

Interpersonal Communication and Context Accessibility
in the Interpretation of Ironic Utterances.
A Case Study: Rastell's Version of *La Celestina*

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ABSTRACT

It has been traditionally assumed that communication is a process of transmission of information between the addresser, who encodes a certain message, and the addressee, who would decode the message produced by the former. This process is assumed to be possible thanks to the existence of a code. However, certain theories, and mainly, relevance, have made it clear that neither the code nor the process described above are sufficient tools to account for this complex phenomenon. For one thing, were this so, it appears that speakers would always convey what they really want to say, and addressees would invariably manage to decode the "right" message.

However, human communication appears to be a much more complex phenomenon, and such a proteic resource as irony illustrates this quite consistently. This also shows the necessity of further exploring its meaning and the way in which the whole process unfolds. Approaching communication in terms of intentions, and their inference may well enrich and offer a wider explanation.

This paper will deal with the problems presented by the conveyance of ironic utterances in an English version of *La Celestina*, and will aim to suggest certain ways to cope with their interpretation, in terms of the relevance proposals of the relationship between speakers' intentions, in a context which they tend to choose, and which the result of their communicative interaction will tend to broaden and make it more shared.

1. Introduction

One of the criticisms made against relevance theory charges it with neglecting the interpersonal aspect of communication:

SW disregard the perspective on language use from which such a use perpetuates historically constituted ways of saying and doing, a perspective from which types of interaction are predetermined. Beneath consciousness, whither SW do not venture, the possible assumptions, intentions, etc. are determined by speakers.

(...)

The whole section discussing language and communication disregards the fact that a human being is surrounded, and indeed constituted, by an immense shifting societal complex, all of which exerts influences of varying degrees on the substance of language-a substance which, according to SW, is non-communicative.

(Mey, Jacob L. & Mary Talbot, 1988: 747-48).

However, being relevance a theory of communication, it is probably difficult to admit that it neglects its interpersonal aspect. What seems to be the case is that relevance theoreticians have tended to stress the cognitive side of the whole process, with a view to showing that communication as the mere process of codification and decoding is but a poor and inaccurate description, since it overlooks the intentional nature of meaning, an aspect which most pragmatists agree upon, from Grice (1957) onwards. In their work *Relevance*, Sperber and Wilson (1986) develop the way in which the speaker's message is to be coped with by the addressee's inferential recognition of the former's communicative intention. They have already stated that "The semantic representation of the sentence uttered may fall short of being a complete interpretation of an utterance in context." (1986: 11). This semantic representation may be defined as the process of coding and decoding of a message on purely semantic grounds, and it cannot account for the understanding of the communicative intentions, which may even remain implicit. Therefore, the decoding of the message conveyed is just one aspect of the process followed by the addressee.

In the case of the interpretation of ironic utterances, the code model alone is even more incomplete, since it is precisely when the addressee limits him/herself to decoding the message conveyed by the addressee, without wondering further about the precise context in which the utterance is stated, or the communicator's intentions, that s/he is likely to fail to understand the message. For the addressee to accurately understand an ironic message, s/he must go beyond what is explicitly codified, and attempt to infer the speaker's intention, which often remains implicit.

Initially, Sperber and Wilson (1981) have refused the traditional account of irony as "meaning the opposite of what is said," since it cannot account for all the possible cases of irony, and, more important, because it would make every ironical utterance uninformative. Furthermore, the addressees would not be able to understand the attitude intended by the addresser, unless they already knew beforehand about the speaker's attitudes and beliefs.

For this reason, these authors state that it is only the context that can shed light on the interpretation intended by the speaker.

For this reason, we believe that the relationship between the different participants, their communicative intentions and the context where the whole interaction takes place can be a fruitful way to approach the mechanisms of irony. Such an approach can be complementary to the relevance views to irony, as the echoic mention of a proposition, (Sperber and Wilson, 1981), or as the establishment of a relationship of *interpretive resemblance* (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1992).

Two important properties related to the relevance approach to the context are *context choice* and *context accessibility*. According to relevance theoreticians, the context is a psychological construct, which is extended in the process of communication, as participants receive new items and chunks of information. For this reason, not all this information will be equally accessible and at the same time. It may be assumed that a speaker, when communicating a certain message, sets it in a certain context, which, if it is selected by the addressee, and if the latter has an adequate access to it, will give way to the addressee's adequate processing of information, and communication will be successful. Otherwise, misunderstandings will arise. As Blakemore notes, "misunderstandings occur when there is a mismatch between the context envisaged by the speaker and the one selected by the hearer." (1992: 31).

This can be applied to the participants of irony. Traditionally, these are the speaker or ironist, and the audience, who can either grasp the former's communicative intention, or else fail to do so. According to our hypothesis, those who can recognise the ironic meaning intended by the communicator will have had access to the context envisaged by the former, and will have selected the intended interpretation. On the other hand, those who fail to grasp the irony will have remained at the literal level of the code, and will have also failed to match the context intended by the speaker. Even though some ironies may not have victims, according to Julia Jorgensen, "Sperber and Wilson's theory also predicts that most ironies will have victims, at least in the sense that an implicit victim is whoever (mistakenly) believes the echoed proposition (or holds the expectation)." (1996: 614).

Authors such as Maria Jodlowiec (1991) follow a similar hypothesis, in her study of verbal jokes: "The control over contexts that the hearer will access and contextual effects he is supposed to work out are a pivotal aspect of verbal joke production and comprehension." (1991: 243).

The relevance notion of inferential communication has also been criticised by authors such as Leo Hickey, on the grounds that it seems to load on the speaker all the responsibility for the success or failure of communication:

My purpose in alluding to these theories, or criteria, which purport to explain how a Hearer decides which interpretation to put on some utterance when more than one interpretation is available, is to show that they seem to presuppose that the Hearer is

sincerely seeking the interpretation of the Speaker's utterance that will optimally accord semantically and pragmatically with the latter's intentions.

... Once the Speaker has placed an utterance at the disposal of the Hearer, it can be used by the latter in any way and for any purpose he chooses (within very broad limits of semantic and pragmatic meaning), irrespective of the purpose for which it was first intended.

(Hickey, 1994: 324-25)

However, the notion of *context accessibility* also seems to make up for this criticism. About this, Adrian Pilkington has written, with regard to the processing of poetic effects:

The hearer-reader inevitably takes a large part of the responsibility for the context accessed, context which, in some cases, is difficult to retrieve beyond the meta - represented cultural-social interpretations that we often use to think with.

(Pilkington, 1994: 44)

Therefore, even if the addressee may be highly conditioned or constrained by the accessibility s/he has to the context, still s/he has the possibility of choosing the context, and it is only if it matches with the one envisaged by the speaker that s/he can be said to have understood the latter's message.

The relevance approach to the context as a cognitive entity can also be contrasted to the textual notions of *context* and *situation*. Here, Blass' views (1990) on this subject will be followed. What seems clear is that the context, understood in this way, includes both linguistic and non-linguistic information, since its most important feature is that it is cognitively grounded. Moreover, as the context is for relevance theoreticians a cognitive entity, "a set of assumptions retrieved or derived from memory or acquired by perception , and used in the interpretation process," (Blass, 1990: 9), it then follows that both linguistic aspects ("context") and non-linguistic ("situation") are constituents of the cognitive environment only in so far as they are psychologically perceived by the participants. This is how Regina Blass sees it:

The defect of all these proposals based on "situational context" is that context is largely seen as something given in the real world. However, physical context never affects language directly, but only via the speaker's and hearer's knowledge of it. Not everything that could potentially be perceived attracts attention. Moreover, people perceiving the same physical environment do not necessarily represent to themselves in the same way. (...)

In other words the notion of "context of situation" is inadequate for utterance interpretation and for discourse analysis alike: what is needed is a psychological account.

(Blass, 1990: 30-31)

This psychological account embraces aspects such as context choice, context accessibility, or the context as cognitive environment.

Moreover, communication understood as the process of codification and decoding of messages is equally insufficient to account for translation. This explains why a mere word-by-word translation is hardly adequate, because, among other factors, it does not account for how an utterance tends to reflect the speaker's communicative intentions, implicit though they may be, or for how the addressee must infer them. An adequate translation should tend to reflect or suggest these intentions, which sometimes may even go beyond the words actually expressed.

In a sense, it can be maintained that the code model and the inferential model are, although different, complementary processes to account for communication, mainly because the code provides a widely used, economical way of conveying intentions, thoughts, feelings, etc. Sperber and Wilson also seem to tend towards this interpretation, especially when they say the following:

Verbal communication involves both code and inferential mechanisms. In trying to construct an adequate description of these two types of mechanism and their interaction, it is important to realise that they are intrinsically independent of one another, and that communication in general is independent of either.

(Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 13).

If this is applied to translation, it appears to be true that the translation process entails the transference into another language of messages actually encoded, but the translator's task (and the addressees' as a whole) also includes the inference of the communicator's intentions. The case of the translator as an addressee or mediator between two cultures is even more complex, since not only must s/he infer these intentional meanings, but also be able to convey them in the Target Language (TL), in such a way that they can be grasped by the target audience without any further processing effort than the source audience. In this way, the relevance approach to communication as a balance between processing efforts and contextual effects must be equally maintained both in ST and in TT. As Gutt has written,

By monitoring the agreement or disagreement between the audience's expectations and what his translation is likely to achieve, the translator can anticipate mismatches ; (...) In all cases he will measure the success of his translation by whether it enables the receptors to recognize his informative intention,

(Gutt, 1991: 187).

2. Irony and context accessibility in Rastell's version of *La Celestina*: From the Spanish *Tragicomedia* into the English *Interlude*

Certain translator theorists have highlighted the importance of genre differences which may exist between the Source and the Target Culture, and which thus pose certain cultural problems to the translator. Thus, Hatim & Mason have written the following about this:

(...) "intertextual" hybridisation. This is when, in subtle and intricate ways, a text is shifted to another type and made to serve another purpose without completely losing at least some of the properties of the original type.

(Hatim & Mason, 1990: 147)

(...) Texts are essentially multifunctional, normally displaying features of more than one type, and constantly shifting from one typological focus to another. (...) A given predominant text-type could be shifted to admit other subsidiary typological effects.

(Hatim, 1997: 42).

In the case of *La Celestina*, one of the most controversial critical issues is precisely the *genre* of the work. Thus, certain authors, such as Menéndez y Pelayo (1947), Alan Deyermond (1961), or Dorothy Severin (1994), claim that it may be regarded as a novel written in the form of dialogue. Others, such as Marcel Bataillon (1961), or Rosa María Lida de Malkiel (1962) regard the work as dramatic. Whatever the case, the author himself points to the hybrid nature of the work :

Otros han litigado sobre el nombre, diciendo que no se avía de llamar comedia, pues acabava en tristeza, sino que se llamase tragedia. El primer autor quiso darle denominación del principio, que fue placer, y llamóla comedia. Yo viendo estas discordias, entre estos extremos partí agora por medio la porfía y llaméla tragicomedia.

(From the *Prologue*, p. 81)

The translations of literary works are of the greatest importance for the development of a certain "national" literature, since they allow the spread of influences at all levels: thematic, generic, cultural, etc. This is particularly the case of English literature and culture at the beginning of the Renaissance period. The translation of contemporary works written by foreign humanists will contribute to the spread of new ideas and of the new learning, as well as to the development and fixing of the language. Drama will be open to classical influences, such as Plauto or Terence, as well to coetaneous Spanish and French drama. As Tucker Brooke and Mathias A. Shaaber point out,

English humanism was a matter of thought and training more than of spontaneous emotion, of borrowing from Italy, France, and Germany more than of native impulse. The movement affected English literature, narrowly considered, rather slowly and rather indirectly. It came in by two doors: the court and the university.

(Tucker Brooke and Mathias A. Shaaber, 1948: 326)

Now, whatever the *genre* of *La Celestina* is thought to be, what is certain is that Rastell's version, *A new Commodye in Englysh in Maner of an Enterlude* (1525), which is considered to be the first, though partial, translation of the Spanish *Tragicomedia* into English, undergoes a *genre* shift towards the interlude, as the name of the play itself reflects. It may briefly be said that the interlude is a short, dramatic representation, which

is usually merry, lively, and often trivial, and which usually has six actors or characters. Axton, an editor of Rastell's plays, says the following:

(...) *Interlude* is perhaps most safely taken in a neutral sense as a "play between two or more speakers." There are usually about six players. The plays are short (an hour or an hour-and-a-half) and sometimes broken into two or three sections that might have accompanied dinner or supper on the same day. (...) Indoor performance is envisaged in a single "place" occupied by actors in turn or together, rather than on an elaborate "simultaneous" set (as is the case with most medieval religious drama). The actors often announce their arrivals and departures and are solicitous of the audience's attention. The plays themselves are extremely varied, but often alternate grave and trivial matter ("toys and gestic"), and are typically described as "merry."

(Axton, 1979: 2).

From the features of the interlude just given, it may be noted that it is *six* the number of characters which appear in Rastell's *Calisto and Melebea*, which means a reduction from the number of those appearing in *La Celestina*. Especially significant will be the absence of a counterpart for Lucrecia. A recurrent feature, which will make Rastell depart from the Spanish original is that characters keep announcing their arrivals and departures, and in fact, most of the characters of the *Interlude* will introduce themselves to the audience. As we shall see next, this is one of the factors that will influence the access that characters have to the context, and consequently, will tend to produce certain differences in the perception of irony. Therefore, it may be said that some of the factors contributing to the changes operated upon the cognitive environments of the participants, and consequently, upon their perception of irony, appear to be rooted, at least in part, in the genre shift which the English play undergoes, if related to its Spanish counterpart. Very briefly, the rest of this paper will be concerned about the following variations, which are but some of the most significant ones found in the *Interlude*:

- A) the introduction of initial monologues.
- B) stories or episodes which in *La Celestina* are directly attended by the external addressee (e.g., the reader or spectator), and which in the *Interlude* are told by a certain character as something previous or simultaneous to the action being covered.
- C) the asides in *La Celestina* and their counterparts in the *Interlude*.
- D) the absence of certain characters, mainly Lucrecia, in the *dramatis personae* of the *Interlude*.
- E) the ending of the play.

2. A) the introduction of initial monologues

A recurrent feature of the interlude is that characters keep announcing their arrivals and departures to the audience. As a result of this, they will generally introduce themselves to the audience, and, at the same time, they may comment upon the main circumstances which

they are involved in. With all this, the audience acquires certain assumptions which will tend to condition their perception of what is to come next.

This is the case of the starting point of the *Interlude*. Structurally, the beginning of the action proper in *La Celestina* has been preceded by an epistle by the author addressed to a friend of his, a prologue, and a general overview of the plot of the play. Nevertheless, the play proper starts *in medias res* with the reader-spectator's direct attendance to the first encounter between the two lovers:

CALISTO: En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios.

MELIBEA: ¿ En qué, Calisto ?

CALISTO: En dar poder a natura que de tan perfecta hermosura te dotasse, y hazer a mí, inmérito, tanta merced que verte alcançasse, y en tan conveniente lugar, que mi secreto dolor manifestarte pudiesse.

(ST, p. 86)

In Rastell's play, the fragment of the conversation corresponding to this interchange has been preceded by a monologue in which Melebea offers the audience the first portrait of Calisto that they receive. Therefore, in contrast to what happens in *La Celestina*, here, when Calisto appears upon the stage, the audience has already a formed opinion about him:

MELEBEA

O, his saynges and sutes so importune,
That of my lyfe he makyth me almost wery!
O, hys lamentacyons and exclamacyons on Fortune
With similytude maner as one that shuld dy!
But who shall pyte thys ? In fayth not I.
Shall I accomplysh hys carnall desyre ?
Nay, yet at a stake rather bren in a fyre!
(TT, p. 70)

In this monologue, Melebea speaks out what her feelings about Calisto are:

Wyst he now that I were present here,
I assure you shortely he would seke me ;
And without dout he doth now inquire
Wether I am gone or where I shuld be.
Se! Is he not now come ? I report me!
Alas, of thys man I can never be ryd!
Wold to Cryst I wyst where I myght be hyd.
(TT, p. 71)

This fragment is new in the *Interlude*, but constitutes the initial context which will be extended in the course of the interaction between the two lovers.

Previous to the appearance of Calisto upon the stage, Melebea has made her feelings about him explicit to the audience. This constitutes an initial context, which Calisto does not

have any access to. Melebea has made her communicative intentions explicit, but in such a way that Calisto cannot be aware of it, precisely due to the fact that this context is inaccessible to him. With the stimulus of Melibea's complaint about Calisto's passionate interest in her, her attitude becomes manifest to the audience, who can thus construct certain assumptions about what Melebea thinks of Calisto, and also entertain certain expectations about the way in which the encounter between them may unfold.

These expectations will be soon fulfilled, to the rejoice of the audience. They will confirm the assumptions they might have entertained through the initial monologue on seeing Calisto appear upon the stage.

Contrarily to what happens in *La Celestina*, where it may be said that irony is based almost exclusively upon Calisto's failure to infer Melibea's intended meaning, Rastell incorporates the external reader in the actual perception of irony. This shows differences in the grasping and accessibility to the context or cognitive environment for the potential spectators of the action.

In this way, the Target Text audience comes to have certain expectations about what may happen between the two lovers, due to the context which has been created in Melebea's monologue, to which only the spectators have had access.

As a result of all this, when Calisto turns up on the stage and addresses Melebea by telling her

CALISTO

By you feyre Melebea may be sene

The grace, the gyftes, the gretnes of God.

(TT, p.71)

which corresponds to his opening words in *La Celestina*

En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios.

(ST, p. 85)

the audience, who has had access to the context provided by Melebea's former monologue, can have certain expectations about Melebea's reaction towards Calisto. Therefore, in Rastell the effect of satisfaction of the audience tends to be reinforced by the greater explicitation of the whole situation.

The whole scene may be said to develop, in the English version, through the contrast between the initial monologue and the unfolding of the dialogue or interpersonal communication between the two lovers. In this case, the scene of dialogue may be related to the previous monologue, and reinforces the assumptions that the audience may have entertained. Calisto is obviously excluded, and his position, away from this monologue, makes him bound to become the victim of the situation. This is so because he has not had any access to the context provided by Melebea in her initial monologue, which makes him further unable to select the interpretation intended by the young girl. Gutt has explained communicative situations like this in the following terms: "These misinterpretations (...)

arise from a *mismatch in context*: a given utterance is interpreted against a context different from the one intended by the communicator." (Gutt, 1991: 74, my italics). In her book *Understanding Utterances*, Diane Blakemore (1992) also follows a very similar thesis: "... communication can succeed only if the context that the hearer brings to bear is identical to the one envisaged by the speaker, ..." (1992: 18).

With all this, the interpersonal communication established between Calisto and Melebea is perceived in a different way by the external audience in either of the plays. Even though in both cases, the final result is Calisto's failure to achieve his intention, due to his inability to grasp the meaning intended by Melibea, the Target Text presents interesting departures from its Spanish counterpart: the introduction of Melebea's monologue sets the external audience in a privileged position over Calisto to understand his failure. Moreover, the inferential meaning of Calisto's rejection by Melibea is further made explicit and codified in the English version, as Melibea will employ similar terms to those of Calisto to express her rejection. Therefore, Melebea's initial monologue will be *echoed* in the words addressed to Calisto. This proves that the echoing mention of a previous proposition can in fact be a fruitful means for the expression of irony, which questions some of the criticisms made to the mention theory of irony, as outlined by Sperber and Wilson :

Another objection has to do with vague or distant echoes, a type case discussed by Sperber and Wilson. We can say, ironically, *What lovely weather!* even though no actual prior utterance is involved. Sperber and Wilson nonetheless treat this as echoic: "One normally sets off for a walk in the hope or expectation of good weather: *What lovely weather* may simply echo these earlier high hopes" (Sperber and Wilson 1981: 310).

If this is so, mention theory will have to be re-examined: we should admit that it is not always the (real or imagined) originator of the opinion echoed who is the target of the irony: the target can well be reality itself, which makes the echoed opinion false or irrelevant" (Martin, 1992: 80-81)

CALISTO

(...)

Yet dyfferens there is bytwene theym and me,
For they gloryfy by his assuryd *presens*
And I in torment because of your *absens*.
(...)

MELEBEA

(...)

And I promyse the, where thou art *present*,
Whyle I lyff, by my wyll I wyll be *absent*.
(TT, 71, my italics)

The former corresponds roughly to the following fragments in *La Celestina*:

CALISTO: (...) Por cierto, los gloriosos santos que se deleytan en la visión divina no gozan más que yo agora en el acatamiento tuyo. Mas, o triste, que en esto deferimos, que ellos puramente se glorifican sin temor de caer de tal bienaventurança, y yo, misto, me alegro con recelo del esquivo tormento que tu *absencia* me ha de causar.

(...)

MELIBEA: (...) ¡Vete, vete de ay, torpe! que no puede mi paciencia tolerar que haya subido en corazón humano el ilícito amor comunicar su deleyte.

(ST, pp. 86-87, my italics).

This fragment shows that the further explicitation of the message in which Melibea rejects Calisto enhances the irony contained in the passage, and makes the speaker's intentions more explicit, even though irony is emphasized in this way, whereas many times the ironic effect is "suggested" rather than openly spoken out.

Both Gutt and other relevance theoreticians explain a situation like this on the grounds that in order that a communicative intention may be recognised by the audience, the speaker may recur to a further explicitation, since the increase in processing effort will be compensated for by the greater contextual effects that may be achieved:

Put in general terms: if a communicator uses a stimulus that manifestly requires *more* processing effort than some other stimulus equally available to him, the hearer can expect that the benefits of this stimulus will *outweigh* the increase in processing cost-otherwise the communicator would have failed to achieve optimal relevance.

(Gutt, 1991: 141, italics as in the original).

Thanks to the interlude convention of self-introduction of characters, the English audience is also offered the possibility of contrasting Sempronio's information given to Calisto about Celestina with what the old bawd tells them about herself:

SEMPRONIO: Yo te lo diré. Días ha grandes que conozco en fin desta vezindad una vieja barbuda que se dize Celestina, hechizera, astuta, sagaz en quantas maldades hay. Entiendo que pasan de cinco mil virgos los que se han hecho y desecho por su autoridad en esta cibdad. A las duras peñas promoverá y provocará a luxuria, si quiere.

(ST, p. 103)

SEMPRONIO

Sir, I have a neyghbour, a moder of bawdry,
That can provoke the hard rokkys to lechery.

In all evyll deeds she is perfet wyse.
I trow more than a thousand vyrgyns
Have bene destroyed by her subtell devyse,
For she never faylyth were she begynnis.
All onely by thys craft her lyffying she wynniss.
Maydes, wyffys, wydows and everychone -
If she ones meddyll, ther skapyth none. (TT, p. 77)

CELESTINA

Now the blessing that Our Lady gave her sone,
 That same blessing I gyve now to you all!
 That I com thus homely, I pray you of pardon.
I am sought and send fore as a woman universall ;
 Celestina, of trewth, my name is to call.
 Sempronio for me about doth inquire,
 And it was told me I shuld have found hym here.
 (TT, p. 78, my italics)

Here, it is through the contrast between interpersonal communication between the servant and the master, on the one hand, and character's monologues, on the other hand, that the TT audience gains access to Celestina's personality. In contrast to Calisto, or to Melibea, who will be cheated by the old bawd, the external addressee comes to know more, if not everything, about her. The information provided both by Sempronio and by Celestina herself will constitute the encyclopaedic information of the audience about the old bawd, and will strongly condition their expectations about her behaviour. In Rastell's play, Celestina's monologue confirms and strengthens the assumptions entertained by the audience on Sempronio's initial description of the old woman to Calisto. Here, the monologue reinforces the assumptions made in the dialogue, and strengthens the ironic load of the whole situation. Again, Calisto may not possibly have had any access to this monologue, and his inferiority over the audience is again restated.

Moreover, the pattern of introducing an initial monologue reoccurs again when Celestina arrives at Melebea's, and readers-spectators can find the young girl addressing them, and telling out her impressions about the old bawd. In this case, the audience is even more satisfied, because, contrarily to what happened in Melebea's initial monologue about Calisto, by now the audience has had the opportunity both to see Celestina upon the stage, and also to know what other characters have said about her. Therefore, their cognitive environment goes beyond Melebea's ignorance. At the same time, at this stage of the play, this situation may tend to create in the reader certain expectations on what may happen next:

MELEBEA:

I pray you, came this woman here never syn ?
 In fayth, to entre here I am half adrad.
 And yet, why so ? I may boldly come in ;
 I am sure from you all I shall not be had.
 But Jesus, Jesus, be these men so mad
 On women as they sey ? how shuld it be ?
 It is but in fables and lyes, ye may trust me.
 (TT, p. 86)

The contrast between both monologues, the old bawd's and the young girl's, lies on the relationship that can be established between each of them and the knowledge that the audience has in each case. Thus, on seeing Celestina turn upon the stage, the audience may

rejoice to become acquainted with the woman everybody has spoken so much up to now. Moreover, in her direct address the audience, the old bawd herself confirms and strengthens the assumptions that they may have formed or entertained about the old Celestina. This must have been the audience's feeling on hearing her say, "I am sought and send fore as a woman universall."

Even more satisfied must the audience have felt on witnessing Melebea's ignorance. In fact, it must be admitted that it is the first time that she has seen Celestina, and in contrast to what has happened in *La Celestina*, neither her mother nor her maid Lucrecia has had the opportunity of introducing the old bawd to her. But still, Melebea has not been able to have any access to a cognitive environment which is well known to the external audience by now, who can be delighted about her frailty.

2.B) stories or episodes which in *La Celestina* are directly attended by the external addressee (i.e., the reader), and which in the *Interlude* are told by a certain character as something previous or simultaneous to the action being covered

This is the case of Celestina's reporting the audience of Elicia's incident with Crito on Sempronio's arrival at her house. It may be remembered here that Sempronio regards Elicia as a lover of his, but when he reaches Celestina's, she happens to be occupied with another lover. This incident is a good example of *irony of situation*, which has to be solved by means of the action of an external factor, Celestina herself, and which remains concealed to Sempronio, the character target of the irony. The way it is reflected in the translation is also influenced by the different unfolding of the action, which in the case of the *Interlude* is not presented directly to the spectator, but "filtered" through Celestina, who summarizes the incident as an internal narrator. Significantly enough, in her story, she also recollects some of the words uttered by other characters and by herself.

In this case, then, the most significant changes operated on context selection affect the way the scene arrives at the audience. Whereas in the Spanish text they receive this scene directly, in the *Interlude* it is filtered through Celestina's words. Each audience receives the scene in a different context, which is bound to exert certain influence upon the way in which irony is grasped.

The fact that in the English version it is Celestina that tells the episode allows her to introduce certain remarks directly addressed to the audience, which allow them to draw attention to those facts which are signalled as especially significant: "But now hark well, for here begynnyth the game." (p. 78)

The result of this is that the reader has access to a different context in each case: thus, whereas in *La Celestina* the addressee witnesses the actions directly, in the *Interlude* these are filtered by one of the participants.

Thus, another possible way in which the context is modified in the English version is constituted by those cases in which a character in the TT makes a synthesis of certain facts which are otherwise detailed in the ST. This is the case of the events taking place when

Calisto arrives at Celestina's, accompanied by his servants: whereas in *La Celestina* we attend to the scene directly, in the *Interlude* it is told by Celestina, and thus, we only have access to it through her eyes:

SEMPRONIO: (...) Mas di, ¿ qué passos suenan arriba ?

ELICIA: ¿ Quién ? Un mi enamorado.

SEMPRONIO: Pues creólo.

ELICIA: ¡ Alahé, verdad es! Sube allí y verlo has.

SEMPRONIO: Voy.

CELESTINA: ¡ Andacá, dexa essa loca, que [ella] es liviana y turbada de tu absencial Sacásla agora de seso ; dirá mil locuras. Ven y hablemos ; no dexemos passar el tiempo en balde.

(ST, p. 105)

This is an example of a widely employed resource in Spanish Renaissance drama, consisting in deceiving by telling the truth. Thus, the source of irony is a bit complex, because of the interplay between falsity and truth, which carries in itself a certain ironic load, and in this context it is employed with a further ironic purpose: here, Elicia is actually telling Sempronio the truth, but she does not want him to believe her. The main source of irony lies both in the actual situation, as well as in the characters's attitude, mainly Elicia's, and in her intention: She defies him to do what she does not want him to do. Celestina's reaction is that of someone who sees the scene from the outside, and is scared about what may happen. What she does is to prevent this situation, which, in turn, is probably Elicia's main purpose. Thus, here, the irony lies precisely in that the speaker wants the addressee to believe the contrary of what she is saying, but she defies him to trust her.

With regard to the expression of irony, here it is linked to a certain attitude, and by no means can it be said to be "meaning the opposite of what is said," for the character is actually telling the truth. This is in fact one of the main criticisms made by Sperber and Wilson against traditional accounts of irony, even though it is also shared with other contemporary pragmatic approaches: "Verbal irony, we argue, invariably involves the expression of an attitude of disapproval." (Sperber and Wilson, 1992: 60).

In the English play, the former is adapted as follows:

CELESTINA:

But now hark well, for here begynnyth the game.

Crypto in my chamber above that was hyddyn,

I thynk lay not easily, and began to romble;

Sempronio hard that, and askyd who was within,

Above in the chamber, that so dyd jomble.

"Who?," quod she, "a lover of myne." "May hap ye stomble"

Quod he, "on the trewth, as many one doth."

"Go up, "quod she, "and loke whether it be soth."

"Well, " quod he," I go." Nay, thought I, not so.
 I sayd, "Com, Sempronio, let this foole alone ;
 For of thy long absens she is in such wo,
 And half besyde her self, and her wyt ny gone."
 (TT, pp.79)

The most significant changes operated on context selection affect the way in which the scene arrives at the audience in each case. Whereas in the Spanish text the audience receives this scene directly, in the *Interlude* this is filtered through Celestina's words. Each audience receives the scene in a different context. Thus, the English text makes explicit certain assumptions which have to be inferred by the Spanish audience, such as in: "Cryto in my chamber above that was hyddyn,/I thynk lay not easily, and began to romble;/Sempronio hard that, and askyd who was within,/Above in the chamber, that so dyd jomble." But these assumptions must be provided by the narrator, Celestina herself, in her attempt to offer a *coherent* narration. Furthermore, this passage also shows that the coherence of a text does not necessarily rely upon explicit cohesion, as Regina Blass has shown: "Just as cohesion is merely a superficial symptom of coherence relations, it seems that coherence relations themselves are merely a superficial symptom of something deeper, which itself is the key to textuality." (Blass, 1990: 19).

This fragment shows that the difference between those who can grasp the ironic meaning intended by the speaker and those who fail to do so seems to lie on their ability or else failure to gain access to the context envisaged by the speaker.

Moreover, Celestina's initial words, "But now hark well, for here begynnyth the game," has monitored the reader's interpretation, and stands for a greater explicitation. Celestina has made her communicative intention clear, by telling the audience about her informative intention.

2. C) the asides in *La Celestina* and their counterparts in the *Interlude*

With regard to those communicative interactions taking place between Calisto and his servants, critics have generally acknowledged that one of the most important manifestations of irony in the play is the contrast between what the latter tell their master and what they point out in their asides:

El aparte, que no oye o apenas oye Calisto, cambia parcial o totalmente de sentido al clarificarlo Sempronio para su amo. El aparte deja ver al lector el verdadero sentido de las palabras de Sempronio. Es obvio que Sempronio juega con y manipula a su amo en este diálogo lleno de apartes irónicos.

(Ayllón, 1984: 39)

We believe that the relevance approach to the context in terms of choice and of accessibility can offer a fruitful means to account for these communicative interactions. In relevance terms, as a consequence of the choice of context, the different participants in a

communicative act may have different *degrees of accessibility* to the context necessary to process a definite utterance. In this way, those asides may be accounted for as the servants' exclusive access to the context created in them, which hinders the other characters' grasping of their intended meaning, mainly their masters. Moreover, these asides tend to be an important source of irony, due to the differences in meaning expressed through them, and also to the fact that they remain accessible only to the hearer/spectator.

Critics such as Emilio de Miguel Martínez (1996: 155) have attempted to design a typology of the different kinds of aside to be found in *La Celestina*. This classification may be said to be based on the relationship established between the different participants, and also on how far the addressee may have had the possibility to infer the meaning intended by the speaker.

This author classifies the asides of *La Celestina* in the following way: on the one hand, those which may scarcely have been heard by the potential victim, and, on the other hand, those which may have been perceived by the addressee. In the latter case, two different types may be further distinguished:

- those which can be perceived by the addressee, though not wholly understood, and whose request for further clarification makes the speaker say something radically different from what he had previously uttered.

- those asides which the speaker has good reason to believe that the addressee has been able to hear, and probably understand, which makes him/her retake his/her words, by mentioning at least some of those employed at first, but tending to express a new meaning.

As the first two are but hardly distinguishable to the addressee, we shall concentrate upon the influence of the addressee's accessibility to the context provided by his/her interlocutor in the ironical utterances springing from either of the other two.

As an instance of those in which the servant says something radically different from what had been previously uttered in the aside, we may refer to the following:

SEMPRONIO: Mira Nero de Tarpeya

a Roma cómo se ardía ;
gritos dan niños y viejos
y él de nada se dolía.

CALISTO: Mayor es mi fuego, y menor la piedad de quien yo agora digo.

SEMPRONIO: (*No me engaño yo, que loco está este mi amo*)

CALISTO: ¿Qué estás murmurando, Sempronio ?

SEMPRONIO: No digo nada.

CALISTO: Di lo que dices; no temas.

SEMPRONIO: *Digo que ¿ cómo puede ser mayor el fuego que atormenta un bivo que el que quemó tal ciudad y tanta multitud de gente?*

(ST, p. 92, my underlining and italics)

SEMPRONIO: Behold Nero in the love of Tapaya oprest,

Rome how he brent; old and yong wept

But she toke no thought nor never the less slept.

CALISTO: Gretter is my fyre and less pyte shewd me.

SEMPRONIO: *I wyll not mok-this foule is a lover.*

(Aside)

CALISTO: What sayst thou ?

SEMPRONIO: *I say, how can that fyre be,
That tormentyth but one byying man, gretter
Than that fyre that brennyth a hole cyty here
And all the people therein ?*

(TT, p. 72, my underlining and italics)

In this example, the servant's aside is firstly an ironic comment about Calisto, who is probably unable to understand it. His following questions show in principle that he has not been able to perceive his servant's message. In relevance terms, it could be said that he has not had access to the context supplied by the servant. This leads Sempronio to restate his words on Calisto's request, and totally recodify his message in such a way that his master cannot infer his first mock. Whereas the aside plainly expresses Sempronio's despise towards his master's attitude, he seeks to avoid these connotations, by recovering the main ideas expressed by Calisto, to the audience's satisfaction. What Sempronio does is to recodify his message in such a way that his master is not able to draw the intended ironical level. In other words, Calisto can only remain at the level of the process of codification/decoding of the message, because his inability to access to the context of the servant does not allow him to infer the intention expressed by the servant.

If we now come to Rastell's version, he follows a similar technique in this case, which allows the audience to see Calisto's being mocked not just once, but twice, because he is supposed to believe the "new" version offered by his servant. Therefore, Sempronio's first aside allows the audience to infer his despise towards his master, which is if with subtlety conveyed. However, the servant's recodification on his master's request reintroduces his remark in the former context provided by the latter. Being then in a different context, the addressee (Calisto) fails to perceive the intended meaning, but appears as even more unaware before the eyes of the audience, who is supposed to be able to master both cognitive environments.

However, it is doubtful to think that the aside, even though the English version ("I wyll not *mok-this foule is a lover*") descriptively resembles the Spanish ("No *me engaño* yo, que loco está este mi amo"), conveys in the former the meaning intended by the Source Text. The relationship that can be established between both is of descriptive resemblance, since they resemble each other formally. However, it seems that the English version fails to communicate the weak implicatures conveyed by Sempronio in the original, where he shows a clear attitude of despise towards his master. The encyclopaedic entries associated with the verb "engañar" show that it conveys an idea of "inducir a otro a creer y tener por cierto lo que no es" (Espasa-Calpe), which contrasts with the reflexive version "engañarse." However, it appears that the English counterpart, "to mock," rather has to do with "scoffing at," and seems to exclude the reflexive reading of the original. Therefore, the English

version fails to communicate the intention to be inferred from Sempronio's words in the Spanish version, and also the implicatures of "being wrong," rather than "deceiving oneself."

Therefore, here irony is based on the drawing of inferences in a certain context which are not possibly deduced in another one. The contextual change is brought about precisely by the different codification of the message, whose variations give way to different processing inferences. In this way, the different codification of the message leads to different inferences, which are moreover meaningful for the mastery of the message conveyed.

As an example of those asides which are probably heard and at least in part understood by the master, and which are reintroduced partially in the dialogue, we find this:

SEMPRONIO: (¡O pusilánime, o fi de puta! ¡Qué Nembrot, que magno Alexandre; los quales no sólo del señorío del mundo, mas del cielo se juzgaron ser dignos!).

CALISTO: No te oyó bien eso que dixiste. Torna, dilo, no procedas.

SEMPRONIO: Dixe que tú, que tienes más coraçón que Nembrot ni Alexandre, desesperas de alcançar una mujer, muchas de las quales en grandes estados constituydas se sometieron a los pechos y resollos de viles azemileros, y otras a brutos animales. ¿ No has leydo de Pasife con el toro, de Minerva con el can ?

(ST, p.95 -96)

In the Target Text, instead of what we may regard as an aside, what can be found is a direct confrontation between master and servant:

SEMPRONIO:

O ferfull hart, why comparyst thou with Nembroth

Or Alexander -of this world not lordys onely,

But worthy to subdew hevyn, as sayeng goth -

And thou reputyst thy self more hye

Then them both, and dyspayryst so cowardly

To wyn a woman, of whom hath ben so many

Gotten and ungotten -never hardys (t) of any ?

(TT, p.74)

The English version makes the link of comparison explicit, as in "Why *comparyst* thou ..." and at the same time, an interesting shift from the Spanish original takes place: whereas in the Spanish version it is Sempronio himself who mocks his master by comparing him with classical myths such as Nembrot or Alexander, in an aside, which is then reintroduced in the dialogue, through his master's request, the content of the aside is basically introduced through the direct confrontation with Calisto in the English work. This direct confrontation also avoids the reformulation of Sempronio's words, which is one of the basic elements of irony in the original.

In imprecations such as these, it is important to notice that Sempronio's attitude towards his master is more respectful than his counterpart in *La Celestina*. However, the vehicle for the expression of irony is maintained in both cases: here, the ironic attitude has to do with

the hyperbolic comparison of Calisto with classical heroes. In *La Celestina*, the irony occurs both at the level of the contrast between the aside-where the identification is meant to parody Calisto-and what Sempronio tells his master, whereas in the *Interlude* the servant tries to set Calisto at some upper level above the former, by destroying the myths.

In this example, the first source of irony, the comparison with classical heroes, is retaken again by the servant in his direct confrontation with Calisto. Therefore, the recodification of his message is made in such a way as to hinder any possible inference by Calisto of the mock intended by his servant.

In this case, the probable though partial understanding of the message by Calisto leads Sempronio to reconstruct his message, by recodifying it on the basis of the previous utterance. However, although at least part of the codified elements are alike, the master is led to draw very different inferences from those manifested at first.

On the whole, the asides stand for communicative interchanges which tend to develop in the frame of another exchange. Certain characters, who paradoxically tend to hold a certain power over those taking part in the aside, have their access to the context highly restricted, and become thus potential victims of their servants' irony.

2. D) the absence of certain characters, mainly Lucrecia, in the *dramatis personae* of the *Interlude*, in the encounter between Celestina and Melebea

It is well known that Lucrecia, together with Alisa, Melibea's mother, will introduce Celestina to the young girl. However, the scene of Melebea's encounter with the old bawd is introduced in the *Interlude* following the already commented convention of the monologue. In this case, Celestina does not introduce herself, since she is already well known and familiar to the audience. For this reason, this audience can feel eager to rejoice before Melebea's declared ignorance of the old woman's identity and, of course, of her intentions:

MELEBEA:

I pray you, came this woman here never syn ?

In fayth, to entre here I am half adrad.

And yet, why so ? I may boldly com in ;

I am sure from you all I shall not be had.

But Jesus, Jesus, be these men so mad

On women as they sey ' how shuld it be ?

It is but fables and lyes, ye may trust me.

(TT, p. 86)

Similarly to what happened with Calisto with regard to his servants' asides, Melebea is bound to be the victim of Celestina's purposes, as she has not had any access whatsoever to the former contexts in which the identity of the old bawd has been revealed.

Moreover, the distance between the cosmovisions of both Celestina and Melebea is reinforced from the very start, which makes that the cognitive environment between both

is hardly shared at all. The English version will tend to reinforce this through the introduction of verbs of attitude, such as in

MELIBEA: ¿ Por qué dizes, madre, tanto mal de lo que el mundo con tanta efficacia gozar y ver dessea ?
(ST, p. 155)

MELEBEA: *I mervell moder ye speke so much yll*
Of age, that all folke desyre effectuously.
(TT, p. 86, my italics).

The existing contrast between both will moreover be exploited, in the English version, by the cunning Celestina, who will tend to answer the young girl by using the antonyms of the words uttered by the latter:

MELIBEA: Madre, (pues que assí es), gran pena tendrás por la edad que perdiste. ¿ Querías bolver a la primera ?

CELESTINA: Loco es, señora, el caminante que, enojado del trabajo del día, quissiese bolver de comienço la jornada para tornar otra vez aquel lugar. (...)
(ST, p. 156).

MELEBEA: Moder, ye have takyn grete *payn* for age ;
Wold ye not return to the *begynnyng* ?

CELESTINA: Folsys are they that are past theyre passage
To begyn agayn, which be at the *endynng*.
For better is possession than the desyryng.
(TT, p. 86, my italics).

This shows that the way in which a definite content may be organised and codified can help the addressee to the drawing of the inferences intended by the speaker. Therefore, it confirms the view according to which the code is, if anything, subsidiary to the speaker's utterance of a certain communicative intention and to the addressee's inferential recognition of it.

In the same way, the absence of Lucrecia in the *dramatis personae* of the *Interlude* may be linked to the final episode of the play, with Melebea's father next acquaintance with everything that has been going on.

2. E) the ending of the play

Whereas in *La Celestina* it is Lucrecia who has attempted to warn Melibea against the potential danger which the old bawd may come to represent, the *Interlude* will follow its internal structure towards a happy ending, which is to be expected from such a genre. The English play will end with a monologue by Melebea's father, Danio, and a final admonition by him addressed to her daughter and the audience as a whole. In principle, the development

of the action has not allowed a place for him, but, in a comic ending, the intervention of the old generation, of the old society, can be expected to save the situation and drive it towards its happy denouement.

Moreover, Danio, as it stands in the play, cannot have had any access to the action unfolded until that moment. Nor can the audience supply a suitable context for this introduction at this stage, in the internal development of the play, unless we think of certain assumed knowledge among the audience of the time, who may have expected the intervention of the old generation, addressed to the reestablishment of harmony, in the context of a general comic setting. The required suitable context is in fact supplied by an external factor to the play, a *dream* that the father, Danio, has, in which he can access to the whole situation:

DANIO

O mervelous God, what a dreme had I to nyght!

Most terryble vysyon to report and here!

I had none such nor none yerthely wyght.

Alas, when I thynk theron, I quak for fere.

It was of Melebea, my doughter dere,

God send me good thythynges of her shortly,

For, tyll I here from her, I can not be mery.

(TT, p. 92)

It is thanks to this *dream* that this character can be said to gain access to the context formed up by the whole action of the play.

3. Conclusions

In this paper, it has been assumed that the interpretation of ironic utterances is closely linked to the context where these utterances occur and to the communicative intentions of the participants. Moreover, this context has been regarded as chosen by participants, depending on their degree of accessibility. In ironic communicative these participants may form a kind of triad, constituted by the speaker, on the one hand, and the addressees, on the other hand, who can either grasp the ironic meaning intended by the addresser, or else fail to do so. The latter can be said to be unable to access to the cognitive environment provided by the speaker, where it is possible to infer the meaning intended by the addresser.

In this way, one of the guiding principles of interpersonal communication can be said the tendency to match both the contexts of addresser and addressee, respectively, either completely or at least partially. The latter seems to be the most spread case. If this is not so, misunderstandings arise, and, in the particular cases of ironic utterances, the addressee is bound to miss the implications of the message conveyed by the speaker.

When it comes to translation, a further problem seems to be connected with the fact that the perception of irony often goes beyond the propositional content expressed in the

utterance, and it also requires the inferential recognition of the speaker's communicative intention, which is pointed out in a certain context or cognitive environment. In the case of translation, the translator should attempt to perceive the speaker's meaning and convey the intended message and its corresponding implicatures. In an ironic utterance, what the speaker aims to convey is often not made explicit, but remains implicit, and it must be inferred from what is explicitly stated.

The inference of the speaker's intended message takes place in a certain context, and, if in translation processes changes in the context occur, these variations will tend to alter the way in which irony is perceived. In this paper, I have dealt with an English version of *La Celestina* in which, mainly due to the shift in genre towards the interlude, certain variations in the context to which the different characters have access to occur, and, as a result, their perception of irony will change. All this leads us to conclude that there exists a close link between irony and the context in which it appears. This context can only be adequately perceived as a cognitive entity which comes to cover the communicative intentions conveyed by the different participants. For all these reasons, it may be pointed out that the relevance approach to the context can be a complementary tool and a fruitful means to deal with the relevance approach to irony as the expression of a certain feeling or attitude, since the contents of any ironical utterance can only be said to stand in a relationship of interpretive resemblance to the thoughts put into words. These thoughts will try to modify and interact with the context in which they are produced, and it is only in relation to this context that they can be adequately processed and understood.

Irony is but a possible instance of the multiple possibilities of interpersonal communication. However, due to its peculiar features, namely, the tendency towards the mismatch between the meaning intended by the speaker and the interpretation made by the addressee, it shows clearly the insufficiency of traditional theories of communication, which have tended to concentrate almost exclusively upon the existence of a code. However, it is precisely the complexity of communication, conceived of as a social phenomenon, that makes the knowledge of the code an insufficient requisite to account for it. When communicating, people cannot remain at the level of the codification and decoding of the message, which, according to traditional theories, should tend to coincide. Irony is a clear example which challenges this view. However, considering that communication relies upon the inference of the intentions expressed by the speaker, which may remain implicit, does not clash with its interpersonal nature. If it is assumed that when communicating speakers tend towards the enlargement of their cognitive grasping of reality, the more tools they are provided with to do so, the more fruitful communication may be considered to be.

In the same way, even though the speaker attempts to reach and modify the addressee's conception of reality, s/he may not do so directly, or may intend to suggest and leave implicit, rather than openly tell them out, what his/her intentions are. This is assumed to be the case of ironic utterances. Saying that communication relies heavily upon the inference of the communicator's intentions, does not seem to deny or question its interpersonal nature. Regarding the context as a cognitive entity, which communication would seek to make more "mutual" among speakers, seems to reinforce rather than question this. On the

contrary, regarding the speaker's intentions may shed light on the effects s/he seeks to obtain with his/her message. In any case, it is probably true that the inference of the communicative intentions is but one aspect of the complex of this undoubtedly social phenomenon, which still contains many questions to be further dealt with and answered.

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