

Shakespeare's Use of Malapropisms and their Translation into Spanish

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to delve into the most representative Spanish versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in order to analyse and evaluate the way malapropisms are rendered and whether the Spanish equivalents or the other solutions successfully or unsuccessfully convey their original function embedded in the English discourse. Since the main function of the malapropism is to generate hilarity in the audience or readers, in Spanish, as a romance language, it is very easy to find a great deal of equivalent malapropisms reflecting the comic effect of the original text, thus the lack of this literary device in the Spanish versions is unforgivable.

1. Introduction

Although Shakespeare had used the literary device of malapropism for comic effect, the term derives from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's character Mrs. Malaprop in his play *The Rivals* (1775); her name is taken from the French word "*malapropos*" ("inappropriate") and is typical of Sheridan's practice of concocting names to indicate the essence of a character. Mrs Malaprop was merely one of a long line of characters in English drama and fiction who have indulged in this implementation. Before tackling the many faces of the malapropisms in *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and their translation into Spanish, it is necessary to draw a sort of framework with the most authoritative definitions of this term.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, malapropism is a "ludicrous misuse of words". *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* follows an analogous meaning and registers the term as a "verbal blunder in which one word is replaced by another similar in sound but different in meaning" and "the humorous misapplication of words". According to Brook (1970:109) "...most people who use language beyond their strength are occasionally guilty of malapropisms but it is not often in real life that we find malapropisms occurring as frequently as they do in the speech of characters like Mistress Quickly and Mrs Malaprop". Beyond the comic effect inherent to malapropism, Gerson (1965: 45) mentions some literary ingredients: "...very often a deeply significant artistic purpose exists behind the apparent humorous effect. Consequently the malapropisms add to our understanding of the speaker's character, and to our comprehension of the novel as a whole."

2. Romeo and Juliet

In this tragedy the nurse is a character that continuously tries to imitate the speech of a lady. But as her origins are rather low, she makes several mistakes each time she decides to use some word of Latin origin. The presence in the play of a friar whose speech is clearly influenced by his study of the classical languages, far from providing the nurse with the perfect source to improve her speech produces on the reader a comic affect by the comparison of both speeches. The friar's Latinisms become blunders in the nurse's mouth: "If you be he, sir, I desire some confidence with you" (II.iii.118-119). The malapropism is produced because of the similarity in the pronunciation of the term "confidence" and that of the word the nurse really intends to pronounce: "conference". Both terms have a Latin origin although they do not belong to the same root. The OED highlights the use of "confidence" as a humorous blunder for "conference" in some other works by Shakespeare. As these terms exist in the English language most translators decided to ignore the mistake in the nurse's speech, but in the original text this is made explicit in the way in which other characters make fun of her speech. Thus Benvolio replies intentionally: "She will endite him to some supper" (II.iii.120). Benvolio is offering "endite" as a deliberate malapropism for "invite". The translators tend to ignore this wrong use of the word. Pujante (1993: 92) translates: "*Si sois vos, señor, deseo hablaros conferencialmente. Le invitaré a cenar*". Conejero (1988: 227) renders: "*Si sois el que busco, os tengo que decir algo aparte. Le querrá incitar a una cena*". Menéndez y Pelayo (1969: 237) proposes: "*Si verdaderamente sois Romeo, tengo que deciros secretamente una palabra. Si querrá citarle para esta noche...*" Astrana (1943: 133) translates: "*Si sois vos él, señor, deseo haceros una confidencia... ¡A alguna cena que le convida!*". Only Pujante seems to be aware of the nurse's mistake and of Benvolio's mockery. His use of "*conferencialmente*" was a good choice to make the Spanish reader realize immediately that these characters are misusing the terms mentioned. Conejero makes explicit Benvolio's conscious mistake in his translation but he apparently did not notice anything strange in the nurse's speech. The other two translators are clearly unaware of the existence of malapropism in the original text.

The nurse makes another obvious malapropism: "Ah, mocker-that's the dog's name. 'R' is for the -no, I know it begins with some other letter, and she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it" (II.iii. 200-204). The nurse says "sententious" instead of "sentences" or "sentence", a word of clear Latin origin, which, besides, friar Lawrence had used before in the play. She fails in her attempt to render a Latinism and ends up pronouncing a term which, though it exists, has no sense used in this context. The translators ignore the use of this adjective instead of a corresponding noun and translate the paragraph as if the nurse had not made any mistake: "Ama. ¡Ah, guasón! 'Erre' es lo que hace el perro. Con erre empieza la... No, que empieza con otra letra. Ella ha hecho una frase preciosa sobre vos y el romero; os daría gusto oírlo" (Pujante, 1993: 95). "Nodriz a ¡Ah, bribonzuelo! ¡Con la 'R' ruge el perro! ¡La 'R' es...! No, no, empieza con otra letra... Si vierais qué sentencias se el ocurren a ella con la 'R' vuestra, con la 'M' vuestra, con la 'O' vuestra. Os encantaría escucharlas" (Conejero, 1998: 245). "Ama. - Eso es burla. Yo sé que vuestro nombre empieza con otra letra menos áspera... ¡Si vierais qué graciosos equívocos hace con vuestro nombre y con romero! Gusto os diera oírle" (Menéndez Pelayo, 1969: 241). "¡Ah, qué burlón! Ese es el nombre del perro. La R es para el... No; sé yo que empieza con otra letra... Pues de esto, de vos y del romero, ha sacado ella unas letrillas tan preciosas, que os diera gusto el oírlas" (Astrana, 1943: 134). None of the translators renders explicit the mistake by the nurse. The last three seemed to misinterpret her blunder and decided to use a plural noun in order to produce perhaps a similar phonetic effect to that of the adjective, which ends in a sibilant sound.

3. A Midsummer Night's Dream

Bottom uses a very humorous misapplication of word: "And he himself must speak through, saying thus or to the same defect" (III.i.34-35). Bottom says "defect" instead of "effect". The translators propose: "Y que él mismo hable a través, diciendo esto, o cosa parecida" (Valverde, 1967: 882). "Y que hable él mismo, diciendo esto, o algo de su parecencia" (Pujante, 1996: 89). "...y diga esto o cosa parecida" (Astrana, 1943: 662). Only Pujante provides a word which more or less approaches the original version, by means of using a non-existent word "*parecencia*". On the other hand, Valverde and Pujante decide on translating literally not the word that is used, but the word that should have been used. Far from judging the work of these translators, we could still find a more successful translation: "*a tal defecto*" instead of using "*a tal efecto*". In so doing, we would be taking advantage of the fact that this pair of words also exists in Spanish and the translation then would approach the original.

Again, Bottom is guilty of another malapropism: "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me" (IV.i.37-38). Bottom uses "exposition" instead of "disposition". This confusion is rendered as follows: "Me está viniendo una gran evasión de sueño" (Valverde, 1967: 900). "Me ha entrado un deseo insociable de dormir" (Pujante, 1996: 115). "Me siento con cierta "exposición" al sueño" (Astrana, 1943: 671). In Valverde's translation we can

appreciate a similarity in sound—but not in meaning—between "*evasión*" and "*invasión*". In the second example, the same relation exists between "*insociable*" and "*insaciable*". Moreover, both editions write these words in italics so that the reader can become aware of the comic situation in the original version of this play, in which we read how Bottom confused the words "exposition" and "disposition".

The malapropism uttered on this occasion is obvious even to the layman of modern times: "Bottom.- Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet" (III.i.76). Bottom has intended to say "odours", but inadvertently substituted for it "odious". The very mistake is corrected by Quincy: "Odours, odours" (III.i. 77). Spanish translators have rendered: "*Tisbi, las flores de dulces maromas. Aromas, aromas*" (Valverde, 1967: 883). "*Tisbe, encierran las flores sabor ojeroso. ¡Oloroso!*" (Pujante, 1996: 90). "*Tisbe, la dulce flor es olorosa*". "*Olorosa, olorosa*" (Astrana, 1943: 662). Unlike in the examples before, the translators were able to find a word similar to the exact one to substitute it on purpose, and provoke a comic effect. The Spanish versions are successful. Here, the contrast between "odious / odours" is represented in Spanish by other groups of words like "*aromas/maromas*" or "*ojeroso/oloroso*", and the fact that there are similar words in sound in another language, helps when translating.

Bottom's next confusion lies in the fact that "bottle" and "bundle" are used in similar contexts: "Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow" (IV. i. 32-33). Spanish translations offer the following texts: "*Me parece que tengo muchas ganas de un haz de heno: buen heno, el heno fresco no tiene igual*" (Valverde, 1967: 900). "*La verdad es que me apetece un buen haz de alfalfa. Buena alfalfa, rica alfalfa; no tiene igual*" (Pujante, 1996: 115). "*Siente también una gran tentación de comer un haz de heno, de buen heno y muy fresco. No hay nada mejor*" (Astrana, 1943: 671). Again, we find another case in which we cannot give a good translation, keeping the meaning of the original. As a solution, the different authors simply make a translation of the word that Bottom should have used. The same happens in Spanish, but the word "*botella*" would sound a bit odd, because it is not similar at all in its pronunciation to the correct word "*haz*".

A new verbal blunder or malapromism is found in the same Act: "Our purposed hunting shall be set aside" (IV.i.182). It is obvious that the use of "purposed" instead of "proposed" generates hilarity. In the Spanish texts we read: "*Dejaremos a un lado la caza que nos proponíamos*" (Valverde, 1967: 903). "*Nuestra caza debe suspenderse*" (Pujante, 1996: 121). "*Como la mañana está muy adelantada, dejaremos nuestro proyecto de caza*" (Astrana 1943: 673). In this case, it is obvious that the three translations deviate from the original. In fact, the former translates the word "proposed" (not purposed) by means of a relative clause that refers to the object: hunting. In the second and third proposal, the translators decide not to render the word. The difficulty in this type of translations is that if we chose to give a more literal translation, it would not sound good Spanish. In this sense, the following sentence: "*Dejaremos a un lado la caza con propósito*" illustrates this point quite well, choosing words in Spanish that are similar to others only in sound and which can

make the audience laugh. The first translation tries to be more faithful to the original and is more literal.

4. The Merchant of Venice

In this play, the clown Launcelot and his father Gobbo are the two characters through whom Shakespeare makes clear his ability to produce a humorous effect on the reader by a very clever use of malapropism. Launcelot is a servant and a witty character. When he or his father talk to someone of the upper class their speech turns out to be rather confusing because of the constant misuse of words, usually of Latin origin: "Gobbo (to Bassiano). He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve" (II.ii.119. Here, Gobbo mistakes "infection" for "affection". This confusion is produced by the fact that both prefixes "in-" and "af- (ad)-" precede the same Latin root: "*facere*". In this context, the blunder is obvious because Gobbo wants to express his son's "wish" to serve Bassanio and not to declare he has some sort of disease. The translators once more tend to ignore the problem: "*Él tiene gran empeño, mi señor, como suele decirse, por servir...*" (Conejero, 1990: 78). "*Tiene, señor, así... como quien diría, una irresistible comezón de servir...*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 30). "*Tiene un empeño loco en servirlos*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 208). "*Tiene, señor, como se dice, una inclinación natural a servir*" (Pujante, 1991: 82). "*Tiene, como si dijéramos, una gran infección a servir*" (Astrana, 1943: 777). Pujante is the only translator that attempts to show a misuse of this word by reflecting the confusion of the prefix. The rest of the translators do not provide a solution to the malapropism and decide to translate the sentence as if it was correctly expressed.

In the same act and scene Launcelot, speaking to a person who belongs to the upper class, makes the same mistakes as his father each time he pretends to express himself in a language that does not correspond to his social status: "Lancelot (to Bassiano).-To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father —being, I hope, an old man— shall frutify unto you" (II.ii.125-128. The mistake by Launcelot is quite clear in this case. Not knowing how to pronounce the term "certify" (of Latin origin), he invents a word that sounds similar, believing he is using it accurately, and so he says "frutify". The translators do not always render this malapropism: "*En resumen, la verdad es que el judío me ha tratado muy mal y ello me obliga, tal como mi padre, que es, espero, viejo, certificará...*" (Conejero, 1990: 79). "*Para ser breve, he aquí toda la verdad. Como el judío no se porta bien conmigo, mi padre, que es, como veis, un anciano, va a demostraros que...*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 30). "*Lo cierto es que el judío me ha tratado bastante mal, y esto me ha obligado...Pero mi padre, que es un viejo, prudente y honrado, os lo dirá*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 208). "*En suma, la verdad es que, como el judío me ha tratado mal, yo debo, como mi padre, siendo, según espero, un anciano, os 'explificará'...*" (Pujante, 1991: 82). "*Para ser breve, la verdad verdadera es que el judío, habiéndome maltratado, me fuerza, como mi padre, que es un viejo, os 'fructificará'...*" (Astrana: 1943: 777). Only Pujante and Astrana try to translate the malapropism, and they

do it by subverting the syllabic order and using italics or inverted commas. The result in both cases is quite effective, producing on the Spanish reader a similar effect to that produced on the English reader.

Launcelot does not seem to be able to show Bassanio his real intentions. He gets nervous and the more he speaks the more mistakes he makes: "In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man; and though I say it, though old man, yet, poor man, my father" (II.ii.131-34). In this case, he again mistakes two words because of their common root but different prefixes. The comic effect is immediate as he says, unconsciously, the opposite to what he really wants to say: "impertinent" instead of "pertinent". The blunder is so clear this time that all the translators considered here have found an easy solution to render it into Spanish: "*Abreviando, lo que pretendo es "impertinente" a mi persona tal como vuestra señoría conocerá por este viejo honrado, que no es porque yo lo diga, que aunque viejo y pobre como es, mi padre...*" (Conejero, 1990: 79). "*En dos palabras: la petición es impertinente a mi persona, como sabrá vuestra señoría por boca de este anciano. Aunque sea yo el que lo diga, es, sin embargo, un anciano, es un pobre hombre y mi padre*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 30). "*Dos palabras: lo que va a decir es impertinente al asunto...Él, al fin, es un pobre hombre, aunque sea mi padre*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 208). "*Abreviando: la petición me es impertinente, como os dirá este honrado anciano, que, no es por nada, aunque pobre y anciano, es mi padre*" (Pujante, 1991: 82). "*Para abreviar: la demanda es "ajena" a mí, como vuestra señoría lo sabrá por este anciano, y, aunque anciano, como yo le digo, sin embargo, es un pobre hombre y mi padre...*" (Astrana, 1943, 777). The similarities between the term "impertinent" in English and its correspondence in Spanish "impertinente" was considered by all the translators, except Astrana who uses the adjective "*ajena*" deviating from the original malapropism. Menéndez y Pelayo seemed to prefer to adapt the context where this term appeared to make it sound natural, and by doing this, he was not being faithful to the original, and thus, his translation can be considered a free version.

In the same dialogue, Gobbo makes a similar mistake: "That is the very defect of the matter, sir" (II.ii.137-138). After his son has stated his intention to serve Bassanio, Gobbo wants to corroborate Launcelot's wishes, but he uses a term that has no sense in this context: "defect" instead of "effect". The mistake is produced again by the confusion of two prefixes that precede the same Latin root: "*facere*". Although the humorous intention of the author is clear here, the translators are not always able or attempt to reflect it: "*Aquí está, mi señor, el "defecto" de toda la cuestión*" (Conejero, 1990: 80). "*Ese es nuestro flaco, señor*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 30). "*Aquí está, señor, todo el intrínquilis del negocio*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 209). "*Ese es el maúllo de la cuestión*" (Pujante 1991: 82). "*Aquí está la verdadera clave del asunto, señor*" (Astrana, 1943: 777). Only Conejero and Pujante attempt to translate the malapropism. Pujante makes a freer translation of the term, choosing again a subversion of the syllabic order.

Launcelot, knowing that his master Shylock is going out to dine out with Bassanio, says: "I beseech you, sir, go. My young master doth expect your reproach" (II.v.19-20). His mistake has to do again with the misuse of prefixes, which, preceding the same Latin root,

produce different words with different meanings. In this case Lancelot means "approach" instead of "reproach". Both terms have a similar pronunciation in English and derive from the root "prope". The translators in this case offer different solutions to the malapropism according to the context: "*Señor, os lo suplico, daos prisa. Mi joven amo espera a vuestra desgracia..*" (Conejero, 1990: 88). "*No dejéis de ir, señor; mi amo cuenta con vos*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 35). "*No faltéis, señor. Mi amo os espera*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 213). "*Os suplico que vengáis, señor. Mi amo desea vuestra insistencia*" (Pujante, 1991: 89). "*Os ruego, señor, que vayáis; mi joven amo aguarda vuestra desgracia*". (Astrana, 1943: 779. Astrana's translation, although written between inverted commas does not seem to reflect Launcelot's mistake. This translator explains in a footnote the reason that led him to use such a term. In this context, it is true that Launcelot chooses the wrong word when trying to speak in the manner of his master, but the mistake he makes does not imply the creation of an inexistent term. The meaning of "reproach", although this word intends to be here a wrong pronunciation of "approach", is used ironically by Shylock, who did not get along with the person he was going to dine with, so he replies, taking advantage of his servant's blunder: "So do I his". Conejero wanted to show the effect that Shylock's reply would produce on the suspicious English reader, and as it is impossible to render this play on words into Spanish, he decided to be faithful to the ironic intentions. Pujante preferred to find a term that allowed him to reflect this confusion with the prefixes, and his choice seems quite appropriate, although it loses the ironic effect reflected in the original.

Again, Launcelot makes one of his typical mistakes with words of Latin origin with the same root: "Yes, truly; for look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children, therefore I promise you I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter" (III.v.1-4). The malapropism can be found here in the use of the word "agitation" instead of "cogitation" (thinking). Both derive from the same Latin root "*agitare*". His mistake shows once more his inability to speak as the members of the upper class do. The translators who had made an effort to translate the previous blunders into Spanish try to solve the problem once again; the others decide to ignore it, creating a text that loses part of its original meaning: "*Sí, así es. Ya lo veis: los pecados de los padres caen sobre la conciencia de los hijos. Por eso, os lo aseguro, temo por vos. Siempre os fui sincero, de ahí ahora "mis agitaciones" en este asunto...*" (Conejero, 1990: 128). "*Sí, creedme; los pecados del padre recaen en los hijos, y os aseguro que no confío mucho en vuestra salvación. Siempre he sido franco con vos, y por eso os participo los temores que me infunde vuestra situación...*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 62). "*Sí, porque habéis de saber que Dios castiga en los hijos las culpas de los padres: por eso os tengo lástima. Siempre os dije la verdad, y no he de callarla ahora...*" (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1969: 238). "*Pues sí, porque, mira, los pecados del padre recaen sobre los hijos, así que temo por ti. Siempre te he sido sincero y ahora te digo lo que he recogitado...*" (Pujante, 1991: 123). "*Sí, en verdad; pues ya lo veis, los pecados del padre recaen en los hijos; por tanto, os prometo que tiemblo por vos. Siempre he sido franco con vos; he ahí por qué os expreso ahora mi "irreflexión" en la materia*" (Astrana, 1943: 792). Conejero is as faithful as possible to the

original and makes a literal translation of the term "agitation" explaining in a footnote that the word intended here by Launcelot would correspond in Spanish to "*meditación*". The similarity between both terms is obvious, although, perhaps the footnote is necessary to avoid any kind of doubt. Pujante resolves the malapropism by the use of an inexistent word "*recogitando*" attempting to reflect the mispronunciation of another word; he also tries to be faithful to the original, but without a footnote it may be difficult for the reader to interpret what Launcelot really wanted to say.

5. Much Ado About Nothing

In this comedy there are two characters who misuse language: Dogberry and Verges. According to Zitner (1994: 46):

'Dogberry' can refer to either the red European dogwood or to its berry, or it can be an excremental metaphor. Verges may refer to the 'verge' or staff of office, and 'verjuice', the sour-tasting juice of unripe fruit such as grapes. The names suggest the hearty ordinariness and the 'verjuice face'.

These characters epitomise the wordy consequential blundering and malapropism in the play, and are used as a means to attack a pompous style, which, in the end, is vacuous and insubstantial. Through their speech, one can sketch the traits of two notorious "murderers" of the English language. Their corruption of language lies not only in their ignorance but also in their intention to achieve a social and a cultural status neither of them have. Dogberry and Verges fake a high-class vocabulary as a result of their sense of status and hierarchy. Shakespeare's purpose was a comic one, in the sense that these laughable characters are functioning as targets for the public's scorn thanks to the "inventiveness" of their language. These prototypes of language *abusers* will take on a twofold role: the issue of linguistic corruption will be both a piece of cranky fastidiousness with a comic tone and a serious moral concern affecting the health of society. And this is the kernel of the matter the translators should bear in mind, since the main ideas, the spirit and the style in any literary text are to be maintained and delivered to new interlocutors or new readers. In our case, malapropisms are to be translated in such a way that their specific and essential function remains unaltered in either version reflecting the comic effects as well as the colourful tone in Dogberry's and Verges's discourse.

The first malapropism appears when Verges says: "Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul"(III.iii.2-3). Through ignorance, Verges commits a malapropism. He uses the word "salvation" when he means just the opposite: "damnation". Both words are formed by a lexeme + the Latin suffix "-ion"; nevertheless, they are antonyms as their roots have opposite meanings: "salvation" comes from the Latin "*salvation -em*" OED and "damnation" comes from the Latin "*damnation -em*" OED. The translators have rendered Verges's discourse as follows: "*Sí, pues de lo contrario sería lástima que no sufrieran eterna salvación en cuerpo y alma*" (Astrana, 1943: 867); "*Sí, o si no, sería una*

lástima, pero tendrían que sufrir "salvación" en alma y cuerpo" (Valverde, 1967: 1482); and *"Sí, pues de lo contrario sería una lástima que sufrieran una eterna "salvación" en cuerpo y alma"* (Navarra, 1998: 90). As can be seen, the translators maintain the malapropism and its inherent comic effect, however, in the first version the verb appears in the negative form, and in consequence of this, the complete meaning of the malapropism is not accurately transmitted.

Dogberry is another character who misuses language and the following example illustrates this: "Comparisons are odorous. Palabras, neighbour Verges (III.v.15-16). Dogberry should have said "odious" instead of "odours" or "odorous". In this case the whole word is changed into a word which resembles what should have been said (that is, "odious"). Both words have their origin in Latin, "odorous" stemming from Anglo-French "odour", which at the same time derives from latin "odor -oris" with the meaning of fragrant OED, where as "odious" springs from Latin "odious" OED. The Latin counterparts are quite similar and are obviously unknown to poor Dogberry. Here the altered syllable changes the meaning of the intended word completely, giving it a striking comic effect. Spanish translators give us the following correspondences: *"Las comparaciones son 'olorosas'; palabras, vecino Verges"* (Astrana, 1943: 871); *"Las comparaciones son 'ociosas', pocas palabras, vecino Agraz"* (Valverde, 1967: 1490); and *"Las comparaciones son 'olorosas', pero, pocas palabras, vecino Verges"* (Navarra, 1998: 109). Valverde accomplishes the effect though not the meaning; Astrana and Navarra achieve both effect and meaning; both translators opt for a direct translation of the malapropism in question and also insert a footnote indicating the existence of the linguistic flaw, the two of them explaining what word was meant by the erratic watchman.

Again, Dogberry fails in his attempt to use words correctly and commits a fresh malapropism: "Yea, an't were a thousand pound more than 'tis, for I hear as good exclamation on your worship as of any man in the city" (III.v.23-25). The malapropism is generated from the misuse of the first syllable of the word, thus changing the prefix "ac -" (acclamation) for "ex -" (exclamation). Both terms have their origin in Latin: "exclamation" comes from "exclamation-em" OED, and "acclamation" derives from "acclamation -em" OED. Spanish translators offer us the following texts: *"Sí, aunque fuera mil veces más pesado de lo que es, pues he oído tan buen 'reproche' de Vuestra Señoría, como de cualquiera de la ciudad"* (Astrana, 1943: 871-872); *"Sí, y aunque fuera mil libras más, pues oigo tan buena 'imputación' sobre Vuestra Señoría como sobre cualquiera de la ciudad"* (Valverde, 1967: 1490); and *"Sí, sí; mil veces lo fuera, mil veces la pondría, y me alegra oír lo que decís, porque Vuestra Señoría goza de tanto favor como no hay otro en la ciudad"* (Navarra, 1998: 109). The translators do not contrive to translate the malapropisms and the result is simply a bad communicative translation. Unfortunately the Spanish texts are stripped of the stylistic function and the comic effect intended by William Shakespeare, thus the literary value is unsubstantial.

The character who is responsible for the new malapropism is Verges: "Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your worship's presence, ha'ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina" (III.v.29-31). Verges has made a wrong use of the word "excepting" for

"respecting" and so, the resulting meaning is just the opposite of what he had intended. The signs of respect he wants to pay to Leonato are turned almost into an insult due to Dogberry's malapropism. Going into the origin of "excepting" and "respecting" we can shed light on this confusion or malapropism. The term "excepting" comes from the Latin verb "*excipere*" (to take out) formed by the prefix "ex-" (out) and the verb "*capere*" (to take). "Respecting" (considering, taking into account) comes from the Latin verb "*respicere*" OED with the meaning of "to look back at, regard, consider" or the frequentative of this, "*respectare*". Once again, Dogberry has misused Latin prefixes and there is also a transposition of the sounds /p/, /e/ and /k/. The translators have rendered: "*Es el caso, señor, que esta noche nuestra ronda, con la excepción presente de Vuestra Señoría, ha echado el guante a un par de bellacos tan pícaros como los que más en Mesina*" (Astrana, 1943: 872); "*Pardiez, señor, nuestra ronda, esta noche, con perdón de la presencia de Vuestra Señoría, ha detenido a un par de bribones granujas como pueda haberlos en Messina*" (Valverde, 1967: 1490-91); and "*Esta noche, haciendo caso omiso de la presencia de Vuestra Señoría, nuestra ronda ha detenido a dos de los más famosos bribones de cuantos hay en Mesina*" (Navarra, 1998: 110). Valverde and Navarra do not understand the malapropism and use an expression which is typical of a formal register "*con perdón de la presencia*" and "*haciendo caso omiso de la presencia*" respectively, and this is something which Dogberry strives unsuccessfully to achieve throughout the play. Astrana has tried to keep the word "*excepción*" which in Spanish got the same origin as the English one, but the sentence is not very clear, and the blunder may not be easy to understand for the reader. Although Astrana has chosen a freer translation, as a result, the humorous meaning has been better conveyed.

Dogberry's laughable discourse is peppered with two malapropisms in the same sentence: "One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two auspicious persons" (III.v.43-44). It is quite obvious that "comprehended" has been mistaken for "apprehended" and "auspicious" for "suspicious". By changing the prefixes, Dogberry is using a verb of mental perception instead of one of a more physical meaning. Once again he wants to use a register which is quite out of his reach. He intends to use a kind of legal language, but the effect is clearly the opposite. "Comprehend" (to grasp with the mind, understand) comes from the Latin verb "*comprehendere*", formed by the prefix "com-" and the verb "prehendere" (to seize). "Apprehend" (to lay hold upon, seize, with hands, teeth; hence to seize a person in name of law, to arrest) comes from the Latin "*apprehendere*". Spanish translators follow two quite different strategies and the results deserve our full attention. One proposal is "*Una palabra, señor; nuestra guardia ha detenido a dos personas 'ospechosas'*" (Navarra, 1998: 110). This translator has not considered "comprehended" as a malapropism and the second blunder in the sentence has been translated as "*ospechosas*" between inverted commas with a footnote to inform the reader about the word in the original text and the word Dogberry had intended to say. The second option is "*Nuestra ronda, señor, ha aprehendido, en efecto, a dos personas 'despechosas'*" (Astrana, 1943: 872). Strangely enough, Astrana has only used inverted commas for the second malapropism, whereas he has maintained the first one without them. We think that the second translator has made an effort to reflect both blunders quite successfully. While Navarra just omits the initial "s" to obtain a far-fetched blunder

"ospechosas", a word which does not exist in Spanish, Astrana has tried to follow Dogberry's line using "*aprehendido*", a malapropism which is very similar to the one used by Dogberry. And in the case of "*despechosas*", the reader thinks immediately of the Spanish word "*despechadas*", which makes the malapropism funnier than just simply mispronouncing "*ospechosas*". Finally, the third translator offers the following: "*Una palabra, señor; nuestra ronda ha detenido a dos personas 'despechosas', y querríamos tomarles declaración esta mañana ante Vuestra Señoría*" (Valverde, 1967: 1491). The word "comprehend" is translated into its meaningful counterpart "apprehend" (*detener*) avoiding the play on words. The second word, however, is duly translated into a similar malapropism in Spanish. The translator makes up a word changing the prefix from "sos-" to "des-": "*despechosas*".

Dogberry continues to use words beyond him: "It shall be suffigance" (III.v.49). This is a case of what we could call "phonetic malapropism". The word "suffigance" does not exist in English. This verbal blunder probably comes from the partial assimilation in spelling to the Old French word "suffisant" which this word suffered in Middle English. In his attempt to sound more learned, Dogberry is trying to emulate the French, more "cultivated", pronunciation. This word comes from the Old French "suffisant" and subsequently from the Latin verb "sufficere" formed by the prefix "sub-" and the verb "facere" (make, do). We also notice that Dogberry changes the sibilant sound /s/ by the guttural /g/, probably to make his pronunciation sound more "French-like". There is still another possibility, yet another turn of the screw in this malapropism, if we think that what Dogberry really wanted to say was "efficient" (effective; adequately operative), from the Latin word "*efficient-em*", present participle of the verb "*efficere*", formed by the prefix "ex-" (out) and the verb "*facere*" (to make, to do). In the three Spanish versions we find: "*Sí, sí; esto será 'sofaciente'*" (Navarra, 1998: 111). The malapropism is signalled by inverted commas and a footnote to indicate just the meaning in Spanish "*suficiente*". And a second proposal: "*Eso será 'suficiente'*" (Astrana, 1943: 872). As we have seen, Navarra considers that the malapropism is just in the pronunciation, while Astrana's translation "*suficiente*", between inverted commas, suggests that the translator thinks that such adjective is out of context there, and has been misused for "efficient", meaning adequate, effective. The problem is that in Spanish, the word does not suggest what Dogberry really meant to say. If the translator used an adjective such as "*eso será más efectivo*", then the reader might understand the blunder more easily. The third proposal is: "*Será bastante*" (Valverde, 1967: 1491). Unfortunately, Valverde does not translate the malapropism.

Once again, Dogberry is guilty of malapropism: "Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication, and meet me at the jail" (III.v.59-61). Here, the malapropism seems to be a confusion between "communication" and "excommunication". In English, "excommunication" means "the action of excluding an offending Christian from the communion of the Church" OED. What Dogberry tries to convey is that the writer is going to write down his "communication", that is to say, his message, his sentence. Spanish versions grasp two different meanings: "*Buscad sólo al sabio escribiente para que extienda nuestra 'excomunió'n', y juntaos conmigo en la cárcel*" (Astrana, 1943: 872); "*Solamente,*

haz que el docto escribano apunte nuestra "excomunicación", y ve a buscarme a la cárcel" (Valverde, 1967: 1491; and *"Atended solamente al sabio escribano que tomará cuenta de nuestra "excomunicación", y venid a reuniros conmigo en la cárcel"* (Navarra, 1998: 111). It is quite clear that two strategies have been adopted. While Astrana commits a transgression of the original malapropism using the correct term *"excomunióñ"*, Valverde and Navarra convey the comic effect of the original word creating the Spanish mala-propism *"excomunicación"*.

The pseudo-learned Dogberry commits yet another malapropism: "Is our whole dissembly appeared?" (IV.ii.1). The word "dissembly" is confused with "assembly" which has a clear phonetic similarity with the former. Again, it is a question of mixed and interchanged prefixes, "di-" being uttered instead of "ad-": The rest in both words have a common phonetic transcription but their etymology is different. "Dissemble" comes from Latin *"similis"*, in English "like", whereas "assembly" stems from Latin *"simul"*, in English "together". It is worth remarking here that if you look up the word "dissembly" OED, you will find that it occurs in the 16-17th century as a perversion of "assembly". Dogberry uses the Greek prefix *"di-*", which, according to the OED, means "twice, double", and this prefix clashes with the meaning of "assembly", which is "meeting together of a group of people for a specific purpose". Spanish versions try to solve the problem in different ways: *"¿Están presentes todos los miembros de la 'disamblea'?"* (Astrana, 1943: 877); *"¿Está presente toda la 'escisión'?"* (Valverde, 1967: 1500); and *"Todos los miembros de la 'disamblea' están aquí?"* (Navarra, 1998: 131). Astrana and Navarra opt for an equivalent malapropism in the target language. Both translators put the invented word between inverted commas thereby implying we are before a strikingly misapplied word which is used likewise in the source language and the illusion of flawed speech is this time quite successfully translated. Valverde uses a very elaborate malapropism (*"escisión"*) and the effect on the Spanish reader is the same as in the original text.

6. The Merry Wives of Windsor

In the first Act, Evans uses *"visaments"* instead of *"adviseiments"*. This character is a Welshparson who does not have a good command of the English language: "Take your 'visaments in that" (I.i.34-35). Spanish translators offer us the following sentences: *"Tenedo por entendido"* (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 152). *"Considerad esto"* (Astrana, 1943: 806). *"Tened cuidado con eso"* (Valverde, 1967: 1526). Neither of the translations reflect the linguistic blunder made by this character. An alternative proposal that reflects this malapropism could be *"flexionad sobre esto"* for *"reflexionad sobre esto"*.

In the same Act, Bardolph, mistakes "sentences" for "senses": "I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five sentences" (I.i.159-160). Spanish translators propose: *"Por mí, os diré que el señor estaba tan borracho, que había perdido las cinco impotencias"* (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 156). *"Pues por mi parte, señor, digo que el caballero bebió hasta perder sus cinco sentimientos"* (Astrana, 1943: 807). *"Pues, señor, por mi parte, digo que el*

caballero se emborrachó hasta perder sus cinco sentencias..." (Valverde, 1967: 1530). The first two translations seem quite good, especially as they keep the difference in syllables in the original and appeal more to the sound effect than to the number of syllables.

Again, it is Evans who says "positable" for "positively": "You must speak positable" (I.i.218-219). None of the Spanish translations reflect this malapropism. "*Decidnos de una manera positiva si...*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 158). "*Debéis decir positivamente si...*" (Astrana, 1943: 808). "*Debéis hablar positivamente, si dirigís hacia ella vuestros deseos*" (Valverde, 1967: 1531).

In the same Act, two malapropisms emerge when Slender says: "That I'm freely dissolved, and dissolutely" (I.i.232-233). We find the use of "dissolved" for "resolved" and "dissolutely" for "resolutely" as two ludicrous uses of words. The malapropism is rendered in the Spanish translations: "*En esto estoy muy disuelto y disueltamente*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 159). "...*a ello estoy francamente disuelto y disolutamente*" (Astrana, 1943: 808). "...*ésa es mi libre disolución*" (Valverde, 1967: 1532). Martínez Lafuente and Astrana Translate the two malapropisms successfully; Valverde doesn't convey the comic effect of the verbal blunder.

Later in this first Act, Caius, a french physician, is the character who uses a malapropism: "Do intend vat I speak?" (I.i.42). His misuse of word "intend" is probably due to some kind of assimilation with a French form "*entendre*". Spanish translators render the malapropism as follows: "*Oís lo que os digo*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 166). "*¿Oís lo que os digo?*" (Astrana, 1943: 812). "*¿Entendéis lo que digo? Una caja vegde*" (Valverde, 1967: 1538). The relationship with the French word "*entendre*" cannot be transferred into Spanish since there is no such a verb as "*intender*". The Spanish derivation of the Latin word is "*entender*" but if this word is used the malapropism is not evident, since "*¿entendéis lo que os digo?*" makes sense even though we try to imply that the speaker wanted to mean "hear" (like the French "*entendre*") with this verb. A proposal that reflects this malapropism would be: "*¿Contendéis lo que os digo?*" for "*¿Comprendéis lo que os digo?*".

Towards the end of the first Act, there is a confusion in the first two syllables of the words by means of substitution of "melan-" for "alli-": "Mistress Quickly: I shall never laugh but in that maid's company. But, indeed, she is given too much to allicholy and musing" (I.iv.147-149). The Spanish versions do not pick up the function of the malapropism: "*Volandera: Nunca me río tan a gusto como en compañía de esa niña. Es lástima que se entregue tanto a la melancolía*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 169). "*Nunca me reiría sino en compañía de esa doncella... Pero, verdaderamente, es demasiado dada a la melancolía y a la mística*" (Astrana, 1943: 814). "*Nunca me reiré si no es en compañía de esa muchacha, pero desde luego, ella está demasiado dada a la malincolía y a cavilar*" (Valverde, 1967: 1541). As we can see, the Spanish versions do not show the mistake made by Mrs Quickly. Translators transform the word "allicholy" (a word that does not exist), and offer the Spanish reader the correct version of the word. The comic effect has been lost and has not been substituted by any other literary device.

In the second Act, Mistress Quickly uses "canaries" instead of "quandaries": "Marry, this is the short and the long of it. You have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis

wonderful" (II.ii.59-61). Spanish translators propose the following sentences: "*Volandera: En resumen, he aquí la cuestión: Vos habéis causado en ella una impresión verdaderamente asombrosa*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 179). "*Quickly: ¡Pardiez!, he aquí la cuestión. Vos habéis causado en ella la impresión de una danza canaria*" (Astrana, 1943: 818). "*Pardiez, pues en pocas palabras, es esto: la habéis metido en tal tituteo, que es prodigioso*" (Valverde, 1967: 1551). The Spanish versions don't reflect the original malapropism.

Moving on to the second Act, Mistress Quickly uses the malapropism "fartuous": "Mistress Quickly... and let me tell you in your ear, she's as fartuous a civil modest wife" (II.ii.92). The text has again been standardized. The Spanish translators do not offer any alternative to Shakespeare's "fartuous": "*Volandera: y permitidme que os lo diga, es una mujer tan virtuosa como cortés y modesta*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 180). "*Quickly...y, permitidme que os lo diga, es una mujer tan virtuosa como cortés y modesta*" (Astrana, 1943: 818). "...y dejadme que os diga al oído que es una señora fastuosa" (Valverde, 1967: 1552).

In the same scene, Mistress Quickly uses "infection" instead of "affection": "But Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page of all loves. Her husband has a marvellous infection to the little page" (II.ii.110-112). Spanish translators propose: "*Volandera: La señora de Page os ruega que no olvidéis mandarle a vuestro paje. Su marido está embobado con él*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 180). "*Quickly.- La señora de Page os ruega que le mandéis a todo trance a vuestro pajecito. Su esposo está embobado con él*" (Astrana, 1943: 819). "*Su marido tiene una gran infección hacia ese paje*" (Valverde, 1967: 1552). Valverde reflects the malapropism in the Spanish version.

Again, Mistress Quickly uses a malapropism: "Alas the day, good heart, that was not her fault! She does so take on with her men; they mistook their erection"(III.v.36-38). Mistress Quickly's sentence is a misapplication of words "erection" for "direction". Spanish translators offer the following proposals: "*Volandera: ¡Ay! ¡Pobre mujer! No ha sido culpa suya. ¡Si vierais cómo ha reñido a sus criados! Ellos se engañaron de dirección*" (Martínez Lafuente, 1916: 209). "*Quickly.- ¡Ay, qué desgracia! ¡Pobrecita! No fue culpa suya. ¡Si vierais cómo ha reñido a sus criados! Equivocaron su erección*" (Astrana, 1943: 831). "*¡Qué desgracia! La pobrecilla, no fue culpa suya. Se ha enojado mucho con sus criados, que confundieron sus destrucciones*" (Valverde, 1967: 1577). In the case of Martínez Lafuente's translation, we have again a standardized version of Shakespeare's text ("*dirección*" for "erection"), but in Astrana's translation we can notice that the humorous misapplication of the word "erection" for "direction" has been preserved.

7. Concluding remarks

It has been shown that Shakespeare was a master both of sophisticated wit and bawdy tavern-door bantering, which are reflected in his frequent and skilful use of malapropisms mainly in the mouths of his low-life characters which generally make for comic relief in his works. Shakespeare's proficient manipulation of language in his search for the depiction of humorous characters hassled the translators to face the difficult task of communicating the

comic effect of the original in English to the translation into Spanish. By means of the analysis and evaluation of the Spanish translations we have seen the double behaviour by which translators have rendered the malapropisms: either using acceptable malapropisms in Spanish or avoiding the verbal blunder when translators do not grasp the function of this literary device in the original text. In general, the translators do not accurately reproduce the character's linguistic particularities. However, we can appreciate a bigger effort on the part of Astrana to pick up Shakespeare's masterly use of language. Spanish is a language very rich in nuances, but the translators have not known how to make the most of them. In spite of this, we can find some sporadic sensible choices that seem to demonstrate that if one spends time thinking about the correct word in the target language, it will appear sooner or later.

According to the new trends in the theory of translation, the translator has to broaden his mind, discover the comic effect of the original text and imbed these ingredients in the target language, since the main function of the malapropism is to generate hilarity in the audience or readers and make clear that characters use language beyond their strength. In Spanish, as a romance language, it is very easy to find a great deal of equivalent malapropisms reflecting the comic effect of the original text (Soto, 1993: 143-202), thus the lack of this literary device in the Spanish translation is unforgivable.

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