

Dubbing and Journalistic Translation: Misinforming the Public

*Roberto A. Valdeón García
Univ. de Oviedo*

The mass media play a fundamental role in today's world, particularly in the western hemisphere. It would be hardly imaginable to deprive this brave new world of the presence of the press, television, radio and cinema. And translators serve as a bridge between the information and the audience, as Martin & Maleve point out: "Su papel de intermediarios es, hoy en día, indiscutible e indiscutido. El intérprete y el traductor se dirigen a su auditorio esencialmente en su lengua materna y la confianza que en ellos deposita ese auditorio exige de estos especialistas sentido de la responsabilidad" (Martin & Maleve 1983, p. 23). Translation is, thus, the basis of either information or misinformation, since the majority of news, films, television series or documentaries that are shown in the West are produced in English-speaking countries, notably the US and Britain, or else come through international agencies, whose main language is English. Therefore national newspapers, magazines, television channels, radio programmes and film theatres depend on translation into the mother tongue of the recipients, if we take apart the notorious case of our neighbouring Portugal, which, however, provides its audiences with Portuguese subtitles. In consequence, we could speak of two main types of translating activities in the media: the obvious one, that is, the dubbing of films, series and documentaries, and the less obvious one: translation of news which originate in English-speaking countries or which are received through international news agencies, and which might seem to have been

originally written in Spanish. In this paper we will be examining both problems through the Spanish versions provided by translators and how some of these versions clearly show a lack of interest, weak command of one of the two languages or even a certain degree of negligence.

To write this paper we have taken examples from radio, television and cinema, although we will also make some references to the case of the press. As regards the audiovisual media, our examples come from various sources, such as written Spanish versions of the words of the speaker, as they speak in their own language. In other cases, we are dealing with simultaneous translation, that is, the process called interpreting. In the remaining cases, examples are extracted from Spanish dubbing of films, series or documentaries. The English word, expression or structure is inferred thanks to the mistake or peculiarity the Spanish literal translation gives way to.

1

Our first group of examples has been taken from newspapers. Journalists play a key-role in modern societies as they contribute to the spreading of information, but they also exercise a great influence on the audience, readers and listeners alike, due to the very language that they use. The reactions they stir in the public range from an absolute rejection of the terms used by journalists to a sympathetic adoption of them, in the worst cases. Today's press, for example, has an excessive tendency to use anglicisms, as the average reader can easily discover at first sight, thanks to the use of warning italics to announce the appearance of an English loan. Some journalists, and specially in certain fields such as the economy or the media, seem unable to provide the reader with Spanish equivalents of English expressions, such as *joint ventures* or *time sharing*. An instance of this was taken from *El Mundo* newspaper (16 April 1994) reporting on television viewing figures: "El programa de Arozamena cuanta con un *share* medio de un 30%", where *share* could have been easily rendered as "cuota de pantalla." On some occasions the English word is followed by the Spanish translation, but the latter comes in brackets, as if to help the illiterate unfamiliar with the inevitable English terms. An example of this comes from *El País*, 16 April 1994. Their economy correspondent writes "La Bolsa de Londres multa con 60 millones a dos ex *brokers* (intermediarios financieros) de KIO." Many of

these are bound to disappear in due time, as Harris points out: "As is well known, the life expectancy of a loan word is largely unpredictable: the disappearance of a particular loanword is largely explicable by reference to the real world" (Harris 1992, p. 263), but until the term is finally replaced by a Spanish version or simply disappears, journalists resort to using them extensively, showing, at least, linguistic laziness.

However aggravating this tendency might be, more worrying is the case of literal translations into Spanish. Correspondents of the various radio and television channels are not particularly careful in the writing of the news reports, which has less grounds for justification than live reports, since we are dealing with reports recorded several hours before being broadcast and their authors have had enough time for preparation and checking. The most frequent types of errors could be divided into three different categories. In the first category, we will include those English words that have been somewhat adapted to Spanish. Both the English and the Spanish word are similar, because they come from the same source, usually Latin. But some journalists do not realize that translating is a process which goes beyond the limits of adding or subtracting certain suffixes. Perhaps the most extended case in recent months is the English verb *influence*, which has become *influenciar* in Spanish, instead of *influir*. Although both verbs have entries in the Spanish Royal Academy's *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, its use was very limited until its advent thanks to excessive journalist fondness of it. An example comes from *El País* newspaper, where journalist Maruja Torres describes 1993's Academy Awards ceremony from Hollywood thus: "Contra toda previsión resultó que Catherine Deneuve se había dejado influenciar por el peluquero..." (31 April 1993). However, this verb was not extensively used in Spanish and has no entries in other most common dictionaries used by the public.

Another example is the English noun *controversy*. The word is usually translated as *controversia* in Spanish (e.g. "*JFK es objeto de controversia en los Estados Unidos...*" according to a Spanish Television news report, TVE). This word could be defined as "public argument or discussion, often rather angry, about something many people disagree with"¹. That is to

1 Two dictionaries are quoted in this article, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Oxford: O. U. P., 1992) for the English terms and *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (Madrid: RAE, 1989) for the Spanish words.

say, this would be the equivalent of the Spanish word that had been used until recently: *polémica*. However, the word *controversia* is much closer to the English original and some journalists resort to the easiest path, even though we might argue that the use of *controversia* is not inherently wrong, it is true that its use was very limited until heard and read in journalistic reports. But if the noun *controversia* could be accepted, more doubts are cast upon the propriety of the adjective derived from that noun, which would clearly show carelessness. We are referring to the English adjective *controversial*. The Spanish Academy has an entry for the same word in its Dictionary and with a similar meaning to the English. Journalists are, on the contrary, inclined to use the word *controvertido* instead of *controversial*, since an adjective ending in -ido sounds more Spanish than *controversial*. Conversely the adjective *controvertido* does not correspond to the English term *controversial*, which is defined as "likely to cause controversy," while the former is derived from the verb *controvertir*, defined in the Spanish Academy's Dictionary as "discutir extensa y detenidamente sobre una materia", that is, *controvertido* could be translated into English as *widely discussed*, not as *controversial*. The use of the term *polémico*, the usual word until recently, would solve the problem.

Let us quote some other examples that might help us define this first category: the Spanish Television's correspondent in New York described former President Bush's visit to Europe as "conciliatoria", with an entry in the Academy's Dictionary, but not in other common use dictionaries, from the English word *conciliatory*, instead of "conciliadora," the normal word in Spanish. Another correspondent of the same television channel in New York spoke of the "tabloides de supermercado", to refer to what might be called "prensa amarilla/rosa" in Spanish, depending on the context. The journalist translates the English word *tabloid* as *tabloide*. This term also has an entry in the Spanish Academy's Dictionary, but not in most dictionaries. The Academy points out that this word is used in South American Spanish. Since the news was addressed to a European audience, its use was unnecessary and rather confusing. And, we must mention an English loan which journalists have introduced in Spanish to refer to their own profession: *conferencia de prensa* instead of the Spanish *rueda de prensa*. In English, of course, the expression is *press conference*.

And finally, we will mention one report, recently published in *El Mundo* newspaper, in which the reporter, apparently writing from Beijing, made three mistakes of this type in one single piece of work. He writes: "Este

invierno la nieve ha llegado pronto a las calles de Pekín, pero parece que no va a ser capaz de enfriar la economía; según los últimos reportajes revelados por la Oficina Estatal de Estadística...", he goes on to say "La reforma económica abandonó a tiempo la vieja teoría soviética de subordinar el crecimiento de la industria liviana a la pesada..." and to cap it all, ends "ahora no sólo el Gobierno ha autorizado el acceso para los nacionales..." (December 1993). The three errors included in this passage are obviously: "reportajes, industria liviana" and "nacionales." The English word *report* can be either a written or spoken account of an event or an official document prepared by a committee. The English "latest report" should have been "último informe", that is, the latter. He also uses "industria liviana", which translates "light industry" as opposed to "heavy industry." The Spanish Academy's Dictionary includes "industria pesada", and there is no equivalent for "light industry." At any rate, we are inclined to think that "industria ligera" would have been less lyrical a Spanish version and more down-to-earth. The third mistake is a literal rendering of the English noun *nationals*, that is, the citizens of a given country as opposed to the foreigners. However tempting, the term is not used in Spanish.

In the second category we include those phrases or expressions which in a literal translation can become a real nuisance for the reader or listener, since they might hamper understanding. The public might understand them or not, but the fact is that these sentences clearly show that some journalists ignore the rules of the target language, and they do not seem to realise that they should translate news items, not isolated words. Antena 3 Radio's correspondent in London is a rich source for this type of mistakes and we have selected one which struck us as particularly dubious: "al acusado se le dio un término de tres años" instead of the more Spanish version: "se le condenó a tres años de prisión". She was quite obviously translating "he was given a three year term."

The third category that we have identified verges on the offensive or, at least, bad taste, since some journalists expect the public to have a knowledge of the language and culture where these reporters are based. A clear example of this group is provided by SER Radio's correspondent in the British capital. In a recent report on the current state of the British economy, he spoke of the "ministro de finanzas en la sombra", to the listeners' astonishment, who wondered why the poor finance minister was in the shadow... or was it in the shade? A quick poll carried out among the recipients of the news item, including some with a good knowledge of

Shakespeare's language, revealed that none of them grasped the meaning of the sentence and, least of all, that this expression translates "the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer", which is related to the traditional existence in British politics of a so-called "Shadow Cabinet." That is to say, it denotes leading members of the Opposition party who would be Cabinet ministers if their party became the government and who act as spokesperson on matters for which they would then be responsible. The journalist, acting as a translator as well, has obviated Holmes' point: "Translation (...) is obviously a question not of translating a series of sentences but of translating a text which happens to consist of sentences among other things" (Holmes 1988, p. 94).

Another example which speaks for itself (and which might be included in what Emilio Lorenzo describes as "lo nocivo", (Lorenzo 1992, p. 71) comes from the well-known journalist and television presenter Jesús Hermida, when he mentioned an actor who had the leading role in a recently released film and said "el filme, estrellado, si puede decirse así...". However, if we look up the entry for *estrellar* in the Spanish Academy's Dictionary, the verb can be used in the following cases: "1. Sembrar o llenar de estrellas. 2. Arrojar con violencia una cosa contra otra. 3. Dicho de los huevos, freírlos. 4. Quedar malparado o matarse por efecto de un choque. 5. Fracasarse en una pretensión por chocar contra un obstáculo insuperable." Therefore this word cannot be used in Hermida's sense as "being the leading actor in a film." Hermida, who sometimes takes up a self-assumed role in speaking correct Spanish, has been clearly influenced by his long stay in New York as a television correspondent and uses a loan from English, *starred by*, which in English does mean "be a star, that is, a famous singer, performer, etc in a play, film, etc."

We might conclude this first division by asserting that, of the three categories aforementioned, the third one can be easily labelled dangerous in the sense that some journalists do not appear as "a bridge" between the information and the audience, but as the real protagonists of the news item itself, or even worse they make the news. The main goal of the media in this case is not achieved and, therefore, the recipients may feel that their confidence has been betrayed. The whole process can lead to the twisting of the message implied, confusion or mere extravagance.

The second section of our paper deals with the audiovisual media, television and cinema, that is, dubbing, interpreting and subtitles. Of all the common errors to be mentioned in this second section, we have only a few of the original contexts in which they are produced. It is the mistakes in the Spanish version that help us guess what expression was used in English. The translators of the Spanish versions for the dubbing of films, series and documentaries are to be held responsible for these errors, since they have time to translate the texts and dialogues carefully or, at least, not to neglect them. Nevertheless, the public is forced to hear expressions such as "vino rojo, que era la bebida de los pobres" in the documentary series *El nacimiento de Europa*, which translates "red wine", easily understood, but who speaks of "vino rojo" in Spanish? Or we may hear sentences like "ha sido sobredrogado" in an American series like *Lou Grant*, which is completed with a similar "ha sido medicinado" later on in the same episode.

To analyse the errors made in the section of the audiovisual media, we have divided them into three groups as well. In the first category we deal with a series of words or expressions which are specific to a certain field, and which should be translated into their correct Spanish version, since otherwise there is a risk of confusing the audience, although the public might be able to identify some of these errors. Such is the case of "lluvia de ácido", used in the series *Lou Grant* to refer to "lluvia ácida." The expression is literally translated from the English "acid rain" and the error might be due to the fact that, when the series was dubbed, that is in the early 1980's, its use had not been widely extended in Spain, except perhaps for the environmentally-concerned, and the translator chose the term which sounded more likely to be heard in Spanish. However, there are no grounds to justify the use of another expression heard in the same series: "tengo la presión muy alta", instead of *tensión*, because it translates English "high pressure". To make sure the use of the expression was inadequate, although not the expression itself, we sought the help of members of the medical profession. They confirmed that the usual term is *tensión*, not *presión*. The latter can sometimes be used among them, but not when dealing with the general public. Leaving apart the medical scene, since the sentence is used outside it in the series, we made another experiment and that was to say the sentence on several occasions to

check people's reactions. The replies that we had in all cases were of the type "What do you mean?" or "What's that?" Therefore, once again, we reach the conclusion that the translator must always have the ability to distinguish between the notions of correctness and use, because as Rabassa points out "the process of translation is one of choice and the skill of the translator lies on the use of instinct or, better, what Ortega calls *vital reason*" (Rabassa 1989, p. 7).

Nevertheless, on many occasions the word is neither used nor correct. This is particularly true in the case of the rendering of animal and plant names into Spanish in documentary series. In the documentary entitled *El puma: el fantasma de las rocosas* in Spanish, the narrator speaks repeatedly about "el león de las montañas", literal translation of American English "mountain lion," which is also the original title of the programme. The translator does not seem to realize that this is not a poetic name but the usual name given by Americans to this animal, whose name in Spanish is the one used for the title, puma. There are two other words in English to call this animal: *puma*, in British English, and *cougar* in American English. The translation might mention that it is also called "mountain lion" in America, but only as an anecdote, instead of annoyingly repeating the name throughout the programme, when there is only one name in Spanish for the three English words: *puma*.

A similar case is that of the bird *cormorán*. The name of the bird comes from French *cormoran*, and this is derived from Old French *corp maranc*, that is "cuervo marino" and this is used by some translators of French documentaries. The Spanish word is obviously a French loan, but it is confusing to use the primitive French words in modern Spanish when the accepted word is *cormorán*.

Another outstanding example in this series of blunders is the translation of the animal called *cheetah* in English, in that translators show a mixture of negligence and facetiousness. This African feline, the fastest mammal on Earth, is translated into Spanish as *guepardo*. The English name sounds familiar, not only to animal lovers but also to picture-goers, since *Cheetah* was the name of the chimpanzee that accompanied Tarzan in innumerable jungle adventures. For Spanish speakers that is the only connection between the name and an animal. All the same, translators use the original English word much too often, even though the average television viewer would not be able to identify the word with the animal, in order to correct the error. Thus the programme, in its Spanish version, is

not achieving its educational goal, quite the contrary, it is spreading an erroneous name for an animal that needs no new names. In some other cases we have heard that *cheetah* was rendered as "leopardo cazador," a worse option since the word *leopardo* already refers to a different feline and the difference that the adjective seems to imply in the second case is clearly inexistent. Even the *Collins Dictionary* mistakenly includes these two terms as the Spanish versions of *leopard* and *cheetah* respectively.

On some occasions the viewer realizes that the narrator is making a mistake because the animal that appears on the screen and the name applied to it do not match. This was the case of the series *The Living Planet*, in which the narrator was describing the habits of a bird called *gaviota* while the public realized that what they are viewing was not any of the several species of *gulls* existing in English or *gaviotas* in Spanish. The bird that could be seen on the screen is called *tern* in English and *golondrina de mar* in Spanish.

It might be worth while mentioning another common error, before we conclude the chapter of animal names. Due to historic reasons which will be dealt with below, English uses the word *buffalo* where we would not in Spanish. The majority of translators of films, series and documentaries confuse the terms *búfalo* and *bisonte*. The former is an African mammal whose scientific name is *Syncerus cafer*, while the latter is an American animal, *Bison bison*. In English, these words are used as synonyms, due to the fact that the first European emigrants to America discovered these animals and they might have looked the same to them as others that lived in Africa and Asia called *buffaloes*. This is the reason why all American programmes use the word *buffalo*, which should be rendered as *bisonte* in Spanish. Most translators, unaware of this historic error and of the subtle difference between the two languages, also use the English name, which is Spanish, but for a different animal.

As regards the names of plants and fruits, translators have difficulties in matching names when it comes to translating the "-nuts" and "-berries" series from English. These fruits have distinct names in our language. However, the English language uses very similar names such as "chestnuts, peanuts or walnuts" in the first case and "strawberries or blackberries" in the second. We might not expect translators to recognize exotic fruits and plants, unless they have specialized in them, but they might be expected to be familiar with names so widely used. An example of an error in translating these names occurs in the film *The Whales in August* (1987)

directed by Lindsay Anderson. One of the protagonists is picking, as the public can see, blueberries, that is *arándanos*. Still, she keeps using the word *moras* throughout the film. The reason why the translator has mistaken both -berries may be connected either with the fact that the English names are so similar: blackberries and blueberries or to the fact that the translator has not even bothered to check a possible error.

A last example to be mentioned in this category, this time belonging to a different field, was heard in a recent documentary series called *Millenium*. The narrator was speaking about Law and, at one point, referred to "Ley Constitucional" instead of "Derecho Constitucional." The mistake stems from the English original "Constitutional Law."

The examples in our next category were taken from the dubbing of films and drama series. The mistakes listed in this second group could have easily been avoided since they do not belong to any specific field. They are used in everyday speech and, of course, they do not correspond literally to the Spanish versions. We have divided this category into two. The first includes those expressions that can be understood even though they would not be uttered by Spanish speakers while the second group consists of those expressions and phrases difficult to be comprehended by Spanish speakers. Let us mention a few instances of the first type. In the film *Nevada Express* (1976), the protagonist says at one point that something "es duro de creer" instead of "es difícil de creer", since it translates "it's hard to believe." In Stanley Kubrick's *Killer's Kiss*, *El beso del asesino* (1955) in Spanish, we hear one of the characters say: "Entonces fui y cogí el trabajo", where the Spanish verb *coger* is used in a peculiar context. We may infer that the translator has obviously used the same verb as in English, that is *take*, although this verb is followed by *up*, that is "I took up the job." It could have been rendered as "acepté el trabajo." In the 1983 telefilm *Regalo de amor*, *The Gift of Love: A Christmas Present* in English, the leading character keeps referring to "la víspera de Navidad." Thus she speaks of "la compras de la víspera de Navidad" or "la cena de la víspera de Navidad." The Spanish viewer with no knowledge of English may wonder why the character speaks of "la víspera de Navidad" instead of *Nochebuena*. There are no distinctive features of the American and Spanish cultures, as far as this religious celebration is concerned, since both are Christian, to avoid using the word *Nochebuena* for "Christmas Eve", even though it literally means, quite accurately, "víspera de Navidad."

All these versions of English phrases or sentences, so alien to the Spanish language, are not unique to translators of English films. Films and programmes of other nationalities, using other languages, have also suffered similar processes. This is the case of Philippe de Broca's film *El hombre de Río* (*L'homme de Río*), in which we can easily find out a good number of French expressions used in Spanish. We will mention a couple here: when the protagonist says "Me temo que voy a tener que ponerle en la puerta" or "Es un hombre con un aire extraño," we realize that he actually uses "mettre à la porte" and "à l'air étrange", which mean *renvoyer* and *paraître* respectively, according to the entries in the *Larousse* dictionary, that is, "echar a alguien" and "tener un aspecto" or "una pinta."

As regards the second group, we will commence with one word which seems to be particularly tricky: the verb *intoxicate* and its related-noun *intoxication*. The verb is defined as "cause somebody to lose self-control as a result of the effects of a drug, a gas (or especially alcoholic) drink" or "excite somebody greatly beyond self-control." The Spanish Academy's *Dictionary* describes the Spanish equivalent term *intoxicar* as follows: "infiacion con tóxico, envenenar." Consequently these two words, although they have the same origin, do not convey the same meaning. Thus, to say in English that a person is *intoxicated*, in its most extended use, is a more formal manner of saying that he is *drunk*. Conversely, the use of those two words in Spanish, *intoxicar* and *intoxicación* is linked to food consumption in bad conditions. Therefore, if the public hears "¡Nuestro hijo intoxicado!", they will interpret that sentence as "my son is suffering from food-poisoning" until the situation clarifies the real meaning of it. This occurred in Ernst Lubitsch's film *Heaven Can Wait*, *El diablo dijo no* (1943), where a mother uttered that exclamation while she really meant *drunk*. Since she belonged to an upper-class family, the word to be used in this context should have been *ebrio*, not *borracho*, and least of all, *intoxicado* as she did. Thus, both the meaning and the register would have been conveyed. The same problem occurred in the recent television production *LA Law*, where the verb was used erroneously once again, although in this case with the second meaning of the English term, "excite somebody": "Es normal que los hombres se intoxiquen con mujeres como ésta."

This word is a highly productive one as far as error-making is concerned. The other side of the coin takes place when the Spanish verb is not used, although the context would require it. However, the translator does not resort to this word because English does not either. That is, situations

where *poisoning* is used in English, and which might be rendered as *envenamiento*, but which we normally translate as *intoxicación*. This type of mistake could be heard in the Canadian documentary series *The Last Frontier*, where the Spanish narrator speaks of "envenenamiento de pescado" instead of *intoxicación*.

Another false friend commonly used by Spanish translators was heard in *The Gallant Hours* (*El valor de un hombre*), a war film directed by Robert Montgomery in 1960, the Spanish version says that a certain document "sigue siendo clasificado." The viewer infers that the document has been arranged in some kind of order. The word *clasificado* is again a literal translation of *classified*, but the English term has two meanings: either arrange systematically in classes or groups or "declare documents, information, etc. to be officially secret and available only to certain people" as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary*, and other dictionaries even include *top-secret* as a synonym. The word is wrong because the translator used a word and was not conscious that the idea behind the word did not correspond to the original dialogue. The process of translation is, obviously, one of translating the concepts behind the word in a given context, and not of translating isolated words, as Ulrich points out.

The wrong choice is also the feature of our next examples, both taken from the drama series *Lou Grant*, whose translators made frequent mistakes in the early 1980's. In the sentence "No hay bastante evidencia para declararlo culpable," we encounter a common mistake widely extended among the journalistic profession and an old friend in the dubbing of English-speaking films: the word *evidencia*. The English word, from which translators and journalists alike, take it is *evidence*. This can be used with the meaning "sign, trace or indication" in general English or "information that proves something", especially used in law. Conversely, in Spanish we use two different words: *evidencia* for the former and *pruebas* for the latter, as clearly shows the Spanish Academy's *Dictionary*. Another interesting example from the same series was the use of *ataque terrorista*, easily understood, although the translator seems to have forgotten, rather surprisingly, that *terrorist attack* becomes *atentado terrorista* or simply *atentado*.

Another significant example from the same series is the word *machismo*. It is significant in the sense that this is one of the few recent Spanish loans used in English. The word is more extensively used in American English, where it was originally taken from American Spanish. In

the Spanish Academy's Dictionary it is defined as "actitud de prepotencia de los varones con respecto a las mujeres". It is usually associated with Latin societies, in which men reputedly feel superior to women who must carry out a limited number of tasks. Therefore, Spanish *machismo* would be the equivalent to English *male chauvinism*: "prejudiced attitude of certain men who believe that they are superior to women." On the other side *machismo* in English is defined as "exaggerated or aggressive pride in being male." The difference is obvious, however close they might sound to some. In the series one of the characters uses the word *machismo* to describe a situation which has just taken place: a young man, almost an adolescent, returns from a revenge attack on a rival gang that had previously attacked his home. He is the only man of the house, so he feels obliged to seek revenge, despite being so young. His grandmother uses the above mentioned word, which corresponds to the English meaning, but not to the Spanish one. The translator has followed the easiest path, however wrong that might be.

Together with those false friends frequently used by translators, we may also find a series of phrases or sentences that may translate their English words literally, but which do not convey any meaning to the Spanish audience or, at least, not the meaning intended by the screenwriters. More examples come from the same television series. A young boy makes the following comment: "En la escuela no lo hago bien." The sentence does not seem to offer any special difficulty. However, the context does not provide any further comments and the viewer wonders "what does he not do well?" Of course, the English sentence did not require further explanations: "I don't do well at school" means that his results or marks are not particularly good, that is to say, what a Spanish boy would say with the words "no me va bien." Other examples of this kind can be traced in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Spellbound*, *Recuerda* in Spanish. The audience must hear laughable sentences such as "estoy prevenida contra él" or "se removió tu complejo de culpabilidad." Or Delmer Daves' melodrama *Parrish* with sentences like "Eso no es muy lisonjero para nosotros," on which I shall make no further comments.

More examples come from film dubbing and Spanish subtitles alike. For instance, in Richard Thorpe's western *The Last Challenge*, Glenn Ford utters the sentence "Éramos jóvenes llenos de nosotros mismos," as in English "full of ourselves", which means "selfish and conceited," but with no meaning in Spanish, thus missing the point of the original dialogue. On

some other occasions, the unconscious of the translator seems to be doing the job. This is the case of a reply made by the leading member of the band *The Bangles*, in an interview for the Spanish Television programme *Profile*, where she says that "our recordings are a free-for-all," that is, "a noisy fight or argument in which anyone present may join;" the Spanish subtitle turns a free-for-all into "un desmadre," a colloquial term which is defined as "exceso desmesurado en palabras o acciones."

In other cases a literal translation of an English idiom becomes rather extravagant. Thus in Frank Lloyd's 1945 film *Blood on the Sun*, *Sangre bajo el sol* in Spanish (notice here the different preposition used), the main character, paradoxically a journalist, says "he perdido cara" after writing a controversial report. It is obvious that the actor does not wonder about with no head, but to expect the viewer to understand that this means "suffer a humiliating loss of prestige" in English is, to say the least, rather naive since we are not aware of any similar expression in Spanish that may enlighten the suffering audience.

The third category that we mentioned in this second block lists all those grammatical mistakes made by translators as well as other errors of usage. Some of these mistakes reflect that translators have a rather superficial knowledge of their own language. In Hitchcock's *Spellbound* we come across the learner's common error: *gente* is singular in Spanish, but *people are* plural in English. In the film we hear "Hay gente que se siente culpable por cosas que no *han* hecho." In Richard Fleischer's 1959 *Compulsion*, *Impulso criminal* in Spanish, we hear "Nadie pegaremos un ojo." In Richard Brooks' *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, a Paul is mentioned and another character asks "¿Cuál Paul?" instead of "¿Qué Paul?" and the list could be endless.

3

These two sections, divided into three categories each, provide us with sufficient evidence to state that serious errors and venial mistakes abound in our mass media as regards translation from other languages, mainly English. English is the language of communication: 75% of the world's telex are in English, over 50% of the world's papers are in English, America produces the largest film crops while Britain makes widely acclaimed documentary series and dramatic programmes. Translators play a fundamental role in helping non-English audiences comprehend this vast

avalanche of originally English messages. Rabassa wrote that no "two snowflakes are alike" and the translator must be fully aware that not only are they not alike, they do not usually fall in the same way, that is to say, translating is a question of choice, first a choice of words and sentences to match concepts and ideas, then a choice of contexts and registers. The word *intoxicate* was an excellent example. It did not mean *intoxicar* in Spanish, and besides the situation required a particular word, *ebrio* as opposed to *borracho*. As Fontcuberta puts it: "No significa simplemente saber, por ejemplo, si és el català o el castellà, posem per cas, sinó, com és evident, el registre de la llengua..." (Fontcuberta 1984, p. 135).

Thus, our final conclusion is that our journalists, translators and/or interpreters are a bridge between the author, the actor, the narrator or the event and the public who receives the message conveyed by a report, a film, a documentary or a series. Their job is to communicate, but the job implies a deep knowledge of the language in the origin of the message as well as a good command of one's mother tongue. Thus the message would not be lost, as in some of the cases examined above, and translators would not need to coin new phrases or words, so alien and unnecessary in the target language.

Bibliography

Diccionario de la Lengua Española (1989), Madrid: RAE, Espasa-Calpe.

Fontcuberta i Gel, Joan, (1984), "Traductor, transmissor. Aproximació a la metodologia de la traducció", *Cuadernos de Traducción e Interpretación 4*. Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Harris-Northall, Raymond (1992), "Awareness in Linguistic Borrowing: The Treatment of Anglicisms in the Spanish Press", *Studia Patriciae Shaw Oblata Volumen III*. Oviedo: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, pp. 263-277.

Holmes, James (1988), *Translated!* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Martin, M. N. & Maleve, J. P. (1983), "Los cursos en lengua materna como preparación a la traducción e interpretación", *Cuadernos de Traducción e Interpretación 3*. Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Lorenzo, Emilio (1992). "Anglicismos y traducciones", *Studia Patriciae Shaw Oblata Volumen II*. Oviedo: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, pp. 67-79.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1992). Oxford: O. U. P.

Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English (1989), Oxford: O. U. P.

Petit Larousse (1989). Paris: Larousse.

Rabassa, Gregory (1989) "No Two Snowflakes Are Alike", *The Craft of Translation*, edited by John Biguenet & Rainer Schulte. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-13.

Ulrich, Miorita (1989). "Fraseología y traducción", *Translation Across Cultures*. León: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de León, pp. 199-206.