic to this process.

In some cases, it can be observed that the humour implicit in the source text (ST) through cultural connotations cannot be transmitted to the target text (TT). In these cases, the most appropriate proposal is a translation that reflects the equivalent comic effect in the original utterances. It should be noted that our proposals do not follow a standardised model, but, as their name indicates, they are proposals made with the aim of providing an alternative translation for this part of Naguib Mahfouz's work translated into Spanish. In this way, the reader will be able to appreciate the hilarious effect that was left out, for various reasons, in the TT.

The difficulties encountered by translators in the process of translating humorous utterances arise when making the implicit explicit, and when trying to strike a balance between being faithful to the ST and the author's message, on the one hand, and the successful transfer to the target language (TL) so that the receiver of the TL has, as far as possible, the same experience as the receiver of the source language (SL). In these cases, the aim is to analyse the translation of humorous utterances from the translator's point of view and through the translator's designated method of translation. The starting point is the idea that the translator has sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge to carry out the task[4]. Seen in this way, the figure of the translator is that of

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[4] This does not mean that the translator must be a native speaker. It is knowledge acquired by translators through appropriate training in the foreign language and its culture.

a mediator, where they act as a receiver and, at the same time, as a sender/translator, Saleh Hussein (2017).

The degree of perfection or appropriateness of a translation is conditioned by the limitations the translator might encounter when transferring the message from SL to TL since, according to Newmark P. (1995; 2004), the aim is not equivalence but the transfer of an idea, content or feeling. Thus, the success of translating humorous discourse lies in the arrival of the idea or the meaning of a situation from the SL to the TL. In other words, such a translation can be considered correct, in the absence of other functional conditions, when the TL receiver perceives the same thoughts and feelings as the reader/listener of the same text in the SL. All this must be achieved through the necessary linguistic and cultural adaptations in the translation process, whilst complying with the semantic rules throughout the translation process.

To be able to carry out the practical role of this work, a few examples based on the humorous discourse in the novels of the corpus were extracted. The total number of extracted examples amounts to 65. The selection of these samples has been based on the translation techniques of the corpus works into Spanish, observing the preferences of the translators when transferring humour.

The following table1 shows the number of examples extracted, divided according to the translation tools used by the translators of the Spanish version. It also shows the number of examples that are unsuccessful –in our view–, and the percentage of failure in the equivalence of humour in the target text. With respect to the total number of examples.

The examples that are represented below in the translation analysis are part of this total sample of texts:

Table 1. Examples analysed according to translation process

Translation process	Total nº of examples per process	Nº of unsuccessful examples in humour transfer	% of unsuccessful examples of humour transfer of the total nº of examples
Literal translation	10	4	40%
Elision	8	3	37,5%
Discursive creation	9	4	44,4%
Modulation	8	6	75%
Coined equivalence	7	5	71,4%
Adaptation	6	1	16,6%
Borrowing	5	1	20%
Condensation	5	3	60%
functional equivalence	7	3	42,8%

The following is an analysis of some examples in the corpus.

Example 1: Case of adaptation strategy

ـــ "... ومع ذلك فلم تخل حياتها من الحزن، كانت مريضة، أو هكذا توهمت، و لكن لم يأس على مرضها احد ممن حولها، و قد اقتنعت على مر السنين بأن عليها أسيادا، و بأن لا شفاء لها إلا بالزار، و طالما توسلت الى بعلها ليسمح لها بإقامة حفلة زار، و لكن الرجل لم يصغ (J.A.: 26-25) إلى توسلاتها... وقنعت بشهود حفلات الزار إذا اتفقت في بيوت الصديقات..."

Spanish:

> *Con todo esto su vida no dejó de ser triste. Estuvo enferma, o se lo imaginó, pero ninguno de los que estaban a su alrededor se condolió de su enfermedad. Se había convencido con el paso de los años de que tenía demonio en su cuerpo y de que no había curación salvo con* una ceremonia de exorcismo*. Rogaba a su marido que lo permitiese, pero éste no atendía a su petición. … la mujer ante la imposibilidad de convencerlos, tuvo que contentarse con asistir a estas* sesiones de magia *en casa de sus amigas. (J.A., p. 33)[5]*

In this example, the protagonist of the novel jokingly explains his mother's fondness for the exorcism-like ceremonies known in Egypt as "zār". The difficulty of translation in this statement lies in the term itself, since in Arabic this term refers to a ritual consisting of a cultural ceremony to drive away evil spirits, in which a dance, special and exclusive to this act, is performed to the beat of very characteristic rhythmic music that leads to ecstasy. In some cases, an animal sacrifice is performed to satisfy the spirits. The term has its origins in the Ethiopian language, and it is practised to ward off evil spirits as a spiritual treatment for those who believe they are possessed.

As we can see from the example, in this translation of the novel (Mahfouz 2000a), two different terms are used to deal with the translation of this term, "exorcism" and "magic session". In the first case, "exorcism" as an adaptation of the Arabic term satisfies - albeit in part - the transfer of the message, since an exorcism poses a similar equivalence to "zār" but entails different practices as it is specific to another community distinguished by a different culture. However, in the second translation of this same term, *"a magic session",* this transfer is not so successful since a Spanish reader cannot associate the translated term with the reality of a "zār". The reader of the target language does not perceive the cultural nuances of the idea put forward in the source text and which is the source of laughter for the reader of the same text in Arabic, unless the translator specifies this difference with a footnote, something which does not occur

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[5] English translation: *With all this, her life was still sad. She was sick, or she imagined it, but none of those around her sympathized with her illness. She had become convinced over the years that she had demons in her body and that there was no cure except an exorcism ceremony. She begged her husband to allow it, but he would not listen to her request. … the woman, unable to convince them, had to content herself with attending these magic sessions at her friends' houses. (J.A., p. 33).*

in the translated text and which often makes reading less fluid and, therefore, can also affect the spontaneity necessary for humour to occur.

Table 2. Adaptation Strategy Examples

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
وبأن لا شفاء لها إلا بالزار	y de que no había curación salvo con una ceremonia de exorcismo	y de que no habría curación salvo con una ceremonia de *zar* para espantar a los duendes.[6]
حفلات الزار	estas sesiones de magia	estas celebraciones de ceremonias de *zar*.[7]

Example 2: Case of literal translation

ـ ياوليّة اتقي الله ودعينا نتكلم في الجد..
ـ الجد؟!.. أتعني إحياء الليلة التي جئت تتفق عليها؟
ـ أعني إحياء العمر كله..
ـ كله أم نصفة؟!
ـ ربنا يقدرنا على الطيب...
واستغفر الله في سره مقدما ثم تساءل:
ـ نقرأ الفاتحة؟) ب.ق108-109(.:

Spanish:

> *- Mi buena señora, ten piedad, por el amor de Dios, y hablemos de cosas serias —dijo el señor con una carcajada.*
> *- ¿De cosas serias? ¿Acaso te refieres al acuerdo para amenizar la velada, que es a lo que viniste?*
> *- ¡Me refiere a amenizar toda la vida!*
> *- ¿Toda ella o sólo su mitad?*
> *- ¡Que el señor nos depare uno bueno!*
> *Y tras pedir perdón a Dios en su interior por adelantado, preguntó:*
> *- ¿Recitamos la fátiha? (EP, p. 111)*[8]

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[6] English translation: *and that there would be no cure except a czar ceremony to scare away the goblins.*

[7] English translation: *these celebrations of* zar *ceremonies*

[8] English translation:
- My good lady, have mercy, for God's sake, and let's talk about serious things," said the gentleman with a laugh.
- Serious things? ¿Do you mean the agreement to liven up the evening, which is what you came here for?
- I mean to entertain all her life!
- All of it or just half of it?

In this other example, the protagonist of the novel, Ahmad Abd el-Gawwad, tries to seduce the singer, the Sultana, and makes her understand that he has come to her house to arrange with her a possible engagement for a wedding or circumcision party. At the end of the conversation, she discovers his intentions and accepts the beginning of a sentimental relationship between the two. ʻAbd el- Ŷauād concludes the agreement with the Sultana with this phrase: "we recite the *fátiha*", which is rendered literally in the translation of the target text: "Shall we recite the *fátiha*?

This original locution "to read the *fátiha*" means "to read the first verse of the sacred book of the Koran"; this fact provokes laughter in the reader of the SL because in the Egyptian-Muslim culture this act –reading the *fátiha*– is usually practised as a pre-agreement in the marriage between two people and where the parents of both parties shake hands and read "the *fátiha*" as a symbol of agreement. What ʻAbd el- Ŷauād is requesting from the Sultana is a cohabitation agreement outside the religious sphere, i.e., a cohabitation that is neither recognised nor accepted by his community.

As we can see, the hilarious effect is lost because the TL reader, without in-depth knowledge of Egyptian culture, will not notice the paradox detected between the fact of reading "*the fátiha*", an act of religious and ceremonial solemnity, and the objective pursued in this situation: to achieve an agreement of extramarital cohabitation forbidden in the society of the speakers. The foreignization of this translatable element, while keeping the original term, is not a communicatively effective method in this case.

Table 3. Literal Translation Example

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
نقرأ الفاتحة؟	¿Recitamos la fátiha?	¿recitamos el salmo?[9]

Example 3: Substitution case

وضاق سليمان بك عته بالضجيج ذرعا واشتد وجهه القبيح كآبة فقال بحنق وعنف كعادته إذا استاء أو غضب:
ـالهدوء.. يا هوه!.. للغرزة آدابها!
ولاحت الدهشة في وجه كمال خليل فسأله باهتمام:
ـوما آداب الغرزة؟!
(خ.خ.178:).

Spanish:

> *Suleimán bey Atta, que tenía la cara triste en medio de todo ese ruido, dijo enfurecido, con la violencia que le era habitual cuando estaba a disgusto:*
> *- Calma, amigos, <u>el lugar para tomar hachís tiene sus ritos.</u>*
> *Estupefacto Kamal Jalil le preguntó con interés:*

- May the Lord give us a good one!
And after asking God's forgiveness within himself in advance, he asked:
<u>*- Shall we recite the fátiha*</u> *(EP, p. 111).*
[9] English translation: *shall we recite the psalm?*

<u>*- ¿Y cuáles son los ritos del hachís? (J.A., p. 224)*</u>[10]

This statement, which violates Grice's maxim of quality, uses the mechanism of false information that raises no doubt about its falsehood, where the difficulty of translation is manifested in the two underlined sentences. In the first sentence: <u>*the place to take hashish has its rituals*</u>, as we can see, there is no humorous effect that could provoke laughter in the reader of the Spanish text, while its counterpart in Arabic does.

The main difficulty in the Spanish version is to reflect the term "gurza", which is again a translation problem, since it is a term that has no equivalence from a cultural point of view. In this case, the receiver cannot appreciate the falsity of the information given in the ST, unless the translator decides to explain exactly what this term refers to with another explanatory translation strategy, of amplification or contextual compensation, if seeking to maintain the spontaneous humorous effect, or with a footnote or in a final glossary, for example, if they wish to offer a more in-depth cultural explanation.

In the second underlined sentence, the difficulty of translating the same term "gurza" persists and it is then that the translator decides to replace it with the word "hashish", which leads to the total loss of the hilarious effect in the sentence.

Table 4. Substitution Case Example

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
الهدوء.. يا هوه!.. للغرزة آدابها!..	Calma, amigos, el lugar para tomar hachís tiene sus ritos.	¡Eh, calma! ¡Hay que respetar los modales según las normas del tugurio![11]
وما آداب الغرزة؟!	¿Y cuáles son los ritos del hachís?	¡¿y cuáles son los modales del tugurio?![12]

Example 4: Case of incorrect/misleading translation

فطلب الرجل يوما مقابلة وكيل الوزارة ودخل درويش افندي ــــ كما كان وقتذاك ــــ حجرة الوكيل في تؤدة ووقار، وحياه تحية الند للند، وبادره قائلا بثقة ويقين:
ـ يا سعادة الوكيل لقد اختار الله رجله.
فطلب اليه الوكيل أن يفصح عما يريد، فاستدرك قائلا بوقار وجلال:
أنا رسول الله اليك بكادر جديد (ز.م17):

Spanish:

> *Darwish solicitó una entrevista con el director general del Ministerio.*
> *Darwish Efendi, como todavía era llamado en aquel tiempo, entró con aire grave*
> *y digno en el despacho, saludó al director general como a un igual y le dijo, sin*
> *ningún remilgo:*
> *- Señor Director General, Dios ha escogido su hombre.*
> *Al rogarle el otro que se explicara, añadió con toda dignidad:*
> *- Dios me ha enviado a molestarle de nuevo. (C.M., p. 20)[13]*

As in the previous case, this example also belongs to the principle of maximum quality infringement, as it provides information that does not raise doubts about its falsity. The underlined sentence in the ST literally means the following: "I am the prophet of God and I stand before you with a new rank". What Darwish says in this statement makes the reader of the ST laugh because it is understood that a mere official is neither a prophet sent by God with a new message (or burden), nor is there any new divine ladder, as understood from the context of the statement in the ST.

If we look at the Spanish translation in the target text, *"God has sent me to trouble you again"*, we see that the reader of the target text does not perceive the same idea of ridicule of a mere official elevating himself to the status of a new prophet. Moreover, the translation into Spanish is at odds with the reality of the meaning –even the literal meaning– in the ST. As we can see, the difficulty of translating this type of humorous utterance has hindered the transfer of humour from one language to another through an inaccurate translation, since the somewhat free proposal also fails to maintain the comic response for readers.

Table 5. Incorrect/Misleading Translation Example

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
أنا رسول الله اليك بكادر جديد	Dios me ha enviado a molestarle de nuevo	Soy el enviado de Dios y traigo un nuevo mensaje.[14]

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[13] English translation:
> *Darwish requested an interview with the director general of the Ministry.*
> *Darwish Efendi, as he was still called at that time, entered the office with a grave and dignified air,*
> *greeted the director general as an equal and said, without any demur:*
> *- Mr. Director General, God has chosen your man.*
> *As the other begged him to explain himself, he added with all dignity:*
> *- God has sent me to trouble you again (C.M., p. 20).*

[14] English translation: *I am the one sent by God, and I bring a new message.*

Example 5: Case of elision-based translation

ـ أين يا ترى سأقيم في كنفه؟

[...]

ـ شقة جميلة ..

ـ شقة؟ ـ!..

داهشاً فسألها المستنكرة، للهجتها عجب:

ـ ألا يعجبك هذا؟

قالت وهي تشير إلى راحتها:

ـ ألا ترى ماء يجري؟.. انظر جيدا ..

ـ ماء يجرى!.. أتودين السكنى في حمام؟

ـ ألا ترى النيل.. عوامة أو ذهبية..؟!) (ق.ش. 110-111.

Spanish:

- ¿Dónde me instalaré bajo su protección? [...]

- Un bonito piso…

- ¡Un piso!...

Se extrañó de su tono asombrado, y le preguntó sorprendido:

- ¿No te agrada eso?

- ¿No ves agua correr?... *Mira bien… -dijo ella mostrando la palma de la mano.*

- ¡Agua correr! ¿Querrías una vivienda con baño?

- ¿No ves el Nilo?... Una balsa o una barcaza… (P.D., p. 128)

The hilarious effect in this utterance is seen in the last sentence as Zannuba's reply to 'Abd el- Ŷauād. Both receivers, in SL and in TL can perfectly grasp both the humour and the message behind Zannuba's reply: according to our version: "Don't you see the Nile...? A raft or a barge..." However, if we go back in the text, we can see that a part of the preparatory discourse to this humorous statement has been left out. To understand what we are proposing, we must look at the Spanish translation of the sentence in the Arabic version that reads: "*Running water! Would you want a house with a bathroom?*" In fact, the sentence reflects 'Abd el- Ŷauād´s astonishment and his inability to grasp the indirect relevance or double meaning of the speaker; 'Abd el- Ŷauād asks Zannuba if she intends to live in a bathroom and not in a dwelling with a bathroom as posited in the English translation. This answer, in our opinion, is part of the hilarious situation, but the translator, in this case, does not adequately convey the humour, as the translation is not done correctly: "*Running water! Would you want a house with a bathroom?*" The TL receiver has not captured the humour in the same way.

Table 6. Elision-based Translation Example

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
ألا ترى ماء يجري؟.. انظر جيدا..	¿No ves agua correr?... Mira bien	¿Tú ves que aquí corre el agua? Haz el favor de mirar bien…[15]
ماء يجرى!.. أتودين السكنى في حمام؟	¡Agua correr! ¿Querrías una vivienda con baño?	¡Agua correr! ¿¡pretendes vivir en una bañera?![16]

Example 6: Case of translation with undeveloped metaphor

فصاح أحمد عاكف:
- خليلة!
46) سـبحان الله ربي!،مالك تدهش لأتفه الأشـياء؟ أقول إن طعمية البيت لذيذة، ولكن ما رأيك في طعمية السـوق؟
- (خ.خ.

Spanish:

> *Ahmad Akif gritó:*
> *- ¡Una amante!*
> *- Bendito seas, Dios mío. ¿Por qué te asombras de las cosas más insignificantes? <u>Digo que la taamiya de la casa es deliciosa, pero como la taamiya del mercado… (J.A., p. 57)</u>*[17]

In this example, in a conversation between Nūnū and Ahmad Akif, the former compares women to "taʿmiyya". The humorous effect is created by the fact that the TL reader knows that "taʿmiyya" is a popular Egyptian food and that it is tastier if bought from a street stall, as the same food made at home does not match the quality of such specialist food vendors. It also turns out that the name of this food is a linguistic reference to the term "rich or tasty", which further facilitates the comic effect of the metaphor in the TL. In this case, the translation does not pose a great difficulty, as the context gives the ST reader all the necessary information, but the target text reader would not be able to appreciate the same hilarious effect if the translator does not provide some illustration, explanation or compensation about the metaphor or the

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[15] English translation: *Do you see the water running here? Please take a good look…*

[16] English translation: *Water running! Do you intend to live in a bathtub?!*

[17] English translation:
> *Ahmad Akif shouted:*
> *- A lover!*
> *- Blessed are you, my God, why do you wonder at the most insignificant things? <u>I say that the taamiya of the house is delicious, but like the taamiya of the market… (J.A., p. 57).</u>*

pragmatic meaning of the term "taʿmiyya". Thus, the translation must reflect the speaker's intention, since it is clear from the thread of the novel that the speaker is inviting his friend to enter into other relationships outside the home.

Table 7. Undeveloped Metaphor Translation Example

Original text in Arabic	Corpus translation	Alternative to translation
أقول إن طعمية البيت لذيذة، ولكن ما رأيك في طعمية السوق؟	Digo que la *taamiya* de la casa es deliciosa, pero como la *taamiya* del mercado…	Yo lo que te digo es que probar lo que hay en la calle no es lo mismo que comer lo que tienes en casa…[18]

6. Conclusions

One of the most important issues raised in this study is the translatability of humour. In this regard, we have concluded that there are different mechanisms which can be considered solutions to the problems of translating humour and which the translator can make use of to achieve a functional translation. By "functional", we mean that the idea of humour is conveyed in a way that is appropriate for the target text TT. Likewise, it is essential that in literary contexts such as the one presented here, the degree of success of the translation is measured in terms of the ability of the target text TT receiver to experience the same hilarious experience as the reader of the same text in the source text SL.

Regarding the translator's work, we have concluded that, although it is taken for granted that the translator must master the two languages and cultures involved in the translation process, the translator's intuition and sensitivity are also two important elements or qualities in the successful translation of humour.

To find a suitable technique for translating humour, the translator must bear in mind that every humorous discourse belonging to another culture requires a different form and an individualised process of translation, based on the extra-linguistic aspects that surround it.

The complexity involved in translating humour is due to extra-linguistic factors that interfere with the interpretation of the original message in the SL. Cultural elements –such as religion or politics– add difficulties to the translation process, since the translator is immersed in a conflict for which, on many occasions, they have no viable alternatives. On these occasions, it is advisable to use contextual techniques of compensation, amplification or explanation, footnotes, or explanation through glossaries for proposals with a study approach, as they can be effective methods to

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[18] English translation: *What I'm telling you is that tasting what you can find in the street is not the same as eating what you have at home...*

ensure the transfer of humour in the translation process.

In Naguib Mahfouz's narrative language, this factor is even more complex to translate, as Mahfouz's narrative is imbued with the cultural factors that characterise Egyptian society.

Finally, we would like to emphasize future lines of research based on this study. It is the creation of a literary translation manual in the field of pragmatics of the Arabic-Spanish language combination. The manual will serve as a guide for translators in the literary sector in this language combination, considering the increasing popularity of translating novels and literary works by Arab writers.

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