

 THE TRANSLATION OF IDIOLECTS
IN *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*:
AN APPROACH THROUGH LEXICALIZED STRUCTURES

PAULA LÓPEZ RÚA
UNIVERSIDAD DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



1. INTRODUCTION

The present study is centred on the process of identification and translation of idiolects by means of the analysis of a corpus comprising different types of lexicalized structures,¹ namely idioms (for example, *be nuts* or *hit the ceiling*), clichés and routine formulae (*you could tell, if you know what I mean*), and the so-called inner terms or non-canonical expressions, that is, structures of the type *How about...?*, also referred to by Lyons (1968: 178) as “schemata.” All of them have been termed “word combinations” (Zgusta 1970), “fixed expressions” (Alexander 1978)²

and “phrasal lexemes” (Lipka 1990). I have grouped them under the expression *lexicalized structures* because, although in different degrees, they all have been subject to a process of *lexicalization*; in Lipka’s words, “the process that a complex lexeme once coined tends to become a single complete lexical unit” (1990: 95).

The data that make up the corpus have been taken from Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), and also from two translations of the book, one into Spanish and the other into Galician. Since I intended to verify to what extent those translations had succeeded in identifying and rendering the characters’ idiolects, I proceeded to a selection of those structures whose systematic occurrence was so evident that they undoubtedly formed part of the characters’ speech habits. The suggestion which I put forward is that, if a particular lexicalized structure occurs so many times (in this case, even more than 100 on some occasions) that it is clearly identifiable as a character’s

speech habit, that structure should keep a fixed or almost fixed translation into the TL (target language), and it should be translated as many times as possible. In that way, the character's linguistic idiosyncrasies and the function attached to them will be preserved for the reader of the TL.

2. THE IDENTIFICATION OF RECURRENT LEXICALIZED STRUCTURES

The idiosyncratic structures of the corpus have been identified on the basis of the number of times a certain construction is used to refer to the same concept in proportion to the character's participation in the dialogues (i.e. his speech turns). For example, in Chapter 19 (CR 148-55),³ Holden has a conversation with his former school advisor Carl Luce, who only appears in this chapter. Taking into account that approximately half the chapter is devoted to description and digression, in the remaining pages (those devoted to dialogue), Luce has 33 speech turns, most of them of one or two short sentences (for instance, on page 151: 'Good God, no', 'Must we pursue this horrible trend of thought?', 'Nobody you know', 'I never asked her, for God's sake.'). The list below—numbered from (1) to (7)—corresponds to the lexical items that are most frequently employed by this character in the dialogue:⁴

- (1) **Certainly**: used twice (for example, on p. 151: 'I like a mature person . . . **Certainly**').
- (2) **Obviously**: used twice (CR 152: 'No kidding! She Chinese, for Crissake?' '**Obviously**').
- (3) **Naturally**: used twice (CR 153: '**Naturally**. Your mind is immature').
- (4) **(Good) God**: used twice (CR 151: 'You still going around with that babe?' . . . '**Good God**, no.').
- (5) **Listen**: used 3 times (CR 154: '**Listen**. I'm not giving an elementary course in psychoanalysis').
- (6) **Simply**: used 3 times (CR 152: 'I **simply** happen to find Eastern philosophy more satisfactory').

- (7) **For God's sake**: used 7 times. For example:

'You mean it's better in China?' . . . 'Not necessarily in China, **for God's sake** . . . 'Why's it better in the East?' 'It's too involved to go into, **for God's sake** . . . 'So do I! So do I regard it as a wuddayacallit . . . 'Not so loud, **for God's sake**, Cauldfield' (CR 152)

Carl's speech habits denote a reluctance to satisfy the curiosity of a sexually inexperienced Holden, together with a wish to appear intellectually superior and more mature than his counterpart. On the other hand, from the list of lexical items it can be inferred that the lexicalized expression *for God's sake* forms part of the character's idiolect as a cliché used with emotional intention to convey an unfavourable feeling of anger or impatience towards his interlocutor.

In the following paragraphs I provide further examples of lexicalized structures that illustrate the speech habits of other characters in the book, namely Holden Cauldfield, his school mates Ackley and Stradlater, his sister Phoebe, Horwitz (the taxi driver) and Sunny (the prostitute). Some of them will be analysed from the point of view of their translation in subsection 3.2. All these characters except Holden have episodic appearances, so the method resorted to in order to identify their speech habits is the same which has been used in the case of Carl Luce.⁵

Ackley and Stradlater's most characteristic lexicalized expressions—illustrated in (8), (9) and (10)—are *for Crissake* and the expletive *the hell* in wh- questions (*What the hell...? Where the hell...?*). They are also the taxi driver's favourite expressions (11). Concerning *for Chrissake*, it could be placed between idioms and clichés: its meaning has lost the compositional quality, and its main function is that of conveying *strong feelings*, usually of surprise, anger or displeasure. The characters' extensive use of this expression turns it into a sort of cliché within their idiolect, as its freshness is obliterated by overexposure. As for the noun phrase *the hell*, it is also far from its original meaning (either literal or figurative: *sinners go to hell*, *she made his life a hell*). It is used simply as an emphazier, and therefore with *emotional meaning*. In the same way as *for Chrissake*, its overuse makes the characters' speech expressive but trite and repetitive (that is, typical teenage language). Along with *the hell*, the variant *the heck* (12) is sometimes used by the prostitute.

- (8) 'Ackley?' I said. 'Y'awake?' . . . '**What the hellyya** doing, anyway?' I said.

'Wuddaya mean **what the hell** am I doing? I was tryna sleep . . . **What the hell** was the fight about, anyhow?' . . . 'Jesus!' he said. '**What the hell** happened to you?' He meant all the blood and all . . .

'You're still bleeding, **for Chrissake**. You better put something on it.'

'It'll stop. Listen. Ya wanna play a little Canasta or don'tcha?'

'Canasta, **for Chrissake**. Do you know what time it is, by any chance? . . . I gotta get up and go to Mass in the morning, **for Chrissake** . . . - **what the hell** was the fight about, anyhow?'

'It's a long story . . . is it okay if I sleep in Ely's bed tonight? He won't be back till tomorrow night, . . .

'I don't know **when the hell** he's coming back'

(CR 50-51)

- (9) I was sort of in the mood for horsing around . . .

'Cut it out, Holden, **for Chrissake!**' Stradlater said. He didn't feel like horsing around . . . 'You're right in my light, Holden, **for Chrissake,**' . . .

'Where is she? . . . How'd she happen to mention me?'

'I don't know, **for Chrissake**. Lift up, willya? . . .

'I used to play checkers with her all the time.' . . .

'Checkers, **for Chrissake!**'

(CR 34-35)

- (10) If you knew Stradlater, you'd have been worried, too . . . He came in griping about how cold it was out.

Then he said, '**Where the hell** is everybody? It's like a goddam morgue around here' . . .

All of a sudden, he said, '**For Chrissake**, Holden, this is about a goddam baseball glove.' . . .

'All right, give it back to me, then,' I said . . . I tore it up.

'**What the hellja** do that for?' he said. I didn't even answer him . . . finally I said, 'You're back prettygoddam late . . . Did you make her be late signing in?' . . .

'Couple minutes,' he said. '**Who the hell** signs out for nine-thirty on a Saturday night?' . . .

'Did you go to New York?' I said.

'Ya crazy? **How the hell** could we go to New York if she only signed out for nine-thirty?'

(CR 44-46)

- (11) Old Horwitz . . . looked at me . . .

'**How the hell** should I know? . . . **How the hell** should I know a stupid thing like that? . . . It's tougher for the fish, the winter and all, than it is for the ducks, **for Chrissake**. Use your head, **for Chrissake** . . . **What the hellaya** mean, what do they do? . . . They stay right where they are, **for Chrissake** . . . It's their nature, **for Chrissake** . . . Their bodies, **for Chrissake** . . . Their bodies take in nutrition and all. That's their nature, **for Chrissake.**'

(CR 87-88)

- (12) 'Sunny,' she said. 'Let's go, hey?' . . . **What the heck** ya wanna talk about?' . . .

'I had an operation very recently . . . On my wuddayacallit—my clavichord'

'Yeah? **Where the hell's** that? . . . You look like a guy in the movies . . . **What the heck's** his name?' . . .

'Do you mind cutting it out? . . . I'm not in the mood' . . .

'**What the heck** did you tell that crazy Maurice you wanted a girl for, then?'

(CR 100-102)

Phoebe's discourse is characterized by the repetitive use of the structure *and everything* in final position (for example, on page 184: *She breathes all over the food and everything*). It is another meaningless cliché that provides a sense of *looseness* of expression and thought which is characteristic of teenagers and children's speech.

- (13) 'How's the play?' I asked her. 'What'd say the name of it was?'
 "'A Christmas Pageant for Americans' . . . It starts out when I'm dying. This ghost comes in on Christmas Eve and asks me if I'm ashamed **and everything**. You know. For betraying my country **and everything** . . . Guess what I did this afternoon! What movie I saw' . . . 'The Doctor' . . . It was all about this doctor in Kentucky **and everything** that sticks a blanket over this child's face that's a cripple and can't walk. Then they send him to gaol **and everything** . . . He feels sorry for it, the doctor. That's why he sticks this blanket over her face **and everything.**' . . .
 'Did they say what time they'd be back?' . . .
 'No, but not till very late. Daddy took the car **and everything**, so they wouldn't have to worry about trains' . . .
 'So it was a good picture, huh?' I said.

'Swell, except Alice had a cold, and . . . always in the middle of something important, her mother'd lean over me **and every-thing** and ask Alice if she felt grippy.' . . .

'D.B. coming home for Christmas?' . . .

'He may, and he may not . . . He may have to stay in Hollywood and write a picture . . . It's a love story **and everything**'

(CR 169-70)

Among Holden's most obvious speech habits I identified the vague expression *and all / and everything* (with the same value as in Phoebe's speech) and its twin *or something / or anything*. The use of such expressions is often purely arbitrary, with no discernible meaning: *my parents... they are nice and all* (CR 5); *it was December and all* (CR 8); *I didn't have any alternative or anything* (CR 15); *How'bout using the table or something?* (CR 27). As the rest of the structures selected, they are frequently repeated throughout the book, and they are at the same time idiosyncratic and group representative, in the sense that they help to present the characters both as individuals and as typical exponents of a particular age or social group.

Taking into account their frequency of occurrence within the whole book, I identified the following idioms as the most characteristic of Holden's speech:

—The phrasal verbs *knock out* and *horse around*. The former is used to express the character's favourable attitude towards the object (therefore, it has an emotional meaning):

(14) When she turned around, her pretty little but twitched . . . She **knocked me out** (CR 77)

(15) I was sort in the mood for **horsing around** . . . He didn't feel like **horsing around** (CR 32)

—The expressions *get on somebody's nerves*, *give a damn*, *give somebody a pain in the ass / be a pain in the ass* are used to convey the character's strongly negative feelings towards something or somebody (impatience, dislike, boredom or indifference). They are grammatically well-formed, but their meaning is not compositional, although they may retain a figurative interpretation.

(16) He was always yelling . . . **It got on your nerves** sometimes (CR 11)

(17) People always think something's all true. I don't **give a damn** (CR 13)

(18) She had one of these . . . embarrassing voices . . . it always **gave me a pain in the ass** (CR 130)

(19) Old Luce. He was strictly **a pain in the ass** (CR 155)

—The alternative expressions *to shoot the bull / the breeze* and *to chew the rag / the fat* are often used with the meaning "to chat." They are non-compositional and semantically opaque.

(20) I kept wishing I could go home and **shoot the bull** for a while with old Phoebe (CR 86)

(21) The old lady . . . and I **shot the breeze** for a while (CR 208)

(22) I went round to the can and **chewed the rag** with him while he was shaving (CR 31)

(23) I like it now . . . Sitting here with you and just **chewing the fat** (CR 78)

The most characteristic non-canonical expression used by Holden (although it is not so frequent as other structures) is the noun phrase *my ass* in final position, which is in fact another expletive with *emotional value*, used to express strong disagreement with respect to his interlocutor's statement. Its equivalents in initial position are *like hell* and *the hell*:

(24) 'Life is a game, boy.' . . . Game, **my ass** (CR 13)

(25) 'That's a deer shooting hat.' '**Like hell** it is.' (CR 26)

(26) 'Did you give her my regards?' . . . 'Yeah.' '**The hell** he did, the bastard.' (CR 46)

Hell is perhaps the most versatile word in Holden's vocabulary. It enters quite a few idiomatic expressions in which it has no relationship to its original meaning, for example in the construction *just for the hell of it* (meaning "without any special reason": *I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it*, on page 42) or in the simile *as hell / like hell*, which is a non-compositional expression with intensifying value. The literal

or figurative interpretation that could be ascribed to this structure in examples such as *old as hell* or *hot as hell* is neutralised by the fact that it is also applied to their opposites (*cold / icy as hell*, *young as hell*). In fact, it occurs as a trite modifier of either positive or negative adjectives in the character's opinion (positive: *casual as hell*, *quiet as hell*, *funny as hell*; negative: *rusty as hell*, *depressed as hell*, *nervous as hell*), and also as a modifier of antonyms (*sad / blue as hell* vs. *gay / glad as hell*; *dark as hell* vs. *sunny as hell*) and verbs (*my chest hurt like hell*). *The hell* is also extensively used by Holden as an expletive in wh- questions (on page 45: *What the hell's the difference if it's about a baseball glove?*).

Holden's alternative to *Ackley* and *Stradlater's for Chrissake* is the comparatively weaker *for God's sake* (for example, on page 23: *He wanted you to think he'd come in by mistake, for God's sake*). He uses *for Chrissake* only when he feels the need for a stronger expression (on page 77: *That annoyed me... 'I'm twelve, for Chrissake'*).

The verb *to kill* is used with a non-literal meaning in the slang expression *It / That kills / killed me*. Holden uses it when he is *emotionally affected*, either favourably (on page 5: *He wrote this terrific book of short stories... it killed me*) or unfavourably (on page 149: *He kept telling her he had aristocratic hands. That killed me.*).

Finally, I will mention a couple of idiomatic similes which also lay between idioms and clichés due to their systematic use: *like a bastard / as a bastard* and *like a madman / like mad*. As *like hell*, they are intensifiers non-compositional in meaning and usually opaque (on page 219: *it began to rain like a bastard*). They mainly occur as verb modifiers (on page 183: *my heart was beating like a bastard*; on page 77: *I apologized like a madman*).

As stated before, due to their frequency of occurrence all these lexicalized structures form part of the characters' speech idiosyncrasies. They contribute to the characterization of their speech as emotional, imprecise, repetitive and sometimes vulgar or obscene, and they are at the same time personal and representative.

3. THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION: PROBLEMS, STRATEGIES AND ANALYSES

3.1. Problems and strategies

Lexicalized structures have been characterized as more or less fixed expressions with different degrees of semantic transparency. It is their non-compositional nature that poses particular problems, firstly with respect to their identification and interpretation in the SL (source language), and secondly concerning their translation: as Bassnett (1991: 32) points out, it is not always possible to find a lexicalized structure of similar form and meaning in both the SL and the TL. Other difficulties may arise from the context and frequency of use of these fixed expressions in different types of text (for instance, written vs. spoken). In that sense, Baker (1992) notices that

[u]sing idioms in English is very much a matter of style. Languages such as Arabic or Chinese which make a sharp distinction between written and spoken discourse and where the written mode is associated with a high level of formality, tend, on the whole, to avoid using idioms in written contexts. (1992: 71)

Baker's remark is highly relevant in the present case, because Salinger's book is a type of text that renders spoken speech, and this kind of speech favours the occurrence of certain idiomatic expressions which would not be allowed in other types of text such as, for example, quality-press news reports. Besides, it must be taken into account that not all languages are equally permissive with respect to the introduction of typically spoken forms in writing. In that sense, the translator should be ready to make any necessary changes to render the message in accordance with the structural and stylistic peculiarities of the TL.

Concerning the methods resorted to when translating lexicalized structures, they fall into four groups: literal translation, translation by equivalence, by modification and by omission. This classification is partially based on Baker (1992: 71-78). The strategy of compensation, that is, the omission of a feature "at the point where it occurs in the source text" and its introduction "elsewhere in the target text" (1992: 78), has been disregarded, as it is hardly used in the translations handled. The rest of the strategies are illustrated in the following paragraphs with several examples taken from the corpus.⁶

3.1.1. *Literal Translation*

It consists of using a lexicalized structure of *similar form and meaning* in the TL. This translation implies a correspondence of structures which is only occasionally achieved. For example, the idiomatic simile *like a madman* in *The Catcher in the Rye* is sometimes rendered as *como un loco* in the Spanish translation and as *coma un tolo* in the Galician one; the semi-cliché *and all / and everything* has the Spanish equivalent *y todo* and the Galician *e todo*, for instance, in

- (27) a. They were going to have me psychoanalysed **and all** (CR 42)
 (27) b. Pensaron en llevarme a un psiquiatra **y todo** (1991: 52)
 (27) c. Quixeron psicanalizarme **e todo** (1990: 41)

3.1.2. *Translation by Equivalence*

This translation resorts to the use of a lexicalized structure of *similar meaning but different form*. For example, the idiom *to give a damn* is sometimes translated as *importar un rábano* (Spanish) and *importar un carallo* (Galician); the idiomatic simile *old as hell* (CR 11) is rendered as *más viejo que Matusalén* (1991: 14) and *mais vello co demo* (1990: 10).

3.1.3. *Translation by Modification*

It consists of a *translation by means of a paraphrase*. According to Baker, it is used when "a match cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages" (1992: 74). For example, on page 165: *that closet's full of hangers that rattle like madmen*. This idiomatic expression is translated into Spanish as *las perchas hacían un ruido terrible* (1991: 193), and into Galician as *percheiros que facían moito barullo* (1990: 144).

3.1.4. *Translation by Omission*

A lexicalized structure may be sometimes omitted in the target text because it does not have a close equivalent in the TL, because its meaning is not easy to paraphrase, or due to stylistic reasons. I came across many examples of translation by omission in both the Spanish and Galician versions, most of them, in my opinion, unjustified. For example, the idiomatic expletive *the hell* in wh- questions, which occurs on 75 occasions in the English text, has several alternative translations into Spanish (*¿Qué demonios...? maldita sea, ¡a quién se le ocurre...!*) and also in Galician (*¿Que carallo...? ¡a quen se lle*

ocorre...?). After a thorough analysis of all the examples I concluded that there was just a small percentage in which the translation by omission could be acceptable (such as, on page 88, *how the hell old are you?*, where any attempt at translation would force the structural rules of the TL). In spite of this, I found out that the translation had been omitted on 55 occasions in the Spanish version and on 51 in the Galician one, which amounts to two thirds of the cases registered.

Most of the inadequacies detected in the Spanish and Galician versions are related to the translations by paraphrase and by omission. In my view, they are due to the fact that the translators have *failed to recognize* the defining features of the characters' idiolect (for example, the systematic use of some lexicalized structures). Apparently, they are not aware of the fact that the writer is *deliberately* resorting to a trite and monotonous vocabulary in order to define the characters and their speech habits. Both translations (but particularly the Spanish one) seem utterly unable to render the characters' idiolects accurately. Instead of trying to convey those idiolects whenever possible (of course adapting them to the peculiarities of the TL), in most cases the translators resort to the systematic omission of recurrent structures, and some other times they translate those recurrent structures in many different ways without taking into account the context, the style and the character who uses them. As a result, the translation becomes expressionless. For instance, the slang idiomatic phrase *chew the fat* (CR 112) is sometimes neutrally translated into Spanish as *hablar* (CR 134), therefore losing all its force and stylistic connotations.

As mentioned before, I am aware of the fact that some languages are more permissive than others concerning the accommodation of informal lexicalized structures in written discourse. For example, the systematic rendering of the conversational semi-cliché *and all / and everything* as *y todo / y eso / y tal* in Spanish would seem quite unnatural in a written text. It is not possible to translate such colloquial expressions all the time, so they must be omitted or modified so as not to force the rules of the TL. However, if those expressions are *purposely repeated*, I believe that *they cannot be omitted or modified all the time*, because this repetition is meaningful and has a function in the original.

Once the lexicalized expressions in the SL have been identified, and once it has been verified that their frequency of use is deliberate and significant, the next step should be to find the means to render them, so that the reader of the TL will perceive that the characters are expressing themselves in a peculiar way. One method would be, for example, to keep a fixed or almost fixed translation (of course adapted to the features of the TL) whenever possible.

An illustrative example of the deficiencies of the translations concerning this point is the rendering of one of Holden's most typical idiomatic expressions: the slang phrase *that / it kills / killed me* (whose meaning and intention have already been explained in Section 2). This construction occurs on 33 occasions throughout the book, so that the reader of the SL realizes that it is typical of Holden's speech. At the same time, the use Holden makes of the expression tells the reader something about the character. When faced with the translation of this expression, what both versions do is to *dissolve* this feature of the character's idiolect by means of *dispersion*, that is, by translating it into Spanish in 23 different ways and into Galician in 17 (plus 5 omissions). Both show a total lack of regularity concerning translation strategies and style, as the translations range from the neutral *ser estupendo* or *gustar moito* to the plainly colloquial *¿No te fastidia?* or *escarallarse de risa*, and from the nearly equivalent *para morirse* and *case me mata* to the looser alternatives *menuda cursilería* and *é o que pasa*. The result is that the meaning conveyed in the original by means of systematic repetition is nullified in the translations and irretrievably lost for the TL reader.

3.2. Comparative Analysis: Characters

In this subsection the English version of *The Catcher in the Rye* and the translations into Spanish and Galician will be analysed from the point of view of some characters' idiolects. In Section 2 I already provided some examples of the speech habits of different characters and noticed their tendency to use a few lexicalized structures which, due to recurrency, could be recognized as part of their idiolects. I will proceed now to examine how these recurrent structures are rendered in the Spanish and Galician versions, focusing on how many times they are used by each character and on the strategies of translation.

Holden's sister Phoebe appears on Chapters 21, 22, 23 and 25. She uses the expression *and everything* on 10 occasions: Ch. 21 (8), 22 (1) and 23 (1). The Spanish version translates *and everything* as *y todo eso* twice, and omits it on 8 occasions; the Galician translation resorts to 3 alternatives: *e tal* (1), *e todo* (2), *e todo iso* (1), and 5 omissions. Consequently, neither of them recognizes the expression as part of the character's idiolect.

Horwitz, the taxi driver, appears on Chapter 12. On hardly two pages he uses the expletive *the hell* in wh- questions 4 times, and the expression *for Chrissake* 6 times. Both tend to be omitted in the translations:

the hell (4)

SPANISH:	
Translation by paraphrase (<i>¿Cómo quiere que...?</i>)	= 2
Translation by omission	= 2
GALICIAN:	
Translation by equivalence (<i>¿Que carallo...?</i>)	= 1
Translation by omission	= 3

for Chrissake (6)

SPANISH:	
Translation by equivalence (<i>¿no te fastidia?</i>)	= 2
Translation by paraphrase (<i>¿no irá usted a..., no?</i>)	= 1
Translation by omission	= 3
GALICIAN:	
Literal translation (<i>¡polo amor de Deus!</i>)	= 3
Translation by omission	= 3

Carl Luce's characteristic expression *for God's sake* occurs on 7 occasions on Chapter 19. The Spanish version resorts once to the literal translation *¡por Dios!* and omits it 6 times; in Galician the literal translation *¡polo amor de Deus!* is used twice, and omission is resorted to on 5 occasions. Again it can be noticed that this feature of the character's idiolect is lost in both translations.

Ackley appears on Chapters 3 and 7. His favourite expressions are the expletive *the hell* (11) and *for Chrissake* (10). Their translations run as follows:

the hell (11)

SPANISH:	
Translation by equivalence (<i>¿Qué demonios...?</i>)	= 2
Translation by omission	= 9
GALICIAN:	
Translation by equivalence (<i>¿Que carallo...?</i>)	= 3
Translation by omission	= 8

for Chrissake (10)

SPANISH:

Translation by paraphrase (*¡Mira que eres pesado!,
¡No me digas!...*) = 5 (different)

Translation by omission = 5

GALICIAN:

Literal translation (*¡por Cristo! = 3 /
¡polo amor de Cristo! = 2*) = 5

Translation by paraphrase (*nai que te botou*) = 1

Translation by omission = 4

Finally, Stradlater's use of *for Chrissake* (8) and *the hell* (9) on Chapters 3, 4 and 6 is rendered into Spanish and Galician in the following way:

for Chrissake (8)

SPANISH:

Translation by equivalence (*¡no jorobes
(por Dios)! = 2, ¡no fastidies! = 1*) = 3

Translation by paraphrase (*¿Pero a quién
se le ocurre...?*) = 1

Translation by omission = 4

GALICIAN:

Literal translation (*¡Por Cristo!*) = 3

Translation by equivalence (*manda carallo*) = 1

Translation by omission = 4

the hell (9)

SPANISH:

Translation by paraphrase (*de una vez, ¿a quién
se le ocurre...?*) = 2 (different)

Translation by omission = 7

GALICIAN:

Translation by equivalence (*¿Que carallo...?*) = 6

Translation by paraphrase (*¿a quen se lle ocorre...?*) = 1

Translation by omission = 2

Summing up, in all cases there is a *high number of translations by omission* which is, in my opinion, *hardly justifiable*, especially if there is

evidence that these lexicalized structures form part of the characters' speech idiosyncrasies. The conclusion I gathered from my analysis is that *both translations fail to identify the features of the characters' idiolects*. Nevertheless, it must also be remarked that, in general terms, the Galician translation tends to be more regular and faithful to the original.

3.3. Comparative Analysis: Global Results

The final step in this study will be a review of the list of examples that make up the corpus. I will consider their frequency of use throughout the whole book (independently of the Spanish and Galician versions. Most of the examples belong to Holden's idiolect and have already been mentioned in the previous section. Holden is the main character in the book, and he tells his own story in the first person. Due to this, he is the character who appears on most occasions, so it is quite easy for the reader to identify his linguistic idiosyncrasies.

I will start with three structures which I regard as synonyms concerning their expressive value: *my ass / like hell / the hell* (for example: *lovely, my ass*, on page 131, or *the hell he did*, on page 46). Their features and meaning have already been explained in Section 2. They are clause initial / clause final expletives which could enter the category of non-canonical expressions. On the whole, they are used by Holden on 6 occasions. The Galician version recognizes their equivalence and provides a *uniform* translation for them (*o carallo*) 5 out of 6 times (for example, on page 117, *bonito o carallo*). The remaining translation is a paraphrase (*non o creo*). On the contrary, the Spanish version is quite *irregular*: it resorts to 6 different translations by equivalence and paraphrase (*un cuerno*= 2, *de raro, nada*= 1, *menuda trola*= 1, *que te lo has creído*= 1, *mentía como un cosaco*= 1).

Concerning the phrasal verb *horse around*, which occurs 15 times throughout the book, the Spanish version resorts to 11 translations: 4 equivalent alternatives (*hacer el ganso*= 2, *hacer el indio*= 2, *tomar el pelo*= 2, *tener ganas de bromas*= 2) and 7 different translations, some of them quite unrelated to the original (*pasear por ahí, salir*). The Galician version keeps a *uniform* translation (the equivalent *face-lo parvo*) on 9 occasions, plus one omission, an alternative *xogar* (4), and also *meter man* (1). The last two intend to render the sexual connotations that the expression sometimes acquires in the original.

The phrasal verb *knock out* appears 8 times. Instead of choosing one fixed translation, both versions resort to several synonymous verbs and ex-

pressions. Therefore, in Spanish it is translated in 3 different ways: *volver loco* (3), *gustar (muchísimo)* (3) and *encantar* (2). In Galician there are 4 alternatives: *encantar* (1), *gustar tanto / moito* (4), *enlevar* (1) and *flipar (a tope)* (2).

The idiomatic expression *get on somebody's nerves* (which is used 7 times) keeps a more regular translation into Spanish: the equivalent (although somehow neutral) *poner nervioso* (5) and two more emphatic alternatives: *poner negro* (1) and *poner los nervios de punta* (1). In Galician, the expressive force of the 4 alternatives ranges from *poner nervioso* (1) to *fartar* (4), *tolear* (1) and *cabrear* (1).

More characteristic of Holden's speech (on account of its frequency: 16 times) is the lexicalized structure *give a damn*. Surprisingly enough, in this case there is a slight tendency towards regularity. In the Spanish version the most frequent translations are: *no importar (mucho / nada)*, which occurs 10 times, and *importar un rábano / un pimienta / un pito*, which is used 4 times, although the latter is far more adequate than the former considering the style and the character. In the Galician translation there are 3 omissions, but the expression is accurately rendered as the colloquial *importar un carallo* 7 times, whereas the more neutral *non importar (moito)* is employed on 6 occasions.

The expletive *the hell* in *wh-* questions is used 75 times by different characters. However, there is a general tendency towards *omission* in both translations (55 in Spanish, 51 in Galician). In the Spanish version, the accurate equivalent *¿Qué demonios / diablos / puñetas...?* is used only on 8 occasions, and the remaining 12 are different paraphrases (*¿A ver, por qué...?*, *¿A quién se le ocurre...?*). In contrast with the dispersion observed in the Spanish translation, in Galician there is a systematic rendering of the expression as *¿Que carallo...?* (23).

The synonymous expressions *for God's sake / for Chrissake* occur on 58 occasions. Again a high degree of *omissions* can be noticed on both translations (38 in Spanish, 31 in Galician). There is also a total lack of uniformity in the Spanish translation, with 16 different alternatives (*¡no me digas!*, *¡no jorobes!*, *¡por Dios!*, *¡por favor!...*), neither of them used more than twice. Concerning the Galician version, it is more regular, as it keeps an almost fixed rendering (*¡Por Cristo!* / *¡Polo amor de Cristo!* / *¡Polo amor de Deus!*) on 21 occasions; *manda carallo* is used 3 times, and the remaining are different paraphrases.

To be a pain in the ass and *to give somebody a pain in the ass* are other idiomatic expressions registered in the corpus. They appear on 7 occasions and have 5 different translations into Spanish, the most frequent being the

equivalent *dar cien patadas* (3), for example, on page 135: *La tal Sally me daba cien patadas* (translated from *She gave me a pain in the ass*, CR 112). In Galician, the parallel *facer doe-lo cu* is used twice, and the rest are four alternatives differing in style and expressiveness (*non gustar*, *amolar*, *ser un coñazo* and *ser mais parvo ca Abundio*).

The structure *(just) for the hell of it* occurs 7 times. It is omitted once in each version. In Spanish it has 6 different translations (for example: *porque sí*, *porque le apetece*, *porque le salta del alma*). In Galician the dispersion is less noticeable, as the equivalent *porque si* is used 3 times, and the structure *por + infinitive* is used twice (*por ir*, *por cantar*).

The idiomatic simile *as hell / like hell* is often used by all characters (it appears on 92 occasions) and is also systematically omitted in both translations (30 times in Spanish and 37 in Galician). Its emphatic value is rendered into Spanish by means of the suffix *-ísimo (nerviosísima, arrepentidísimo)* 19 times, and by means of the adverb *muy (muy deprimida, muy buena persona)* on 9 occasions. Equivalent emphatic similes are used 5 times (*más frío que un témpano, más viejo que Matusalén*) and the rest are 21 different translations. In Galician, the equivalent *coma o demo* is regularly used (19), followed by the adverb *moi* (15), equivalent emphatic similes, such as *serio coma unha pedra* (3), and 12 different translations. In general terms, a considerable stylistic difference between the original and the Spanish version can be appreciated. On the contrary, and despite the dispersion, the Galician translation generally succeeds in keeping the informal, slightly irreverent tone of the original:

- (28) a. I was being seductive **as hell** (CR 131)
 (28) b. Estuve tan seductor (1991: 155)
 (28) c. Eu estaba seductor coma o demo (1990: 117)

- (29) a. It made me feel sad **as hell** (CR 100)
 (29) b. Me dio una tristeza horrible (1991: 121)
 (29) c. Sentíme triste coma o demo (1990: 90)

- (30) a. She sounded sore **as hell** (CR 138)
 (30) b. Parecía enfadadísima (1991: 163)
 (30) c. Estaba cabreada (1990: 121)

Another idiomatic simile, *as a bastard / like a bastard*, is used 12 times. In Spanish it is rendered as the equivalent similes *como un imbécil* (3) and *como un condenado* (4). On one occasion it is omitted, and the 4 remaining are different translations. In Galician the most frequent translations are the

literal *coma un fillo de puta* (4) and the equivalent *coma un cabrón* (3). There are also 3 omissions.

Not so frequent is the simile *like a madman / like mad* (9). It is also more irregularly translated: the Spanish version resorts to 9 different translations (comprising the literal *como un loco* = 1, equivalent similes such as *como un condenado*, and paraphrases such as *disculpase como cincuenta mil veces*); in Galician there are 3 omissions, the literal translation *coma un tolo* is kept on 3 occasions and the adverb *moito* is used twice.

Finally, I will consider two of Holden's most typical expressions: the dangling end *and all / and everything* and its counterpart *or something / or anything*, usually in negative sentences. Both are extensively used in the original and frequently ignored in both translations, despite the fact that it would be possible to keep a systematic rendering such as *y tal / y eso, ni nada / o algo* in Spanish, and *e tal / e iso, nin nada / ou algo* in Galician. Once more, omissions and paraphrases should be the exception rather than the rule if there is evidence that the intended effect is that of a repetitive and imprecise discourse.

And all / and everything is used at least on 304 occasions by different characters and mainly by Holden. It is omitted 248 times in the Spanish version and 226 in Galician. In Spanish it is translated as the literal *y todo*, the equivalent *y eso* and the combination *y todo eso* (34) plus 14 different translations (*las historias habituales, y cosas de esas, y todo ese follón...*). The Galician version exhibits more regularity: *e iso / e todo / e todo iso* is the most frequent translation (38), followed by *e tal* (28) and 9 different translations (*e toda esa leria, ou o que sexa...*).

Concerning *or something / or anything*, the Spanish version omits the translation on 93 occasions out of 142. The literal translation *ni nada (de eso)* is used 25 times and the positive equivalents *o algo / o así / o algo así* occur 14 times. There are also 10 different translations (*al menos, o cualquier cosa, siquiera...*). The Galician version omits the translation on 76 occasions. The most frequent renderings are the literal *nin nada* (37) and the positive *ou algo / ou así / ou algo así* (22). The rest are 5 different translations (for example: *e tal* = 2, *ou calquera cousa* = 2, *ou o que fose* = 1).

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the general analysis seem to support those obtained in the analysis of individual speeches; they reveal the same deficiencies concerning

the translation of idiosyncratic lexicalized structures in both the Spanish and the Galician versions of the book (although these deficiencies tend to be more evident in the former). Their origin is, on the one hand, *the abuse of the translation by omission*, and on the other, the fact that in many cases *several synonymous translations* are unnecessarily used in order to render one single structure. In that way, the characters' idiolects, which are mainly created by means of deliberate repetition in the original, are progressively dismantled and destroyed in the translations, and the reader of the target language is deprived of an important instrument of interpretation.

It has been acknowledged that each language has its own peculiarities and possibilities, so that the main aim of a translator must be that of providing the most adequate interpretation of the message within the resources of the TL. In the present case, the translation goes a step further because it also demands the translator's sensibility to realize the function and value attached to the idiomatic structures as well as his aptitude to render them accordingly. As becomes clear from this study, when the translator is not able to keep a careful balance between the expressive resources of the SL and the TL, his work will be not only a colourless reflection of the original; he will also be depriving the message of part of its meaning and purpose. ❧

NOTES

1. The main sources for the identification of the structures compiled are Partridge (1984), Cowie et al. (1978) and Long et al. (1992).

2. Both Zgusta (1971) and Alexander (1978) are quoted in Asher (1994: 3168).

3. The examples in English have been extracted from the 1973 edition of J. D. Salinger's book (abbreviated CR).

4. In all the examples —including those numbered from (1) to (30)—the emphasis (bold type) is mine.

5. In order to establish an accurate proportion concerning the frequency of use of the structures, the physical extension of the book (as measured in pages) has also been considered; it is a medium-size novel (216 pages in the English version which I handle).

6. For more examples of all the methods considered, see subsection 3.2.

The research reported in this article was funded by the Galician Ministry of Education (XUGA 20401A97). This grant is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

WORKS CITED

- ALEXANDER, R. J. 1978. "Fixed Expressions in English: A Linguistic, Psycholinguistic, Sociolinguistic and Dialectic Study. Part I." *Anglistik und Englishunterricht* 6: 171-88.
- HER, R.E., ed. 1994. *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. 10 vols. Oxford: Pergamon.
- KER, Móna. 1992. *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London: Routledge.
- SSNETT, Susan. 1991. *Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.
- WIE, Anthony P., Ronald MACKIN and Isabel R. MCCAIG, eds. 1978. *The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic Speech*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- KA, Leonhard. 1990. *An Outline of English Lexicology*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- NG, Thomas H., and Della SUMMERS, eds. 1992. *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms*. 1979. London: Longman.
- ONS, John. 1968. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- TRIDGE, Eric. 1984. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. 1970. 2 vols. London: Routledge.
- LINGER, Jerome D. 1973. *The Catcher in the Rye*. 1951. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- . 1991. *El guardián entre el centeno*. Trans. Carmen Criado. Barcelona: Edhasa.
- . 1993. *O vixia no centeo*. Trans. Xosé Ramón Fernández Rodríguez. Vigo: Xerais.
- STA, L. 1971. *Manual of Lexicography*. (Janua Linguarum, Series Maior 39). The Hague: Mouton.



POLITENESS PHENOMENA IN BRITISH ENGLISH AND URUGUAYAN SPANISH: THE CASE OF REQUESTS



ROSINA MÁRQUEZ REITER
UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

INTRODUCTION

"Politeness" has been an important topic for sociology, anthropology, psychology and interrelated social sciences. However, it was not until the 70s that the concept became a major issue in pragmatics. Although linguistically scholars have not yet agreed on a definition of politeness, there appears to be a general agreement by which linguistic politeness is taken to refer to the principles, strategies and choice of linguistic forms involved in "smooth" communication, in other words, the use of verbal strategies in order to keep social interaction friction-free.

The universality of politeness principles has constituted a major concern in pragmatic research. Scholars, mainly through cross-cultural research, have sought to determine to what extent the principles of politeness vary or coincide from language to language. The aim of this article is to present an analysis and interpretation of the realisation patterns of requests in British English and Uruguayan Spanish, establishing the similarities and differences between the conceptualisation of politeness by native speakers of both languages.