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**The representation of Irish English in *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*:
the translation of humour**

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ABSTRACT

English undoubtedly holds a prominent position as an international language in our globalised world. Nevertheless, the vast array of English dialects worldwide is often overlooked, each presenting unique challenges, especially in translation. Irish English is a prime example. This dissertation investigates the translation of Irish English into Spanish, focusing specifically on the humour-based culturemes found in Brendan Behan's *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*. The study explores how humour, deeply embedded in linguistic and cultural contexts, poses significant challenges in translation, particularly when the humour is as culturally specific as Irish humour. The analysis uses Newmark's 1988 translation procedures to examine how Irish humour—centring on themes of nationalism, alcohol, and insulting the British—is adapted for a Spanish audience, highlighting the frequent loss of the unique Irish essence as well as the toning down of humour in the translation process. The goal of this study is to highlight the importance of translators recognising the differences among the many English variations and finding culturally equivalent expressions while also possessing an in-depth understanding of both the source and target language. Furthermore, attention should be drawn to the need for other English variations to be explored in translation studies to facilitate more effective cross-cultural communication and help improve the quality and accuracy of future translations.

KEYWORDS: Irish English, language variations, culturemes, humour, literary translation

RESUMEN

Indudablemente, el inglés ocupa un lugar prominente como lengua internacional en nuestro mundo globalizado. Sin embargo, a menudo se pasa por alto la amplia variedad de dialectos ingleses que existen en todo el mundo, cada uno de los cuales presenta sus propios desafíos, especialmente en la traducción. El inglés de Irlanda es un ejemplo destacado en este sentido. Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado investiga la traducción del inglés de Irlanda al español y se enfoca específicamente en los culturemas relacionados con el humor presentes en *Confesiones de un rebelde irlandés* de Brendan Behan. El estudio explora cómo el humor, profundamente arraigado en contextos lingüísticos y culturales,

plantea desafíos significativos en la traducción, como en el caso del humor irlandés. El análisis emplea los procedimientos de traducción de Newmark de 1988 para examinar cómo el humor irlandés, centrado en temas de nacionalismo, alcohol y desprecio a los británicos, se adapta a un público español, y también se destaca la frecuente pérdida de la esencia irlandesa y la atenuación del humor en el proceso de traducción. El objetivo de este trabajo es resaltar la importancia de que los traductores reconozcan las diferencias entre las distintas variedades del inglés y encuentren expresiones culturalmente equivalentes, así como tener un profundo conocimiento de la lengua de partida y la de llegada. Además, se pretende señalar la necesidad de explorar otras variedades del inglés en los estudios de traducción para facilitar una comunicación intercultural más efectiva y ayudar a mejorar la calidad y precisión de las futuras traducciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: inglés de Irlanda, variedades lingüísticas, culturemas, humor, traducción literaria

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalised world, the prominence of English as an international language is undeniable. However, what often goes unacknowledged is the rich diversity of English variations that exist worldwide. From regional accents to distinct linguistic quirks, these variations pose unique challenges, particularly in the context of translation.

As an Irish native living in Spain, I have experienced first-hand the difficulties of translating Irish English into Spanish, particularly during my oral interactions. Our humour, known for its wit and uniqueness, often gets lost in translation, which leaves me struggling to convey its essence to my Spanish friends. It is a daily challenge that has sparked my interest in exploring the translation of Irish English literature, in this case focusing on Brendan Behan's *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*. He is an excellent representation of Irish humour, and I was confident that translating his memoir into Spanish would prove to be a highly complex task.

This dissertation will explore the complexities of translating Irish humour into Spanish, using Newmark's 1988 translation procedures as a framework for analysis. By focusing on the most prevalent themes of humour within Behan's work—nationalism, alcohol, and insulting the British—the aim is to highlight the challenges of capturing the essence of Irish humour in translation.

The main objectives of this study are twofold: firstly, to examine the translation strategies employed in rendering Irish humour into Spanish, and secondly, to evaluate the extent to which these translations manage to preserve the original essence and impact of the humour.

To achieve these objectives, this dissertation will provide an overview of the global reach of the English language and its diverse forms, with a specific focus on Irish English and the linguistic and sociolinguistic characteristics it presents. It will also delve into literary translation and the complexities of translating humour, examining the challenges posed by cultural references and linguistic differences. Subsequently, the translation of Irish humour into Spanish will be analysed, discussing the strategies used and their impact on the humour's effectiveness. Finally, it will conclude by reflecting on the limitations encountered during the study and suggesting future research avenues in the field of translating Irish English literature.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 A WORLD OF ENGLISH VARIATIONS

2.1.1 Definition of language variations

When we communicate with others using the same language, we often encounter subtle differences, not only in the words we choose, but also in the way we pronounce them, the rhythm and melody of our speech, and even the expressions and idioms we employ. These differences are not mere quirks but represent the complex world of language variations.

To put it simply, language is a means of communication. According to the Collins Dictionary, it is a “system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing” (n.d.). However, this seemingly straightforward concept takes on a more profound dimension when viewed through the eyes of Sapir, a prominent figure in the foundation of modern linguistics. He expressed that “language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations” (1921:220).

Given the immense diversity of languages spoken across the globe, it is only natural that linguistic variations and distinctions emerge as a consequence of factors like geographical distribution, cultural influences, historical developments, and societal contexts. As Blake (2008) puts it, not only do speakers of a language speak differently from each other but they also speak differently in every situation, and these variances are often associated with social status, gender, age, and situational context. Furthermore, languages are dynamic entities that evolve over time. While most of us recognise changes in vocabulary, especially with the introduction of new terms driven by technological innovation, all aspects of language change, including shifts in pronunciation, word formation, sentence structure, and the meaning of particular words (Blake, 2008:181). All typical speakers can create new words, use existing words in new ways, form sentences they have never heard before, and combine sentences to construct entirely new discourses (Chaika, 1982:8). Thus, language is in a perpetual state of flux.

When exploring language variations, two primary categories emerge: dialects and accents. Dialects are regional or social varieties of a language, each with its own unique characteristics and expressions. Accents are mainly about how words are pronounced differently. A distinguishing characteristic of a dialect is the overall pronunciation or

accent, and “accents live on” (Blake, 2008:183). Many people can easily differentiate between British English and American English, generally based on vocabulary and accent. For instance, while an American might refer to “garbage,” a British individual would typically use the term “rubbish.” Similarly, when it comes to the number twenty, Americans often pronounce it as /twendi/ or even /tweni/, whereas in British English, it is commonly articulated as /twenti/, retaining a clear /t/ sound at the end.

To better understand the concept of dialects, this same Australian linguist and author (2008:181–182) provided an illustrative example involving two islands. Imagine speakers of a language settling on two different islands, too far apart for regular contact. As time passes, language changes will occur independently on both Island A and Island B, resulting in two distinct local varieties, or two dialects. It is likely that after a very long period of separation, these two dialects would diverge so much that they would be mutually unintelligible, leading to the classification of two separate languages. This phenomenon of language divergence illustrates the fluidity and adaptability of language to different contexts and environments. Over time, these two dialects may develop different vocabularies, pronunciation patterns, and even grammatical structures, making them separate linguistic entities.

Traditional rural dialects, historically distinct and regionally rooted, are gradually fading due to the growing influence of mass media and standardised education (Blake, 2008:183). These significant factors promote a more uniform, standardised form of the language, to ensure mutual understanding among speakers from various regions. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that the existence of different dialects or languages does not make one inherently superior to another; instead, these variations reflect the richness of human expression (Chaika, 1982:7). While some dialects are privileged as the “standard” form of a language, others may be marginalised or stigmatised.

2.1.2 English: from international language to lingua franca

Wherever you go on the globe, the use of English as an international language is unmistakable. While Mandarin Chinese may boast more native speakers, English’s global dispersion surpasses that of any other language. In the early 21st century, it has evolved into not just an international language, but “*the* international language” (Seidlhofer, 2011:2), with an ever-growing demand for proficiency. Learners are not only growing in

number, but they are also starting at increasingly younger ages. The integration of English into school curricula worldwide has become a norm rather than an exception, with a growing acknowledgement of the language's crucial role in preparing learners for effective communication in an interconnected world.

Looking back at its history, it is fascinating to realise that the status of English as a major world language is relatively recent. Shakespeare, for example, wrote for a speech community of only a few million, whose language was not much valued elsewhere in Europe and was unknown to the rest of the world (Barber, 1993:234). From its early origins in Britain, the English language has spread to nearby Ireland, journeyed across the Atlantic to North America, and down under to Australia and New Zealand. At present, it shares official status with one or more languages in countries such as Nigeria, Malta, Jamaica, the Philippines, South Africa, and Pakistan. In India, a nation with a population exceeding one billion, English serves as an official language in addition to several others, and it is widely used as a language of administration and commerce (Barber, 1993:238).

The global expansion of English stems from various factors. According to Barber (1993:234–235), England's population growth, from 1.5 million during the Norman Conquest to over 30 million by 1900, played a pivotal role. The Industrial Revolution further fuelled this growth, reaching 17 million by 1850. English gradually spread within the British Isles, displacing Celtic languages, particularly through education. The author adds that it was not until the last two centuries that it became the primary language of Ireland, Wales, and the Scottish Highlands. Additionally, trade, colonisation, and conquest expanded the influence of English to all corners of the globe (1993:234–235). Another contributing factor to the worldwide reach of English is the spread of technology and the diffusion of American technological innovation in the 20th and 21st centuries. Furthermore, it is often linked to social prestige, with some highlighting the simplicity of its grammatical structures and the cosmopolitan nature of its vocabulary (Finegan, 2008:60).

The European Union (EU), despite presenting itself as a multilingual institution, has seen the supremacy of English established in European politics and numerous European and international bodies, such as the European Commission, the United Nations, and NATO (Dollerup, 1996:27). In the UN, English is one of the six official languages. Post Brexit, Ireland remains the only English-speaking country in the EU whose native language is English, and it retains its position as the most spoken foreign language in the EU.

Although all languages are intended to be equal, it is evident that English is “more equal than the others” (Seidlhofer, 2011:139).

Beyond its widespread use as an international language, English now functions as a *lingua franca*, which is essentially a common or mediator language used among people who do not share the same first language. While English’s status as an international language embraces both native and non-native speakers, its function as a *lingua franca* primarily involves non-native speakers as key communicators, acting as a neutral bridge language in cross-cultural interactions (Jenkins, 2007:1). This is particularly evident in settings such as conferences, political gatherings, and business meetings, where English is often the preferred medium of communication. Similarly, in the academic community, English functions as the primary language for much scholarship, especially in fields of scientific and technical nature (Finegan, 2008:60).

Regarding Europe, it is worth noting that before World War II, German was the major *lingua franca* in Eastern Europe. However, following Germany’s defeat in 1945, the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957, and of the European Union in 1993, English became more popular. Presently, English, along with French and German, is one of the working languages of the EU and the most commonly used link language for translators and interpreters (Kirkpatrick, 2007:164–165).

Around the world, non-native speakers of English are on the rise, using their own versions to serve their authentic communication needs. The number of native speakers of English relative to the non-speakers is decreasing, which makes English a successful *lingua franca* that enables people to access a globalised world of communication and bridge gaps in language and culture (Kohn, 2011:72–73).

2.1.3 World Englishes and standards

The worldwide expansion of English has given rise to countless variations, and these diverse forms are collectively known as “world Englishes.” Among the most widely spoken are American English, Australian English, Indian English, Nigerian English, and, of course, British English.

According to Kirkpatrick (2007:55), American English is undoubtedly the most influential and dominant variety of English globally today. This prominence can be attributed to the United States’ political power, the widespread diffusion of American culture and media, and its close association with the rapid development of

communications technology. The US boasts the largest population of native English speakers and, similar to the variety of English spoken in England, American English serves as a reference variety and is increasingly adopted as a model in teaching English as a foreign language worldwide (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:79). Melchers and Shaw add that despite its global influence, it is somewhat surprising that English has not been officially declared the official language of the United States (2003:80). Like in the United Kingdom, its predominance is assumed rather than formally acknowledged.

From the earliest permanent English settlement in the country in 1607 to the waves of immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, as people fled the aftermath of famine, revolution and poverty in Europe and many other parts of the world, many historical factors influenced and left their mark on American English (Crystal, 1997:26–30). As a result, by the first half of the 19th century, Noah Webster, an American lexicographer, recognised an opportunity for linguistic independence (Kirkpatrick, 2007:56). He compiled the renowned Webster’s Dictionary, aiming to reform and systematise English spelling. His proposals included simplifying spelling by removing what he considered unnecessary vowels, leading to standard American spellings such as “flavor,” “color,” “catalog,” “neighbor,” and “program,” diverging from the British “flavour,” “colour,” “catalogue,” “neighbour,” and “programme” (Kirkpatrick, 2007:56).

In addition to its differences in spelling, American English also features a distinct but widely recognised accent—or rather accents: the Northern, the Midland, and the Southern—often heard in movies and TV series (Barber: 1993: 243), as well as differences in vocabulary and grammar. A prime example of the vocabulary would be the terminology used for cars and driving. In the UK, cars have bonnets, windscreens, boots, tyres, number plates, and gear levers. In the US, they have hoods, windshields, trunks, tires, license plates, and stick shifts (Kirkpatrick, 2007:58).

Another distinct variety of English is Australian English, perhaps even considered a third reference variety, especially given its growing use in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, notably in Asia (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:101). Despite Australia’s considerable size, Melchers and Shaw also observe that regional linguistic variation within Australian English is relatively minor (2003:102).

From a historical perspective, British explorer James Cook’s 1770 expedition to Australia marked the beginning of significant British influence, leading to the establishment of the

first penal colony in Sydney by 1788 to reduce prison overcrowding in Britain. Over fifty years, more than 100,000 prisoners were transported alongside free settlers from the British Isles, which heavily shaped Australian English. Many convicts originated from London and Ireland, and today's Australian speech patterns reflect the influence of the Cockney accent from London and the Irish English twang (Crystal, 1997:35). By the late 19th century, Australian English had developed three main accent varieties: Cultivated, Broad, and General Australian, the latter becoming the most dominant (Moore, n.d.).

Aboriginal languages minimally influenced Australian English due to English dominance, but around 400 loanwords are recorded, mainly for native flora and fauna, such as “kangaroo,” “wallaby,” “coolabah,” and “billabong” (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:101–106). Furthermore, Australian English is characterised by merging diphthongs, non-rhoticity, word clipping like “barbie” for barbecue, and distinctive vocabulary such as “Sheila” for a woman and “tucker” for food (Kirkpatrick, 2007:71–74; Melchers & Shaw, 2003:104–106).

Indian English represents another significant variety of the English language spoken globally. English serves as one of the official languages in India, alongside Hindi and numerous other recognised regional languages, and is extensively used in administrative and commercial contexts (Barber, 1993:238). The language plays a crucial role in education, media, governance, and the publishing sector, and interestingly enough, India ranks as the third-largest producer of English books globally, following the USA and the UK (Sailaja, n.d.).

According to Crystal (1997:41–42), the history of Indian English dates back to the British East India Company's arrival in 1600, initially for trade, but gradually extending its influence across the subcontinent. English gained significance during British rule, becoming the language of administration, law, and education. English-medium education was introduced in the early 19th century, with English-medium schools and universities established to promote the language. Over time, Crystal emphasises that English not only served as a means of communication but also symbolised social status and mobility (1997:43).

Indian English is characterised primarily by its pronunciation, often described as rhotic, although not all /r/ sounds are pronounced consistently (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:139). Borrowings from Indian languages are widespread, especially for terms related to food,

clothing, culture, and religion. Examples include “namkeen,” “gosht,” “karma,” and “bhajan.” Distinct linguistic features of Indian English include the use of rising intonation for yes–no questions and reduplication for emphasis, as seen in constructions like “big-big problems” and “chubby-chubby cheeks” (Sailaja, n.d.).

Nigerian English, another significant World English variety, is prevalent in Nigeria, one of the largest English-speaking countries globally. According to Ugwuanyi (n.d.), more than half of the nearly 220 million Nigerians communicate in English. Much like other African nations, Nigeria recognises English as a co-official language, sharing this status alongside three major indigenous languages. This status is a direct result of Nigeria’s colonial history, wherein English served as the dominant language during the colonial era.

The establishment of a British colony in Lagos in 1861 marked the beginning of a trade relationship that introduced English across the West African coast (Crystal, 1997:46). Given the presence of hundreds of local languages, Crystal explains that the region witnessed the emergence of various English-based pidgins and creoles, which are simplified forms of communication blending elements of different languages (1997:45). Following independence in 1960, English continues to dominate the spheres of administration, education, and commerce, despite not being the primary means of informal communication among different ethnic groups (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:149–150).

Nigerian English shows influences from indigenous languages, such as the lack of grammatical differentiation between count and non-count nouns, leading to words such as “advices” and “furnitures,” as well as the use of double subjects in constructions like “The woman she is happy” (Ugwuanyi, n.d.). Moreover, Nigerian English is known for its non-rhoticity and for having a syllable-timed rhythm, where all syllables in a phrase occur at equal intervals (Barber, 1993:248).

Finally, British English is the variety of English spoken in the United Kingdom, particularly in England. Naturally, it stands as a World English variation and is esteemed for its historical legacy and global impact, holding a prominent position among the diverse varieties of the English language. English can be traced back to the 5th century when it arrived in England from Northern Europe, initiating its spread across the British

Isles (Crystal, 1997:25). The language has been in constant movement, especially with the extensive colonisation efforts of the British over the years.

As discussed previously in the context of other World Englishes, British English maintains specific spelling conventions distinct from other variations, such as American English, including “colour” instead of “color,” “theatre” instead of “theater,” and “organise” instead of “organize.” Grammatically, British English frequently favours the present perfect tense for actions relevant to the present moment, a practice less frequent in American English (Kirkpatrick, 2007:58). Vocabulary differences also distinguish British English from other English varieties. For example, a “flat” in the UK is an “apartment” in the US, while “biscuits” in the UK are referred to as “cookies” in the US. For many speakers of English outside the United Kingdom, the pronunciation of the /r/ sound situated between vowels may well be considered the most defining trait of an English accent (Kortmann & Langstorf, 2017:124). Additionally, British English is generally non-rhotic, leading to the omission of the /r/ sound in words such as “car,” “turn,” and “heart” (Melchers & Shaw, 2003:51).

It is impossible not to mention the concept of standard when discussing British English. Standard English refers to a form of the English language that is widely accepted as the correct and proper usage in formal and written contexts. Under British colonial rule, Standard British English was enforced as the language of administration in numerous territories, with deviations from it often regarded as errors (Barber, 1993:241). Beyond the UK, it is often perceived as authentic or original English and serves as the typical model for learners in non-English speaking countries, especially in Europe.

However, it is crucial to recognise that Standard English represents only a fraction of native English speakers, and many of these speakers do not adhere strictly to its norms, particularly in spoken language (Seidlhofer, 2011:46). Consequently, individuals learning English abroad may find themselves surprised upon visiting a native English-speaking country for the first time that they rarely come across the Standard English they expected, especially in spoken interactions. Even just within the United Kingdom, there are numerous varying accents, from Cockney in London to Scouse in Liverpool, and Geordie in Newcastle.

In the past, alongside British English, the standard pronunciation was labelled Received Pronunciation (RP), also known as the Oxford or BBC accent (Blake, 2008:187). RP has,

at least in England, remained the accent linked with those in the upper levels of society, as indicated by factors such as education, income, or profession. Traditionally, it was the accent of individuals educated at private schools, but today, British people still tend to associate the accent with wealth, influence, and an overall high social status (Hughes et al., 2012:3–4).

All that said, RP is only spoken by about 3% of people, which makes us question the notion of a singular, ideal form of English (Kirkpatrick, 2007:58). This idea is being increasingly challenged by the realities of global English usage, and as the language continues to spread and adapt to various sociocultural environments, the concept of what constitutes a standard becomes more nuanced and diversified. We may often forget that non-native users of English vastly outnumber native speakers of the language (Seidlhofer, 2011:46). Ultimately, there is no superior variety of English.

2.2 LANGUAGE VARIATIONS: THE CASE OF IRISH ENGLISH

2.2.1 A brief history of the English language in Ireland

Irish English is understood as the variety of the English language spoken in Ireland. Often referred to as the Emerald Isle, Ireland is situated west of Great Britain and is divided into two parts: the Republic of Ireland, an independent nation covering about five-sixths of the island, and Northern Ireland, constituting the remaining one-sixth and being part of the United Kingdom. The history of the English culture and language in Ireland is remarkably complex, with lingering conflicts that persist to some extent.

According to Wilson and Millar (2013:265), the 12th century saw the introduction of the English language to Ireland with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans led by King Henry II, marking the onset of centuries of Anglo–Irish struggle. However, it was not until the Tudor conquests in the 16th century that English began to assert itself as a major language of administration and governance. Recognising Ireland as a vulnerable entry point and the “backdoor to England,” the authors explain that English forces set about conquering the island to secure against foreign invasions. The Tudor monarchs, particularly Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, sought to strengthen English control. This period witnessed plantations, where land was confiscated from Irish landowners and redistributed to English and Scottish settlers (2013:271).

By 1800, English was the first language of roughly half the population of Ireland (Leith, 1996:188). Over the 19th century, there was a noticeable shift away from the use of Irish,

mainly due to the impact of the Great Famine, which gave rise to mass emigration and substantial loss of life. This allowed the English language to become increasingly dominant in Ireland, all the while accelerating the global spread of Irish English. Moreover, Leith explains that the implementation of universal English-language education contributed to the growing prominence of English within Ireland (1996:188).

Fast forward to today, and the English language is the predominant form of communication for the vast majority of people in Ireland, despite the national significance of Irish and the bitterness that may be felt towards the past.

2.2.2 Irish English: linguistic variations

Irish English, characterised by its distinctive phonological, grammatical, and lexical features, holds a unique position among English varieties. Renowned for its melodic accents and witty humour, Irish English is often regarded as one of the most attractive accents globally, despite the country having a mere population of over five million (European Union, n.d.).

Generally, the island of Ireland is linguistically categorised into two main regions, primarily distinguished by phonological differences: the north and the south. These intersect, to some degree, with the north–south political division. Hickey (2008:71–104) divides Northern Irish English into Rural Northern, Belfast English, and Derry English, and within Southern Irish English, he addresses two Dublin forms and differences in pronunciation in the Midlands, the Rural South/South-West, and the East Coast.

Concerning phonology, Irish English is rhotic, which means that the /r/ is pronounced before a consonant and at the end of words. This rhotic pronunciation is particularly prominent in rural areas (Wilson & Millar, 2013:275). Another noteworthy phonological characteristic involves the pronunciation of the /t/ sound, as in “tin.” Irish speakers tend to articulate this sound with the tip of their tongue against the top front teeth instead of against the ridge behind the teeth, as is the case with most varieties spoken in England (Leith, 1996:189). This dental pronunciation of /t/ leads to a loss of contrast with the sound /θ/ (th), causing words like “tin” and “thin” to sound the same.

In Southern Irish English, a “breathy” articulation is observed in words such as “butter,” “try,” and “under,” so that they sound a bit like “butther,” “thry,” and “undher” (Cesiri, 2016:100). Furthermore, in the northern region, particularly in the Belfast English dialect,

there is a prevalent use of rising intonation patterns. This distinctive intonation is not only found in questions but also in statements (Jarmen & Cruttenden, 1976; Rahilly, 1997).

Irish English exhibits distinct grammatical features influenced significantly by Irish Gaelic. Unlike the phonological aspects, the impact of Irish on grammar is more pronounced. One notable feature is the use of pronouns such as “ye,” “youse,” and “yeez” to designate the second-person plural pronoun (Hickey, n.d.). While the form “ye” is not stigmatised and is heard across various levels of Irish society, the last two may carry some social stigma, especially if they are the exclusive forms used by speakers. Among the grammatical features of Irish English, the regularisation of irregular verbs in past tense or past participle forms stands out, such as in constructions like “I done” and “I seen” (Wilson & Miller, 2013:276). Additionally, Wilson and Miller highlight the use of “them” as a demonstrative, seen in expressions like “them girls” and the occurrence of multiple negatives, as in “I didn’t see nothing” are also typical traits.

The progressive form is more frequently employed in Irish English compared to Standard British English, particularly with verbs expressing states and verbs of having and being. Examples like “She is wanting a new car” and “I am not liking this new teacher” highlight this grammatical feature (Ronan, 2001:45–47). Furthermore, the imperative is employed alongside the progressive form, as seen in expressions like “Don’t be doing that,” serving an intensifying function in communication.

Clefting is a distinctive feature in Irish English, which involves restructuring a sentence to emphasise a particular element by placing it at the beginning for added emphasis or focus. For example, “Too much tea I’m drinking,” “It’s to Dublin I’m going,” and “It’s a new dog I want.” Generally, this fronted element is considered new or contrastive information (Wilson & Miller, 2013:278). Another distinctive grammatical trait frequently heard in Irish English is the use of “do + be” to express the habitual aspect. For instance, “She does be in and out of hospital a lot” and “I do be at my lessons every Monday night” reflect a likely influence from the Irish language (Cesiri, 2016:100).

Furthermore, the Irish language has significantly influenced Irish English vocabulary, introducing loanwords such as geographical terms like “knock” from the Irish “cnoc” (hill), “slieve” from “sliabh” (mountain), and “lough” from “loch” (lake) (Wilson & Miller, 2013:279). In addition, institutional terms like “Taoiseach” for “prime minister” and “Dáil” for “parliament” are borrowed from Irish. Everyday vocabulary also reflects

this influence with words like “gob” signifying “mouth” and “galore” representing “a lot.” According to Hickey (n.d.), word pairs with complementary meanings are often interchanged, such as “ditch” for “dyke,” “bring” for “take,” and “rent” for “let.” Colloquially, there is a tendency to use “learn” in place of “teach,” as in “That’ll learn ya.”

Moreover, Wilson and Miller (2013:279) mention that Irish English incorporates colloquial idiomatic expressions, including phrases like “your man” and “your one” to refer to a specific person, “deadly” and “desperate” as both positive and negative intensifiers, and “altogether” meaning “wholly” or “completely.” Hybrid forms, combining an English stem with an Irish suffix, particularly the diminutive suffix “ín,” are evident in Irish English, as seen in words like “girleen,” meaning a small girl (Cesiri, 2016:101).

Historically, the perception of accents, particularly in the context of English, has been marked by social biases. Blake (2008:190–190) explains that not too long ago, individuals who spoke with Irish accents (as well as Scottish or Welsh) faced judgment and were often viewed less favourably. The prevalent attitude held that these accents were indicative of a lack of education or sophistication, reinforcing negative stereotypes. According to the author (2008:188), for over a century, those who did not adhere to Received Pronunciation in England and the surrounding areas were subjected to social prejudice, making them feel inferior. The association of the Irish accent, among others, with lower social status and education sustained a harmful perception that persisted into the 20th century.

Today, societal perceptions have evolved, and the Irish accent is widely appreciated for its charm, cultural richness, musicality, and uniqueness. Embraced globally, it adds a touch of warmth and character to communication. For this dissertation, it is important to understand all the previously mentioned characteristics of Irish English to be able to understand the humour.

2.3 TRANSLATION OF IRISH ENGLISH: THE EXAMPLE OF HUMOUR IN LITERATURE

2.3.1 Some specificities of literary translation

Literary translation is widely regarded as a form of translation that allows for a considerable degree of creative freedom. However, it does possess certain distinct

characteristics that set it apart from other forms of translation. According to Belhaag (1997:20), literary translation is expressive, subjective, connotative, symbolic, timeless, and universal. Furthermore, it focuses on both form and content, allows multiple interpretations, uses special devices to heighten the communicative effect, and tends to deviate from the language norms.

One of the primary challenges often encountered in literary translation is the absence of a clearly defined *skopos*, since the sender's intention, aimed at engaging the recipient's interest for various purposes, can be interpreted differently by translators (Zaro & Truman, 1999:110). The *skopos*, a term coined by Vermeer in 1978, refers to the purpose or aim of the translation, and how it depends on the target audience's needs and expectations. Therefore, a translator should not just mirror the original text word-for-word; instead, they must consider who will read the translation and why, and make decisions to meet those needs.

Unlike other forms of translation, style plays a crucial role in literary translation. While technical translation, for example, prioritises the unaltered transfer of information from the source language to the target language, in literary translation, the style can be the deciding factor between "a lively, highly readable translation and a stilted, rigid, and artificial rendering that strips the original of its artistic and aesthetic essence, even its very soul" (Landers, 2001:7).

The novel is one of the most popular literary genres, hence the necessity for translators to make it more accessible to the reader. Among his translation methods, Peter Newmark (1981:39) highlights communicative translation as an optimal approach for tackling novel translation since its objective is to "produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original." For Newmark, communicative translation is focused on the target text reader and is adapted to a specific language and culture, generally resulting in a clearer and smoother text. Consequently, a profound understanding of both source and target cultures and languages is essential to accurately convey the author's intended meaning while effectively resonating with the target audience. It is worth acknowledging that humour is probably one of the most subtle aspects of any language and culture that deserves particular attention when it is present in literature.

2.3.2 Translation and cultural references

2.3.2.1 What is culture?

Culture is a broad term that consists of the collective way of life shared by a group of people. It includes their practices, values, beliefs, and social norms that guide their behaviour in various aspects of life. One of the first definitions of culture is provided by anthropologist Tylor (1871:1), who describes it as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Another perspective is offered by Schwartz (1992:324), who considers that culture “consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organised, learned, or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.”

Moreover, culture is not static; just like language, it is constantly changing (Robinson, 1988). Various authors and scholars have offered differing perspectives on what constitutes culture, which reflects how complex and diverse it is. Some emphasise the tangible aspects of it, such as art, language, and customs, while others highlight its intangible elements, such as beliefs, values, and norms. Despite these differences, there is a common recognition that culture plays a fundamental role in shaping human identity and society.

2.3.2.2 Culture and translation: challenge

Translating culture poses significant challenges as it involves conveying not just words, but the essence and nuances of a society’s beliefs, customs, and values. Effective translation requires a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures, as well as sensitivity to the cultural nuances embedded within language and communication. The role of translators extends beyond linguistic expertise; they must also be cultural mediators. They play a crucial role in bridging cultural divides and facilitating the process of intercultural communication (Clouet, 2008:148).

It can be very difficult to translate certain elements such as idioms, slang, and colloquial expressions. These elements often lack direct equivalents in the target language, making it difficult to convey the original meaning. For example, a “céilí” in Irish culture (a social gathering usually with traditional dancing) would have to most likely be translated in a

way that is explained as it would not be understood outside of the country. In the case of Spanish, it could be translated as “fiesta irlandesa tradicional con música y baile.”

Furthermore, it is essential for the translator to be aware of taboos, given that what might seem acceptable in one culture can be deeply offensive or inappropriate in another. According to Clouet (2008:154), incorrect decisions in translation and interpreting often arise from cultural misjudgements, resulting in misinterpretation and, eventually, culture-related issues among participants. Ultimately, it is impossible to dissociate culture from language.

2.3.2.3 What do we understand by cultural elements? (sometimes called culturemes)

Cultural elements, often referred to as culturemes, are the distinct and unique components that define a culture’s identity, encompassing its beliefs, practices, symbols, and values. These elements manifest in various forms, including language idioms, social customs, symbolic imagery, and material artefacts, each carrying unique meanings within their cultural context. Vermeer (1983:8) proposed the term “cultureme” and defined it as “a social phenomenon of culture A, which is considered relevant by the members of this culture and which, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in culture B, is found to be specific to culture A.” In translation studies, the term is employed to identify particular elements of a culture that may pose practical challenges when being transferred into another cultural context.

Newmark (1988:103) points out that in order to translate cultural elements, several contextual factors surrounding the text must be considered, like the purpose of the text, the readers’ level of cultural, technical, and linguistic understanding, the significance of the referent in the source language text, the setting (including whether a recognised translation exists or not), the recency of the word or referent, and the future implications of the referent.

Cultural transposition, a term coined by Hervey and Higgins (1992:28), refers to the varying degrees of departure from literal translation employed when transferring cultural content from a source text to a target culture. It includes alternative strategies to strictly source language-biased translations, intending to minimise foreign elements in the target text and facilitate its integration into the target language and its cultural context.

In the process of cultural transposition, five specific strategies were proposed. Exoticism utilises linguistic and cultural features of the original culture with minimal adaptations.

Cultural borrowing occurs when expressions or concepts from the source language are not found in the target language and are directly incorporated. Calque involves the use of expressions that respect the lexis and syntax of the target language but may lack idiomatic fluency. Communicative translation focuses on employing clear communicative equivalents in the target language. Finally, cultural transplantation entails full adaptation to the target culture.

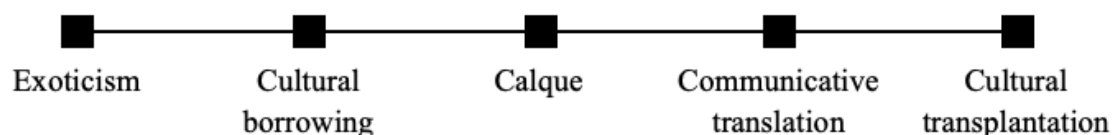


Figure 1. Cultural transposition

2.3.3 Irish humour as a cultural reference: characteristics and classification

With that linguistic backdrop in mind (see 2.2.2), it is impossible to overlook another defining aspect of Irish culture and language: the unique sense of humour. Growing up in Ireland, I have witnessed first-hand how our humour operates not just as a form of entertainment but as a vital tool for social interaction and connection. It has also served as an essential coping mechanism during our nation's troubled past, overcast by colonisation, famine, political unrest, economic struggles, and cultural suppression. It is more than just a stereotype; it is a reality that shapes every social exchange. Whether it is banter with friends, witty retorts at work, or humorous anecdotes shared over a pint in the local pub, Irish humour remains a fundamental part of our identity and social cohesion.

One way to define humour is "everything that is actually or potentially funny, and the processes by which this 'funniness' occurs" (Palmer, 1994:3). Broadly speaking, humour can be categorised into four types: affiliative humour (sharing jokes and light-hearted banter to create a sense of harmony), aggressive humour (using put-downs, insults, or sarcasm at the expense of others), self-enhancing humour (laughing at oneself in a good-natured way), and self-defeating humour (putting oneself down and undermining one's self-worth, often as a defence against criticism) (Martin et al., 2003:48). The social context significantly influences how humour is both created and received, making it difficult for it to cross boundaries of time and social groups (Ross, 1998:2).

Irish humour, far from being a recent phenomenon, is an ancient characteristic of Ireland, evident in the country's folklore, proverbs, and early literature (O'Donoghue, 1894:xi).

Writers such as Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Brendan Behan, and Flann O'Brien are notable examples of Irish authors who have showcased this humour in their works. Their writings reflect the wit, satire, and absurdity that are hallmarks of Irish humour, providing insight into the rich tradition of comedic storytelling in Ireland.

As Malone (2012) explains, a commonly held belief is that Irish humour is more about the delivery, while British humour tends to emphasise the punchline. A key aspect of Irish wit lies in its lunacy, a quality exemplified particularly by Flann O'Brien who often explored topics about nationalism, religion, language, and politics in his books. The author (2012) also highlights the fact that Irish wit carries an innocence that has contributed to the presence of the "Irish joke," often entertaining the audience while not always flattering the teller.

Typical Irish jokes often revolve around themes of alcohol, religion, and insulting the British. A common scenario is where an Irishman and Englishman enter a pub and the punchline is usually where the Irishman comes out on top or outwits the Englishman in some way. Since Ireland has always had a strong religious influence, with a historical division mainly between Protestants in the north and Catholics in the south, this has often been a subject of humour. This may involve satire or parody of religious institutions, scandals, or typical stereotypes such as the strictness of Catholic priests or the primness of Protestant ministers. Moreover, religious phrases such as "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," "Merciful hour," "God bless us and save us," and "Christ on a bike" are commonly used in Irish humour or even in day-to-day life to express shock, disbelief, or astonishment, reflecting the influence of religion on the language over the past few decades.

It is also worth noting that Irish humour is considered less malicious than humour in other cultures (O'Donoghue, 1894:xiii). Despite this, the Irish have a knack for delivering cutting remarks, and it was once said that even "the most illiterate of Irish peasants can put more scorn into a retort than the most highly educated of another race" (1894:xiii).

2.3.4 Translation strategies to translate humour

Translating humour presents a considerable challenge, much like translating culture itself. What is considered humorous in one culture may fall flat or even cause offence in another. Not only does the translator encounter the unavoidable challenges and demands typical of any translation task, but they must also address the complex aspects of humour, both in how it is perceived and reproduced (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbeascoa Terran, 2017:11).

Therefore, it is crucial to possess a deep understanding of the target culture and language to accurately convey comedic elements.

To combat these issues, various translation strategies exist. Hurtado Albir (2001:276) defines “translation strategies” as the range of individual procedures, both conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, internal and external, employed by the translator to address the challenges encountered in the translation process and enhance its effectiveness in line with their specific requirements. Newmark (1988:81), on the other hand, proposes the term “procedures” and states that “while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language.” Some of the most important procedures that he put forward include the following (1988:81–93):

- Literal translation entails translating word-for-word, without much regard for idiomatic or cultural differences. This might work well with simple phrases but often struggles with idiomatic expressions. For example, “It’s raining cats and dogs” would be poorly served by a literal translation, as the idiom does not hold the same meaning in Spanish.
- Transference involves importing words or phrases directly from the source language into the target language without alternation. The translated word becomes a loan word. For instance, the English words “parking,” “hardware/software,” “email,” and “hobby” are often borrowed into Spanish.
- Naturalisation refers to adapting foreign names, phrases, or expressions to make them sound natural or familiar in the target language, first adapting the word from the source language to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the target language. For example, “güisqui” in Spanish to indicate “whiskey.”
- Cultural equivalent involves replacing culturally specific elements in the source text with equivalents that are more familiar or appropriate for the target audience, ensuring clarity and relevance. A clear example is adapting titles of movies or books to fit cultural sensibilities. For humour translation, this might mean changing a joke about hurling (a sport with limited appeal outside of Ireland) to one about football in Spanish, where the sport enjoys widespread popularity.
- Functional equivalent requires the use of a culture-free word, therefore neutralising the source language word. An example would be the prime minister of Ireland, the “Taoiseach,” being translated as “primer ministro” in Spanish.

- Descriptive equivalent involves providing a description or explanation in the target language to convey the meaning of a term or concept from the source language. For instance, if the Spanish text mentions “sangría,” the English translation might be “a Spanish wine punch with fruit,” explaining the beverage.
- Synonymy utilises synonyms or alternative expressions in the target language to convey the same meaning as the source text. This is suitable where literal translation is impossible and because the word is not so important in the text. An example of synonymy would be translating “awkward situation” for “situación incómoda” in Spanish.
- Through-translation refers to the literal translation of organisation names, common collocations, and elements of compound words. It is sometimes referred to as calque and should only be used when a term is already recognised. Some obvious examples include the names of international organisations like “The Council of the European Union” (El Consejo de la Unión Europea) and “skyscraper” (rascacielos).
- Shifts or transpositions change the grammatical structure from the source language to the target language without altering the meaning of the text. An example of this would be the change from singular to plural or translating the English passive voice into an active voice in Spanish. For example, “The book was read by the boy” becomes “El niño leyó el libro.”
- Modulation involves altering the perspective or viewpoint of the source text to convey the same idea more effectively in the target language. This might mean translating the phrase “It’s not hard” as “Es fácil” in Spanish, which shifts the perspective from negative to positive.

Newmark (1988:91) also points out that translation notes can be included alongside a translated text to provide cultural, technical, or linguistic context. This extra information can be included in the text itself, as footnotes at the bottom of the page, chapter notes, or a glossary at the end of the book.

According to Chiaro (2017:27), many jokes pose a significant challenge in translation due to the extensive exploitation of linguistic features, such as puns, for example. These jokes frequently incorporate highly specific socio-cultural references, requiring recipients to possess significant knowledge of the history, events, people, customs, and values of the source culture to grasp the intended humour and recognise the attempt at non-seriousness.

In general, although highly challenging, humour can be translated. Where possible, the target humour will closely resemble the source humour, but the target text can never be an exact equivalent (Chiaro, 2017:27).

3. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

3.1 CORPUS

Confessions of an Irish Rebel by Brendan Behan provides an account of the author's life, detailing his involvement in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and subsequent imprisonment. Behan, born in Dublin in 1923, gained notoriety for his political beliefs, published works, and constant presence in pubs across Ireland. He was a poet, playwright, novelist, author of short stories, and wrote in both Irish and English. The memoir was published in 1965, a year after Behan's death at the age of 41, and recounts his experiences as an Irish rebel, his perspective on Irish society and politics, and his encounters with people from all walks of life, from fellow rebels and inmates to literary figures and ordinary citizens. Through *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*, Behan not only documents his own life but also captures the spirit of Ireland in the mid-20th century—a country struggling with its identity, politics, and path forward, particularly in the aftermath of the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War.

Humour plays a significant role in the narrative, and Behan's clever wit and satire can be seen throughout nearly every page of the book. Through his storytelling, he blends Irish slang with his poetic nature and never fails to throw in the odd retort or vulgar joke where possible.

I have chosen this book for my dissertation because I believe it captures the essence of Irish humour very well, despite the backdrop of political and social unrest. It not only entertains but also provides valuable insights into the difficulties of Irish identity and heritage. Undoubtedly, its cultural references and slang would have presented significant challenges during its translation. The book was translated into Spanish under the title *Confesiones de un rebelde irlandés* by Maite Mujika and published by Editorial Txalaparta in 1999.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this dissertation focuses on analysing the translation of humour-related culturemes from Brendan Behan's *Confessions of an Irish Rebel* into its Spanish version, *Confesiones de un rebelde irlandés*. This analysis focuses on identifying and categorising the humour in the text, subsequently examining how these elements have been translated, bearing in mind the cultural and linguistic nuances.

Prior to commencing the analysis, both texts were thoroughly read, with a specific focus on identifying and extracting humour-related culturemes present in the English version, particularly more complex examples.

The identified culturemes will be divided into three main categories: by type, themes, and translation procedures.

By type (according to Martin et al., 2003):

- Affiliative humour
- Aggressive humour
- Self-enhancing humour
- Self-defeating humour

By themes (chosen based on their prevalence in Irish humour):

- Nationalism
- Alcohol
- Insulting the British

By translation procedures (according to Newmark, 1988):

- Literal translation
- Transference
- Naturalisation
- Cultural equivalent
- Functional equivalent
- Descriptive equivalent
- Synonymy
- Through-translation
- Shifts or transpositions
- Modulation

For the presentation of the data, tables have been elaborated to display the findings for each cultureme. These tables include the cultureme in the source text (ST), the cultureme in the target text (TT), the chapter in which the cultureme appears, the type of humour, the theme addressed, and the translation procedure used.

ST	
TT	
Chapter	
Humour type	
Theme	
Translation procedure	

Table 1. Sample table

Beneath each table, a detailed analysis of the translation of the humour-based culturemes will be provided. In this analysis, the translation procedure employed will be examined, and an assessment will be made of how effectively the cultural and linguistic aspects of the original humour are preserved or adapted in the translation process. Furthermore, the aim is to highlight the challenges faced by translators in maintaining the humour while making sure it fits culturally and makes sense in the target language. I hope that my native familiarity with Irish culture, alongside my experience studying translation in Spain, will enable me to critically evaluate the Spanish translation, and possibly provide a more personal perspective to the analysis.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES

ST	‘Although this is Dublin whiskey,’ I told him, ‘it is Protestant whiskey; it’s Jameson’s.’ ‘ I don’t give a fish’s tit whether it is Mohammedan whiskey, ’ he said [...]
TT	—Aunque este whisky es de Dublín —le dije—, es whisky protestante, es de Jameson. — Me importa un bledo que sea whiskey de Jameson o de Mohammed.
Chapter	16
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Alcohol
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent, literal translation

Table 2. Example 1

In this example, the author expresses his total lack of concern uniquely and hilariously, “I don’t give a fish’s tit,” deviating from the conventional “I don’t give a damn” or “I don’t care.” The translator opts for a functional equivalent since a literal translation would be ineffective. The term “Mohammedan whiskey” is employed as an example of religion-related satire to humorously convey indifference towards the origin of the alcohol. In the Spanish translation, the reference is maintained with “whiskey de Mohammed,” capturing the essence of the joke for Spanish-speaking readers.

ST	And Jaysus, in the Labour Exchange didn’t we find this half-wit of an eejit to end all eejits?
TT	Y, ¡Jesús!, en las oficinas de Intercambio Laboral nos encontramos con el más tonto de entre todos los tontos.
Chapter	15
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Insulting the British
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent

Table 3. Example 2

In Irish humour, “eejit” is often used affectionately or lightly to refer to someone acting foolishly, but in this particular context, it takes on a derogatory tone and essentially means “idiot” or “stupid person.” This is further intensified by the expression “to end all eejits,” which emphasises the extreme level of stupidity associated with the person being described. The translator opted for a functional equivalent in Spanish which effectively conveys the extreme level of foolishness: “the most foolish of all fools.” To some extent, there is a degree of descriptive equivalence as the term is slightly explained. Finally, although “half-wit” was not directly translated, through this alternative explanation, the insult’s harshness and impact remain clear to the reader.

ST	‘I’ve got business to do— on the wrong side. ’
TT	Tengo algunos negocios de « caminos ocultos ».
Chapter	18
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Nationalism

Translation procedure	Descriptive equivalent
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Table 4. Example 3

The phrase “on the wrong side” is often used by people in the Republic of Ireland to refer humorously or critically to Northern Ireland, across the border. In translating this to “caminos ocultos,” the specific, politically-charged humour is replaced with a broader concept of secretive activities (or, literally, “hidden paths”), thereby altering the original comment and losing the depth of the cultural and geographical implications of the joke. In this example, the translator opted to focus on the dodgy business that was to be done in the North.

ST	‘That’s the lighthouses,’ I interrupted him for I wasn’t in mind to be arguing with this pox-faced bastard of a whore’s melt .
TT	—Se refiere a los faros —le interrumpí, porque no tenía en mente ponerme a discutir con ese cretino hijo de puta [...]
Chapter	15
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Insulting the British
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent

Table 5. Example 4

The translation from “pox-faced bastard of a whore’s melt” to “cretino hijo de puta” slightly tones down the insult while maintaining its aggressive nature. However, the description of the original phrase, which includes insults regarding appearance, is somewhat lost. “Pox-faced” refers to an ugly or spotty face, and it comes from the term “pox,” which historically referred to various infectious diseases that often resulted in facial blemishes. Instead, “cretino” is used, meaning “fool” or “idiot,” adding a sense of stupidity to the insult. “Whore’s melt” implies a child of a prostitute or a child of sin, and it is conveyed in the Spanish translation through “hijo de puta.” This word is an excellent example of how the Irish put their humorous spin on the most ordinary of insults—it could not possibly be understood elsewhere.

ST	And I swear I would have knocked the fughing be-Jesus out of him had not Sergeant Sharpe intervened as he had on a previous occasion when I was first arrested in Liverpool in 1939.
TT	Juro que le hubiera arrancado toda esa arrogancia a golpes de no haber sido por el inspector Sharpe, que intervino como había hecho antes, cuando fui arrestado por primera vez en Liverpool en 1939.
Chapter	1
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Insulting the British
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent

Table 6. Example 5

“BeJesus” (also spelt “bejaysus” or “bejeezus”) is one of the many religious expressions used in Irish English to express shock, disbelief, or astonishment. In this example, written as “be-Jesus,” it is used as a euphemism to replace the word “shit,” as in, “to knock the shit out of him.” A further euphemism is the use of “fughing” instead of its more explicit version. The Spanish translation conveys a similar sense of aggression and physical confrontation, while also introducing the notion of arrogance.

ST	We were all a good way gone by now in the process of liquidation [...]
TT	Ya todos nos encontrábamos en «las últimas» [...]
Chapter	4
Humour type	Affiliative humour
Theme	Alcohol
Translation procedure	Cultural equivalent

Table 7. Example 6

In the context of alcohol, “the process of liquidation” is a very humorous euphemism used by Behan to refer to being drunk, or in this case, heavily intoxicated, since they were “a good way gone by now.” The translator opted for a cultural equivalent, using the expression “las últimas” to suggest that they were nearing the end or limit of their

capacity, and they were having their last drinks. A direct translation of “liquidation” would probably have sounded a bit strange and would not be understood by the Spanish readers.

ST	‘Shower of fughing sods.’
TT	—Partida de cretinos estúpidos.
Chapter	9
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Insulting the British
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent

Table 8. Example 7

“Shower,” in this context, is a colloquial term frequently used in Ireland to describe a group of people, but it carries a negative connotation, suggesting that the group is undesirable or unpleasant in some way. While it is often employed alongside an insult, it can also effectively convey criticism on its own. “Sod,” on the other hand, is similar to the word “eejit” in the sense that it does not carry the weight of more severe insults, and it refers to someone difficult or useless. The translator opted for the use of “partida” to maintain the reference to a collective group, while “estúpido” intensifies the derogatory tone, in the same way that “fughing” does in the original expression.

ST	[...] when I reached Grafton Street the pavements were like the top of an oven and I was glad for the high stool in the pub for the safety of the soles of my feet.
TT	[...] caminando por Grafton Street, el pavimento me parecía la superficie de un horno, de manera que me sentí muy contento cuando pude poner las plantas de mis pies a salvo en las altas banquetas del bar.
Chapter	12
Humour type	Affiliative humour
Theme	Alcohol
Translation procedure	Literal translation

Table 9. Example 8

Here we have a clear example of one of the many witty excuses that Behan gives for seeking refuge in the pub, in this case being the hot pavements of the street. He refers to the high stool as being a secure spot or a haven from the ever-so-dangerous situation outside the pub. The translator opted for a direct translation of this light humour, which preserves the original meaning in this particular example.

ST	[...] which I must say, was very sporting of them. In my bollocks and to hell with you. Up the Republic!
TT	Yo hago lo que me parece, o sea que al diablo con vosotros. ¡Viva la República!
Chapter	4
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Nationalism
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent

Table 10. Example 9

“Bollocks” or “bollix” is a very versatile word used in Ireland that can express anger or disbelief, dismiss something as nonsense, or, quite literally, refer to one’s testicles. In this particular case, “in my bollocks” is a sarcastic remark that means “absolutely not” or “as if,” and it totally disregards what was said before. This humorous but vulgar term is seen on numerous occasions throughout the book. The translator took a different approach in translating it as “Yo hago lo que me parece,” expressing self-assurance or assertiveness. While both phrases involve personal judgement, they convey different attitudes, the original one being that of pure sarcasm, rejecting or discrediting the previous statement.

ST	I’d a thirst on me and was repairing it in a public house not an ass’s bawl from O’Connell’s house [...]
TT	De repente sentí sed y me fui a solucionar este problema a una taberna, no muy lejos de la casa de O’Connell [...]
Chapter	8
Humour type	Affiliative humour
Theme	Alcohol

Translation procedure	Functional equivalent
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Table 11. Example 10

The expression “I’ve a thirst on me” is an informal way of saying that one is thirsty, and in Ireland, it most likely expresses a thirst for alcohol, which was the case for Behan in this example. This thirst had to be “repaired” as if it were a problem, and it was used among many other excuses that the author made to pop into a nearby pub. This is not a very normal way to express “I’m thirsty” and this Irish twist is lost when translated to Spanish: “Sentí sed.” Likewise, to be within “an ass’s bawl” or “ass’s roar” from somewhere means to be very close to that place, and this unique Irish expression is neutralised when translated into Spanish. That said, it perfectly conveys the main idea—it just is not as funny anymore.

ST	‘You’re for the Governor in the morning,’ said this dreary red-headed little Welsh Methodist bastard of a screw.
TT	—Vas a reunirte con el director mañana por la mañana —dijo el lúgubre pelirrojo metodista de Gales.
Chapter	1
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Insulting the British
Translation procedure	Literal translation, omission

Table 12. Example 11

This example of humour is the very first sentence of Behan’s memoir, and he started off as he meant to go on with one of his typical, elaborate insults. In this case, it is directed towards a “screw,” which is a slang term with a negative connotation for a prison guard. This word is accompanied by six additional insults to describe the person. The reference to his denomination, “Methodism,” is very typical in Irish humour due to the significance of religion, especially during the period in which the book was written. The translator only partially translated this insult, omitting “bastard of a screw,” so that the reference to the prison guard alongside the derogatory term is excluded. The insult is therefore softened significantly.

ST	‘Yes,’ I answered, and what’s it to you, you lousebound, deskbound bastard leaving the Republic to look after itself, but quietly to myself.
TT	—Sí —le respondí—, y qué te importa a ti eso, piojoso, bicho de escritorio, desgraciado que abandonas a su suerte a la República.
Chapter	5
Humour type	Aggressive humour
Theme	Nationalism
Translation procedure	Literal translation

Table 13. Example 12

Behan, being an extremely patriotic person, demonstrates this attitude towards all forms of authority within his country and abroad, criticising the work they are doing and how Ireland is essentially being left to fend for itself. In this example, he accompanies this complaint with a unique insult: “lousebound, deskbound bastard.” “Lousebound” is a term that refers to someone infested with lice, and “deskbound” describes someone who works exclusively at a desk. In some way, the repetition of two terms ending in “bound” intensifies the insult. The translator opted for a literal translation, with the exception of the word “bastard,” which I believe has slightly been softened when translated as “desgraciado,” meaning “miserable,” “unfortunate,” or “wretched.” Furthermore, the translator managed to keep the rhyme in Spanish with the repetition of insults ending in “o”: “piojoso, bicho de escritorio, desgraciado.”

ST	[...] and I got exceedingly drunk on the journey for I have discovered no better way of doing your work as a soldier of the Irish Republic than by getting drunk.
TT	[...] y yo me emborraché sobremanera durante el viaje. Descubrí que no hay mejor manera de cumplir con tu trabajo de soldado de la República Irlandesa que borracho.
Chapter	9
Humour type	Affiliative humour
Theme	Nationalism

Translation procedure	Literal translation, shift or transposition
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Table 14. Example 13

In this example, we see not only the author's pride in being patriotic and fighting for his country but also his pride in being an alcoholic. His humorous statement suggests that these two things should go hand-in-hand to make a decent soldier. The translator opted for a literal translation in this case, except for the term "getting drunk," which was translated as "borracho" employing the shift or transposition procedure. This changed the grammatical structure from a verb to an adjective: "drunk."

ST	'You pull the chain and in a jiffy, your shit is floating down the Liffey.'
TT	«Estiras la cadena y, en un abrir y cerrar de ojos, tu caca estará flotando en el Liffey».
Chapter	10
Humour type	Affiliative humour
Theme	Nationalism
Translation procedure	Literal translation, functional equivalent

Table 15. Example 14

In this example, Behan presents us with a humorous rhyme regarding the Liffey, which is an important river and landmark in Dublin. This city symbol is mentioned several times throughout the book, reflecting the author's pride as a Dubliner. "Liffey" and "jiffy" rhyme in English, and while this rhyme may not be preserved in the direct translation into Spanish, the original meaning is retained. Although nearly all of the sentence has been translated literally into Spanish, the functional equivalent procedure was applied to the term "in a jiffy."

ST	I wasn't much interested in the science of boxing, but I was interested in the science of knocking the head off two dozen of stout and I got so stocious that I had to be carried back to my cell.
TT	Yo no estaba muy interesado en el arte del boxeo, pero sí en el arte de quitarle el tapón a dos docenas de botellas de cerveza. Me

	emborraché de tal forma que tuvieron que llevarme a rastras hasta mi celda.
Chapter	7
Humour type	Affiliative humour, self-enhancing humour
Theme	Alcohol
Translation procedure	Functional equivalent

Table 16. Example 15

In this example, there is a clever play on words related to boxing, and where some people “knock the head off,” or strike, someone in that sport, Behan applies the action to knocking the head off or essentially devouring stout. This creates a humorous contrast between boxing and the casual act of drinking alcohol. In fact, he turns the latter into a science, and the translator maintains this idea with “el arte de.” However, in the Spanish translation, “knocking the head off” is expressed as taking the cap off alcohol, “quitarle el tapón,” which is an interesting alternative, even though most stout is consumed in glasses. That said, since this specific alcoholic term was omitted and translated to “botellas de cerveza,” it works, as bottles of beer have caps. On the other hand, the word “stocious” is a humorous Irish expression indicating that someone is highly intoxicated, and it was translated as “me emborraché de tal forma.” While it conveys the idea effectively, the Irish touch is lost.

3.4 RESULTS

The research problem addressed in this dissertation revolves around the challenges and strategies involved in translating humour, particularly Irish humour culturemes and their translation into Spanish.

After choosing five examples for each of the three humour themes (nationalism, alcohol, and insulting the British), they were analysed with a special focus on their original significance in Ireland and their translation into Spanish, while also evaluating the extent to which their meaning was retained.

In terms of the translation procedures employed by the translator, the methods used for each of the 15 examples were organised into a pie chart to observe their frequency and application. In certain cases, two distinct procedures were used for a single example. Although “omission” is not listed in Newmark’s 1988 translation procedures, he

acknowledges the possibility of omission, so I have included it given its presence in the examples, which I considered important. A total of 20 translation procedures were used. The resulting data is presented in the pie chart below.

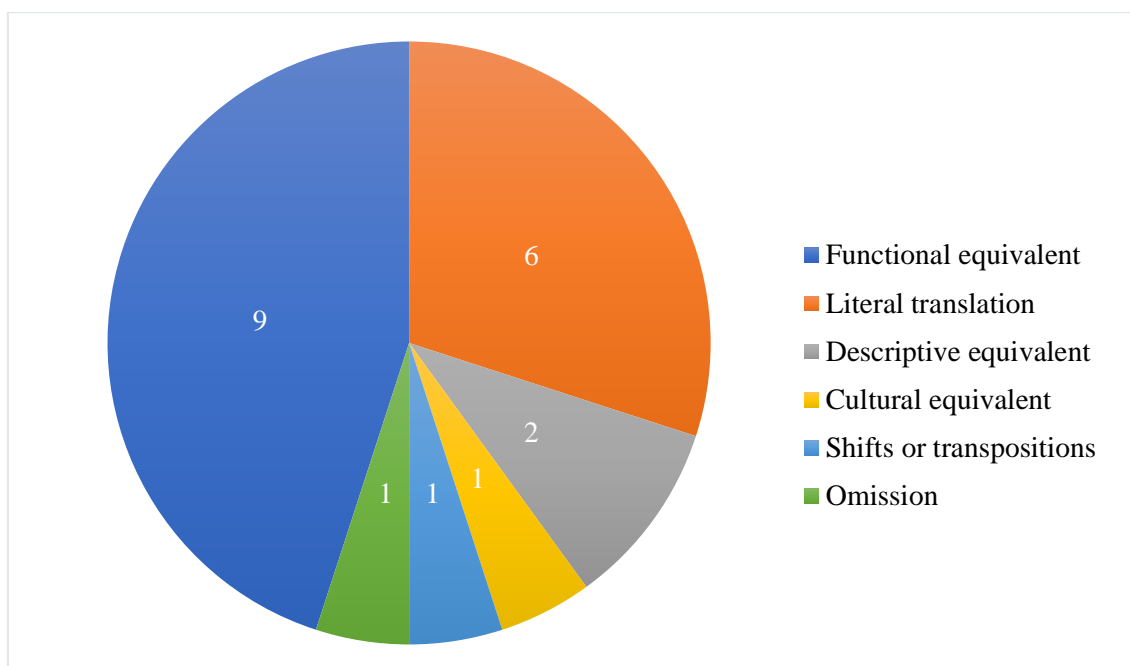


Figure 2. Translation procedures employed in the examples

Clearly, the functional equivalent procedure was the primary method employed in these 15 humour examples. This is likely due to the high prevalence of Irish English references and slang present in the book, which made it very difficult for any other translation procedure to be used. However, this frequent use of functional equivalent translation leads to a loss of cultural richness since the original references are not being retained. Moreover, transference has not been observed in the examples, the procedure that involves importing words or phrases from the source language into the target language without alternation. Nevertheless, in a few cases throughout the book, particularly with words written in the Irish language, the translator chose to leave them untouched and added a footnote with the translation.

As for the four humour types categorised by Martin et al. (2003), aggressive humour stood out as the predominant type, which is linked to the themes of nationalism and insulting the British, thus naturally evoking a sense of anger in the author. Affiliative humour was also popular, given that the majority of Irish humour is considered light-hearted banter. There were no instances of self-defeating humour in the examples, an absence that may be interpreted as a positive reflection on Behan's self-esteem. On the other hand, there

was only one example of self-enhancing humour. A second pie chart was elaborated to present the occurrence of the different humour types:

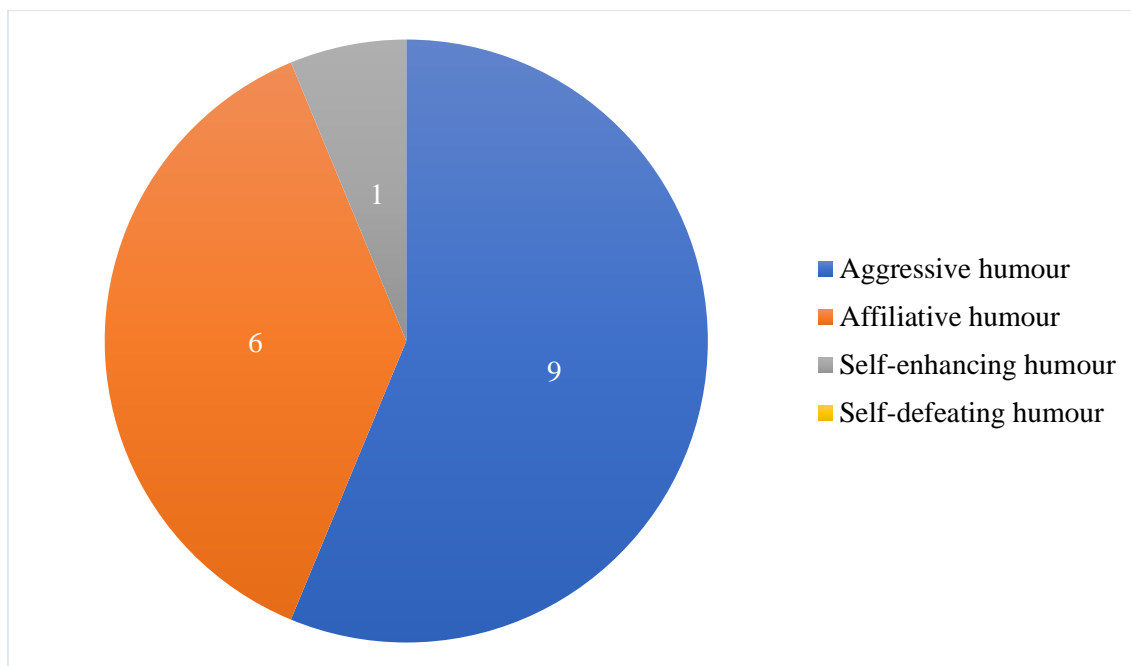


Figure 3. Types of humour present in the examples

Overall, though, the majority of these Irish culturemes have been lost in translation and have been conveyed in a more general sense. The Irish twist or essence that is familiar to other native English speakers no longer exists. This could also be a result of the overall lack of knowledge among Spanish speakers and translators about Ireland. Furthermore, throughout Behan's memoir, the Spanish translation did not always accurately convey the original meaning, suggesting that the translator's awareness was limited regarding certain Irish cultural elements. That said, in some cases, I was unfamiliar with particular expressions, and upon asking my parents or grandparents, they were able to confirm the meaning and give me an example for context.

Concerning the humour, the original examples are simplified and toned down in the Spanish version, including the insults. For an Irish reader, the use of certain Irish words makes a joke much funnier, and it is possible that Spanish readers will not laugh as much throughout the reading process.

Regarding the humour themes, it was extremely simple to find various examples for each one, given that the book was full of Irish humour culturemes. Alongside the three themes, religion is also a prevalent source of humour in Ireland due to the country's strong Catholic influence. However, it was not included among the themes of the memoir

because, rather than joking exclusively about religion, religious references were used, which made something sound funnier when expressing surprise or anger. Some examples from the text include “Jesus, Joseph and Mary, Mother of God, I said in my mind,” “In the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” “Oh God, Oh Sacred Heart, the Lord have mercy on her,” and “The curse of Jaysus on you.” In fact, searching for the word “God” returned 76 results, with “Jesus” showing up 65 times. Religion is deeply rooted in the Irish language and culture.

4. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the rich landscape of language variations, from the global influence of English as an international language and lingua franca to the distinct World Englishes and their standards. It has also examined the case of Irish English, including its historical roots, linguistic and sociolinguistic characteristics, and its unique humour. Furthermore, the concept of culture and culturemes was discussed, with a special focus on the translation of these elements, particularly in the realm of literary translation.

Translating humour is a highly challenging task since it relies heavily on linguistic nuances, cultural references, wordplay, and context, which do not always transfer from one language to another. Furthermore, humour is embedded in culture, and what may be funny in one culture may not resonate in another. Translators must be aware of these differences and find culturally equivalent expressions while also possessing an in-depth understanding of both languages.

While humour can be translated, the target text can rarely be an exact equivalent. In the case of Irish English humour, not only is the Irish essence or charm lost in the Spanish translation, but it also results in a less amusing outcome. In reviewing the examples of Irish humour-related culturemes in Brendan Behan's *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*, most have been conveyed in a more generalised manner and the humour has been toned down significantly. The Irish people are known for their witty, unique humour, and it is extremely difficult to convey this accurately in other languages.

The Republic of Ireland is a country that is very often confused with or overshadowed by the UK. As an Irish native living in Spain, I believe there is a general lack of knowledge about Irish culture and language in translation studies. For instance, in the subjects I took during my degree in Translation and Interpreting, there was very little mention of the Emerald Isle, and there was no special focus placed on translating texts rich in Irish culture. This can transform the process of translating Irish English texts into quite a challenge for the future professional translator. English translation teachers could dedicate a few classes to learning about the country and the variety, alongside translating Irish texts, particularly humour-based ones. While our everyday speech does not differ massively from the American or English variations, it is our humour, slang, and colloquial expressions that will prove more difficult for foreigners to understand.

In the course of the dissertation, several limitations were encountered that need recognition. Firstly, the selection of only 15 examples for analysis might have limited the depth of the study, making it harder to identify translation patterns or to adequately represent Irish humour. Additionally, having focused on only three themes of humour meant other great examples of Irish slang or expressions were excluded that did not fall into these categories. Furthermore, the reliance on a written text for analysis neglects all the linguistic features that distinguish the Irish people from other nationalities. We are mainly known for our accent, and although many elements in Behan's text were written as if spoken, this cannot be conveyed effectively through text.

There is potential for future research to examine the translation of Irish English beyond humour-based culturemes. This could involve a deeper investigation into the regional dialects, including slang, idiomatic expressions, socio-cultural references, and historical influences, to understand how these factors impact the translation process into Spanish. It would also be worth looking into audiovisual content since a lot of Irish humour is present in spoken dialogue. On the other hand, it may be interesting to explore the translation of Spanish texts into Irish English, a task that could prove to be difficult and limited due to the perception of Irish English as a non-standard language.

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