

# "WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?": JAIME DE OJEDA'S SPANISH TRANSLATION OF *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

*Alba Chaparro Martínez*

The Hatter's remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English.<sup>1</sup>

Lo que acababa de decir el Sombrero no parecía tener ningún sentido y, sin embargo, no se podía decir que no fuese perfecto Castellano.<sup>2</sup>

The unconventional nature of language in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has tended to draw much critical attention to its somewhat eccentric author. Much has been said about Lewis Carroll, born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a study of secondary literature reveals that most of the books dealing with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are devoted mainly to the life of its writer. Numerous psychoanalytical works have also appeared which attempt to put forward explanations about Carroll's underlying obsessions, mainly sexual. Surprisingly few critics have dealt with the purely linguistic aspects of his masterwork, especially given the evident importance that Carroll conferred upon language in this book, and the influence of its language on our reading of the text.

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is in itself a linguistic game. Behind its inoffensive appearance lies an intricate marriage of use of language, idiom and sociocultural allusions which make this book so archetypically British. Remarkably, such an autochthonous book has been translated into more than forty languages, from Chinese to Catalan, Gaelic to Esperanto. This article will compare the original text with Jaime de Ojeda's Spanish translation. In particular it will deal with what I consider to be the most important problems for the translator: the songs, the poems and the linguistic games, such as puns and plays on words.

When the idea of translating *Alice* was first considered Carroll was already aware of the difficulty in translating it. As Warren Weaver comments in *Alice in Many Tongues*, Carroll himself expressed his worries and views about the translations in a letter to Macmillan the publishers in 1866: 'Friends have seem to think that the book is *untranslatable* into either French or German, the puns and songs being obstacles (...)'<sup>3</sup>.

The proof that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is far from untranslatable lies in the number of translations published. Ojeda's translation succeeds in retaining not

---

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Oxford University Press (Oxford 1987), p. 62. With an introduction by Sir Roger Lancelyn Green. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alicia en el País de las Maravillas*, Editorial Alianza, Madrid 1989, p. 118. Translation and introduction by Jaime de Ojeda. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Warren Weaver, *Alice in Many Tongues*, University of Wisconsin Press (Madison) p. 33.

only the atmosphere of Carroll's text, but also in providing effective equivalents of certain linguistic features of the text. Nonetheless, some effects present in the original English text are inevitably lost in translation.

In the prologue of the Spanish version, Ojeda speaks about the problems of translation posed by Carroll's text; he is under no illusions as to the difficulty of the text in question:

Alicia es uno de esos fenómenos literarios que no admiten trasplantes y pese a todo el cuidado que se ponga en guardar intacto su significado vernáculo en ese naufragio irreparable y doloroso que es toda traducción, creo que es prácticamente imposible 'trasladar' a la mente del lector castellano todo el contenido de vivencias sabrosas, de evocaciones misteriosas y de introspección cultural de que está lleno este precioso libro.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the proliferation of socio-cultural references contained in the poems and songs in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, most translators and critics agree that these represent one of the greatest problems for the translator. Carroll's burlesque treatments were intended mainly for the amusement of children. Most of the original versions have been totally forgotten nowadays, such as Isaac Watt's poems *Against Idleness and Mischief* or the *Sluggard*, which inspired Carroll's variations *How Doth the Little Crocodile* and *'Tis the Voice of the Lobster*, respectively. Certain parodies will be recognized as such by a modern day readership, as with the song *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Bat* sung by the Hatter in Chapter 7, based on the well-known poem by Jane Taylor called *The Star*. As Sir Roger Lancelyn Green observes, many of the songs and poems are still familiar through Carroll's parodies, such as that of the moralizing poem by Robert Southey's *You Are Old Father William*. Nowadays, however, many of these parodies and other aspects which were easily recognized by the Victorian reader might not be recognized by the British reader, let alone by the foreign reader. The problem is the following: if the reader does not recognize the parodies as such and does not know the original version, the humorous effect of the parody is lost. Therefore, the Spanish reader unfamiliar with these poems will encounter great difficulty in seeing any humour in them. Inevitably, then, the original flavour of *Alice* has changed to a greater or lesser extent for the modern reader of any cultural background. Jaime de Ojeda's translation of the poems and songs is not especially original: he has translated them in their most literal way, with the result that many characteristics of the original version, such as the rhyme pattern, are lost in translation. All translations have disadvantages, and either the translator looks for parallel examples of songs and poems within his own language, at the risk of straying from the original version, or tries to be faithful to the literal content of the original work. Ojeda has opted for the second possibility: rather than seeking an equivalent Spanish poem or song, he has confronted the reader with an approximation of the original version. Both the modern English edition and Ojeda's translation accompany poems and songs in the text with copious explanatory references in annexes; these attempt to remedy the serious problems of recognition associated with parodies outlined above, without the need to provide modern-day equivalents of Carroll's language.

---

<sup>4</sup> Weaver, *Alice in Many Tongues*, p. 5.

While Ojeda's literal translation of poems and songs has its limitations, he is more imaginative in translating what might be termed linguistic games. These are one of the most important and interesting aspects of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, due to its essentially ludic conception. I have classified these linguistic games in the following way:

1. Reverse expressions and what I would call *derived expressions*, that is expressions that are new to us but remind us of existing ones: in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* these take many forms and only a reduced number might pose difficulties, albeit less so for the translator than for the reader. In some cases these expressions have fallen out of use and might cause a degree of uncertainty, such as:

a) 'as sure as ferrets are ferrets' (31), which is a parallel of the expression 'as sure as eggs is eggs'; another instance of this is 'take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves' (80), which as Martin Gardner observes in his *Annotated Alice* is a version of the British proverb, 'take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves'. Many British readers might recognize these expressions by analogy, while only the first example, translated as 'tan seguro de que los grillos son grillos' (67), reminds the Spanish reader of the expression 'tan seguro de que me llamo como me llamo', which is used in Spanish to express complete certainty about something.

Genuine expressions can sometimes create problems of interpretation because of the lack of a parallel expression in the other language: the expression, 'a cat may look at a king' (76), which is a familiar English proverb referring to the right that a man has in front of a superior, has no counterpart in Spanish; therefore, the Spanish reader has to draw his own conclusions from the translated expression: 'un gato puede mirar a un Rey' (138). A similar problem arises from the reference to the Hatter and Hare as being mad:

'In that direction,' said the Cat, waving his right paw round, 'lives a Hatter; and in *that* direction,' waving the other paw, 'lives the March Hare. Visit either you like: they are both mad.' (57)

'*Por ahí,*' contestó el Gato volviendo una pata hacia su derecha, 'vive un sombrerero; y por *allá,*' continuó volviendo la otra pata, 'vive una liebre de marzo. Visita al que te plazca: ambos están igual de locos.' (108)

The British reader will recognize the allusions to the expressions 'mad as a Hatter' and 'mad as a March Hare' immediately, not so the Spanish reader, for whom the equivalent expression is 'loco como una cabra' (mad as a goat) or 'loco como una regadera' (mad as a watering can); the Spanish reader, therefore, will not understand the implied meaning in the Cheshire Cat's explanation, as there are no such connections between Hatters, Hares and madness in Spanish culture. On the other hand, expressions such as 'birds of a feather flock together' (80) or 'the more there is of mine, the less there is of yours' (81), may be rendered in Spanish as 'Dios los cria y ellos se juntan' (145) and 'mi medro mina el tuyo' (146); these set no important problems for translation as equivalent expressions in Spanish share the same context. The same idea applies to what I term *reverse expressions*: their translation into Spanish does not pose any major problems for translation:

'For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.' The Frog-Footman repeated, in the same solemn tone, only changing the order of the words a little, 'From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.' (51)

'Para la Duquesa; una invitación de la Reina para jugar al croquet'. El lacayo-sapo contestó repitiendo las mismas palabras, sólo que alterando un poco el orden: 'De parte de la Reina; para la Duquesa, una invitación para jugar al croquet'. (100)

## 2. The use of words which are semantically ambiguous:

One of the most problematic aspects in translating *Alice* from English into Spanish is the occurrence of words that are semantically ambiguous and may be interpreted in different ways, creating problems of ambiguity. These instances are very difficult to translate into Spanish, as exemplified in Chapter 7, when the Dormouse is telling Alice the story of the three sisters in the well. As the Dormouse explains, these sisters were learning to draw:

'Así, pues, ahí estaban las tres hermanitas, y además, habéis de saber, estaban aprendiendo a sacar...'

'¿Y qué sacaban?,' preguntó Alicia, que ya se había olvidado de su promesa.

'¡Melazas!,' dijo el Lirón sin la menor vacilación esta vez. (...)

'Lo siento, pero no acabo de comprender cómo sacaban esas melazas.'

'De un pozo de agua puede uno sacar agua, ¿no?,' dijo el Sombrero. (...)

'Y también aprendían a dibujar,' continuó el Lirón bostezando y fro-tándose los ojos, pues se estaba durmiendo cada vez más. 'Y dibujaban toda clase de cosas..., todo lo que empieza con la letra M...' (123-125)

'And so these three little sisters - they were learning to draw, you know -'

'What did they draw?' said Alice, quite forgetting her promise.

'Treacle,' said the Dormouse, without considering at all this time. (...)

'But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?'

'You can draw water out of a water-well' (...)

'They were learning to draw,' the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very sleepy; 'and they drew all manners of things - everything that begins with an M...' (66-67)

The verb 'to draw' has two different meanings in English: a) to make a picture and b) extract something from somewhere. The context in which the word appears

leads easily to an ambiguous interpretation; in Spanish no single equivalent conveys both meanings. In Spanish there are two different words to express each of the meanings contained in 'to draw': the sentence 'they were learning to draw' can be interpreted as 'aprendian a jugar' (to depict), or as 'aprendian a sacar' (to extract); therefore, the play on words will be impossible, simply because two very different and unrelated words are required which may both be expressed with one word in English, thereby creating an ambiguous situation.

### 3. Words which are interpreted in their most literal sense:

These instances are translated successfully in most cases with no further problems. For the main part, the problems of interpretation arise not from the word itself but from carelessness in our use of language, which can lead to nonsensical and ridiculous situations:

'Take off your hat,' the King said to the Hatter.

'It isn't mine,' said the Hatter.

'*Stolen!*' the King exclaimed, turning to the jury, who instantly made memorandum of the fact.

'I keep them to sell,' the Hatter added as an explanation. 'I've none of my own. I'm a hatter.' (98)

'¡Vuestro sombrero!,' ordenó el Rey indicando al Sombreroero que se descubriese.

'No es mío,' respondió el Sombreroero. (174)

'*¡Robado!*,' exclamó el Rey volviéndose significativamente hacia el jurado, cuyos miembros inmediatamente anotaron un memorándum del hecho.

'Tengo sombreros para vender,' añadió el Sombreroero explicándose, 'pero ninguno es de mi propiedad: soy sombreroero de profesión.' (174)

Another, even more evident example of this occurs when the Queen orders the execution of the gardeners:

'Are their heads off?' shouted the Queen.

'Their heads are gone, if it pleases your Majesty!' the soldiers shouted in reply. (73)

'¿Han perdido sus cabezas?,' les gritó la Reina.

'Sus cabezas se han perdido; así le plazca a Vuesa Majestad,' respondieron impávidos los soldados. (133)

In this case, the translator has been extremely successful in recreating the effect of the original, and at the same time in creating a similar effect to that of the English text, as 'perder' accounts for both what the Queen means and what the soldiers mean. Apart from these examples, however, other major problems arise when trying to translate the

homophones which create the most important puns and plays on words in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

#### 4. Homophones, plays on words and puns:

Puns and plays on words are the most common instances of linguistic games in *Alice*. They are more effective aurally than visually, since much of their effect lies in their phonetic form and misunderstanding will be more easily produced in an oral context than in a written one. Besides revealing the sense of humour inherent in a particular society, plays on words and puns also show some of the linguistic characteristics of a particular language.

Homophones, words which have the same pronunciation but different spelling, create different kinds of problems relating to its translation. These are perhaps the most difficult linguistic feature to translate from English into Spanish without losing the original meaning and effect. Three main types of 'homophonic games' which pose interesting problems for translation can be distinguished in *Alice*:

a) Two words which sound the same but have different written forms and different meanings.

b) Words which are misunderstood because they are phonetically similar.

c) A word which is phonetically similar to another and which replaces the one we would normally expect in the context, creating a pun.

a) Words which share the same pronunciation create problems of communication and interpretation. One instance of this is found in Chapter 3, where the Spanish equivalent for Alice's misunderstanding of the word 'tale' for 'tail' is not a result of its sharing the same phonetic form, but of giving less importance to the word 'historia' (story) than to its complement 'cola' (tail). The translator has chosen the common expression 'una historia con cola', literally, 'a tale with a tail', meaning in Spanish that the story is complicated and long, to make up for the impossibility of homophonic play. Nevertheless, it represents a clever solution as the result in both cases is misinterpretation:

'Mine is a long and sad tale!' said the mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail (...) (28)

'¡Larga y triste es mi historia!', exclamó el Ratón dirigiéndose a Alicia y suspirando, 'y trae mucha cola!'

'Ciertamente parece una historia con *mucha* cola,' dijo Alicia contemplando con asombro cuán larga era esa extremidad del Ratón (...) (60)

Other words which are homophones in English, such as 'axis' and 'axes', are not translated literally, but instead, Ojeda has looked for a word that can convey a similar idea to that in the original text. In this case, one word is enough in Spanish: 'ejecución', whose meaning being ambiguous, achieves the same effect as in the original:

‘Just think what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round its axis-’

‘Talking of axes,’ said the Duchess, ‘chop off her head!’ (54)

‘¡Imagínese el trastorno que eso supondría para el día y la noche! Ya sabe que la tierra requiere veinticuatro horas para ejecutar un giro completo...’

‘Hablando de ejecutar,’ interrumpió la Duquesa, ‘¡que le corten la cabeza!’ (104)

As Ojeda himself admits in one of his footnotes in the Spanish translation, plays on words based on homophones are more easily constructed and recognized in English than in Spanish, because Romance languages are more ideological than onomatopoeic. For this reason, in many cases the translator will have to make reference to the existence of a play on word or pun in the original version.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties that may appear when translating *Alice*, Ojeda is successful in most occasions, as is demonstrated by the following example in Chapter 11. Here the letter ‘T’ and the word ‘tea’ convey exactly the same ambiguity in Spanish:

‘I’m a poor man, your Majesty,’ the Hatter began, in a trembling voice, ‘and I hadn’t begun my tea - not above a week or so - and what with the bread-and-butter getting so thin –and the twinkling of the tea–’

‘The twinkling of *what?*’ said the King.

‘It *began* with the tea,’ the Hatter replied.

‘Of course twinkling *begins* with a T!’ said the King sharply. (100)

‘¡Majestad! Soy un pobre hombre...,’ empezó a decir el Sombrero con voz temblorosa, ‘y no había empezado aún a tomar el té... ni siquiera hace una semana... sin contar con que las rebanadas de pan y mantequilla son cada vez más delgadas... y el... “brilla, luce” del té...’

‘¿El brilla y luce de qué?,’ interrumpió el Rey.

‘¡Ay! ¡Es que para mí *todo* empieza con té,’ se quejó el Sombrero.

‘¡Pues claro que *todo* empieza con T!,’ replicó el Rey acerbamente. (176)

These instances cause few problems for translation as it is always possible to find either an equivalent or words which would create a similar effect.

b) Words which are phonetically similar can create misunderstandings both in the original text and in translation. An interesting example occurs in Chapter 6, where Alice talks to the Chesire Cat about the transformation of the baby into a pig. The misunderstanding appears when the Chesire Cat mishears the word due to its phonetic similarity with another, in this case ‘pig’ and ‘fig’:

‘Did you say “pig”, or “fig” ?’ said the Cat.

‘I said “pig”,’ replied Alice (...) (59)

The effect has been preserved in the Spanish translation. In Spanish there are two words for 'pig', 'lechón' for a young one and 'cerdo' for an adult one. In this case the translator has conveniently chosen the word 'lechón', as the story refers to a baby who turned into a young pig; this choice enables the translator to build a play on words based on the similarity of the word 'lechón' with 'pichón', the Spanish word for a young pigeon.

¿Dijiste "lechón" o "pichón"?,' le preguntó el Gato.

'Dije "lechón",' aclaró Alicia (111)

In this case the translator has not only looked for a phonetically close word which would lend itself to a certain degree of misunderstanding, but has chosen a word, 'pichón', which also is an animal, whereas in English the misunderstanding is purely phonetic. The Spanish translation thus adds a new dimension to the original linguistic joke.

c) Based on the idea of the homophonic game, Carroll chooses words which are phonetically similar to others but which replace words that we would actually expect in a particular context. There are two main examples of this, in Chapters 9 and 10.

In Chapter 10, when the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon tell Alice about the Lobster Quadrille dance, there is a constant play on words based on the phonetic similarity of different words, and extremely difficult to translate into Spanish while reproducing the same effect as in the English version; despite the translator's efforts it has not always been possible to create a recognizable equivalent in Spanish, as in the following example:

'Do you know why it's called a whiting?'

'I never thought about it,' said Alice. 'Why?'

*'It does the boots and the shoes,'* the Gryphon replied very solemnly.

Alice was thoroughly puzzled. 'Does the boots and the shoes!' she repeated in a wondering tone.

'Why, what are *your* shoes done with?' said the Gryphon. 'I mean, what makes them so shiny?'

Alice looked down at them, and considered a little before she gave her answer. 'They're done with blacking, I believe.'

'Boots and shoes under the sea are,' the Gryphon went on in a deep voice, 'are done with whiting. Now you know.'

'And what are they made of?' Alice asked in a tone of great curiosity.

'Soles and eels, of course,' the Gryphon replied, rather impatiently: 'any shrimp could have told you that.' (91-92)

¿Sabes por qué son blancas las pescadillas?'

'Nunca me lo he preguntado,' respondió Alicia, '¿Por qué?'

'Pues porque sirven para darle brillo a los zapatos y a las botas, explicó el Grifo con gran solemnidad, 'por lo blancas que son.'



Alicia se quedó de una pieza. ‘¡Para sacar brillo!,’ repetía, sin saber cómo explicárselo.

‘¡Pues claro! ¡A ver! ¿Cómo se limpian los zapatos?’, le preguntó el Grifo. ‘Quiero decir, cómo se les saca brillo?’

Alicia se miró a los pies y reflexionó un poco antes de dar una contestación: ‘Con negro de betún, me parece.’

‘Pues bajo el mar, a las botas y a los zapatos se les da con blanco de pescadilla,’ interpuso el Grifo con voz sentenciosa: ‘Ya lo sabes.’

‘¿Y de qué están hechos?’, preguntó Alicia con gran curiosidad.

‘De mero y peces pacones,’ replicó el Grifo con alguna impaciencia, ‘cualquier gamba habría sabido responder a esa pregunta’. (161-162)

The play on words between ‘whiting’ and ‘blacking’ is instantly recognized by the British reader: ‘whiting’, which has a double meaning, may be interpreted both as a fish and as whitening, a substance to make things white. In Spanish ‘whiting’ can only be translated as ‘pescadilla’, and this noun denotes no other thing than a fish. At the same time, Lewis Carroll has related ‘whiting’ to ‘boots and shoes’, creating a perfect play on words in relation to the word ‘blacking’; besides referring to the fish, ‘whiting’, we are told, is also the substance used to polish shoes under the sea, ‘blacking’, by contrast, being the substance used by human beings. Since ‘pescadilla’ is the only feasible translation of ‘whiting’ there is no possibility of playing with its meaning, nor would a Spanish reader establish a natural connection between ‘blanco de pescadilla’ and ‘negro de betún’, which is the word for ‘blacking’. The translator has had to look for an alternative, replacing the question, ‘Do you know why it’s called a whiting?’, with one that contains the ideas of ‘whiting’ and ‘whitening’, thereby producing: ‘¿Sabes por qué son blancas las pescadillas?’ (Do you know why whiting is white?), which will allow him to relate the idea of ‘blanco de pescadilla’ to ‘negro de betún’ (blacking). Nevertheless, the play on words between ‘blanco de pescadilla’ and ‘negro de betún’ seems quite artificial and lacks spontaneity.

When Alice asks what is used to make shoes and boots under the sea, the answer is ‘soles’ and ‘eels’, direct puns on ‘soles and ‘heels’. These puns are hardly recognizable in the Spanish version: the play on words in Spanish is between ‘mero’ and ‘peces pacones’, names of fish which remind us of the words ‘cuero’ (leather) and ‘tacones’ (heels), which could be used to make shoes. Nevertheless, the example is not easily recognized as a pun in Spanish.

However there are instances when the translation of a pun works out beautifully:

‘If I’d been the whiting,’ said Alice, whose thoughts were still running on the song, ‘I’d have said to the porpoise ‘Keep back, please! We don’t want you with us!’

‘They were obliged to have him with them,’ the Mock Turtle said. No wise fish would go anywhere without a porpoise.’

‘Wouldn’t it, really?’ said Alice, in a tone of great surprise.

‘Of course not,’ said the Mock Turtle. ‘Why, if a fish came to *me*, and told me he was going a journey, I should say “With what porpoise?”

'Don't you mean "purpose"?' said Alice. (92)

'Si yo hubiera sido esa pescadilla,' dijo Alicia, que continuaba pensando en la canción, 'le habría dicho al delfín: "Haga el favor de retirarse! No deseamos estar con *usted*".'

'No tenían más remedio que estar con él,' dijo la Tortuga Artificial; 'no hay pez que se precie en algo que no vaya acompañado a todas partes de un delfín.'

'¿De veras?,' preguntó Alicia, muy sorprendida...

'¡Pues claro que no!', replicó la Tortuga Artificial, 'como si se me acercase un pez y me dijera que se iba de viaje, lo primero que le preguntaría sería: "Y con qué delfín?".'

'No querrá usted decir "con qué *fin*",' inquirió Alicia. (162)

The last play on words between 'porpoise', which is at the same time a pun on tortoise and 'purpose', has a good parallel in Spanish; Ojeda has been able to preserve the same meaning as in the English version, choosing the words 'delfín' (dolphin) and 'fin' (purpose) to create an ambiguous interpretation through the phonetic similarity of both words.

Finally, I shall concentrate on the most interesting and original puns in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: These are to be found in Chapter 9, where the Mock Turtle is telling Alice about the subjects it used to study under the sea. The Mock Turtle's lessons are puns on common subjects studied in our schools, such as reading, writing, history, drawing, etc. This transposition from conventional subjects into the subjects taught under the sea creates an amusing and witty parallel, which any British reader is able to recognize easily:

'I couldn't afford to learn it,' said the Mock Turtle, with a sigh. 'I only took the regular course.'

'What was that?' inquired Alice.

'Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with,' the Mock Turtle replied; 'and then the different branches of Arithmetic - Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.' (...)

(...) 'What else had you to learn?'

'Well, there was Mistery,' the Mock Turtle replied, counting off the subjects on his flappers, - 'Mistery, ancient and modern, with Seography: then Drawling - the Drawlingmaster was an old conger-eel, that used to come once a week: *he* taught us Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.'

'What was *that* like?' said Alice.

'Well, I ca'n't show it you, myself,' the Mock Turtle said: 'I'm too stiff. And the Gryphon never learnt it.'

'Hadn't time,' said the Gryphon: 'I went to the Classical master, though. He was an old crab, *he* was.'

'I never went to him,' The Mock Turtle said with a sigh. 'He taught Laughing and Grief, they used to say.'

(...)

'And how many hours a day did you do lessons?' said Alice, in a hurry to change the subject.

'Ten hours the first day,' said the Mock Turtle: 'nine the next, and so on.'

'What a curious plan!' exclaimed Alice.

'That's the reason they're called lessons,' the Gryphon remarked: 'because they lessen from day to day.'

(...) (86 - 87)

The translation into Spanish is somewhat different:

'Nunca tuve la ocasión de aprender esa asignatura,' continuó la Tortuga Artificial con un suspiro. 'Solamente me permitieron seguir los cursos ordinarios.'

'¿Y en qué consistían?,' preguntó Alicia.

'Pues nos enseñaban a beber y escupir, naturalmente para empezar,' replicó la Tortuga Artificial, 'y luego las diversas ramas de la Aritmética: a fumar y a reptar, y también la feificación y la dimisión' (...)

'¿Qué otras cosas aprendían allá?'

'Bueno, teníamos Histeria,' replicó la Tortuga Artificial, llevando la cuenta con las extremidades de sus aletas, 'Histeria antigua y moderna, con Mareografía; luego, Bidujo; el profesor era un viejo congrio que venía una vez a la semana: *él* fue el que nos enseñó a bidujar y a bofetear y la tintura al boleó.'

'¿Y *eso* cómo era?,' volvió a preguntar Alicia.

'Bueno, no puedo hacerte una demostración yo misma,' contestó la Tortuga Artificial; 'estoy ya demasiado anquilosada. Y el Grifo no aprendió nunca a hacerlo.'

'No tenía tiempo suficiente,' explicó el Grifo. 'Iba, sin embargo, a las clases de Letras. Y menudo maestro que teníamos, ¡ese sí que era un viejo cangrejo!'

'Pues yo nunca fui a sus clases,' confesó la Tortuga Artificial con un suspiro; 'dicen que enseñaba el patín y el riego'.

(...)

'¿Y cuántas horas al día duraban esas lecciones?,' preguntó Alicia, apresurándose a cambiar el tema de conversación tan penosa.

'Diez horas el primer día,' respondió la Tortuga Artificial 'nueve al día siguiente, y así sucesivamente.'

'¡Que horario más extraño!, exclamó Alicia.

'Por eso se llaman "cursos",' explicó el Grifo, 'porque se "acortan" de día en día.' (152 - 153)

From Ojeda's point of view, this is one of the most difficult parts of the book to translate. The puns dealing with different school subjects involve a further problem when they have to be translated, as they must still be recognizable as puns on actual subjects. This is not an easy job and in many cases it is difficult to distinguish a pun in Spanish. As a general rule, these puns are not so evident and easily recognized in the Spanish translation as in the original English.

'Beber y escupir' (drinking and spitting) is what the Mock Turtle learnt in school instead of *leer y escribir* (reading and writing); in English, the pun is achieved through the similarity between 'Reeling and Writhing' (*tambalearse and contorcerse*) and Reading and Writing (*leer and escribir*). The pun on arithmetic seems to be more easily recognized in English than in Spanish: addition is 'Ambition'; in Spanish the pun is between *sumar* (to add up) and 'fumar' (to smoke); subtraction is 'Distraction' and, in this instance, the translation of the pun into Spanish improves on Carroll's attempt, although it is difficult to judge whether the pun would be recognized as such by the Spanish reader. *Restar* (subtract) becomes 'reptar' (to creep, crawl or snake along); in the case of multiplication, which has been turned into 'Uglification', the Spanish pun is hardly recognizable: the translator has used 'feificación' (Uglification) for multiplication (*multiplicación*). Ojeda has been more successful in translating the pun between *division* (división) and 'Derision' (*burla*) by turning *división* into 'dimisión' (resignation). In the case of history (*historia*), replaced by 'Histery', the pun has a clear parallel in the Spanish 'histeria'. On the other hand, geography (*geografía*) turns into the phonetically close 'Seography', while in Spanish *geografía* changes into 'Mareografía'. In English both words, geography and 'Seography' are phonetically closer than their Spanish counterparts. In the case of 'Drawling' (*arrastrando las vocales*) for Drawing (*dibujar*), the translator seems not to have been able to find a parallel, and so his solution to the problem has been to alter the order of the first letters of the word *dibujo* (Drawing) producing 'bidujo', which has no meaning but is immediately recognizable as an altered form of the word *dibujo*. In the following case, Ojeda has chosen 'bofetear' (to give a slap in the face) for *bocetear* (Sketching), which is effective enough as they are very close to each other phonetically, even if the translator diverges here from the original word 'Stretching' (*estirarse*). The last pun between painting in oils (*pintar al óleo*) and 'Fainting in Coils' (*desmayarse en espiral*) is translated into Spanish with a rather artificial and calculated result: 'tintura al boleó' (dyeing carelessly) to make reference to *pintura al óleo* (painting in oils). Latin (*latín*) and Greek (*griego*) which produce the puns 'Laughing' (*risa*) and 'Grief' (*sufrimiento*), translated into Spanish as 'patín' (ice skate) and 'riego' (watering), which are quite easily recognized and successful as puns of *latín* and *griego*. The final play on words between 'lessons' and 'lessen', which produces a rather witty pun, due to phonetic similarity, is hardly recognizable as such in the Spanish version, translated as 'cursos' and 'acortan', which bear resemblance etymologically but not phonetically.

Ojeda's translation of the puns is a commendable attempt to bring the Spanish reader closer to the original text, in that he has tried to recreate the ideas and content of the original version. He is not uniformly successful, but, as he himself points out in the introduction to his translation, the puns are more difficult to perceive in Spanish

than in English. This is evidenced by the fact, cited by Ojeda, that no member of his family could recognize any puns in his translation! It is possible that some readers might not be aware of the existence of puns in the Spanish version, especially as the pun or play on words seems not to be easily constructed or recognized.

In conclusion, Ojeda has proved himself to be fully aware of the many, varied and at times irresolvable problems which *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* sets for translation. His aim is not to create a radically different piece of literature, but to *recreate Alice*, preserving all of its original characteristics in the best possible way:

La intención de esta traducción es la de dar una versión fiel y auténtica de *Alicia* para satisfacer la curiosidad de los que conocen su popularidad sin haberla podido leer (...) (22)

As Ojeda's words reveal, his translation is primarily aimed not at those already familiar with the original version, but at a new readership. For bringing Carroll's engrossing, original and enjoyable work to a wider readership of non-English speakers, he deserves our gratitude. As a parallel text to be read alongside Carroll's book, his Spanish translation offers a great deal of insight, not only into the wider issues of translating a literary work, but also into the vast possibilities of expression offered by each language.

**University of Aberdeen, October 1991.**