

Corpus Lift? The Use of Wordplays in Translator Training Classes

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Abstract: If wordplays pass unnoticed by translators, addressees may be deprived of the effect intended in the source text. Exposing novice translators to wordplays and their subsequent rendering can be a useful activity to encourage both metalinguistic awareness and creativity. A set of 14 wordplays was collected in a corpus compiled from synopses and reviews of American reality television series *Botched*. To verify if students could recognize and then appropriately translate such constructions, a questionnaire with the occurrences was circulated to native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese who had to rate them as creative or not, humorous or not, and easy/hard to translate, and then present a translation. My discussion mainly draws on studies about wordplays (Delabastita 1996; Zirker & Winter-Froemel 2015), and their translation (Delabastita 1996; Silva 2019). The results reveal, above all, that all participants perceived the wordplays in the segments, even though, could not translate all of them as such, confirming that this task is in fact difficult and challenging, as such, recommended for training translation students.

Key words: *irrealia*, particulares ficcionales, neologismo, procedimiento de formación, creación léxica.

Corpus Lift? El uso de juegos de palabras en clases de formación de estudiantes de traducción

Resumen: Si los juegos de palabras pasan desapercibidos para los traductores, los destinatarios pueden verse privados del efecto deseado en el texto original. Exponer a traductores novatos a juegos de palabras y su posterior interpretación puede ser una actividad útil para fomentar tanto la conciencia metalingüística como la creatividad. Se recopiló un conjunto de 14 juegos de palabras en un corpus compilado a partir de sinopsis y reseñas de la serie de telerrealidad estadounidense *Botched*. Para verificar si los estudiantes podían reconocer y luego traducir apropiadamente tales construcciones, se circuló un cuestionario con las ocurrencias a hablantes nativos de portugués brasileño, quienes debían calificarlos como creativos o no, cómicos o no, fáciles/difíciles de traducir, y luego presentar una

traducción. Mi discusión se basa principalmente en estudios sobre juegos de palabras (Delabastita 1996; Zirker & Winter-Froemel 2015) y su traducción (Delabastita 1996; Silva 2019). Los resultados revelan, sobre todo, que todos los participantes percibieron los juegos de palabras en los segmentos, aunque no pudieron traducirlos todos como tales, lo que confirma que esta tarea es de hecho difícil y desafiante, por lo que se recomienda para la formación de estudiantes de traducción.

Palabras clave: Formación de traductores. Lingüística de corpus. Traducción. Juegos de palabras.

Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. What is a wordplay? 3. How can wordplays be created? 4. The study corpus and the wordplays collected. 5. How can wordplays be translated? 6. The classroom activity, how participants reacted and performed. 7. Final remarks.

1. Introduction

Readers must (or should) have noticed that the title of this article starts with a wordplay: “corpus lift”? Should not it be “body lift”? Yes, it should: “(a) body lift improves the shape and tone of the underlying tissue that supports fat and skin. Excess sagging fat and skin are also removed”¹. Readers who captured the wordplay understood that, considering “corpus” as the Latin word for “body”, both are, at least theoretically, synonymous. However, the expected collocation is “body lift”. According to Kjellmer (1991: 112):

(a) large part of our mental lexicon consists of combinations of words that customarily co-occur. The occurrence of one of the words in such a combination can be said to predict the occurrence of the other(s).

In this case, as the presence of the word “corpus” seems to be semantically incompatible in the combination, a wordplay is generated through the manipulation of the conventionalized linguistic structure “body lift”. This is possible since at least two senses of “corpus”, “(t)he main part of a bodily structure or organ” and “(a) collection of writings or recorded remarks used for linguistic analysis”², are preserved (Attardo 1994). The creation of this wordplay was motivated by two facts: 1) the occurrences of wordplays (used in the activity proposed to novice translators in this article)

¹AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLASTIC SURGEONS (2020): Body Lift – Improving Shape and Tone (online). Retrieved: November 16, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.plasticsurgery.org/cosmetic-procedures/body-lift>>

were collected from a television series, which follows two doctors as they remedy extreme plastic surgeries that have gone wrong, and 2) the principles and tools of corpus linguistics have been applied for data collection and analysis.

As I believe the use of a wordplay in a text is to cause an initial effect of surprise, if it passes unnoticed, its primary goal is not achieved. The lack of the linguistic and cultural knowledge to successfully recognize a wordplay seems to pose a more significant challenge to translators who, consequently, can deprive readers/viewers of the effect intended by the author in the source text. Bearing that in mind, one of my objectives was to expose novice translators to wordplays and their subsequent rendering as a useful activity to encourage both metalinguistic awareness and creativity, a kind of activity that can help them become less naïve towards the uses of language in general.

Thus, this paper intends to verify if novice translators could recognize and then appropriately translate wordplays from English into Portuguese. For that, my discussion mainly considers studies on wordplays (Delabastita 1996; Zirker & Winter-Froemel 2015), and their translation (Delabastita 1996; Silva 2019). Next, I briefly discuss how wordplays can be defined and generated.

2. What is a wordplay?

In the literature on wordplay, several definitions can be found. Let us examine the following:

- a) “any adaptation or use of words to achieve a humorous, satirical, dramatic, critical, or other effect” (MacArthur 1992: 787);
- b) “the function of most wordplay is to create a comic effect and attract the attention of the reader or listener to a specific point in the text” (Veisbergs, 1997: 159);
- c) “the stylistic manipulation of the lexis (and semantics) of fixed expressions and idioms is perhaps to provide some sort of defamiliarization, and typically providing humour” (Moon 1998: 170);
- d) “wordplay is characterized as a clever and creative exploitation of the meaning and form of words” (Langlotz 2006: 195), and
- e) “the clever manipulation of the form of a language string or the use of polysemy resulting in an amusing effect” (Arnaud, Maniez & Renner 2015: 136).

As it can be noticed, if, according to Arnaud, Maniez & Renner (2015: 136); “wordplay”, above all, “must involve manipulation”, these definitions are, to a certain extent, converging and supplementary. On the one hand, the idea of “manipulation” seems to permeate most of them, through

“manipulation” itself, “adaptation” and “exploitation”, implying, then, that wordplays entail a certain type of intervention in the use of language. Besides, some of them include the idea of humor, through “humorous”, “comic” and “amusing”, implying that wordplays, in general, must provoke a certain reaction in the reader/listener. On the other hand, some of the definitions add extra components to wordplays: “cleverness” and “creativity”, implying that they are the result of an ingenious and imaginative perception of a linguistic occurrence susceptible to transformation.

The definition of wordplay by Delabastita (1996: 128) is worthy of attention:

Wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomenon in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings.

Curiously, Delabastita’s definition does not include humor, like “most definitions” usually do (Arnaud, Maniez & Renner 2015). His definition of wordplay; however, also places emphasis on the idea of “manipulation”, or on the exploitation of “structural features of the language(s)” to cause a confrontation of “linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings” (1996: 128).

Doubtlessly, I agree with authors that include humor in their definitions, but I prefer to prioritize the inherent (and maybe undeniable) feature of manipulation of a conventionalized linguistic structure, which, by defeating the expectation of addressees, may produce a wordplay, not necessarily and primarily intended for causing a comic effect, but an initial effect of surprise. This initial effect may, then, produce subsequent effects of humor, criticism, and so on, depending on how addressees interpret the manipulated linguistic structure and its environment. In view of that, wordplay is here defined as: any clever and creative manipulation through the confrontation of meaning and forms of one or two words, or of multi-word combinations, capable of causing, in readers/listeners/viewers, a primary reaction of surprise; subsequently, bringing about amusing, comic, critical, dramatic, humorous, satirical, and other effects.

The function of wordplays is another feature that needs attention. Though function and effect may, sometimes, be interpreted as the same thing, function can be expanded. Part of Veisbergs’ definition, to “attract the attention of the reader or listener to a specific point in the text” (1997: 159), may be a useful starting point. Then, as Zirker & Winter-Froemel (2015: 1-8)

postulate, a wordplay “may fulfil a wide range of functions and be entertaining and comical, it may be used to conceal taboo, and it may influence the way a speaker’s character is perceived”, and it also “invites to and is expressive of metalinguistic reflection”. From that, it can be inferred that wordplays can have different functions as ludic, critical, poetic, or metalinguistic, among others. In this paper, I will place emphasis on wordplays functioning as a didactic resource to be used with translation students. Now, I turn to how wordplays can be generated.

3. How can wordplays be created?

Based on my definition of wordplay, the mechanisms involved in the generation of wordplays are now presented considering two levels: one or two words and multi-word combinations.

First, referring to Delabastita (1996); Tagnin (2005); Giorgadze (2014), and Renner (2015), I shed some light on the most common mechanisms used to create wordplays through the manipulation of one or two words. I illustrate the mechanisms with my own examples.

According to Delabastita (1996: 128), wordplays operate on different aspects of language through its phonological, graphological, lexical, morphological, syntactic structures. Based on that, he suggests five basic mechanisms that can be used to create wordplays: homonymy [identical sound, identical spelling, as in *bark* (verb)/*bark* (of a tree)]; homophony [identical sound, different spelling, as in *time*/*thyme*]; homography [different sound, identical spelling, as in *lead* (verb) /li:d/, and *lead* (metal) /led/]; paronymy (similar sound, similar spelling, as in *imminent*/*eminent*), and polysemy (same spelling, different, but related sense, as in *mouth* (face)/*mouth* (of a river)]. Tagnin (2005) suggests practically the same mechanisms: homonymy, homophony, paronymy, and polysemy³. Giorgadze’s (2014: 273) suggestions, which have been summarized here for reasons of space, also include similar mechanisms: homonymy, homophony, and polysemy. In terms of semantic relations, I add synonymy to this group of mechanisms, as can be seen in “corpus lift” (discussed above), as confronted with “body lift”.

I move on now to a mechanism that involves, at least, two words, the so-called lexical blending, blend, or portmanteau word. Renner (2015), in his comprehensive study on lexical blending, presents a detailed discussion

³ It should be noted that, in her article, Tagnin (2005: 247) suggested that such mechanisms, linguistic manipulations, can be used “to cause a breach in the listener’s/reader’s expectations” as a way to create humor; however, they can also be used to generate wordplays.

about such process, defining it as “the act of coalescing several words into one after an act of clipping, of overlapping, or of both clipping and overlapping” (2015: 121). Based on several authors and different ideas on this process, he presents a rich typology of lexical blending (2015: 124-129):

- formal complexity⁴ [*ambisextrous* (ambidextrous + sex); *humongous* (huge + monstrous); *avigation* (avi + navigation – aerial navigation)];
- structural transgression [*smang* (smash + bang – have sex); *planetesimal* (planet + infinitesimal – miniature planet); *Brangelina* (Brad + Angelina)];
- graphic play on words [*pharming* (pharmaceutical + farming – production of pharmaceuticals from genetically altered plants or animals)];
- semantic play on words [*underwhelm* (under + overwhelm)], and
- functional ludicity [bit (binary + digit)].

Next, I briefly discuss the ideas by Veisbergs (1997) on potential devices for the generation of wordplays that confront meaning and forms of multi-word combinations.

Though multi-word combinations include a wide range of fixed expressions such as: collocations; idioms; binomials; similes; compounds; phrasal verbs; speech act formulae; attitudinal formulae; commonplaces; proverbs; slogans; politeness formulae; stock phrases; quotes, among others (Granger & Paquot 2008; Tagnin 2013); the wordplays encountered in my study corpus basically represent transformed binomials, citations, collocations, idioms, sayings, slogans, and titles.

Manipulated multi-word combinations, idiom-based wordplays for Veisbergs (1997: 157-158), refer to “(t)he various types of idiom transformations” that “fall into two basic groups”, structural transformations, “which affect both the structure and meaning of the idiom”, and semantic transformations, in which “the idiom’s structure remains intact but its meaning undergoes some change”, which is “possible and activated by the contextual environment of the idiom. Structural transformations normally result from devices such as addition, insertion, allusion, ellipsis, or substitution⁵, and semantic transformations, from sustained or extended metaphor, zeugma and dual actualization⁶.

⁴ Under formal complexity, Renner (2015: 126) mentions a very curious case: multiple blending [*turducken* (turkey stuffed with a duck which is stuffed with a small chicken, and *Christmahanukkwanzadandiwalstice* [Christmas + Hanukkah + Kwanzaa + Ramadan + Diwali + (Winter) Solstice Winter – inclusive term for December holidays].

⁵ Similar mechanisms can be found in Barta (2005, 2006), deletion, addition, substitution, and permutation, who has studied changes in a specific type of multi-word combination: the proverb.

⁶ Viégas-Faria (2004), Dore (2010), and Brezolin (2020), for instance, investigated wordplays based on semantic idiom transformations.

In this paper, though, my analyses of the mechanisms that produced the wordplays from my corpus will focus on the following devices: substitution associated with alliteration, homophony, lexical blending, and paronymy, the most common in the participants' solutions.

4. The study corpus and the wordplays collected

My study corpus consisted of synopses and reviews⁷ of *Botched*, the American reality television series, which follows doctors Terry Dubrow and Paul Nassif as they remedy extreme plastic surgeries that went wrong.⁸ The television show (6 seasons/92 episodes) was featured on Channel E! (NBCUniversal Cable Entertainment Group division) in the USA, from 2014 to 2020, and has been broadcast in its dubbed version on Channel E! (NBCUniversal/HBO Latin America Group) in Brazil since then. The synopses and reviews were copied, and, before they were pasted into a *.txt* file, technical information, such as numbers of seasons and episodes, air date, and number of USA viewers, was removed. The final corpus, totalling 7,168 tokens, was run with the AntConc concordance tool (Anthony 2020). Using basic features of the software, a word list was obtained (1,396 types), and compared with a word list of a reference corpus of 277,728 tokens (compiled from TV shows scripts). This comparison produced a keyword list of 242 words, out of which words related to parts of the body and plastic surgery were selected for further analysis through the concordance feature of the software. In my search, I also gave attention to some eye-catching terms, such as “bimbofication”. Then, a set of 14 wordplays was obtained. Next, the segments with the wordplay (in bold), its context, the mechanism involved in its creation, and the source word(s)/phraseologism are presented.

- (1) a Supa Woman shows off her **ass-ets** (a woman shows off huge butts after a few surgeries) – lexical blending by means of graphic play on words, resulting in homophony (Renner 2015: 126), source word: **assets**;
- (2) a woman with **franken-tits** (woman with frightening breasts after unsuccessful surgeries) - lexical blending, source words: **Frankenstein** + **tits**;
- (3) Bigger isn't **breast** (patient wishes to get a breast reduction) – substitution in one element of the saying, resulting in paronymy, source phraseologism: Bigger isn't **best**;

⁷ IMDB (2019): *Botched – Episodes* (online). Retrieved: November 16, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3781836/episodes?year=2019>>

⁸ WIKIPEDIA (2020): *Botched* (TV Series) (online). Retrieved: November 16, 2020. Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botched_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botched_(TV_series))>

- (4) Face **misfor-chin** (chin surgery that went wrong) - lexical blending, resulting in homophony, source words: **misfortune** + **chin**;
- (5) Four **leeches** and a funeral (man says farewell to his nose with a funeral after fixing it with the extra help of leeches) – substitution in one element of the movie title, source phraseologism: Four **weddings** and a funeral.
- (6) It's called **bimbofication** (a woman wants to look like a “blowdoll”, or a bimbo) - lexical blending: **Bimbo** + **modification**;
- (7) Make **titties** great again (a patient hopes to regain her confidence with new breasts) – substitution in one element of slogan popularized by Donald Trump: Make **America** great again;
- (8) Mother knows **breast** (a young woman undergone double mastectomy to beat cancer after her mother had died of the disease) – substitution in one element of idiom, resulting in paronymy: Mother knows **best**.
- (9) Nothing **butt** trouble (young woman, whose multiple silicone removal surgeries have left her with a distorted derriere) – substitution in one element of idiom, resulting in homophony: Nothing **but** trouble.
- (10) Say yes to the **breasts** (former actress who fought a flesh-eating disease wants to reconstruct her breasts) – substitution in one element of a reality television series, resulting in paronymy: Say yes to the **dress**;
- (11) Short-changed at the **nipple** bank (a woman seeks breast reconstruction after double mastectomy) – insertion of one element in idiom: short-changed at the \emptyset bank;
- (12) **Silicone** Valley (silicone began to leak and migrate throughout the body of a transgender) -substitution in one element of binomial, resulting in paronymy: **Silicon** Valley;
- (13) The serial **filler** (a patient hopes to erase the physical reminders from a fatal car accident that gave her a lip filler) – substitution in one element of the adjectival collocation, resulting in paronymy: The serial **killer**;
- (14) To **implant** or not to **implant** (a woman with jarring pain from her previous breast implants is not sure if she wants new ones) – substitution in two elements of famous quote from *Hamlet* by Shakespeare: To **be** or not **be**.

As it can be noticed, most of the wordplays are creative context-motivated constructions, prompted by the setting of plastic surgery, or more precisely, of plastic surgery gone wrong. Since the episodes feature the disastrous consequences of medical malpractice, and most patients disclose disfigured or deformed parts of their body, one might say that a television series should not show something not acceptable to mention, or that is a taboo. However, as the television show is presented in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, the tension that discussing botched and traumatic surgeries would generate is relieved by using wordplays to refer to the

results of negligent conduct. As I mentioned before, if, on the one hand, wordplays may be used “to conceal taboo” (Zirker & Winter-Froemel 2015: 1); on the other, they may also be used to address taboo issues without sounding rude or inappropriate.

5. How can wordplays be translated?

If languages have morphological, phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic particularities, and there is no one-to-one interlingual correspondence, translators, relying on their linguistic abilities and creativity, may resort to some of the following translation strategies to deal with the challenging task of translating wordplays. These are Delabastita’s suggestions (1996: 133-134)⁹:

- 1) *PUN into PUN*: the pun in the source text is translated by a pun in the target text, considering the grammatical features and limitations of the target language;
- 2) *PUN into NON-PUN*: the pun is translated by a non-punning phrase;
- 3) *PUN into RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE*: the pun is replaced by some wordplay-related rhetorical device (repetition, alliteration, rhyme, among others), aiming to recapture the effect of pun in the source text;
- 4) *PUN into ZERO*: omission of the portion of the text containing the wordplay;
- 5) *PUN S.T. = PUN T.T.*: the translator reproduces the wordplay in the target text, without actually translating it;
- 6) *NON-PUN into PUN*: a wordplay is introduced in a portion of the text where there was none in the source text, as a way to make up for lost wordplays elsewhere;
- 7) *ZERO into PUN*: the translator introduces totally new textual material containing wordplay in target text, possibly as a compensatory device;
- 8) *EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES*: the translator adds footnotes or other types of annotations to explain the source-text wordplay, for example.

To show how participants tackled the wordplays, some of these strategies will be resumed in my analyses, returning to the device substitution associated with alliteration, homophony, lexical blending, and paronymy, the most used mechanisms by participants, especially when the result was *PUN into PUN*.

⁹ For an expansion of Delabastita’s wordplay translation strategies, refer to Silva (2019).

6. The classroom activity, how participants reacted and performed

As put by Arnaud, Maniez & Renner (2015: 149), wordplays depend not only on the intention of the speaker/writer, but also on the reader's/listener's reaction; "intended wordplay may well fall flat or pass unnoticed and thus fail as such". To observe how participants (from now on, referred to as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5) reacted to the occurrences, they were asked to check if the segments were "creative or not", "humorous or not", "easy/hard to translate", "explain why", and, finally, present a translation into Portuguese. Attention should be given to the fact that, in no part of the questionnaire, was "wordplay" mentioned, I preferred to call them "linguistic combinations", and I chose not to exclude obvious wordplays, such as (5), (7), (12), (13), and (14), for example. I deliberately took this decision to make participants spontaneously recognize the wordplays, either evident or not.

The 14 occurrences were also followed by these questions: "After you translated (or tried to translate) the excerpts, did you find the activity challenging? Yes/No. Why?"; "In general terms, while translating, did you think of any translation theory? Yes/No. Justify your answer.", and "How can an activity like this help translation students?" (Appendix 1). The answers participants gave to these questions will be discussed in my final remarks. The contexts of wordplays (Appendix 2) were also sent to participants as extra help.

The questionnaire was then circulated to more than 20 novice translators (all native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese) who were expected to fill it out on a volunteer basis. Only five, three females (aged 21 to 22), and two males (aged 24 and 26) completed and returned the questionnaire. All respondents¹⁰ have completed an 8-semester translation undergraduate program at a private university in Greater São Paulo, State of São Paulo, Brazil.

Table 1 shows how participants reacted to the segments with wordplays, considering if they were "creative or not", "humorous or not", and "easy or hard to translate".

¹⁰ I owe them a deep debt of gratitude for their contributions.

Segments	Creative?	Humorous?	Easy to translate?
1. a Supa Woman shows off her assets	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 0/5
2. a woman with franken-tits	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 2/3
3. Bigger isn't breast	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 1/4	Yes/ No. 0/5
4. Face misfor-chin	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 1/4
5. Four leeches and a funeral	Yes/ No. 3/2	Yes/ No. 1/4	Yes/ No. 5/0
6. It's called bimbofication	Yes/ No. 3/2	Yes/ No. 1/4	Yes/ No. 0/5
7. Make titties great again	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 2/3
8. Mother knows breast	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 1/4
9. Nothing butt trouble	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 1/4
10. Say Yes to the breasts	Yes/ No. 3/2	Yes/ No. 2/3	Yes/ No. 2/3
11. Short-changed at the nipple bank	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 1/4
12. Silicone Valley	Yes/ No. 4/1	Yes/ No. 2/3	Yes/ No. 4/1
13. The serial filler	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 3/2	Yes/ No. 2/3
14. To implant or not to implant	Yes/ No. 5/0	Yes/ No. 1/4	Yes/ No. 5/0
Totals	66/9 (88 %/12 %)	42/33 (57 %/44 %)	29/46 (39 %/61 %)

Table 1. How participants reacted to the segments containing wordplays

According to the participants' reactions, most of the wordplays were considered creative, accounting for 88 % of all occurrences. Taken in isolation, segments (1), (2), (4), (7), (8), (9), (11), (13), and (14) were unanimously considered creative, followed by less creative ones: (3), (12), (5), (6), and (10). In terms of humor, only 57 % of all occurrences were considered humorous, with segments (2), (7), (11), as the most humorous, and segments (3), (6), and (14), as the least humorous. As to the level of translation difficulty, segments (1), (3), and (6) were considered the hardest ones by all participants. In general terms, 61 % of all segments were considered "hard" to translate.

Next, I present how participants translated the segments. Each segment is followed by the way they reacted to how easy or hard was to

translate them, the translations proper, and whether their solutions resulted in wordplays or not. The participants' translations that I classified as wordplays were expected to evoke the same context of the source wordplay, and to represent a linguistically and pragmatically plausible structure in the receiving language. Consequently, successful wordplays should privilege effect over form, and sound natural in the target language, as put by Tagnin (2015).

Segment 1- a Supa Woman shows off her ass-ets			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	Um mulherão aBUNDAnte	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	Uma super mulher exibe seu traseiro maravilha	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Uma Super-mulher mostrando sua abundância	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	A mulher exibe sua abundância	<i>PUN</i>
P5	No.	Uma Super Mulher mostra sua abundância	<i>PUN</i>

Curiously, considering that all participants rated segment (1) as hard to translate, P1, P3, P4 and P5 came up with highly satisfactory pragmatic solutions, that is, *PUN* into *PUN*. P1 used the adjective *abundante* ("abundant"), whereas P3, P4 and P5 used the noun *abundância* ("abundance"), in all cases, the word *bunda* ("butt"), inserted in middle position, provides a double reading as in English, "abundant resources" and "big butt". P1 also managed to resort to the same mechanism used in the original: lexical blending by means of graphic play on words.

Segment 2- a woman with franken-tits			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	A criatura Franken-seios	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P2	Yes.	Uma mulher com peitos de outro mundo	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	uma mulher com franken-tetas	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Os peitos de Frankenstein da mulher	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	uma mulher com frankentetas	<i>PUN</i>

In this case, I considered only P3's and P5's solutions as effective wordplays, for they chose a word for "breasts", *tetas*, which is closer to the phonological effect of the original, "tits". In both cases, the same mechanism for generating the wordplay was lexical blending, as in the original segment. It is worth mentioning that, although P2 rated segment 2 as "easy to translate", his/her solution was not up to the mark.

Segment 3- Bigger isn't breast			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	Quanto maior o seio, maior é sua queda	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	Maior não é melhor	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Tetamanho não é documento	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Quanto menos, melhor	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	Peitão não é tão bom	<i>RRD</i>

In segment (3), though all participants tried to use an analogue multi-word combination (a saying) to generate a wordplay as in the source text, only P1, P3, and P5 were successful in their endeavor. Their success relies on the fact that they could retrieve the exact component that created the source wordplay, "breast", by using possible correspondents in Portuguese, *seio* ("breast"), *teta* ("tit"), *peitão* ("big breast"). P1, for example, used an existing saying in the target language, *Quanto maior a altura, maior a queda* ("The higher you climb, the harder you fall"), and by substitution, created *Quanto maior o seio, maior a sua queda* ("The bigger the breast, the harder it falls"). P3 resorted to *Tamanho não é documento* ("Size does not matter"), and by lexical blending, created *Tetamanho (teta+tamanho) não é documento* ("Having big breasts does not matter"). P5 replaced the wordplay with a *RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE* (RRD), alliteration (*peitão* /pejt'ẽw/, *não* /n'ẽw/ *tão*/t'ẽw/ *bom* /b'ẽw/¹¹, that is, *Peitão não é tão bom* ("Big boob is not so good").

¹¹ Informal pronunciation of *bom* /b'õ/.

Segment 4- Face misfor-chin			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	De queixo caído	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	Queixando-se	<i>PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	De queixo caído	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	O queixocontecimento facial	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	Um contra-mento facial	<i>NON-PUN</i>

In this segment, P1 and P3 came up with the same solution by creating ambiguity through *De queixo caído*, which suggests two readings, a literal one, “My chin dropped” (“My chin is deformed”), and a figurative one, “My jaw dropped” (“I am surprised, astonished”). P2 used the verb *queixar-se* (“to complain”), phonologically close to *queixo* (“chin”), in the present participle, creating “*Queixando-se*” (“Chinning”/ “Complaining about the chin”). P4 tried a lexical blending *queixo* + *acontecimento* (“chin + happening”), and P5 produced a compound word using synonymy (*mento* = *queixo* = “chin”); however, according to my appreciation, both failed as wordplays.

Segment 5- Four leeches and a funeral			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Quatro sanguessugas e um funeral	<i>PUN</i>
P2	Yes.	Quatro sanguessugas e um funeral	<i>PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	Quatro sanguessugas e um jeans viajante	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P4	Yes.	Quatro sanguessugas e um funeral	<i>PUN</i>
P5	Yes.	Quatro sanguessugas e um funeral	<i>PUN</i>

As expected, this segment was obvious, and all participants deemed it as “easy to translate”. P1, P2, P4 and P5, by referring to the source movie title in Portuguese, *Quatro casamentos e um funeral* (“Four weddings and a funeral”), replaced *casamentos* (“weddings”) with *sanguessugas* (“leeches”), also creating a wordplay by substitution, and making justice to the context. P3, as it seems, tried to create a wordplay, referring to another movie (*Quatro amigas e um jeans viajante*, whose original title in English is “The sisterhood of the traveling pants”); however, it did not fit in the context.

Segment 6- It's called bimbofication			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	O nome disso é “bimboficação”	<i>PUN S.T. into PUN T.T.</i>
P2	No.	Trata-se de uma plastificação	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Quero virar uma Barbie	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Isso chama bimboficação	<i>PUN S.T. into PUN T.T.</i>
P5	No.	Isso que eu chamo de embonecar	<i>PUN</i>

As it can be observed, P1 and P4 used the mechanism Delabastita classifies as *PUN S.T. into PUN T.T.*, in which the translator reproduces the wordplay in the target text, without really translating it. This way, according to my appreciation, this type of solution does not constitute a wordplay since the result might be understood only by a very restricted audience. P2 tried to retrieve part of the wordplay (“-fiction”) through an existing word in Portuguese *plastificação* (“plastification”), but it resulted in no wordplay either. P3 managed to create a wordplay through ambiguity since “Barbie” can refer to a plastic doll and to “a conventionally attractive young woman typically perceived as lacking substance, character, or intelligence”¹²; this way, the idea of plastic surgery and of an unintelligent woman is conveyed. A similar solution was arrived at by P5, who generated a wordplay through ambiguity too (*Isso que eu chamo de embonecar* / “It’s called dolling up”), since the verb *embonecar* can mean “to doll up” or “to transform into a doll”.

Segment 7- Make titties great again			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Torne o seio americano grande novamente	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	Peitos acima de tudo, silicone acima de todos	<i>PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	Faça as peitcholas grandes novamente	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Torne os peitos bons novamente	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	Para o peito seguir aumentando	<i>PUN</i>

¹² Barbie. (2020): *Merriam-Webster.com.dictionary*. Retrieved: November 16, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/barbie>>

The wordplay in segment 7, based on Donald Trump's presidential campaign slogan ("Make America great again"), prompted two clever and creative solutions. P2 and P5 also transformed presidential campaign slogans: Jair Bolsonaro's *Brasil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos* ("Brazil above everything, God above all") into *Peitos acima de tudo, silicone acima de todos* ("Breasts above everything, silicone above all"), and Dilma Rousseff's *Para o Brasil seguir mudando* ("For Brazil to keep on changing") into *Para o peito seguir aumentando* ("For the breast to keep on augmenting"); respectively. P1's solution was considered a wordplay since it is clearly based on the source slogan, *Torne o seio americano grande novamente* ("Make American titties great again"), though the wordplay in English makes no reference to the USA. P3 came up with a wordplay by graphically transforming *peitos* ("breasts") into *peitcholas* ("titties"), a much more colloquial word for *peitolas* ("tits"), which replaced "America" in the slogan. P4's solution was considered *NON-PUN* in that the replacement of "great" for "good" (*bons*) does not evoke the original slogan.

Segment 8 - Mother knows breast			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	A "mama" sabe tudo	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	Mães sempre sabem mais	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Respeitos à mãe	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Sua mãe sabe mais	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	A mama sempre tem razão	<i>PUN</i>

P2's and P4's solutions, to some extent, translated the wordplay considering the source phraseologism ("Mother knows best") into *Mães sempre sabem mais* ("Mothers always know best"), and *Sua mãe sabe mais* ("Your mother knows best"); respectively, which resulted in no wordplay in Portuguese since they make no reference to "breasts". Differently, P1 and P5, using the same linguistic mechanism, homophony, since *mama* can mean "mother" and "breast" in Portuguese, created wordplays transforming two existing sayings *As mães sabem de tudo* ("Mothers know best"), and *O cliente sempre tem razão* ("The customer is always right") into *A "mama" sabe tudo* ("Mamma knows best"), and "The mamma is always right". P3 created a lexical blending by coalescing *respeito* ("respect") and *peitos* ("breasts"), *ResPEITOS à mãe*, something like "ResPECTUS to the mother"

(“respect” + “pectus”)¹³, but could have placed graphic emphasis on *peitos*, as I have done.

Segment 9- Nothing butt trouble			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Problemas aBUNDAntes	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	∅	∅
P3	No.	Nada com nádegas	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P4	No.	Abundância de problemas	<i>PUN</i>
P5	No.	Mas que nádega	<i>NON-PUN</i>

Segment 9 contains a wordplay that prompted solutions like those produced in segment 1. For example, P1 used the adjective *abundante* (“abundant”), and by resorting to lexical blending through graphic play on words, created *Problemas aBUNDAntes* (“Abundant problems”), and P4 used the noun *abundância* (“abundance”), generating *Abundância de problemas* (“Abundance of problems”), again, in both cases, the word *bunda* (“butt”), inserted in middle position, provides a double reading as in English, “butt” (derriere) and “but” (conjunction). P3 came up with the strategy *PUN* into RELATED *RHETORICAL DEVICE*, using alliteration, but created no wordplay since the idea of problem was eliminated. P5 justified in the questionnaire that he/she tried to allude to the Brazilian song *Mas que nada* (“Nothing but”); however, the solution does not refer to a problematic situation.

Segment 10- Say Yes to the breasts			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	O seio ideal	<i>PUN</i>
P2	Yes.	Diga sim aos peitos	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Peitões à obra	<i>PUN</i>
P4	Yes.	O peito ideal	<i>PUN</i>
P5	No.	Diga sim aos Peitinhos	<i>NON-PUN</i>

¹³ Pectus. (2020): *Merriam-Webster.com.dictionary*. Retrieved: November 16, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pectus>>

In cases like in segment 10, where a wordplay is based on a television show (“Say yes to the dress”), the translator faces two challenges: to recognize the referent, and to find how it is entitled in his/her country. In Brazil, the show is broadcast as *O vestido ideal* (“The ideal dress”), so P1 and P4 captured the wordplay and translated accordingly *O seio/peito ideal* (“The ideal breast”). P2 and P5 rendered the wordplay literally, which does not refer to the show title as played in Brazil. P3 produced a very humorous wordplay by referring to another television series, the Canadian “Property Brothers”, broadcast in Brazil as *Irmãos à obra* (“Brothers at work”), which resulted in *Peitões à obra* (“Big titties at work”).

Segment 11 - Short-changed at the nipple bank			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	No.	Uma mastectomia barata pode sair cara	<i>PUN</i>
P2	No.	∅	∅
P3	Yes.	Re-peito é bom e eu gosto	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	Uma pequena transferência no Banco dos Peitos	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P5	No.	Peitinho ou Peitão, Eis a Questão!	<i>PUN</i>

By far, segment 11 was one of the most difficult ones to translate, as four of the participants attested. Besides, based on P4’s suggestions, my impression is that “short-changed” was misunderstood as “short of cash”, *Uma pequena transferência no Banco de Peitos* (“A small amount transferred into the nipple bank”). P1 produced a solution that was based on the context rather than on the source wordplay proper, since he/she understood that, after two mastectomies, the patient needed to reconstruct her breasts. He/she then came up with *Uma mastectomia barata pode sair cara* (“A mastectomy: you get what you pay for it”), based on the popular saying *O barato sai caro* (“You get what you pay for”). P3 was very creative by referring to a popular saying *Respeito é bom e eu quero* (“Respect is welcome and I want it”), and produced a wordplay through lexical blending, coalescing *respeito* (“respect”) and *peito* (“breast”), *re-peito*, something like “re-pectus”, from “respect + pectus”.

Segment 12- Silicone Valley			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Vale do Silicone	<i>PUN</i>
P2	Yes.	Vale do Silicone	<i>PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	Vale do Silicone	<i>PUN</i>
P4	Yes.	Vale do Silicone	<i>PUN</i>
P5	No.	Vale do Silicone	<i>PUN</i>

Differently from the previous segment, this was one of the easiest wordplays to translate, as the solutions produced by all participants could attest. Although *silício* and *silicone* are not paronyms, as their correspondents in English (“silicon”/ “silicone”), the substitution in Portuguese constitutes a wordplay.

Segment 13- The serial filler			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Enchimentos em série	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P2	No.	Enchimento por acidente	<i>NON-PUN</i>
P3	No.	Preenchimento letal	<i>PUN</i>
P4	No.	O preenchimento assassino	<i>PUN</i>
P5	Yes.	O preenchedor em série	<i>PUN</i>

Like segment 11, this was a difficult one to translate. As the source phraseologism “serial killer” is commonly used as a loanword in Portuguese, translating the wordplay “serial filler” becomes even more challenging. First of all, as far as cosmetics is concerned, the equivalent word for “to fill” in Portuguese is *preencher*, so P1’s and P2’s solutions had to be discarded, since they used words derived from a different verb *encher*, resulting in *enchimento*. According to my interpretation, P3 and P4 created wordplays in Portuguese by referring to movie titles through substitution: *Preenchimento letal* (“Lethal filling”), based on *Virus letal* (“The viral factor”), and *O preenchimento assassino* (“The killing filler”), based on *Brinquedo assassino* (“Child’s play”). P5 opted for *O preenchedor em série*, a literal rendering, which according to him/her refers to *O assassino em série*, rendered literally, also used in Portuguese.

Segment 14- To implant or not to implant			
Participants	Easy to translate?	Translations	Resulted in
P1	Yes.	Implantar ou não implantar, eis a questão	<i>PUN</i>
P2	Yes.	Novos implantes ou não? Eis a questão	<i>PUN</i>
P3	Yes.	Implantar ou não implantar	<i>PUN</i>
P4	Yes.	Fazer ou não fazer o implante	<i>PUN</i>
P5	Yes.	Implantar ou não implantar	<i>PUN</i>

Like segment 12, this was an easy wordplay to translate. All participants managed to use structures that resembled the well-known quotation from *Hamlet* by Shakespeare “To be or not to be”. To make the wordplay in Portuguese more evident, P1 and P2 added part of the quote not included in source wordplay (“That is the question”/ *Eis a questão*). In my opinion, translations that used infinitives (P1, P3, P4 and P5) rather than other structures produced more effective wordplays.

Considering all the solutions in Portuguese (70 wordplays = 14 occurrences x 5 participants), 64 % (45) of the translations resulted in *PUN*. First impressions might imply that some participants did not notice the wordplays in the segments, and then did not translate them as such. However, according to the participants’ comments from the questionnaires, they rated most of the occurrences (61 %) as difficult to translate exactly because the segments contained wordplays.

7. Final remarks

The results have shown that, although participants’ performance was reasonably satisfactory and consistent in several segments, only 64 % of their solutions resulted into wordplays. This is likely to be connected with the fact that translating wordplays is in fact a difficult and challenging task, as their replies, edited below, confirm: “it is difficult to translate because it involves different aspects of languages and cultures, requiring not only linguistic knowledge, but also creativity and awareness of the type of audience the translation is intended for”. However, curiously, only 61% of all segments were deemed as hard to translate.

Their opinion also signalled that not all wordplays analyzed are creative (88 %), nor humorous (57 %). All participants mentioned that this kind of activity is an “interesting”, “excellent” exercise to develop creativity,

and to resolve dilemmas, they will possibly face in future real-life translation assignments.

Participants also mentioned that, while they were translating the wordplays, they remembered theoretical aspects of translation, such as “adaptation” “foreignization/domestication”, and “functional translation”, and theoreticians, such as Delabastita, and Tagnin, for instance. Even considering that participants were deeply involved in the activity, individual performance was not uniform. The results show that P3, P1, and P5, with 12, 11, and 11 successful solutions; respectively, did better than, P4, and P2, with 7 and 5 successful solutions; respectively. The results suggest, then, that it will not suffice for translators just to *recognize* a wordplay, they will have to *translate* it as such.

In sum, an activity like the one I proposed to novice translators raises the possibility of using it with translation students, since it can potentialize the metalinguistic function of wordplays. If wordplays, in general terms, encourage or demand metalinguistic reflection from the addressee, the translator, as a special addressee, must have great linguistic knowledge to be able to perceive a wordplay and to translate it into a wordplay. Consequently, this type of activity can provide fruitful insights not only from the linguistic, but also from the theoretical, pragmatic, and cultural points of view.

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Appendix 1 - Questionnaire circulated to participants

I am investigating the occurrence of linguistic combinations extracted from the American reality television series *Botched*, which follows doctors Terry Dubrow and Paul Nassif as they remedy extreme plastic surgeries gone wrong.

You are being requested to analyze the segments below. Then, circle the answers corresponding to your reaction to each of them, and justify. Later, please suggest a translation into Brazilian Portuguese. Some of the segments refer to the titles of the episodes. Feel free to visit <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3781836/episodes> to obtain more information about the episodes. If you happen to watch any of the episodes in their dubbed version, please inform how the segment(s) has/have been translated into Portuguese.

The results of this enquiry will be treated anonymously, but the following information is needed:

Your age: Your sex: M/F

Thank you for your contribution.

	Segment	Creative?	Humorous?	Easy to translate?	Why?	Your trans.
1.	a Supa Woman shows off her ass-ets	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
2.	a woman with franken-tits	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
3.	Bigger Isn't Breast	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
4.	Face Misfor-Chin	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
5.	Four Leeches and a Funeral	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
6.	It's Called Bimbofication	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
7.	Make Titties Great Again	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
8.	Mother Knows Breast	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
9.	Nothing Butt Trouble	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
10.	Say Yes to the Breasts	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
11.	Short-Changed at the Nipple Bank	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
12.	Silicone Valley	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
13.	The Serial Filler	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		
14.	To Implant or Not to Implant	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.	Yes/ No.		

After you translated (or tried to translate) the excerpts, did you find the activity challenging? Yes/No. Why?

In general terms, while translating, did you think of any translation theory?
Yes/No. Justify your answer.

How can an activity like this help translation students?

Appendix 2 – The context of wordplays sent to respondents along with questionnaire.

- (1) A woman shows off huge butts after a few surgeries.
- (2) A woman with frightening breasts after unsuccessful surgeries.
- (3) A patient wishes to get a breast reduction.
- (4) A chin surgery that went wrong.
- (5) A man says farewell to his nose with a funeral after fixing it with the extra help of leeches.
- (6) A woman wants to look like a “blowdoll”, or a bimbo.
- (7) A patient hopes to regain her confidence with new breasts.
- (8) A young woman undergone double mastectomy to beat cancer after her mother had died of the disease.
- (9) A young woman, whose multiple silicone removal surgeries have left her with a distorted derriere.
- (10) A former actress who fought a flesh-eating disease wants to reconstruct her breasts.
- (11) A woman seeks breast reconstruction after double mastectomy.
- (12) Silicone began to leak and migrate throughout the body of a transgender.
- (13) A patient hopes to erase the physical reminders from a fatal car accident that gave her a lip filler.
- (14) A woman with jarring pain from her previous breast implants is not sure if she wants new ones.