

Máster en Traducción Especializada

Humor and Cultural Transfer in Diplomatic Interpretation: walking the tightrope

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Summary

“War is what happens when language fails” (2009, p. 46). This phrase by Margaret Atwood encapsulates the importance of interpretation in diplomatic settings. This duty to prevent a war, sometimes metaphorically and others even literally, is what led to the conception of this thesis. The need to explore the difficulties that diplomatic interpreters face formulated the question regarding the interpretation of humor in such settings. Humor has always been a predicament for both translators and interpreters but placing it in the context of interpretation in the diplomatic settings seems to establish a new series of difficulties that have to be dealt with here and now. In particular, this thesis is an attempt to analyze the difficulties that emerge when interpreting humor in diplomatic settings and to provide strategies that could be useful to tackle these difficulties. By employing qualitative methods with the examination of already existing literature related to the topic and conducting interviews in order to give voice to the protagonists, the interpreters and the diplomats, this thesis delineates the complications that emerge during the attempt to interpret humor in the studied context. At the same time, ways in which these complications can be deflected are suggested, so this thesis can serve as a how-to-book for interpreting students and diplomatic interpreters who would like to be prepared when it comes to walking the dangerous path of interpreting humor in diplomatic settings.

Resumen

«War is what happens when language fails» (2009, p. 46). Esta frase de Margaret Atwood resume la importancia de la interpretación en el ámbito diplomático. Este deber de evitar una guerra, a veces metafórica y otras incluso literal, es lo que llevó a la concepción de esta tesis. La necesidad de explorar las dificultades a las que se enfrentan los intérpretes diplomáticos generó la pregunta relativa a la interpretación del humor en dicho ámbito. El humor siempre ha sido un predicamento tanto para los traductores como para los intérpretes, pero situarlo en el contexto de la interpretación en el ámbito diplomático parece determinar una nueva serie de dificultades a las que hay que hacer frente aquí y

ahora. En concreto, esta tesis trata de analizar las dificultades que surgen a la hora de interpretar el humor en entornos diplomáticos y de aportar estrategias que puedan resultar útiles para hacer frente a estas dificultades. Mediante el empleo de métodos cualitativos con el estudio de la literatura ya existente relacionada con el tema y la realización de entrevistas para dar voz a los protagonistas, los intérpretes y los diplomáticos, esta tesis delinea las complicaciones que surgen a la hora de interpretar el humor en el contexto estudiado. Al mismo tiempo, se sugieren formas de evitar estas complicaciones, por lo que esta tesis puede servir de libro de instrucciones para los estudiantes de interpretación y los intérpretes diplomáticos que quieran estar preparados a la hora de recorrer el peligroso camino de la interpretación del humor en entornos diplomáticos.

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1 Introduction

This thesis studies the interpretation of humor in the diplomatic field and the difficulties that may arise given the complexity that humor presents. Moreover, it suggests strategies to confront the interpretation of humor in such settings that can be of use to interpreters. This study was carried out in a specific context, that of diplomacy, having been given the impetus from the Embassy of Spain in Athens, where the author did an internship in 2019, a fact that explains her personal motivation to conduct this thesis. The Embassy of Spain in Athens is also the starting point for the interviews done as part of the field work of this thesis, as the first interviewees contacted work in the aforementioned institution. This investigation is a means to analyze and understand real life phenomena in a naturalistic and interpretive way with the attempt to accentuate them in order to unveil reliable data.

1.1 Rationale

For many years, a lot of interest has been expressed for the fields of Translation and Interpretation as both have accompanied human communication for a very long time. However, the topic of transmitting humor in translation has concerned more studies than its transfer in the field of interpretation.

One of the first works that addressed the topic of interpreting humor belongs to Pöchhacker and was published in 1993. This work, entitled “This isn't Funny. A Note on Jokes in Simultaneous Interpreting”, tries to offer knowledge and data about how interpreters deal with “funny situations” to use the author's words (p.455). A few years later, in 1996, Viaggio's work “The Pitfall of Metalingual Use in Simultaneous Interpreting” followed. In this work he explicitly emphasizes the need to transfer humoristic utterances while interpreting. According to Viaggio,

An untranslated pun normally goes unnoticed by the readers of the translation, but if one of the audiences at a meeting laugh, the others know that something funny is going on - and unless they

are let in on whatever has caused know their neighbours' hilarity, they will feel excluded, and so to boot publicly. (1996, p.1)

And yet, apart from additional work on the specific field by Pavlicek and Pöchhacker in their article “Humor in Simultaneous Conference Interpreting” (2002), “we lack a literature in comparison to other disciplines”, as Espinoza claims (2018, p.107).

During the last few years, transferring humor while interpreting seems to concern more and more professionals and researchers, thus, several articles have been written about the topic, like the one authored by Michael, who is herself an interpreter, entitled “Interpreting jokes, swear words and brusque remarks: Experience in the European” (2015). The article focuses on interpretations that take place in the European Parliament and is one of the very few writings which try to connect humor and its interpretation to a diplomatic field.

Apart from that and in combination with the lack of rounded literature about the interpretation of humor, as the existing literature investigates the use of humor in conference interpretation or interpretation in general, there seems to be gaps concerning the specific fields of interpretation and hence the diplomatic interpretation as well.

According to Baigorri-Jalón, “Over the last two hundred years, diplomatic interpreting has evolved quite significantly, due to changes in the world’s geopolitical landscape, new political settings and technical revolutions which have vastly modified transportation and communications systems” (2014, p.45). Countries all over the world base their external relations and affairs on diplomatic missions and, of course, diplomats. External relations have a fundamental significance for the communication and the cooperation of countries and even the peace between them. It is obvious that diplomats are charged with a very difficult and delicate role, thus there is no doubt that diplomatic interpreters face challenges that hide great costs. As Park Hee-kwon, the former ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Spain, states in the online magazine *The Diplomat in Spain*, “Precisely, the sense of humor is an indispensable resource for diplomats, who work in the

first line of intercultural contact, because intelligent humor often serves as a lubricant that helps to reduce the frictions caused by the lack of mutual understanding” (2018).

So, if humor is one of the challenges the diplomatic interpreters may face, the investigation of its use and the problems that it can impose, and the suggestion of strategies that can be employed by the interpreters seem to be much needed. This thesis tries to research on these topics in order to offer imperative data that will facilitate the onerous work of diplomatic interpreters.

1.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this thesis are to analyze the problems that the cultural transfer of humor can impose to diplomatic interpretation and suggest strategies to solve this kind of translation problems.

In order to fulfill these objectives, there are also other specific objectives that are pursued. First of all, this thesis studies the nature, characteristics, and requirements of diplomatic interpretation. With that objective in mind, both terms *diplomatic language* and *interpretation* are explained, so as to have a round understanding of interpretation in diplomatic settings.

Additionally, connecting humor to diplomatic interpretation, this study establishes the use of humor in the diplomatic field, as at first it may seem contradictory with the nature and characteristics of the diplomatic language.

Besides, since one of the main objectives is to suggest strategies about how to interpret humor, it is of crucial importance to study why humor is employed in the first place. With that purpose, the *skopos* of humor in diplomatic settings will be analyzed, based on Vermeer's *skopos* theory (*Skopostheorie*) (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984).

According to Munday,

Skopos theory focuses above all on the purpose of the translation, which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This result is the TT [target text], which Vermeer calls the *translatum*. Therefore, in skopos theory, knowing why a ST [source text] is to be translated and what the function of the TT will be are crucial for the translator. (2001, p.79).

Finally, another important factor that needs to be taken under consideration and determined is the relationship between humor and culture, since this interconnection is the one imposing an even more challenging task to the interpreters. After having established this relationship, the thesis investigates the role of cultural transfer in diplomatic communication with the end-all to define the nature of the difficulties imposed and propose a plan of action for the diplomatic interpreters.

Table 1 Main and specific objectives of the thesis.

Main Objectives	Analyze the problems that the cultural transfer of humor can impose to diplomatic interpretation.
	Suggest strategies to transfer humor when interpreting in diplomatic settings.
Specific Objectives	Study the nature, characteristics, and requirements of diplomatic interpretation.
	Analyze the use of humor in diplomatic language.
	Determine the relationship between humor and culture.
	Investigate the role of cultural transfer in diplomatic interpretation.

1.3 Structure

The structure of this thesis is based on different chapters that firstly lay the theoretical grounds of the topic under investigation, and then turn to the field work conducted to achieve the pursued objectives.

In particular, the first chapter (the present one) is the introduction which sets the objectives of the thesis and the methodology employed to develop it. After having established these aforementioned components, the theoretical framework is presented in chapter two. This framework provides the theoretical information studied in already existing investigations and explores important notions for the progression of the thesis, such as the diplomatic language, diplomatic interpretation, and humor. The results analysis follows in chapter three addressing the issues posed by the objectives of this thesis. In the analysis the answers of the interviewees are studied in combination with the examination of audiovisual material. The fourth chapter explores the relations between this investigation and the contents of the master's degree conducive to this thesis. The next and final chapter is the one containing the conclusions that have been reached after the development of this thesis. Apart from the conclusions based on the objectives, this chapter deals with the limitations faced and the future lines of investigation that are drawn. The references employed in this thesis are displayed afterwards. Finally, the appendices consist of the documents created to support the interviews, namely the interviews' scripts, the information sheets, the consent forms, as well as the transcriptions and written answers of the interviews.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis is a qualitative research in interpretation, particularly the diplomatic interpretation, and it has been conducted by using qualitative methods providing information in a specific context and time. To use Pandey and Patnaik's words "qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, case studies,

personal experiences, introspectives, life story interviews, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives" (2014, p. 5744). So, this thesis provides a phenomenological approach focusing on the protagonists of the interpretation in diplomatic settings, namely the interpreters and the diplomats.

This thesis was developed employing a descriptive, but also, an interpretative method and particularly that of a case study, as it examines the specific case of the interpretation of humor in diplomatic settings combining information provided from the protagonists, but also by a profound analysis of previous investigations and publications on the field in order to exhaustively analyze the multiple characteristics of such a case. As Yin states, a case study is "an empiric investigation that studies a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in a real-life context" (2009, p.32), as this investigation does.

The study has a linguistic but also a sociological character, as it examines the problems that interpreters may face due to the use of humor by diplomats and its cultural connotations. On the one hand, Linguistics focuses on the human language, hence it constitutes an integral part of the studies of interpretation and can determine the reasons why interpreters make specific choices when it comes to interpreting. On the other hand, humor is tightly interwoven with language and society. Despite the fact that, when Sociology emerged as a discipline, it did not focus on humor, but rather on more formal issues, like modernization and industrialization, it cannot be denied, as Kuipers states, that

Humor is a quintessentially social phenomenon. Jokes and other humorous utterances are a form of communication that is usually shared in social interaction. These humorous utterances are socially and culturally shaped, and often quite particular to a specific time and place. And the topics and themes people joke about are generally central to the social, cultural and moral order of a society or a social group. (2008, p.365).

So, in this thesis, notions like humor, cultural transfer and diplomatic interpretation are explored. More specifically, the following were the data collection techniques used. Firstly, in order to study and analyze the nature, characteristics and requirements of the diplomatic interpretation, this thesis uses the document analysis technique. In particular, a

literature review of the most relevant and updated publications regarding diplomatic interpretation has been conducted. Literature review was used as well to determine the relationship between humor and culture. In short, a considerable number of books, articles and journals were read and interpreted in order to gain a rounded perspective of what has been said about the aforementioned notions so far. This material was the result of a thorough online research in academic repositories like *Google Scholar* or *Academia.edu*, using key words that form the basis of this investigation (such as interpretation, humor, diplomacy), and was analyzed in the second chapter of this thesis. Bearing in mind that the quantity should not outweigh the quality of the documents analyzed, viewpoints and attitudes of acclaimed investigators expressed in different periods of time and for different reasons give the opportunity to notice the changes and development of the field of diplomatic interpretation, particularly when translating humor.

Secondly, as for the other objectives, audiovisual material, such as videos displaying the act of interpretation or with interpreters talking about their experiences on the profession were examined to investigate the use of humor in diplomatic language. In order to suggest strategies about transferring humor through interpretation, it was considered that it may be useful to get to understand how interpretation works from the inside, and interpreters are the ones best fit to talk about the topics mentioned above offering a glimpse of real-life interpretation and its problems focusing on humor and cultural transfer, as stated earlier.

Additionally, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with diplomatic interpreters and diplomats (see Appendices 7.1 and 7.2) to investigate the use of humor in diplomatic settings and the role of cultural transfer in diplomatic interpretation, as well as the difficulties interpreters face when interpreting humor and the strategies used to transfer it. All participants were asked to read an information sheet about the thesis and its objectives (see Appendix 7.3 and 7.4) and sign an informed consent if they agreed to voluntarily participate in the interviews (see Appendix 7.5 and 7.6).

With regard to the inclusion criteria followed when selecting the participants, all the interviewees should have more than one year of professional experience in their field and

have signed the aforementioned informed consent provided to them. In total, five interviews were conducted, three with diplomats and two with diplomatic interpreters. One diplomat and one interpreter are employed in the Spanish Embassy in Athens, Greece, while the other two diplomats work in the Cyprus Embassy in Brussels and the European Union appointed by the Greek Foreign Affairs Office, and the second interpreter is employed in the Foreign Affairs Office in Greece. The selection of these participants was decided taking into account that they were “who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic” (Morse et al., 2002, p.18). The first method used to select the participants was convenience sampling. Due to the previous collaboration of the author of this master’s thesis with the Embassy of Spain, one interpreter and one diplomat employed at the Embassy were contacted to ask them to take part in the investigation, as they both meet the requirements stated. From there the snowball sampling was employed, as the selection of the rest of the participants was made based on the networks the first interpreter has. Coming in contact with the next interpreter, he directed the author to other participants all of whom meet the criteria for taking part in the interviews.

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants in the interviews, a code was assigned to each of them, as explained in the following table:

Table 2 Codes assigned to the participants of the interviews.

Minister Counsellor in the Embassy of Spain in Athens	D1
Diplomat in the Embassy of Cyprus in Brussels	D2
Diplomat appointed in the European Union	D3
Interpreter in the Embassy of Spain in Athens	I1

Interpreter in the Greek Ministry of External Affairs	12
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The questions posed to the diplomats aimed to get an insight from their perspective and their opinion on using humor in diplomatic settings, but also understanding it, as they are not only the addressors but the recipients of humoristic utterances as well. Moreover, concerning the interpreters, they were asked to analyze the problems that humor and cultural transfer can impose and suggest strategies to convey that humor when interpreting in diplomatic settings. Interviews were preferably audio recorded and transcribed *verbatim* to facilitate its subsequent analysis, but in two cases the interviewees asked to answer in written form, making themselves available to give any needed clarification after sending their answers (see Appendix 7.7 to see the transcriptions and the written answers to the interviews).

The interviews were followed by an analysis of the data collected from different sources such as the transcriptions of the interviews and the selected audiovisual material. A qualitative content analysis approach was followed, which involved “reading and re-reading transcripts, looking for similarities and differences that enable the researcher to develop themes and categories.” (Kawulich, 2004, p.104). This excluded organizing the data based on the interview subjects, the diplomats and the interpreters, as the objective of this thesis is to form a round idea of the actions that take place in a diplomatic interpretation, hence, the combination and comparison of the ideas and opinions expressed by both subjects studied were imperative. Also, classifying these data in categories according to several topics was possible since all concepts discussed in the analysis had been carefully defined in the theoretical framework. By positioning the results in the theoretical framework already laid out, the data were connected and placed into the theory and the literature written and discussed so far. As Kawulich states, according to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), “The theoretical underpinning provides the lens through which the data are viewed and helps the researcher to situate the results in the theory,

which helps to facilitate the understanding of the data within that theoretical perspective.” (2004, p. 100). This process of comparing and contrasting went back and forth, and it allowed more refined questions to emerge.

The analysis was conducted by using a variety of tactics and mainly focusing on the comparative method of data analysis. As Bryman asserts, the qualitative content analysis is "probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents" and it "comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed" (2004, p.392). Thus, following the clusters of themes formed, the answers to the same question were compared and contrasted within every category of the interviews, the diplomats and the interpreters. They were, then, compared to the questions made to the other subjects of the study in order to bridge the data of both categories under question, meaning the answers of the diplomats were compared to those of the interpreters. These comparisons targeted discovering what happens in the diplomatic interpretations and how humor is dealt with by both sides of the coin, the diplomats but also the interpreters. This is why relevant literal excerpts from the interviews are included, to give the interviewees a voice and faithfully show their perspectives. In addition, this analysis has employed the questions expressed by Srivasta (2009, p.78) concerning the effort to describe the aim of the procedure of analyzing data. While processing the data of the interviews and the audiovisual material, the following three questions, displayed in Table 3, were employed in order to help make the appropriate connections between what it is known and what needs to be discovered based on the objectives of the thesis.

Table 3 Questions that served as the framework for the data analysis (Srivasta, 2009, p.78)

Q1: What are the data telling me? (Explicitly engaging with theoretical, subjective, ontological, epistemological, and field understandings)

Q2: What is it I want to know? (According to research objectives, questions, and theoretical points of interest)

Q3: What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (Refining the focus and linking back to research questions)

In short, this thesis interpreted the data collected from different sources, namely the aforementioned interviews and audiovisual material, by pinpointing similarities and differences between the data and positioning them into the theoretical framework in order to tie the theory with the results and arrive to conclusions that represent the real-life context, which is the diplomatic interpretation.

Concerning the reliability and validity of this study, it should be noted here that the number of the interviewees, that is five, may be considered a small sample, and their answers are subjective and probably determined by the context, and hence we cannot conclude that they speak for every diplomat or interpreter. Nonetheless, it is important for this study to investigate whether the topic discussed affects diplomats and interpreters in real life, thus their experience however personal will provide a better understanding of reality.

According to Pandey and Patnaik, "Qualitative research is often cited as being too specific on a particular social setting to be generalizable to a wider world. As against quantitative research, qualitative research lacks any statistical analysis and sample size calculation. Qualitative research should be understood as an effort to seek depth rather than breadth" (2014, p. 5745). Nevertheless, this investigation does not pursue generalization but transferability. As Pandey and Patnaik point out, "it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the field work sites is provided to enable the transferability of such research inquiries" (2014, p. 5749), and so it will be done in the subsequent Results Analysis chapter.

Additionally, in order to establish the trustworthiness and the verisimilitude of the results, several techniques have been employed. "Prolonged engagement" (Pandey and Patnaik, 2014, p. 5747) was one of them, as the researcher had already created an environment of trust with the interviewees having been an intern in the Embassy for several months. Bearing in mind the subjectivity of the interviews, triangulation of sources was also employed in order to offer different perspectives expressed by other investigators, but also

professional interpreters and diplomats, in different periods of time, with the aim to provide a more rounded and robust analysis of the matter in question.

To sum up, the use of different sources and data collection techniques, including document analysis, audiovisual material analysis and interviews, aims to result in more credible and reliable outcomes, “building a logical chain of evidence” (Kawulich, 2004, p.102).

2 Theoretical framework

There are some main concepts that need to be examined in relation with this master's thesis. These are interpretation, diplomatic language, diplomatic interpretation, cultural transfer, and humor.

2.1 Interpretation

To define diplomatic interpretation, one should first establish the concept of interpretation. Many people believe that interpreting is part of translation as a subcategory, but the truth is that, since the spoken language preceded the written one, it can be said that interpretation is an ancient practice that covered the need for communication maybe long before translation. For example, "Expressions in Germanic Scandinavian and Slavic languages denoting a person performing in the activity of interpreting can be traced back to Acadia the ancient Semitic language of Assyria and Babylonia around 1900 BCE" (Pöchhacker, 2004, p.9). If we consider the fact that people have always had the need to communicate with each other, first in order to survive and then in order to expand their civilizations and their cultures, it cannot be denied that interpretation has always been present. To use Baigorri-Jalón's words, "it has always been like this: since prehistoric times, contacts through interpreters must have existed, with different levels of frequency and sophistication, all over the world, whenever mutual intelligibility failed" (2015, p.11).

But what is interpretation and how does it differ from translation? According to Pöchhacker, "interpreting is performed here and now for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture" (2004, p.10). Additionally, as Pöchhacker states, "in contrast to common usage as reflected in most dictionaries, 'interpreting' need not necessarily be equated with 'oral translation' or, more precisely, with the 'oral rendering of spoken messages'. Doing so would exclude interpreting in signed (rather than spoken) languages" (2009, p.10). So, the definition of

the term *interpretation* has been an as difficult task as the one defining the term *translation*. The difficulty seems to lie in the plethora of situations where interpretation and translation take place, as well as in the polysemy of key notions such as “language”, “meaning”, “effect” and “culture” used to define them. In order to have a more rounded understanding of the term *interpretation*, several definitions can be presented. According to Pöchhacker who uses the definition of Kade (1968), “interpretation is a form of translation in which the source-language text is presented only once and thus cannot be reviewed or replayed, and the target-language text is produced under time pressure, with little chance for correction and revision” (2004, p.10). Valdivia Campos defines interpretation as “an operation on discourse by means of which the interpreter carries out the transmission of the meaning of the discourse of the original language by formulating it in the target language” (1995, p.175). Another definition is that of Nolan, who suggests that “Interpretation can be defined in a nutshell as conveying understanding. Its usefulness stems from the fact that a speaker’s meaning is best expressed in his or her native tongue but is best understood in the languages of the listeners” (2005, p.2). Three quite different explanations in different periods of time of the concept *interpretation* have been intentionally presented to underline the fact that, even if the definitions vary, the purpose is the same; to convey meaning and facilitate communication.

Another topic that needs to be discussed before we focus on diplomatic interpretation is the disparities between translation and interpretation, which will shape a more solid understanding of the notion. Apart from the apparent “oral” and “signed”, as mentioned about, versus “written” language, one could claim that interpretation is more demanding, and it does not give the interpreter a “second chance” for a slow and deliberate review. What is meant is that it requires promptness and dexterity here and now. One must show alacrity and face a vast variety of topics with the same readiness. Using the metaphor of Nolan,

The translator’s activity is more like that of a writer, while the interpreter’s performance is more like that of an actor. A good translator will spend much time searching for the correct technical term or the right choice of words, but a good interpreter must immediately come up with a satisfactory paraphrase or a rough equivalent if *le mot juste* does not come to mind, in order not to keep the audience waiting. (2005, p.3).

In addition, skills like being able to speak before large audiences, use the correct intonation and pitch of voice, but most importantly use voice in order to achieve the same function or effect that the speaker intends to are some of the aptitudes necessary for an interpreter that differ from those required for translators.

Finally, interpretation is employed in different situations and for different reasons. From conference interpretation to community interpretation, professional interpreters need to be agile, focused, and ready to adapt to various topics. In short, "Interpreters are chameleons, they have to lend themselves to the topic under discussion and blend themselves with the general décor" (Cremona & Mallia, 2001, p.301).

2.2 Diplomatic language

Another concept that we need to explore before addressing the field of diplomatic interpretation is the diplomatic language. Apparently, the diplomatic language is not merely used by diplomats, but it is rather advised to be used by everyone in formal situations. What is more, this language is sought after even for not formal situations, as there are books and online resources offering guidelines for obtaining this "skill". Though, why is it so important and why is it called diplomatic? It cannot be denied that diplomats try to facilitate communication and negotiations between countries in the most gracious and polite way, as sometimes the future of their countries depends on the words they employ. So, using the correct register, intonation, vocabulary, and syntax may prevent or cause even a war. Before proceeding, a clarification should be made concerning oral and written diplomatic language. This study has no intention to make a distinction between the two in sense of superiority, but since it focuses on interpretation, referring to diplomatic language should suggest the oral language. In Stanko's words, "Oral communication is the quintessence of personal contact, which—in turn—remains the very substance, even the *raison d'être* of diplomatic work" (2001, p.43).

There are many situations where diplomatic language is employed. As a matter of fact,

There are several specialized types of diplomatic language in various fields of diplomatic activity—for the redaction of communiqués (“atmosphere of friendliness”, “closeness of views”, “complete openness”, etc.), for negotiations (hence the difference between so-called soft and hard negotiators—although I recognize only the distinction between good and bad ones!), for unofficial contacts outside of official premises and for informal occasions, for participation in international conferences, for the conclusion of international treaties, etc. (Stanko, 2001, p.45-46).

Regardless of the type and the context, in diplomacy nothing is chosen by chance, every word is very carefully selected to fulfill a specific purpose, and this is known both to the speaker but also to the recipient of every utterance. Consequently,

Through the centuries a very carefully balanced, restrained, moderate vocabulary has been developed, ensuring a particular way of refined control over nuances in the meaning of words—both when agreeing with one’s interlocutor (but taking care not to give the impression of undue enthusiasm!) as well as in rejecting his views (again with fitting concern to avoid undesired offence) (Stanko, 2001, p.44).

That means that the diplomats come sometimes to conclusions by interpreting what lies between the lines. Thus, the decision of every word employed is not taken lightly. This does not mean that speeches should hide second meanings and be confusing. Quite the opposite should happen. Let us not forget that the diplomatic language is the language of politics, and its main intention is to persuade. “In diplomacy it is important to eliminate the disagreements exactly because the main interest is to achieve agreements” (Galindo, 2017, p.920). In order to persuade, one would say that time is of essence, and this is something that can be achieved with ambiguity which is a thorny issue as its use can be both beneficial and harmful in the diplomatic relations. As stated by Galindo,

In diplomatic language, ambiguity is as important as precision. The lack of precision can be a virtue in specific occasions. Precision has the disadvantages that it can be offensive, cause rejection and hostility and reduce the space for diplomatic maneuvers. Ambiguity has the disadvantages that it can create space for disputes about the interpretation of a text and cause lack of trust. [...] Although its disadvantages, the main objective of ambiguity is to create space for maneuvers, in the time and place, for diplomacy. Ambiguity gains time in order to achieve better agreements in the future or to create different interpretations that can be the cornerstone of agreements in volatile situations (2017, p.925).

Another element of diplomatic language that is inseparably connected to oral diplomatic language should be mentioned here, and this is the non-verbal language. Attention to the intonation of the voice has already been called, but in communication we cannot exclude

gestures, facial expressions, and postures. If these means of communication, which vary from culture to culture, are not in accordance with the utterances used by the speaker, then this incongruity can have negative effects on the communication. Of course, in diplomatic communication we may assume that these non-verbal means are as carefully employed as the words used, but nevertheless, we need to examine their role in interpretation.

2.3 Diplomatic interpretation

Since the main characteristics of the diplomatic language have been already laid out, we will now turn to the field of diplomatic interpretation. If we take a closer look to diplomatic interpretation, we get the following definition “Where the representatives of different linguistic and cultural communities came together with the aim of establishing and cultivating political relations, they will have relied on mediators practicing what is usually called diplomatic interpreting” (Pöchhacker, 2004, p.14). We understand that this specific field of interpretation has a particular significance for the international relations of the countries, which makes it an even more challenging and demanding profession.

Diplomatic interpretation can employ either the consecutive modality, in which the interpreter may take notes during the production of the message and starts interpreting right after the production is over, or the simultaneous one. The latest term indicates that the interpreter translates simultaneously during the production of the original message. Both modalities are quite demanding, and the main task is to transfer the main ideas, as a word for word interpretation is almost unattainable. It is understandable why Valdivia Campos is of the opinion that

the interpreter must try hard to understand and analyze in order to keep up with the way the discussion progresses and at the same time transfer in the target language, in a reliable, idiomatic and spontaneous way the essence, *el sentido*, of the discourse as if they were the orator. (1995, p.176).

But how can a diplomatic interpreter merely transmit the main points of the discourse without intervening too much or too little and causing problems to the diplomatic relations? Maybe this is what draws the line between diplomatic interpreting and conference or community interpreting. The intention is not to give prominence to diplomatic interpretation as a more refined or important form of interpreting, but by defining what differs it from other forms of interpretation can lead us to the reason why it is so challenging and, in that way, try to develop strategies in order for an interpreter to overcome them. Taking the more general difficulties as a starting point, we will then direct this investigation to a more specific one which is the use of humor in diplomatic settings and its interpretation.

We may assume that the main predicament rises from the fact that diplomatic interpretation has to do with political discourse. As we have already mentioned, it is not only the formal register, but the need to persuade, employing a sense of ambiguity that should not however impede the communication between the parties. "Consequently, common sense would suggest that there is a balance to be struck between diplomatic decorum and forceful debate" (Nolan, 2005, p.128). An interpreter must use the same formal and most of the times rigid register and the words that will achieve the same effect that the original would have to the recipient. At the same time, they should not employ words too strong or too weak, so as to leave space for further negotiations and remain politically correct, while talking for crucial matters of external affairs. Seymour gives an example of this political correctness:

One has to be far more polite and diplomatic than in an ordinary committee. If the French make a proposition which is perfectly rotten and the chairman asks your opinion, you can't say 'I don't like it,' but rather: 'At the present moment I feel that my government would have some hesitation in accepting the proposition of the French without reserve; may I suggest that a modification in the following sense would perhaps provide for a settlement which might, in the eyes of the inhabitants concerned, appear more equitable.' I find that I am losing all capacity to say just plain 'no' or 'yes'; it has to be, 'I should be rather slow to agree', or 'at the present moment I should feel inclined to concur' (1965, p.162).

If one considers the delicacy of political discourse, it is totally understandable to wonder about transferring this subtlety to another language, maintaining not only the meaning but its effect as well. We should also keep in mind that the process of communication includes other factors such as intonation and gestures that sometimes reveal more than words do.

Should a diplomatic interpreter follow the pattern of the speaker or should they merely convey the message? These questions have been concerning researchers as a univocal answer does not exist. Some interpreters

[...] prefer to follow the speaker more closely, and endeavor to translate the speech as faithfully as possible, respecting not only the style, but also the tone, and expressing the gestures through the voice. [...] This method, however, raises some immediate questions. How does one translate anger, humor, insult, confidence? Does one censor? Does one correct? (Cremona & Mallia, 2001, p.302)

Apart from the variety of topics being discussed in diplomatic conferences and the need for interpreters to be updated and well prepared for words that are frequently used in political discourse, "it is important for an interpreter working in the diplomatic field to follow closely world political, social and cultural events" (Cremona & Mallia, 2001, p.302). Additionally, professionals have also other kinds of difficulties to face like heavy accents, incoherence, and speed. In fact,

The interpreter's nightmare is those who race through written speeches; this occurs very frequently in diplomacy where a written speech format is preferred as speeches receive prior approval. A tight agenda may also dictate a rush to read, and speakers will try to cram a fifteen-minute speech into five, a fatal disaster for the interpreter, especially if figures and dates are quoted (Cremona & Mallia, 2001, p.304).

Since all these factors and difficulties have been discussed, an important question lingers. Is there a place for mistakes in diplomatic interpreting? As Cremona & Mallia affirm, "Occasionally, the interpreter serves as a scapegoat when in a moment of tension, a misunderstanding can be rightly or wrongly attributed to misinterpretation" (2001, p.304). All professionals are expected to fulfil the tasks assigned to them with minimum errors, showing competence and the aptitude to deal with any situation. In particular, in the diplomatic field, the lack of dexterity can generate confusion, enmity or even a war. Thus, while interpreters have to walk on this tightrope, it is extremely challenging for them to come up against equivocal linguistic elements. "In diplomacy, where the value of a word carries weight, it is particularly important to pay attention to idiom, innuendos, nuances of meaning" (Cremona & Mallia, 2001, p.304) and especially those that have cultural connotations, like humor, being sometimes even impossible to be transferred to another language.

As stated by Niedzielski, “failure to appreciate cross-cultural humor because of cultural differences is equally prevalent –not only across radically different cultures but also in the same speech community across generations or other socioeconomic or political groups” (1991, p.139). If humor is shaped by the culture and even the generation that created it, how can it be faithfully translated in another language maintaining the same intention that the original speaker had? And how can interpreters achieve it during the demanding procedure of interpreting the diplomatic language? In order to try to answer these questions, let’s explain what cultural transfer means and specifically how difficult transferring humor from one language and culture to another can be.

2.4 Cultural transfer

A different term should be introduced here in order to lay the framework in which the use of humor will be explained, but those examined in the diplomatic interpretation, which is *cultural transfer*. The term *cultural transfer* is a relatively newly introduced one and it was coined by Espagne in the 1980s. Suvorov describes cultural transfer as “a process of redefining (resemantization), which accompanies the transition of a cultural object from one space to another” (2018, p.209). As Yakushenko suggests in her online article published in the official page of the European University at St. Petersburg,

In the process of transfer and the migration from one cultural situation to another, any object falls into a new context and takes on a new meaning. Cultural exchange is not the circulation of objects and ideas as they already are, but their relentless reinterpretation, rethinking and re-signification. In studying languages, for example, it is clear that even universal words and terms have different connotations and meanings in different languages. (2014).

This transfer does not have an imposing notion of one culture to another rather than a sense of mutual influence and exchange. If we consider culture as the identity that a country and its people have, then cultural transfer refers to the transfer of parts of this identity to people with different identities.

Cultural transfer can happen as a result of cultural experience in one particular culture based on the existing cultural universal entries. In the absence of a similar cultural experience in another culture, the cultural text is transferred from the initial one, and develops in a new environment of another culture (Suvorov, 2018, p.209).

It is important to underline the fact that this transfer of a cultural element into another culture will probably give a new interpretation to this element from the perspective of the host culture. This new perspective though does not only apply in cases where a cultural element comes in contact with a different culture but even in its interpretation from the same culture. It would be a mistake to ignore the existence of “subcultures” in the same country or civilization.

But even the culture of a specific country or civilization does not constitute a rigid and solid notion. People change, their living conditions vary, language, as every living “organism”, evolves and so must culture as all these notions are part of it. Thus, culture itself may be read as transfer, as suggested by Musner (2005), and, more specifically, as an on-going negotiation and differentiation (Rossini & Toggweiler, 2014, p.5). Our world is a world of movement and transformation, and the term *culture* does not carry a univocal meaning.

Having arrived at this point, what is the relation between cultural transfer and language? Williams writes “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (2014, p.49). If we take a closer look to the term *culture*, we understand the complexity of the matter. According to Avruch,

Partly, this confusion stems from the curious history of the term and from the varied academic disciplines that have adapted the notion to their own disciplinary idioms. In some idioms, ‘culture’ is merely a label, a handy name for persons aggregated in some social, often national, sometimes ethnic, grouping; the name given to the group distinguishes it from other such groups. In other idioms [...] ‘culture’ is conceived more deeply, as an evolved constituent of human cognition and social action (1998, p. 3).

If we employ the words of Spencer-Oatey, we get the following definition of culture:

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour. (2008, p.3).

So, what about the language and its role in a culture? All the aspects mentioned above are expressed through oral or written language. From the laws and regulations that serve the organization of a country or a group, to the songs, prayers, poems and history, language is

always present in every culture. We dare say that language functions as a vessel for the expression and transfer of culture. But, at the same time, language apart from the medium is, also, an integral part of the culture establishing a reciprocal relationship between them. As Schiffman explains,

[...] linguistic culture, that is, the set of behaviors, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religion-historical circumstances associated with a particular language. That is the beliefs (one might even use the terms myths) that a speech community has about language (and this includes literacy) in general and its language in particular (from which it usually derives its attitudes towards other languages) are part of the social conditions that affect their maintenance and transmission of its language. (1996, p.5)

The relationship between language and culture has been a vast area of study and, as far as different languages exist so will cultures, and cultural transfer. What remains unanswered is the role of interpretation in this relationship. When interpreters are employed, their objective is to transfer the speaker's words from a source language to a target language which is understood by the recipient. If every language is “culturally charged”, how can a message have the same meaning and effect in another language? Hence, the difficulty that face not only interpreters but translators as well. In this thesis, a particular linguistic and cultural element is to be examined, and this is humor, as mentioned earlier.

2.5 Humor

Humor is another notion difficult to define, hence the plethora of definitions made by different scholars. The origin of the word *humor* comes from Latin. According to Tisgam, “Humor is a Latin word meaning liquid, fluid or moisture. According to ancient Greek theory the body of man comprises of four humors, or liquids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile” (2009, p.2). Dudden defines humor as “a culturally shaped individual cognitive experience, culturally determined because the sociological factors are the primary mechanisms leading to its occurrence” (1987, p.7).

Another attempt to describe humor was offered by Vandaele who emphasizes the fact that humor is not just words bind together and cannot be translated as separate units. According to this author,

It goes without saying that “humor” in general is not articulated in the sense of a conventionally coded linguistic unit *per se*, a semantic meaning attached to lexicalized linguistic forms (words, phrases, etc.). [...] At a higher language level (involving syntax), humor is not necessarily a consequence of merely the ‘literal’ meaning of sentences (or, to use the more technical term, their prepositional content). This does not imply, of course, that the specifics of language in humor cannot be studied; [...] What it does suggest however is that humor as a translation equivalent/unit needs to be defined more adequately (2002, p.151).

Although there has been a great interest in the use and rendering of humor in translation, its investigation in interpretation did not have the same fate. One of the first works published concerning humor in interpretation, as stated in the first pages of this thesis, was the one written by Pöchhacker in 1993 entitled “‘This isn’t funny’ A Note on Jokes in Simultaneous Interpreting”. In this study, Pöchhacker asserts that “funny situations” occur very frequently in simultaneous interpretation (1993, p.455). Another previously mentioned work exploring the relationship of humor and interpretation was “The Pitfalls of Metalingual Use in Simultaneous Interpretation”, which was conducted by Viaggio in 1996. Already from the abstract, he comments on the presence of humor in interpretation and the difficulty posed by humor to interpreters: “For the simultaneous interpreter, puns and other instances of metalingual use are both a challenge and a nuisance” (1996, p.1). He emphasizes this relationship by stating that an interpreter should not only know the language they work with but, also, the culture. And Viaggio adds that “While thematic ad hoc preparedness reflects the interpreter’s professionalism, culture is an essential, structural component of his overall competence” (1996, p.7). These studies investigate humor in simultaneous interpreting, while the objective in this thesis is to move one step further and direct this investigation to the diplomatic arena.

As previously explained, humor is a very unique linguistic element as it does not have the same effect on every person and its comprehension depends on many factors, one of these being language and culture.

In order to be more precise and prove the difficulty conveyed, Nolan's example (2012: 258) can be borrowed:

[...] a British Ambassador acting as President of the UN Security Council once began a meeting with a limerick dedicated to the Russian ambassador, who had just come back from Florida with a handsome tan while the other Security Council members had weathered a bitter New York snowstorm:

Serguei is a difficult name

To slip in the limerick game

But we have to admit

That he looks so fit

That he puts the whole Council to shame.

Needless to say, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for simultaneous interpreters to render a complex verse form like a limerick into French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese while preserving the humor.

It is reasonable to wonder how an interpreter can decide what to interpret regarding humor and what not, what is translatable and what is not, who makes the decision and if there is a correct choice. This thesis will try to answer some of these questions and propose strategies that will hopefully be useful to diplomatic interpreters when transferring humor.

3 Results analysis

Before examining the results of the analysis, the context of the study should be defined. The participants selected are employed in different posts and thus, it would be useful to briefly present each one of them so as to lay the context in which the interviewees work and experience the diplomatic settings and the diplomatic interpretation. Following information about the Embassy of Spain in Athens, Greece, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Cyprus in Brussels is displayed.

The Embassy of Spain in Athens is the diplomatic mission of Spain in Greece. The Embassy promotes the cooperation of the two countries and the representation of Spain in Greece. This representation includes diplomatic, economic, commercial, military, consular relations and consular duties serving Spanish nationals living in or visiting Greece. Currently three diplomats, including the Ambassador, and one interpreter are employed in the Embassy. Although the presence of Spanish diplomats in Greece is dated back to the 18th century, there is no evidence of when the Embassy of Spain in Athens was established.

The information about the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Brussels was found in the official webpages of the two organizations providing the following:

The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts the country's foreign policy, represents the country before other states and international organizations, participates on its behalf in international cooperation initiatives and mechanisms at the international, European and regional levels and advocates Greek interests, both public and private, abroad. The competences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs primarily involve among others the representation of Greece before foreign states, its representation in the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and other international organizations and conferences promoting international cooperation. Due to the international relations fostered, a number of diplomats and interpreters are employed. (Hellenic Republic - Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Brussels is the diplomatic mission of Cyprus to the Kingdom of Belgium. Cyprus and Belgium established diplomatic relations in 1960 and the first Embassy was established in Brussels in 1971. The Embassy's main mission is to promote and further enhance political, economic, cultural and trade relations with Belgium, Luxembourg,

Switzerland and the Gambia. Furthermore, the Embassy provides general information on Cyprus and offers consular services to Cypriot Nationals visiting or living in Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Gambia as well as to foreigners visiting or wishing to establish relations with Cyprus in various fields. No information about the number of diplomats and interpreters working in this embassy has been found. (Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Brussels)

3.1 The nature and requirements of diplomatic language

One of the topics that required thorough analysis as it lays the foundation of this thesis is the nature of the diplomatic language which in turn determines the nature and requirements of the diplomatic interpretation.

As it is already mentioned in the theoretical framework, the diplomatic language follows specific rules and must be persuasive as this is the main objective of the majority of the diplomatic meetings. According to the interviewee D1, the two main features that characterize the diplomatic language is tradition and formality. As he states “la tradición deriva de un uso continuado e inalterado en el tiempo de las fórmulas diplomáticas y el formalismo representa la solemnidad debida en las comunicaciones entre los interlocutores diplomáticos, que hablan en nombre de sus Estados”. It is understood that it consists of a particular terminology that is widely accepted in the diplomatic world and even expected and required, as it is the result of inveterate procedures and ways of communication. To use his words, “La diplomacia multilateral ha ido creando un lenguaje propio, muy utilizado en las organizaciones internacionales, con fórmulas de cortesía diplomática repetitivas”. The word *courtesy* may be one of the key characteristics of diplomatic language and its importance is understood if we consider that the diplomatic meetings do not intend to cause a breach in the relations of the countries but rather to bridge any existing gaps. The following sentence depicts “formulas” used in the diplomatic communication as offered by interviewee D1, “La Embajada de España en ... saluda atentamente al honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de ... y se complace en informarle...”.

There is no doubt that the diplomacy employs a jargon that must obey specific unwritten rules in order to promote communication which is the ultimate intention of every language.

As reported by D2, this jargon must be accurate, sharp, and aim at convincing the interlocutors which leads us to the same characteristics already mentioned. However, if we compare it with the words of Galindo who stated that “the lack of precision can be a virtue in specific occasions” (2017, p.925), we come to realize the complexity of the aforementioned language. Diplomats try to use language in a polite and formal way in order to accurately represent their countries, but, at the same time, they deflect being definite about the different topics discussed in order to leave space for further dialogue and negotiations. In line with Galindo is I2 who talks about “grey zones”. Specifically, he states that “[...] un tema muy peculiar en los temas diplomáticos, que a veces hay zonas grises. O sea, el orador, a propósito, no quiere revelar todo y está hablando de una forma un poco escondiendo y presentando y la cosa no sale siempre muy clara [...]”. It is evident that a very fine thread exists between what is formally accepted and what is really expressed, which, of course, calls for even more discreet maneuvers on the part of the diplomats and, as a consequence, of the interpreters.

Apart from the maneuvers and the prudence that are expected in the diplomatic setting, the language of diplomacy consists, as said above, of specific vocabulary that must be respected and followed. Here, we must not only mention the carefully selected words that diplomats employ in order to address their interlocutors, but we should, also, take into account the titles and names of specific posts or procedures. For example, if we were to talk about an Embassy, since the Embassy of Spain in Athens was the goad to study diplomatic interpretation in this thesis, we meet the title *Secretario de Embajada*. For someone who speaks English and has no knowledge of the diplomatic hierarchy, this term would bring in mind the job of a secretary which is totally mistaken as according to D1 “esta denominación corresponde a la categoría inferior de la carrera diplomática. No debe confundirse, aunque ocurre con frecuencia, con el puesto administrativo de secretario”. Another example offered is that of the title “Encargado de Negocios” that, as D1 explains, means

Funcionario diplomático encargado de sustituir provisionalmente al jefe de misión por no poder este desempeñar sus funciones o por haber quedado vacante el puesto. Nada tiene que ver con la persona responsable en una Misión Diplomática de los asuntos relacionados con los negocios o las

finanzas. La confusión deriva de la traducción al español de la expresión francesa '*Chargé d'Affaires*', que probablemente se ajustaría más a Encargado de los Asuntos que de Negocios.

We get to understand the consequences of not being accustomed with such language and how important these terms are, not only for the sake of an unhindered conversation, but also, in order not to insult the interlocutors by not being able to recognize their post in the diplomatic hierarchy.

However, the terminology used in the diplomatic settings does not have to do only with preconstructed syntactic structures and predetermined vocabulary set as the foundation of the diplomatic language. We should, also, consider the topics and issues discussed and handled in such context which vary, as diplomatic meetings may concern topics such as defense, agriculture, education, culture and in general a wide scope of affairs. Diplomats come together to talk about innovations in technology, treaties about nuclear weapons, financial regulations and other diverse, but certainly exigent subjects, that can affect the prosperity of their people and countries. In her interview, I1 stated that "cada uno de los sectores de la política tiene su propia terminología [...]. Hay que conocer terminología de todos y cada uno de los sectores". It seems that the terminology used in diplomatic fora covers an ample range of topics which require the apprehension and even expertise in terminology emerging from different sectors. Conversations may veer to different directions that relate to the international politic situation and the European relations that evolve and reform on a daily basis. The changes of the political context prompt new terminology to emerge in order to respond to the needs of the current affairs. New treaties and legislations come up in an effort to cover the introduction of a new reality, that sometimes has to do with unexpected current events such as a pandemic. As stated in the interview with I1,

A raíz de la Unión Europea y de las distintas políticas que se han ido adoptando a lo largo de la existencia de la Unión Europea, se ha creado una terminología que se desarrolla mientras vayan avanzando también las relaciones europeas sobre un tema concreto. Hay terminología que se actualiza y un intérprete tiene que estar al tanto de la actualización de esa terminología.

Within this scope, one should speak of the acronyms already existed and new ones that are created describing institutions and organizations that have their place in politics and current affairs and are often used by diplomats. On that subject, I1 explains that

Se crean organizaciones de repente y claro, como suelen tener unos nombres que son como una perífrasis de su objeto, de su razón de existencia, es normal que todo el mundo las llame por sus siglas. Entonces un dolor de cabeza tremendo es saber los acrónimos y saber el correspondiente del o al idioma, a la del o al que tú tienes que interpretar.

It is quite understandable that it is highly important for the terminology employed to be used adequately in order to ensure the smooth communication between the different diplomats and as a consequence between the different countries. Another factor that plays an essential role is the intention that veils behind the words and is expressed through the intonation, the diction, and the countenance of the speaker. As expressed by D3, strong and aggressive language should be avoided in the diplomatic settings as the objective is to meet the goals of the diplomatic encounter by enforcing the relations and promote cooperation between countries and in no way provoke undesirable reactions. In that regard, this interviewee adds:

I believe that no one should use aggressive diplomacy when negotiating because that is exactly the point of the negotiation, you discuss with arguments to get somewhere, in fact to get where you want. I think that it is not appropriate to use aggressive language unless it is about undisputed situations of domination

It should be mentioned here that the aggressive vocabulary is not the only factor that can be blamed for the use of aggressive language, as the intonation and the even most simple gestures can reveal the intention, aggressive or not, of the interlocutors.

3.2 The role of interpreters in diplomatic settings

Diplomatic interpreters are employed in a variety of diplomatic settings in order to facilitate communication between diplomats of different countries and languages. Diplomatic interpreting, which Gamal also calls “the pinnacle of interpreting” in his lecture “Interpreting in the World of Arabic” (Zeng, 2015), takes place in a number of instances, such as, diplomatic settings, for example, the United Nations and the European Union,

parliamentary sessions, like the ones held by the European Parliament, meetings of global leaders, official states visits, speeches, conferences and other events that affect the external affairs of a country.

As every interpreter, the diplomatic interpreters have to face a number of general difficulties that are met in every field, such as the simultaneous interpretation that does not offer the benefit of time to search for the proper words, the speakers' fast or even difficult to understand articulation and the anxiety to render the meaning correctly, to name some of them. It should be mentioned here that the proficient knowledge and use of the language or languages into which and from which someone interprets is considered a precondition either when talking generally about interpretation, or, as in our case, the diplomatic interpretation. Thus, in this section this thesis is not going to analyze the general difficulties in rendering the source language into the target language and how well the second one is acquired as this is a difficulty faced by all interpreters, but also because the fact that an interpreter has excelled at the languages they use is perceived as a norm.

So, which is the role of interpreters in diplomatic settings? This question could be answered by taking into account the perspectives and opinions of the two poles that partake in the diplomatic interpretation, the diplomats and the interpreters. It was a very intriguing task exploring whether the opinions of the interpreters concerning their role coincide with the opinions of the diplomats concerning the expectations they have from their interpreters.

Starting with the perspective of the diplomats, one would presume that the main and primary expectation they have when talking about interpretation in diplomatic settings is the accurate interpretation of their discourses in the target language in order for communication to be facilitated. Indeed, the diplomats interviewed stressed the need for accuracy. As D2 states, "Interpreters shall be capable of accurately and immediately interpreting so as to be as helpful as possible". This opinion is, also, supported by D1 who claims that "La importancia de la interpretación radica en la fidelidad de los términos utilizados y traducidos; en la correspondencia exacta entre los idiomas interpretados".

Both diplomats talk about accuracy, but how can we define accuracy? Someone could maintain that accuracy is achieved when a discourse is interpreted word-to-word, whereas other people claim that accuracy has to do with rendering the exact same meaning by even altering the way the interlocutor has expressed themselves. Thus, we come to face the most ubiquitous dilemma that has troubled translators and interpreters for centuries: literal or free translation and interpretation. Of course, free interpretations should not be understood as free as the term sounds, since it simply refers to the semantic translation, which emphasizes the translation or interpretation of the meaning whereas literal translations adopt a more word-to-word approach.

Many studies and opinions have been written and expressed about the propriety of the two approaches, but the objective of this thesis is not to favor either of them. They are mentioned here because the expectations the diplomats expressed should be even more analyzed since the word *accuracy* can create ambiguities. In order to clarify the blurred lines, the next question asked to the diplomats was about the importance of word-to-word translation. Here, the answers were more diverse. Although D1 states that fidelity is the heart of interpretation when asked about word-to-word translation, his answer may seem contradictory since he deems “más relevante la traducción del espíritu que de la letra”. Reflecting upon his answer on a more profound level, we get to understand that the accuracy he refers to has to do with the meaning of the discourse rather than the words. Thus, an interpreter can be accurate when they transmit and render the exact same message, respecting the context in which it was said, without looking for a word-to-word translation. D3 bares the same opinion, as she states that “sometimes it might be problematic if it is done word-to-word. When one has a good knowledge of the language, free interpretation, free rendering of the text or speech is sufficient” and continues by adding that she is not of the opinion that “word-to-word interpretation is always rendered correctly”. However, D2 seems to hold fast to her opinion that word-to-word interpretation is considered an accurate interpretation, “I consider it [the word-to-word interpretation] very important because you have to make sure that accurate translation is done in your native language. In this vein, each diplomat can transmit what was said back to his mission”. We can conclude that diplomats’ opinions on word-to-word interpretation differ.

In order to display the pitfalls of word-to-word interpretation and how interpreters can be trapped in them, an example of an interpretation as presented by the interpreter Magalhaes (2016) in his TED-ed video *How interpreters juggle two languages at once* is offered.

In 1956, during a diplomatic reception in Moscow, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev told Western Bloc ambassadors, "My vas pokhoronim". His interpreter rendered that into English as, "We will bury you". This statement sent shockwaves through the Western world, heightening the tension between the Soviet Union and the US who were in the thick of the Cold War. Some believe this incident alone set East-West relations back a decade. As it turns out Khrushchev's remark was translated a bit too literally. Given the context his words should have been rendered as, "We will live to see you buried", meaning that Communism would outlast Capitalism, a less threatening comment. Though the intended meaning was eventually clarified, the initial impact of Khrushchev's apparent words put the world on a path that could have led to nuclear Armageddon.

We understand that sometimes the work of the diplomatic interpreters seems really like the work of the juggler, though these interpreters try to balance on a tightrope between the complexities of the languages they interpret and the cultural exchange that naturally occurs, that could change the course of history. Besides, that is why consistency and accuracy is expected from them, but always keeping in mind the context in which something is said.

It is, also, noteworthy that particular attention is paid on the accuracy needed when terminology makes its appearance. As it was already mentioned, terminology has a special place in the diplomatic language and, as a consequence, in the diplomatic interpretation. It is not aleatory that two of the diplomats consider that interpreters knowing in advance the topics of the discourses is essential since, in this way, the interpreters can be adequately prepared to face the terminology employed which is not always undemanding or even heard before. D1 expresses the thought that it is also very important "que los intérpretes conozcan de antemano los temas (y la terminología) que van a tratarse". This view is in accordance with what D2 states about the preparation of the interpreters and the need to handle terminology: "I have sometimes encountered interpreters who have difficulty in rendering the language when they inform us in multilateral meetings about intelligence missions. The terminology that is used is a bit difficult".

The issue of terminology offers a link to the perspective of the interpreters since both of the interviewed interpreters consider terminology highly important and a prerequisite in diplomatic interpretation. In order for an interpreter to achieve mastering the terminology that may vary widely in the diplomatic settings, knowing the topics discussed and having a round knowledge about the current affairs is required. I2 affirms that it is essential “conocer muy bien a fondo la materia y, también, los detalles del tema que lo llamaron para interpretar”. This is, also, stated by I1, who believes that part of the job of an interpreter is using the correct terminology and, in order to accomplish that, the interpreter has to continue learning and studying the reality at all times. In her opinion,

Hay terminología que se actualiza y un intérprete tiene que estar al tanto de la actualización de esa terminología. Y además saber si antes que él o ella ha habido traducción en su idioma o el idioma al que va a interpretar y, si no, hay que inventar una palabra, un término para que sea comprensible por parte de los interlocutores.

I1 continues by stressing the importance for the knowledge of an interpreter to be updated as the opposite is not even considered an option in the diplomatic interpretation. Particularly, she believes that a diplomatic interpreter

Tiene que actualizar sus conocimientos todos los días. El intérprete es una persona que tiene que estudiar o leer todos los días. Es como un médico. Si uno no actualiza sus conocimientos, se queda fuera, es decir, no puede ser tan bueno y no se puede confiar en él o en ella. [...] Hablando de interpretación, en entornos diplomáticos es imprescindible, es sine qua non, es una condición que, si no puedes cumplirla y tienes la intención de ser intérprete, es mejor dejar esta intención y cambiar por otra profesión.

Of course, we can assume that the same attention should be paid to another characteristic of the diplomatic language which has to do with the names of the diplomats and politicians who take part in the diplomatic meetings and appertain to the current affairs. According to I1,

Los nombres, por ejemplo, de los jefes de Estado, por lo menos de Europa, los tienes que saber, del ministro cuya competencia es el tema que tú tienes que traducir. Digamos que son unos detalles técnicos de la interpretación. No tiene mucho que ver con el conocimiento del idioma, pero sí te pueden hacer la vida muy difícil o fácil, si los conoces, en el momento en que aparezcan los y las reconoces, por lo menos en el momento en el que aparecen.

We come to realize that the role of the interpreters is not limited to interpreting simultaneously or consecutively the various diplomatic settings. Au contraire, it is obvious

that their preparation and on-going study of the current affairs is vital, and their work does not end when the diplomatic meetings end. If we take into account the fact that on some occasions their performance is transmitted live, we understand why there is no room for missteps. In De Rioja's video " United Nations, A Day in the Life of Real Interpreters", Liao, Chief of the Interpretation Service at the UN, stated that, as an interpreter,

You have to know your technical side, but you also have to have a certain disposition before you can do it well. When you are in the booth, when you are in front of a meeting, part of it is really performing also because you are after all on air, and you cannot redo what you just did.

Thus, precision is another factor that the interpreters deem paramount, hence the round knowledge they try to obtain, coinciding with the view of the diplomats interviewed about the accuracy that is expected from the former. This is evident from I1's views about what diplomatic interpreters should lay emphasis on: "Y, por supuesto, la precisión de cuando estamos hablando de entornos diplomáticos. Debes tener mucha precisión en el momento de interpretar". In the interview which constitutes part of the aforementioned video "United Nations, A Day in the Life of Real Interpreters", Andreassier-Pearl, the chief of the French Section Interpretation Service at the UN, claims that

A school of thought would say that as long as you translate the word, it is okay. No, you have to make sense, it has to be coherent. It's not enough to do the translation, you have to interpret and make full sentences and you have to make sense in what you say.

Taking all opinions expressed into consideration, we can say that the two sides of the coin, that is to say, the diplomats and the diplomatic interpreters, agree to a large extent on the role of the interpreter in the diplomatic settings. Both parts recognize the need for accuracy, even if this accuracy does not correspond to word-to-word translation, which stems from the severity of the topics discussed. At the same time, to fulfill this requirement, diplomatic interpreters are bound to get acquainted with the language employed which can differ from meeting to meeting. This is why, in order for the interpreters to be fully equipped and deliver the most required outcome, which is to

facilitate communication, they need to be abreast of the current affairs and become familiar with a wide range of terminology, hence always be on their toes.

3.3 The difficulties that emerge when interpreting humor in diplomatic settings

In order to analyze the difficulties that should be dealt with when interpreting humor in diplomatic settings, one has firstly to establish that humor is used by diplomats in the aforementioned settings.

The evidence provided by the interviewees, but, also, the personal experiences of interpreters and diplomats expressed in the audiovisual material analyzed indicate that humor is indeed used by diplomats in the diplomatic settings. There was not one diplomat or interpreter that stated the opposite. This is quite predictable if we consider that humor is another way to express one's ideas and way of thinking. We should not be surprised when thinking about diplomats employing humor as, despite of the severity of the topics discussed in such settings and the importance of their posts, they remain people with perceptions about the world around us which could be presented through humoristic instances. To be more specific, D1 states the following about humor in diplomacy:

La utilización del humor en la diplomacia no depende del medio sino de las personas. Lo mismo podría predicarse de otras profesiones y de otros ámbitos. ¿Utilizan los médicos el humor? Probablemente no cuando están operando a corazón abierto y quizás sí (en función de la personalidad del médico de que se trate) en conversaciones con personas de confianza, incluso sobre operaciones a corazón abierto.

Using humor does not deprive the conversation of the seriousness it may have. Employing it or not is a matter of personality and probably of how confident someone feels about using it in different occasions which might seem more or less inappropriate, but in reality, humor is just another vessel of communication. This is why, however strange it may sound, humor is widely adopted by diplomats as it is by many people. As I1 comments, "Digamos que el humor ha nacido en estas ocasiones de las que yo te estoy hablando de

un clima muy bueno”. The personality of the diplomats partaking into discussions plays its role in the use of humor. I1 continues by stating that

Cuando digo clima bueno, no me refiero solo al resultado de las conversaciones en sí, me refiero también a la personalidad de las partes, que hubo química, por decirlo de una manera. Se entendían muy bien, había caído uno bien al otro, cosas de ese tipo. Es decir, no tiene solo que ver con el tema de la conversación y si ha salido bien o mal. También, tiene que ver con las personas que integran esta conferencia o mesa redonda o lo que sea, o simplemente unas conversaciones bilaterales.

Both of the other two diplomats interviewed hold the same opinion about humor often being used in diplomatic settings. According to D2, “Diplomats often use humor in meetings especially when they want to make the discussion more pleasant or when they want to use a quote in order to compare facts and events”. Here, it is worth mentioning that diplomats may use humor in order to lighten the mood. As stated before, the topics discussed in diplomatic settings vary and can have an important impact on the countries represented, so it is important to either create the adequate ambience that welcomes discussions or endeavor to make difficult situations more bearable and favorable by employing humor. It could be said that humor can be used as an asset when trying to establish a framework for effective communication. It is not by chance that many speakers, in general, choose to break the ice with a joke when starting their speeches as this will help them establish a better and a closer connection with their audience, thus, making their listeners get interested in the speech beforehand and even seem more amiable. So, why not expect the use of this asset by the diplomats who up to a point aim at convincing their interlocutors and creating the context that will facilitate bridging any differences that may arise. This opinion is supported by I2 who thinks that in diplomatic settings humor is used

[...] para romper el hielo, pero también, en algunos casos, cuando las cosas se vuelven agudas, se vuelven duras, difíciles, pues si por aquí o por allá habrá algún orador, algún ponente, algún diplomático que tiene que intervenir bueno para, ya sabes, para hacer las cosas un poco más suaves. Pues tendrá que decir algún chiste o tendrá que decir alguna cosa así más jocosa.

We get to understand that humor is not employed only in the beginning of the conversation in order to set the tone, but also during the discussions to mitigate tense situations that can emerge.

However, D3 expresses an additional reason behind the use of humor by diplomats. She, initially, agrees that humor is an element that has to do with the personality of the interlocutors but goes a step further stating that it, also, has to do with the culture and the country.

My experience from the EU Institutions have taught me that in all the meetings there are member states which, as a rule, use humor or give a touch of humor in their speeches and in their statements. The English, the French, the Germans who have a touch of irony in their humor and the Romanians as well. [...] The English because often it is in their DNA, and the more serious issues were indeed negotiated with very sophisticated sense of humor.

So, we infer that maybe some cultures employ humor more than others, but what D3 adds to the information about why diplomats employ it is that they do it in order to convey rigid messages veiled behind humor. In order for some utterances not to sound that harsh or categorical, humor can be handled in such a way that will transmit the message but at the same time it will keep the interlocutor protected from accused of being absolute. According to D3, "Many times, it is, also, used to convey serious things or to warn. My feeling is that the French often use humor in their speeches to warn about something". It should be stressed that this thesis does not intend to investigate whether each country stated above uses or not humor nor to criticize the way they use it. Additionally, with such a small number of participants in the interviews, generalizations about the use of humor by diplomats from specific countries cannot be reached. The mere mention of the countries, here, is to display different reasons why humor can be employed in diplomatic settings.

As far as the different types of diplomatic settings where humor emerges are concerned, it is understood that they differ as the diplomats and diplomatic interpreters interviewed work in different posts and attend different diplomatic meetings. To name some of the settings, I1 mentions the appearance of humor in diplomatic conferences, round tables, and two-way conversations, and D3 points out diplomatic meetings in the EU Institutions. Also, the diplomatic hierarchy does not seem to play an important role in the use of humor by the diplomats. I1 states that interpreting humor "ha ocurrido muchas veces [...] bastante en las consecutivas y a todos los niveles, a nivel de ministros o a nivel de periodistas que hablaban con diplomáticos, o sea, a todos los niveles". In addition to this comment, D3

observes that “[...] the more we move up the ranks, the more humor is used in comparison to the lower ranking diplomats”.

We can conclude that humor is indeed used by diplomats for a variety of reasons, and it can be a linguistic tool of particular importance that may set the tone of a discussion or even reveal the intentions of the speakers. “In difficult situations humor is necessary and shows the way someone approaches an issue”, as expressed by D3.

Having established the use of humor, the next question that comes to mind is whether it is always easy to detect. This question concerns rather the interpreters who are the ones that interpret and convey the messages from a source language to a target language. In order to deliver humor in a second language, one has to detect it first, meaning that they have to realize that the utterance said has a humoristic connotation and should be treated as a humoristic remark. Here, the cultural barrier and, as a consequence, the language barrier should be introduced as factors that may impede humor from being detected. Words are not empty shells; they bare meanings and connotations that are mold into a context. Different languages are molded by different people and different cultures which in turn are forged based on how these people see the world and how they have formed their existence throughout history in it.

Thus, it is not difficult to understand that no two languages can provide exact synonyms if we were to make corpuses, as the notions covered by their vocabularies differ not only linguistically but also culturally. There exist many cases of untranslatable words, like “μεράκι” (meraki) in Greek, used “when you put your heart and soul into something” (“Babel Magazine”, 2017), “sobremesa” in Spanish which literally means ‘over the table’ and describes the Spanish tradition of relaxing at the table after having a meal, “abbiocco” in Italian which refers to the drowsiness someone feels after a big meal, “utepils” in Norwegian which apparently is a beer that someone drinks outside. These words do not have a direct translation in other languages because no language can perfectly encapsulate the different ways in which people see the world. Languages are partly a matter of perspective and, if we assume that people in general have different perspectives,

we can imagine how perspectives can differ between different cultures and languages. Utterances can be considered funny or even hilarious by some people while others just do not understand why someone should laugh about them. This has to do not only with the linguistic barrier, but also with the fact that even people with the same nationality and experiences do not necessarily hold the same perspective and opinion about what is thought and understood as humor.

The answer given by I1 about whether humor is always detectable comes to confirm the previously presented opinion. As the interpreter states, detecting humor

depende de la nacionalidad de la persona al o del tines que interpretar. [...] solamente hago interpretación del español al griego y del griego al español. En mi caso, diría que es más fácil que para una persona que interpreta del español al chino o del español al japonés o alemán. Supongo que sería más difícil en estos casos.

A new aspect is introduced here and that is of the proximity of cultures. The more two cultures are oriented towards the same perspectives and temperament, the easier it gets to identify humor. The connection that the interpreter makes among culture, language and humor could not be more coherent. No matter how languages change and evolve, the underlying culture is always present providing the framework in which they unfold.

The difficulties displayed in the words of the first interpreter interviewed are, also, expressed by I2, who shares the opinion that detecting humor is not an easy task. In his opinion, “Depende del orador, porque hay oradores que creen que tienen humor, pero que no tienen. La verdad es que lo más difícil de destacar [sic], diría yo, es el humor de los británicos porque los mediterráneos lo tienen más claro, más obvio”. The connection between humor and culture is established stressing anew the proximity between cultures.

So, are the diplomatic interpreters always expected to be aware of the humoristic instances they may encounter? There are no people more suitable to answer this question than the diplomats, and the answer is not surprising. Diplomatic interpreters are expected not only to detect it but also to interpret it. The answer in the question about how someone can detect humor even if it is sure not to be an easy task comes from I1, who thinks that

Las armas que tiene la persona que tiene que interpretar el humor, detectable o no, es el muy buen conocimiento de los dos idiomas. Eso significa que el noventa por ciento de los casos sabe que se trata de humor. Es decir, porque un intérprete normalmente no solo sabe el idioma, conoce muy bien la cultura de los países al y del que cuyo idioma mejor traduce, interpreta. Entonces, creo que, digamos, si tenemos en cuenta que tienen un alto nivel de conocimiento, no solo de la lengua sino también de la cultura y de la civilización, en teoría, de los países cuyo idioma habla, en noventa por ciento, si quieres, o poco menos de los casos, sí que lo sabe detectar.

If we suppose that diplomatic interpreters can in a way overcome the fact that humor is not always detectable, what occurs next is the interpretation of the humoristic utterance which can be considered as the second difficulty they may face concerning humor being used in diplomatic settings. We need to keep in mind that interpreters, and in our case diplomatic interpreters, do not have the luxury of time as they interpret against the clock. Their responses have to be immediate and precise, and humor is a way of expressing oneself that does not necessarily have an equivalent in the target language. Yet, merely informing the diplomats that something humorous has been said is not what is expected from the diplomatic interpreters. D2 believes that “it is important to have the full context in order to take part into the discussion and fully understand the concept”.

However, the diplomats do not deny the difficulties that the use of humor can impose, as they have sometimes faced them themselves. D2 acknowledges that on some occasions the cultural connotations that humor carries have made it difficult to grasp the humoristic utterances said, and explains that

This is a quite frequent issue especially if a joke is made in a language that I don't speak and have no other affiliation to it. Well, the translation of a joke is always a difficult attempt given that someone might be in a way lost in translation or misinterpret what was actually said. I would prefer to have the translation but also the actual motto in order to make sure that I have understood things correctly and within the right framework.

Probably the cultural boundaries mentioned above are the reason why D1 believes that humor should be employed after having considered some factors, and specifies that

Conviene tener cuidado con la utilización de chistes en las conversaciones diplomáticas. No tanto por lo que representan a la hora de aportar humor a la conversación, sino por la posibilidad de que no vayan a ser entendidos por nuestros interlocutores. A este respecto, conviene que las notas de humor (no forzosamente un chiste) busquen el terreno de lo universal y que traten de huir del chiste, normalmente circunscrito a entornos culturales homologables.

The importance of the interpretation of humor is also displayed in the words of D3, who affirms

I think it is very important because it sometimes lightens the mood, and it is necessary; plus, through it you get to know your interlocutor. Personally, I think that the approach with humor is necessary because humor hides an intelligence for the person who talks about serious issues and gives a humoristic tone and approach. It, also, reveals things about other sides of their character. It is important because it generally reflects a little bit more the country, the culture, and the hierarchy.

It is understood that interpreting humor is sought-after, and it is quite reasonable if we take into account the fact that no one wants to feel left out of a conversation let alone in a diplomatic setting where discussions about the external affairs of the countries take place. Diplomatic interpreters are aware of this need, and they consider it an undisputable fact. After all, the work of the interpreter is not to choose the parts or phrases that they will interpret but transmit the message assisting in the communication of the interlocutors. This is clearly stated by I1:

No cabe duda de que hay que traducirlo. No, no es cuestión de elegir traducir o no una frase humorística. Lo que sí puede ocurrir algunas veces, sobre todo en las interpretaciones simultáneas, es que puede que, en aquel momento en que uno dice algo humorístico, si no hay tiempo, se ha dicho muchas cosas antes y bastante después y no le da tiempo traducir también una bromita que no añade mucho ni quita nada de la conversación, a lo mejor pasa de sentido de humor del locutor. Pero esto puede ocurrir por presión, no porque el intérprete en principio elija lo que tenga que traducir. Indudablemente lo tiene que traducir.

So far, it has been made evident that humor is not always or at least easily detectable due to cultural connotations that it may have, but both interpreters and diplomats agree that humoristic instances should be interpreted despite the cultural associations that it bears.

Apart from being less or more effortless to distinguish humor in a speech in diplomatic settings, there are also other complications that may emerge from its use. These complications, as well, have primarily to do with the fact that humor is interwoven with culture. We have already mentioned that humor can be a personal way of expressing that does not necessarily create the same effect to other people, but this is not connected with the interpretation but rather with a more personal taste and sense of humor. However, we should be mindful of the fact that no one intends to laugh alone when telling a joke and interpreters may feel even more stressed bearing this in mind. Perret, a professional interpreter, in his video “Interpreting jokes” (De Rioja, 2012), states the following “If you ask a lot of interpreters, they would say that the words that they most dread hearing are ‘I am going to tell you a joke’”.

Along the same lines, Slaughter Olsen, who is a conference interpreter who interprets for diplomats and world leaders at places like the U.N, in the video “Interpreter Breaks Down How Real-Time Translation Works” (WIRED, 2019) expresses the opinion that “Jokes are one of the most difficult things to interpret because they can get lost in translation easily”. In order to give an example of such an occasion he presents a joke made by an English-speaking person whose interlocutor is a Spanish-speaking person:

- “What did one dolphin say to the other after splashing him?”

- “You did that on porpoise”.

He explains that “Never mind that this joke barely makes sense in English, in Spanish it completely does not work, because 'porpoise' is 'marsopa' and 'purpose' is 'propósito'. It is an untranslatable pun. Attempts of humor are often lost and there is not much an interpreter can do”.

It is clear that an obstacle that can surface when interpreting humor is its untranslatability, which means that something gets usually lost in spite of the interpreters’ effort to interpret

it and convey the same meaning. It is clear that puns do not work or at least do not have the same effect when an attempt to translate them is made. In her interview, D1 affirms that

El humor no es siempre traducible, para empezar. Yo diría que en muchos casos no es traducible y quien te diga lo contrario será una persona muy presumida, francamente. Aunque estamos hablando de unas culturas tan próximas como la española y la griega, no es siempre traducible. Sí, hay casos, por supuesto, que es perfectamente traducible, otros que se aproxima y, utilizando unas analogías, puedes entender el sentido del humor o una frase humorística que te haya dicho tu interlocutor. Pero no, no es siempre traducible.

As said before, people perceive the world in a way that is affected by the place, the time and the way they are grown up. This in turn affects the way they express themselves, and humor is another way of expressing oneself. We cannot deny that a country's history, culture, society, everyday life and in many cases even religion are interconnected notions expressed through language. Specific perceptions formed are expressed through humor and many of them may create difficulties in being understood by others because of the lack of same experiences and perceptions or even worse at times offend without that being the objective. An example of such a cumbersome instance is illustrated by I1, who explains that

Un caso también puede ser no muy frecuente, menos mal, puede ser, darse el caso de una persona con un sentido del humor que, inconscientemente vamos a suponer, puede ofender a su interlocutor y él no darse cuenta de esto. [...] Yo creo que este es uno de los problemas más grandes en los casos de frases humorísticas o bromas que se pueden decir entre dos interlocutores. A mí me ha ocurrido una vez una persona que ha dirigido una frase a su interlocutor que prácticamente ofendía a su superior, del interlocutor. Pero claro, lo ha hecho sin darse cuenta de que, sí lo ofendía, porque era un comentario muy sexista, un humor, mejor dicho, muy sexista. Entonces hablando dos hombres, no era hombre y mujer, hablando dos hombres, uno de ellos ha hecho un comentario bastante sexista de la superior del segundo hombre. [...] Son situaciones en las que uno tiene que proteger al que haya dicho esta broma tan desconcertada. No siempre lo consigue, porque, si se trata de algo muy gordo, no lo puedo remediar. Sobre todo, si hablamos de interpretación simultánea y son casos difíciles cuando el humor se utiliza de manera sexista o, si quieres, machista o racista.

Although sexist and racist humor is condemned, we cannot escape the fact that some cultures follow a different status quo and some notions and old ideas are rooted in them in a way that they do not even realize that what has been said may offend part of the interlocutors, or at least seem inappropriate. The role of the interpreter is really tough in situations like this. On the one hand, their profession dictates interpreting everything that

has been said, not being able to choose, and on the other hand, they know that moments after they interpret, the diplomatic relations may take a totally different turn than the one planned. On this subject, I1 continues,

No puedes salvar una relación diplomática por no interpretar, no es este tu papel, por no interpretar una frase. Pero cuando tú te das cuenta de lo que dice uno de los interlocutores y él o ella no lo hace, no se da cuenta, la verdad es que esta sí que es una situación muy difícil para un intérprete, cuando sabe que la próxima frase que va a traducir puede ser un factor que afecte las relaciones de los interlocutores. Y no por su culpa, por supuesto. Son detalles que no sé, en aquel momento, no puedes tener una estrategia para todo. Ni tampoco ningún libro te puede aconsejar.

There is no doubt that interpreters face a very cumbersome moment when they face situations like the aforementioned and not being able to take the time to process the next move makes them walk into a tightrope. However, humor that can offend some of the interlocutors is not the only impediment that might arise. Sometimes set phrases or proverbs are used in a humoristic manner. Needless to say, since they are forged into cultures, the cultural gap is often very obvious when interpreting them. When I2 was asked whether he could talk about any example of untranslatable humor, he answered that

Muchas cosas, por ejemplo, chistes y juegos de palabras. Eso ya no coincide de un idioma a otro. No me acuerdo exactamente ahora algo específico, pero te digo como es interpretar el chiste o el humor es no solamente interpretar palabras, sino otras tradiciones y otras maneras de ver [...].

Even when proverbs have a corresponding interpretation in other languages, the interpreters must decide whether these translated proverbs can be used depending on the register they belong to. The target proverbs can be really vulgar in the target language which raises the question of whether they should be used, however convenient their interpretation, when they do not belong at the register used at the diplomatic setting. To become more explicit, an example presented by I1 is used. The interpreter states that

Incluso, en las culturas griega y española hay expresiones, estaban hablando ahora de expresiones para dar un ejemplo, porque no se me ocurre otra cosa, expresiones o refranes o frases hechas que pueden resultar humorísticas. Independientemente de que un interlocutor tenga sentido del humor o si da una pincelada de humor en lo que dice, hay frases hechas, refranes que sí que pueden resultar humorísticas en algún momento. Entonces, un ejemplo que te puedo dar podría ser, por ejemplo, la frase hecha en español que es "está hasta en la sopa". Una persona que está hasta en la sopa. En griego hay algo equivalente que, si lo traducimos al castellano, sería "es el

perejil". Una persona que está en todas partes y quiere que su nombre aparezca en gran parte, en Grecia se llama el perejil. Hay una analogía ¿no? El perejil va en toda la comida, como decimos está hasta en la sopa. Entonces, es bastante fácil que un griego o un español, según lo diga primero entienda el sentido de humor que uno quiere hacer con esta expresión. Y son proximidades culturales más que lingüísticas.

The analogy offered seems to provide a glimpse of hope for the diplomatic interpreters, but two factors should be taken into consideration here. The first one is the proximity between the two cultures that I1 talks about, the Spanish and the Greek. There are language pairs that do not present the same proximity neither culturally nor linguistically. Interpreters cannot simply rely on the fact that the languages they interpret into and from display a cultural proximity. The second one is the opinion expressed before and has to do with the appropriateness or lack of it that the interpreted proverb may bear. I1 offers such an example that due to its vulgarity would not be used in a diplomatic setting although it is the perfect interpretation for the proverb stated:

En castellano existe una expresión que es "irse por los cerros de Úbeda". Esta expresión, una persona que sabe castellano y no es español, claro, entiende perfectamente lo que quiere decir. Ahora en griego hay un equivalente, pero es muy vulgar, es muy popular. Y ahí hay otro problema, aunque encuentres un equivalente, hasta qué punto el espíritu, o, mejor dicho, el ambiente del encuentro diplomático, de la reunión diplomática permite que traduzcas el equivalente que es vulgar. Son sentidos muy sutiles que uno tiene que tener en cuenta en el momento de hacer la interpretación. Porque no solo nos puede facilitar que haya un equivalente. Es que hay que ver el registro de uso de este equivalente. Es muy importante esto. Entonces, en aquel momento el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que ver qué sacrifica: una frase en el otro idioma casi puntual en cuanto a su significado, pero vulgar, que va a sonar de una manera rara en este ambiente, o hace una traducción no tan, digamos, bien registrada en la lengua a la que tiene que traducir, no tan establecida, mejor dicho, y lingüísticamente en la lengua a la que tiene que traducir.

To sum up, if we were to provide an overview of the difficulties that may arise from the use of humor it would be useful to mention the untranslatability of some puns and jokes that work only in the source language in virtue of the linguistic and cultural gap that exists between countries. Another factor that is partly related to culture, as it also has to do with the personality of the interlocutor, is offensive humor that paradoxically may be considered offensive for the target language and culture but not for the source language and culture, since differences in culture have different standards on deciding what is offensive and what is not. The appropriateness and suitability of interpreted proverbs or jokes chosen by the interpreter due to their close proximity to the original proverbs or jokes is another element that can cause a headache when interpreting humor in diplomatic settings.

It must be noted that humor can be a headache for all interpreters independently of the setting they work in. However, considering the fact that the diplomatic setting has the abovementioned characteristics and creates the framework for the healthy relations between countries, any word uttered by the diplomatic interpreters can have a great impact on them. Thus, the difficulties and, as a consequence, the reaction of the interpreters bear an extra importance as they may negatively affect the diplomatic relations. If the most desired objective of the discussions in the diplomatic settings is to promote communication between the nations, the least desired one is to offend any of the interlocutors in any way; either by interpreting an offensive joke or by failing to transmit their intention to make a joke and let both the speaker and the listeners puzzled not being able to understand why the first is laughing and the rest of the interlocutors are not.

In short, it seems that interpreting jokes can be a real puzzle for diplomatic interpreters since the problems that may immerge are quite a few. We can assume that no matter how hard interpreters try, no matter how witty and well prepared they are, sometimes language may fail them and lead them to not deliver the exact sense or meaning that the humoristic utterance that was employed had.

3.4 Suggested strategies for interpreting humor in diplomatic settings

Having established that diplomats use humor, and therefore it is quite possible that at some point during their careers diplomatic interpreters will have to interpret it, with the difficulties that this interpretation may involve, one can wonder how these difficulties can be tackled. In other words, can diplomatic interpreters be prepared for interpreting humor? Are there any specific strategies that they can follow in order to be able to resolve the problems posed by the use of humor? The answers vary.

It is thought quite useful to start with what the diplomatic interpreters should avoid when facing the difficulty to interpret humor. It may sound commonplace and even unrealistic,

but one of the first steps is not to panic. When panicking while interpreting, it is probable that two things will happen. First, the audience will discern the panic and will realize that something is out of place. This can generate an anxiety from the part of the diplomats which is definitely neither expected nor desired, especially when they rely on their interpreters to understand what their interlocutors talk about while discussing and negotiating important affairs. The next thing that will occur is that the interpreter focusing on their anxiety and effort to deliver the joke will stop “listening” and lose the progression of the interlocutor’s speech creating an even more serious problem to the interpretation. Hence, it is important to stay focused and continue interpreting.

The difficulty of detecting humor has already been illustrated and what follows is what should not be done when interpreters have to deal with this difficulty. When one has not fully grasped the humoristic utterance or its meaning, it would be better to probably avoid guessing and interpreting something they are not sure about. To use the words of I2,

En un entorno diplomático, si no están al cien por cien seguros de lo que han entendido y de lo que van a interpretar, pues que no lo hagan, porque puede salir justamente en entornos diplomáticos una interpretación que no sea la deseada por el orador. Así que hay que tener muchísimo, muchísimo cuidado y estar segurísimo de lo que han entendido y lo que van a reproducir.

It is considered a better option to omit a joke than make the effort to interpret it when the meaning and its objective are not fully understood, as transferring it in an improper way may cause a negative reaction from the side of the listeners and will wrongfully embarrass the speaker. Another pitfall that diplomatic interpreters should avert is interpreting the humoristic utterances word-to-word. It has been mentioned that usually puns do not work in other languages simply because the humoristic elements rise from the specific words, their meaning, and the way they rhyme or resemble, as in the above-mentioned example with the words “porpoise” and “purpose” that can be considered as homonymous.

The literal translation in Spanish, for instance, would make no sense leaving the interlocutors perplexed at least and would fail to deliver not only the meaning but also its purpose, *skopos*, which is to produce laughter. As observed by I1,

Para empezar, en la mayoría de los casos no se puede traducir palabra por palabra. Si hablamos de una expresión, incluso vuelvo al refrán que puede tener un papel humorístico en una conversación, es muy raro que se traduzca palabra por palabra, no se puede traducir palabra por palabra.

Moreover, starting to interpret a joke without knowing how it ends or if it is translatable is another occasion that can cause confusion to the interlocutors, but also an extra anxiety to the interpreters. Even in the simultaneous interpretation, when a humoristic comment is made, it is better, if possible, to fully grasp its meaning and then continue with the interpretation provided that it is translatable. When it comes to untranslatable humor, interpreters ought to avoid laughing when they are not able to transfer this humoristic attitude to their listeners and provide them with the same opportunity to laugh. No one wants to feel left out of conversions and especially diplomatic ones when many things are at stake.

After having established actions that should be eschewed, strategies and advice provided by interpreters shall be presented. It has also been made clear that the requirements and the challenges that diplomatic interpreters face are numberless and in the meanwhile the time is of essence. So, when humor is employed in diplomatic settings, one has only a few seconds to decide whether what has been said is translatable or not. As discussed, sometimes interpreters can employ equivalent proverbs or phrases that exist in the target language and will be completely understood by the interlocutors, causing the same humoristic meaning. However, cultures and languages do not always provide the interpreters with the corresponding solutions. In case that a specific word is chosen in order to convey a humoristic message, the interpret should not focus on the literal translation of this word but rather on selecting one that will produce the same effect as the original employed. I1 explains that “Tanto en la consecutiva como en la simultánea, si se trata de una palabra, verbo, sustantivo o lo que fuera, el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que

encontrar un equivalente que produzca la risa, digamos, de la segunda parte en esta conversación”.

Sometimes, the work of the interpreter is even harder, and they have to face a situation when the humor employed is untranslatable. In that case, some advice is provided in the video “Interpreting jokes” (De Rioja, 2012) by Perret, who is an interpreter but also a stand-up comedian. Drawing upon his experience, he claims that in such an occasion, when something humoristic has been said and the interpreter cannot transfer it or by transferring it, the humor is lost, the idea is to make a joke out of the situation. This means that the interpreter has to highlight the fact that they have failed to deliver the joke due to its untranslatability no matter how hard they tried. This can at least create a smile at the part of the interlocutors who may appreciate the effort and the honesty of the interpreter, and they may even laugh. It can be perceived as a sign of integrity and even loyalty to the profession and will show respect to the interlocutors as well. All people fail at times and being candid about it may gain the respect of the interlocutors. According to Perret, “That might, if you are lucky, get a laugh, but it will certainly break the ice and it establishes a direct link between you and the customer which could be the intention of the speaker”.

What can follow is an attempt from the part of the interpreter to explain two aspects, the first one being the intention of the humor employed and the second one being its spirit and *skopos*. As Perret explains,

Accept that we cannot make justice to the substance, so we need to go back to the speaker’s intention, if it is breaking the ice, establishing a perspective, establishing a bond, demystifying or showing the absurdity of a situation. We may just have to explain that, so we can take the time of listening to the joke and try to work out what the point of the joke is, not why it is funny but why it is being told, how it relates to the meeting. And then give some kind of quick explanation such as, ‘the speaker makes a joke comparing the commission’s proposal and a leaky boat’ or ‘the speaker makes a joke demonstrating how we are all facing the same problem’. You feel like it is a bit of a cop-out but at least you survive and live to fight another day.

The objective here is to deliver to the interlocutors at least the intention of the speaker which is not of lesser importance than the joke itself. As stated earlier, jokes are a way of expressing so maybe the intention behind them is of equal if not of higher importance than the words employed. In the diplomatic settings knowing the intention of the interlocutors is

key to understanding the agenda of the parties and their objectives for the meeting, so providing the information that the speaker has used humor to break the ice or irony to criticize the relations between two countries, for example, is valuable information for the diplomats.

In addition, a quick explanation of the humor could also be employed. In order to transfer the spirit of the joke, I1 comments that

Si se describe lo que la segunda parte ha querido decir con lo que ha dicho, o si se da como entre comillas, como un resumen, se da la idea en una palabra o dos, pero que no se da, no se traduce, interpreta, mejor dicho, literalmente se da de una manera que puede ser una frase más larga o menos o uso el verbo que a lo mejor tiene un idioma y el otro no, se puede intentar acercarse lo más posible al sentido y al espíritu del humor que un interlocutor haya tenido en el momento en que haya dicho lo que haya dicho.

Here, not the intention but rather an effort to explain the joke or any humoristic utterance is displayed. For example, in the case of the pun with the words “porpoise” and “purpose”, the interpreter could try to explain the resemblance of the words in English that cause laughter in one language but not in the other. I2 also expresses the opinion that the interpreter can try to reform the humoristic utterance employed in a way that will make sense in the target language.

Alguna vez intentar poner palabras o intentar interpretarlo de una forma semejante o cercana a lo que acaba de decir el orador y si se puede de una manera jocosa, pero graciosa. Pero sabes, eso también depende del intérprete. O sea, si el intérprete tiene sentido del humor por sí mismo, pues la cosa puede ir mejor.

As far as the interpretation of humor that can offend the rest of the interlocutors, we can assume that there is an important aspect that should be taken into consideration and that is the intention of the speaker. If the speaker has employed humoristic utterances that are meant to offend, then the interpreter should deliver this intention keeping in mind that the profession asks for the mere interpretation of what is said and probably no one will blame the interpreter for doing their job. In the case offered previously by I1, where the speaker had no intention to offend their interlocutors, it should be considered again the fact that the interpreter is only a messenger.

Nevertheless, the careful selection of words could mitigate the negative effects of the improper joke. According to I1,

[...] sí que hay que distinguir que el humor y todo eso... más bien te lo cuento porque el humor no es siempre bueno. El humor no siempre ayuda. No siempre es un factor que relaja a los interlocutores. Puede ser muy negativo. Y desde luego, si es negativo, aunque se utiliza de manera inconscientemente negativa, el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que tomar una decisión en un segundo. La regla general es traducir lo que tienes que traducir y punto. Pero claro, puedes calibrar hoy mismo si puedes dar un tono más ligero en el comentario, utilizar otro verbo en lugar del que ha utilizado el interlocutor. Hay trucos que no traicionan la profesión que estás ejerciendo. Y al mismo tiempo suavizan, digamos, una situación que puede ser crispante de un momento a otro por una... no sé cómo lo llamaría, un desconcierto inconscientemente. Si es conscientemente, ya no te digo nada, en aquel caso sí que hay que traducir lo que uno que haya dicho. Si es un humor de esto, sarcástico, por ejemplo, o agresivo y que también, digamos, es un humor negativo, pero si es así, y es por alguna razón, entonces no cabe duda de que tienes que traducir lo que tienes que traducir.

It is understood that, especially during simultaneous interpretation, paying attention to the speaker, deciding if humor is untranslatable and explaining its purpose while at the same time trying to keep focused on the next phrases uttered by the speaker is a struggle and experience is pivotal. This struggle has led some interpreters to an act that is probably not considered a strategy but rather a last-minute solution. There have been instances where the interpreter asked from the audience to laugh as they could not transfer the humoristic instance due to its untranslatability and in order for the listeners not to feel excluded and the speaker not to feel offended. I2 gives such an example:

A veces me contaba un colega que justamente alguien que había en una reunión, en una conferencia, había dicho un chiste, empezaron a reírse solamente los que entendían inglés y los españoles no entendían nada. Así que él les dijo por los auriculares «Bueno, es que el orador acaba de decir un chiste en inglés que no se puede traducir. Pero como todos se ríen, por favor, pueden reír ustedes también».

When interpreters are called to transfer humor and, in a way, they do not succeed, as something is lost, they should not see this incident as an actual failure but rather as an opportunity to further practice their skills. Past nonperformance should stand for the motivation to study what has been uttered and how it could be better interpreted in the future in order to practice their skill to face such difficulty in a more experienced way. Besides, it has been made clear that the work of the interpreter does not finish after the diplomatic meetings.

So, independently of the strategies provided above, one cannot deny the unpredictability of interpreting in diplomatic settings where the topics vary considerably. Following these strategies is not a panacea, but beware. Fortunately, there is something that interpreters can do in order to ride out the interpretation of humor in the diplomatic settings and it is related with the personal effort they devote to the profession. In other words, the only way to keep up with the difficulties is to keep up with reality through being constantly informed about the world around them. Languages are neither inert nor static; they keep moving and changing since the world that has mold them and used them changes continuously. Languages are like organisms; they need to change in order to survive and meet the requirements of everyday life. Since humor is a vessel that expresses perspectives through language, it is only logical to change and adapt to the changes of language. If an interpret cannot follow these changes, they simply fall behind. As stated by I1,

[...] lo cierto es que, en definitiva, por muchas estrategias, entre muchas comillas, que uno tenga en el momento de interpretar, la lengua es algo tan rico, tan vivo que se renueva y se renueva tanto de un día para otro, que siempre las encontrarás superadas por el propio idioma en cualquier idioma. Entonces, siempre tienes que inventarte nuevas estrategias. No te van a servir las que tienes tú en el cuadernito apuntadas y, aunque las tengas en tu mente, en cualquier momento, te van a superar. Todos los apuntes te van a superar.

As the everyday life adapts to new conditions, so must do the interpreters. Reading the news and be abreast of the current affairs has already been mentioned as a requirement that interpreters should fulfill. However, it must be noted that this information plays an important role in the interpretation of humor as well. Let us not forget that humor does not only refer to proverbs and puns, but it also has to do with comical incidents that occur in everyday life. How can an interpret detect the humoristic connotation that a word, phrase, or a name may bear if they have not been informed for the humoristic incident that was the context and the reason to employ the word in the first place?

The following excerpt, provided by I1, perfectly encapsulates the need to be always informed, never cease to try to learn more.

Lo que cuenta más también para el humor en entornos diplomáticos o en cualquier otro entorno son los principios y el trabajo. Trabajar mucho, seguir la actualidad, seguir la política europea, internacional, nacional, seguir la cultura, desde luego, no solo seguir, vivirla constantemente. En este sentido, vivir también las novedades que puede haber en el sector del humor, nuevas expresiones que puedan resultar humorísticas y que salen de acontecimientos de la vida social o política, muchas veces. Todo ello está relacionado y es más que obvio, si, por ejemplo, un intérprete o una intérprete no lee los periódicos, no lee la prensa, no puede traducir una expresión que se haya producido a raíz de un acontecimiento cómico que pueda haber surgido en Grecia o en España. No puede tampoco captar el sentido de humor que un país pueda tener frente a otro, que no le facilita su trabajo porque muchas veces el humor entre niveles diplomáticos puede ser también muy sarcástico, ¿no? Entonces, creo que la estrategia, la única estrategia si se puede llamar así, sería estar siempre muy al tanto de la actualidad nacional, europea y, en tercer lugar, internacional.

It can be said that every profession is based on some principles and one of the principles of diplomatic interpretation is being precise and respectful of the communication established between diplomats. One cannot be neither precise nor respectful if they stop being au fait with the current affairs not only in terms of the political life, but also in terms of the progression of language. I1 supports that

Todo ello llevará al poder captar el sentido de humor. Y para mí, como te he dicho al principio, cualquier estrategia se desarticula si uno no sigue la actualidad lingüística y política y, sobre todo, o si quieres, también si no está en alerta, si carece de precisión lingüística, me refiero en este caso, y también si le falta respeto a lo que hace y hacia al y para los que lo hace.

It seems that the most important strategy, which was mentioned by many diplomatic interpreters throughout the interviews, but also in the audiovisual material consulted, is to get a news habit and always know what is happening in the world. In that way, diplomatic interpreters can walk the tightrope being as much prepared as possible to face humor and its ramifications.

4 Relation between the project and the contents of the master's degree

Although this master's degree offers courses that mainly have to do with translation and not interpretation, the course "Práctica de la Interpretación para la Empresa I B-A (Inglés-Español)" (Business Interpretation) was the one that urged me to explore the obscure to me world of interpretation. The course provided the foundation in order to get to know what interpretation really is and at the same time come in touch with the different types of interpretation which made the need to investigate it even more profound. The contents of the aforementioned course laid the background knowledge required to investigate interpretation and hence offered the competence to delve into diplomatic interpretation and the difficulties that interpreters may face when humor is employed.

Apart from the theoretical groundwork, the course "Práctica de la Interpretación para la Empresa I B-A (Inglés-Español)", also, offered a more practical view of the concept. Through it, this master presented the opportunity to "work" as an interpreter through the practical assignments of the course. This was a great opportunity to recognize the difficulties that arise when interpreting and at the same time realize how stressful the work of interpreters can be given so little time to think when they face these difficulties. This experience led to the question concerning the interpretation of humor which is the main subject of this thesis.

Of course, the course "Metodología de la investigación" played a great role in terms of learning how to investigate and study in order to write this thesis in the first place. From the theoretical aspects of the methodology and the analysis used to the more practical ones, for instance the way to organize a research, how to search for the appropriate sources, use citations and write the bibliography, this course proved of utmost importance. In fact, it was the course that was most connected to the "how to" of this thesis as it offered the chance to start by drafting the proposal for the thesis and taking the first

steps providing the theoretical underpinning in order to first come to know and then decide the method of investigation, the type of investigation, collecting data techniques, organizing, and presenting them. It is undeniable that this course served as a manual for the writing of this research study.

Another course that served as a guide, though a theoretical one, was “Teorías sobre la Traducción”. In order to study and analyze how humor affects interpretation one has to know the theoretical framework about translation and interpretation and how those were formed throughout the years. The objective of a translation or an interpretation is of utmost importance as it defines the steps a translator or an interpreter will follow. Hence, this course shed light in meaning such as *sentido* or *skopos* that are mentioned and examined in this thesis. It would be impossible to conduct this thesis without having the theoretical background that can lead to identifying already existing theories and conclusions and drawing new ones.

Exploring how intriguing interpretation can be and learning the theory behind translation and investigation through the aforementioned courses offered by this master was pivotal for the choice to investigate this specific area of expertise. The theoretical and practical knowledge gained played a substantial part not only in the selection of the topic of this thesis but, also, in its progression.

5 Conclusions

This thesis aimed to analyze the problems that humor and cultural transfer can impose to diplomatic interpretation and suggest strategies to transfer humor when interpreting in diplomatic settings. For these main objectives to be met, other more specific objectives needed to be established and pursued using qualitative methods that combined the study and use of already existing bibliography, audiovisual material and interviews that were conducted in a specific context, the one of interpretation in the diplomatic settings. Hence, the participants were chosen based on their professional experience on the fields of diplomatic interpretation and diplomacy.

The theoretical framework presented served as the basis to further research the relationship between humor and culture and explore the role of this connection in the interpretation in diplomatic settings. In order to examine this relationship, first the grounds and characteristics of diplomatic interpretation had to be laid out. As shown in the analysis, the diplomatic language and its characteristics is the essence of the diplomatic interpretation. Since interpretation has to do with the transfer of language, what gives diplomatic interpretation its singularity is the diplomatic language which has been mold throughout the years in order to serve the needs of the diplomatic relations. On account of the fact that the diplomatic relations never remain static following the reality of the external affairs, it is only logical to conclude that the diplomatic language as well is a living organism. What the research presented is that, apart from formulaic words and expressions on which diplomatic language is based, new vocabulary and terminology is being introduced following the current affairs and thus posing a challenge to the diplomatic interpreters which is the need to always be au courant.

The balance between multiple factors, such as knowing how to use the diplomatic jargon, being abreast of the newly introduced terms, transferring the exact same meaning that the interlocutor has expressed but at the same time conveying the same vagueness and courtesy that characterizes the diplomatic language, is on its own a great challenge for the

diplomatic interpreters. The analysis illustrated that the aforementioned requirements have to be met while confronting a plethora of topics, as interpretations carried out in diplomatic settings can include a wide variety of subjects. Irrespective of the topic and the difficulties the specific terminology may bring about, diplomatic interpreters are expected to be consistent and accurate, always bearing in mind the context and the setting in which they interpret.

After understanding the nature and requirements of diplomatic language and interpretation, the analysis focused on the use of humor in the diplomatic settings. The answer to the question whether humor is employed in such settings was unanimous. Both evidence from previous investigations and publications on the field and the narrative data collected from the interviews and the audiovisual material confirm that humor is indeed used by diplomats for different reasons and fulfills different needs, and this is probably because humor is an alternative way of expressing oneself. Breaking the ice, creating an amiable atmosphere, making a point out of a humoristic instance are some of the reasons why humor is employed in a theoretically strict setting. The use of humor can emerge either as a consequence of a pleasant climate or as a way to curb tension, but also as a way to convey strict messages without creating a hostile environment.

Regardless of the reasons why humor is employed, one of the objectives of this thesis was to explore whether it is connected to culture. The analysis conducted revealed that the connection between humor and culture is such that at times it makes it difficult for the interpreters to even recognize humor. What was illustrated is that since humor is a way of expression using language, it bares the limitations of this language. Languages do not impose only linguistic barriers, but also, cultural ones since they are formed to serve the needs and everyday life of different civilizations and countries. The traditions, customs and history mold the language used and in turn this language molds the humor that sprouts from it. It was only expected that the interpreters interviewed claimed that humor is not always detectable as it serves different linguistic and cultural needs. Word plays and proverbs are an example of how humor formed in a specific language cannot be transferred to another one due to the linguistic and cultural barriers. Another factor that

highlights this interwoven relationship is the “cultural proximity”, a notion mentioned by the interpreters interviewed. If we are to suppose that cultural proximity helps understand and interpret humor, then inevitably we accept this connection, putting culture in the center of humor. The examples provided by interpreters in the interviews and in the audiovisual material come to enforce the already expressed opinion in the theoretical framework that the relationship between humor and culture is unavoidable.

This relationship makes humor difficult to interpret, a fact that became quite obvious studying the already existing bibliography and analyzing the answers of the interpreters presented in the audiovisual material, but also, the ones interviewed for the needs of this thesis. Since the analysis confirmed that interpreting humor in diplomatic settings is a quite challenging task, it continued by pinpointing the exact problems that may occur and interpreters have to face. It has been stated earlier that humor is a way of expressing oneself and, thus, is somewhat a personal issue. What is meant here is that on some occasions a humoristic instance uttered by an interlocutor may be conceived as something even not humoristic at all by the rest of the interlocutors. Humor is employed to connect people, but at times it can cause the exact opposite effect. When an interpreter cannot perceive the humor behind an utterance, it is probable that the interpretation will not bare the humoristic sense of the original, thus, conveying a different message than the one in the source language and therefore having a different effect. However, recognizing a humoristic intention is not the only difficulty that may arise, as even when humor is quite apparent, it is not always translatable. The untranslatability of humor is highly related to the cultural connotations it bears. From mere words that are used in a humoristic way and may not even have a corresponding translation in the target language to humoristic proverbs that will make no sense when simply translated in the target language, humor is a profoundly demanding undertaking for the interpreters. If we take into consideration the fact that humor can also be offensive since it pertains to perspectives and perceptions of a culture that might not be accepted in other cultures, we come to understand the duty of the interpreters and how thin is the rope they walk on, as their interpretations can change the relationship of countries and the course of history.

This is why it was very important for this thesis to adduce strategies that can be adopted by diplomatic interpreters in order to overcome the difficulties that emerge when interpreting humor in diplomatic settings. Indeed, the analysis offers specific strategies that have to do with how a diplomatic interpreter should react in case of a humoristic instance uttered. This advice focuses on the transfer of the essence and the reason behind the use of humor. That is to say, if a humoristic utterance is untranslatable, it is thought vital to transmit the interlocutor's intention, which is not of a lesser importance as it was concluded in the analysis, and the message's meaning behind humor. In that way the rest of the listeners will not be excluded from the conversation, the message will be transferred and its *skopos* will be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, what, also, emerged from the analysis is the need for the diplomatic interpreters to constantly be informed. The investigation shows that what experienced diplomatic interpreters deem highly significant is being abreast of the current affairs. The personal effort that the interpreters have to make does not only have to do with the interpretation of newly introduced terminology, but also humor. Keeping in mind that humor can emerge from incidents that occur in everyday life and politics, one can comprehend why it is advisable to be au fait with the current affairs. Being politically aware can serve as an advantage when it comes to interpreting humoristic instances that arise from such settings and a deep knowledge not only of the language, but, also, of the culture can provide the framework to depend on when facing strenuous situations like the one when humor makes its appearance in a diplomatic setting.

Lastly, it cannot be denied that this thesis presents some limitations. The first one is related to the number of participants that were interviewed. The access to diplomats and diplomatic interpreters was limited, as some invitations to other possible participants were rejected, which was an expected limitation bearing in mind the nature of these two professions that usually demands many hours of travelling and preparing for crucial diplomatic meetings. So, three diplomats and two interpreters were interviewed, but we should take into consideration that the audiovisual material and the bibliography studied presented the views of an additional number of diplomats and interpreters permitting the

analysis of data that can lead to the formation of trustworthy conclusions. A greater number of interviewees or the observation of interpretations in diplomatic settings would provide the thesis with more examples of how humor is treated and interpreted in the diplomatic settings, but this does not deprive the analysis of its reliability. The fact that the interviewees were only Greek and Spanish people could be considered a limitation too. This fact played an important role in making conclusions about the cultural proximity that surfaces when interpreting humor in the diplomatic settings but interviewing people with nationalities that present a cultural “distance” would have also been very beneficial. In that way we would have had a more rounded idea about the difficulties of interpreting humor, as it is possible that a Japanese or a Russian interpreter would address issues and mainly present examples that arise from the cultural differences between countries that share more linguistic and cultural barriers.

These limitations could serve as steppingstones for future investigations concerning the interpretation of humor in the diplomatic field. The cultural proximity that emerged from the analysis is a topic that needs further investigation, as it is a factor that may work in favor but also against the diplomatic interpreters as seen in the analysis. The effects that it can have must be considered after defining what creates this proximity and how it can be described. Then its relation to the diplomatic interpretation could be more detailed. On the other hand, if we suppose that there exists cultural proximity between nations, we are to investigate whether we can talk about cultural distance. The factors that create it should be multiple and surely need further examination and analysis in order to discuss its place in the interpretation of humor in the diplomatic field or even in interpretation in general. These future lines of investigation draw upon a number of academic disciplines including cultural studies, linguistics, social studies, but also translation and interpretation, offering opportunities for studies that can serve as a reference point for different future investigations.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Diplomats' interview script

- What are the characteristics of the diplomatic language?
- Do diplomats use humor?
- What are your expectations from the interpreters employed in diplomatic settings?
- How important do you consider the word-to-word translation in the act of interpretation that takes place in diplomatic settings?
- In your opinion, how important is the translation of a joke for the progression of the conversation in diplomatic settings?
- When interpreting humor in diplomatic settings, can the information that something humorous has been said be considered adequate and sufficient?
- Have you ever experienced the difficulty of not understanding a joke because of its cultural connotations?
- If the answer was yes, how did you react? If the answer was no, how would you react if it happens in the future?

7.2 Interpreters' interview script

- What do you consider to be the greatest difficulties when interpreting in diplomatic settings?
- Have you ever had to translate humor when interpreting in diplomatic settings?
- Is it always easy to detect humor before starting interpreting?
- When confronting humor in diplomatic interpretation do you consider necessary to translate it?
- Do you think that humor is translatable at all times? If not, could you give any example of untranslatable humor, according to your experience?
- What strategies do you employ when humorous utterances cannot be word-to-word translated or there is no humorous equivalent?

- What strategy or strategies would you suggest to young interpreters when having to translate humor in diplomatic settings?

7.3 Information sheet diplomats

Investigating “Humor and Cultural Transfer in Diplomatic Interpretation: walking the tightrope”

Name of the Researcher: Theodora Angelidou

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Almudena Nevado Llopis

Phone Number of the Researcher: 306980610xxx

Dear Participant

Please take some time to read through the following information. If at any point you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher, Theodora Angelidou, or contact her at a later date at: Theodora.angelidou@uvic.cat.

Overview

You have been invited to take part in a master’s research study exploring how the cultural transfer of humor can impose problems to diplomatic interpretation and suggesting strategies to solve this kind of translation problems.

What you have been asked to do

You have been asked to participate in a confidential and anonymous online interview session, lasting around 30 minutes. This will be arranged for a time and date of your convenience, prior to the end of April 2021.

You will be asked questions about your current role and experience as a diplomat and the use of diplomatic language. You will also be asked to think of instances where humor was used in diplomatic settings. You will be asked to answer questions about the interpretations that were offered to you in such settings and the role of the interpreters in the translation of humorous instances. *You are not obliged to, but you might find it useful to have a think about some of these prior to the interview.*

Your data

For the purposes of enhancing the accuracy of the qualitative analysis of the data from our interview session, with your consent I will record the audio of the session. Also, with your permission, I may include selective quotes from the transcription to illustrate points in my thesis and any resulting publications. These will be anonymized, and great care will be taken to ensure that any quotes cannot be attributed to you as an employee of your current organization.

Your interview responses and experiences will be confidential. Notes and recordings will be anonymized and stored within an encrypted folder, accessible only to the lead researcher, Theodora Angelidou, and her supervisor. Your responses will not be discussed with any fellow interviewees in the study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any of the pre-planned questions asked. You may withdraw your participation at any time during or after the interview session up until any potential publication of the findings. After the study is completed and the master's thesis is submitted and defended in September 2021, all the collected data will be destroyed.

As a reminder, if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the lead researcher, Theodora Angelidou, on the contact details provided.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and we hope to speak with you soon!

Theodora Angelidou
Master's Degree on Specialized
Translation
Universitat de Vic, Spain

7.4 Information sheet interpreters

Investigating “Humor and Cultural Transfer in Diplomatic Interpretation: walking the tightrope”

Name of the Researcher: Theodora Angelidou
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Almudena Nevado Llopis
Phone Number of the Researcher: 306980610xxx

Dear Participant

Please take some time to read through the following information. If at any point you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher, Theodora Angelidou, or contact her at a later date at: Theodora.angelidou@uvic.cat.

Overview

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You have been asked to participate in a confidential and anonymous online interview session, lasting around 30 minutes. This will be arranged for a time and date of your convenience, prior to the end of April 2021.

You will be asked questions about your current role and experience as an interpreter and the interpretation in diplomatic settings. You will also be asked to think of instances where humor was used in diplomatic settings. You will be asked to answer questions about the interpretations that you provided in such settings and the role of the interpreters in the translation of humorous instances. *You are not obliged to, but you might find it useful to have a think about some of these prior to the interview.*

Your data

For the purposes of enhancing the accuracy of the qualitative analysis of the data from our interview session, with your consent I will record the audio of the session. Also, with your permission, I may include selective quotes from the transcription to illustrate points in my thesis and any resulting publications. These will be anonymized, and great care will be taken to ensure that any quotes cannot be attributed to you as an employee of your current organization.

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As a reminder, if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the lead researcher, Theodora Angelidou, on the contact details provided.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and we hope to speak with you soon!

Theodora Angelidou
Master's Degree on Specialized
Translation
Universitat de Vic, Spain

7.5 Consent form diplomats

Title of Master's Thesis: "Humor and Cultural Transfer in Diplomatic Interpretation: walking the tightrope"
Name of the Researcher: Theodora Angelidou
Phone Number of the Researcher: 306980610xxx

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Theodora Angelidou is conducting a research study on the use of humor in diplomatic interpretation and the difficulties imposed to the interpreters due to the cultural transfer involved. The purpose of your participation in this research is to help the researcher verify that humor is employed in diplomatic settings and the ways interpretation is affected due to its use. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your professional status as a diplomat can give an insight of the diplomatic setting and the main characteristics of the diplomatic language, which may be very useful for the conduction of this thesis.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur: you will be asked to answer a number of questions concerning diplomatic language and interpretation. The interview will be recorded in order to be transcribed and subsequently analyzed in the master's thesis conducted by the researcher.

C. CONFIDENTIALITY

The records from this study will be kept confidential. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Every interview will be given a code and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Research information will be kept in locked files at all times. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the files. After the study is completed and the master's thesis is submitted and defended in September 2021, all the collected data will be destroyed.

D. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your decision whether or not to participate in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

E. QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Theodora Angelidou by calling 306980610481 or sending an email to Theodora.angelidou@uvic.cat

CONSENT

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.

Signature_____ Research Participant

Signature_____ Interviewer

Would you like to receive the research results?

Yes No

Date_____

7.6 Consent form interpreters

Title of Master's Thesis: "Humor and Cultural Transfer in Diplomatic Interpretation: walking the tightrope"

Name of the Researcher: Theodora Angelidou

Phone Number of the Researcher: 306980610xxx

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Theodora Angelidou is conducting a research study on the use of humor in diplomatic interpretation and the difficulties imposed to the interpreters due to the cultural transfer involved. The purpose of your participation in this research is to help the researcher verify that humor is employed in diplomatic settings and the ways interpretation is affected due to its use. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your professional status as an interpreter can give an insight of the interpretation in diplomatic settings, which may be very useful for the conduction of this thesis.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur: you will be asked to answer a number of questions concerning diplomatic interpretation. The interview will be recorded in order to be transcribed and subsequently analyzed in the master's thesis conducted by the researcher.

C. CONFIDENTIALITY

The records from this study will be kept confidential. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Every interview will be given a code and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Research information will be kept in locked files at all times. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the files. After the study is completed and the master's thesis is submitted and defended in September 2021, all the collected data will be destroyed.

D. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your decision whether or not to participate in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

E. QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Theodora Angelidou by calling 306980610481 or sending an email to Theodora.angelidou@uvic.cat

CONSENT

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.

Signature_____ Research Participant

Signature_____ Interviewer

Would you like to receive the research results?

Yes No

Date _____

7.7 Written answers & transcripts

Written answers D1

- ¿Cuáles son las características del lenguaje diplomático?

El lenguaje diplomático tiene como características propias la tradición y el formalismo. La tradición deriva de un uso continuado e inalterado en el tiempo de las fórmulas diplomáticas y el formalismo representa la solemnidad debida en las comunicaciones entre los interlocutores diplomáticos, que hablan en nombre de sus Estados.

Ejemplos de dichas tradición y formalismo son las fórmulas utilizadas en las comunicaciones escritas, que se repiten invariablemente desde hace siglos y no se han alterado:

“La Embajada de España en ... saluda atentamente al honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de ... y se complace en informarle...”

o

“Aprovecho esta oportunidad, para testimoniarle el sentimiento de más Alta consideración y estima...”

Al igual que ocurre en otros ámbitos laborales, el mundo de la diplomacia ha generado un lenguaje exclusivo que es propio de las relaciones diplomáticas y que, en ocasiones, puede inducir a confusión en las personas que no están familiarizadas con dicho lenguaje.

Me referiré a continuación a dichas fórmulas y a la confusión que, en ocasiones, pueden plantear.

1. **Nota Verbal.**

La denominada **Nota Verbal**, que el *Diccionario panhispánico del español jurídico* define como una “*comunicación oficial escrita redactada en tercera persona que dirige una Misión Diplomática al Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores del Estado*”

receptor”, constituye la comunicación diplomática oficial por excelencia. Dichas Notas no se firman, sino que se rubrican.

2. **Llamada a consultas.**

Como dice el citado Diccionario, es la “orden que se envía al Jefe de Misión por su Ministro para que se persone urgentemente con objeto de informar sobre un determinado asunto y recibir instrucciones particulares”

3. **Secretario de Embajada.**

Esta denominación corresponde a la categoría inferior de la carrera diplomática. No debe confundirse, aunque ocurre con frecuencia, con el puesto administrativo de secretario.

4. **Canciller.**

Jefe del personal administrativo de una Misión diplomática o de una Oficina Consular que no pertenece a la carrera diplomática. En algunos países (especialmente en Iberoamérica), esta denominación corresponde a la de Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores.

5. **Encargado de Negocios.**

Funcionario diplomático encargado de sustituir provisionalmente al jefe de misión por no poder este desempeñar sus funciones o por haber quedado vacante el puesto. Nada tiene que ver con la persona responsable en una Misión Diplomática de los asuntos relacionados con los “negocios” o las finanzas. La confusión deriva de la traducción al español de la expresión francesa “*Chargé d’Affaires*”, que probablemente se ajustaría más a Encargado de los Asuntos que de Negocios.

La diplomacia multilateral ha ido creando un lenguaje propio, muy utilizado en las organizaciones internacionales, con fórmula de cortesía diplomática repetitivas.

- ¿Utilizan los diplomáticos el humor?

La utilización del humor en la diplomacia no depende del medio sino de las personas. Lo mismo podría predicarse de otras profesiones y de otros ámbitos. ¿Utilizan los médicos el humor? Probablemente no cuando están operando a corazón abierto y quizás sí (en función de la personalidad del médico de que se trate) en conversaciones con personas de confianza, incluso sobre operaciones a corazón abierto.

- ¿Qué espera de los intérpretes empleados en el ámbito diplomático?

La importancia de la interpretación radica en la fidelidad de los términos utilizados y traducidos; en la correspondencia exacta entre los idiomas interpretados. De ahí la importancia de que los intérpretes conozcan de antemano los temas (y terminología) que van a tratarse.

- ¿Cuánta importancia considera que tiene la traducción palabra por palabra en la interpretación que tiene lugar en el ámbito diplomático?

Considero más relevante la traducción del espíritu que de la letra.

- En su opinión, ¿qué importancia tiene la traducción de un chiste para el desarrollo de la conversación en el ámbito diplomático?

Conviene tener cuidado con la utilización de chistes en las conversaciones diplomáticas. No tanto por lo que representan a la hora de aportar humor a la conversación sino por la posibilidad de que no vayan a ser entendidos por nuestros interlocutores. A este respecto, conviene que las notas de humor (no forzosamente un chiste) busquen el terreno de lo universal y que traten de huir del chiste, normalmente circunscrito a entornos culturales homologables.

- A la hora de interpretar el humor en entornos diplomáticos, ¿puede considerarse adecuado y suficiente con informar de que se ha dicho algo humorístico?

Normalmente, las referencias humorísticas suelen ser entendidas como tales.

- ¿Ha experimentado alguna vez la dificultad de no entender un chiste a causa de sus connotaciones culturales?

Como señalaba anteriormente, los chistes suelen obedecer, normalmente, a ámbitos culturales homologables. A este respecto, más que experimentar dificultad para entender un chiste, el chiste no me ha hecho gracia. Pero esta circunstancia no es exclusiva del ámbito diplomático. Me ha ocurrido también con compatriotas con un sentido del humor distinto al mío.

- Si la respuesta es afirmativa, ¿cómo reaccionó? Si la respuesta es negativa, ¿cómo reaccionaría si le ocurriera en el futuro?

Hay dos posibles reacciones, en función de la confianza que tengamos con nuestro interlocutor. En los casos de ninguna o poca confianza, se suele fingir una sonrisa. En

los casos de mucha confianza se dice amablemente a nuestro interlocutor que su chiste es mejorable...

Written answers D2

- What are the characteristics of the diplomatic language?

Diplomatic language shall be accurate, sharp, to the point and aiming at convincing your interlocutor for your position so as to achieve your goals.

- Do diplomats use humor?

Diplomats often use humor in meetings especially when they want to make the discussion more pleasant or when they want to use a quote in order to compare facts and events.

- What are your expectations from the interpreters employed in diplomatic settings?

Interpreters shall be capable of accurately and immediately interpreting so as to be as helpful as possible

- How important do you consider the word-to-word translation in the act of interpretation that takes place in diplomatic settings?

I consider it very important because you have to make sure that accurate translation is done in your native language. In this vein, each diplomat can transmit what was said back to his mission and/or capital.

- In your opinion, how important is the translation of a joke for the progression of the conversation in diplomatic settings?

Well, the translation of a joke is always a difficult attempt given that someone might be in a way lost in translation or misinterpret what was actually said. I would prefer to have

the translation but also the actual motto in order to make sure that I have understood things correctly and within the right framework.

- When interpreting humor in diplomatic settings, can the information that something humorous has been said be considered adequate and sufficient?

No. it is important to have the full context in order to take part into the discussion and fully understand the concept.

- Have you ever experienced the difficulty of not understanding a joke because of its cultural connotations?

This is a quite frequent issue especially if a joke is made in a language that I don't speak and have no other affiliation to it.

- If the answer was yes, how did you react? If the answer was no, how would you react if it happens in the future?

Well, I made sure that I will adjust to the discussion in a polite manner and then certainly find out of the actual connotation of the joke.

Transcript D3

- What are the characteristics of the diplomatic language?

The answer is a bit subjective in the sense that it depends on the issue you are negotiating, it depends on its importance, on the general situation in which something has to be negotiated. I would not say that there is a rule for diplomatic language, there may be some prohibitions in my opinion. Personally, I believe that no one should use aggressive diplomacy when negotiating because that is exactly the point of the negotiation, you discuss with arguments to get somewhere, in fact to get where you want. I think that it is not appropriate to use aggressive language unless it is about undisputed situations of domination.

- Do diplomats use humor?

Yes, a lot. My experience from the EU Institutions have taught me that in all the meetings there are member states which, as a rule, use humor or give a touch of humor in their speeches and in their statements. The English, the French, the Germans who have a touch of irony in their humor and the Romanians as well. I think that because of the experience of the diplomats sitting around the table, they all take it in the right sense. But many times, it is also used to convey serious things or to warn. My feeling is that the French often use humor in their speeches to warn about something. The English because it is in their DNA, and the more serious issues were indeed negotiated with a very sophisticated sense of humor. The Hungarians and the Polish have a bit more caustic humor, more ironic also like the Germans. One observation I have to make on this is that the more we move up the ranks the more humor is used in comparison to the lower ranking diplomats. And in difficult situations humor is necessary and shows the way someone approaches an issue.

- What are your expectations from the interpreters employed in diplomatic settings?

Personally, and I speak about a multilateral meetings and not bilateral ones, I have faced a problem and in particular, in the Institutions. The interpreters who are not native speakers and those who are not of Romance languages often have a difficult accent when they speak; I would like to have the possibility to have the texts when we are discussing difficult texts. Whilst I have an excellent command of English and I am almost a native speaker of French, many times I have had difficulty understanding some important things. And it is not just a matter of rendering the language. They may be native speakers; they may be German and speak English fluently, but the vocabulary used is becoming increasingly difficult. I would like the interpreters to have this possibility, it is not up to them of course, to have this instruction that the Greek interpreter interprets for the Greek, the German for the German, etc. in order to make our work easier, and be able to be more accurate in the reports we write. Also, I have sometimes encountered interpreters who have difficulty in rendering the language when they inform us in multilateral meetings about intelligence

missions. The terminology that is used is a bit difficult. Also, humor sometimes cannot even be rendered periphrastically. It is always the general context in which an interpretation is realized that plays a role, and this follows from the characteristics that have to be put on the table in a diplomatic transaction.

- How important do you consider the word-to-word translation in the act of interpretation that takes place in diplomatic settings?

I think that sometimes it might be problematic if it is done word-to-word. When one has a good knowledge of the language free interpretation, free rendering of the text or speech is sufficient. It is assumed that the person listening knows a little bit about the subject discussed. Of course, when one does not know the subject, like I did when I started there, it is now up to the delegate to process the subject a little bit, to know what we are talking about when they go to the meeting, so that it is much easier afterwards to follow up. However, I do not think that word-to-word interpretation is always rendered correctly.

- In your opinion, how important is the translation of a joke for the progression of the conversation in diplomatic settings?

I think it is very important because it sometimes lightens the mood, and it is necessary; plus, through it you get to know your interlocutor. Personally, I think that the approach with humor is necessary because humor hides an intelligence for the person who talks about serious issues and gives a humoristic tone and approach. It, also, reveals things about other sides of their character. It is important because it generally reflects a little bit more the country, the culture and the hierarchy.

- When interpreting humor in diplomatic settings, can the information that something humorous has been said be considered adequate and sufficient?

Since the people doing the job are trustworthy and very competent in their field, I would not say it's a problem. But on the other hand, I would like to know what it was that it has been said, was it humor, was it an irony, was it something that insinuates something else? I remember an incident that happened when we were negotiating sanctions; it was one country, Greece against 27. We had to compromise somehow; nobody is in a comfortable position when that happens. At some point, the then English colleague took the floor with his excellent sense of humor, an exceptional colleague, and said that we should not shoot the colleague, referring to me personally, because yes, that is the way it is. There was a one-second pause and he spoke again and said, "Of course Greece could have reacted because the text was written, and it was under silence procedure agreement". Meaning that since you were given the right to react within a certain time to the text, you could have expressed your objections. The truth of course was somewhere else, but it would not be enough for me if the interpreter had just told me "Yes, the colleague is right in what she said", because the English colleague expressed it in a very specific way using a joke.

- Have you ever experienced the difficulty of not understanding a joke because of its cultural connotations?

No, this has not happened to me. I try to follow the general context of the debate or of the negotiation.

- If the answer was yes, how did you react? If the answer was no, how would you react if it happens in the future?

If the meeting at that moment allowed me to do so, I would have immediately asked them to explain what it was, but I would have asked for it in a very polite way, not in anger because we constantly learn new things and it's also nice to be on the same page with the other interlocutors and understand the same things. Another option would be to note it down exactly as it had been said and later on Google it. I prefer the direct response though. I would say that I'm glad because something was implied with a humoristic tone

that I personally didn't understand, and I'd like to get into the mood a bit and would ask them to explain it better in case I needed to react.

Transcript I1

- ¿Cuáles considera que son las mayores dificultades a la hora de interpretar en entornos diplomáticos?

- Se entiende que, por supuesto, no vamos a hablar de que hay que saber los dos idiomas a la perfección. Esto es algo que se supone que uno cuando hace ese trabajo lo tiene ya, maneja ambos idiomas, los domina de manera óptima. Yo creo que no es necesario que hablemos de este tema, a no ser que tú lo quieras, pero en principio lo doy por hecho. Hay que tener un conocimiento muy alto de ya ambos idiomas, no solo de uno, aunque no traduzcas. Seguramente a veces tienes como pasivo el idioma que no es tu idioma materno, pero aun así yo considero que hay que tener un dominio, lo mejor que se puede tener de ambos idiomas y si interpretas tres idiomas, pues lo mismo. Ahora, eh, lo que acabo de decir es como una regla para cualquier entorno en el que hay que interpretar. En cuanto al entorno diplomático, yo diría que hay terminología, aunque uno puede decir que sí se habla la mayoría de las veces en términos muy generales. Hay terminología y esto aparte de que cada uno de los sectores de la política tiene su propia terminología, por ejemplo, si de repente hay un encuentro bilateral entre dos ministros de Agricultura, vamos a suponer o dos embajadores que quieren hablar de temas de agricultura o de defensa o de cultura, educación o lo que fuera. Hay que conocer terminología de todos y cada uno de estos sectores. Porque la lengua en este sentido, también se desarrolla. Es decir, a raíz de la Unión Europea y de las distintas políticas que se han ido adoptando a lo largo de la existencia de la Unión Europea, se ha creado una terminología que se desarrolla mientras vaya avanzando también las relaciones europeas sobre un tema concreto. Hay terminología que se actualiza y un intérprete tiene que estar al tanto de la actualización de esa terminología. Y además saber si antes que él o ella ha habido traducción en su idioma o el idioma al que va a interpretar y si no hay que inventar una palabra, un término para que sea comprensible por parte de los interlocutores. Para mí,

pues, la terminología es una de las dificultades que un intérprete puede tener hablando de entornos diplomáticos. Porque la mayoría de las veces los encuentros son ya puntuales. Por supuesto, hay visita de cortesía, de protocolo o lo que fuera, y ahí a lo mejor no hace falta estar tanto al tanto. Bueno, es una redundancia, pero es que a lo mejor no se utilizan términos especiales. Pero por lo general sí que hay que actualizarse, aunque uno no vaya a interpretar un tema puntual. Tiene que actualizar sus conocimientos todos los días. El intérprete es una persona que tienen que estudiar o leer según todos los días. Es como un médico. Si uno no actualiza sus conocimientos, se queda fuera, es decir, no puede ser tan bueno y no se puede fiar en él o en ella. Si no actualiza los conocimientos lingüísticos que tiene. Y por supuesto, cuando por eso he dicho leer o estudiar porque es tremendamente necesario que lea la prensa. Hablando de interpretación, en entornos diplomáticos es imprescindible, es sine qua non, es una condición que, si no puedes cumplirla y tienes la intención de ser intérprete, es mejor dejar esta intención y cambiar por otra profesión. Para mí, vamos, es imprescindible. Ahora, esto en términos generales, hablando como de una manera más práctica. Digamos que una de las dificultades podría ser los temas de conversación que surgen y están fuera de la agenda que uno tiene ya manos. Y eso sí que te puede provocar un desconcierto. Y te lo pasas muy mal y si encima es un tema que requiere también tecnología te lo pasas mal. No es nada agradable la experiencia. Y ahora especificando aún más, especificando o si quieres, resumiendo, diría que en primer lugar hay que saber muy bien la situación política de cada uno de los países cuyo idioma tienes que interpretar, tienes que saber la situación internacional, las relaciones europeas a la perfección, quiero decir, entre los Estados miembros de la Unión Europea. Y especificando más y más las políticas es en temas concretos y sobre todo si de ellos van a hablar cuando tienes que interpretar y algo que puede parecer hasta gracioso, otro dolor de cabeza para un intérprete son los acrónimos. Se crean organizaciones de repente y claro, como suelen tener unos nombres que son como una perífrasis de su objeto, de su razón de existencia, es normal que todo el mundo las llame por sus siglas. Entonces un dolor de cabeza tremendo es saber los acrónimos y saber el correspondiente del o al idioma, a la del o al que tú tienes que interpretar. Los nombres, por ejemplo, de los jefes de Estado, por lo menos de Europa, los tienes que saber, del ministro cuya competencia es el tema que tú tienes que traducir. Digamos que

son unos detalles técnicos de la interpretación. No tiene mucho que ver con el conocimiento del idioma, pero sí te pueden hacer la vida muy difícil o fácil, si los conoces, en el momento en que aparezcan los y los reconoces, por lo menos en el momento en el que aparecen. Y bueno, por supuesto, la precisión de cuando estamos hablando de entornos diplomáticos. Debes tener mucha precisión en el momento de interpretar. Pero yo considero que esto en cualquier entorno, es otra condición sine qua non en cualquier entorno que traduzcas, no interpretéis. No se me ocurre ahora mismo otra cosa. ¿Estamos hablando de la interpretación consecutiva o simultánea?

- Hablamos de ambas.

- Pues todo eso que acabo de decir en la simultánea hay que tenerlo diez veces más. La interrelación simultánea no te da tiempo. Hay que ser muy rápido. Y entonces solamente añadiría, pero que tampoco es solamente eso, no es cuestión solo del entorno diplomático, no añadiría que otro problema, aunque parezca mentira, puede ser la articulación de los locutores. Es decir, si tú no entiendes lo que dice porque tiene mala articulación o si habla muy rápido. Ese es otro problema. Si habla muy rápido, es un problema. Ahora bien, a nivel muy alto, los políticos, los diplomáticos, embajadores y tal sí que tienen en cuenta que los están interpretando. Entonces, como ya suelen automáticamente hablar más despacio e intentar articular bien. A nivel muy alto digamos que es curioso, pero a lo mejor no, un intérprete no tiene este problema. No siempre, pero te lo digo por norma general, es cuando ya vas bajando, digamos, el nivel de los participantes, el nivel, me refiero a su cargo, no me refiero a otra cosa. Cuando va bajando el nivel del cargo puede tener más problemas porque son personas no tan acostumbradas a ser interpretadas. Pero yo no creo que esto sea solamente un problema de la interpretación en el entorno diploma. Estoy hablando también del entorno diplomático, pero puede ser un problema o algo que hay que tener en cuenta para cualquier entorno. Pero ahí sí que la precisión es muy importante. Los matices pueden cambiar un discurso, pueden cambiar un punto de vista. Es muy importante la precisión.

- ¿Ha tenido que traducir el humor cuando estaba interpretando en entornos diplomáticos?

Sí, sí he tenido que traducir el humor en estos entornos. Curiosamente, o no tan curiosamente, esto ha ocurrido solo cuando hacía interpretación consecutiva, no simultánea. Mejor no hablarte entonces de la frecuencia que puede tener la interpretación de situaciones o frases humorísticas o el humor en general en la interpretación simultánea, te puedo hablar de mi experiencia. En ninguna de las simultáneas he tenido que hacerlo, pero si me ha ocurrido bastante. No en todas, por supuesto, pero sí bastante en las consecutivas y a todos los niveles, a nivel de ministros o a nivel de periodistas que hablaban con diplomáticos, o sea, a todos los niveles. Yo pienso que como la interpretación consecutiva es como más digamos, directa en un sentido, en el sentido de que no, no en la cabina en la que tú estás encerrado. Los interlocutores están sentados en una mesa, uno enfrente del otro. Entonces, se desarrolla en aquel momento una relación de cercanía, no siempre está claro, pero depende también de la personalidad de cada uno de ellos. Pero por lo general sí que se establece otro tipo de relación entre los interlocutores cuando están sentados todos alrededor de una mesa, sin micrófono es como más inmediato. Sí, también te diría que no sé si la mayoría vez de las veces, pero digamos que muchas veces ha ocurrido al final de las conversaciones. Tal vez porque los interlocutores se sientan más relajados cuando ya está terminando, digamos, un encuentro a nivel diplomático, no lo sé, pero rara vez, casi jamás ahora que lo pienso, ha habido un comentario humorístico durante unas conversaciones. A mí todo lo que me ha ocurrido fue al final, que por supuesto, no solo al final, sino que después de haberse creado un clima como muy positivo entre las partes. Digamos que el humor ha nacido en estas ocasiones de las que yo te estoy hablando de un clima muy, muy bueno. Y este, cuando digo clima bueno, no me refiero solo al resultado de las conversaciones en sí, me refiero también a la personalidad de las partes, que hubo química para decirlo de una manera. Se entendían muy bien, había caído uno bien al otro, cosas de ese tipo. Es decir, no tiene solo que ver con el tema de la conversación y si ha salido bien o mal. También, tiene que ver con las personas que integran esta conferencia o mesa redonda o lo que sea, o simplemente unas conversaciones bilaterales.

- Vale, ¿es siempre fácil detectar el humor antes de empezar a interpretar?

Es una pregunta diría que difícil. Vamos a ver. Tengo que organizar mis pensamientos. Digamos que lo primero que uno podría decirte es que depende de la nacionalidad de la persona al o del tienes que interpretar. Vamos, este es un criterio como bastante vago. Vamos, que no te puede servir a ti para nada que te diga yo eso. Diría que en mi caso porque no puedo hablar de otros casos, en mi caso, y que normalmente lo que hago es bueno, no solamente hago interpretación español, griego y griego español. Y en mi caso diría que es más fácil que para una persona que interpreta del español al chino o del español a japonés o alemán, diría yo, no lo sé. No sé nada de alemán, entonces no puedo hablar. Pero supongo que sería más difícil en estos casos. Ahora bien, las armas que tiene la persona que tiene que interpretar el humor detectable o no es el muy buen conocimiento de los dos idiomas. Eso significa que el 90 por ciento de los casos sabe que se trata de humor. Es decir, porque un intérprete normalmente no solo sabe el idioma conoce muy bien la cultura de los países al y del que cuyo idioma mejor traduce, interpreta. Perdón. Entonces, creo que digamos, si tenemos en cuenta que tienen un alto nivel de conocimiento, no solo de la lengua sino también de la cultura y de la civilización, en teoría, de los países cuyo idioma habla en noventa por ciento si quieres o poco menos de los casos, sí que lo sabe detectar. En el caso del griego español es mucho o al revés, español griego, es mucho más fácil porque el sentido de humor de un español o una española, de un griego o de una griega es bastante parecido. Sería muy raro que no lo pudiese detectar un intérprete del o al español griego con. Francamente, yo no conozco casos que no lo hayan podido detectar, según mi experiencia. Porque un español, aunque diga algo sin ninguna expresión en la cara sabes que está bromeando, por ejemplo, porque captas el sentido en el que dice algo o no dice algo depende. Entonces sería difícil que no se detectase. Esta es mi opinión. No lo sé. Otra gente con más, tal vez experiencia o gente que tiene más idiomas. Yo creo que vamos, no te puedo decir otra cosa.

- ¿Cuándo se enfrenta al humor en la interpretación diplomática, considera necesario traducirlo?

Sí, claro. No cabe duda de que hay que traducirlo. No, no es cuestión de elegir traducir o no una frase humorística. Lo que sí puede ocurrir algunas veces, sobre todo en las interpretaciones simultáneas es que puede en aquel momento en que uno dice algo humorístico si no hay tiempo, se ha dicho muchas cosas antes y bastante después y no le da tiempo traducir también una bromita que no añade mucho ni quita nada de la conversación a lo mejor pasa de sentido de humor del locutor. Pero esto pueda ocurrir por presión, no porque el intérprete en principio elija lo que tenga que traducir. Indudablemente lo tiene que traducir. Ahora, y creo que este sería un problema ¿si el humor no se traduce que hace? ¿Cómo lo traduce? Un caso también puede ser no muy frecuente, menos mal, puede ser, darse el caso de una persona con un sentido de humor que inconscientemente vamos a suponer puede ofender a su interlocutor y el no darse cuenta de esto. El intérprete puede que sí se dé cuenta, precisamente porque entiende la cultura de ambos países. Yo creo que este es uno de los problemas más grandes en los casos de frases humorísticas o bromas que se pueden decir entre dos interlocutores. Mira, hablando de mi experiencia, no, a mí me ha ocurrido una vez una persona que ha dirigido una frase a su interlocutor que prácticamente ofendía a su superior, del interlocutor. Pero claro, lo ha hecho sin darse cuenta de que, sí lo ofendía, porque era un comentario muy sexista, un humor, mejor dicho, muy sexista. Entonces hablando dos hombres, no era hombre y mujer, hablando dos hombres uno de ellos ha hecho un comentario bastante sexista de la superior del segundo hombre. Y ya te digo, con toda la buena entre comillas si quieres voluntad del mundo, pero esto no quitaba de que su comentario humorístico era muy sexista. Son situaciones que uno tienden a proteger al que haya dicho esta broma tan desconcertada. No siempre lo consigue, porque si se trata de algo muy gordo no lo puedo remediar. Sobre todo, si hablamos de interpretación simultánea y son casos difíciles cuando el humor se utiliza de manera sexista o si quieres machista o racista. Claro, tú no puedes salvar una relación diplomática por no interpretar, no es esto tu papel, por no interpretar una frase. Pero cuando tú te das cuenta de lo que dice uno de los interlocutores y él o ella no lo hace, no se da cuenta, la verdad es que

esta sí que es una situación muy difícil para un intérprete, cuando sabe que la próxima frase que va a traducir puede ser un factor que afecte las relaciones de los interlocutores. Y no por su culpa por supuesto. Son detalles que no sé en aquel momento no puedes tener una estrategia para todo. Ni tampoco ningún libro te puede aconsejar. Tal vez la experiencia de compañeros, de colegas sí que te puede servir. Pero claro, son momentos que cada uno de los intérpretes y las intérpretes han tenido que solucionar en su carrera. Son cosas que tiene la profesión. Un médico tiene que dar respuesta inmediata a un espacio urgente. Pero sí que hay que distinguir que el humor y todo eso más bien te lo cuento porque el humor no es siempre bueno. El humor no siempre ayuda. No siempre es un factor que relaja a los interlocutores. Puede ser muy negativo. Y desde luego, si es negativo, aunque se utiliza de manera inconscientemente negativa, el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que tomar una decisión en un segundo. La regla general es traducir lo que tienes que traducir y punto. Pero claro puedes calibrar hoy mismo si puedes dar un tono más ligero en el comentario, utilizar otro verbo en lugar del que ha utilizado el interlocutor. Hay trucos que no traicionan la profesión que estás ejerciendo. Y al mismo tiempo suavizan, digamos, una situación que puede ser crispante de un momento a otro por una... no sé cómo lo llamaría, un desconcierto inconscientemente. Si es conscientemente, ya no te digo nada, en aquel caso sí que hay que traducir lo que uno que haya dicho. Si es un humor de esto, sarcástico, por ejemplo, o agresivo y que también, digamos, es un humor negativo, pero si es así, y es por alguna razón, entonces no cabe duda de que tienes que traducir lo que tienes que traducir. La interrogante te surge cuando no se da cuenta el interlocutor de una cosa muy gorda que haya dicho. Y creo que, si puedes aligerar la eventual tensión que pueda crear, este desconcierto, lo haces. Esta es mi opinión. Pero sin traicionar el espíritu en realidad. Ya te digo, utilizando verbos, palabras menos... con connotaciones menos fuertes.

- ¿Cree que el humor es siempre traducible? Si no es así, ¿podría dar algún ejemplo de humor intraducible según su experiencia?

El humor no es siempre traducible para empezar. Yo diría que en muchos casos no es traducible y quien te diga lo contrario será una persona muy presumida, francamente.

Aunque estamos hablando de unas culturas tan próximas como la española y la griega, no es siempre traducible. Sí, hay casos, por supuesto, que es perfectamente traducible, otros que se aproxima y utilizando unas analogías puedes entender el sentido de humor o una frase humorística que te haya dicho tu interlocutor. Pero no, no es siempre traducible. En mi experiencia, yo creo que he tenido suerte porque no me ha ocurrido algo que no haya comprendido el interlocutor español o griego. No me ha ocurrido nada que tuviera que inventar yo algo que pareciera al chiste o a la frase humorística. Incluso, en las culturas griega y española hay expresiones, estaban hablando ahora de expresiones para dar un ejemplo, porque no se me ocurre otra cosa, expresiones o refranes o frases hechas que pueden resultar humorísticas. Independientemente de que un interlocutor tiene sentido de humor o si da una pincelada de humor en lo que dice hay frases hechas, refranes que sí que pueden resultar humorísticas en algún momento. Entonces, un ejemplo que te puedo dar podría ser, por ejemplo, la frase está en español es “está hasta en la sopa”. Una persona que está hasta en la sopa. En griego hay algo equivalente que si lo traducimos al castellano sería “es el perejil”. Una persona que está en todas partes y quiere que su nombre aparezca en gran parte, e Grecia se llama el perejil. Hay una analogía ¿no? El perejil va en toda la comida, como decimos está hasta en la sopa. Entonces, es bastante fácil que un griego o un español, según lo diga primero entienda el sentido de humor que uno quiera hacer con esta expresión. Y son proximidades culturales más que lingüísticas. Vamos, yo creo que tenemos suerte los que hacemos griego-castellano y castellano-griego. En este sentido tenemos suerte, bastante suerte, bastante más suerte que uno que tenga españoles-chino como decíamos antes o incluso escocés. Son culturas bastante próximas. Entonces te quiero decir que hay situaciones que aunque griego no existe ,estamos hablando de refranes que pueden resultar humorísticos en una situación como el entorno diplomático, porque si un diplomático llega a utilizar un refrán en un encuentro, una reunión diplomática, pues significa que ya hay cierto sentido de relajamiento, de algo positivo y a lo mejor opta por un refrán o una frase hecha para describir una situación que sí, que a veces tanto la frase hecha como el refrán sí que tienen lugar de una frase humorística y ayuda mucho en una reunión entre diplomáticos o políticos. Y es curioso, porque incluso hay personas que han hecho, incluso doctorados tal vez o trabajos menores, pero sí que han dedicado sus tesis, sus trabajos en la

proximidad semántica y no solo, de los refranes o frases hechas del español-griego y al revés. Y en este entorno el diplomático sí que la utilización, el uso de frase hecha o refrán sí que puede dar un sentido humorístico.

- ¿Qué estrategias emplea cuando las expresiones humorísticas no pueden traducirse palabra por palabra o no hay un equivalente humorístico?

Para empezar, en la mayoría de los casos no se puede traducir palabra por palabra. Sobre todo, si se trata de una frase hecha o no hecha. Si es un sustantivo que uno emplea y el uso de este sustantivo o verbo en aquel momento, en aquel contexto, resulta humorístico, es distinto. Pero si hablamos de una expresión, incluso vuelvo al refrán que puede tener un papel humorístico en una conversación es muy raro que se traduzca palabra por palabra, no se pueda traducir palabra por palabra. La estrategia yo creo y estoy hablando de consecutiva ya que en la simultánea es distinto. Tanto en la consecutiva como en la simultánea, si se trata de una palabra verbo, sustantivo o lo que fuera el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que encontrar un equivalente que produzca la risa, digamos, de la segunda parte en esta conversación. Y si tampoco esto da resultado, en la consecutiva se permite a la interprete o al intérprete se le permite el lujo de explicar un poco el verbo que se ha utilizado y describir un equivalente, pero en la simultánea, es raro que esto pueda ocurrir. Y depende, en teoría tendría el intérprete encontrar, si se trata de palabras, repito, una equivalente que produzca el mismo efecto. Ahora, si se trata de frases hechas que pueden ser humorísticas en un momento determinado o refranes allí también, debería uno encontrar algo equivalente y repito que al intérprete griego-español sí que le es más fácil encontrar una frase o un refrán equivalente. Ahora sí, tampoco se puede dar esto porque es algo muy, muy particular, muy, muy local incluso a veces, es cuestión de juzgar. Si se describe lo que la segunda parte ha querido decir con lo que ha dicho, o si se da como entre comillas, como un resumen, se da la idea en una palabra o dos, pero que no se da, no se traduce, interpreta, mejor dicho, literalmente se da de una manera que puede ser una frase más larga o menos o uso al verbo que a lo mejor tiene un idioma y el otro no, se puede intentar acercarse lo más posible al sentido y al espíritu del humor que un interlocutor haya tenido en el momento en que haya dicho lo que haya

dicho. Pero palabra o palabra, ya te digo, es muy difícil que se pueda hacer en cualquier idioma hacia cualquier otro. Por ejemplo, voy a utilizar otra vez una frase hecha porque puede dar claramente, creo, lo que quiero decir. En castellano existe una expresión que es “irse por los cerros de Úbeda”. Esta expresión, una persona que sabe castellano y no es español, claro, entiende perfectamente lo que quiere decir. Ahora en griego hay una equivalente, pero es muy vulgar, es muy popular. Y ahí hay otro problema, aunque encuentres un equivalente, hasta qué punto el espíritu, o, mejor dicho, el ambiente del encuentro diplomático, de la reunión diplomática permite que traduzcas el equivalente que es vulgar. Son sentidos muy sutiles que uno tiene que tener en cuenta en el momento de hacer la interpretación. Porqué no solo nos pueda facilitar que haya un equivalente. Es que hay que ver el registro de uso de este equivalente. Es muy importante esto. Entonces, en aquel momento el intérprete o la intérprete tiene que ver qué sacrifica una frase en el otro idioma casi puntual en cuanto a su significado, pero vulgar, que va a sonar de una manera rara en este ambiente o hace una traducción no tan, digamos, bien registrada en la lengua al que tiene que traducir, no tan establecida, mejor dicho, y lingüísticamente en la lengua que a la que tiene que traducir. Son matices que uno tiene que ver en el momento. Pero lo cierto es que, en definitiva, por muchas estrategias, entre muchas comillas que uno tenga en el momento de interpretar la lengua es algo tan rico, tan vivo que se renueva y se renueva tanto de un día para otro que siempre las encontrarás superadas por el propio idioma en cualquier idioma. No, no estoy hablando de uno o de otro. Así que siempre verás. Es decir, siempre te supera la capacidad de vida, porque yo considero que la lengua es algo más vivo que un ser humano, porque el que no, que no muere. Bueno, con ella mueren a veces según el período y tal, expresiones, palabras que desaparecen, pero es algo tan vivo. Entonces, siempre tienes que inventarte nuevas estrategias. No te van a servir los que tienes tú en el cuadernito apuntadas y que las tengas en tu mente en cualquier momento, te van a superar. Todos los apuntes te van a superar.

- ¿Qué estrategia o estrategias, sugeriría a los jóvenes intérpretes cuando tengan que traducir el humor en entornos diplomáticos?

Yo diría que más que estrategias hay que tener tres cosas. Estar en alerta, ser preciso y ser respetuoso o respetuosa. Las estrategias, me parece a mí que no sirven. Son los principios que pueden servir más que una estrategia, principios, valores en este sentido. Que, por supuesto, un joven intérprete no debe tener solo para los casos del humor, en cuanto lo tienen que traducir. Diga que en todos los casos no. Lo que cuenta más también para el humor en entornos diplomáticos o en cualquier otro entorno son los principios y el trabajo. Trabajar mucho, seguir la actualidad, seguir la política europea, internacional, nacional, seguir la cultura, desde luego, no solo seguir, vivirla constantemente. En este sentido, vivir también las novedades que puede haber en el sector del humor, nuevas expresiones que puedan resultar humorísticas y que salen de acontecimientos de la vida social o política, muchas veces. Todo ello está relacionado y es más que obvio, si, por ejemplo, una intérprete o una intérprete no lee los periódicos, no lee la prensa, no puedes traducir una expresión que se haya producido a raíz de un acontecimiento cómico que pueda haber surgido en Grecia o en España. No puede tampoco captar el sentido de humor que un país pueda tener frente a otro, que no le facilita su trabajo porque muchas veces el humor entre niveles diplomáticos puede ser también muy sarcástico, ¿no? Entonces, creo que la estrategia, la única estrategia si se puede llamar así, sería estar siempre muy al tanto de la actualidad nacional, europea y en tercer lugar internacional. En tercer lugar, no porque sea menos importante o que da menos, digamos, tener que interpretar a fora internacionales. Estamos hablando ahora de un ámbito europeo más que de fora internacionales. Entonces, yo no diría estrategia, no porque un joven pensaría que, si sabe o tiene ya controladas ciertas claves estratégicas, a lo mejor se relaja y deja de leer, deja de estudiar porque hay una diferencia entre las dos cosas y la interpretación no es esto. La interpretación antes que nada es constante actualización a nivel lingüístico, a nivel de conocimiento, como he dicho, la situación política y, por supuesto, a raíz de todo ello, podrá comprender el sentido de humor más todavía. Son dos cosas que van en paralelo. Captar el sentido de humor no es leer cómics o leer chistes o contar anécdotas, chistes, como he dicho, o ver programas en la tele que se pasan de listos los

presentadores o el público. Tener el sentido y captar, mejor dicho, el sentido de humor es seguir la actualidad, seguir los cambios sociales a nivel lingüístico, seguir los cambios que puede haber en el pensamiento, en la filosofía y letras, estaba hablando incluso a nivel académico, de un país. Todo ello llevará el poder captar el sentido de humor. Y para mí, como te he dicho al principio, cualquier estrategia se desarticula si uno no sigue la actualidad lingüística y política y, sobre todo, o si quieres, también si no está en alerta, si carece de precisión lingüística me refiero en este caso y también si le falta respeto a lo que hace y hacia al y para los que lo hace.

Transcript I2

- ¿Cuáles considera que son las mayores dificultades a la hora de interpretar en entornos diplomáticos?

Bueno, hay muchos. Hay muchos problemas. En primer lugar, es cuando el orador no tiene una idea muy clara de lo que quiere decir. Segundo, si no tiene una manera muy clara de expresarse y sabes también otro tema muy peculiar en los temas diplomáticos, que a veces hay zonas grises. O sea, el orador, a propósito, no quiere revelar todo y está hablando de una forma un poco escondiendo y presentando. Y la cosa no sale siempre muy clara y por eso hay un intérprete para echarle la bronca. Por eso te digo que es importantísimo para un intérprete como generalistas, que somos o especializados en temas jurídicos o en temas diplomáticos, etcétera, pues conocer muy, muy bien, conocer a fondo la materia y también los detalles del tema que lo llamaron para interpretar.

- ¿Ha tenido que traducir el humor cuando estaba interpretando en entornos diplomáticos?

Bueno, en entornos diplomáticos solamente el humor se utiliza a lo mejor en el principio

solamente para romper el hielo, pero también, en algunos casos, cuando las cosas se vuelven agudas, se vuelven duras, difíciles, pues si por aquí o por allá habrá algún orador, algún ponente, algún diplomático que tiene que intervenir bueno para, ya sabes, para hacer las cosas un poco más suaves. Pues tendrá que decir algún chiste o tendrá que decir alguna cosa así más jocosa ¿no? Y por eso, el intérprete está allá para intentar entender y pasar el mensaje de la mejor manera posible para no crear situaciones difíciles, situaciones no muy placenteras.

- ¿Es fácil detectar el humor antes de empezar a interpretar?

-No, depende del orador, porque hay oradores que creen que tienen humor pero que no obtienen. La verdad es que lo más difícil de destacar sería diría yo el humor de los británicos porque los mediterráneos lo tienen más claro, sabes, más obvio.

-Tiene que ver con la cultura, a lo mejor.

-Hay que conocer la cultura también del país, del orador, claro.

- ¿Y cuando se enfrenta el humor en la interpretación diplomática, considera necesario traducirlo?

Sí, y bueno, hay que traducir todo lo que uno dice, ¿verdad? Porque al fin y al cabo que somos nosotros, somos la voz del orador. Entonces el orador, ningún orador quiere que diga algo que no se ha traducido. Lo que pasa es que cuando se complica más la situación es cuando unos oradores utilizan juego de palabras. Y este juego de palabras no es siempre muy obvio y no es siempre muy fácil interpretar o pasarlo a otro idioma.

- ¿Cree que el humor es siempre traducible y si no es así, podría dar algún ejemplo de humor intraducible según su experiencia?

Sí, pues mire el humor no se puede traducir siempre porque hay humores. Otras palabras, es otra mentalidad, es otra manera de ver las cosas, es otra manera de entender que no es siempre muy claro, muy obvio y muy lógico, iba a decir más de un idioma a otro, porque al fin y al cabo no es solamente traducir, porque el humor no es solamente traducir palabras, es traducir toda la mentalidad, es traducir toda la manera de ver las cosas es traducir toda una tradición si se puede poner así. Entonces a veces y justamente cuando estudiaba interpretación, los maestros, los profesores nos decían si crees que no va a salir bien, pues puedes decir al orador, a la persona a la cual estás interpretando que bueno que el orador acaba de decir de un chiste o hacer una broma, pero que no se puede traducir o hacer una perífrasis, o sea, intentar explicarle de que se trata más o menos. Si sabes ya de antemano que esta traducción no solamente no será, no será acertada, pero también pueda crear problemas, porque además no hay nada peor de tener al público de un cierto idioma a empezará a reír y los otros pues nada, entonces tienes que explicar. A veces me contaba un colega que justamente alguien había en una reunión, en una conferencia había dicho un chiste, empezaron a reírse solamente los que entendían inglés y los españoles no entendían nada. Así que él les dijo por los auriculares “bueno, es que el orador acaba de decir un chiste en inglés que no se puede traducir. Pero como todos se ríen por favor pueden reír vosotros también”.

- ¿Tiene algún ejemplo específico de humor intraducible?, si puede recordar.

Muchas cosas, por ejemplo, chistes y juegos de palabras. Eso ya no coincide de un idioma a otro. No me acuerdo exactamente ahora algo específico, pero te digo como es interpretar el chiste o el humor es no solamente interpretar palabras, sino otras tradiciones y otras maneras de ver, expresiones, etcétera, pues entiendes que no es obvio, no es siempre muy muy fácil. Aunque sea una interpretación entre español y griego, que son culturas un poco parecidas, semejantes. Sí, pero bueno, pues mira, existen algunas veces

que he tenido que interpretar chistes, eso sí. Esto fue sin problema, o sea, de una manera correcta, o sea fenomenal. Todos se rieron, se rompo el hielo, etcétera. La cosa se complica mucho más cuando empiezan a hablar los ingleses, los anglosajones y allá pues, porque allá también hasta entre ellos es otra cultura la de los estadounidenses, lo cual los británicos de los australianos, etcétera. Cosa que no ocurre entre los españoles y la gente que viene de Sudamérica, sino solamente en cuanto a palabras utilizadas. Porque, por ejemplo, algunas connotaciones o algunas palabras que tienen otro sentido en español de España y otro sentido, por ejemplo, en español del cono sur de ah, el Uruguay o el de Argentina, como algunas palabras como la huahua. La huahua en Chile es el autobús y en otros países el autobús se llama el micro para ser un poco más peyorativo, diría la palabra coger, que en España sabe lo que quiere decir coger. Recibir, ¿no? Y en América del Sur coger tiene una connotación muy sexual. Así que, así que hay que tener mucho cuidado con las palabras, aun cuando estén hablando los españoles con los sudamericanos. Hay que tener mucho cuidado.

- Qué estrategias emplea cuando las expresiones humorísticas no pueden traducirse palabra por palabra y no hay un equivalente humorístico.

Pues como acabo de decir, informar a los auditores, a los que te están oyendo que el orador acaba de decir un chiste que no se puede traducir, es intraducible o como hizo el colega, pedirá al público que empieza a reírse, aunque no puedes o alguna vez intentar poner palabras o intentar interpretarlo de una forma semejante o cercana a lo que acaba de decir el orador y si se puede de una manera jocosa, pero graciosa. Pero sabes, eso también depende del intérprete. O sea, si el intérprete tiene sentido del humor por sí mismo, pues la cosa puede ir mejor.

- Qué estrategia o estrategias sugeriría a los jóvenes intérpretes cuando tengan que traducir el humor en entornos diplomáticos.

Bueno, entornos diplomáticos, tener muchísimo cuidado, muchísimo cuidado, porque en

un entorno diplomático, si no están al cien por cien seguros de lo que van a que, de lo que han entendido y de lo que van a interpretar, pues que no lo hagan, porque puede salir justamente en entornos diplomáticos. Una interpretación que no sea la deseada por el orador. Así que hay que tener muchísimo, muchísimo cuidado y estar segurísimo de lo que has entendido y lo que vas a reproducir.