

THE TRANSLATION OF HUMOUR IN ROALD DAHL'S PARODY

A STUDY OF THE TWITS AND GEORGE'S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE

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Abstract

The aim of this report is to examine how the humour of parody in Roald Dahl's *The Twits* (1980), and George's *Marvellous Medicine* (1982) is translated into French. This study explores the various translation problems that may arise in the translation of parody within children's literature, and what strategies translators use to retain the humour.

This report analyses Dahl's two works and their French translations: *Les Deux Gredins* (2007) and *La Potion Magique de Georges Bouillon* (2007). By analysing and comparing the verbal and visual frames in the books and their translations, the study shows how frame semantics may be used to analyse the techniques that are used to build up the humour of parody within the different frames based on context, contextualisation and relevance theory.

Declaration

I, Samantha Louise Rothbart, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

__S. Rothbart__

__2009__

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Description of the Study

My parents always believed that the best way to keep young children occupied was to get them to read. They both considered it a great triumph that, where other children would climb trees and convert the house into a fort, my sister and I were often found sitting in a quiet corner with a good book. We read everything that was given to us: adventure books like Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, were favourites, as much for their typical English humour as the weird and wonderful surprises that were to be found inside. This is precisely why both my parents were delighted when they stumbled upon Roald Dahl.

Here was an author with a mischievous sense of humour that appealed to my family at once. Where other parents would express their misgivings because the content was too "violent," or "evil", mine immediately adored them for their mockery and clever quips. And I loved them too. In fact, I continued to love them throughout my school years, and I love them to this day. It then dawned on me how interesting it was that these "children's" books appealed to me and my parents equally, though for different reasons.

Looking back today, I enjoy Roald Dahl more than ever before because I appreciate his use of parody in a way I did not understand, nor recognise, when I was younger. Each time I pick up one of his books, I find some new pun, or make an association that I had not made previously, simply because I have since encountered people and things that have allowed me to approach each reading from a different perspective.

Having come to this conclusion, and being as fond of languages as I am, I decided to dedicate my study to the way in which Dahl's parody is translated across cultures, and whether or not the humour is really retained.

I chose *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine* because of their focus on established family structures, and the way these are distorted to create humour. Having read *The Twits*, I remember wondering at the bizarre relationship between Mr and Mrs Twit and the nasty tricks they played upon each other. Surely, that was not the way a nice middle-aged couple should behave? Similarly, in *George's Marvellous Medicine*, my mind boggled at the idea that a grandmother could be so very mean to her grandson, especially when my own grandmother was warm, loving and protective of me.

The fact that Dahl targets these two aspects of family life (and the interpersonal relationships involved) and twists them, makes these books appealing to children, because it is a situation they know, if not in the way Dahl presents it. It is precisely this mockery of adult authority within families that appeals to the child's sense of humour. It also makes these two books ideal for this study.

The Twits tells the story of a dirty, nasty married couple who are cruel to everyone and everything. They are constantly playing evil tricks on each other and enjoy being cruel to animals, including the poor monkey family that they keep caged in their garden. One day, a magical bird arrives and helps the monkeys hatch a plan that will teach the horrid Twits a lesson for once and for all.

George's Marvellous Medicine is about a friendly little boy with a beastly grandmother. Where other little boys have caring grannies that tell stories by the fireside, George's grandmother moans, complains and taunts him endlessly. Then, he decides to cure her of her nasty ways by concocting a new medicine for her, and using it to replace the one she needs to be given every day at 11 o' clock. The results are fantastical and hilarious, and seem to be a solution for more than just his grandmother's bad habits.

During the course of my research, I discovered that, although much attention has been given to the fields of children's literature, humour, parody and their translation, we still lack a comprehensive view of how these fields influence one another. Parody has mostly been explored more as a reference to other works (as in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*) rather than as a form of humour in which social conventions and taboos are ridiculed.

Furthermore, little research has been done with regard to the relationship between language and illustrations to create humour, which is particularly prevalent in Roald Dahl's books. Although certain authors have attempted to reduce this gap, such as Riitta Oittinen (2003), Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2001) and Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2006), none of these specifically looks at how illustrations aid the translation of humour in particular; rather we have a general study of illustrations in children's literature, and a study of visuals as a "language", which does little to reduce the gap at all. Roald Dahl's works are an ideal platform to integrate the three areas, allowing us to move away from a systematic and static approach to translation, and towards a more dynamic one.

Roald Dahl's Literature

Before beginning this study, we need to look at the nature of Roald Dahl's literature and how he uses parody to convey humour to both adults and children. Dahl's children's fiction always has an element of the fantastical in it, appealing to the child's sense of imagination. I have only to mention books like *The BFG*, *The Witches*, and *Fantastic Mr Fox*, and already we encounter giants that blow dreams into children's ears, witches that turn people into mice, and a talking fox that always manages to outsmart three mean farmers. However, it is not just Dahl's keen descriptions and imaginative plots that attract readers, it is also his, often, mischievous and evil ideas, his mockery and distortion of social norms and people, and his use of nonsense to appeal to the inner child in all of us. Roald Dahl's books concentrate on defying such norms, and much of his content

deals with children's "taboos", such as adults having bad qualities, misbehaviour, the grotesque and mildly violent situations. Oittinen (2000: 92) explains that "violating these taboos in children's books is what makes them so appealing to children" [in the first place].

In an interview conducted by Todd McCormack (www.roalddahl.com), Roald Dahl was asked how he kept his readers entertained. He replied:

My lucky thing is that I laugh at exactly the same jokes that children laugh at...I don't sit out here roaring with laughter but you have wonderful inside jokes all the time and it's got to be exciting, it's got to be fast, it's got to have a good plot, but it's got to be funny. (Dahl: 1988)

The things that children laugh at, as Oittinen points out above, are the taboos, the things that are not normally considered appropriate for children (which I have also discussed in the section above). Roald Dahl highlights these very things, because he is aware of what children find funny.

A second feature in Dahl's literature is his use of parody, and this is essential to my research. Using both clever language and Quinton Blake's timeless illustrations, Dahl ridicules elements of life and society that children (and adults) find funny, purely because they are "not meant to". His use of nonsense words is humorous because they are so ridiculous, and his vivid descriptions of his characters, along with the caricatures Blake illustrates for the text, make the mockery all the more accessible to the imaginative reader. Distortion in both description and illustration is Dahl's most powerful tool in presenting his parody. In fact, Dahl stated that:

[T]he only way to make characters really interesting to children is to exaggerate all their good or bad qualities, and so, if a person is nasty or bad or cruel, you make them very nasty, very bad, very cruel. (Dahl: 1988)

One last element that is prevalent in Dahl's works, and which complements the mockery expressed in the parody, is the fact that he often presents situations that

are quite mean, but with the intention of making the reader laugh. Shavit (1986: 113) explores the idea that a text must be “appropriate and useful to the child, in accordance with what society regards...as educationally ‘good for the child’”, but also acknowledges that in children’s literature, imagination has become more acceptable and is now considered the prevailing norm (1986: 114). It has become acceptable to write about unsuitable events, like George putting potentially fatal ingredients into his granny’s *new* medicine. However, children accept and laugh at them for two reasons: 1) they know that the story is just that - a story, and 2) there is never a description of the horrors happening, the author just says that they happen (Dahl 1988).

Although there are certain elements that govern children’s literature and mark it as “audience-appropriate”, they do not always have to be honoured to appeal to the readers. Indeed, Dahl seems to flout the very “guidelines” set out by authorities on children’s literature with the result that he is just as popular, if not more so, than his purist colleagues. However, it should also be noted that there is an educational purpose in his writing, leaving readers to reflect on the characters’ actions and social etiquette. The nature of Dahl’s writing is what has made him so successful in the genre and, given how expectations and constraints in children’s literature have changed over the years, his writing may well be said to be entirely appropriate to children of our time. Not only is his writing entertaining, but children are presented with the task of understanding the source of ridicule in a way that expands their knowledge and experience, and allows them to apply such knowledge in order to make assumptions about the things they encounter.

Three areas of study are pertinent in Dahl’s literature: parody and humour, children’s literature, and translation in these two areas at both a cognitive and a linguistic level.

The broad theoretical framework for this research is relevance theory as presented by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986) and Ernst-August Gutt (1991). Gutt explains that:

Relevance theory is not a descriptive classificatory approach. It does not try to give an orderly description of complex phenomena by grouping them into classes, but tries instead to understand the complexities of communication in terms of cause-effect relationships, which, applied to our mental life, are taken to mean computational, and particularly inferential, relationships. Furthermore, because it is tied in with a psychological optimization principle, relevance theory provides a natural basis for an empirical account of evaluation and decision making. (1991: 21)

Relevance theory looks at translation as communication in which an audience may infer something from an utterance, based on *semantic representations* (1991: 24). These refer to linguistic expressions that give rise to mental representations, based on the receiver's previous assumptions or knowledge, and the mind's ability to make associations on this basis. So, we see that relevance theory relies heavily on the cognitive process of developing links to what has been presented, and this knowledge and experience is a cultural consideration as well.

Within the framework of relevance theory, frame semantics is a useful tool in the translation of humour. As I show in Chapter Three, Ana Maria Rojo Lopez provides an extended analysis of frame semantics (2002b: 318),¹ highlighting five different frames that may be identified: situational, visual, text-type, social and generic frames. In addition to this, she suggests various strategies for analysing the different frames. This is particularly useful, because where other authorities have provided some theoretical analysis of frames, they have fallen short of actually applying this theory adequately to examples. Lopez bridges this gap, applying strategies such as modification, reinforcement, and metaphoric and metonymic mapping in her analysis of David Lodge's *Small World*, and which I apply to each of Dahl's works.

In addition to Frame Semantics (and its clear link to Raskin's Script Theory),² there are numerous other strategies, such as the use of nonsense words, and

¹ Pages 39-43.

² Pages 37-38.

cultural and linguistic ways of interpreting and translating jokes. A combination of these proves a useful way to both understand and deal with the translation of humour. When it comes to understanding humour, specifically parody, within children's literature we need to address the mental process of association that takes place. This is as much to establish how external factors may influence the child's understanding of the utterance, as what associations they may make as a result.

Chapter Two focuses on humour, parody, and culture and context. The first idea centres on the nature of humour: its standard definitions, as well as the various causes and effects involved. An essential part of this chapter is to delve into why things are considered funny in the first place, and how this differs across audiences. The various types of humour necessarily impact on the translation process because our understanding of them will differ according to their respective functions. The second aspect explores parody as a specific type of humour. This provides further insight into Dahl's literature and represents the first problem area in the translation process. Specifically, this section focuses on the elements of Carnivalism that are embedded in parody and how this is integral to Dahl's work. The final section of this chapter deals with context and contextualisation and how these are important in conveying and understanding humour across cultures.

Chapter Three sets out the theoretical framework of this study. It explores the classification of humour, and the various strategies available for creating and translating humour, such as the use of nonsense words, and the General Theory of Verbal Humour and its relation to frame semantics. The link between humour and cognition is a prominent feature, allowing the reader to understand how humour and translation theory may be combined. The second section in Chapter Three discusses frame semantics in general and its ties to relevance theory as a useful framework for translating humour. The final aspect of Chapter Three relates to the translation of visual elements in a text. This moves the discussion beyond the realm of words and into that of images. It explores how images are just as important in the translation process as the language itself. The interplay between verbal and visual elements is an essential quality of Dahl's literature,

because we are faced with a visual representation of the text that is crucial to the translation process.

Chapter Four presents the methodology for this study, and provides the chosen frames from the two original works, as well as their French translations. In this chapter, I analyse eight frames (four each from *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine*) and trace the translational shifts that occur across the two languages, based on the different associations created by the various verbal and visual images.

Chapter Five, the conclusion of this report, provides a brief summary and an evaluation of the study.

CHAPTER TWO – HUMOUR, PARODY AND CONTEXT

The Nature of Humour – The Causes and Effects

“The complete process of understanding is better characterised by the joke about two psychoanalysts who meet on the street. One says, ‘Good morning’; the other thinks, ‘I wonder what he meant by that.’” (Pinker in Lopez, 2002a: 34)

The study of humour in the field of translation has always been a rather complicated matter. This is likely because the nature of humour is so very complex to begin with. Often, even amongst people who speak the same language, a joke isn’t always obvious; in fact, certain parties may not even find it funny. In this section, I address the nature and types of humour (specifically parody).

Finding a suitable definition of humour has challenged scholars for centuries. More often than not, when people are asked what humour is, the typical response is that it is something’s “quality of being funny” (Vandaele, 2002: 153). This introduces the concept of laughter, so often associated with humour, for, surely, if something is funny, we are expected to laugh (or at least smile) at it. But why do we laugh? What makes these things funny in the first place? To answer these questions, we need to look at the causes of humour and the effects they produce.

Henri Bergson holds that man is an animal that laughs and that whenever objects produce the effect of laughter, “it is always because of some resemblance to man, of the stamp he gives it or the use he puts it to” (1911: 4). This introduces Bergson’s belief that humour is a living thing and that laughter is a social phenomenon, accessible only because we have some experience of it, because

we understand it in relation to another item. This view is supported by Jeroen Vandaele, who explains humour as forming a part of our practical grasp on the world (2002: 153). In fact, as Bergson points out:

From the runner who falls to the simpleton who is hoaxed, from a state of being hoaxed to one of absentmindedness, from absentmindedness to wild enthusiasm, from wild enthusiasm to various distortions of character and will, we have followed the lines along which the comic becomes more and more deeply embedded in the person... (1911: 27)

Therefore, we see that laughter is evoked in a person because of some stimulus, as a response to some form of “arousal” (Palmer, 1994: 99). This attribution may be positive or negative, and brings us to a very interesting idea: while most people would view laughter as a good thing, a positive release of emotion, we do not always laugh at things with good intentions. We all have very different ideas of what we think is funny. In fact, we laugh at almost everything, and for all sorts of reasons, as Bergson indicates above. For him particularly, humour is “inclined to return evil for evil” (1911: 194), such as how we laugh at others when they are humiliated, or at their faults. He believes that it has nothing to do with a good or bad character, merely the fact that the person is unsociable and, therefore, does not fit into our understanding of society at large (1911: 135-145). I think this is only true to the extent that we laugh when that person’s actions seem incongruous in a particular setting.

Stephen Potter (1954: 4-8) holds that there are few situations to which laughter does not apply, including using laughter to break the ice and to find common territory in one’s conduct with a stranger. Stephen Leacock believes that original humour is represented by “progressive gradations as victory, cruelty, teasing, horse-play, hazing,³ practical jokes and April Fool” (1935: 13). Lopez sums all of these ideas up, explaining that:

³ The Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary (1987) describes hazing as “1. To persecute or punish with meaningless, difficult, or humiliating tasks. 2. To initiate, as in a college fraternity, by exacting humiliating performances from or playing rough practical jokes on. [Perhaps akin to Old French *hasert*, to insult, harass.”

humour is a complex phenomenon which is part of human nature...it may become a weapon for defence or attack, a way to protest or accept something we cannot avoid, a method to overcome shyness and establish new relationships. (2002a: 34)

In fact, all of the above notions of humour seem to indicate that the stimuli are endless, and the effects, even more so. “Humour based on wordplay may have ‘silly’ or ‘witty’ undertones, slapstick may strike people as ‘simplistic’, nonsense talk in an unfamiliar environment may be slightly frightening etc.” (Vandaele, 2002: 154).

However, what all of the above beliefs do seem to agree upon, is that we find things humorous because of some absurdity (like practical jokes and teasing), some unexpected quality in what we experience (being hoaxed or tripping, for example), or because we enjoy laughing at the misfortunes of others, a most common characteristic of the humorous. Vandaele believes that many people have a warped sense of humour, which feeds into the idea that most humour is of an aggressive nature at heart (2002: 153). This concept is further established by Salvatore Attardo’s (2002: 178) suggestion that all humorous material has some target, or “butt of the joke”, that we are meant to laugh at. However, given that we are all human, warped humour is, perhaps, the norm; this type of humour is universal.

This brings me to a more focused discussion of why these elements create humour in the first place. Above, we saw certain stimuli that could induce laughter. What we have not established is the cause of these stimuli, the reason we find them funny. Leacock believes that humour “finds its basis in the incongruity of life itself” (1935: 17). Vandaele (2002: 156), in turn, distinguishes between both incongruity and superiority as the causes of humour, and Morreall (in Palmer, 1994: 94) holds that humour may be derived from “a sensation of superiority over what is laughed at, a sensation of psychological relief or the perception of incongruity”.

Incongruity refers to a departure from normal cognitive schemes, which are playful rather than aggressive, whereas superiority looks at the effect of humour as competitive and even slightly hostile. Incongruity harks back to Bergson's belief that humour is the ability to recognise and laugh at any deviation from human adaptability (Potter, 1954: 11). Superiority, as explained by Aristotle and Hobbes, reflects on our idea of social status and intelligence, and is also linked to our sadistic impulses according to Freud (Potter, 1954: 11). Therefore, anything that is funny is something that we find incongruous to what we know to be true, or something that makes us feel superior to others because of our knowledge or our understanding of things that others cannot appreciate because they are inferior to us in some way.

Incongruity and superiority as a basis for humour are the causes that produce the effects of humour (laughter, mostly). Vandaele (2002: 159) holds that there are four types of humour, all of which are a combination of incongruity and superiority. It is not enough merely to look at the intention of humour, we also have to look at the way in which it is understood, and this can sometimes be very different from the intention.

Humour may be comic (either funny because it is incongruous, or superior because it is embarrassing for one party); intended (a humorous intention is communicated, producing a humorous effect in the audience), unintended (no humorous intention is communicated, but the audience infers humour from the utterance), or unachieved (where a humorous intention is communicated, but does not produce a humorous effect in the audience, because they do not find it funny).

Eco (2002) looks at the combination of these elements as incongruity-resolution-superiority, the process being that a reader will be faced with something incongruous (therefore funny), resolve it in his mind and then feel superior at having been able to understand this humour for himself.

Although incongruity and superiority are the foundations of humour, there are certain comic devices at our disposal upon which these two building blocks may

rely. Humour may be said to exist in various settings: it may be linguistic, which is linked to extra-lingual contexts and which often relies on the misuse of, or play between words (Eco, 2002: 234), situational, or even character based. With regard to the latter, Bergson (1911: 50-51) stresses that “*any incident is comic that calls our attention to the physical in a person, when it is the moral side that is concerned*” (original in italics), because what incites laughter is the transformation of a person into an object.

However, in terms of all three settings of humour, the devices vary considerably.

The usual devices of comedy, the periodical repetition of a word or scene, the systematic inversion of parts, the geometrical development of a farcical misunderstanding...must derive their comic force from the same source... (Bergson, 1911: 36)

From this suggestion, Bergson further establishes three ways in which comedy may be produced: repetition, inversion and reciprocal interference (all of which apply to Lopez’s strategies in Chapter Three).⁴ Repetition refers to a regular occurrence of a scene, producing a humorous effect because of the expectation it builds (1911: 90). Inversion (which has its roots in incongruity and distortion) creates humour through the reversal of situations and the inversion of character roles; the comic scene is obtained when “a villain becomes the victim of his own villainy” (1911:94), for example. Reciprocal interference is the most complex of the three and presents an equivocal situation that may have more than one meaning (1911: 97): the plausible meaning (by the actor) and the real one (by the public). Whereas we know every aspect of the situation, each character only knows one part, which creates superior humour for the audience and incongruous, unexpected humour for the characters within their particular context. All of the above devices are common in Roald Dahl, as will be seen in the analysis in Chapter Four.

⁴ Page 42.

Another common feature used to create humour is exaggeration, which is often seen in caricature and stereotyping. However, as Bergson emphasises, the aim of exaggeration is not comedy; rather, exaggeration is a means to produce a humorous effect (1911: 27). On the opposite end of the scale, we have what Leacock refers to as *meiosis*, which is an understatement that directly contradicts the exaggeration in illustrations or situations, and upon which typically English humour relies (1935: 43). This too, is an important consideration in Dahl's humour and its translation; that is, the translation of typically English humour into French humour, which gives rise to the cultural implication of humour and context discussed at the end of this chapter.

As we can see, a true textbook definition of humour is difficult to achieve and we are better off dealing with humour in terms of its causes, effects and devices. Leacock provides the most comprehensive and concise view of humour and all its elements:

One turns from words to things: from the verbal forms, which are only the mechanisms of humour, to those incongruities and antitheses of circumstance and character which are its base. (1935: 99)

Parody and Carnivalism

As we saw in the previous section, and according to Arthur Schopenhauer (www.humorthory.com and Palmer, 1994: 95), "laughter appears from the recognition of incongruity between the physical expectation and the abstract conception of certain things, people, or actions". Margaret Rose holds that parody is used to create humour through confusion, of a sort, and, through this confusion, it challenges the reader to the task of interpretation (Rose, 1979: 62). When we view Schopenhauer's and Rose's concepts of humour and parody together, it becomes clear that, to a certain extent, most humour has its roots in incongruity, and that parody, as a tool of humour, draws on this incongruity to achieve its maximum effect.

However, beyond simple incongruity, parody may be said to have two functions. Most often, parody is ridicule through imitation, thus creating the humorous effect. This means that readers need to rely on previous knowledge of the parodied works to appreciate the humour fully, which is reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes' notion (drawn from Aristotle and Plato) that "laughter has a bearing on one's social status and superiority..." (www.humorththeory.com), in the sense that one can only boast understanding of the humour if one knows something that others do not. However, Rose shows that parody is so much more and that, in fact, "it is the use of incongruity that distinguishes the parody from other forms of quotation and literary imitation, and shows its function to be more than imitation alone" (1979: 22). This gives rise to the idea that parody is also used to distort with its incongruity, and not just to imitate.

This is exactly where Roald Dahl's literature fits in. I have already pointed out that Dahl's magic lies in his use of distorted social norms, and our appreciation of the incongruous elements. In fact, we could even go so far as to say that his parody is a distorted imitation of life – how married couples interact, or how people treat animals, for example – rather than of another author's work and style. As we will see in Chapter Three,⁵ this distorted imitation of life is given a perfect visual representation through Blake's twisted illustrations, providing the ideal basis for text-image interaction in conveying the humour in Dahl's parody.

The use of parody in illustrations (for example, to ridicule certain conventions, which often involves the use of caricatures as in Blake's illustrations) often results in a confused interpretation of it. More often than not, readers will regard these elements as indicative of satire, and afford parody an imitative function only. It should be clarified that "parody is both satirical and self-reflexive, or ironic, while also offering criticisms of traditional concepts of imitation" (Rose, 1979: 66), in much the same way as a political satire would, for example. The real distinction is that satire is a particular genre, or literary form, whereas parody is more a technique used to create humour, than a genre in itself (Rose,

⁵ Page 45.

1979: 20). Furthermore, humour is not necessarily the aim of satire; satire is used to *attack* through ridicule, as can be seen in political satires. Parody is not an attack – its function is to ridicule through incongruity, thus producing a humorous effect. Bergson suggests that “the comic in parody has suggested defining comedy as a species of degradation” (1911: 124).

Thus, we can see that the primary element in parody is ridicule through some sort of incongruity, and this aspect has its historical roots in the burlesque and carnival folk culture.

The word burlesque comes from the Italian verb *burlare*, which literally means to make a fool of, or to ridicule. It is all about mockery, joking and fun, using serious matter that is made amusing by an incongruity (Jump, 1972: 1 & 72). Markiewicz (in Rose, 1979: 39) holds that burlesque can mean “grotesque, rank or flat comicality, extravagance of imagination or style (especially using vulgar or extraordinary language)...” which refers to all those elements that parody utilises. However, before even burlesque, parody was born of carnival folk culture. Mikhail Bakhtin states that:

Despite their variety, folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody – all of these forms have one style in common: they belong to the culture of folk carnival humor. (1968: 4)

Parody has its roots in carnival culture because it is involved in play; it deals with a world that is subject to its own laws and this fantastical place is one of wonder, fun and, most of all, humour.

Within the context of Dahl’s literature, we begin to see how parody and all its elements are an excellent way to engage children in a way that they find stimulating and funny. Oittinen explains that:

like carnivalism, children's literature is nonofficial, with no dogma or authoritarianism. It does not exist to oppose adult culture as such but rather lives on in spite of it. (2000: 54)

Similarly, parody is used to contradict, rather than oppose adult culture, and this forms part of the basis of the appeal for children. The Carnival is a parody of life, and one that children can appreciate because of the freedom involved, because it is "a second world... outside of officialdom" (Bakhtin, 1968: 6).

Dahl's stories have many carnivalistic elements to them, and this is most noticeable in his portrayal of characters: not only the description of their character traits and behaviour, but also the distorted images that depict them (which refers back to the mockery used in parody). One of the key features in carnival culture is grotesque realism, in which elements and images of the body are exaggerated: "The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world...the open mouth...the nose..." (Bakhtin, 1968: 26). The aim is to turn what is often considered frightening in normal life into something ludicrous and amusing. Bakhtin explains that exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness are deemed to be essential qualities of the grotesque style (1968: 303), and cites Moser's (in Bakhtin, 1968: 35) idea that violating the body's natural proportions presents the elements of caricature and parody. Schneegans (in Bakhtin, 1968: 306) further states that the very nature of the grotesque is to caricature the negative and the inappropriate, resulting in a caricature that reaches fantastic dimensions. This is particularly true of Dahl's literature.

Other common features in carnivalism, and Dahl's books, are a strong emphasis on food, or anything else that can be ingested (which refers to Bakhtin's concept of banquet imagery) and the ridicule of anything that is deemed frightening, which we have seen throughout Dahl's stories. With regard to the banquet imagery, whereas Bakhtin promotes food as a representation of regeneration and abundance, Dahl distorts this image and makes food something disgusting and excessive. Similarly, Dahl's emphasis on the utter stupidity of characters distorts their malicious nature, allowing children to view them as grotesque rather than terrifying (Bakhtin, 1968: 91).

Carnivalism appeals to a child's imagination, the silliness, the intrigue, the grotesque and the magical quality of a new world. It allows them to contradict all those norms imposed upon them by an adult authority. This thinking is not naïve, wrong or illogical; it is merely mythical and logical in a way that is different from adult thinking (Oittinen, 2000: 58).

For us to truly understand humour and parody, we need to remember that these both take place within a specific context, and that across cultures, what people find funny must necessarily differ. In the next section, I discuss culture, context and contextualisation because they play an integral part in the translation of humour.

Culture, Context and Contextualisation

The terms 'culture' and 'context' are constantly used when discussing translation theory, and yet, despite this, both notions remain quite vague and are used fairly loosely. What is culture, really? And what do we mean by context in translation? More specifically, how do these things impact on the translation process? I look at both culture and context within the framework of relevance theory. First, I address the notion of culture; second, I explore how contexts are selected, and third, how culture necessarily impacts on this selection from the perspectives of both the communicator and the receiver. Furthermore, given that understanding differs across cultures (more specifically, cultural contexts), we will see that context is vital in understanding, conveying and translating humour.

Let us first look at the notion of culture, for although we use it everyday, we do so without considering what it is we are actually referring to. Many people view culture as the combination of elements specific to a particular group, such as music, traditional dress, food, religion, beliefs and ideologies. Others view culture in terms of geography and political and social history (Katan, 1999: 11). However, one thing that almost all translators agree on is the relationship

between language and culture and, more specifically, how language makes up a fundamental part of any culture, because it is a part of the way that society views and interprets the world in relation to itself (Katan: 1999). In spite of all these ideas, scholars still have difficulty in defining culture, and doing so in such a way as to highlight its ever-growing importance in the field of translation.

In Nord (1997: 23), Snell-Hornby describes culture as “a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception”, whereas Goodenough attempts to clarify this broad definition by stating that culture:

consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge... culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in their mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (in Nord, 1997: 23-24)

Both definitions agree that culture is about knowledge and perception. However, Goodenough broadens his definition to include the idea that both knowledge and perception have to take place within a specific setting, a context, if you will (which I deal with in detail below). Within this particular group (or context), knowledge and perception take on the form of understanding utterances based on either shared or previous knowledge, and the perceptions we form about the world around us as a result. This raises a very important issue: the idea that contexts, or situations, are culturally determined. If cultures are different, contexts must be different as well, and this would alter our knowledge of the world based on our surroundings. This, in turn, will alter our perceptions of the world in relation to that setting, and in relation to ourselves.

Katan appears to support this view in a sense, for he believes that culture:

is not a visible product, but is internal, collective and is acquired rather than learned. Acquisition is the natural, unconscious learning of language, behaviour, values and belief through informal watching and learning. Learning, on the other hand, is formal and is consciously taught. (1999: 26)

Katan goes on to explain that people take in elements from their environment, which influences their development within the human system. Ultimately, culture entails a shared knowledge system in which reality is interpreted and experience is organised (1999: 26). This is consistent with the notion that knowledge is acquired automatically from one's surroundings and interaction with others, and that perceptions gradually change or are enhanced, which results in further human development and communication.

In all three definitions, we have the suggestion that cultures (and, therefore, contexts) are governed by both external and internal forces that control the way in which people interact with each other and the world, which results in the acquisition of experience and knowledge, and leads to certain assumptions they are induced to make on that basis. All of these aspects fall within the rather broad scope of relevance theory.

Chapter One referred to the inferences we make in response to utterances.⁶ It is these very inferences that make culture an important aspect of relevance theory. Based on our knowledge and experience, we can only draw conclusions, or make inferences, if certain information is relevant to us in some way. We need to be able to access information in order to understand and interpret utterances, and this can only happen if we are able to make the appropriate mental associations with things that we already know, or have experienced. Furthermore, each new event of interpretation adds to this stored knowledge and experience, which modifies the inferences we may make at a later stage.

Tied together, these elements highlight the cognitive environment attached to culture and relevance. Gutt states that a cognitive environment of a person:

⁶ Page 6.

comprises a potentially huge amount of varied information. It includes information that can be perceived in the physical environment, information that can be retrieved from memory – in itself a vast store of information, including information derived from preceding utterances plus any cultural or other knowledge stored there – and furthermore information that can be inferred from those two sources. (1991: 26)

In order to understand how we pick the setting most appropriate for this varied information, we need to turn to context. Context is integral in culture and relevance theory because it allows us to pick the setting most suitable to the understanding process.

Sperber and Wilson (1986: 15) describe context as “a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world”. This shows two things: first, that context relies on a cognitive approach to interpretation, showing its ties to cognitive linguistics; second, that context is determined by a receiver’s background or situation, which takes into account his experience and assumptions (all of which has already been suggested, to a certain degree, though from a cultural perspective). This situation is governed by external elements such as gender, race, social class, dialect, family upbringing, race, age, education etc, all of which determine whether or not something is culturally relevant to a receiver.

However, the fact that utterances are dependent on different contexts, and because context is dependent on interpretation, means that any utterance may have multiple implications for individual receivers, depending on their knowledge, experience and assumptions of the world. Mona Baker (2006: 322) refers to Hymes’ speaking model to point out that where an utterance may have a number of meanings, the context (or current situation) may restrict the number of meanings that are appropriate at that time.

Baker (2006: 321) addresses translation in terms of cognitive versus social, or interactive, definitions of context. Translation is a dynamic area and it is constantly changing as ideas, behaviour and contexts change too. Therefore, we

cannot only look at elements like gender, age, geographical location, family structure etc, in isolation when we approach translation. They may be important in terms of context, because they all contribute to our understanding of the world, or the humour, as the case may be, but they are extraneous factors. Baker uses Teun Van Dijk's distinction that "contexts are not just social situations, but also mental constructs...they are not [only] 'out there', but 'in here'" (2006: 321).

The cognitive process of translation relies on the idea that, for a receiver to understand the information being sent, it must be relevant to him within his given social, cultural and linguistic context. It is not enough that he has an understanding of the language; he must use his own assumptions, knowledge of the world and previous experiences to understand what is being conveyed to him. If he can use these to understand something, it is relevant to him because he and the sender obviously have some shared knowledge of the matter being discussed.

Therefore, Baker's approach to translation takes the receiver's actual state of affairs into account, as well as his previous experiences and his mental application of them, to maximise understanding and contextual relevance. The actual state of affairs refers to the receiver's social context, and the mental application refers to the cognitive process and the links the receiver draws between his own experience and the utterance in order to interpret appropriately.

The question we now need to return to is how the most relevant context is selected in the first place. Luchjenbroers (1989) analyses context selection by referring to Sperber and Wilson's model on relevance theory and Grice's theory of Implicature. She states that Grice's theory of Implicature is "an initial attempt within linguistic theory to logically define how interlocutors comprehend seemingly unrelated utterances in discourse" (1989:1), while Sperber and Wilson's theory is a more recent account of human communication with its roots in cognition, and an individual's dependence and understanding of "relevant contextual cues" (1989:1).

This goes back to the idea that for a reader to understand an utterance, it needs to be relevant to him based on his assumptions, previous knowledge and experience that were dealt with above, which is obviously a cultural consideration as well.

Grice's theory of Implicature (1975) states that communication should follow certain maxims: quality (say what you justifiably believe to be true); quantity (be adequately informative, no more, no less); relevance (make sure that contributions are relevant); manner (be brief and unambiguous). These norms rely on the assumption that speakers will always strive to comply with these norms to ensure that utterances are not misinterpreted. However, Grice talks a great deal about the communicative effect of violating these norms, acknowledging that speakers often do so, and that receivers may also interpret those utterances differently than the speaker intended. Thus, although the human brain strives to make connections with utterances, even when they seem to have no connection, the inference may be entirely different from the implication. Alternatively, the hearer may infer more than the speaker intended. This is why Luchjenbroers considers Grice's theory to be a speaker-biased one, because it assumes that speakers are always going to act in accordance with these norms.

The problem arises where speakers do not conform to these norms. They may use irony or sarcasm to express what they mean, which could alter the understanding of the receiver, or they might provide utterances which are seemingly unrelated to the context at hand. Gutt (1991: 27) provides the following the example:

Margaret: Could you have a quick look at my printer – it's not working right.

Mike : I have got an appointment at 11 o'clock.

Obviously, Mike intends for Margaret to infer from this that he is, in fact, unable to look at her printer. The implication is that, if he has a meeting at 11 o'clock, he will not be around long enough to help her. Within this particular context, we are missing the time utterance, and therefore, the idea that Mike cannot look at

the printer. Although both utterances are completely clear in terms of semantic content, without a context, it is difficult to see how the two relate.

As a result of this speaker-receiver limitation (that speakers' implications are not always matched by equal inference), Luchjenbroers looks to Sperber and Wilson's model of context selection, which, she states, is a more hearer-biased model of relevance. Sperber and Wilson (in Luchjenbroers, 1989: 1) define relevance as the maximal contextual effects that are achieved when the least amount of processing effort is required. In other words, the less effort a receiver needs to exert to make the necessary associations for understanding to occur, the more relevant it must be to that person (most likely, because of knowledge and experience). However, given the potential for multiple inferences, Sperber and Wilson (in Luchjenbroers, 1989: 1) feel that this relevance needs to be limited to a hearer's recognition of speaker intentions.

The basic model they propose is as follows: stimuli (environmental factors and linguistic codes) are fed into the receiver's input systems, which may be visual, auditory, linguistic etc. combined with conceptual memory (or previous knowledge and/or experience), the receiver forms a specific hypothesis about the utterance, which may result in a denied, confirmed or modified assumption (in Luchjenbroers 1989: 2). Basically, these input stimuli are tested against the backdrop of a hearer's assumptions about the world, and these hearers aim to improve their general representation of the world by only processing information that is relevant.

However, who selects the context and decides what is relevant? The speaker or the hearer? Early theories hold that context is predetermined. Moreover, positions are then processed against the context as given by the speaker. This has two implications: first that the context exists already by the very fact of its nature; for example, an AIDS conference. Second, that the speaker determines the context for the receiver based on the content he wishes to convey. Other theories hold that context can only be determined by the hearer, who first needs to hear the utterance so that he may respond to it. This response relies on the fact

the hearer has to test the linguistic code against his knowledge, experience and assumptions, which means he is the one picking a context that is relevant to him.

Obviously, there are problems with both areas of thought. I do not think that it is possible for either a speaker or hearer to be solely responsible for the context selection. Indeed, it denies the very nature of the communicative process. Rather, I agree with Sperber and Wilson's conclusion that contexts are "a consequence of communication" (in Luchjenbroers, 1989: 4), and that context selection actually occurs in many places, taking into account both environment and cognitive contexts (the mental constructions of the hearer). The argument appears somewhat circular, given that context is chosen on the basis of relevance (also a cultural consideration) to the assumption, and that assumptions are derived on the basis of a relevant context. The solution is to combine both the internal and external elements (predetermined context + assumptions and experience) to form a mutual cognitive environment (1989: 5). This raises the notion of an evolving context, where linguistic and perceptual information (which are shared) combine with information in memory (specific to an individual or group/culture) to establish the most relevant context.

As we have explored already, this needs to happen, because speakers do not always say what they mean, whatever the intended context, and hearers do not always make the same inferences. The whole interpretation process is dependent on the contextual markers (such as linguistic input, and assumptions and knowledge) which are also culturally determined.

Culture and Context in Translation

The task now is to view these three spheres of culture, context and relevance in relation to the field of translation. It is one thing to examine them in isolation (although I have shown how they necessarily influence, and are influenced by, each other), but it is quite another to tackle the ways that they are approached in translation.

When cultural factors arise in translations, we are faced with the difficult task of negotiating both the language and culture. Not only do translators need to keep the meaning and sense of the text, but they need to make sure that the text is culturally accessible to the audience. Unfortunately, situations often arise where both requirements cannot be met. Meaning is sometimes sacrificed when equivalent items are unavailable, and accessibility is sometimes limited where understanding relies on the actual meaning behind the text. Of course, it is arguable that making a text accessible increases understanding of the meaning, or that the meaning changes slightly, but this does not necessarily mean that the true function of the text has been fulfilled.

Some relevant translation strategies with regard to the translation of culture include Tymoczko's three types of cultural interface: transference, representation and transculturation. She explains (2006: 27) transference as the movement of physical or symbolic material from one cultural context to the next. The result is that the "cultural products" are either very similar to, or completely different from, the source matter.

The second interface, representation, involves "substitution in the symbolic realm, creat[ing] images that have an ideological aspect" (2006: 28). Translation, then, is a significant intercultural form of representation. Tymoczko explains that representation presupposes a perspective on what is being presented, as well as a purpose in the activity itself (2006: 28). Basically, representation constructs an image, and then suggests the presentation of that image as well, taking into account the ideological perspective of the cultural group in question.

The last interface is transculturation and constitutes "the transmission of cultural characteristics from one cultural group to another" (2006: 28). It is explained as going beyond the mere transfer of verbal matter, to ideas about religion and government, the spread of artistic forms like music and art, and transfers relating to material cultural elements like food, clothing, housing, transport and more recent areas such as the modern media (2006: 29). Transculturation means transposing cultural elements in certain texts, be they verbal or written, and

relies on the notion of cultural interchange in cultures where more than one language and culture are engaged. In terms of translation, transculturation is of great value, because it includes a performative function, unlike transfer and representation; instead of just transferring or hybridising cultures across groups, the characteristics of the sources are actually performed, for example, “importing genres, reproducing functions of the source material (say, humour or wordplay) dynamically” (2006: 29) etc.

Although these strategies do not specifically apply to my analysis in Chapter Four, they do provide useful insight into the way that culture influences and guides the translation process. In Chapter Three, I explore the classification of jokes and the various strategies that may be employed to translate the elements of humour, culture and context that are prevalent in Dahl’s literature. I then examine the way that humour is created through the use of frames and illustrations.

CHAPTER THREE – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter, I examined the complex nature of humour. Now, the task is to decide how best it may be translated, given the obstacles involved. Furthermore, having established that humour is tied to linguistic, cultural and social phenomena, it is essential to bear these in mind during the translation process, and combine them where possible.

The Classification of Jokes

When we encounter instances of humour in translation, our understanding and appreciation of what we are hearing may be governed by one of several things:

- 1) The structure of our language may be too different from the original language to reproduce the same humorous effect.
- 2) We may not understand the humour in terms of our social or cultural context – that is, it is not relevant to us, and we cannot access the idea.
- 3) The humour may be taboo in our culture and, though we understand the reference, we do not find it funny.
- 4) We may just not think that the joke is funny.

Of the considerations listed above, we may deduce that the first highlights a linguistic constraint, the second and third present cultural restrictions, and the last is based on personal taste. The latter is largely a social phenomenon, given that our preferences can be influenced by anything from our family upbringing to religion, age or gender, to name a few. If we had to summarise our

deductions, we might say that jokes may be linguistically, culturally or socially determined, and this seems to encompass almost all instances of humour.

Debra West (1989:130) holds that jokes may be divided into 3 categories: linguistic jokes, cultural or ethnic jokes, and universal jokes (such as the unexpected), which would seem to fit our deduction. The only real difference seems to be that West addresses universal humour, which she believes is inherently funny, whereas socially determined humour is influenced by context.

West holds that these three types of jokes become easier to translate as we move down the list. In the first category, she uses the example, “linguistic jokes are punny as hell” (1989: 130), stating that unless a speaker is English, the joke will probably not be obvious to the person hearing it. She says that, to understand this joke, a reader would have to recognise that the sentence is a pun based on the word *punny*, which rhymes with *funny* and replaces it in the idiom “funny as hell”. The problem here is not one of social or cultural understanding (after all, these can be interpreted and conveyed in a manner that will be accessible to the audience), but rather, the lack of an equivalent linguistic device in the target language. She states that linguistic jokes are so very complex to translate because we are not only dealing with the nature of the joke, but the nature of the language as well (1989: 131). Linguistic jokes often centre on things like puns, nonsense words and neologisms (see the section below).

West then goes on to show that cultural jokes are far easier to translate, because we can draw parallels across cultures, and, more specifically, relationships (1989: 130). Let us take, for example, the animosity between the Belgians and the French. The French tell the following joke: while on the road, a Belgian truck driver comes to a tunnel and realises that his truck is too high and will not fit through. So, he gets out of his truck, fetches a shovel, and starts to dig up the ground around the tyres, so as to lower the truck. At that moment, a Frenchman

drives past in his Renault. He slows down, winds down the window and says, “What the hell are you digging for? Why don’t you just let down the tyres?”

The Belgian turns around and replies, “Don’t be ridiculous! It’s the top half that doesn’t fit!”

To language speakers not familiar with the relationship between the French and the Belgians, the joke is not humorous. We would have to recontextualise it for them: in our own context, the joke could instead feature an Australian and a South African, or an Englishman and an Irishman. There is usually a similar example that an audience will be able to access, and which can be used to convey the same message.

Finally, universal jokes are those that people find inherently funny. West gives the example of children making mature comments, getting embarrassing revenge on a person who has done us wrong, or the unusual or unexpected response. The first example relies on irony, the second relies on our appreciation of silly humour (which can be sick humour, slapstick or even the grotesque) and the third relies on the incongruity that forms the basis of most humour. However, these so-called “universal jokes” can also be culture-specific. For example, Americans find slapstick humour much funnier than the British, who favour dry humour. Where this is the case, what West considers “universal” humour may be appreciated on different levels by different cultures.

Below, I examine certain strategies that may be employed in the translation of cultural humour and linguistic jokes.

Strategies for Creating and Translating Humour

For the purposes of my analysis in this study, it is important to distinguish between the strategies available for creating humour and those that may be used for its translation. In Chapter Two, my discussion suggested strategies for

creating humour, such as repetition, reciprocal interference and inversion,⁷ exaggeration and stereotypes,⁸ and meiosis.⁹ In addition to the use of puns and nonsense words proposed above, we can add the use of literary references (or metaphoric mapping, as in frame semantics below)¹⁰ and illustrations.¹¹

In contrast, the strategies that may be used for the translation of humour include neologisms, metonymy and cultural substitution. However, devices like exaggeration, inversion and repetition are strategies that may be employed for the translation of humour as well.

We begin with nonsense words, and then continue with the strategies for translating humour.

NONSENSE WORDS

In the above discussion on jokes, we saw that certain situations are funny because they are universally deemed so, others are funny only to a certain culture, and others still because the joke is relevant to the speakers of a specific language. The most obvious example here would be an idiom, whose contents may only be understood within a certain language model. However, linguistically, the potential to create humour is infinite and in addition to idioms, we can also use puns, double entendre and various other humorous devices that may only be accessed within the framework of a particular language.

However, what happens when the words or sequences seem to mean nothing at all? It is not unusual for writers to include nonsense words in their writings, and yet, despite having no particular meaning or an unsuitable context, readers find

⁷ Page 13.

⁸ Page 13.

⁹ Page 14.

¹⁰ Pages 39-43.

¹¹ Pages 43-48.

them amusing. Elizabeth Sewell (1952) defines nonsense as the opposite of sense, which we establish by referring to sets of mental relations and whether or not they seem to hold when applied to objects in the outside world. In brief, she refers to some sort of order that we can identify. However, as she shows, this definition is less simple than it initially appears to be. She goes on to suggest that nonsense:

may be a collection of words which in their internal composition of letters and syllables or in their selection and sequence do not conform to the conventional patterns of language to which the particular mind is accustomed...Or nonsense may appear as a collection of events or a verbal description of such a collection, where the order and relationships differ from those held to be normal. (1952: 2)

What we therefore see is that, since nonsense seems to be so language specific, nonsense words may even be classed as a sub-category of linguistic jokes. Furthermore, as in the previous chapter, the contradiction is what makes a word, situation etc. amusing and, consequently, what makes the field of nonsense amusing as well. The great challenge lies in translating the humour in a nonsense word or scene.

We have already said that nonsense is effective in creating humour because we are faced with incongruities in situations of which we have prior knowledge and experience. What makes nonsense so effective is using it in a context in which it should not really have a place, for example, infinities such as space and time. This harks back to exaggeration specifically as a tool to create humour; exaggeration is often funny because the things being suggested are, in our eyes, entirely improbable and, therefore, pure nonsense. We know that cows cannot jump over moons, cats play the fiddle, nor dishes elope with spoons (Carroll, 1982: 571), but we find the notions amusing. We know that in reality, they cannot exist and yet the ability to push this boundary through nonsense is extremely appealing.

Sewell refers to two ways of creating nonsense: selection and organisation (1952: 55). These two terms mean exactly what they suggest. Selection refers to

using certain words to create nonsense because of the incongruity between object and context or object and object, as with the cow and the moon above; organisation refers to the organisation of words in a sequence that defies perceived order and, thus, is considered nonsense. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is an excellent example of both selection and organisation. In his poem *The Walrus and the Carpenter*, recited by Tweedledee, we find the following stanza:

*'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
 'To talk of many things:
Of shoes – and ships – and sealing wax –
 Of cabbages – and kings –
And why the sea is boiling hot –
 And whether pigs have wings.'* (1982: 160)

Carroll uses ordinary words that may be manipulated to convey either order or disorder. There is nothing particularly funny about a selection of shoes, ships, sealing wax, cabbages or kings in isolation. However, selecting them in the same context is unusual because they have absolutely nothing to do with each other – there is no order. Similarly, their organisation is distorted because the sequence of objects does not clarify the initial confusion; it merely perpetuates it. Furthermore, they are an odd combination of things to wish to discuss in the first place. The final two lines enhance Carroll's use of nonsense even further in that his suggestions once again push the boundaries of reality: while the sea may at times be warm, it is never boiling hot (barring, of course, something specific like volcanic activity), and pigs most certainly do not have wings. Therefore, we see that it is a combination of selection, organisation and dream/reality that may be used to convey nonsense and the humour accompanying it.

In addition to selection, organisation and reality, the humour in nonsense may also be achieved through the use of nonsense words, as I hinted at earlier, and which are prominent in Dahl's writing. Nonsense words and neologisms, as Sewell points out, "can scarcely be said to be words, since words should have reference but these have none, making no direct connection for the mind with

anything in experience” (1952: 115). However, she goes on to say that, despite the fact that nonsense words have no reference, we can assume that “writers wanted their sentences containing Nonsense words to look like genuine sentences bearing reference...” (1952: 118). The only way that this can be possible is if the mind attempts to make connections between nonsense nouns, adjectives or verbs, and all existing words and neologisms that they resemble. If this is the case, then there is some sort of reference after all.

Carroll explains the understanding of several of his nonsense words as “two meanings packed into one word like a portmanteau...” (1982: 731). The use of *frumious*, from his famous poem *Jabberwocky*, he explains, is a combination of *furious* and *fuming*, since the nonsense word seems to suggest both of these. In this way, the mind is able to make associations between the nonsense word and some sort of order. The same can be applied to nonsense verbs. However, nonsense nouns have an added dimension; they may resemble an existing word or combination of words, but the mere fact that they are capitalised to form proper nouns often allows the mind to gloss over the fact that there may not be a potential reference. An example would be Dahl’s *Giant Skillywiggler* in *The Twits* (1980: 20).

As a final note to this section, it is worth reiterating that the humour in nonsense words may be understood in two ways: first, that humour is appreciated because of the incongruity present, and second, because the mind strives to make connections with what it has already experienced. Therefore, even though there may be no reference at all, it is amusing to cross that reality and toy with the world of possibility.

NEOLOGISMS

Neologisms have already been highlighted as a strategy that may be used in the translation of humour. Anne Leibold (1989: 110) describes neologisms as the combination or modification of existing words, or the addition of modifying prefixes and suffixes to words to ‘condense or simplify the message and accelerate delivery’. Although neologisms often make use of prefixes and

suffixes to *create* humour, I deal with them here as a means of translating humour in the face of linguistically challenging terms or phrases. In both *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine*, the use of neologisms is the strategy employed to compensate for losses that arise from the use of nonsense words in the English original.

Leibold provides an example from Frédéric Dard's work to better illustrate the use of neologisms (1989, 110). The phrase "*Il titouille les bistounets*" describes a man playing at a slot machine. She suggests that '*titouille*' is likely a derivative of *titiller* (to tickle), combined with the suffix "*-ouille*", which has a derogatory connotation, and also hints at the word *couille*, a familiar word for testicles.

From the example above we see that the form of the word suggests certain images and associations, and these can only be made if they are relevant to us in some way. When this happens, our recognition of the neologism and what it implies results in superiority at having understood the humour. Moreover, when these connotations are incongruous in the face of a given context, the humour is reinforced.

CULTURAL SUBSTITUTION

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw that cultural jokes can be translated by using close cultural equivalents. The use of cultural equivalents means that a humorous concept may be conveyed effectively by presenting the same joke, but in a recontextualised form. That is, humorous elements are adapted to fit a new cultural context, using material that is culturally familiar to the new audience.

Interestingly, linguistically difficult phrases may be negotiated in the same way. Baker (1992: 32) proposes translation by cultural substitution as a useful way to tackle linguistically challenging material. Where puns are too complex, or idioms are not understood, substituting cultural elements in place of linguistic ones is often a good way to compensate for the humour losses in translation. The humour is retained, but its focus shifts. If, for example, a play on words cannot

be recreated in a translation, a metaphor using culturally familiar elements would be a good solution.

Göte Klingberg raises the concept of cultural context adaptation, which follows the same line of thought as cultural substitution. He explains that it is an adaptation “with the aim of facilitating understanding or to make the text more interesting than would otherwise be the case” (1986: 12). He admits that, at times, stylistic changes need to be made in translations, so that they may be rendered functionally similar to the source text (1986: 14), but also suggests that such adaptation may also leave a text lacking something that was important in the original: the atmosphere, the character, or, in our case, the humour.

Klingberg explains that cultural context adaptation occurs for various types of cultural contexts, and provides the following list of categories that necessarily change in the translation process (the following reflect the order of importance he perceives):

1. Literary references
2. Foreign languages in the source text
3. References to mythology and popular belief
4. Historical, religious and political background
5. Buildings and home furnishings, food
6. Customs and practices, play and games
7. Flora and Fauna
8. Personal names, titles, names of domestic animals, names of objects
9. Geographical names
10. Weights and measurements (1986: 18)

Of the ten categories, those that apply in the translation of Dahl’s work specifically are categories 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10. My analysis in Chapter Four provides specific examples for literary references, food, and personal names and

titles. The result is that humour is either retained, even though it has shifted slightly, or it is sacrificed for understanding.

THE GENERAL THEORY OF VERBAL HUMOUR (GTVH)

Attardo describes the General Theory of Verbal Humour as including a:

metric of similarity between texts which can go a long way towards providing the criterion for determining similarity of meaning/force *in the domain of texts whose perlocutionary goal is the perception of humour...*(2002: 175)

The GTVH is a revised version and extension of Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humour. As we will see below, scripts are also known as frames, and form the basis of the methodology for this study. According to the GTVH, all jokes can be viewed and analysed according to the six Knowledge Resources (2002: 176-184): Language (LA), Narrative Strategy (NS), Target (TA), Situation (SI), Logical Mechanism (LM) and Script Opposition (SO). These are, in actual fact, arranged hierarchically, from most to least important (that is: $SO \rightarrow LM \rightarrow SI \rightarrow TA \rightarrow NS \rightarrow LA$), but will be discussed as listed initially.

Language contains all the information that is needed for the text to be articulated. It refers to the way that the words are arranged and how they function within that utterance. Attardo explains that paraphrase is essential in this Knowledge Resource because jokes can be expressed in several ways while still retaining one meaning (2002: 177). Language is also responsible for the position of the punch line of a joke, which is essential to the GTVH, given that this theory is aimed at the perception of humour. This means that the point of understanding could influence the way the punch line is interpreted, depending on how much and what kind of information is presented up until that point.

Narrative Strategy refers to the organisation of a joke, for example as a dialogue, a simple narrative, a limerick, a riddle etc. Target is the parameter that selects the butt of the joke, which ties in with the discussion in Chapter Two that

humour is often of an aggressive nature.¹² Situation is described as the props of a joke, such as objects, participants or activities, which are mostly generated by the scripts activated in the text (2002: 179). The Logical Mechanism is most problematic in Attardo's eyes and he argues that it "embodies the resolution of the incongruity in the incongruity-resolution model..." (2002: 79). However, since resolution is optional in humour, the Logical Mechanism is not always an essential Knowledge Resource in the GTVH.

Script Opposition is the most interesting of the Resources because, as I have already stated, it provides some insight in terms of frame semantics below. Scripts are:

cognitive structure[s] internalized by the speaker with information on how the world is organized, including how one acts in it. A script is a semantic object but in Raskin's theory it incorporates what most linguistic theories of semantics would view as pragmatic/contextual information. (2002: 181)

There are two conditions for Script Opposition to occur: a) the text must be compatible, either wholly or partially, with two different scripts and b) the two scripts must be opposite, and will overlap fully or partially (Raskin in Attardo, 2002 : 181). Scripts overlap if texts may be understood in terms of more than one script, but this is not always funny on its own. For the humour to be present, overlapping scripts must be opposite, presenting some sort of "antonymy" (2002: 182), or, I think it is clearer to say, incongruity.

While it is preferable to act in accordance with all six Knowledge Resources when carrying out a translation, where this is not possible, the translation should differ at the lowest level necessary (i.e. language) for the pragmatic purpose (2002: 183).

¹² Page 11.

Frame Semantics

Within the framework of relevance theory, we have the notion of frame, which has its roots in cognitive linguistics. The concept of frame was introduced by Charles Fillmore in the 1970s. He explained frame as:

Any system of linguistic choices - the easiest cases being collections of words, but also including choices of grammatical rules or linguistic categories - that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes. (1996: 209)

Put more simply, a frame is governed by a group of words and the situation it initially implies, which is what is meant by a prototypical scene. Katan (1999: 51) describes a prototype as the “ideal or idealized example held in a frame”. Ungerer and Schmid explain prototype as the idea that when readers interpret utterances, the words trigger corresponding cognitive groups or “mental concept [s] which we have of the objects in the real world (1996: 47). With every utterance, the associations that we make refer to stored cognitive models, from which we try to call up similar experiences (1996: 49). Even if people’s “prototypes” are similar, the associations they make are often different and their diverse situations will trigger different frames of knowledge and experience.

Frame semantics and relevance theory therefore provide a useful framework within which to make translation decisions with regard to humour. Frames represent our cognitive process of understanding, and this process is only possible if something is relevant to us. Moreover, the way that a single frame gives rise to a series of associations, based on knowledge and experience, mirrors the way in which humour is understood. The use of a neologism, for example, can imply several things, and each humorous association becomes a new frame in a series of frames that is created.

Lopez draws on the notion of frame semantics (2002a and 2002b) as introduced by Fillmore, and Ungerer and Schmid above. Her discussion on frame ties in

closely with Baker's (2006) discussion on context, because she is aware that understanding takes place 'upstairs', and that the outside world alone cannot make the individual understand an utterance if the individual has no way of accessing the frame.

Lopez cites W. Nash (1986: 12), who believes that, "humour characterises the interaction of persons in situations of cultures, and our response to it must be understood in that broad context" (2002a: 34). This follows on from her idea that we need to use both cognitive and interactional frames. Her initial discussion centres on the idea of *prototype*, which I have already addressed. She states that prototype plays an important role in humour because, to understand a certain concept, we need to be able to access what she refers to as our "stored repertoire of prototypes in our memory" (2002a: 35).

Lopez provides the example of a commercial transaction (2002a: 36). Words like "buyer", "seller", "goods" and "money" all activate that particular frame. This is what Lopez defines as a situational frame, which refers to "information chunks related to conventional situations" (2002b: 320). The stereotypical nature of the frame triggers the entire process associated with that frame. Therefore, in the transaction example, the mere description of a man walking into a shop (the initial frame) triggers a number of subsequent frames: the client picking an item up from the shelf; the owner standing behind the counter; the process of the client handing over money in exchange for the item; the owner giving the client a receipt, and packing the item into a plastic bag etc. In this way, we can see that one frame triggers a cognitive process in which we use one image from our "repertoire" to create a chain of actions related to that event. It is the reader's ability to access those frames that is important, and those frames include idioms, colloquial and taboo expressions, metaphors, puns and metonymies.

However, it is important to remember that where situational frames are concerned, there are various points of view that the reader can access. In the example provided above, the shop owner and the client each have a different set of actions that they perform and expect in return based on the role they fulfil. Therefore, when analysing situational frames, the focus may be entirely

subjective, based on how the reader interprets that frame in relation to the participants and himself.

In addition to situational frames, Lopez draws on four other types of frames: visual, text-type, social and generic (2002b: 318). Visual frames refer to frames that evoke a series of images, such as that of a farm: we respond with related images like a barn, a farmhouse, a chicken-coop, farmyard animals and grazing fields. Visual frames also refer to words used to describe gestures, or movement, where the audience is able to build up subsequent frames describing sentiments and attitudes, based on the initial word.

Text-type refers to a reader's implicit knowledge of the way a text is structured in her mother-tongue, and the frames within the text that activate this. Examples of this would be limericks and knock-knock jokes, where the form of the text activates the type of joke ("Knock-knock"), and the kind of response that should be given ("who's there?"). Text-type frames are the equivalent of Raskin's Narrative Strategy,¹³ which deals with the organisation of jokes.

Social frames are those that "describe the cognitive structures that organise our social knowledge" (2002b: 326). This is important because it includes knowledge of the type of register that is appropriate to different types of roles and interpersonal relationships. For example, dialect, geographical position and relationships are all elements of social frames that will govern how people respond to each other: how an employer addresses an employee; how a peasant addresses an aristocrat; or even how a parent addresses her child. Different social norms will govern interpersonal relationships, and the frames that are activated by each type of interaction.

Finally, Lopez describes generic frames as "prototypes of people" (2002b: 343), such as an evil person, or an innocent one. These frames are particular types of social frames and refer to the type of knowledge an individual has about people in society. This includes things like behaviour, physical features, manner or

¹³ Page 37.

commonly used expressions. Each aspect activates a specific frame, with the net result that we have a character sketch of the person in question.

Having established these frames, Lopez then draws on strategies discussed by Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 115), which convey humour through such frames. These include modification, reinforcement, metaphoric mapping and metonymic mapping. Lopez uses these concepts and applies them to translation to explain how a reader's cognitive frames can be manipulated to create a humorous effect (2002a: 39).

Modification distorts existing frames to create new ones (such as with parody), or to activate a frame that is inconsistent with the context, for humorous effect (which is reminiscent of Raskin's Script Opposition). Modification mostly relies on incongruity for effect. Reinforcement confirms the frames that a reader activates from her repertoire of stored prototypes. This usually occurs where a sequence of frames is activated and each subsequent frame confirms the previous one. Often, and particularly when understanding humour, reinforcement relies on a holistic viewing of the frames; it is impossible to understand what is taking place if a reader comes into the picture halfway through the story, rather like opening a book in the middle and starting to read from there.

Metaphoric and metonymic mapping are often combined as strategies. Metaphoric mapping refers to the act of interpreting one frame in terms of a different frame, which is a "conceptual mapping of knowledge" (2002a: 39). Parodied references usually employ Metaphoric mapping as a strategy to convey the humour, because the reader needs to have previous knowledge of the frame being referred to if he is to understand the one being presented to him.

Metonymic mapping uses an entity to refer to another object within the same frame. Lopez provides the example *croak* (2002a: 61). In a literal sense, this may refer to either a human voice or the sound a frog would make. As a colloquial expression, it would be a crude way of saying that someone or something has died. It is very clear that what we have is an overlap of items and situations that

are not necessarily funny in themselves, but would depend on some form of incongruity to make them humorous.

Given these ideas of frame and context, a new aspect begins to emerge. When authors or translators write, they do not only do so with their readers' expectations in mind, but also their own. In the same way that readers interpret utterances based on knowledge and experience, authors/translators write based on theirs. This includes their assumptions about the nature of that target audience. When looked at in terms of children's literature specifically, this raises Oittinen's (2000) notion of "child image", which is also prevalent in contemporary literature. The "child image" is similar to the expected audience, or future reader, and in the case of children's literature, it makes sense that, depending on the content of the literature, we are writing for a specific kind of child, which is often culturally determined.

A translator will often translate with this "child image" in mind according to her own experiences of childhood, her perceptions of children today and what they enjoy, and the inner child in us all (since adults were once children too). Child image is important, because we already have an indication of this in the original work. Dahl's "child image" concentrates on children as beings who enjoy evil humour, because they can be rather wicked at the best of times. Such characteristics are not thought to be normal characteristics for children, or, if they are, they are not the ones that parents wish to promote. As I have already mentioned, Roald Dahl makes particular use of these in his books and parodies such characteristics to create humour, distorting our expectations of people and situations.

The Verbal-Visual Interplay: How Illustrations Work

Having looked at parody and the nature of Dahl's literature, we already have an indication of how Dahl attempts to create humour through his combination of

verbal and visual elements. This brings me to the effect of the verbal-visual interplay in Dahl's stories and their translations.

Rankin (2005: 23) speaks of the inter-animation of words and pictures and how the two would be incomplete without each other; she explains that the total effect in the translation process depends on the combination of text and the illustrations that are used. Sipe uses the term "synergy", explaining this as "the production of two or more agents, substances...of a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects (1998: 98). Both explanations hint at the notion that words and images are naturally dependent on each other, making their combination more effective than looking at either aspect in isolation. Oittinen holds that:

[W]ords or images cannot be divorced from their contexts but are situated in time and place: in new situations they continually take on new meanings. When a book in translation is illustrated, the pictures bring along a new point of view. The visual is the context of the words, and the other way around: when translating picture books, it is this totality of the verbal and the visual that is translated. (2003: 132)

I find that this is particularly relevant to Dahl's writing, and the interaction between his texts and Quentin Blake's illustrations.

In both the original and the translated work, Quentin Blake's illustrations are used throughout. This provides a challenge for the translator in creating the same "synergy" between text and image. Oittinen points out that:

... illustrations more generally... make the translator's task very difficult, if not impossible: due to co-prints, it is only the texts in words (in black print) that can be altered, the illustrations must be left untouched. (2003: 133)

Possible discrepancies in the translation between the text and illustrations can impact negatively on the way that humour is perceived.

Blake's illustrations are very particular: they are sketch-like, two-dimensional and they are always in black and white (barring the book covers). Blake's drawings come across as caricatures, with a strong emphasis placed on the facial features (which further reflects Bakhtin's ideas on Carnivalism). The lines are jagged and rough, which is indicative of a character's malicious nature, whereas the curved lines, which are used to moderate the grotesque, are reserved for the heroes of the story and innocent bystanders (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001: 101).

Blake utilises caricatures by enhancing features like the nose, mouth and eyes to convey both character and behaviour. In other words, through these caricatures, he distorts the human form or humanises animals. Nikolajeva and Scott (2000: 230) discuss illustrations as a way to enhance animal characters by giving them human attributes such as clothes, facial expressions, feelings etc. Similarly, the caricatures used to portray human characters make them particularly grotesque. These illustrations enhance character sketches because they provide a visual platform through which the reader may engage with the story.

Blake's illustrations are a perfect visual translation of the parody in Dahl's written work, making use of the same techniques as the text to manipulate the reader's response. The illustrations elicit laughter because they are grotesque and unexpected. This mirrors Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996: 2) suggestion that "even when something can be 'said' both visually and verbally, *the way in which* it will be said is different" (original italics). The text and the illustrations may have the same goal of conveying a certain message, but because the means of conveying the message are different, the reader's response to each medium will also differ. This becomes quite pertinent in the translation process, because where losses occur and humour is not adequately conveyed verbally, the illustrations may draw attention to this element and compensate for those losses. Often, "...the visual medium offer[s]...cognitive resources which [are] not available... in the verbal medium" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 37).

Although Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that what words do not show, the pictures may account for, there are several other ideas as to the way in which texts and illustrations work with each other. Golden (in Nikolajeva and Scott

2001: 7) suggests the following text-picture interactions: a) “the text and pictures are symmetrical (creating redundancy); b) text depends on pictures for clarification; c) illustration enhances, elaborates text; d) the text carries primary narrative, illustration is selective; e) the illustration carries primary narrative, the text is selective.” The way that illustrations are used in relation to the text impacts on the way that the translation will be interpreted by the readers.

For the purposes of this study, I focus on those interactions that occur in Dahl’s work, and which highlight the *shifts in humour in the translation*. Of Golden’s interactions, only enhancement applies to my analysis.

The first aspect mentioned above is symmetry, which refers to pictures that depict exactly what is described in the narrative. The effect is that the pictures are redundant, because they add nothing to the text that it has not already described, giving the pictures a purely decorative function. I think this is unrealistic and clearly does not support the notion that words and images need to work together to strengthen the overall effect (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001: 16). I show that, rather than create redundancy in the original and the translation, the use of images in the two works examined here generally enhances the text, because:

[w]hatever the relationship, the illustration of a story always adds to the narration by giving extra information, such as cannot be given by words: details about setting in time, place, culture, society as well as characters and their relationships. The illustration of a story gives a background and places the characters in homes and milieux. As a whole, illustrations are never quite straightforward but always elaborate, complement, and amplify the verbal narration. (Oittinen, 2003: 131)

This creates a synergy that would otherwise not be achieved with words or images alone.

Schwarcz (in Sipe, 1998: 98) distinguishes two types of text-image interaction: congruency (which refers to enhancement) and deviation. Congruency refers to

harmony between images, allowing the illustrations to complement the text by pushing the action forward; he also suggests that texts and images may take turns in telling the story (1998: 98).

Schwarcz's second category is that of deviation, which is when illustrations and narratives do not necessarily tell the same story and, sometimes, even contradict each other. He states that often, the "enjoyment of this story lies in the reader-viewer's perception of both stories at once" (1998: 98). This will also have implications for the translation process, particularly when discrepancies are of a cultural nature. Often, texts may be adapted so that they are culturally accessible to the new audience. However, when the images do not change, the overall effect is to create ambivalence, and the challenge then is to decide whether or not this influences the story positively, or negatively. Nikolajeva and Scott reinforce this by saying that "as soon as words and images provide alternative information or contradict each other...we have a variety of readings and interpretations" (2001: 17).

There are three other ways that images may work with texts, which are prominent in the Dahl's and Blake's work: illustrating characters, framing and simultaneous succession¹⁴ (Nikolajeva & Scott: 2001).

I have already referred to the ability to portray characters through illustrations.¹⁵ Roald Dahl's narrative is full of keen descriptions, allowing the text could exist on its own quite well. However, we often forget that although adults enjoy Dahl as much as children do, these particular books are intended for a child audience. Illustrations are one of the most effective ways to engage a younger audience. Children are also more susceptible to visuals when the text is being read to them, making the dynamic between text and image a vital part of their interpretation process.

¹⁴ Although simultaneous succession is used in the translation of *George's Marvellous Medicine*, there was not enough time or space to apply it in my analysis. The discussion on simultaneous succession here is an extension of enhancement.

¹⁵ Page 45.

The second element that Blake uses quite frequently is framing; that is, using borders to capture illustrations, and sometimes using none at all. More often than not, throughout the original work and its translation, frames are used to enclose images of the unsavoury characters. This, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 62) explain, is because frames are used to distance the reader, whereas a lack of frames invites the reader into the story.

However, framing is not only used to evoke specific sentiments in the reader. Often, a lack of frames implies space; it suggests that things are happening beyond the page that the reader would love to know about, leaving much of the interpretation to the reader's imagination. This is a particularly useful tool, especially since many authors have criticised the function of illustrations as denying readers the opportunity to use their imagination when reading, since the picture is already there.

Finally, simultaneous succession may be used. This refers to pictures that are used in sequences to indicate the progression of time, or even to imply movement. Often the text is unable to adequately describe the temporal and spatial properties of the story beyond words like then, now, up and down. Illustrations utilise space and, when viewed together in succession, often tell as succinct a story as the text (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001: 151). However, when viewed together, the reader is constantly referring to text and images rapidly, enhancing her understanding of the overall story, and the humour involved, with each new glance.

Chapter Four presents the methodology for this study and an analysis of Dahl's two works, *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine*, and their French translations.

CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSING FRAMES

Methodology

For this study, I analysed four extracts each from Roald Dahl's *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine* and their French translations, *Les Deux Gredins* and *La Potion Magique de Georges Bouillon*. Each passage in the English original has been chosen on the basis of the type of frame it portrays and the type of strategy that has been used to convey the humour and parody. Where possible, I chose extracts that have illustrations which play a fundamental role in enhancing or contradicting the text.

Each extract portrays at least one of the frames outlined by Lopez, as we saw in Chapter Three, or a combination of these, so as to illustrate how different frames may be used to portray humour and parody throughout each book. Each frame, or combination of frames, employs different strategies for creating and conveying humour (which was also discussed in Chapter Three),¹⁶ which has allowed me to identify significant humour shifts in the translations. Changes in strategy between the original in the translation have, at times, resulted in new frames being created that were not present in the original, which has quite a serious impact on the way that the humour and parody are portrayed and perceived.

In each instance, I identified the frame(s) present and explained both the humour and parody based on strategies employed by Dahl to create this humour, and the associations a reader would subjectively make as a result of her previous knowledge and experience. Where applicable, I identified how the illustration

¹⁶ Pages 30-31.

associated with the frame enhances, or detracts from, the humour in the parody. I then compared each original extract with its French translation and identified the translation shifts that occur at both a lexical and visual level (if at all). Based on the various strategies proposed by Lopez, as well as ones that do not fall within her model (such as the use of nonsense words, neologisms and figures of speech), I explain whether or not these shifts have allowed the translation to retain the humour or not.

Character Sketches

FRAME ONE – THE TWITS



Illustration 1 (1980: 12)

English Original:

Mr Twit didn't even bother to open his mouth wide when he ate. As a result (and because he never washed) there were always hundreds of bits of old breakfasts and lunches and suppers sticking to the hairs around his face. They weren't big bits, mind you, because he used to wipe those off with the back of his hand or on his sleeve while he was eating. But if you looked closely (not that you'd ever want to) you would see tiny little specks of dried-up scrambled eggs stuck to the

hairs, and spinach and tomato ketchup and fish fingers and minced chicken livers and all the other disgusting things that Mr Twit liked to eat. (1980: 12)

French Translation:

Compère Gredin, lui, ne prenait même pas la peine d'ouvrir grand la bouche quand il mangeait. Et, comme il ne se lavait jamais, les restes de ses repas se collaient à sa barbe. Soyons justes, il s'agissait de petits restes, car, en mangeant, il s'essuyait la barbe du revers de la manche ou du plat de la main. Mais, si l'on y regardait de plus près (ce qui n'avait rien d'agréable !) on découvrait de petites taches d'œufs brouillés, d'épinards, de ketchup, de poisson, de hachis de foies de volaille. Bref, de toutes les choses dégoûtantes que Compère Gredin aimait ingurgiter. (2007 : 10-11)

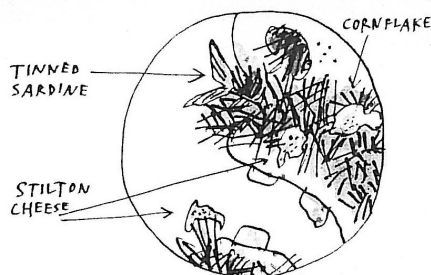


Illustration 2 (1980: 13)

ANALYSIS

The frame in excerpt one is primarily a generic frame,¹⁷ but it is accompanied by a situational frame and several visual frames. What we have is a rather graphic description of Mr Twit's appearance, his actions and his dirty habits, arising from the synergy created between the text and illustrations one and two. Dahl tells us that Mr Twit never washes or cleans his beard and that when he eats, he doesn't bother to use a napkin, but instead wipes his mouth with his sleeves. In

¹⁷ Page 41.

fact, his eating habits (which create the visual frames) contradict everything that children are taught about good manners at the dinner table and personal hygiene (which form the situational frame).

Dahl then goes on to show that, in addition to his filthy eating habits, Mr Twit also eats a selection of nasty things: egg, spinach, ketchup, fish fingers and chicken livers. Most of these items are in some way unappealing to children, such as eggs and fish (for the smell associated with them), spinach (stereotypically, children do not like vegetables) and chicken livers (the idea of eating offal is rarely appealing to children). Moreover, the description of all the food being dried up, and Dahl's reinforced suggestion that it is all *disgusting* suggests decay and relates back to Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque. What we have is a clear character sketch: Mr Twit is a disgusting individual whose appearance is as filthy as his manners (and, as we see later in the story, his behaviour and attitude towards animals and people in general). Mr Twit is such a blatantly hideous example of a human being that our disgust is mingled with amusement.

However, beyond the overall description of the horrid Mr Twit, there are three elements in this passage that help create the humour. The first is Dahl's use of exaggeration; not only does he explain that Mr Twit never washes, but he refers to "hundreds of old breakfasts and lunches and suppers". This creates a series of associated images, building up layer upon layer of old dried food.

The second element is the visual depiction of Mr Twit and his meals. Illustration 1 depicts his uncouth behaviour at the table, and illustration 2 shows the revolting leftovers that are likely to be found in his beard: these are described in the text further on as "a piece of maggoty green cheese or a mouldy old cornflake, or even the slimy tail of a tinned sardine" (1980: 13). These illustrations are an essential aspect of this generic frame because together with the text, they create a synergy that is not possible with the text alone. Both illustrations draw attention to the nose and the mouth as described by Bakhtin; Mr Twit's nostrils are enlarged and black, and his mouth is filled with unevenly spaced (and probably rotting, given his lack of hygiene) teeth. Once again, the

images enhance the exaggeration in the text, but by placing emphasis on the physical features rather than actions. It is interesting to note that both illustrations are framed. This use of framing directly supports the text's message that Mr Twit is such a nasty piece of work that the reader would do well to watch him from afar, and certainly not get closer to his dirty beard than is necessary.

Finally, on a linguistic level, humour is portrayed through the use of loaded words such as *disgusting*, and the tongue-in-cheek tone adopted throughout the passage. For example, "They weren't big bits, mind you, because he used to wipe those off with the back of his hand or on his sleeve while he was eating." This is humorous because although he initially seems to be trying to defend Mr Twit's lack of manners, Dahl is really pointing out just how vile his mealtimes can be. Dahl also uses repetition of the word *and* to show that the same happens at every meal. The phrase "old breakfasts and lunches and suppers" drives home the unsavoury nature of Mr Twit's endless gluttony.

In the French translation, several changes occur. First, the name Mr Twit becomes Compère Gredin. *Compère* translates as *stooge, partner or accomplice* (www.granddictionnaire.com and www.wordreference.com) and *Gredin* literally means *rascal* or *rogue*. The use of *Compère* rather than *Monsieur* is, I think, more effective, because it conveys Mr Twit's sly nature as Mrs Twit's accomplice to malice. *Monsieur*, in contrast, would seem to suggest that Mr Twit was something of a gentleman, which we know is certainly not true.

The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1992) describes a rogue as a "dishonest or unprincipled person" or to refer to an "inexplicably aberrant result or phenomenon". In contrast, a *twit* is described as referring to a foolish person, or may be used as a "reproach or taunt, usually good-humouredly". Mr Twit's obviously malicious nature is not really matched by the "good-humoured" connotations that *twit* involves and, as we see throughout the book, Mr Twit is more sly than stupid. The only time he is portrayed as being foolish is when Mrs Twit convinces him to stand on his head so that he is "the right way up". *Gredin* is therefore more suitable because it contributes to the sketch of Mr Twit's

treachery in the book. In the English original, *twit* is used in the typically English sense and is more suited to Mr Twit's foolish behaviour towards the end of the book. The shift in the translation is more effective and better suited to the book's content.

Interestingly, the shift is not effective with regard to Mrs Twit's French name. *Commère* translates as *gossip* from French into English, which is not a feature of Mrs Twit's personality at all. Thus, the humour is more effectively conveyed in the original and somewhat out of place in the translation. Indeed, readers may even be confused as to how her name provides insight into her character; the result is incongruous and contributes neither towards the parody in the story, nor the humour that lies within.

The second shift is the result of a more limited translation of certain items. The translation dispenses with the phrase "hundreds of old breakfasts and lunches and suppers" and instead reads, "les restes de ses repas". Literally translated, this means "the remains of his meals". This translation detracts from the humour for two reasons; first, because the exaggeration (hundreds) that is so essential in parody is lost; and second, because breakfast, lunch and supper simply become "meals". This affects the rhythm that is built up in the repetition, and the intensity of the scene is reduced.

However, not every change is ineffective. The tongue-in-cheek tone is retained in the translation of the typically English "they weren't big bits, mind you...", and becomes "Soyons justes, il s'agissait de petits restes". The most appropriate translation of this would be "to be fair, they were only little bits", which I think keeps the same playful tone.

The translation of the various types of food is a little trickier. *Ketchup* seems to be commonly used by both the English and the French, and appears to be a borrowed word from the Hindu or Indonesian *ketjap*.¹⁸ *Fish fingers* becomes

¹⁸ Office de la langue française. 1994. Found at Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique (www.granddictionnaire.com).

simply *fish* (*poisson*), which is less funny because the cultural association with the typically English meal is removed. Fish fingers and ketchup are often given to children for meals. *Fish* alone would perhaps be funny because of the smell associated with it by children (as I stated above), but the cultural humour is lost. This need not have happened, really, because the French would most likely be amused by a reference to “bland” English cuisine.

The final shift occurs in the change from the word *eat* to *ingurgiter* at the end of the passage. *Eat* simply implies ingesting the food, whereas *ingurgiter*, which according to Harrap’s *Petit Dictionnaire* means “to gulp down”, has a very different implication. It evokes a visual frame in the translation that the original lacks, because we have the suggestion of movement rather than merely a “static” action. The visual frame evokes a series of associations with the swallowing action: the bristly mouth chewing the food with its ugly teeth (as in illustration 2), the rhythm of the food being gobbled down greedily etc. *Gulp* enhances the idea that Mr Twit is a messy and ill-mannered eater and places emphasis on his gluttony.

Thus, the humour in the translation is achieved through the combination of the generic frame and the added visual frame adopted at the end, which makes use of image-rich verbs to create humour. The name change creates humour in a new frame by providing a series of associations based on the meaning of *Compère* and *Gredin*. However, cultural humour is lost in the translation of the food and, in the deliberately condensed phrases used, the parody is not enhanced because the devices for creating humour (such as exaggeration) have been left out.

FRAME TWO – GEORGE’S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE

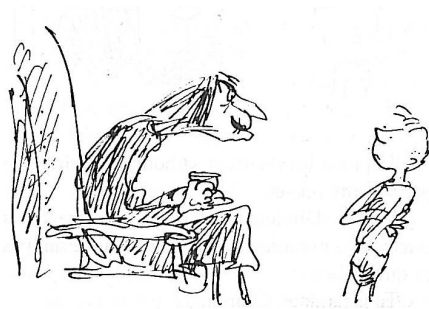


Illustration 3 (1982: 13)

English Original:

George couldn't help disliking Grandma. She was a selfish grumpy old woman. She had pale brown teeth and a small puckered up mouth like a dog's bottom.

'How much sugar in your tea today, Grandma?' George asked her.

'One spoon,' she said. 'And no milk.'

Most grandmothers are lovely, kind, helpful old ladies, but not this one. (1982: 8)

French Translation:

Georges n'y pouvait rien, il détestait Grandma. C'était une vieille femme grincheuse et égoïste qui avait des dents jaunâtres et une petite bouche toute ridée comme le derrière d'un chien.

- Combien de cuillerées de sucre dans ton thé, aujourd'hui, Grandma? demanda Georges.

- Une, répondit-elle sèchement. Et n'ajoute pas de lait.

La plupart de grand-mères sont d'adorables vieilles dames, gentilles et serviables, mais pas celle-là. (2007: 8-9)

ANALYSIS

Once again we are dealing with a generic frame and are provided with a character sketch of George's grandmother. Like the Twits, she is a hateful

example of a human being, but she also represents a typical, grumpy old lady. However, in this particular scene, and the story in general, Dahl is mocking a different social structure, creating a social frame as well. Rather than focus on the inter-personal relationship between husband-wife, he turns his attention to the inter-personal relationships between grandparents and grandchildren, mothers and daughters and mothers and sons-in-law. This particular frame deals with the first of these relationships.

It is generally hoped that all children come from loving homes, where they are treated with care and affection. The relationship between a grandparent and grandchild is often particularly special, with the grandparents doting on their grandchildren to such an extent that the parents are sure the child is just being spoiled. However, in this story, Grandma is the one who is certain that George is nothing more than a spoiled brat. Dahl once again modifies that which we would normally expect in such a socially common scene. Instead of a granny that is a “lovely, kind, helpful old lad[y]...” we are presented with a “selfish grumpy” old hag of a woman that is nasty to her grandson whenever his parents are out. The typical interaction is distorted.

This incongruity in how grandmothers are perceived is humorous because it is the complete opposite of what we expect and highlights the aggressive nature of humour. Grandma herself is an awful caricature with a nasty demeanour and evil little eyes, which can be seen in illustration 3 above. George is even leaning back to create distance between himself and his hunched over, witch-like Grandma, which enhances the situation in the text. Coupled with Blake’s caricature, Dahl creates humour through his detailed description of Grandma’s features: he describes her teeth as being pale brown, a portrayal that evokes the idea of rotting and immediately distances the reader from the subject. He then goes on to point out that Grandma has “a small puckered up mouth like a dog’s bottom”. This phrase is extremely effective because it works on several levels at once.

The word puckered means “to gather into small wrinkles or folds” or “to become contracted or wrinkled”, according to the Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary (1987). This is effective because it highlights both the look of a dog’s bottom

and the wrinkles that one would expect old people to have. However, this humour is not retained in the translation because of the use of *ridée*, which means “rippled” or “wrinkled” (Harrap’s *Petit Dictionnaire* 1995). *Puckered* has rather different connotations to *wrinkled*, because it has associations with churlishness and bad temper. *Wrinkled* merely suggests that something is lined and old. The connotations expressed in the English original and the translation are not the same, reducing the intensity of the description once again.

The simile comparing Grandma’s mouth to a puckered dog’s bottom emphasises child-like, slapstick and grotesque humour by focusing on Bakhtin’s concept of the lower bodily stratum. A puckered dog’s bottom is funny to a child because bottoms in general are considered taboo in their eyes, and all associations they would be induced to make with this statement would relate almost entirely to toilet humour. The connotations of linking the mouth to the bottom is Dahl’s way of pushing and crossing this boundary of what is acceptable in a child’s upbringing and what is not. For a child, this description is a perfect indication of just how disgusting Grandma really is.

For adults, the image is humorous because it is both grotesque and entirely incongruous in terms of things we associate with mouths. This stark discrepancy is an ideal example of Raskin’s Script Opposition,¹⁹ because the two “scripts” (mouths and bottoms) provided present antonymy. When viewed in terms of Bakhtin’s banquet imagery, we have a distortion arising from the combination of abundance and nourishment with base elements related to the lower bodily stratum.

In the translation, I think that the humour is retained, given that the language is fairly similar, but the relationship between George and Grandma is far more intense, allowing for a more severe character sketch of Grandma. In the first sentence, we see that “George couldn’t help disliking Grandma”, whereas in the French translation “il détestait Grandma” (he detested Grandma). The English original has connotations that he knows he *should* like Grandma, but can’t. The

¹⁹ Page 38.

French translation is more deliberate, introducing Grandma as quite a wicked individual from the start.

What I do find interesting in this introductory sentence is the fact that the term *Grandma* is retained in the French translation. This is quite out of place for a French audience, who would normally refer to their grandmothers as *mémé*, *mamy* or *mamie*.²⁰ A possibility for this could be that these are considered terms of endearment, which is exactly what Dahl is trying not to use. However, this does not explain why *Grand-mère* was not used as the term of address; although more formal, at least it would have depicted the emotional distance between George and Grandma.

George's name, however, is very effective. In the English original, the surname used is *Kranky* (like *cranky* in English, meaning to be irritable). *Kranky* is more suited to Grandma's disposition, and so, in the translation, George becomes *Georges Bouillon*. The term *bouillon* refers to a soup or broth; although George's potion is neither of these things, the similarities between the two (for example, that they are liquid, cooked in a cauldron or pot, and ingested) make the choice in surname amusing and more than suitable in terms of the story's content. The shift in the translation places more attention on the potion itself than the reason it is created in the first place: to cure Grandma's foul habits.

The next shift occurs where Grandma's teeth are described as *jaunâtres*, meaning *yellowed* rather than *brown*. Although they do not mean the same thing, the same effect is achieved: that of evoking disgust in the reader and bringing to mind the idea of decay and filthiness.

The French translation then goes on to add a dimension to Grandma's personality that we do not see in the English original. When George asks Grandma how much sugar she takes in her tea, the short reply is "One spoon. And no milk". The only indication that Grandma is being nasty here is the abrupt

²⁰ "Grandma". *Word Reference English – French Dictionary*. 2009. Word Reference Online. 27 January 2009. <http://www.wordreference.com/enfr/grandma>.

manner in which she speaks. Her tone is suggested and this is enhanced by the lack of “please” or “thank you” in her reply. In the French translation, the word *sèchement* (meaning *drily* or *coldly*) is used, which explains what is implied in the original. However, it also draws a small smile from the reader, because Grandma is behaving exactly as petulant, grumpy women are expected to. If this becomes our attitude towards Grandma, then it is the repetition of such bad behaviour that creates the humour. Repetition adopted as a strategy for humour is effective here because the reader anticipates humorous character traits.

The addition of such descriptive words in the French translation shifts this frame towards a more visual one. Although it is still a character sketch, the generic and social frames in the French translation are now qualified by a several visual frames, which are created through the use of adjectives and verbs that increase the intensity of the scene, such as *sèchement* (*drily*) and *détestait* (*detested*). These visual frames enhance Grandma’s wicked character. In contrast, the English original presents the combination of a generic and social frame, which relies more on tone to convey character traits.

Social, Situational and Visual Frames

FRAME THREE – THE TWITS



Illustration 4 (1980: 24)

English Original:

At one o'clock, she cooked spaghetti for lunch and she mixed the worms in with the spaghetti, but only on her husband's plate. The worms didn't show because everything was covered with tomato sauce and sprinkled with cheese.

"Hey, my spaghetti's moving!" cried Mr Twit, poking around in it with his fork. "It's a new kind," Mrs Twit said, taking a mouthful from her plate which of course had no worms. "It's called Squiggly Spaghetti. It's delicious. Eat it up while it's nice and hot." (1980:24-25)

French Translation:

À treize heures, elle fit bouillir des spaghetti. Puis, dans l'assiette de son époux, elle ajouta une bonne ration de vers qu'elle recouvrit de la sauce tomate et de parmesan.

- Eh là ! Mes spaghetti gigotent ! s'écria Compère Gredin en donnant des coups de fourchette dans le tas.

- Il s'agit d'une nouvelle marque, dit Commère Gredin qui, elle, faisait honneur à son plat (sans lombrics, bien entendu). Les spaghetti *Grouillanzi*. Mmm, délicieux ! Mange tant qu'ils sont chauds. (2007: 23-24)

ANALYSIS

In the above passage, three different frames interact with each other: a situational frame, a visual frame and a social one. As mentioned earlier, Lopez describes situational frames as those referring to "information chunks related to conventional situations" (2002b: 320). The situation above portrays that of a

typical lunch setting between husband and wife, which is reinforced by the illustration.

Illustration 4 shows Mr and Mrs Twit sitting opposite each other; there are salt and pepper grinders on the table, pictures on the walls, and a lamp and side-table in the back ground. However, on closer inspection, the text and illustration are in sharp contrast because the situation has been completely distorted. Instead of a family lunch, Mrs Twit has added worms to Mr Twit's spaghetti as an act of vengeance, making this particular frame a mockery of a societal convention, and taking the reader completely by surprise. Not only is this married couple apparently very wicked towards each other, but the lunch setting has been twisted into something grotesque and evil. This would immediately appeal to a reader's "evil" sense of humour, especially when viewed from the perspective that all humour is hostile in nature, relying on laughter at the misfortune of others. In this frame, the distortion means we are laughing at Mr Twit's expense.

This situational frame gives rise to two more frames: the social frame, and the visual frame. Social frames are described as governing interpersonal behaviour. They are an extension of situational frames because they trigger associations based on what we know to be true of a certain situation and, therefore, how people respond to each other within that situation. Here, Mr and Mrs Twit very clearly do not relate to each other as a conventional married couple would. They play tricks on each other and, rather than show support, thrive on undermining each other. Therefore, in both frames so far, there is a clear strategy of modification and, more specifically, distortion being used.

The visual frame is where I feel that the humour is extended more substantially. Obviously, the social and situational frames are amusing because they contradict everything we would expect of societal conventions. Rose qualifies this by explaining that "[t]he shock destruction of expectations has long been recognised as a basic ingredient of the comic effect" (1979: 23). However, in the visual frame, we are able to trace these comic elements more specifically.

First, the use of worms as an ingredient to add to the spaghetti is funny because of their similar appearance to this type of food. This is also humorous because the thought of eating worms is grotesque. Second, the reader picks up on the irony that she and Mrs Twit are fully aware that Mr Twit is eating worms, whereas he is not. The humour here is created through the use of reciprocal interference.²¹ The concept of eating worms is also one that is associated with children and their insults.

Finally, the use of the word *squiggly* is funny, because it reinforces the movement of the worms. This, in turn, reinforces the grotesque quality of the image, making the reader think of worms squirming in the grass. Furthermore, *squiggly* represents a portmanteau of *wiggle* and *squirm*, both of which evoke the same visual frame, enhancing the movement of the worms and the spaghetti.

Thus, we see that three frames interact with each other in the original, and also show that strategies of distortion and reinforcement have been adopted to convey this humour within the parody.

In the French translation, the same frames have been used, but have the same strategies been used as well? The illustration remains the same between texts and qualifies the situational and social frames, as in the original. The distorted social frame (illustrating parody) and the humour contained within are retained in the translation, because the situation remains the same. The real magic of the humour in the translation comes through at a linguistic level.

First is the use of the word *bouillir* as opposed to *cook*. *Bouillir*, meaning *to boil*, implies a certain movement that *cook* does not. Indeed, it causes the reader to think of the volatile bubbling movement of the spaghetti, and the way it almost writhes in the water. This relates very well to the frame in which the worms are added to the spaghetti dish, because when Mr Twit notices how his spaghetti moves, the same squirming movement is suggested and reinforced.

²¹ Page 13.

Second, we have the word *Grouillanzi* in place of *Squiggly*, and this is funny for two reasons: the word *grouiller* literally means *to crawl*, which reinforces the movement of the worms, as in the original, and therefore, the situation; the suffix *-anzi* gives the name of the Spaghetti an Italian sound, which is extremely clever, as it takes the text beyond nonsense and almost to something resembling a play on words. The suffix creates mental associations with Italian culture and this is reinforced by the type of food.

Finally, there are cultural changes that render the translation more accessible to the reader, namely, the substitution of *cheese* for the more specific *parmesan*. The use of *parmesan* has the effect of making the reader think of a Mediterranean lifestyle. Although spaghetti Napolitana is a standard Italian dish of cheese and tomato sauce, given the earlier reference to typically English food like fish fingers, my own association with this spaghetti would be that of tinned spaghetti, another “English” meal often given to children. If this is the case, the comic effect in the original is lost slightly, because we are no longer ridiculing an English norm, but adapting the context for a French audience in order to make the text accessible rather than funny.

Therefore we can see that the same strategies of distortion and reinforcement have been used to convey the humour in Dahl’s parody. In fact, the added use of neologisms has the effect that the translation is funnier than the original, because it provides associations that are unavailable in the original. However, the use of cultural substitution here has been less effective.

FRAME FOUR – THE TWITS



Illustration 5 (2007: 93, 99)

English Original:

‘I suppose you know what *happens* to you when you get the shrinks?’ he said.
 ‘What?’ gasped Mrs Twit, what happens?
 ‘Your head SHRINKS into your neck...
 ‘And your neck SHRINKS into your body...
 ‘And your body SHRINKS into your legs...
 ‘And your legs SHRINK into your feet. And in the end, there’s nothing left except a pair of old shoes and a bundle of old clothes.’ (1980: 31-32)

French Translation:

- Tu sais ce qui arrive lorsqu’on a attrapé la *ratatinette*? fit-il.
- Quoi? Qu’est-ce qui va m’arriver? demanda-t-elle, morte de peur.
- Ta tête va se *ratatiner* dans ton cou...
- « Puis ton cou se *ratatiner* dans ton tronc...
- « Puis ton tronc se *ratatiner* dans tes jambes...
- « Puis tes jambes se *ratatiner* dans tes pieds...

« Et, à la fin, il ne restera plus rien de toi qu'une paire de souliers et une tas de vieux habits ! (2007: 31-32)

ANALYSIS

Above, we see the interaction between situational, social and visual frames, as in the previous frame. However, since I have already discussed the social frame, and since this relationship between the Twits remains the same (even when they work together to capture the birds and monkeys, they still interact with each other in such a derogatory manner), I shall focus on how the humour is portrayed through the use of the situational and visual frames.

This situational frame takes place shortly after Mr Twit has eaten the worm spaghetti and shows how he gets his revenge on his wife. Each evening, he creeps downstairs to add a small round of wood to the bottom of her walking cane and favourite wooden chair, with the result that within a couple of weeks, it appears as though she has grown smaller. Mr Twit gleefully explains that she has got *the shrinks* and will soon disappear completely. This particular situation is so far-fetched and so very evil that the reader cannot help but laugh. The exaggerated nature of the “disease” and the fear that it evokes in Mrs Twit is a perfect example of the aggressive nature of humour.

Illustration 5 provides the visual interpretation of how *the shrinks* affect the Twits at the end of the story. They are tricked into standing on their heads and remain that way until they sink into their own bodies, leaving nothing but a pile of clothes, which is what Mr Twit tells his wife to taunt her.

A visual frame works in unison with this unconventional and totally impossible situation, enhancing the parody portrayed in the scene with use of the verb *shrink*. This particular frame is an excellent example of the interaction of Bergson's three devices for creating humour: repetition, inversion and reciprocal interference. The repeated use of *shrink* creates humour because of the expectation that it builds in the reader; we know that from the head, the body

will sink into the neck, and from there, into the torso, etc. The inversion is present in the situation itself; that is, the impossibility of such an illness. Finally, humour arises from reciprocal interference: we, like Mr Twit, know that the disease is not real and that it is really the revenge he takes on his wife. However, Mrs Twit has no clue and has no choice but to accept her husband's explanation for this strange shrinking phenomenon; she is only aware of part of the situation, whereas we have can see the whole picture.

If we now examine these two frames more closely, we see that at a linguistic level, the emphasis lies on the word *shrink* and its French counterpart, *ratatinette*. The word *shrink* implies that an object is getting smaller, such as clothes shrinking in the wash, or old people diminishing in height. Mrs Twit already has her walking stick, and so the association of elderly people shrinking with age makes the idea humorous, because Mr Twit is distorting a normal phenomenon and adding horrifying elements to it. He is not just suggesting a reduction in height, but that Mrs Twit will disappear altogether. This defies our expectations of what we know to be true, and the ridicule evokes laughter from the reader because the situation is so fantastical.

Moreover, from my own experience, I would immediately associate *the shrinks* with the Wizard of Oz, where the wicked witch shrinks into herself and melts, until nothing is left but a pile of clothes, which is the final stage of *the shrinks*. Therefore, to me, *the shrinks* is a parody of this well-known classic, and this is indicative of a literary reference as discussed by Klingberg.²² particular situational frame: one that I can draw on from previous childhood knowledge. Cognitively, several associations can be made, both in terms of old age, and the "sickness".

In the French translation, the word *ratatinette* is used. There are several interesting elements to this. First, we have the nominalization of the verb *ratatiner*, which literally means to shrivel, or to become wizened, according to Harrap's (1995). Both words carry connotations of wrinkles and drying out. As

²² Page 36.

in the English version, the cognitive interpretation relies on our knowledge of old age, and that elderly people are often described as wizened. Thus, we have the same clever use of distortion, a strategy in frame semantics to create humour. However, the emphasis shifts slightly, because rather than downward movement, which eventually results in disappearance, we have the mental image of Mrs Twit crunching and scrunching up until she becomes so small that she disappears into nothingness, rather than shrinking into the ground. The humour is retained, but it has shifted.

The second element is the suffix, which I think makes up for this translational shift. In *ratatinette*, the *-ette* suffix denotes diminution, and this is particularly effective as it creates the mental association in the reader that something is smaller, or will become so. The *-ette* suffix used here is a common linguistic feature in the French language, and thus allows the reader to make this link.

The final element is the sound of the word and the rhythm it creates. The soft, almost tiptoe-like sound of the repeated ‘t’ emphasises this slow reduction in size. It is almost as if small raindrops patter onto the ground and disappear as though swallowed up, which is exactly what happens with *the shrinks*.

We can therefore see that in the original, the name of the sickness is based on what the content of the word implies, and that humour is the result of the distorted situation acting together with the visual frame. However, in the translation, the word used is effective as much for its content, the way it sounds and how this contributes to the mental picture created, and the linguistic form of the word (including what reader’s associate this with, based on their understanding of their home language). The distorted situation is retained, but the parody is enhanced through rich linguistic devices that are either unavailable in the source language or not used as effectively as they are in the French language.

Text-Type Frames and Metaphoric Mapping

FRAME FIVE – GEORGE’S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE

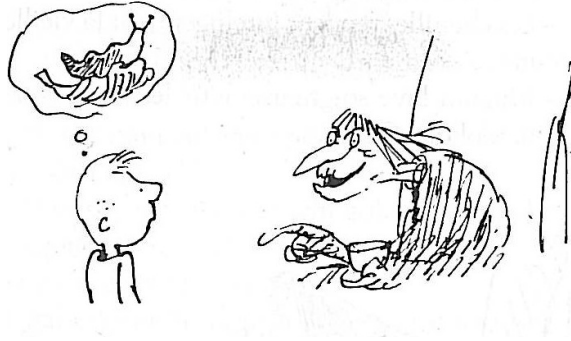


Illustration 6 (1982: 14)

English Original:

‘Whenever I see a live slug on a piece of lettuce,’ Grandma said, ‘I gobble it up quick before it crawls away. Delicious.’ She squeezed her lips together tight so that her mouth became a tiny wrinkled hole. ‘Delicious,’ she said again. ‘Worms and slugs and beetley bugs. You don’t know what’s good for you.’

‘You’re joking, Grandma.’

‘I never joke,’ she said. ‘Beetles are perhaps best of all. They go *crunch!*’

‘Grandma! That’s beastly!’ (1982: 13-14)

French Translation:

- Moi, dit Grandma, quand je vois une limace vivante sur une feuille de salade, je l’avale aussitôt, avant qu’elle ne s’enfui. C’est délicieux. Elle pinça les lèvres et sa bouche devint une petite fente plissée.

- Mmm, délicieux, reprit-elle. Les vers, les limaces, les punaises, les insectes...Tu ne sais pas ce qui est bon!

- Tu plaisantes, Grandma?

- Je ne plaisante jamais, dit-elle. Les scarabées sont peut-être encore meilleurs. Ils croustillent sous la dent.

- Grandma, c’est dégoûtant! (2007: 14-15)

ANALYSIS

This extract boasts the interaction of all five of Lopez's frames: generic, social, situational, visual and most interestingly, text-type. This particular frame is of further importance in this study because it is an excellent example of metaphoric mapping and how the humour within may be lost across cultures.

This particular scene follows on from the character sketch analysed earlier. At this point, Grandma has told George that he is growing too fast and warns that if he wants to grow *the right way* (she states that this is down, not up), he should not be eating things like chocolate. Rather, he should be eating cabbage and all sorts of disgusting insects. This awful behaviour on Grandma's part is an extension of her nasty character traits that we saw in Frame Two, which enhances the generic frame. Indeed, her suggestion is clearly intended to frighten George (not to mention disgust him), which is exactly what a grandmother should not be doing. Grandma portrays all the negative characteristics that stereotypes and parodies normally portray.

Her terrible behaviour reinforces the distorted social frame and inter-personal relationship that was discussed in Frame Two, placing emphasis on the confusing and emotionally frightening situation in which George finds himself. The situation is evil, yet amusing, because Grandma is such an old hag and challenges the "sweet little old lady" expectations that we have.

In this extract, Dahl primarily creates humour through the use of visual frames: the words *gobble*, *squeezed* and *crunch* all conjure up various responses within the reader as a result of what they suggest. All three words focus attention on the mouth and the actions associated with eating. *Gobble* indicates that the insect is savagely chewed and swallowed in one go, which makes the reader think of the disgusting gurgling and munching noises associated with the word ; this image is then reinforced by the word *crunch*, where the frenzied action actually translates into and is qualified by sound. The very thought of crunchy beetles and slimy

slugs being eaten may seem terrible enough, but the marriage of sounds and images in these enhanced visual frames is an excellent way of creating the grotesque humour that amuses children endlessly. However, although *gobble* and *crunch* are well-paired terms, *gobble* refers to a slug and not a beetle (as *crunch* does). In actual fact, the term is really a bit inconsistent with its subject. Nevertheless, the combination of these items succeeds in tying the imagery of the scene together.

The word *squeezed* is effective in creating humour here because it extends the amusing simile that compares Grandma's mouth to a puckered dog's bottom and, in doing so, ties together all those elements relating to the mouth-eating imagery.

The second strategy is perhaps the most fascinating because it combines metaphoric mapping with the visual frames as well as a text-type frame, making use of a parodied rhyme to create the humour. Dahl uses the phrase "[w]orms and slugs and beetley bugs", which in my experience parodies the popular nursery rhyme *What are Little Boys made of*:

"What are little boys made of?

Snips and snails, and puppy dogs tails

That's what little boys are made of !"

What are little girls made of?

"Sugar and spice and all things nice

That's what little girls are made of!"

(www.rhymes.org.uk/what_are_little_boys_made_of.htm)

This is an extremely funny reference because it allows Dahl to match the childish grotesque elements of "snips and snails, and puppy dogs tails" with that of "worms and slugs and beetley bugs". The same text-type is used; the reader recognises the form of the phrase and mentally finishes it with "that's what...are made of" in accordance with the rhyme. As a result, the same emotions are evoked by elements that are used within similar contexts.

However, it is important to note that the frame is humorous because we have previous knowledge of such a rhyme; most children have, at some point during childhood, heard it and used it to tease one another. Knowing the rhyme is what allows us to access the humour that Dahl's text contains. Therefore, we can see that through an effective parody of childhood teasing, Dahl allows the reader to access and understand the humour of the situation on two different levels: first, through the incongruity of Grandma advising George to eat insects (and all the grotesque associations this entails) and second, through previous knowledge of the nursery rhyme and its form.

In the French translation, the humour shifts in the visual frames. *Gobble* becomes *avalier* (*swallow* or *gulp*) and *crunch* becomes “croustillent sous la dent”; that is, the beetles “go crunch in your mouth”. The change from *gobble* to *gulp* dispenses with the chewing action, emphasising the slimy quality of the slugs – and the slippery movement that swallowing would entail – rather than the crunchy quality of the beetles. This is much more consistent with the subject of the slug than is the case with the English original, which shifts the element of the grotesque to a subject that is only mentioned later on. *Croustillent* effectively retains the humour that *crunch* implies, because it highlights the noisy, munching action originally suggested in the English extract.

The humorous effect is then lost, somewhat, by the description of Grandma's mouth; this was quite effective in the English original, since it allowed for the extension of the generic frame. In the French translation, Grandma's mouth is said to become “une petite fente plissée”, which translates as a small puckered or wrinkled slit. This does not present the same image as a wrinkled hole, though the idea of *puckered* does follow on from Frame Two.

The real loss in humour occurs where the parodied reference to *What are Little Boys made of* is concerned. As I stated earlier, the humour lies in the recognition of the reference Dahl makes through his use of metaphoric mapping. In the French translation there is no hint of the form of the rhyme. The French version is a literal translation that dispenses with the assonance and rhyme in “slugs and... bugs”, the alliteration in “beetley bugs” and the made-up word *beetley*.

The translation given is “[l]es vers, les limaces, les punaises, les insects...” which means “worms, slugs, bugs and insects”. This is hardly poetic and all attempt at the rhyme is abandoned. Even if a French audience would not have been able to access the humour of the rhyme using a cultural substitution, there is still no attempt at the inclusion of a poetic device to compensate for this loss. The inclusion of *insects* is an unnecessary inclusion that merely repeats the class of objects being listed.

Finally, there is a tone change in the translation. In the English original, George’s response to Grandma is disbelieving, even challenging, when he states, “You’re joking, Grandma”. However, in the French translation, this effect has been lost and the statement has become a question: “Tu plaisantes, Grandma?” (Are you joking, Grandma?). This first shift changes George’s character in the eyes of the reader, making him come across as an uncertain little boy, rather than one that is about to teach his ghastly granny a lesson. The humour in the English original lies in the fact that a little boy is about to give a little old lady her comeuppance; in the French translation, this is no longer the case. The second tonal shift arises because the typically English tone of the original extract has not been retained. The word *beastly* becomes *dégoûtant* (*disgusting*). Although *disgusting* conveys the same emotion as *beastly*, the quaint English humour of such an old-fashioned word is lost.

We can therefore see that culturally, metaphoric mapping cannot always be replicated in translation. However, in this example, there is no evidence of an attempt to salvage the humour of the original reference. Although the humour comes through in the visual frames, the overall humorous effect is less significant because the metaphoric element has been lost.

Metonymic Mapping

FRAME SIX – GEORGE’S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE



Illustration 7 (2007:35)

English Original:

The next bottle he took down had about five hundred gigantic purple pills in it. FOR HORSES WITH HOARSE THROATS, it said on the label. THE HOARSE-THROATED HORSE SHOULD SUCK ONE PILL TWICE A DAY. 'Grandma may not have a hoarse throat,' George said, 'but she's certainly got a sharp tongue. Maybe they'll cure that instead.' Into the saucepan went the five hundred gigantic purple pills. (1982: 35)

French Translation:

La seconde bouteille contenait cinq cents dragées violettes. « *Remède de cheval contre les langues blanches : le cheval doit sucer une dragée deux fois par jour.* »

« Grandma n'a pas la langue blanche, dit Georges, mais elle a une langue de vipère. Ceci la guérira sans doute. »

Au chaudron, les cinq cents dragées. (2007: 36)

ANALYSIS

In the following passage, humour arises from the combination of a situational frame and various strategies, such as metonymic mapping, repetition and play on words. Although the situation itself gives rise to the initial amusement, it is the translation of these strategies that is of interest to us here. The frame does not change, nor give rise to new ones, as has been the case in some of the previous frames. Rather, the strategies have had to be adapted on the basis of inaccessibility, as shall be seen below.

In this situational frame, George is scouring the shed for more ingredients for his marvellous medicine. He has reasoned, in typical child-like fashion, that even though his parents have forbidden him to touch anything in the medicine cabinet, when it comes to the animal medicines in the shed, “[n]obody [has] ever told him he mustn’t touch *them*” (1982: 33, original italics). This justification is amusing because it relates back to West’s universal humour that I discussed in Chapter Three, about children making mature comments. Furthermore, we know exactly what George is doing: like any curious child, he is creating a loophole for himself and an advance excuse, should he need it!

The strategies that Dahl adopts in the original passage are those of repetition, metonymic mapping and play on words. Let us first turn our attention to the repetition. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the repetition of an item or phrase creates humour by virtue of the fact that the reader comes to expect the pattern that has been presented, and recognises it each time. The repetition of “five hundred gigantic purple pills” creates comedy because it enhances the gravity of George’s enterprise. The number of pills seems to be as large as the pills themselves, and the fact that they are purple adds to the hilarity; the colour is vibrant, flamboyant and very clearly not brown, as Grandma’s medicine is meant to be. The alliteration of “purple pills” and the rhythm of the repetition suggests a heavy sort of finality to the situation, creating anticipation in the reader.

The second strategy is the play on words, arising from the use of horse/hoarse, which also forms the basis of the metonymic mapping. Metonymic mapping uses one entity to refer to another object in the same frame. In this case, it is using

hoarse to refer to *the horse*. The words may not be funny in isolation, but when presented together, they are made humorous by their incongruity. In addition to being another successful example of Script Opposition, this play on words within the metonymy is effective because it makes use of homophones to create confusion. *Horse* obviously refers to the equine animal, whereas *hoarse* refers to the raspy or husky quality of the voice. The humour of the parody lies first in the incongruity of horses having hoarse throats, and then in the superiority of recognising the play on words. This is the perfect example of Eco's incongruity-resolution-superiority structure. Giving horses human attributes and the similarity of the two words is witty and contributes well to the overall effect of Dahl's parody.

A second, but different, example of metonymic mapping emerges towards the end of the passage. When George states, "Grandma may not have a hoarse throat, but she's certainly got a sharp tongue", Dahl presents two metonymic elements: the throat and the tongue. These are two specific parts that refer to a whole (in this case, the human body), which is known as synecdoche, a subclass of metonymy. Grandma's sharp tongue is representative of her nature, making George's observation both humorous and appropriate in the story.

The French translation has quite a task of retaining the humour created by the play on words and metonymic mapping, but does not manage to do so adequately. In terms of the first strategy, the translator has dispensed with the repetition of the phrase "cinq cents dragées violettes" (five hundred purple pills) and instead ends with "cinq cent dragées" (five hundred pills). *Gigantic* does not even feature in the translation and there is no reference to size. This detracts from the humorous tone in the English original.

The use of the phrase in the translation is limited, in the sense that we are not given any hint at the importance of this situation for George. Almost everything in the story until now (and for the remainder of the book) refers to excess: the large saucepan, the hundreds of ingredients that go into the pot, the toxic nature of most of the ingredients etc. Furthermore, the omission of *violettes* in the final sentence of the extract draws attention away from a very significant element in

the story: Grandma's brown medicine. The entire medicine-making process revolves around weird and wonderful ingredients that render the liquid every colour but the one George needs. The medley of colours that he creates fits in well with the magical theme Dahl uses, inspiring images of bubbling cauldrons and witches' brews. The omission of *violette* eliminates the anticipation of what will result when George adds the vibrant pills. What is effective in the French translation is the use of *chaudron* (cauldron), rather than the original's *saucepan*, which continues that theme of magic and reinforces *La Potion Magique* (the magic potion) in the title of the book.

The play on words is the next area of difficulty. As we saw above, Dahl uses the hoarse/ horse pun to create humour in the frame, concluding it with, "Grandma may not have a hoarse throat... but she's certainly got a sharp tongue. Maybe they'll cure that instead". The hoarse/ horse pun does not translate adequately into French owing to linguistic constraints; equivalent homophones do not exist. The solution that the translator has opted to use here is to shift attention away from the throat and instead keep the focus on the tongue (I address this in more detail in a moment). The statement used is, "Grandma n'a pas la langue blanche...mais elle a une langue de vipère. Ceci la guérira sans doute". My own translation would be, "Grandma may not have a white tongue, but she certainly has a snake's tongue. This will definitely cure her". This works quite well in terms of consistency; it allows George to reason that both the horse's problem and Grandma's problem relate to the tongue and that, as a result, the pills are sure to work equally well. However, it is very different to the English original, where George expresses doubt that pills for the throat will sort out Grandma's sharp tongue; but, he takes the chance anyway. There is a definite shift here, which is slightly less humorous in the French translation. In the translation, George seems to want something that will definitely cure Grandma of her foul habits; in the English original, he'll settle for anything that gives Grandma a real shock and him a good laugh.

Let us return to the use of "langue blanche" (white tongue) as an alternative to "hoarse throat". I previously spoke of how retaining the reference to *tongue* worked well for consistency within the text. However, I do not think this is

nearly as effective in terms of retaining the humour. It appears that the translator has drawn on the idea that if animals do not have pink, healthy tongues, they are unwell. My research did not yield any results for white tongue in horses and so, I can only assume that the translator intended to keep the focus on this particular organ by referring to a general symptom of illness in animals. The comparison between a white tongue and a serpent's tongue is humorous to the extent that it likens Grandma's sharp tongue to a disease, and sets up an antithesis between *gentle* horses and *dangerous* snakes. While this may be amusing, it is certainly not as effective as the *hoarse horse*. The humour shifts away from the incongruity of horses having sore throats to Grandma's sharp tongue alone. This aspect is already available in the English original and so, the translation falls short in retaining the humour of the pun because it has no suitable alternative.

Cultural Counterpoint

FRAME SEVEN – THE TWITS

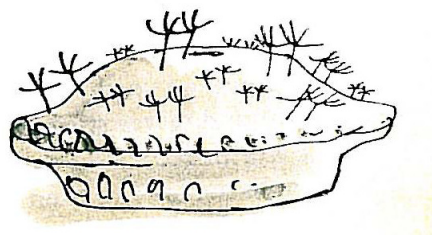


Illustration 8 (Dahl, 1988: 48)

English Original:

Once a week, on Wednesdays, the Twits had Bird Pie for supper. Mr Twit caught the birds and Mrs Twit cooked them.

Mr Twit was good at catching birds. On the day before Bird Pie day, he would put the ladder up against The Big Dead Tree and climb into the branches with a bucket of glue and a paint-brush. The glue he used was something called HUGTIGHT and it was stickier than any other glue in the world. (1980: 47)

French Translation:

Une fois par semaine, les deux gredins dînaient d'une tarte aux oiseaux. C'était Compère Gredin qui attrapait les oiseaux et Commère Gredin qui les faisait rôtir. Pour attraper ses proies, Compère Gredin avait un truc. Le mardi après-midi, il grimpeait, à l'aide d'une échelle, sur le Grand Arbre Mort, avec un seau de glu et un pinceau. Il utilisait la glu *Éternelle*, la glu la plus gluante de tous les temps. (2007: 47)

ANALYSIS

The final example above introduces the interaction between two frames: a situational frame and a visual frame (though, this is more to do with the illustration than verbs in the text).

The situational frame in this extract is very interesting, because it is the first time that we see the terrible Twits working as a team. Throughout the story, husband and wife have been fighting and sabotaging each other, resulting in a distorted view of the typical married couple. However, now, we finally have Mr and Mrs Twit behaving as a unit, where Mr Twit brings home food and Mrs Twit cooks it. However, the way in which they work together is sinister: rather than the typical scenario of the breadwinner husband bringing home food, Mr Twit brings in birds that he has caught brutally in the garden outside. He smears the branches of the tree they like to perch in with *Hugtight* glue and then plucks them off in the morning for cooking. Mrs Twit uses them for the filling in their Bird Pie. Apart from this brutal method of catching he birds, given the nature of the story so far, this sudden teamwork in the story could be seen as a further distortion of the Twits' usually warped relationship.

Dahl conveys humour in the original in several ways: the first is the double distortion of an upside down family unit acting as a team (as I have shown above); the second is the importance he places on the event with the title of *Bird Pie day*, and the third is the morbidly funny way in which Mr Twit actually traps the birds. The dark humour lies in the fact that Mr Twit traps the birds in a horrific manner and makes a quaint little pie out of them. The whole scene has quite a humorous, childlike quality to it, upon further inspection. Naming Wednesday *Bird Pie day* makes the Twits seem like children: they are full of excitement at the prospect of having their favourite meal, in much the same way that a child will look forward to the one night of the week that his mother makes Macaroni Cheese, and name the day after this event. This childlike element extends into the next image, where Mr Twit pulls the trapped birds off the *Big Dead Tree*, not unlike a child pulling the wings off of flying insects. It is all quite unsettling, coming from an adult, and yet strangely amusing because we have a kind of role reversal that children and adults will find funny. Therefore, throughout the extract, Dahl has used modification to convey the humour with these images.

The humour in this scene is enhanced by the image Blake provides: that of a crusty baked *Bird Pie*. The pie itself is hilarious to behold, with the sticklike little birds legs poking up out of it. Not only does this give the pie the look of a little bird cemetery, but the whole thing is rather reminiscent of an English star-gazy pie, which normally has sardine heads sticking out of the top. This parodies a typically English traditional meal with great results. In effect, a strategy that can be identified here is that of metaphoric mapping, because an English audience would use the frame of a star-gazy pie to interpret, and appreciate the humour in, Mr and Mrs Twit's *Bird Pie*.

In the French translation, there are numerous shifts in the humour at a lexical level and because of the illustration itself. The first important change is the translation of *Bird Pie*, which becomes *tarte aux oiseaux* (literally, bird tart). This provides a cultural counterpoint in the story, most specifically with regard to the image Blake provides. The illustration shows a typical English pie, with

covered top and folded edges, which is quite different from the typical French tart, with its open top and thin based crust.

If the illustration does not change, how do French readers reconcile themselves to such an incompatible text-image relationship? Given that the French are not accustomed to the image of the pie in relation to the word *tarte*, what we seem to have is an incongruity that detracts from the overall humour of the scene; comedy has been sacrificed for cultural accessibility. One suggestion I have is that although this appears to be the case, given the upside down nature of parody, perhaps the presence of such mismatched elements is a further way to create humour, because it appears so ridiculous. The whole story is one big distortion, and the contradiction may merely appear to be just another nonsense element to an already funny situation.

At a lexical level, the first significant change is the omission of *Bird Pie day* in the translation, which simply states that the Twit's "dînaient d'une tarte aux oiseaux". This literally translates as "dined on bird tart". The omission of the title discards the original childlike humour and anticipation, portraying the scene as slightly mundane in comparison to its English original. The translation does not make an event of the situation. Instead, what happens is that the language choice in the translation shifts the way that the humour is perceived by the audience. Where in the English original we have what I referred to as distorted childlike humour, in the translation, the humour is more brutal and the aggressive nature of humour is enhanced.

For example, the phrase "Mrs Twit cooked them" becomes "C'était...Commère Gredin qui les faisait rôtir". The substitution of *cooked* for *rôtir* (roasted) has quite an impact on the meaning. *Cooked* is far less emotive than *roasted*, which places emphasis on the brutal activity of trapping and cooking the birds. The word itself conjures up images of burnt and crispy flesh, which is in stark opposition to the cute little birds that are being subjected to the treatment.

This brutality is extended in the next sentence: "Mr Twit was good at catching birds". This becomes "Pour attraper ses proies, Compère Gredin avait un truc",

my own translation of which would be “Mr Twit had a trick for catching his prey”. Referring to the birds as *prey* highlights the brutal nature of the situation; the birds are no longer simply birds, they have become something to be hunted. The translation has once again used a far more laded term than the English original. When read with *rôtir* within the context of the scene, these two words create a series of associations related to the hunting process: stalking, hunting, catching, killing, and cooking. This creates a visual frame in the translation that is unavailable in the English original. Thus, the humour has not been lost after all, it has merely shifted.

The last change deals with *hugtight* glue and how it is “stickier than any other glue in the world”. The term *hugtight* is a combination of the words *hug* and *tight*, which evoke the image of squeezing, or holding firmly in an embrace. The translation, “...la glu *Éternelle*, la glu la plus gluante de tous les temps”, which literally means “Eternal glue, the stickiest glue of all-time”, dispenses with the hugging image and instead focuses on the concept of eternity, which is more serious than its colloquial partner in the original. The term *eternal* almost seems to seal the fate of the prey in a much more serious manner than the playful *hugtight* originally suggests.

Therefore, the shift in humour is the result of two fundamental elements: the text-image interaction, which impacts on cultural accessibility, and the transformation of the situational frame into a visual one, owing to the image rich lexical choices in the translation.

Nonsense Words

FRAME EIGHT – GEORGE’S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE



Illustration 9 (2007: 48)

English Original:

‘By golly, you really are on fire,’ George said.

‘Of course I’m on fire!’ she yelled. ‘I’ll be burnt to a crisp! I’ll be fried to a frizzle! I’ll be boiled like a beetroot!’ George ran into the kitchen and came back with a jug of water.

...

‘The fire’s out,’ George announced proudly. ‘You’ll be alright now Grandma.’

‘All right?’ she yelled. ‘Who’s all right? There’s jacky-jumpers in my tummy! There’s squiggles in my belly! There’s bangers in my bottom!’ (1982: 48-49)

French Translation:

- Diable, tu flambes, dit Georges.

- Bien sûr je flambe ! hurla-t-elle. Je flambe comme une crêpe au rhum. Je friss comme un lardon. Je bous comme un bouillon. Georges courut dans la cuisine chercher une cruche d’eau.

...

- J’ai maté l’incendie ! annonça Georges fièrement. Tu vas très bien maintenant Grandma ?

- Très bien ? vociféra-t-elle. Qu'est-ce qui va très bien ? J'ai de la dynamite dans le bide ! Une grenade dans la bedaine ! Une bombe dans les boyaux ! (2007: 49-51)

ANALYSIS

The following situational frame makes use of tone and nonsense words to create humour. As we have seen previously, the highly unlikely nature of the situation is extremely funny and this is retained in the French translation. The shifts that are of concern to us are those that occur at word level.

George's opening remark, "By golly, you really are on fire" sets the playful tone in this extract. It is so typically English, and incongruously polite considering his Grandma is on fire, that one cannot help but laugh. This continues when George "proudly" announces that the fire is out and assures Grandma that she will be absolutely fine. George's naiveté is charming and, from an adult's point of view, amusing for this very reason.

This is extremely well retained in the French translation, which manages to express George's candour to perfection. Rather than the polite "by golly!" the French translation uses "Diable, tu flambe!" in the same way that a child would unthinkingly blurt out. This outburst is the equivalent of a child saying, "Bloody hell, you're on fire!" The humour in the French translation is so successful because it is more realistic in terms of a child's reaction: children are well known for their frankness and these often adult exclamations are hilarious. Furthermore, children often pick up on things that their parents say when they think their children are not listening, which is universally funny. The translation manages to add a new dimension to the humour in Dahl's parody, enhancing the reader's appreciation of the text.

A further humorous element in this first passage is the use of visual frames. The words *burnt*, *fried* and *boiled* all refer to very extreme types of cooking. *Burnt* conjures up images of blackened bits (which, if viewed in relation to Grandma is really quite gruesome), *fried* stirs up associations of chips frying in boiling oil

(which, interestingly, is accessible to both English and French readers: fish and chips for the English and pommes frites, or fried potatoes, for the French) and *boiled* brings to mind over-cooked vegetables that are grey from colour loss. This series of similes creates a very powerful, as well as humorous, series of images made all the more impressive by the fact that we are forced to view Grandma as a piece of meat that is being cooked.

The second aspect deals with nonsense words to create humour. Grandma's first outburst is, "I'll be fried to a frizzle! I'll be boiled like a beetroot!" The first obvious device used here is alliteration, with both *fried/ frizzle* and *boiled/ beetroot*. The repetition of the hard 'f' and 'b' sounds is effective in creating a rhythm within the text, which adds to the fast paced humour in the scene. Dahl nominalises *frizzle*, rather than use it as a verb, which is normally the case. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1992) explains *frizzle* as a method of frying with a sizzling noise, or burning and shrivelling. What we can see here is that *frizzle* is really a portmanteau of *fry* and *sizzle*, made acceptable as a word on its own through constant use. *Fry* and *sizzle* could be one of many combinations that readers would pick based on their previous knowledge and experiences. Words like this are an excellent way to create humour in the original text; although they are intended to evoke a combination of existing words, at a first glance, they seem to be nothing more than nonsense, which is humorous in itself.

Dahl continues his use of nonsense words in the following scene as Grandma yells, "There's jacky-jumpers in my tummy! There's squiggles in my belly! There's bangers in my bottom!" The words *jacky-jumpers*, *squiggles* and *bangers* are all nonsense words. However, they are not portmanteaux; here Dahl uses the words for the images they evoke from our experiences. To me, *jacky-jumpers* brings to mind the image of a jack-in-the-box, which pops or *jumps* out of the box each time it is opened. This association makes the suggested movement in the scene familiar to us, and therefore humorous, creating a visual frame that we are able to access from childhood memories. Furthermore, the idea of a little jack-in-the-box jumping around in Grandma's tummy is so incredulous that it is amusing; we know that it could never be possible, and we know that

there is no such thing as a *jacky-jumper*, which makes this fictitious critter a humorous element in the text.

Squigglers is indeed a portmanteau, suggesting a combination of the words *squirm* and *wiggle*, as I suggested in Frame Three. However, it has become accepted through widespread use but is more commonly used as a verb than a noun. Once again, through the use of a nonsense word, Dahl creates visual frames that evoke feelings of revulsion because of the movement they suggest, and the things we associate with that movement. Often, when children fidget and cannot sit still, parents will tell them that they have ants in their pants, or that they are squirmy worms. There is almost always some reference to insects, which children may find grotesque; in fact, many adults find insects and other creepy crawlies disgusting too. The use of *squigglers* here links back to Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque.

It is the rich visual frames that Dahl creates in this scene that make it humorous for a range of audiences. There are so many associations that a reader could make here, and nominalising verbs is an excellent way to achieve this: the movement implied by the verb and our recognition thereof creates humour in the first instance; the humour is then continued by our knowledge that the object (like a *squiggler*) cannot exist in anything but a fantasy world, but is still brought to life by the movement its verb form suggests.

Finally, Dahl uses the phrase “bangers in my bottom” to round off the effects of Grandma's new medicine. This is humorous both for the nonsense word *bangers*, and the very obvious reference to the lower bodily stratum that Bakhtin speaks of. *Bangers* is amusing in this case because it personifies the sound that the medicine is making in Grandma's stomach. Furthermore, *bangers* is reminiscent of fireworks, which is so incongruous when referred to in the same context as Grandma's stomach that it becomes comical. Illustration 8 enhances this very idea, depicting Grandma as being launched off her seat and into the air like a rocket. The bright colours also associated with fireworks perpetuate the theme of magic and George's multi-coloured potion its various stages. The very

idea is over the top, making the exaggeration a perfect example of the way parody is expressed.

In the French translations, the task is to convey the humour of nonsense words that evoke specific ideas, or a series of images, based on their linguistic associations: the types of words they resemble, the sounds they represent etc. As I discussed in Chapter Three, West believes that linguistic jokes are the most difficult to duplicate and this strategy has not been retained in the French translation. Instead, a strategy of cultural substitution has been used, which I think is an excellent alternative that retains the playful and exaggerated humour of the English original. The humour is, of course, expressed in a different way and therefore shifts, but I do not think that humour is lost at all. The words in the translation are so culturally familiar and accessible to a French audience that they have an equivalent effect to the one that the nonsense words in the original have on the English audience.

The first shift occurs where Grandma yells, “Je flambe comme une crêpe au rhum. Je fris comme un lardon. Je bous comme un bouillon.” My own translation of this would be, “I’m being flambéed like a rum crepe/ pancake. I’m frying like a piece of bacon. I’m boiling like a broth.” The changes in relation to the English original are evident: the elements of burning, frying and boiling have been retained, creating the same cooking imagery in similar visual frames. However, the objects that are being cooked in the French translation are more culturally accessible, whereas the objects in the English original rely more on commonly used, and sometimes clichéd, phrases in the English language, namely: burned to a crisp and boiled like a beetroot. In the English original, these are funny because they highlight the grotesque and darkly funny effects of Grandma’s medicine, and they rely on the reader’s familiarity with common expressions.

In the French translation, the focus is not on clichés, on food that is commonly eaten in France. The first sentence, “Je flambe comme un crêpe au rhum” is extremely effective for two reasons. The first is that crepes are a typically French dish and the audience is able to access the range of elements that are associated

with crêpes. This leads us to the second reason: the verb *flamber* means to burn or to blaze, but is also commonly used to refer to the method of cooking pancakes, or *crêpes*; this method of cooking involves adding alcohol, usually cognac or rum, to a pan in order to create a burst of flames. It is the perfect simile to describe how Grandma is feeling, particularly when she states that she is on fire. Whereas almost anything can be burnt to a crisp, crêpes, specifically, are flambéed. Therefore, this reference is suitably funny in the translation because of its cultural accessibility, as well as the fact that it perfectly illustrates Grandma's excessive reaction to the medicine.

The second sentence refers to *lardons* (bacon) rather than the nonsense *frizzle* in the original story. The humour of the portmanteau does not translate, but humour is retained in the sense that the audience may access the visual frame created by frying an item of food that they are familiar with. The idea of Grandma frying like a piece of breakfast bacon is just as humorous as her being fried and sizzled. In third sentence, Grandma states that she will be "bous comme un bouillon"; that is, she will be boiled like a broth rather than a beetroot. The alliteration and the rhythm created by the repetition of the hard 'b' sound is not lost in this instance. In my opinion, the shift from beetroot to broth (bouillon) is more effective than the English original, because it ties in with the title *La Potion Magique de Georges Bouillon*, creating automatic associations with George's name and the potion that he makes.

The next set of nonsense words is translated rather differently. *Jacky-jumpers*, *squiggles* and *bangers* are substituted with *dynamite* (dynamite), *grenade* (a grenade) and *bombe* (a bomb) respectively. The description in the translation is, "J'ai la dynamite dans le bide! Une grenade dans la bedaine! Une bombe dans les boyaux !" A back-translation of this would be, "There's dynamite in my belly! There's a grenade in my tummy! There's a bomb in my guts!" The obvious shift here is that all the "creepy-crawly" insect and monster imagery has been replaced by explosion imagery. This evokes a very different emotion to the disgust associated with slimy insects. Rather, the use of these weapons suggests a metaphor for the explosive war going on inside of Grandma's stomach. The associations linked to dynamite, grenades and bombs all indicate blasts, fires and

smoke, all of which perfectly describe the way Grandma initially reacts to her medicine earlier in the frame.

It could be argued that the translation of this set of nonsense words is less effective than the original, because these imaginary creatures do not translate adequately into French. However, the humour is retained in a different fashion; there may no longer be a grotesque and child-like humour that centres around insects and creatures, but the imagery provided in the French translation expresses Dahl's parody perfectly. The focus shifts to overstatement and impossibility, which are key elements of parody, and away from grotesque realism.

In this particular frame, we can see that in both passages, the English and the French, the humour is created and retained through the use visual frames. Although nonsense words are almost impossible to translate because of their linguistic complexities, the French translation cleverly makes use of cultural substitution and image-rich vocabulary to capture the same type of humour as the English original. Furthermore, although the humour is different to that of the English original, it is *as* effective because it is accessible to the target audience in a way that it automatically finds funny.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

Evaluation of the Study

The aim of this study was to ascertain whether or not the humour in parody has been adequately retained in the French translation of Roald Dahl's *The Twits* and *George's Marvellous Medicine*. From the analysis in Chapter Four, I have come to the following conclusions:

The situational frames portrayed in each of the extracts from the English original did not change in nature when translated into French. In this way, the distortion of the situation remained funny in the translation, as it was in the original. It is the incongruity of the situation, the contradiction of expectations, that is humorous, and this is a universal concept.

The interpersonal relationships governed by the situation, and societal conventions in general, were also similar between the original and the translation. This is because, in many respects, English and French social conventions are the same. Not culturally perhaps, but certainly in the universal application of concepts like good manners, grandparent/grandchild relationships or the institution of marriage. However, as we saw in Frame Two of Chapter Four, the relationship between George and his Grandmother is far more intense and aggressive than in the original; this is the result of added adjectives that help create the dry tone, and new visual frames that evoke sentiment.

The significant shifts in humour occur when cultural elements differ, and this is because we have a changing cultural context. In particular, the linguistic conventions specific to each language and culture become important because of the things they imply. From this analysis, the structure of the French language itself meant that certain strategies were available in the translation that were

ineffective in the original; for example, *Grouillanzi* was far more effective in conveying humour than *Squiggly*, because it performed a dual function, almost like a play on words, whereas the English version was one dimensional and less clever in its choice of word. Similarly, the use of *ratatinette* as opposed to *the shrinks* was better at conveying humour because it allowed for neologisms, rhythm and image-rich vocabulary that was well-suited to the content of the story.

Frames Two, Three, Four and Eight were effective in retaining the humour and, at times, better. In Frame Two the name changes were, linguistically, more effective because they were better suited to the content of the story; Grandma's title is incongruously funny for a French audience and George's name is better suited to the fact that he makes a "potion" (bouillon) to cure Grandma. Repetition and added visual frames meant that the humour was retained, and slightly more aggressive than the original, which showcases Dahl's parody well.

Frames Three and Four, which I referred to at the beginning of this page, were also more effective: the use of neologisms added a dimension to the frames that the original lacked, which enhanced the overall perception of the humour. Once again, the inclusion of linguistically clever words created new visual frames that did not exist in the original.

In Frame Eight, the translation made excellent use of cultural substitution, which I find interesting, given that humour is often sacrificed for cultural accessibility. However, I do think that, at times, unless something is accessible, we can't appreciate the humour because we don't recognise it at all. In this instance the humour shifts, which is not always worse, as we saw in Frame Eight.

However, in Frame Seven, we had a different scenario. The humour was retained through the use of dark, humorous language in the translation, such as *proies* (prey), and the way that the birds were caught and cooked. The added visual frames enhance the brutal nature of humour and parody extremely well, and yet in other areas, the humour was nevertheless lost. The first loss was the result of cultural discrepancies, where the text and illustration did not match. The second

was the form of the French language, which has a tendency to condense the English expressions and detract from the tone in the text, as well as to omit elements that would otherwise enhance the humour.

In Frames One, Five and Six, the loss of humour in the translation was more evident. Frame One lost much of the humour that Dahl creates with his playful, tongue-in-cheek tone; by omitting words and condensing sentences, the translation no longer displays the exaggeration that is so crucial in identifying parody. Furthermore, the character name may be consistent for Mr Twit, but is unsuitable for Mrs Twit.

Frame Five posed the problem of linguistic difficulty. The translation was unable to duplicate the effect of the simile (comparing Grandma's mouth to a wrinkled hole), and completely lost the humour of the reference to the English rhyme *What are Little Boys Made of?* The translation does not even attempt to use an alternative strategy to recapture the humour that has been lost.

Finally, Frame Six shows the humour losses that occurred because of the linguistic complexity of the play on words. The *hoarse horse* pun could not be expressed in the same way, since the French language lacks semiotically similar equivalents. The strategy that was used was ineffective matching the humour in the original, relying solely on metonymy for effect. Furthermore, the strategies of repetition and exaggeration were dispensed with in this frame, and these are both useful strategies to promote both humour and parody.

Thus, we can conclude that the humour in Dahl's parody is retained overall, but there are certainly problems as well. Among the extracts analysed, four retained the humour in Dahl's parody, one was effective for its language use but ineffective for the cultural inconsistency, and three fell far short of retaining that humour. However, humour is subjective, and even though I have found certain strategies unsuitable, each text is specifically designed to appeal to its desired audience, and the translation shifts support this change. Sometimes, the fact that the humour is accessible at all is better than trying to recreate a joke that was never going to be understood in the target language anyway.

Despite the losses that have occurred, I think that the translations were successful and that they certainly retained the humour in Dahl's parody for the most part. This was possible because of rich language choices that have created new frames and enhanced others, and cultural substitution that has managed to remain both accessible and funny.

Therefore, from the application of this model, I can conclude the following:

When applying frame semantics, several analyses attempt to map one frame per concept, which I find unrealistic. The multiple frames that have emerged from a single passage that I have analysed are evidence of this, indicating the interdependent nature of frames within a specific context. Furthermore, in the translation process, not only have numerous strategies been used in each instance to recreate or retain humour, but often, new frames have been created in the process.

Situational frames give rise to social frames, and social frames are reinforced by visual frames. Even within these, a character sketch emerges as a result of the actions depicted by characters, creating space for a generic frame as well. I find that this ripple effect along the frames reinforces the cognitive nature of this model. In the same way that frames rely on each other to be understood, and build up a series of images, descriptions and ideas, the brain makes mental associations that multiply in a similar fashion. One suggestion induces the reader to make another suggestion, and so on. Often, these ideas are not even related, and we need to rely on context to narrow the field of elements that we use in the association process.

When we view these unrelated ideas within the context of parody, we see that the incongruities that lie within (which is Raskin's Script Opposition)²³ are the very elements that create humour in the first place. Our expectations are

²³ Page 38.

challenged by the distortion of what we know to be true or usual, and our recognition of this modification leads us to appreciate the humour.

Cultural context in the analysis in Chapter Four is an obvious way in which to limit the frame. However, the associations that are made depend on the reader, his experiences and his knowledge. Similarly, what other readers will find humorous will differ too, for the same reasons. It is fairly safe to assume, though, that readers from similar back grounds will make similar associations, or even find the same things funny, but this will not always be the case.

This study was of great interest to me because Dahl's parody challenges the very conventions associated with children's literature, and I do not think that enough research has yet been done to deal with such overt humour where children are concerned. It is also interesting that Bergson's writings on humour are still so pertinent almost one hundred years on, and that both humour and translation theorists today draw on him for their own writings, considering that this "accepted" view of humour is still sometimes deemed unsuitable for children.

The translation of humour and parody in children's literature is multi-faceted and I believe that this study has provided a sound analysis of the problems that may arise, as well as the strategies that may be used to combat them. Furthermore, I have shown that humour has indeed been retained in the translation, despite these difficulties, with a special focus on the text-image interaction that has been little explored within the field of humour and translation together.

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