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Approach to the translation of *sound* in comic books

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The relationship between texts and images in comics is essential from the graphic point of view and for the understanding of the story. Hence, the translation of comics has certain peculiarities that other literature genres do not have, partly due to its combination of iconic language and literary language. Among the wide array of interesting topics within this field, we are going to focus on a great challenge for translators: the graphic and phonetic values of the sounds in comics. Technical advances have improved comic books translation: nowadays modifying an element of the vignette no longer involves redrawing the whole animation. Thus, the translation of this literature genre can now focus on other problematic issues, such as the translation of sounds. Taking into account the lack of categorization of these sounds, this article deals with the translation of inarticulate sounds, interjections and onomatopoeias from English comic books into Spanish in order to observe the existing trends in these issues and to confirm if the new technologies have changed the translators' task in the last 25 years.

Keywords: comics, translation, sound, onomatopoeias, interjections

1. Introduction

Comics have been usually left out of the status that other literature genres may have, although reading and translating a comic imply more than one intellectual exercise. It is therefore a double aspect act, as Yuste (2001) rightly points out: the aesthetic perception and the intellectual recreation, image and text respectively.

This study understands comic books as a non-trivial literature genre made up of texts and images. Our corpus includes all kind of comics, that is to say, what is usually called *commix* as well as graphic novels – since it has been argued that graphic novels have texts, while comics can have only graphics. Regarding that, this study recognizes that comics consist of typographic, linguistic and visual elements and that each of them has a certain function.

We are also aware that the topic of the translation of comics has been studied from different disciplines, especially from translation field. Regarding this field,

it has enclosed several tribulations of nomenclature, such as semiotic translation, subordinated translation, or constricted translation (Rosenman 1982; Chapman 1984; Mayoral 1984, 1992; Santoyo 1985; Mayoral et al. 1986; Rabadán 1989, 1991; Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997; Baker 1998; Hurtado 1996, 2001; Valero Garcés 2000). Concerning the translation of comics, this study agrees with the definition of Kaindl (2004: 87) who says:

From a translational point of view, the translation of comics can be defined as the sum of all the actions that are carried out in the linguistic, textual and typographical levels in order to transfer the text and text elements from an original culture into a target culture.¹

In the early times, technical limitations restricted the task of the translator because when the sound – inarticulate sounds, onomatopoeias, certain interjections, phonosymbolic verbs and nouns – was not included inside the bubble, translators had to leave it in the original version. This meant that, although there were idiomatic mistakes of certain combination of letters or sounds, these *sounds* coming from the US comic books were accepted in a mimetic way by many European comic book artists (Gubern 1973: 61; Renard 1978: 176–177; Gasca and Gubern 1988: 578).

Bearing all this in mind, the first part of this article briefly reviews the studies carried out on the translation of onomatopoeias and other sounds, especially in comic books. Secondly, it analyses the treatment of sounds in the translation of a corpus of eight comic books published between 1986 and 2010. The main goals of this study are to extract some trends of the translation from English into Spanish of successful comic books and to observe if the new technical advances have changed the way these sounds are translated, focusing on the linguistic dimension of sound words.

2. Sound in comic books

There is some controversy about the classification of onomatopoeias, interjections and inarticulate sounds. Many are the works that focus on this topic and many are also the contradictions, disagreements and taxonomies. As a complete review of these works is beyond the scope of this article, we will only mention the ones

1. Own translation. The original text is the following: “Aus translationwissenschaftlicher Sicht kann die Übersetzung von Comics als die Summe aller Handlungen definiert werden, die auf sprachlicher, bildlicher und typographischer Ebene vorgenommen werden, um den Text bzw. Textelemente von einer Ausgangs- in eine Zielkultur zu transferieren”.

that were more relevant for the classification that was used in the analysis. For the purpose of this study, we have called *sounds* the sounds and inarticulate voices reproductions.²

Firstly, it is important to remember the words of authors such as Valero Garcés (2000: 84), Gubern (1974: 153–154), Kelly and Mayoral (1984: 154), and Gasca and Gubern (2008: 8), which highlight the well-known ability of English to reproduce inarticulate sounds and to create onomatopoeias, as well as its richness in phonosymbolic forms, while Spanish and other Romanic languages find more difficulties in this aspect. As it is shown in the analysis section, this study works with a wide array of elements known as onomatopoeias, interjections, exclamations, and inarticulate sounds. That is the reason why these differences between both languages have to be kept in mind.

Regarding this, Matamala (2004) manages to gather a very complete review of the interjections, onomatopoeias and related elements that this article tackles. In her thesis, based on a multiplicity of previous works,³ she stresses the *own interjections* and highlights Cuenca's classification (2002) distinguishing the interjections that are expressive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic and representative (there is a place here for onomatopoeias). She also develops an exhaustive description of phonologic, orthographic and morphologic aspects of these elements that are essential for our study (2004: 268–269 and 457–475).

In the same line, Poyatos (1994) and Payrató (1996), among others, state that some of these elements are used in order to express emotions and feelings, voluntarily or not, to control the conversation, to express sounds that we do not know how to describe, to refer to activities, to interact with animals, and so on. All these possible *functions* of these elements are mentioned here because of their relevance in the analysis of the corpus.

More detailed, Goffman (1978, 801–805) distinguishes what he calls *response cries* into transition display (*brr, ahh!*), spill cry (*oops!*), threat startle (*EEK*), revulsion sound (*eeuw*), strain grunt, pain cry (*ouch*), sexual moan, floor cues and audible glee (*wheee!*). Furthermore, Mayoral (1984: 121; 1992: 108–109) differentiates between inarticulate non-onomatopoeic forms (*ooops, wow!*), inarticulate onomatopoeic forms (*wwurrrk*), articulate onomatopoeic forms (*chirp, tweet*), non-onomatopoeic verbs (*dribble, convulse*), and articulate onomatopoeias. These two last authors were taken into account for the study because of the wide range of examples illustrating their works.

2. Kaindl (2004: 230) calls them 'Geräuschwörter'.

3. Fabra (1956), Quirk et al. (1972), Marvà (1988), Seco (1989), Biber et al. (1999), among many others.

Exclusively speaking of comic books, Carreras et al. (2008:12–13) mention that onomatopoeias reproduce all possible and imaginable sounds and that these words melt with the animation so that they can even become distorted, get longer, grow, stretch, etc., depending on what they want to express. The authors also point out the expressive importance of the onomatopoeias' illustrations.

Meanwhile, Gasca and Gubern (2008: 8) distinguish between expressive words and onomatopoeias. These onomatopoeias can be formed by a verb, an adverb, an adjective, a noun, an element that is phonetically symbolic, etc. Comparing films with comics, these authors indicate that:⁴

in films, the visual and acoustic representations are perceived and decoded simultaneously by the audience, while in the strips of comics, although their figurative and written representations are also simultaneous on paper, their reading is consecutive. [...] And the size of their letters, as well as their colour (cold or hot), suggest their sonorous intensity, in a singular example of optic-acoustic synaesthesia.

This study takes as a basis the definition of Gubern (1972:151) that states that onomatopoeias in comics can be defined either as phonemes with graphic value that acoustically suggest the sound of an action or an animal to the reader, or as a phonetic writing representation of noises or sounds produced by animals.

The classification of this study is based on the works of Kaindl (2004), Liberman (2004),⁵ Gasca and Gubern (2008), as they were considered the most complete categorizations. Our taxonomy distinguishes the following categories of sounds:

1. Sounds not made by humans at all (like things falling, machines working, punches landing).
2. Biologically constrained human sounds (like sneezes, cries of pain, laughter, and breathing).
3. Sounds made by animals (barking, moo, roar).
4. Sounds made by nature (wind, thunder, earthquake).
5. Sounds made by the interaction between a human being and an object (knock, shot).
6. Filled pauses and other hesitation sounds (like English *uh*, *um*, *er*).
7. Non-lexical vocal gestures (like clucking the tongue or English *sh+* or *aw+*).
8. The wider class of conventionalized interjections (like English *whoa* or *oh*).
9. Non-phonological onomatopoeic sounds, whether imitations of natural sounds or non-representative evocative noises.

4. Own translation.

5. See also the works carried out by Inose (2009) and Flores Acuña (2008).

10. Ideophonic words and systems of ideophonic vocabulary fully embedded in a language's phonological system.⁶

3. The translation of sound in comic books and translation proposals

Something that differences this study from previous works is that its corpus belongs to the most recent generation of comic books of the last 25 years and to eight very differentiated comic genres. This ensures an updated exercise that takes into account the new technical innovations that make possible to intervene and modify the elements that are not inside the bubble. Therefore typographical restrictions do not exist anymore. There are some issues regarding ethical, technical and economic restrictions that we did not include in the analysis because they were not believed to influence on the translation problematic studied here. We have also considered the multimodal aspects of sound in comic, i.e., the mode of colour, the typography (size, fonts), the interrelation of sound with the pictorial elements, etc.; but, as it was mentioned before, this article focuses mainly in the linguistic dimension of sound words.

3.1 The translation of sound in comic books

Back in the early stages of comic's translation, when translating an element outside the bubble meant drawing the whole strip again, the limitations of space and the interrelationship between the text and the image was one of the main problems of this kind of translation. Nowadays the problems rely more on linguistic, cultural, pragmatic and contextual limitations.

Therefore, translators can focus more on other problematic issues such as sounds. Translating sounds is not an easy task. Valero Garcés (2000: 83–84) distinguishes between onomatopoeias that are *heard* in the same way in both languages and those that are not. Therefore, the translator only has to adapt the spelling; and sounds of those onomatopoeias that are heard in a different way. According to this assumption, Young (2008: 67) states that

6. "These categories blend into one another in many cases, but the distinctions are still worth making. Cross-cutting these distinctions, we need to distinguish between the way that such sounds are performed (or happen naturally), and the way that they're represented orthographically. The orthographic conventions can in turn influence the way that some people perform the sounds, as in the case of "tsk tsk", which starts as a way to represent clucking the tongue, but is often pronounced as if it were a phrase spelled "tisk tisk" (Lieberman 2004).

in different languages these words have different characteristics and pronunciations. It is because people with different backgrounds often have different perceptions towards the sound produced by a certain object or the image of a particular action.

Consequently, if the translator modifies an external sound, the reader may lose the association between the sound and its meaning (Inose, 2009: 57).

Furthermore, the translator has to take into account that speech bubbles and background spaces restrict the length of the translated version. Besides these considerations, studies carried out by Castillo Cañellas (1997:7), for example, point out three main problems translating onomatopoeias from English into Spanish. Firstly, reproducing onomatopoeias made up from an English verb with its equivalent verb in Spanish. Secondly, Spanish equivalents are less consolidated in the comic world than the English ones. And last but not least, when onomatopoeias are part of the cartoon. As it is shown in the following sections, all these obstacles as well as a wide range of strategies to solve them have been found in our analysis.

3.2 Translation proposals

A few authors have suggested techniques to translate these sounds, especially onomatopoeias and some interjections, within comic books. This study mentions the five most relevant proposals found in order to observe the techniques used in the study corpus.

- a. Mayoral (1984:123; 1992:107) distinguishes five categories of translation techniques: omission, compensation (transferring the meaning to the dialogue or omitting it), calque, equivalence, and lexical loan. Most of these techniques could be applied to other translation modalities, but they are definitely relevant in this specific area.

As the reader will see, the following proposals are really similar to the one developed by Mayoral, but each of them adds some new aspects that are worthy of mention.

- b. Valero Garcés (1995: 103; 2000:83) proposes to search for an equivalent in the target language, either by adapting the orthography or by maintaining the original form. She also quoted the most common proceedings (1995: 116): finding an Spanish equivalent to inarticulate sounds produced by humans or animals that express feelings or attitudes; calquing the English representation, even if there is no equivalent in Spanish; using lexical loans without adapting them when they are sounds indicating violence and fight; looking for compensation through other orthographic signs.

- c. Another proposal is the one developed by Inose (2009:172), who finds examples where the translation uses equivalents, maintains the original as an English loan, uses transcriptions, changes the meaning, uses a verb/adverb with modified orthography, or eliminates them.
- d. Kaindl (2004: 285) presents six strategies that can be translated as repetition, addition, detracting, transmutation, substitution, and deletion.
- e. For this article the essay by Young (2008: 68–83) is especially relevant because he distinguishes in an incisive way the different techniques used when the sound is within the bubble and when it is in the background. In the first case, he proposes three strategies: translating onomatopoeia into corresponding onomatopoeia, translating onomatopoeia into non-onomatopoeic expressions, and translating onomatopoeic words into *created* onomatopoeic words. In the second case, he suggests another three strategies: translating onomatopoeia into corresponding onomatopoeia, translating mimetic words into non-mimetic words with lively images, and translating onomatopoeia into words with greater force to represent a certain effect.

4. Analysis of the sounds in comic books and their translation

Eight different books were taken as corpus (in chronological order): *Maus* (Spiegelman 1986 & 1991), *V for Vendetta* (Moore & Lloyd 1988–1989), *Hate* (1990–1993), *Ghost World* (Clowes 1993–1997), *Palestine* (Sacco 1993–1995), *300* (Miller 1998), *Hell and Back: A Sin City Story* (Miller 1999–2000), and *Kick-Ass* (Millar & Morita 2008–2010).

All of them were published in the last 25 years and are addressed to an adult audience, while standard comics are normally addressed to teenagers. They can be divided into three different groups: those dealing with historical and biographical issues (*Maus*, *Palestine*, and *300*), those belonging to a more thriller and *noir* genre (*V for Vendetta* and *Hell and Back: A Sin City Story*), and those addressed to a younger adult audience (*Hate*, *Ghost World* and *Kick-Ass*).

Even though all of them offer a significant amount of data, their volume in pages is considerably different as it can be seen in Table 1. This difference in pages should be taken into account, as it has an influence in the data collected for the posterior analysis.⁷

7. M (*Maus*), KA (*Kick-Ass*), PA (*Palestine*), GW (*Ghost World*), SC (*Sin City*), V (*V for Vendetta*), H (*Hate*).

Table 1. Pages of the comic books

Book	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
Pages	287	106	257	283	82	287	358	331

Our study compares the original version with the Spanish translated version of these eight comics, since all these books were originally written in English.

The analysis is divided in three parts. In the first one, information about the location of sound elements is shown as well as the amount of general omissions and additions in their translations. The second part applies the classification by Kaindl (2004), Liberman (2004) and Gasca and Gubern (2008) to the corpus of the study. Finally, the third part analyses each comic separately in order to observe the peculiarities that were not possible to detect or show in the previous sections.

4.1 Localization and basic translation techniques

As it has been pointed out before, it is important to clarify if the elements of analysis are inside or outside the bubbles, since their functions are different. Within the speech bubble we can find balloons or captions. According to Tomášek (2009: 13), balloons usually represent direct speech or thoughts, while captions represent narration. Outside the conversation bubble we find elements part of the cartoon or animation that serve a “supplementary purpose, rather than contribute directly to the content of the story. They are used to create a certain mood or particular setting” (Young 2008: 78). Obviously, as Gubern (1972: 151–152) states, the representation of one of these sounds outside the balloon has a double value: a phonetic and a graphic value.

Table 2. Sounds inside and outside speech bubble

Book	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
Outside	44	38	0	0	17	167	1	317
Inside	281	27	110	54	141	54	295	1219
TOTAL	325	65	110	54	158	221	296	1536

Table 2 shows the large differences between the comics. Whereas most of them have a balance between sounds located inside the bubble and those located outside the bubble, works such as *Kick-Ass* or *V for Vendetta* prove that not all the works of this genre express sounds the same way.

In addition to that, our first approach to the analysis showed in a general way the number of sounds which were not translated, maintained or transferred from

English into Spanish (see Table 3) as well as the number of sounds that the Spanish translations added when possible.

Table 3. General translation

Books	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
No translated	46	0	10	11	34	3	125	150
Added	7	0	2	0	3	3	1	30

As it was expected, the number of non-translated sounds is much higher than the additions. It is also surprising that works such as *300* and *Palestine* do not have examples or do not have additions. Most of the elements which were not translated correspond to pauses, hesitation sounds, and interjections.

4.2 Analysis

According to the classifications chosen in this study, Table 4 shows the main sounds found in the eight books in their original versions. In relation to sounds not made by humans, most of them are sounds produced by machines working, such as telephones and televisions, things falling or exploding, vehicles, and bells. It is surprising that books such as *Kick Ass* do not contain any example of this category.

Regarding biologically constrained human sounds, nearly all are different ways of laughing, coughing, and several sounds produced when eating. The next two categories – sounds made by animals and sounds made by nature – offer far fewer examples. In fact, only *Hate* and *Sin City* had an example. Concerning sounds made by the interaction between a human being and an object, the study found numerous examples dealing with knocking doors and other surfaces, fighting, and many other activities. Next, the most popular filled pauses and hesitation sounds were found, which were vastly similar through the whole corpus; meanwhile the non-lexical vocal gestures tend to vary among the different books. Finally, conventionalized interjections and ideophonic words include many samples in this corpus, too, as it can be observed in Table 4:

Table 4. Main sounds

	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
Sounds not made by humans	rriing	krak	–	Blam-	click	screeech	bang	crack
	kpok	klink		blam	beep	thump		smash
	pnnng	klank		rat-tat-tat	boop	skik		shreeek
	plunk			bam-	pop	tok		boom
	clik			bam	eep	eeeeee		bump
	bang			kkkkkik	clack	blam		pow

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
	takka- taka slam crak crash boom krak kpow skreeee klakk splash kbang kboom skraaak				bam knock crrrkk ftt fit sqeeech ka-split ka-strike	vroom pow boop whungg rakka - rakka krashh boom ringg poom		slap bash bam slam zoom ring ring boing stomp ding dong whirrr- vrrroom
Biologically constrained human sounds	ha ha coff slupp- slupp	koff huff heff - henf	koff gurk hukk urk	ha ha ha	ha ha ha zzzzzz heh heh snort mmpph	koff glug blagg hukk ungg sputt keff blarf urpp ulp	coughf ha ha heh fnff fnff ngmf glep gor ghmf	ha ha ha heh-heh umpf gulp tee-hee snort wheeee snork zzzzzz slorp glug splut hawhaw nyah ho, ho hee hee
Sounds made by animals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	tweet yap yap
Sounds made by nature	-	-	-	-	-	boom	-	plop
Sounds made by the interaction between a human being and an object	nok nok slap knock	whukk - kunch kunk thud tok chakk	-	slap- slap	clap	fapp fapp thak kreek fupp krak snap chink punt grmppl crunch grnch skrik	-	clink ker-rash bash knock bump crunch bloop squack tuck pop smash boot

Table 4. (Continued)

	M	300	KA	PA	GW	SC	V	H
						-skrik pop whud krunch kok plip plip budda		slip bash kick kick bonk tap tap snip
Filled pauses and other hesitation sounds	uh hum huh? uh hmmh hmf um	hnh? hm	uh huh uh-uh whuh uhn	hum? um... hmmm	umm... mmm... uh-oh	uh huh? wuh?	uh... hmm... er... hmph mmnuh hmm? uhh? eh? ah-hum	huh? uh umm... hmmm er... uh-oh uh-huh
Non-lexical vocal gestures	snf snf ach sob ai ai ai um brrr bwaah sigh agh! ouch shhh gasp	yaaa aaar gaa yarr	agh unnt oomf gagh ungh ooff hunnt gaah aw ow nnngg	sheeesh aww	shh hehn eww aww aieee ooooo sigh gasp sob sniff boooo	garkkk aarr gyaa oof gaa unff huff aw nff awk	sob choke shhh	off ew aw gasp grrr hmpf umph urrngh eeyiyahowie whew prrr sigh oof
A wider category of conventionalized interjections	ow hey snrk oh ah whooh hah hoosh fah oof unf	whoof aarr ak wuff oof gyaa	oh hey hah nah	ha hey hiya yikes	oh hey nah yikes yick duh yo yay	oh hey whuo ow whoa	oh ah ay ah-ha aw oauhh nah uugh oah eughh oough	hey oh feh naw whoa pfft aah wow bah uugh ah-ha
Ideophonic words and systems	pssh psst groan yawn whew pfeh oops	ptui	-	pfft wooops doot doot	tsk oops	-	da da da dum	shhh tsk gasp groan psst moan oops grrrrunt brrrm

Maus has its own peculiarities when it comes to sounds. It is surprising that while its translation looks for equivalence in a few cases (*oops!* > ¡hala! / *uh hum* > *ajá*) or modifies the orthography (*oof* > *uf* / *whew* > *fiuuu*), it normally maintains the original as an English loan (*groan* > *groan* / *ouch* > *ouch* / *slam* > *slam* / *slap* > *slap* / *slupp* > *slupp*), being most of them phonosymbolic verbs that do not exist in Spanish.

The rest of the comic books (with the exception of *Hate* which case will be explained in detail in Section 4.3.3) tend to not translate or compensate the elements covered in Table 4, except for some filled pauses and hesitation sounds and interjections that generally are eliminated (mainly because they are not so common in Spanish) or adapted to the Spanish orthography (*ow!* > ¡ah! / *huh?* > ¿eh?), but they represent a very small percentage of the total amount of elements found.

However, for a more exhaustive analysis, the works are analysed case by case in the following section.

4.3 Distinctive characteristics of each comic

During the analysis, certain peculiarities started to arise, clarifying the vast differences among some works and the significant similarities among others. Taking these similarities and differences into account, the analysis gathered some of the comic books under the same subgroup in order to explain their posterior translation strategies. Hence, three groups were created. The first one includes *Maus*, *Kick Ass*, *Palestine*, *Ghost World* and *V for Vendetta*, mostly because of their lack of translation tactics, modifications, and approaches. The second group consists of *300* and *Sin City* and their particular approaches to the translation of all those elements regarding fighting, violence and alike. Finally, the last group is the special case of *Hate*, which represents the most unusual and distinctive example of the nine books.

4.3.1 *The ordinary translations and use of loans in Maus, Kick Ass, Palestine, Ghost World and V for Vendetta*

Most of the translations of the comic books of the corpus preferred *standardized* terms, especially regarding all the elements used to attract attention (*eh, hey, ehem*), to express astonishment, surprise or amazement (*aha, ah, eh, oh*), pleasure (*yippee, wahey*), pain (*ay, ah, auh, arr*), approval or understanding (*aha, uh-uh*), booing (*uh, boo*), relief (*oof*) or laugh (*ha, he, hee, ho*).

Varied translation options have been chosen regarding inarticulate sounds produced by humans denoting a feeling or attitude. The classifications of Mayoral (1992:127) and Cruz and Tejedor (2009:51) stress the terms used to express relief, approval, disgust, understanding, setback/hitch, disappointment, disdain,

rejection, pain, food enthusiasm, excitement, coldness, scepticism, fear, pleasure, remonstrance, happiness, satisfaction, surprise, and phatic language. Taking this into consideration and adding some sounds not made by humans or made by humans in interaction with objects, Table 5 shows a few of the most relevant examples with their corresponding translations in Spanish.

Table 5. Feeling, attitude and interaction with objects

	M	KA	PA	GW	V
Sounds not made by humans or by humans in interaction with objects	slam > slam kpok > kpok pnng > pnng nok > nok skreeeee > skreeeee		Rat-tat-tat-tat > Ratatatatá slap > slap	beep > biiip squeech > squeech ka-strike > ka-strike	
Disgust				ewww > ajjjj	
Pain	ouch > ouch groan > groan	unnt > unnt ungh > ungh gah > gah nnnggg > nnnggg gurk > gurk			coughf > coughf eughh > argh
Disappointment	ach > ach sob > snif			sigh > sigh sob > sob	sob > sniff
Excitement	yoohoo > iujuu				
Surprise	gasp > glup		oops > hala	gasp > gasp oops > oops	
Food enthusiasm	slupp > slupp				ngmf glep gor > ñam
Skepticism			ha > tururú		
Disdain, rejection				tsk > tsk	

From these five comic books, only *Palestine* is sometimes more prone to adapt the sounds to Spanish (with exceptions such as *slap*), though it should be reminded that this book is also characterized by its insignificant amount of sounds (54 terms found through 283 pages).

As it was previously mentioned, *Maus* has a particular way of expressing some sounds, such as the common use of the disappointment interjection *ach* or some sounds made by bullets (*pnng*), for example. Most of the words used in the translation are in fact English loans, combined with some right elections, such as *oops!* > ¡*epa!*. It is worth mentioning the widespread use of expressions like *sob* > *snif*, which does not exist in Spanish but it is so common to find them in comic books that the standard audience already knows the meaning of the expression.

Kick-Ass provides a wide array of examples and it is also characterized by its use of English loans, transcriptions and omissions (especially regarding interjections and hesitations). The case of pain sounds must be highlighted here, since the original English term is kept in the Spanish translation, even though such words do not exist in the Spanish language. There are many examples throughout the book and all of them are translated by calques.

Finally, *Ghost World* and *V for Vendetta* also show an extensive collection of sounds made by humans or in interaction with humans. In the first case, the strategy of calquing the English representation is unexpected as well as ineffective, even if there is no equivalent in Spanish, and it looks for some compensation through orthographic signs. After a right translation of *beep* > *biiip*, imitating the sound made by an answering machine, there is also *sigh*, *sob*, *gasp* or *oops*, which do not exist in Spanish and do not necessarily have to be understood by the target audience. Something similar happens with *V for Vendetta*, although the amount of examples is smaller and deals more with interjections and pause and hesitation sounds.

4.3.2 *The translation of violence sounds in 300 and Sin City*

300 and *Sin City* are two comic books characterized by the large amount of sounds expressing violence: articulation of pain sounds, sounds coming from the effort

Table 6. Translation of violent actions

	300	SC
Pain	aarr > aarr koff > koff gaa > gaa yarr > yarr	garkk > garkk aarr > aarr ungg > ungg gaa > gaa
Effort	whoof /whuff > uff / huff huff > huff hukk > hukk heff > heff hunff > hunff	hukk > uuf blagg > blagg henff > hmff hunff > hmff oof > oof
Sounds caused by punches, blows, slaps and similar	whukk > whukk krak > krak thud > thud	fapp > fapp thak > thak thok > thok krak > krak punt > punt klik > klik kunch > kunch
Sounds made by things	kunch > kunch kank > kank klink > klink chakk > chakk	screech > screech thump > thump kreek > kreek fupp > fupp grmppl > grmppl skrik > skrik

made by the person, sounds caused by the action or consequence of a punch, a blow, a slap and other fight movements, or sounds made by things, sometimes in interaction with humans, such as objects hitting bodies or structures, metallic objects and alike. Some of these sounds are shown in Table 6, along with their translations.

While some sounds are represented in a standardized way – especially those expressing pain or effort – both comic books have their own way of communicating certain sounds: for example *fupp* for shooting a gun or *grmppl* for crumple plastic. These particularities make them unique. Almost 100% of the examples are not translated into Spanish and, therefore, the original is maintained as an English loan, even when those orthographic combinations are impossible in Spanish, for example, *ff*, *kk*, *gg*, or *pp*.

4.3.3 *The special case of Hate*

Among the eight comic books of the corpus, the distinctive characteristics of *Hate* must be highlighted. The translation of this comic caused some controversy when the Spanish audience first received it. Instead of using the *standardized* translation for the well-known phonosymbolic verbs, the translator chose a completely new approach to these elements and tried to capture and imitate the English construction. Therefore, we find two different translation techniques: on the one hand, phonosymbolic verbs are translated as Spanish verbs in the infinitive form; on the other hand, they are translated as nouns deriving from the verb. Table 7 shows a few examples from the more than 250 cases found.

It is interesting that besides adopting a new and innovative technique for the translation of this kind of verbs, the translator maintains the special features of these elements; for example, when consonants are reduplicated in the original version they are also reduplicated in the translated version: *ssssssslide* (*resssssblar*), *groannn* (*bostezoo*), *mnoannnn* (*ggemiiiiido*). As Saraceni (2003: 20) already pointed out, the visual aspect of words in comics has great significance; for instance, bold type is normally used to emphasize certain words or to indicate loudness.

Hate is the only comic in the corpus that tries to follow the English grammatical structure in its translation. Besides the use of more frequent translation strategies – instances of compensation, equivalences, and a very few calques and lexical loans are found in the Spanish version –, the Spanish version of *Hate* uses verbs, nouns and adverbs in the way the English comics do. Some of the English verbs are translated by Spanish verbs, but it is also very common that these verbs are translated by nouns.

Table 7. Translation of phonosymbolic verbs in *Hate*

	Original version in English	Translation into Spanish
Phonosymbolic verbs translated into verbs	bash!	¡crujir!
	knock! knock!	¡llamar! ¡llamar!
	shake! shake!	¡sacudir! ¡sacudir!
	clutch!	¡agarrar!
	smooth! flatten!	¡alisar! ¡aplastar!
	tuck! tuck!	¡meter! ¡meter!
	gulp!	¡tragar!
	scratch! scratch!	¡rascar! ¡rascar!
	snatch!	¡arrebatar!
Phonosymbolic verbs translated into nouns	bump!	¡tropezón!
	crunch!	¡crujido!
	crack!	¡restallido!
	pop!	¡taponazo!
	boot!	¡puntapié!
	shove!	¡empujón!
	slip!	¡resbalón!
	fidget! feel!	¡meneo! ¡manoseo!
	slam!	¡portazo!

5. Conclusions

After a brief overlook at the existing works regarding the translation of comics, this study focused on the translation of sounds – that is: inarticulate sounds, interjections and onomatopoeias – in comic books written originally in English and translated into Spanish.

Some of the works mentioned in this article highlighted the large differences between English and Spanish in relation to the ability of reproducing sounds and creating onomatopoeias and similar elements. Since comic production has traditionally been based in United States and Belgium, readers from countries such as Spain got used to finding *foreign* onomatopoeias and those calques were even adopted in their own comic production. As it was already mentioned, one of the main reasons for not translating these sounds was the impossibility of modifying the picture when the element to be translated was part of the drawing in the strip, outside the bubble. Nowadays, typographical issues are not a problem anymore thanks to technical advances that enable the translator to manipulate plastic elements in certain spaces of the strip.

One of the first tasks in this study was to examine the amount of sounds located inside or outside the bubble, which number was very different depending on the book. This is also the case of the number of elements that were not translated (mainly, deleted) and the number of elements added in the translation.

A general view over the eight comic books confirmed that most of the strategies chosen for translation ranged between compensation modifying the orthography when possible, maintenance of the English sound and elimination of the term, especially when it comes to interjections, pause and hesitation signs.

Due to the heterogeneity of comic books we divided the analysis in three sections in order to get a more exhaustive analysis. The first group included the five comic books that presented the most moderate translations: *Maus*, *Kick Ass*, *Palestine*, *Ghost World* and *V for Vendetta*. The sounds in these books were frequently translated into Spanish using standardized terms. Among all the collected examples, sounds dealing with feelings, attitudes and interaction with objects were the most striking, since it was observed that most of the books maintained their English terms in their translations, providing loans, calques, and a continuous sensation of foreignness.

The second group centred on the translation of sounds produced by violent actions, fighting situations, articulation of pain sounds, and alike. For this group, the comic books *300* and *Sin City* were selected, since they provide a wide amount of examples. In fact, this kind of sounds are specially relevant in these two comics as can be seen by the huge dimension they are written in or the central position where they are located. Unlike other cases, these two books preserve the sound elements in the original version, instead of translating or transferring them, even though the orthotypographical features do not exist in Spanish, as it is the use of double consonants (*ff*, *ss*, *tt*, etc.). As Gubern (1972: 154) already mentioned, this kind of strategies are adopted in the Spanish translations without noticing the exoticism or idiomatic error of certain combinations of letters or sounds.

Finally, the third group only included the comic book *Hate*. The Spanish version of *Hate* does not resort to the most popular translation strategies, but shows a surprising, innovative and controversial approach to the translation of sounds in comic books. This study focused on its treatment of the phonosymbolic verbs, trying to imitate in its Spanish translation the traditional English constructions and being, at the same time, successful in its purpose.

This study did not expect the vast amount of differences among the translation strategies and choices that later were found. Meanwhile it seems to be still a certain tendency towards the use of English loans maintaining the original form and calquing the English representation. This is a phenomenon that was mostly observed in traditionally action comic books (dealing with violence, fights and the alike) and feeling sounds made by humans, which are still tremendously difficult to translate. Regarding the rest of strategies used, it seems that in the last years the translation of comic books tends to look for equivalents in Spanish and if an efficient equivalent is not found, to delete the sound.

Finally, we would like to highlight that brave and innovative approaches to the translation of sounds in comics have been found in our corpus and that they suggest alternative translation strategies to the ones used for decades in comic translation. This may be a revolutionary change in the translation of comics.

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Résumé

La relation entre les textes et les images des bandes dessinées est essentielle d'un point de vue graphique et pour la compréhension de l'histoire. C'est pourquoi la traduction de bandes dessinées présente certaines caractéristiques dont d'autres genres littéraires sont dépourvus, en partie en raison d'une combinaison de langue emblématique et de langue littéraire.

Parmi le large éventail de thèmes intéressants dans ce domaine, nous nous concentrerons sur un grand défi pour les traducteurs : les valeurs graphiques et phonétiques des sons dans les bandes dessinées. Les avancées technologiques ont amélioré la traduction des albums de bandes dessinées : de nos jours, modifier un élément de la vignette n'implique plus de devoir redessiner toute l'animation. Par conséquent, la traduction de ce genre littéraire peut se concentrer désormais sur d'autres questions problématiques, comme la traduction des sons. Compte tenu de l'absence de catégorisation de ces sons, cet article traite de la traduction en espagnol de sons inarticulés, d'interjections et d'onomatopées, tirés d'albums de bandes dessinées en anglais, afin d'observer les tendances existantes dans ces difficultés et confirmer si les nouvelles technologies ont modifié la tâche des traducteurs ces 25 dernières années.

Mots-clés: bandes dessinées, traduction, son, onomatopées, interjections

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