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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

## TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Bridging the Gaps between Cultures.  
An Analysis of Cultural References in Dubbing: The case of  
Quentin Tarantino

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2013/2014



## ABSTRACT

In the following paper, I will analyze one of the biggest challenges presented in audiovisual translation, cultural references. This study focuses on the English – Spanish translation of four movies created by the American director Quentin Tarantino. Thus, the goal will be to detect the cultural references, observe the translation problems, check which strategies the translators followed and provide solutions in the target culture.

## KEYWORDS

Audiovisual Translation - Cultural Reference - Tarantino -  
Dubbing English-Spanish - Movies

## RESUMEN

En el siguiente trabajo, realizaremos un estudio sobre uno de los mayores retos en la traducción audiovisual, las referencias culturales. El estudio se basa en traducciones inglés-español extraídas de cuatro películas creadas por el director Americano Quentin Tarantino. El objeto de este estudio será detectar dichas referencias culturales, ver qué estrategias se han seguido en su traducción y proporcionar soluciones alternativas para la cultura meta.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Traducción Audiovisual - Referencia cultural - Tarantino -  
doblaje inglés-español - Películas



# INDEX

## 1. INTRODUCTION

p. 8 - 9

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

p. 10 - 11

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1 ROLE OF CULTURE

p. 12 - 13

### 3.2 CULTURAL REFERENCES

p. 13 - 18

### 3.3 DUBBING VS. SUBTITLING

p. 18 - 19

### 3.4 THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

p. 19 - 23

### 3.5 MY CASE: QUENTIN TARANTINO

p. 23

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1 CULTURAL ADAPTATION

p. 26 - 32

#### 4.1.1 **Los 40 Principales de USA & Madonna**

#### 4.1.2 **Problematic translation. Austrian Gastronomy**

4.1.3 **The Spanish speaking country that turns into a Portuguese speaking country**

4.1.4 **Hansel y Gretel**

4.1.5 **Losing of pejorative tone**

#### 4.2 EXPLICITIVE TRANSLATION

p. 32 -36

4.2.1 **Rain check – ¿Comprobación de/por lluvia?**

4.2.2 **About Lamb's Tails**

4.2.3 **Mexican standoff**

4.2.4 **Winchesters**

4.2.5 **Charles Bronson at “The Great Scape” & more celebrities**

#### 4.3 REFERENT'S REMOVAL

p. 36 - 45

4.3.1 **English**

4.3.2 **Bashful, the shy dwarf**

4.3.3 **Tips “rule”**

4.3.4 **Pepsi Challenge**

4.3.5 **Palooka**

4.3.6 **Racism. “Pickaninny”**

4.3.7 **Gañanes, cucarachas y monos**

#### 4.4 NON-TRANSLATION

p. 45 - 49

4.4.1 **Charlie Chan**

4.4.2 **Jews stereotype**

4.4.3 **Inglewood, the dangerous city that gets obviate**

4.4.4 **Baseball reference**

4.4.5 **Marshall/ Sheriff**

5. CONCLUSION  
p. 49 - 50

6. REFERENCES  
p. 51 - 53

## 1. Introduction

The Oxford English Dictionary collects different meanings for the word *translation*. However, the wider meaning is the one related to the linguistic world, defined as “The process of translating words or text from one language into another”. Every sense of the word has the same feature: the establishment of connections between two different points.

Sometimes, creating the “bridge” between two languages can be difficult for a translator. Every culture has its own customs, traditions... and they may be different from the ones in other cultures. Those differences are what in translation are called cultural references, and they can create many problems when it comes to their translation.

This paper analyzes how cultural references have been translated and which strategies have been used taking examples from the filmography of one of the most admired movie directors nowadays, Quentin Tarantino. His vast filmography provides a great frame to explain the different strategies carried out by translators for the translation of cultural references. He is one of the U.S. movie directors who makes more references to the American culture in his works. Due to the space limitations of this project, it is impossible to analyze all his work. Therefore, I have selected the four movies that have given him more success: *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*. This movie selection was also made dividing Tarantino’s filmography into two different periods: the 90s or his beginnings as a movie director, and his most recent work in the 2000s.

Accordingly, this paper will be organized as follows:

### ❖ Justification

In this section, we have a first approach to the paper’s theme and what I want to achieve with it.

### ❖ Theoretical Background

Throughout this section, I am going to analyze in detail what translators understand as “cultural reference” and their translation in the dubbing process of a movie.



❖ Analysis

In this section, I am going to analyze the data collected from the Tarantino's movies selection that I have established before, focusing on the objectives that I have previously set in the *Justification* .

❖ Conclusion

This closing section will remark the results that I have obtained from the analysis and the conclusions I have arrived to.

❖ Bibliography

## 2. Justification

With the process of globalization, societies have expanded themselves. In this brand new world without borders the information travels free from one country to another. What people may not notice is that within that exchange of information, several specific cultural factors, like its customs or traditions, are involved. Most of these are exclusive or representative of a specific society. Thus, within the process of communication between two different cultures some “gaps” may appear. Those cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings or loss of information, changing the original intention. The name of these specific aspects of a concrete society is what in translation is called cultural reference. These might suppose a real challenge for the translator in his or her aim to fill the existent gaps between cultures.

Translation is the key to share information worldwide. In our day to day life, it bridges the difficulties in the process of communication between cultures. Without the existence of translation, every culture would be a closed entity without the possibility of receiving any feedback or information outside it. It seems clear that without translation the idea of globalization or a world without borders would not be possible.

One of the areas where translation is more useful nowadays is in the world of Arts, especially in the film industry. The translation of movies and TV shows, also called audiovisual translation, has become one of the most popular. As in every translation field, the audiovisual has its own specific problems for the translator. One of the biggest challenges that the audiovisual translator must face are cultural references.

My intention with this project can be depicted in three main objectives:

- 1) To see if there are any changes in the chosen translation strategies of cultural references in the two different periods of time. The movies’ selection was made dividing Tarantino’s filmography into two different periods. My idea is to see if there are any differences regarding the translation of cultural references between Tarantino’s first period and his second one aiming to find out how much “adaptation” had Tarantino’s movies suffered in their Spanish versions.

- 2) To check which is the tendency regarding the translation of Quentin Tarantino's movies, and following the idea established in the objective 1. With the use of data from the analysis, my intention is to see if the trend in Tarantino's filmography is to maintain the product as faithful to the original as possible, maintaining most of the cultural references present in the original or if there are any adaptations in Tarantino's script and how big those modifications are.

To this end, I will compare two of the translation strategies that dubbing translators use, which are explained in 3.2. in order to see how the "cultural bridge" has been treated.

- 3) To draw some conclusions once I have located and analyzed every cultural reference and to check if the overall translation is able to transmit the original content that the director wanted to and if the translation is able to maintain all the information, eliminating the existent gap between the American and the Spanish cultures, or if there is some information that simply is lost in the process.

### 3. Theoretical Background

#### 3.1 The role of Culture

The definition of culture has always been subject of study for scholars worldwide. It is difficult to delimit its concept, as the idea of “culture” covers a very diverse range of areas of the human being which cannot be easily delimited by a close statement as a definition is.

Authors like D. E. Campbell (2000) define *culture* as “a complex web of information that a person learns and which guides each person’s actions, experiences, and perceptions”. Other authors like J. Banks (1984) suggest another definition of culture as “the behavior, patterns, symbols, institutions, values, and other human made components of the society”.

Finally, after getting deep in the concept, there is the definition provided by the *Centre for Advance Research Linguistic Acquisition*, or **CARLA**. They explain culture as “the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group.”

Many different definitions for the same concept have been provided through the years, though none of them are completely equal. Despite the inability to give a complete definition of culture, we can see that most of these definitions share some characteristics. One of them is the idea of “sharing” among humans. Generally speaking, the concept of “culture” defines a society divided by specific characteristics – patterns, perceptions, human behavior... - that distinguishes it from other societies.

It is true that the world seems “smaller” than ever; today anyone can travel, visit and learn from other cultures easier than ever before. However, this knowledge is limited if there is a linguistic problem, that is, the inability to speak or understand different languages. According to *Ethnologue* - a database which catalogues all languages spoken worldwide -, there are more than 7 thousand different known languages around the globe, being Cantonese Chinese, Spanish and English the three languages with more native speakers. It is obviously impossible for someone to speak that many languages,

but today the world needs to stay connected more than ever before, and here is where the importance of translation lies. Obviously, it is not possible to learn around 7 million languages, but thanks to the work of translators we can fill the gaps between cultures and reach the cultures behind those 7 million languages. By means of translation, societies worldwide can create “bridges”; channels where the information goes through different countries or regions to share information and their cultures.

Taking the above into account, it is obvious that a translator should have certain knowledge from both cultures he or she pretends to “connect” in a great spectrum of fields including, among others, customs, social setting and, of course, linguistic variability, i.e. different language types with their particular norms.

Monireh Akbari, in one of her articles in the *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, states - as Hatim and Mason (1990) said that the social context is the most important variable in translation, including the gender. In the same article, Akbari quotes Wittgenstein, who once said that “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” (1958, p. 53). This line fits perfectly with the purpose of this paper; it emphasizes the importance of translation as a connector of cultures and adds value to the translator’s job, who assumes the role of the “architect” of those bridges between cultures.

### **3.2 Cultural references**

“Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions.” (Toury 1978).

Translation and culture are dependable on one another. Translators cannot try to translate something from one language to another without taking into account the two cultures involved.

Almost everything can be part of our own cultural background, no matter if it belongs to the scope of literature, history, climate, or audiovisual media. Each of these areas does its bit to conform what the cultural identity of a determined society involves. However, it is impossible to transfer every part of information, there are always going to be some elements which belong to the original culture that will not be translated perfectly neither match the target culture. These elements are called cultural references, and they can become a big problem for translators.

In order to provide a correct definition of what a cultural reference is I will use Rosa Agost's words (1999:99), who defines cultural references as:

“lugares específicos de alguna ciudad o de algún país; aspectos relacionados con la historia, con el arte y con las costumbres de una sociedad y de una época determinada (canciones, literatura, conceptos estéticos); personajes muy conocidos, la mitología; la gastronomía, las instituciones, las unidades monetarias, de peso y medida; etc.”

In other words, every aspect of a society or country: its customs, gastronomy, history, etc. Everything that can be considered as proper and distinctive is what Agost (1999) considers a cultural reference.

Along the same lines, Santamaría (in Igareda, 2011) defines cultural references as:

“[...] los objetos y eventos creados dentro de una cultura determinada con un capital cultural distintivo, intrínseco en el conjunto de la sociedad, capaz de modificar el valor expresivo que se otorga a los individuos que están relacionados al mismo (2001).”

To put it in another way, any distinctive aspect that plays an intrinsic part in the culture of the specific society or country that it belongs to.

Both definitions share the idea of cultural references as “something” distinctive of the culture of a country or society, but none of them seems to get deep in which concrete things encompass cultural references' category. This happens because even linguistic experts cannot provide a closed list of what a cultural reference is or it is not. What it is clear is that cultural references are extremely diverse, covering almost every level of a certain culture.

It is likely that as part of a concrete society, we do not realize how important cultural references are in our everyday lives. They involve things that define us, like our language, our literature (e.g. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, one of our most famous national characters, Karlos Arguiñano, or even customs like the famous Spanish *siesta*.) We may not notice it, but culture is what makes a society, not a territory nor a flag.

Cultural references have a great importance when it comes to their translation, that is to say, the transference of concepts from the original language, called source language, to another language or meta language called target language. Regarding this, a translator not only needs to have a linguistic competence, but also a sociocultural competence that

will enable them to understand the source culture terms and adapt their translation to the meta culture.

These cultural terms or references are part of the culture itself, and therefore cannot be isolated from language or speech. That is why they repeatedly appear in literature and audiovisual media. With globalization, the world is “connected”, and a book written in English is quickly translated and published into French, Spanish... and that includes the translation of all those cultural terms inside them. They are an every-day problem for translators.

The translation of those terms has more connotations than the simple transfer of information from one language to another. With the translation of a cultural reference, we are also making another culture known to the meta culture. A favorable translation of the features of a certain society may have a heavy influence in the meta culture’s readers. Some scholars like Santamaría (2001) discussed the importance of the ideology of any given society when it comes to the translation and comprehension of foreign cultural references. Every society has its own ideology, mostly independent from the others, and it is represented through its own cultural references. Thus, being too faithful to the original cultural reference can produce a mistranslation, as the meta culture audience can interpret it differently. The solution to this may be to find what Santamaría calls “social representations: ‘the end product and the process of a mental activity by which an individual or a group reconstructs the reality which he or it is faced and attributes to it a specific importance’ Abric (in Santamaría, 2010).

In other words, sometimes it is a good translation strategy to base our translation in helping the target audience to understand the cultural reference. This is what in translation is called naturalization. Santamaría advices translators about the cognitive process that it is followed when we found something new to our culture, pointing out how new terms integrate in someone’s social representations scheme:

- I. Anchoring: Using our memory, we “try” to integrate the new term in our mental system of social representations, even if it is something unknown and strange to us.
- II. Objectification: In this second phase, we finally integrate the new term and recognize it as part of our mental system of social representations.

Santamaría suggests that the integration of new terms can produce a whole reorganization of our social representations system i.e. changing the way we interpret the world.

Santamaría concludes that the most important duty when translating cultural references is to “reflect a particular social reality in such a way that viewers can understand it through the usual cognitive process”.

Therefore, the translator’s duty is, to the extent possible, to fill the gaps of the meta audience to get to understand the other culture and at the same time to maintain the text’s prime purpose.

The following examples are going to provide us the first approach in this paper to real instances of cultural references.

(1)

This excerpt taken from *Abisrror’s biography* gives us a perfect example of how cultural references can transcend its role in just a part of culture and become a larger entity. The text is provided to us in two versions: the Spanish (SP) one and another version translated into English (EN).

SP:

“Desconocemos cuántos hijos han tenido juntos pero después de un tiempo Moisés, quien era conocido como todo un **Don Juan** se casó con otra chica llamada Dolores Guerra (mi abuela).”

EN:

“We don’t know how many children they had together but after a while Moisés, who was known to be a “**Don Juan**” married another girl called Dolores Guerra (my grandmother).”

The figure of the “Don Juan” was first created by the Spanish author Tirso de Molina in his work *el Burlador de Sevilla*. The *Don Juan* figure represented first the breakdown of the established social order, the absolute freedom. Nowadays, the meaning has become



deformed and now what the Spanish culture understands as a *Don Juan* is someone who is a womanizer. ( *Sobre mitos y estereotipos*, Juan Carlos Benavente).

*Don Juan* has gone from being a character to a term with its own connotations in the Spanish culture. That is a clear example of a cultural reference.

Regarding its translation, the translator in charge of this website has decided to maintain the cultural reference as it is, *Don Juan*, simply because nowadays it is a term widely known and understood in other cultures.

(2)

There are instances of cultural references that belong to a society not as a representation of a country, but as a group of people that share a specific figure, no matter where they come from.

That is the case of the term being a “doubting Thomas”. This English idiomatic expression has its root in the Catholic Bible. In one of the chapters, Thomas - one of the Twelve Apostles - did not want to believe that Jesus Christ had risen from death and that he had appeared to the other apostles until he could see and touch the wounds on Jesus Christ’s body, which showed that, indeed, he had resurrected. [John 20:24–29] (Merriam-Webster)

Nowadays, people use being a doubting Thomas to designate someone that is skeptic. The same term is used in other languages, like in the Spanish culture: “Tomás el incrédulo”.

The following sentence is extracted by the bilingual Spanish/English article *King James Bible Study Correspondence Course. An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries*:

EN:

“We are not like **doubting Thomas.**”

SP:

“Nosotros no somos como **Tomás el Incrédulo.**”

Nowadays, cultural references are more clear in the audiovisual world, because we receive the information through two different channels: audio and image. Movies and

TV shows are inevitably filled with such type of cultural references, and audiovisual translation is responsible for transferring that audio into another language as an oral text, dubbing, or as a written text, subtitling.

### 3.3 Dubbing vs. subtitling

The choice of dubbing versus subtitling has been an issue that has been subject of discussion throughout the years. Frederic Chaume, in his well-known book called *Cine y Traducción* (2004), provides an overview about this concrete decision whether to choose dubbing or subtitling. Chaume presents a never ending debate whether which option is the best.

Among the factors involved in the use of subtitling or dubbing, Gambier (1994) focuses on political and social causes as the main factors to choose dubbing or subtitling. Authors like Danan (in Ballester, 1995) justify this with the example of the rise of the extreme nationalist ideologies that appeared in Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Leaders like Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy or Franco in Spain, whose priority was to protect their identity as a country - including the language – did not allow any movie without being dubbed.

Regarding this issue, Ballester (1995) makes a research about the concrete case of Spain during the Franquismo, the Spanish Dictatorship. She concludes that this rule of dubbing foreign movies taken during the Franco era (1939 – 1975) was continued along the next decades until our time. According to her investigation, foreign movies were seen as a kind of “invasion”. By means of dubbing strategies, Spanish Dictatorship members, just like in Germany or in Italy, could modify foreign movies in the way they wanted and show what they wanted to show from a certain society, removing the parts or the dialogues that were not to be seen by the target audience.

Nowadays, we increasingly find more and more audiovisual works – TV shows, movies... - that arrive to the final audience “untranslated”, but with subtitles in the meta language. Subtitling, unlike dubbing, has a “foreigner” component. As seen before, subtitling shows the original material unaltered, with the original dialogues and images. A subtitled version is less likely to be only partially translated or adapted than the dubbed version is, as the latter suffers severe modifications in its translation process

without the audience noticing it. Thus, the subtitled movie versions would have been unthinkable during nationalist movements.

In the same vein, Lampert (1989) concludes that the translation is at the same time an active agent and a symptom of the linguistic and cultural interchanges, being a key factor to determine the norms that configure the cinematographic discourse in a country.

### 3.4 The Translation Process of Cultural References

In translation, we try to provide the closest natural equivalent to the original message, paying special attention to the meaning and also in terms of style. (Nida and Taber, 1969) According to Rosa Agost (1999), cultural references are implied within a certain society or culture. However, this allusion may not be that clear when translating for someone from the meta language. The power of the reference can get lost, as the origin and meta societies do not share the mentioned cultural knowledge.

For the problem that causes their translation, there are some strategies that help to save the gap between the two cultures, and find an appropriate translation in the meta culture that will enable readers understand it and bridge the two cultures. This is a problem that many scholars have dealt with, purposing different classifications about which translation strategies should be followed when we face cultural references. Authors like Newmark (2001), Davies (2003) or Agost (1999) show the great amount of translation strategies that can help us in the translation of cultural references. For the purpose of this paper, I am going to use Agost's (1999) classification.

Agost proposes the following classification of the translation strategies (1999: 100-101):

- ❖ **Cultural Adaptation:** It consists on substituting the cultural reference from the original culture for another well-known equivalent in the meta culture.
- ❖ **Explicative translation:** The translator explains the cultural reference in order to facilitate its comprehension to the meta audience.
- ❖ **Referent's removal:** Whenever the translation of the cultural reference is problematic or impossible. It is also possible to substitute the cultural term for another element.
- ❖ **Non-translation:** Leave the cultural reference untranslated.

What follows are some basic examples to clarify Agost's classification.

### **Cultural Adaptation**

With this translation strategy, Agost refers to a complete substitution of the cultural reference. It happens when the translator in charge decides that the cultural reference from the origin culture is not going to be understandable in the meta culture. In these cases, the translator looks for a substitute in the meta culture that can work as a homologous for the original cultural reference. The ideal substitution should maintain the intended purpose in the origin text. Comedy movies, for instance, are full of examples of cultural adaptations, since adapting cultural references is one of the best ways to maintain humor.

The following example was taken from an article by Botella (2006). (Extract from the movie *Ali-G in da House* (2002), and its translation to Spanish, carried out by the Spanish comedy group *Gomaespuma*.

**V.O.**

**ALI-G:** - *We'll be like the A Team, I \*is BA Baracus*

**RICKY:** -*I wanna be BA Baracus*

**SP**

**ALI-G:** -*Salvemos el Digimundo. Yo me pido Garurumón.*

**RICKY:** -*Eh, Garurumón soy yo.*

In this example, the translator decides to change the reference to the A Team, a very famous TV show in the U.S, for another that could be understandable for the Spanish meta audience, maintaining at the same time the humor. In this case, the characters are mentioning the famous cartoon show *Digimon*.

### ✚ Explicative translation

There are some instances where it is impossible to find an acceptable substitute for the cultural reference in the origin text, and a cultural adaptation cannot be done, since there is no similar concept in the meta language. This time, Agost suggests the use of an explicative translation of the cultural term, losing some of the cultural value of the term but making it understandable for the meta audience.

Extract from the Disney's movie *Peter Pan* (1953), the following example was taken from Iglesias Gómez (2009).

**V.O.**

**MR. DARLING:** Sound the alarm! Call Scotland Yard!

**SP**

**SR. DARLING:** ¡Suene la alarma! ¡Llama a la policía!

In London, it is common to call “Scotland Yard” to the police. *Scotland Yard* was the name of the street where the London police headquarters were originally settled. Over the years, the name started to designate the police itself.

With this allusion, any Anglo-Saxon spectator would understand that the character is referring not only to the police, but concretely to the London police.

The translation omits the cultural reference and makes the reference explicit – *la policía* –, since it is a kid's movie and the policemen's provenance is irrelevant.

### ✚ Referent's removal

This strategy is required when the translation of the cultural reference causes so many problems that the translator decides to delete the reference in the meta language. It sometimes can be confusing with the explicative translation, as both strategies involve the loss of cultural content. However, in this case the cultural reference is completely removed, without trying to replace it with an explanatory term or phrase.

Extract from the American TV show *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013). The character, Walter, is addressing to a group of Mexican girls, and he tries to communicate with them in a kind of broken Spanish. The translator decides to remove the cultural reference of the American character trying to speak Spanish.

**V.O.**

**WALTER:** Buenos días ladies, Good morning! ¿Hablan inglés?

**SP**

**WALTER:** Buenos días señoras, buenos días... ¿tienen un momento?

#### **Non-translation**

These days, due to globalization, this particular translation strategy is more and more used. Places like *Burger King* or *McDonalds* are well-known worldwide in most meta cultures, despite originally being part of the American culture.

Apart from cultural references, we can have other problems in the translation process which can hinder the transfer of information between cultures. That is the case of the diversity of languages. Rosa Agust refers to this type of translation problem that the translator may face in one of her articles in the book "*Traducción Subordinada. El doblaje.*" (2001). As Agust points out, the appearance of a second language in the original text can create different troubles for the translator, which can be overcome with many other solutions as well. She proposes three different methods taking into consideration factors like the movie genre – animation, documentaries, advertisements... - or the historical context inside the movie.

#### **a) The use of an only arrival language**

This option implies the disappearance of the linguistic variation i.e. second language. In this case, the spectator feels that something is going wrong, causing a "loss of the original cultural richness".

#### **b) To let some sentences untranslated**

The intermediate option. The translator leaves some key sentences in the second language, just to reflect some purpose and maintain a little bit of that cultural richness.

**c) The complete substitution of one of the languages for another**

Many English-speaking movies have some Spanish speaking characters, but from Latin America. Maintaining any of the fragments in Latin American Spanish may sound weird for Spanish-speakers in the Iberian Peninsula.

As Agost suggests, when the language contrast is vital for the movie scene, the translator can opt to change the Latin American Spanish from the origin text to another similar language like Italian or Portuguese, aiming to maintain the “likelihood”.

### **3.5 My case: Quentin Tarantino.**

“I’ve always made my movies for me anyway [...] I make them for me and everybody else is invited”.

This is how **Quentin Jerome Tarantino**, one of the most influential contemporary movie directors not only in the U.S. but in the whole world introduces himself. Son of a social worker and a law student, he became fond of movies thanks to his grandmother, a second rate actress with small roles in B movies. (IMDb)

Since his first movie, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), which was an instant hit, - Tarantino has been considered a cult director for many people around the world. His way of mixing brutal scenes with outstanding soundtracks produces whacking effects on the audience, some of whom even refer to those scenes as masterpieces.

Be that as it may, Tarantino’s constant allusions to American pop culture in his movies have – and will – create many problems for translators. Not only due to the cultural references in the dialogues, but also for the huge amount of visual and sound cultural references.

However, that work has to be translated and dubbed or subtitled for the different meta audiences to be broadcasted in other countries. This is where the translator comes in. His difficult job involves, not only translating the script and dialogues, but also bridging the gaps between the American Pop culture and the meta language, in order to make the translation as smooth as possible.

## 4. Analysis

It is time to focus on my subject of study, the filmography of one of the most famous American directors nowadays; Quentin Tarantino. With the following analysis, I will analyze the translation of the cultural references present in his work.

The reason behind selecting this director and no other, apart from my personal taste, comes from the fact that Tarantino is one of the English speaking directors that provides more problems to translators, as he introduces a lot of cultural references from the North-American society in his movies.

As it was said in the introduction of this paper, I have chosen four movies as the subject of study: *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*.

The selection attends to two main factors.

- Representativeness: These four are perhaps the most worldwide well-known movies from this director; they have been translated to many different languages, supposing problems to translators around the world.
- Two different stages: The four movies are separated in two periods from Tarantino's filmography. Two movies from the decade of the 90s, his first period as director, and the two other movies from his last stage as a director, from the 2000s onwards.

### ✓ **Reservoir Dogs**<sup>1</sup>

Spanish title: *Reservoir Dogs*.

Year of publication: 1992.

Length: 99 min

Translator in charge (English to Spanish version): Alicia Losada.

Distributor: MIRAMAX FILMS

Distributor in Spain: CINE COMPANY S.A.

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<sup>1</sup> In this case, the movie has two different versions: the first translation made when the movie came up in 1992, and a further version, made in 2008. I decided to use the 1992 version, since this was the first one that arrived to the Spanish audience and would be more comparable with the *Pulp Fiction* one, as it belongs to a similar period in Tarantino's filmography.



✓ **Pulp Fiction**

Spanish title: *Pulp Fiction*.

Year of publication: 1999.

Length: 154 min

Translator in charge (English to Spanish version): Darryl Clark.

Distributor: MIRAMAX FILMS

Distributor in Spain: LAUREN FILMS S.A.

✓ **Inglourious Basterds**

Spanish title: *Malditos Bastardos*.

Year of publication: 2009.

Length: 153 min

Translator in charge (English to Spanish version): Josep Llurba.

Distributor: THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

Distributor in Spain: UNIVERSAL PICTURES INTERNATIONAL SPAIN S.L.

✓ **Django Unchained**

Spanish title: *Django Desencadenado*.

Year of publication: 1999.

Length: 154 min

Translator in charge (English to Spanish version): Quico Rovira-Veleta.

Distributor: THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

Distributor in Spain: SONY PICTURES REALASING ESPAÑA S.A.

As I have pointed out, in the case of *Reservoir Dogs* I have decided to use the 1992 version of the dubbing, just to be able to create two pairs of movies from two different decades and see if there are any changes in the translation techniques used regarding cultural references or if the same method has been maintained throughout the years.

It is worth mentioning that the four movies have been translated by four different translators. Despite this, I think that it is not something that would be decisive in the analysis of the techniques used in the translation of cultural references, since translators usually follow similar translation patterns.

For the analysis of the translation of cultural references, I have grouped them following the technique used for their translation, according to the classification made by Agost (1999: 100-101) that I have explained in 3.4.

It would have been interesting to include every case of translation of a cultural reference but it is not possible due to the restrictions in length of this paper. Within the analysis, I have only included the most notorious samples.

## 4.1 Cultural Adaptation

### 4.1.1 Los 40 Principales de USA & Madonna ( RESERVOIR DOGS )

Movies are remembered for their key scenes: the “freedom speech” in *Braveheart*, the wedding’s scene in *The Godfather* or the dance between Mia and Vincent in *Pulp Fiction* are just some examples of clips that people who have watch the movies will not forget. That is the case of the initial conversation of *Reservoir Dogs*.

In a humorous tone, Mr. Brown – Quentin Tarantino - explains to his partners his theory about the meaning of Madonna’s hit “Like a Virgin”. During the conversation, a lot of references to the American culture keep happening and this obviously put in difficulties to our translator.

#### V.O

**MR. ORANGE :** Which one is "True Blue?"

**NICE GUY EDDIE:** You don't remember "True Blue?" That was a big ass hit for Madonna. Shit, I don't even follow this **Tops In Pops** shit, and I've at least heard of "True Blue."

**SP**

**SR. NARANJA:** ¿Cuál es "True Blue"?

**EDDIE:** ¿No sabes cuál es "True Blue"? Fue un exitazo de Madonna. ¿Qué pasa? ¿Es que no escuchas los **40 principales**?

For the song True Blue, the translator has to maintain it as he decided to maintain "Madonna" as the center of the conversation. Madonna is known enough in the meta culture to maintain her instead of trying some cultural adaptation. The same happens with the Madonna's songs named within the conversation, although some of them are omitted in the Spanish dubbed version –e.g. "*Lucky Star*".

However, as regards to the radio program, "*Tops In Pops*" is a music chart television program very famous in Britain. As this would not be known in the meta culture, the translator decides to use an adaptation strategy and to change the term into something known for most of the Spanish audience like "*Los 40 Principales*", a well-known radio-station in Spain. "*Tops In Pops*" is similar in a way to the "Del 40 al 1" program made by "*los 40 principales*", so it is a good substitution.

#### 4.1.2 **Problematic translation. Austrian Gastronomy (INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS)**

The movie "*Inglourious Basterds*" shows numerous references to the Germanic culture in general, covering the culture of countries from Switzerland to Germany.

Aldo Rayne, one of the main characters of the movie, uses many of these looking to give his lines a pejorative tone, but at the same time a humorous sense, seeking out to entertain the audience.

**V.O.**

**LT.ALDO:** Now take your **wennersitnitzel** lickin finger, and point out on this map what I want to know.

**SP**

**TENIENTE ALDO:** Ahora empieza a pensar con la **Kopf** y dinos lo que queremos saber.

The translator faces the problem of “wennersitnitzel”. In this scene, Aldo is referring to a Nazi sergeant that the Basterds are, in a way, torturing.

As I said before, Aldo uses stereotypes to make fun of the German soldier. The wennersitnitzel is a typical meal from the Austrian area. In the Spanish version, we lose this stereotypical joke and instead of that, we have a typical phrase like “pensar con la cabeza” – i.e. use your brain - but only with the change of “kopf” –head - instead of using “cabeza”, as it is its equivalent in German.

This is a difficult situation for the translator, since “wennersitnitzel” is a difficult cultural reference that probably no one would know in Spain. However, I do not think using “kopf” is a good solution just because the same issue, not many people in Spain would understand the reference to the German equivalent of “cabeza”. My suggestion in this case would have been simply to omit the cultural reference and leave it as “pensar con la cabeza”. Despite we are losing some pejorative tone towards the German soldier and even perhaps a kind of humorous way to ridicule the soldier, I think there is not a better option.

#### **4.1.3 The Spanish speaking country that turns into a Portuguese speaking country ( PULP FICTION )**

The mention to a Spanish speaking country like Mexico creates once again problems for the Spanish translator.

**V.O.**

**FABIENNE:** So if we wanted, we could live in Bora Bora?

**BUTCH:** You betcha. And if after a while you don't dig Bora Bora, then we can move over to Tahiti or Mexico.

**FABIENNE:** But I do not speak **Spanish**.

**SP**

**FABIENNE:** ¿Si quisiéramos podríamos vivir en Bora Bora?

**BUTCH:** Por supuesto. Y si después ya no te enrolla, iríamos a otro lugar, quizá a Tahiti, o a Brasil.

**FABIENNE:** Pero yo no hablo **portugués**.

The translator opts to use a cultural adaptation. This is not made by chance, but due to the next part of the dialogue.

**V.O**

**BUTCH:** You don't speak Bora Boran either. Besides, **Mexican** is easy: ¿Dónde está el zapataría?

**FABIENNE:** What does that mean?

**BUTCH:** Where's the shoe store?

**FABIENNE:** ¿Dónde está el zapataría?

**BUTCH:** Excellent pronunciation. You'll be my little *mamaceta* in no time.

**SP**

**BUTCH:** Tampoco hablas Boraborano. Además, el **portugués** es fácil.

**FABIENNE:** ¿Qué significa eso?

**BUTCH:** ¿Dónde está la zapatería?

**FABIENNE:** “Undo sta sapateria?”

**BUTCH:** Excelente pronunciación. Serás mi *masinha* enseguida.

The broken Spanish from the original version turns into a Portuguese class in order to overcome the barrier of having the characters speaking Spanish. Also, the translator maintains the humorous reference at the end of the dialogue changing the “mamaceta” i.e. “mamasita” to its portuguese equivalente “masinha”. Here we have a clear case of the appearance of linguistic variations in the origin text, that have been explained in 3.4. In this case, the translator uses a complete substitution of one of the languages for another.

As the language contrast is vital for the comprehension of the scene, the translator changes the Latin American Spanish from the origin text to another similar language like Portuguese, aiming to maintain the “likelihood”.

In my opinion, is a quite valid option, since you cannot leave the same cultural reference, as they are heading to a Spanish speaking country without knowing the language when they are indeed speaking Spanish, so the substitution is a good option.

#### 4.1.4 Hansel y Gretel ( **INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS** )

This scene takes place in a military attaché in the UK, during the conversation between the British General Fenech and the Lieutenant Hicox. The topic of the conversation goes around the possibility of Hicox of infiltrating in the Nazi ranks, like a kind of job interview.

**V.O.**

**GEN.FENECH:** It says here you speak German fluently?

**LT.HICOX:** Like a **Katzenjammer Kid**.

**SP**

**GEN. FENECH:** Aquí pone que ¿habla fluido el alemán?

**TENIENTE HICOX:** Como **Hansel y Gretel**.

The Katzenjammer kids were the characters from the namesake American comic strip, created by Rudolph Dirks, very popular in the U.S. from 1912 to 1949. In the movie, Lt. Hicox is making a reference to a German origin character quite known in the American culture like the Katzenjammer Kids. - The comparison with the Spanish culture could be something like saying “Zipi y Zape” -.

The translator in charge has to look for an equivalent that can be known in the meta culture or Spanish culture, aiming to making clear that the character is referring to someone with German origin. In this case, the translator founds the answer in the children’s story “Hansel y Gretel”. The Spanish audience would recognize these characters since they belong to any Spaniard’s childhood and they are associated with a German origin, just like the Katzenjammer kids.

I think this cultural adaptation is a great solution to a particularly difficult problem.

#### 4.1.5 **Losing of pejorative tone ( INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS )**

Continuing the conversation in 3.1.2, Aldo keeps using some problematic cultural terms.

**V.O.**

**LT.ALDO:** Up the road a piece, there's an orchard. 'sides you, we know there's another **kraut patrol** fuckin around here somewhere. Now if that patrol were to have any crackshots, that orchard, would be a goddamn snipers delight.

SP

**TENIENTE ALDO:** Siguiendo ese camino, hay un huerto. Aparte de vosotros, sabemos que hay otra **patrulla teutona** tocando los cojones. Si esa patrulla tuviera un tirador de élite, ese huerto sería una gozada para probar puntería.

In *Inglourious Basterds*, every time Aldo refers to the German soldiers, he does it calling them “krauts”, a pejorative term in English to refer to Germans - as they are “square heads” for them -. In this case, the translator avoids this pejorative sense of the word and decides to translate it as “teutón”, gentile noun for the German people.

Just like happened in 3.1.2, we are losing the pejorative tone in the conversation, since there is not any element that ridicules the Germans or the German culture. Despite “teutón” is not that offensive in Spanish like calling them square heads, I think this is a good translation. It is difficult to find equivalents in Spanish to the huge amount of uncomplimentary terms that Americans have for Germans.

As far as I am concerned, it is impossible for me to know if the translator made this on purpose, or if he felt obliged to use this strategy.

## 4.2 Explicative Translation

### 4.2.1 Rain check – ¿Comprobación de/por lluvia? ( PULP FICTION )

Vincent’s hurry forces him to postpone the appointment with his friend, the drug-dealer Lance. The way of expressing this is quite peculiar.

**V.O.**

**VINCENT:** I'm on my way somewhere. I got a dinner engagement. **Rain check?**

**LANCE:** No problem.



**SP**

**VINCENT:** Tengo que ir a un sitio... ¿**En otra ocasión?**

**LANCE:** Sin problema.

Rain check is an expression used in English for “re-schedule” some appointment. There is not an analogy translation into SP, so the translator decides to make an explicative translation in order to maintain the coherence of the dialogue. In my opinion, this is a good translation.

The origin of this expression dates back to the decade of the 1880s. This Americanism was used during baseball games, when a game had to be postponed because of the rain. As we can see, the term was formalized and it is still in use within the American culture. (Phrases.org.uk)

#### 4.2.2 About Lamb’s Tails ( PULP FICTION )

Mia advises Vincent to relax in her place while she gets ready to their sort of date.

**V.O**

**MIA:** (into microphone) Go make yourself a drink., and I'll be down in two **shakes of a lamb's tail.**

**SP**

**MIA:** Sírvete una copa y bajaré **en lo que tardas en bebértela.**

It is always difficult to find out the origin of an idiomatic expression, i.e. idiom.

According to some data, the use of “shakes” as a measurement of time dates back to March 30, 1967 in the “*Tell me Why*” column by A. Leokum published in the Toledo Blade newspaper.

The expression was still in use in the modern era, as an advertisement found in the Pittsburg newspaper “*The Gazette Times*” shows back in the decade of the 1920s.

Nowadays, I am not sure if it is an expression still in use since I could not find any contemporary articles using it, or if it is simply an archaism used by Tarantino in his movie.

Back to the translation issue, the translator decides to omit the idiomatic expression and he creates an explicative phrase instead. According to Shojaei (2012), paraphrasing is one of the strategies we can follow when translating idioms. That is why I think the translator's choice is quite correct. Idiomatic expressions are always difficult to translate.

Another valid option could have been replacing the English idiomatic expression for an idiomatic expression in Spanish with a similar meaning, like “en menos que canta un gallo”.

Furthermore, here we have a case of perfect labial synchronization without having to recur to a literal translation. The camera is doing a foreground to Mia's lips at that moment. The labial consonants /sirbete/ , /kópa/ , /baxaré/ y /bebértela/ fit perfectly with the English labial consonants /meik/ /jə'self/, /bi:/, /əv/ (Chaume 2004). This is an extra difficulty that the translator was able to solve.

#### 4.2.3 Mexican standoff ( INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS )

The following scene belongs to the part just after the slaughter that takes place in the underground bar, by the end of the movie.

**V.O**

**ALDO:** Not so fast, Willi, we only have a deal, we trust each other. A **Mexican standoff** ain't trust.

**SP**

**ALDO:** No tan deprisa, solo hay un trato si hay confianza mutua. Y un **duelo armado** no demuestra confianza.

A Mexican standoff represents the classic three people gun confrontations that we all have seen in Westerns. With the time, the term was popularly used in the U.S. especially during the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis to refer to the duels in equal conditions – not advantage for any side -. The U.S. audience understands this reference, but obviously the Spanish meta audience will not catch Tarantino’s reference. Therefore, the best option for the translator is once again to substitute the reference with an explicative translation.

#### 4.2.4 **Winchesters ( DJANGO UNCHAINED )**

This scene happens just at the beginning of the movie, when Django and Dr. Schultz arrive to the Saloon of the first town they visit, with some bad consequences.

##### **V.O**

**MARSHALL'S VOICE:** We got eleven **Winchesters** on every way outta that buildin'!

##### **SP**

**MARSHALL:** Tengo 11 **rifles** apuntando a todas las salidas de la cantina.

The Winchester is a type of rifle created by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, hence its name. In a country like the U.S., where people is so familiarized with guns and their types, this cultural reference fits perfectly. However, in a country like Spain, not many people know what a Winchester is, so the translator decided to make an explicative translation, since people from the meta audience will not care about the type of rifle the cowboys are using.

#### 4.2.5 **Charles Bronson at “The Great Scape” & more celebrities ( RESERVOIR DOGS )**

The “Like a Virgin” conversation keeps on causing problems.

**V.O**

**MR. PINK:** Then one day she meets a **John Holmes** motherfucker, and it's like, whoa baby. This motherfucker's like **Charles Bronson** in "The Great Escape."

**SP**

**SR.ROSA:** Entonces un día se encuentra con **un tío que tiene un pollón** y ¡zas! El tío es como **Charles Bronson** en "La Gran Escapada".

John Holmes was one of the most famous porn actors in the U.S. Tarantino uses him as a way to describe the guy and his particular feature. Obviously, the translator knows that not many people in the meta audience will know who John Holmes was and simply makes an explicative translation remarking the characteristic "feature" from the porn actor.

In my opinion, the translator's decision is quite good. Apart from that, he could also have done a cultural adaptation instead – substituting the American porn actor for a Spanish one that is known by the Spanish population like Nacho Vidal-. By doing this, the implied humor appearing in the conversation would not be lost, instead of making it explicit.

## 4.3 Referent's removal

### 4.3.1 English

Translators into Spanish face a problem when the characters talk about English as the language they are using to communicate in the scene. They cannot leave it as such, because in the dubbing version they are not speaking English, but Spanish. Also, they cannot replace it for "Spanish" because it would sound weird that Americans say that they are communicating in Spanish. The solution behind this is the use of a cultural adaptation, replacing the "English" and following different patterns:

At first sight, this translation problem may not be considered as a cultural reference for some scholars. However, as Santamaría points out, a cultural reference is every "object or event created inside a culture", this description would perfectly fit with the idea of a country's language like English.

✓ English – “mi idioma”

( PULP FICTION )

V.O.

**JULES:** What country you from!

**BRETT:** (petrified) What?

**JULES:** "What" ain't no country I know! Do they speak **English** in "What?"

**BRETT:** (near heart attack) What?

**JULES:** **English**-motherfucker-can-you-speak-it?

SP

**JULES:** ¡¿De qué país eres?!

**BRETT:** (petrificado) ¿Qué?

**JULES:** ¡No conozco ningún país llamado “Qué”! ¿Hablan **mi idioma** en “Qué”?

**BRETT:** ¿Qué?

**JULES:** **Mi idioma**, cabronazo, ¿sabes hablarlo?

( INGLORIOUS BASTERDS )

V.O.

**LT.ALDO:** Hows your **English** Werner? Cause if need be, we gotta a couple fellas can translate.

**SP**

**TENIENTE ALDO:** ¿Te manejas en **mi idioma** Werner? Porque un par de mis hombres podrían traducirte.

✓ **English – “otros idiomas”**

( **INGLORIOUS BASTERDS** )

**V.O**

**COL LANDA:** Monsieur LaPadite, I regret to inform you I've exhausted the extent of my French. To continue to speak it so inadequately, would only serve to embarrass me. However, I've been lead to believe you speak **English** quite well?

**PERRIER:** Oui.

**SP**

**COL LANDA:** Monsieur LaPadite, me temo que he agotado mis conocimientos de francés, y si continuo hablándolo sé que me acabaría poniendo en evidencia. Sin embargo, usted se defiende correctamente en **otros idiomas**, ¿no es cierto?

**PERRIER:** Qui.

✓ **English – “en cristiano”**

( **DJANGO UNCHAINED** )

**V.O**

**ACE SPECK:** Speak **English!**

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** Oh, I'm sorry. Please forgive me, it is a second language.

**SP**

**ACE SPECK:** ¡Hable en **Cristiano!**

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** Discúlpeme. No es mi lengua materna.

These patterns get constantly repeated over the translation of the four movies. We can see that there are similar patterns in the way translators face the problem of “English”, notwithstanding that we have four different translators in the movies.

In my opinion, the referent’s removal is a good solution in this problem. Any of the possible answers is quite valid. My suggestion in this case would be the one used in the first case, translating “English” as “mi idioma”, which is in fact the most recurrent in the scripts. However, there is a special case where the substitution of “English” for “mi idioma” or something similar is not possible.

**( INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS )**

**V.O.**

**GERMAN SGT:** I'm a German you idiot!

**ALDO'S VOICE(OS):** You speak **English** pretty good for a German!

**GERMAN SGT:** I agree! So let's talk!

**SP**

**SGT ALEMAN:** ¡Soy alemán idiota!

**ALDO: Disparas muy bien para ser alemán**

**SGTO ALEMAN:** Estoy de acuerdo.

The substitution made by the translator in this case is complete. They are no longer dealing with speaking any language, but questioning the ability of the German sergeant for shooting. This solution opted by the translator is in a way risky. Nevertheless, I think it is a good idea. Aldo spends the whole movie talking about Germans in a pejorative tone that the translator has had to obviate as we have seen in previous examples. Therefore, the introduction of this pejorative stereotype that Germans are bad at shooting guns gives the Spanish meta audience a little bit of Aldo's little respect for the German soldiers.

#### 4.3.2 **Bashful, the shy dwarf ( PULP FICTION )**

**V.O**

**MIA:** Let me help you **Bashful**, did it involve the F-word?

**SP**

**MIA:** No seas **tímido**, ¿qué más te dijeron?

Bashful was one of the seven dwarfs that lived with Snow white in the famous fairy tale *Snow white and the seven dwarfs*. In the scene, Mia Wallace makes an allusion to the shy dwarf trying to create a humorous reference. The translator in this case decides to omit the reference, making the sentence lose its funny sense.

In my view, I think the translator could have maintained the cultural reference, translating the name of the dwarf into its Spanish equivalence – “Mudito” –. Almost everyone in the Spanish meta audience knows about Snow White's fairytale and he would have maintained the humorous tone.

#### 4.3.3 **Tips “rule” ( RESERVOIR DOGS )**



We went back again to the “Like a Virgin” conversation just at the beginning of “*Reservoir Dogs*”.

**V.O**

**NICE GUY EDDIE:** I'd go over twelve percent for that.

**SP**

**EDDIE:** Yo por eso daría **propina**.

Most of a waitress's salary in the U.S is based in the tips they receive. It is a common habit to leave twelve percent of the bill as a tip for the waitress. This sort of rule is not applied in Spain, where people do not usually leave tip and even less following this convention like in the U.S. The translator knows this and changes the dialogue adapting it to the meta culture by omitting this reference to the American culture.

#### 4.3.4 **Pepsi Challenge ( PULP FICTION )**

**V.O.**

**LANCE:** I'll take the **Pepsi Challenge** with Amsterdam shit any ol' day of the fuckin' week.

**SP**

**LANCE:** Dejaría que la **compararan** (su droga) con esa mierda de Amsterdam cualquier día de la semana.

Created in 1975, the Pepsi challenge is a marketing promotion made by the Pepsi brand consisting basically on a taste test. A Pepsi representative prepares two blank cups - one containing Pepsi and one filled with Coca-Cola-. Participants taste both drinks, and then select which cola they prefer. Then the representative reveals the two bottles so the taster can see whether they prefer Coke or Pepsi. (Pepsi.com)

Tarantino resolves in this way Vincent's doubts about which cocaine is best between the one in Amsterdam or the cocaine from his friend Lance. This "taste comparison" test between the two most famous colas and the "coke" is made with a clear humorous intention. Regarding the translation, we can see that the translator rightly decided to omit this reference, as it is something that the meta culture would not understand, and replace it by using the verb "comparar".

#### 4.3.5 Palooka ( PULP FICTION )

In this tense conversation at Sally LeRoy's, a club owned by Marsellus Wallace, Vincent uses a cultural term in the form of an insult that is going to cause some troubles to the translator.

**V.O.**

**BUTCH:** Lookin' at somethin', friend?

**VINCENT:** I ain't your friend, **palooka**.

**SP**

**BUTCH:** ¿Algún problema, amigo?

**VINCENT:** No soy tu amigo, **palurdo**.

Palooka is a slang term used in the U.S to refer to the bad fighters or the ones that take a dive. The term comes from the American comic strips of "Joe Palooka", created by Ham Fisher, which were very famous in the 30s. The story goes around the life of a heavyweight boxing champion, so the pejorative sense of the term referring to an inept fighter is still unknown. (Merriam-Webster)

As this term creates a conflict within the meta audience, the translator decides to omit this reference and substitutes it for a low style urban word in Spanish like "palurdo", trying to maintain the pejorative tone. I take into account that the Spanish slang used in

the 90s was different from the one used nowadays, so I think “palurdo” is not a bad option. However, I would have chosen another word more appropriate like “pringado” or “payaso”.

Doing a deeper analysis of the translation, perhaps the translator is forced to use a word like “palurdo”, due to the labial synchrony. In the scene, the camera is clearly focused on Vincent’s face. In order to maintain the synchrony in the translation – something very important for a good translation – the translator has to resolve the translation with a term which has a similar pronunciation than “palooka”. This being the case, the translator has brilliantly come up with the use of “palurdo”, almost perfect lip sync with the original term.

#### 4.3.6 Racism. “Pickaninny” ( DJANGO UNCHAINED )

Calvin Candy - slave owner – uses this term when he is about to kill one of the negroes he “owns”, just for amusement, in his home “Candyland”.

**V.O.**

**CALVIN CANDIE:** Well now since you won't pay a penny for this **pickaninny**, you won't mind me handlin' this nigger however I see fit?

**SP**

**CALVIN CANDIE:** Bien. En vista que no vais a pagar nada por esta **cucaracha**, no os importará que haga con este negro lo que me parezca.

*Django Unchained* is fraught with racist references and offensive words against negroes, as was usual in the Southern states during slavery times. Just like it happens with the huge amount of negative references to Germans in *Inglourious Basterds*, the Spanish language does not have such a huge amount of cultural references in our vocabulary to refer to the negroes in a pejorative way.

The term “pickaninny” is used to refer to black kids or any descendants of negroes. Despite it does not sound as something negative, it is usually used in a derogative way. The translator has to omit the cultural term and substitute it for another that can sound equally derogative and racist like “cucaracha”.

#### 4.3.7 Gañanes, cucarachas y monos. ( DJANGO UNCHAINED )

I present you here some of the multiple times characters at *Django Unchained* refer to the black as “nigger”.

1.

V.O

**SPENCER:** Django isn't a slave. Django is a free man. Do you understand? You're not to treat him like any of these other **niggers** around here, cause he ain't like any of these other niggers around here. Ya got it?

SP

**SPENCER:** Django no es un esclavo, es un hombre libre. ¿Lo entiendes? No puedes tratarle como a uno de los gañanes de por aquí porque no es como los **gañanes** de por aquí. ¿Lo pillas?

2.

V.O.

**DJANGO:** He's your **nigger**

SP

**DJANGO:** Es su **negro**.

3.

V.O.

**CALVIN CANDIE:** Mr.Stonesipher... .let Marsha and her bitches send D'Artagnan to **nigger** heaven.

SP

**CALVIN CANDIE:** Sr. Stonesipher... deje que Marcha y sus perros manden a D'Artagnan al cielo de los **monos**.

4.

V.O

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, Hildi. The **niggers** know each other.

**SP**

**STEPHEN:** Exacto, Hildi. Esas **cucarachas** se conocen.

Just like it happens in the previous example with “pickaninny”, the Spanish language does not have a term that can be comparable with the social and moral implications that a word like “nigga” has in English. In this case, the translator is forced to remove the cultural reference. Instead of “nigga”, he tries to look for an equivalent to that derogatory use of the word by using several words – “gañan”, “mono”, “cucaracha”, “negro” -

In my view, I think that the most appropriate term would be “Mono”, as it is something that racists here in Spain frequently use. Nevertheless, a somehow literal translation of nigger as “negro” like in (2), depending on the voice tone, can be harsh enough to be understandable for the meta audience as a derogatory term.

## 4.4 Non-Translation

### 4.4.1 Charlie Chan ( RESERVOIR DOGS )

**V.O.**

**MR. WHITE:** For the past fifteen minutes now, you've just been droning on with names. "Toby...Toby...Toby...Toby Wong...Toby Wong...Toby Chung...fuckin Charlie Chan." I got Madonna's big dick outta my right ear, and Toby Jap I-don't-know-what, outta my left.

**SP**

**SR. BLANCO:** Llevas quince minutos dándome la vara, repitiendo nombres. "Toby...Toby...Toby...Toby Wong... Toby Chung...el puto **Charlie Chan.**" Tengo la polla de Madonna en el oído izquierdo y el maldito Toby nosequémas en el derecho.

Continuing with the dialogue in 4.2.5, the same conversation has more American celebrities that in this case will not be translated. That is the case of *Charlie Chan* – fictional U.S. Chinese detective famous in the 30s – (IMDB) .

This play of words adds humor to the whole conversation. In this case, the translator opts to maintain the cultural reference. However, being a character unknown for most of the Spanish culture, this comical reference is pointless. Still, I think it is the best option available, since the other option would be to make a cultural adaptation, changing the whole conversation point and making it sound strange.

#### 4.4.2 Jews stereotype ( RESERVOIR DOGS )

This fragment belongs to the same conversation that in the previous example. The “Like a Virgin” conversation is a long one, indeed.

**V.O**

**NICE GUY EDDIE:** I don't even know a **Jew** who'd have the balls to say that. So let's get this straight. You never ever **tip**?

**SP**

**EDDIE:** Ni siquiera un **judío** diría eso. Dejémoslo claro, ¿Tú nunca dejas **propina**?

The general stereotype for Jews is that they are stingy people. As this stereotype is maintained in both the American and the Spanish culture, the translator rightly decides to maintain the reference untranslated.

#### 4.4.3 Inglewood, the dangerous city that gets obviate ( PULP FICTION )

**V.O**

**LANCE:** Am I a nigger? Are you in **Inglewood**?

**SP**

**LANCE:** ¿Acaso soy un negrata? ¿Estamos en **Inglewood**?

Inglewood is a city located in the southwestern of Los Angeles County, California. It is known for its Latin and Black gangs and was considered as a really dangerous city back in the 90s.

The translator maintains this reference to a dangerous city despite the fact that the Spanish meta audience does not know what the character wants to say with the Inglewood allusion. Despite this, the option of cultural adaptation would have been worst, imagine an American talking about a dangerous Spanish city or neighborhood like Carabanchel, in Madrid.

#### 4.4.4 **Baseball reference ( INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS )**

**V.O.**

**SGT. DONNY:** Teddy fuckin' Williams knocks it out of the park! Fenway Park on its feet for Teddy fuckin' Ballgame! He went yardo on that one, out to fuckin' Lansdowne Street!

**SP**

**SGT. DONNY:** ¡El carbón de Teddy Williams la manda a tomar por culo!  
¡Fenway Park se pone en pie para aplaudir su puto batazo! ¡La bola de los  
cojones se ha perdido en la calle Lansdowne!

The baseball, known as the American pastime, is referred when the Bear Jew knocks the Nazi Sargent in the head. This part causes troubles to the translator, as neither baseball nor any baseball players, fields and so on are known for most of the Spanish meta culture. However, the translator resolves this problem maintaining the cultural reference untranslated, despite it will not be understood in the meta culture.

The reason behind this is found in the visual cultural reference. Donny is hitting the Nazi with a baseball bat, so there is no possibility of cultural adaptation, it would sound weird. Added, you cannot omit the sequence, as it is relevant in the movie, so the translator is more or less forced to maintain this sort of cultural distance between the original and the translated version, and leave the reference for the minority of people in Spain that watches baseball.

#### 4.4.5 Marshall / Sheriff ( DJANGO UNCHAINED )

We are back at the same Saloon we had in the example 4.2.4.

1.

V.O

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** And as if on cue... here comes the **sheriff**.

SP

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** Y tal y como anuncié, ahí viene el **Sheriff**.

2.

V.O

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** Now you can go get the **marshall**.

SP

**Dr.SCHULTZ:** Ahora puede llamar al **Marshall**.

Terms like Marshall or Sheriff, which belong to the American culture, can be left untranslated, since most of the Spanish meta audience will know their meaning, due to the amount of times we have seen them in many western movies coming from the U.S.

However, the difference between both the Marshall and the Sheriff ranks is something that people in Spain may not be aware of. However, since this distinction is not relevant for the movie's plot, the translator can leave the cultural references without needing any explicative translation.



## 5. Conclusion

The analysis shows instances of cultural reference translations collected from four different Quentin Tarantino's movies. The selection was made dividing two periods of time, around the 90s and the contemporary times, around the 2010s. Then, I chose two movies from each period as my subject of study.

My first thought was that the results may show that translation strategies used may have changed, making more non-translated cultural terms in the recent movies, whereas the cultural adaptation strategy would be the usual in the 90s movies. Cultural references from the American society have consolidated in the Spanish society due to the huge amount of them we have received throughout the years. As Santamaría presented, these American social representations have established themselves in our mental system of representations. Therefore, they seem to us as something common, even like they are not something foreign i.e. naturalized.

However, as results show, there is no significant difference between movies as to which translation strategy is preferred. It is true that there are more cultural adaptations in the older movies, but the difference is not big enough and this paper is too short to reach a definite conclusion. With the necessary time and space, a deeper analysis regarding this point would be necessary to provide conclusive data. Perhaps the time leap among the movies is not big enough to show any conclusive data. Since the samples used are Tarantino's most early movies and the most recent ones, we can conclude that the translation strategies for cultural references followed in Tarantino's filmography have remained unchanged through the years.

Analyzing the movies one by one, it is noticeable that Tarantino's reference to the American pop culture favors the use of non-translation strategies. On the one hand, Movies like *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* are the ones with more cultural references in this regard. The references to American characters like Madonna, who is well-known by the Spanish audience, makes the use of the non-translation strategy as the most preferred option. On the other hand, *Inglorious Basterds* and *Django Unchained* are not movies set in the modern U.S. The cultural references that appear are more related to historical issues – racism and slavery, World War II – than to the American modern

culture itself. Therefore, these cultural references offer a wider range of possible translation strategies, especially of the use of the explicative translation. In addition, this extended use of non-translations can serve as an answer for my second objective, since the translators could have done it aiming to maintain as faithful as possible to the original text.

I think that there are some cases that the translation of the cultural reference could have been done in another way, looking for the perfect mixture between the cultural meaning of the translation and the understanding of the meta culture. Despite this, the translation carried out in Tarantino's movies has always been complimented by the general audience, and in general these translations worked well. They succeed in creating the necessary bridges to make the Spanish audience understand Tarantino's movies. It is common to hear professional translators like Maria José Aguirre, known for her job as translator to peninsular Spanish of *The Simpsons*, say things like the good translation is the one that "causes the same impression in the audience than the original text". In this respect, the translations for these movies fulfill the text's pragmatic function not falling into non-natural or weird translations.

In spite of the gap between both the Spanish and the American culture is not completely bridged with the translations, the dubbing work in these four movies is worth watching. However, I believe, and this is my personal opinion, that subtitling is still a better option if you have the possibility. In the words of Iglesias Gómez (2008), "there is always going to be some loss of information in the dubbed version of an audiovisual work, no matter how good the translation is".

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