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**Translation of film clip with Tina Fey  
Study of translating humour and cultural references**

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Universitat Autònoma  
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## Dades del TFG

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### Títol:

**Traducció d'una pel·lícula de Tina Fey – estudi de la traducció de l'humor i les referències culturals**

**Traducción de una película de Tina Fey – estudio de la traducción del humor y las referencias culturales**

**Translation of film clip with Tina Fey – study of translating humour and cultural references**

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### Resum del TFG

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Estudi sobre els elements humorístics i culturals que apareixen a la pel·lícula *Mean Girls*, la qual compta amb un guió escrit per la famosa còmica Tina Fey. S'analitzen altres elements que suposen un problema de traducció pels traductors de pel·lícules, com ara l'estil i el registre però també el doblatge. S'inclou un petit estudi comparatiu entre el text original i la traducció oficial en castellà on s'analitzen ambdues versions i es comenten fent referència a estudis realitzats anteriorment per altres teòrics de la traducció i autors importants dins d'aquest camp. El treball intenta respondre a les preguntes que poden sorgir a l'hora de traduir un text audiovisual amb aquestes característiques i comprovar si la traducció final i oficial té tota la qualitat que hauria de tenir un producte com aquest.

Estudio sobre los elementos humorísticos y culturales que aparecen en la película *Chicas Malas*, la cual cuenta con un guión escrito por la famosa cómica Tina Fey. Se analizan otros elementos que pueden suponer un problema de traducción para traductores de películas, como por ejemplo estilo y registro, pero también el doblaje. Se incluye un pequeño estudio comparativo entre el texto original y la traducción oficial en castellano donde se analizan ambas versiones y se comentan haciendo referencia a estudios realizados anteriormente por otros teóricos de las traducción y autores importantes dentro de este campo. El trabajo intenta responder a las preguntas que pueden surgir a la hora de traducir un texto audiovisual con estas características y comprobar si la traducción final y oficial tiene toda la calidad que un producto como este debería de tener.

Case study of humoristic and cultural elements that appear in the film *Mean Girls*, scripted by the renowned comedian Tina Fey. Other elements that may suppose a translation problem for film translators, such as style and register but also dubbing are analysed too. The dissertation also includes a brief comparative study of the original text and the official Spanish translation, where both versions are commented, making a reference to studies previously done by other translation theorists and significant authors of this field. This dissertation aims to answer the questions that may arise when translating an audiovisual text with these characteristics and prove if the final and official translation has the quality that is expected of a product like this.

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# Index

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction .....  | 1  |
| 1.1. Motivation.....   | 1  |
| 1.2. Methodology.....  | 1  |
| 2. Mean Girls .....  | 3  |
| 2.1. Specifics.....  | 3  |
| 2.2. Synopsis.....   | 3  |
| 2.3. Reception .....   | 4  |
| 3. Comedy and humour.....  | 6  |
| 3.1. Humoristic elements .....                                     | 7  |
| 3.1.1. Types of jokes.....   | 8  |
| 4. Translation analysis.....                                       | 12 |
| 4.1. Translation issues.....                                       | 12 |
| 4.1.1. Style and register.....                                     | 12 |
| 4.1.2. Lexical meaning.....  | 16 |
| 4.1.3. Dubbing .....   | 18 |
| 4.1.4. Cultural references.....                                    | 20 |
| 4.2. Analysis of Spanish translation.....                          | 24 |
| 5. Conclusion .....  | 38 |
| 6. Bibliography .....  | 40 |
| 7. Appendix 1: <i>Mean Girls'</i> impact on mainstream media ..... | 42 |

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Motivation

These four years studying the Translation and Interpreting degree at the Autonomous University of Barcelona have been, undoubtedly, full of knowledge and insight into both language and culture. Translation is a process in which there is a purpose of linking these two elements to fulfil such a basic human function as communication is. As students, we are instructed to carry out this role as best as possible, and university brings all the resources and the formation necessary to do that. From the first year of the degree we are offered subjects on translation, but these are usually of technical, literary or journalistic type. It is not until the last year – the same year in which our *Treball de Fi de Grau* (dissertation, from here on also referred to as TFG) takes place – that we are able to take a class on audiovisual translation. My interest for multimedia platforms has always been present, be it computers or any other type of screen or device, and I have always enjoyed cinema and television content. Once having to decide the topic that my TFG would cover, the answer seemed rather obvious. *Mean Girls* is a film that I have viewed an endless amounts of times whether dubbed in Spanish or in its original version in English. Combining both humoristic, stylistic and cultural elements, each time I would watch it I wondered how the translation of the original text into Spanish may have been made, many times taking the position of the translator in my mind but left still with both answers and more questions.

The aim of this TFG is to obtain answers to these questions I have always had rounding in my head and analysing these various elements that I had picked up on through years of viewing the film. During my stay at university I have unquestionably acquired the knowledge necessary to take on the task and the possibility of furthering it was reason enough to decide on developing it.

## 1.2. Methodology

In order to analyse the text first it is necessary to have a theoretical basis to work with. Thus, the first part of the TFG consists on a theoretical background of the main topic that constitutes this study: humour – particularly jokes – and its constituent

elements with examples found in the film. Listed after are the principal translation issues a translator is likely to find in the process of converting the original text into another language, in this case Spanish: style and register, lexical meaning, dubbing and cultural references – notice how this part is not only linguistically driven as it also includes a more technical factor as dubbing is. Once there is a proposed methodology – a result of a combination of a number of theorists and authors and their proposals – to overcome these issues, the analysis can take place. These are several linguistic units such as words and lines of the film that present the four different issues mentioned above, commented and analysed using the theoretical basis gathered before.

## 2. Mean Girls

The aim of this first section is to contextualise the case study. Below there is the main information regarding the film to help to understand the type of elements that one can find later in the analysis section. The specifics and synopsis will serve as an introduction to the language used in the film, helping the reader to create an image of what they can expect to read later on – a brainstorm if you will. The latter section regards the reception of the film as another point to justify the reason behind the selection of this work for an analysis and not any other.

### 2.1. Specifics

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Original Title</b> | Mean Girls   |
| <b>Genre</b>          | Comedy - teen comedy   |
| <b>Year</b>           | 2004   |
| <b>Running Time</b>   | 97 minutes   |
| <b>Country</b>        | United States  |
| <b>Director</b>       | Mark Waters  |
| <b>Screenwriter</b>   | Tina Fey   |
| <b>Based on</b>       | <i>Queen Bees and Wannabes</i> by Rosalind Wiseman   |
| <b>Music</b>          | Rolfe Kent   |
| <b>Cinematography</b> | Daryn Okada  |
| <b>Producer</b>       | Paramount Pictures   |
| <b>Cast</b>           | Lindsay Lohan, Rachel McAdams, Tina Fey, Tim Meadows, Amy Poehler, Amanda Seyfried, Ana Gasteyer, Lacey Chabert, Lizzy Caplan, Daniel Franzese, Neil Flynn, Jonathan Bennett |
| <b>Awards</b>         | 2004: Nominated for Critics' Choice Awards: Best Young Actress (Lohan)<br>2004: Writers Guild of America (WGA): Nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay                        |



Fig. 1. Promotional poster of the film. Source: IMDb.com

### 2.2. Synopsis

The film is set in the US, where the main character, Cady Heron (played by Lindsay Lohan) moves with her parents all the way from Africa and starts her first year of high school. She tries to fit in with the rest of the students but soon she finds herself catching the attention of three girls who are said to be “high school royalty” – the

Plastics. Every student at North Shore High knows of them, but few of them know their true personalities. Cady's friends, Janis (Lizzy Chaplan) and Damian (Daniel Franzese), warn her about Regina George (Rachel McAdams), the "queen bee" and leader of the Plastics, but at the same time persuade her to spend time with them and play the double agent – pretending to be their friend and later telling Janis and Damian all the mean things she says.

Cady accepts, thinking Regina cannot possibly be as evil as she is told, but when she sees her kissing Aaron Samuels (Jonathan Bennett), the boy she likes (and Regina's ex-boyfriend), it's all too much – after all, it was Regina herself who offers to talk him into going out with Cady. From that moment, Cady decides to get her revenge and, helped by Janis and Damian, plots to take her down.

They try anything to destroy her, from feeding her high-calorie nutrition bars to ending her relationship with Aaron. It takes time, but when the plan succeeds, they can't predict what happens next: Cady turns herself into a Plastic and the new queen bee. As expected, Regina doesn't give up and strikes back publishing some pages of the "burn book" – a book the Plastics have written through the years full of rumours about every girl in North Shore – and makes it look like it is written by Cady. As a result, the school turns into a complete jungle and all the girls fight each other over those rumours.

Cady finally realises what she has become and tries to make it right, as she is all by herself again. In the end, everyone manages work out their differences and can restore the peace back at the North Shore High School, but maybe not forever.

### 2.3. Reception

The film had a great reception all over the world, but especially in the US. According to Box Mojo Office, the leading on-line box office reporting service, it grossed over \$24 million in its opening week – a successful feat considering the production budget was \$17 million – and ranked #1 at the box office. As of today, worldwide grosses have ascended up to \$129 million.

It won three Teen Choice Awards, including the Best Comedy Actress and Female Breakout Star for Lindsay Lohan, and three MTV Movie Awards. The film was also



nominated for Favourite Movie in the comedy category at the People's Choice Awards and Tina Fey was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay at the Writers Guild of America Awards.

Mean Girls is considered to be an iconic teen film and is still very relevant even though it has been more than 10 years since it was released. Some of the most famous quotes are still being used – particularly on the Internet. Twitter users have created a “National Mean Girls Day” which is celebrated on October 3<sup>rd</sup> (a date quoted on the film). In 2012, the US ex-president Barack Obama used a GIF (Graphics Interchange Format, popularly known as animated images) from the movie to remind young voters to watch a presidential debate in which he took part (App. 1. Fig. 1.) Moreover, the following year The White House's twitter account uploaded a photograph of Obama's pet, Bo, followed by another quote from the film (App. 1. Fig. 2.) As Gillian Orr wrote in the article *10 years of Mean Girls: How the film defined a generation - and gave it a new language* (2014) in the Independent, the popular English news site:

It's an Internet meme. Not only is it still discussed on Twitter and blogs, but on Tumblr you can find a photo of just about anything – from a reality-television star crying, to a meeting of world leaders – with a line from the film slapped across it.

Celebrities have also expressed their love for this film in many ways. *All I Want for Christmas is You* songstress Mariah Carey released a song called “Obsessed” back in 2009 which starts with the quote “I was like, why are you so obsessed with me?” from Regina George (App. 1. Fig. 3.) Mariah's ex-husband, Nick Cannon, told MTV News that the song was inspired by the film since the singer is a huge fan of it. Academy Award winner Jennifer Lawrence also alluded to the film during her People's Choice Award acceptance speech in 2013 saying “I wish this was like Mean Girls and I could just break this up and throw it at all of you.” (App. 1 Fig. 4.)

### 3. Comedy and humour

In order to understand the type of comic text that *Mean Girls* constitutes, it may prove useful to have a brief look into the history of comedy and its evolution through the years.

Comedy first appeared as a theatre genre in Ancient Greece along with tragedy and satyr-play. In comedies, Greek dramatists like Aristophanes and Menander poked fun at contemporary stereotypes and society, telling tales of a sympathetic hero who achieved unbelievable feats through “bold actions; earthy humour; immediate social or political relevance; personal attacks on contemporary figures.” (Konstan, 1995: 4) In many cases the plays would include obscene sexual jokes, but the one thing that they all had in common was a happy ending. The main goal was to meet the audience with laughter, whether it was using ironic or satirical devices. Aristotle stated in *Poetics* – the earliest surviving work on dramatic theory – that comedies should bring out the ridiculous and the ugly to have a laugh at it, because humans sometimes take pleasure in doing the wrong thing and this brings us happiness, which is the ultimate state of being.

The invention of cinema allowed for comedians and actors to reach wider audiences. Charlie Chaplin quickly became the face of silent film through comedy, making the viewer burst out in laughter at the sight of his gestures and expressions. Words were not needed for people to find something funny in the adventures of this character, in which he would make others or even himself stumble, fall and get mud on their faces or clothes. The clowns of the circus would also get a spot on television later on, like Bozo the Clown or Oleg Popov. But verbal humour still had a great impact on society, and British radio had one of the most influential comedy programmes, *The Goon Show*. Sketch comedy gained an enormous popularity with artists like Rowan Atkinson or Monty Python, who would combine both physical and verbal humour.

Now, this is a very brief summary on the history of comedy, but what is significant is that even though comedy has continued evolving through the years, many of its original characteristics have continued to be present to this day. Comedy has been present in every medium there is (oral and written expression, theatre, cinema, radio

and television) and the humoristic elements present in it have varied depending on trends or the different location of each culture across the globe. Thus, *Mean Girls* is no exception, and the next section will provide an identification of humoristic elements that can be found in the film and the theory behind them.

### 3.1. Humoristic elements

Some of the characteristic elements of comedy are used throughout the entire film as humour generating devices. As Chiaro points out, “Humour generating devices such as words and phrases with more than one meaning and distinctive references to people, history, events and customs of a particular culture are characteristics that are often the basis of wordplay.” (2010: 1) Being such specific elements tightly linked to a source culture, the ability to convey them into something funny through language is, undoubtedly, a challenge for a translator. Not only the meaning needs to be transmitted but the audience has to react to it equally. Especially since the mid-nineties, many authors such as Delabastita, Zabalbeascoa, Vandele and the aforementioned Chiaro have dedicated journals and essays to the subject, as joy and laughter are basic human emotions and the attempt to comprehend their cause or effects of their use is also an interesting topic in translation, be it literary or audiovisual. Below there are a number of these elements that can be distinguished in comedy and a theoretical approach to them.

Chiaro (2010: 14) makes it clear that a universal definition of the term ‘humor’ does not exist:

From its original Latin meaning of ‘fluid’ *umor*, over the centuries the term has travelled from its early days as a medical term of the science of physiology, to the discipline of aesthetics ... to become an unclear umbrella of term ... Thus we find that the term embraces concepts such as comedy, fun, the ridiculous, nonsense and scores of notions of each ... Furthermore, the concept of humour often appears to be used a synonym of *sense of humour* (Ruch 1998).

Consequently, the fact that one cannot identify and classify a text as ‘humorous’ is not surprising, since there is not a single valid definition of it. There are, though, recognisable patterns and expressions in language that often foretell a **joke**, for example, when someone starts an utterance with the common “Knock, knock?” line. These

represent but a tiny fraction of all the humoristic devices that one can find in real life or analysing a text though. We can understand a joke as a narration or dialogue, often short, constituent of two parts. Hockett (1972) refers to them as 'build up' and 'punch' (hence the popular term 'punch line'). The first part consists of the presentation of the context or and the later consists of the final part of the discourse unit, usually providing surprise or incongruity with the first one (Suls 1972). See Salvatore Attardo (2010) for a further and very detailed analysis of jokes.

Jokes can also include or be built around **paronomasia**, also known as puns or double entendres, which are "a linguistic element which has more than one meaning in its original language." (Chiaro, 2010: 3) These are normally referred to as "the lowest form of wit" according to Chiaro, and are commonly aided by the use of homonyms (words which are written the same way but have different meanings) and homophones (words phonetically equal but with different meanings), but there are other linguistic devices that can appear in these humoristic elements, such as polysemes (words with different meanings), metatheses or spoonerisms, malapropisms, chiasmus (repetition of words), blends, antanaclasis (repetition of a word but referring to a different meaning in its second use) or many other characteristic traits of language like stress and rhythm, word formation or syntax.

This theoretical basis on humoristic devices presents a broad view on all the elements that can be present on a comic text and their composition. Jokes – along with cultural elements – comprise a big part of them, and thus this dissertation will give a further look on their classification and the methodology used to translate them.

### 3.1.1. Types of jokes

There are several classifications or categories of jokes, but for this dissertation Zabalbescoa's (1996) classification seems to be the most appropriate as it is made from a translator's point of view, with the purpose of translating dubbed television situation comedies – not exactly the type of audiovisual text that *Mean Girls* is but fairly close.

- a. **International joke:** a small unit of discourse such as a little story or a short intervention in a dialogue where the joke does not rely on any specific elements of a source culture or its language, thus the viewer does not need

any particular knowledge about it. The issue that can appear when translating this type of jokes into a specific language or culture, as it might not always translate as 'funny'.

Take as an example the line "My breasts can always tell when it's gonna rain" (TCR 00:47:36) translated as "Mis pechos siempre me advierten de cuando va a llover". The fact that one's breasts can forecast the weather *and* the fact that this character believes it in all seriousness makes it funny in any language.

- b. **National-culture-and-institutions joke:** these are the jokes built around a specific cultural element or reference and the translator would need to find an equivalent in the target culture (see section 4.1.4. for a detailed explanation of cultural references and translation procedures).

An example of this joke would be the line "If North Shore was *Us Weekly*, they would always be on the cover" (TCR 00:07:35) translated as "Si tuviéramos una revista de moda [en el campus], ellas saldrían en la portada". If the target audience don't know what *Us Weekly* is, there is a loss of the comic effect (see section 4.2 for a further analysis of this line).

- c. **National-sense-of-humour joke:** Zabalbeascoa defines these jokes as "certain joke-types and joke-themes that are apparently more popular in some countries or communities than in others and constitute a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding." (1996: 253) This might depend on factors that constitute cultures, such as religion, history or politics. He then goes on to recognise that "this category of jokes still needs a lot of research and is probably the most controversial." While it is hard to define, it is safe to say that some countries or cultures are more likely to be comfortable making fun of some elements than others. For instance, it might be controversial to include a joke about Nazism in a German dubbed film or television series.
- d. **Language-dependent jokes:** this is the type joke that depends on the aforementioned paronomasia and other linguistic features. With these kind

of jokes the translator can proceed with more freedom, since it is practically impossible to carry out a literal translation even if the two languages are closely related, let alone when they do not come from the same family. In these cases the translation requires great levels of creativity and wit.

We do not find many of them in the film, although the use of the word 'crack' when Janis is plotting to dethrone Regina with Damian and Cady is a good example. The dialogue goes as follows:

Janis: We gotta crack Gretchen Wieners. We crack Gretchen, and then we crack the lock on Regina's whole dirty history.

Damian: Say "crack" again.

Janis: Crack. (TCR 00:32:28)

Then Regina sees Cady talking to them and asks what she was doing, to which Cady answers "She just, you know, came up to me and started talking to me about crack." (TCR 00:32:56) In this case the Spanish translator decided to translate the verb "crack" as "mantener a raya" (to contain), and translating Cady's response to Regina as "Se me ha acercado de repente y se ha puesto a hablarme de rayas," making a clear allusion to drugs, which is the same meaning given to the word in the original version.

- e. **Visual joke:** according to Zabalbeascoa "we could discriminate between humour derived solely from what one sees on the screen and the kind of joke that may seem entirely visual but is really the visually coded version of a linguistic joke." (1996: 254) While one of them only depends on the images and non-verbal elements the other still relies in language.

For instance, when Janis is explaining to Cady and Damian her plan to take down Regina, she lists a number of resources they have to take from her. When she names an "ignorant band of loyal followers" (TCR 00:29:48) and the camera cuts to the blackboard, where the words "army of skanks" can be read. The joke lies in the style shifting (see section 4.1.1 below for more information on the topic) Janis is using between what she says and what she

wrote (the level of formality used speaking is significantly higher than the one used on the board). In the Spanish version subtitles appear below the words on the blackboard reading “ejército de arpías” (more comments on this line in section 4.4.) Zabalbeascoa believes that in the near future visual jokes will not present a problem for translators as the digital image-processing field will be able to solve these issues.

- f. **Complex joke:** a combination of two or more types of jokes abovementioned. The most common complex joke would be one that combines both cultural references and linguistic elements.

Altogether, these six types of jokes seem to include most of the humoristic elements one can find in an audiovisual text. Jokes can be part of other rhetorical techniques such as irony or sarcasm, hence providing the text with more humoristic dimensions. Martínez Sierra (2010) believes that this classification includes types of elements that constitute jokes and not jokes per se. He also considers this classification to be unfitting for an analysis of the language used in a translation (a target text) and only valid for a source text. Again, these arguments prove Chiaro’s statements on the inexistence of a universal definition of humour – if there is not one valid and official definition, there cannot be a valid and universal classification. She also establishes four different procedures (2010: 6-8) in order to translate ‘verbally expressed humour’ (Ritchie 2004), but Zabalbeascoa’s classification seems to be more specific and already includes Chiaro’s methodology.

## 4. Translation analysis

This section analyses the official Spanish translation through the identification of a number of translation issues found in the original version of the text during the translation process. In order to do so it is necessary to identify the elements that can become a translation problem – which are mainly four – through definitions and the analysis of previous studies made by linguists, sociolinguists and translation theorists on the matter. These will offer a critical view on the subject and provide a methodology to use in the analysis of this case study. After establishing a classification and having stated the procedures available to translate the original text, section 4.2 will provide a number of tables with specific examples taken from the original text and analysis following the criteria stated in the next section.

### 4.1. Translation issues

Listed below in four different sections are the main topics that can be classified as translation issues, as they appear during the translation process of a text or discourse. There may be more, but while conducting the analysis of the film's translation these four are the problems that appeared repeatedly and needed to be particularly commented on.

#### 4.1.1. Style and register

Style and register are two topics that have always been studied by sociolinguists. According to Chambers "Sociolinguistics is the study of the social uses of language." (2002: 3) One of the topics covered by sociolinguistics and a determinant factor of the way humans use language to interact with each other and society is style and register.

According to Crystal and Davy, when talking about a foreigner who is learning English:

He needs to be fluent, and fluency should here be measured by his ability to conform in the approved manner to many disparate sociolinguistic situations. He needs to develop a 'sense of style' ... a semi-instinctive knowledge of linguistic appropriateness and (more important) taboo. (1983: 7)



In Crystal's book *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, he defines stylistics as "A branch of linguistics which studies the features of distinctive uses (varieties) of language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language." (2008: 460)

In other words, **style** refers to the right choice of words or expressions depending on the situation. This way, as many authors like Allan Bell, Judith T. Irvine or William Labov emphasize in their studies, a speaker cannot have only one style, since they will be facing many different social situations in their everyday life. Their speech will change depending on the response of their audience. According to these authors, a speaker's ability to adapt their language to the given context is called style-shifting, and is vital for speakers of any language. There are other features that can determine a speaker's style such as:

- **Dialect:** they may have to adjust the way they have been taught to speak to an established standard, or they may need to use some regional expressions to be understood in a community they are originally not part of.
- **Time:** the usage of certain terms or expressions according to the period of time in which the text takes place.
- **Mode:** a dialogue will include resources to interact with another speaker, while a manual will be written with a certain formality and the instructions will all use a certain pronoun.

Trudgill, on the other hand, believes that dialect doesn't have any direct effect on style. From his perspective, dialect and the standardisation of a language have nothing to do with stylistics. In his article, he defines style as "varieties of language viewed from the point of view of formality." (1999: 118) He then distinguishes three main different styles: formal (or very formal), intermediate and informal.

Baker uses the word "dialect" (1992: 15) to refer to style and classifies it as a part of the evoked meaning of a word (see section 4.1.2 for further explanation on lexical meaning), and then distinguishes three different bases of it: geographical (a variation of the language depending on the countries from which the speakers come from),

temporal (words or expressions used by members of different age groups or different periods of time) and social (the language used depending on the social class of a speaker). Even though the differentiation of these three types of concepts seems viable and makes sense, one may argue that the word 'dialect' is not the most adequate to englobe them, as it makes a direct reference exclusively to the geographic or social origin of a speaker and style, explained by all the other authors above, proves to be much more than that. Davy's definition of dialect seems to fit this point of view:

A regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. Spoken dialects are usually also associated with a distinctive pronunciation, or accent. Any language with a reasonably large number of speakers will develop dialects, especially if there are geographical barriers separating groups of people from each other, or if there are divisions of social class. One dialect may predominate as the official or standard form of the language, and this is the variety which may come to be written down. The distinction between 'dialect' and 'language' seems obvious: dialects are subdivisions of languages. (1980: 142)

This, however, leads to a further discussion in sociolinguistics and although interesting, it is a slight deviation from the purpose of the section and the dissertation.

When it comes to **register**, the meaning may result similar to the one for style for many sociolinguists and academics, since there is not an agreed and universal terminology for both topics, but after reading the works of different authors, one may come to think that there is indeed a slight difference. According to Crystal's definition, register refers to "a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations, e.g. a register of scientific, religious, formal English." In her book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Janet Holmes also mentions that "other [sociolinguists] use the term 'register' more narrowly to describe the specific vocabulary associated with different occupational groups," which has a similar definition to the term "jargon". As Holmes continues to say, "The distinction is not always clear, however, and many sociolinguists simply ignore it." Trudgill agrees with Holmes in his definition of register provided in the article *Standard English: what it isn't*, and claims that it is "almost exclusively a matter of lexis, although some registers, notably the register of law, are known to have special

syntactic characteristics” (1999: 120). Regarding the purpose of the existing variety of registers, he adds that “they have the more particularly sociolinguistic function of symbolising a speaker or writer’s membership of a particular group.”

The clearest example of usage of a specific register appears when we are watching a football match. If we focus on the sports commentator we will realise they use short sentences, poorly punctuated (there is no need for commas or other punctuation signs if the sentence merely has three words), sometimes without a subject or a verb and with terminology that wouldn’t make any sense outside of this context (“a clearance”, “a volley”, “a one-two”). If we listen to two doctors talking to one another, they will use a medical register, as that is the one they have been taught in their studies. They will understand each other. In the presence of a patient though, their register will have to change since the other person is not likely to know the meaning of medical terminology.

For Baker, register is “a variety of language that a language user considers appropriate to a specific situation,” a slightly vague definition. She then names three variations of register matching Hatim and Mason’s in *Discourse and the Translators* (1990):

- **Field of discourse:** as explained above, the situation in which the speaker is involved and how it affects their choice of language, for instance playing a football match or discussing a football match.
- **Tenor of discourse:** it refers to the relationship established between two or more speakers taking part in the discourse. It has a direct effect on the level of formality used by the speakers, since their language would vary according to their different interpersonal relationships (a mother and her child, a boss and their employee...).
- **Mode of discourse:** the role that the language is playing (speech, lecture, instructions) and its medium of transmission (spoken or written).

Bearing in mind the studies and definitions by the aforementioned sociolinguists, the analysis of *Mean Girls’* translation will distinguish style and register as two different topics throughout the analysis of the film’s translation. Style will include a subdivision

into two types: formality – as explained by Trudgill and differentiating three different levels of it (formal, intermediate and informal) – and time – whether the language and expressions used in the film sound dated or not according to the original text and the Spanish spoken nowadays. For register, the analysis will follow the definitions of Holmes and Trudgill and refer to it as terminology and vocabulary belonging to a specific field.

#### 4.1.2. Lexical meaning

According to Mona Baker, the lexical meaning of a word “may be thought of as the specific value it has in a particular linguistic system and the ‘personality’ it acquires through usage within that system” (1992: 12). The aim of the analysis of such a small “lexical unit”, as Baker refers to, is not to fit it into the different components of meaning there are, as many more factors play a part in that and a word is already a part of a bigger structure or pattern with its own meaning. Rather than that, a deeper look into a word may prove useful in the final process of the translation of a text.

Baker bases her model of analysis on Cruse’s (1986), and distinguishes four different types of meaning:

- a. **Propositional meaning:** related to the description of the word and what it refers to for the speakers of a language. That is to say, what we as a society understand and decide something is (i.e. a chair is a piece of furniture, usually made of 4 legs and designed to sit on). We can judge it as true or false (if someone was to say that a cushion is a chair, we’d say they are wrong).
- b. **Expressive meaning:** this relates to a particular speaker’s feelings rather than an objective, descriptive meaning of a word. The intention of this new meaning is given by the speaker, and thus it cannot be judged as right or wrong.

Two or more words can have the same propositional meaning (synonyms) but differ in their expressive meaning (they can still be synonyms, but in this case they have different connotations or nuances). In the case of the film, Regina and her group of friends are called ‘the plastics’, but that doesn’t mean they are made of a synthetic material made out of oil or coal (propositional meaning). Surely the students of North Shore High School gave them that name to point out that they have fake personalities or that they’ve had plastic surgery done

(expressive meaning). In Spanish though they are called 'las divinas', which is an adjective very much like fabulous, exquisite (propositional meaning) because they basically are teen royalty and most students apparently adore them, but even though Cady and her friends use that nickname too, it's not for the same reason; in fact they think that it's ridiculous how people obsess over them (expressive meaning).

c. **Presupposed meaning:** it affects the words or expressions before or after a specific lexical unit. There are two types of restrictions for the presupposed meaning of a word, depending on what we expect to see next to this particular lexical unit:

- *Selectional restrictions:* "a function of the propositional meaning of a word" (1992: 14). If we find the verb "talking" or the adjective "divorced" we expect a human subject, and if we see the verb "wrote" we expect the object to be a book, a note or words.
- *Collocational restrictions:* "these are semantically arbitrary restrictions which do not follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word" (1992: 14). They relate to the collocations found in every language's grammar, i.e. a sequence of words or terms that co-occur very often and thus it's not a matter of chance but a matter of grammar. Collocations are different for every language and the misuse of them would make a text or a speaker sound awkward or just wrong.

Baker also distinguishes a fourth meaning, called evoked meaning, but she defines it as a variation of register and dialect. Since there is already a further and detailed explanation on style and register in the previous section 4.1.1, it is not necessary to include this fourth meaning in the present section, as it will be considered as a whole different topic for the analysis of the translation. Furthermore, the author also mentions in this chapter of the book that the only type of meaning that can be challenged by a reader is the propositional meaning, and she concedes that it is indeed very complex to identify the various types of meaning in a lexical unit, basically due to the nature of language having "blurred edges" (1992: 17). It is pertinent to consider both

propositional and expressive meaning in the analysis of the translation of the film, since the nature of the film and the expressions used in it may lead to confusion or mistakes in the translation process.

#### 4.1.3. Dubbing

Working with a dubbed version of a film adds another layer of complexity to a translation. Through the different stages of dubbing – from the translation of the text to the recording of it – the translation is likely to be modified by linguists and adaptors. The final result should still remain a quality translation, even though solutions for problems encountered in this process may vary depending on different factors, such as the company producing the film or the voice actors hired to fulfil the task. Below there is a brief look upon the theory behind the audiovisual text and the procedures involved in the creation of a dubbed film and the factors that transform a text from the first stage of translation until the final product, as it may be useful to comprehend some of the problems of the Spanish dubbing and translation of *Mean Girls*.

The text is limited by a subordinate translation, as Patrick Zabalbeascoa states in his study *La dimensión tecnológica de la traducción para el doblaje* (2005). This is a concept purely related to audiovisual translation but also to the translation of songs and comics. This means that the words chosen in the translation depend on some type of synchrony, melody or physical limitation. His take on it lies in the fact that there isn't a universal hierarchy in the different levels of language or its medium (that is through visuals, sound or words), so audiovisual translation can alternate from one to another and there isn't a predefined priority.

Zabalbeascoa questions Jakobson's classification of translation back in 1959, in which he differentiates three types of translation: intralinguistic, interlinguistic and intersemiotic. In this classification the importance of the message relies on the words chosen in the translation and their meaning, but not the manner in which they are transmitted nor their textual, communicative or social context. An 'audiovisual text' should convey all the verbal or non-verbal elements in it and every possible combination of them, i. e. verbal for non-verbal (as in a particular intonation rather than the correct, dictionary-based translation) or sound for visual (a voice-over for a poster or sign). His

approach offers more possibilities for a translator to solve the translation problems they may encounter during the process of translating and adjusting a film, as language is flexible to change from one medium to another.

During the adaptation stage of a translated text for a dubbed adaptation of a movie the translation is bound to undergo all kinds of changes. Patou-Patucchi states that “It is rather obvious that if we have the same professional translating and adapting a multimedia work, we simply do not have any kind of problem.” (2009: 140) This would be a perfect picture, but reality seems to differ most of the times. Professionals in charge of this job may not even know the target language of the translation:

Most adaptors are self-taught people ... this apprenticeship-type of system is essentially based on the empirical method of “fail and learn.”... In my country, it may happen that dubbing and subtitling are done by professionals who do not know the original language of the multimedia works they are commissioned to adapt. Sometimes they do not know *any* foreign language at all. So it would not be too hasty to consider their work as a mere adaptation from their *own* language into their *own* language. They use a translation someone else has done for them, about which they cannot even say whether it is good or bad. (Patou-Pattuchi, 2009: 140)

Synchronisation is an important part of this stage, in which the words said by the characters on the screen have to match their gestures, lip movements but also be coherent with the rest of audiovisual text. Fodor proposed three types of synchrony in 1962 as a classification: phonetic synchrony (regarding lip movement), character synchrony (in relation to the voice of the dubbing actors) and content synchrony (the coherence between the words of the dubbing actor and what happens in the screen). Later, in 1992, Whitman-Linsen points to two types of synchrony, more detailed and taking into account both the technical part of process but also the professionals involved and their characteristics. As listed by Matamala in the article *Translations for dubbing and dynamic texts: strategies in film synchronisation* (2010: 5-6):

- a. **Visual/optical synchrony:** includes lip synchrony (phonetic synchrony), syllable articulation synchrony, length of utterance synchrony (gap synchrony or isochrony) and gestual and facial expression synchrony (kinetic synchrony).

- b. **Audio or acoustic synchrony**, which takes into account the idiosyncratic vocal type, paralinguistic elements such as tone, timbre and pitch of voice, prosody (that is, intonation, melody and tempo), cultural variations, accents and dialects.

This means, in order to obtain a perfect synchrony, words or even whole sentences might be omitted or replaced by others. These decisions might be made in the recording booth, where the dubbing actor has the responsibility of fitting the translated text into the scenes. On some occasions, that is the first time they encounter the text, consequently there is not much room to think about a better fit for a translation. Certain companies will not even hire a linguist at this stage. This new, alternate version created in the recording phase may not have been the first choice made by the translator or linguist in previous stages, but due to specific scenes, angles or gestures made by the characters on-screen, it fits better than the translator's choice. It is important to remember this during the analysis, because, as said by Patou-Pattuchi "This explains the odd interpretations of some expressions of other cultures" (2009: 141). After a deeper research, we find that the translation of a film is not only a linguistic-based process, but a complex compound of technical procedures too.

#### 4.1.4. Cultural references

Several cultural references appear throughout the film. These can be related to American pop culture of the early 2000s or simply iconic personalities and places to most of the American audience. Knowing how to translate these words or expression is vital in order to maintain the film's character and its impact on the audience. In this section there are a number of techniques as stated by different theorists like Newmark or Nida. These procedures are thought to be the main method when translating a text into any other language. While not every theorist may concur with the views of Newmark and Nida and there may even be more techniques to name, listed below are the strategies followed to analyse the film, as these two authors are some of the most known and acclaimed theorists.

In *A Textbook to Translation* (1988), Peter Newmark states that there are two main translation procedures to translate cultural words (a term coined by him to



designate words from a source language that do not have a literal equivalent in the translated language): transference and componential analysis.

Through **transference**, the translated word becomes a “loan word” (1988: 81). The word is transliterated from one alphabet to another. This is the case of names of most living and dead people (except for the Pope and some historical figures), names of streets or institutions, unless they already have recognised translations. In written texts, this procedure can be followed by a second translation of the word (what Newmark calls ‘couplet’), using other procedures such as a cultural or functional equivalent. In a film, it can be used in the subtitles, but not in the dialogues – unless the word or concept is later explained in the original version.

Through **componential analysis**, a common component to both source and translated languages is used with a contextual distinguishing component added to it. For instance, if a Spanish translator was to translate Nair, a well-known hair removing gel brand, they could choose to translate it as ‘crema’ and then add ‘depilatoria’ or ‘para la depilación’ in order to obtain a full working translation. Nevertheless Newmark lists some more translation methods that can be used for cultural references:

Using a **cultural equivalent** we make an approximate translation from one cultural word in the SL to another in the TL, i.e. translating Spanish ‘selectividad’ as English ‘A Levels’. It may prove very helpful to the general audience and people with little to no knowledge of the source culture, but as an approximation, there is a risk that it might fall short on conveying the whole meaning and intention of it. In the words of Newmark: “Their translation uses are limited, since they are not accurate, but they can be used in general texts, publicity and propaganda, as well as for brief explanation to readers who are ignorant of the relevant SL culture. They have a greater impact than culturally neutral terms.” (1988: 83)

A **functional equivalent**, on the other hand, needs of a ‘culture-free word’ – a word that is equally semantic for both cultures – that neutralises the SL word and sometimes may be accompanied by an adjective or another noun to denote its purpose or function. For example, a functional equivalent of ‘Palacio de la Zarzuela’ in English would be “Spanish royal residence” or simply “the King’s residence”. Newmark believes

this is the “most accurate way of translating i.e. deculturalising a cultural word” but sometimes “description has to be weighed against function”. In these cases we might need a whole sentence to express the full meaning of a cultural word, i.e. translating ‘katana’ as ‘long Japanese sword used by samurai’.

**Naturalisation** is a method which implies an adaptation from the word in the SL to the standards of pronunciation and morphology of the TL. Instead of being merely a ‘loan’ like in transference, naturalisation goes a step further and implements the foreign word in the translated language. Translating the English word ‘selfie’ to Spanish as ‘selfi’ is an example of naturalisation.

A **through-translation**, as Newmark calls it, is another procedure in which the cultural word from a SL is translated literally in the TL. It is a technique used especially for common collocations, names of organisations, phrases or the components of compounds. This would be the case of the Spanish translation of the 2002 film *Spiderman*, translated in Latin America as *El hombre araña*. Newmark reminds us that “in theory, a translator should not ‘initiate’ a through-translation” (1988: 84) but also believes that they can fill in useful gaps in different cultures. For instance, some English speakers may find the need of an expression to use right before starting to eat in the company of others, much like French speakers have *bon appétit* or Spanish speakers say *buen provecho*.

Apart from these procedures, he also allows the translator to delete the word if the translation is redundant (especially metaphors and intensifiers), use a couplet of two or more procedures, use the accepted standard translation for it or making notes.

Eugene Nida considers that “the provision of cultural conditioning always implies the entire problem of the extent to which certain adjustments can and should be made in the transfer” (1969: 110). He states three main reasons to justify the use of a translation method other than the literal for cultural words. These are:

- a. A possible misunderstanding of the text by the receptors
- b. The receptors not understanding the meaning of the text
- c. The translation being too complex for the average audience’s comprehension

These are not valid arguments if cultural references have an historical significance or a religious symbolism.

These procedures will be key when analysing the different cultural elements present in the original text. In order to translate each one of them the translator has to decide which technique is the most adequate and valid considering the text as a whole (needs to be coherent and cohesive) but especially taking into consideration the culture of the target language. In the next section there is a number of tables destined to analyse some of the cultural references found in the film and its translation to Spanish through the abovementioned methods, discussing whether the procedure used proves the best option or there is another which would enhance the translation.

## 4.2. Analysis of Spanish translation

This is the part where the theory is put to practice. In the following tables some of the most remarkable – and possible – translation problems are identified and explained. The issues are numbered and given in a context next to the corresponding TCR (Time Code Reading). Below, there's an explanation on why the example proves to be a certain issue followed by a Note based on the previous theoretical background obtained through academic research. The official Spanish translation of the film can also be found to illustrate the final result of the procedures taken by the official translator and the professionals in charge of the technical aspects of dubbing. There is also an alternate or suggested solution for the issue.

| <b>Issue #1 (TCR 00:02:20)</b>  |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Source text</b>  | <b>Official translation</b>             |
| Talk to me again and I'll kick your ass.  | Corta el rollo que se te ve el plumero. |
| <b>Context:</b> Cady mistakes another student for the teacher   |   |
| <b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)  |   |
| <b>Reason:</b> Probably dubbing, the Spanish translation for the sentence might be too long or there may have been a loss of visual synchrony.  |   |
| <b>Note:</b> Although the propositional meaning is completely opposed, the Spanish translation works and is cohesive with the rest of the text. |   |
| <b>Suggestion:</b> "Vuelve a hablarme y te machaco"   |   |

| Issue #2 (TCR 00:02:32)  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| Hello, baby.   | Hola, guapo.         |
| <p><b>Context:</b> A female student greets her boyfriend.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (expressive)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> The propositional meaning of the word in Spanish (“bebé”) is not as used as in English.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The official translation maintains the same expressive meaning.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

| Issue #3 (TCR 00:02:58)   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| I’m bad luck.   | Soy algo gafe.       |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Cady bumps into Mrs. Norbury and she spills her coffee all over herself.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> A literal translation wouldn’t make any sense in Spanish as you can only ‘have’ luck or ‘be lucky’.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The translator found the correct adjective for the idiom.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

| Issue #4 (TCR 00:04:15)   |  |
|---|--|
| Source text   | Official translation                     |
| The first day of school was a blur.   | El primer día de clase fue una nebulosa. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Cady bumps into Mrs. Norbury and she spills her coffee all over herself.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Register</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> According to Collins and Oxford Dictionaries a blur is “something vague, hazy, or indistinct”.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If you look up at the RAE or Espasa dictionary “nebulosa” refers to an astronomic cloud of dust and could only mean hazy or vague as an adjective, but in this sentence it is used as a noun.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “El primer día de clase pasó volando”, “Apenas recuerdo el primer día de clase”</p> |  |

| Issue #5 (TCR 00:06:17)   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| Health. Spanish.  | Higiene. Francés.    |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Damian is reading Cady’s schedule.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Cady is attending Spanish classes, but it may sound awkward to go to Spanish classes if you know how to speak Spanish (in the Spanish dubbed version.)</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Using a cultural equivalent creates the illusion that the characters in the film really speak Spanish, but I think that the translation of cultural references should be consistent throughout the film and not as translated (i.e. dollars as “dólares”, North Shore High School as “Instituto North Shore”.)</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “Higiene. Lengua.”</p> |                      |

| Issue #6 (TCR 00:06:57)  |   |
|--|---|
| Source text  | Official translation                    |
| Don't have sex in the missionary position.   | No folléis en la postura del misionero. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Damian is reading Cady's schedule.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (formal)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> 'Having sex' is a neutral expression (i.e. it does not sound "filthy" or "too aggressive")</p> <p><b>Note:</b> In Spanish "follar" is considered slang, and if more cursing wouldn't happen in the film it would be inappropriate, but since this is not the case, I believe this is a correct translation.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |   |

| Issue #7 (TCR 00:07:32)  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation      |
| Who are the Plastics?  | ¿Quiénes son las Divinas? |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Damian sees the Plastics and calls her by that name. Cady, who has never seen them before, wants to know who they are.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (expressive)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> As explained in section 4.1.2, in English they give them this name to point out that they have fake personalities as well as fake body parts.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> "Divinas" does not have such a bad connotation as "Plastics" does, but Janis gives the word an ironic meaning, so it works for the Spanish version.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                           |

| Issue #8 (TCR 00:07:35)  |  |
|--|--|
| Source text  | Official translation   |
| If North Shore was US Weekly, they would always be on the cover.   | Si tuviéramos revista de moda en el campus ellas saldrían en la portada. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Damian explains to Cady who the Plastics are.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> <i>Us Weekly</i> is a well-known American magazine, but unknown for most Spanish people.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Through componential analysis the Spanish-speaking audience receives the same explanation as the English one and the effect is the same. Another option would be using the name of a well-known Spanish magazine, such as <i>Cuore</i> or <i>¡Hola!</i></p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |  |

| Issue #9 (TCR 00:08:10)   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation            |
| Slut-faced ho-bag.  | Ninfómana y caliente braguetas. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis gives her own opinion on Regina George.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (expressive), style (formal), register</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Slang cannot be translated literally into any other language as that would not have the same effect or even make sense.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Putting aside the fact that nymphomania is a mental illness and using it so freely increases its stigmatisation in society, the lexical meaning of the Spanish is the same: a promiscuous woman. The term “caliente braguetas” can be also considered Spanish slang, but not “ninfómana”, there’s an increase in the level of formality and can be also considered part of medical register.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “Guarra y caliente braguetas”, any other Spanish cuss word for promiscuous women really.</p> |                                 |



| Issue #10 (TCR 00:08:34)   |   |
|--|---|
| Source text  | Official translation  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her favorite movie is Varsity Blues.</li> <li>- One time she met John Stamos on a plane and he told her she was pretty.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Su peli favorita es Love Story.</li> <li>- Una vez coincidió con Brad Pitt en un avión.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Various students describe Regina George.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (expressive), style (formal), register</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Both the film and the actor may not be known for the Spanish audience and it would be advisable to change them to a film and actor that Spanish people can easily recognise.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Instead of using a cultural equivalent from Spanish culture, the translator chose to use other cultural referents from the American culture, still believable for the public and easier to identify.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |   |

| Issue #11 (TCR 00:08:49)  |  |
|---|--|
| Source text   | Official translation   |
| Every year, the seniors throw this dance for the underclassmen.   | Todos los años los del último curso dan un baile de primavera. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Damian explains to Cady what the Spring Fling is.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> The American High School course system is organised with names instead of numbers.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Through componential analysis the cultural Word “senior” is explained, and at the same time that explanation works as a translation of the term.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |  |

| Issue #12 (TCR 00:09:15)  |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| You got your freshmen, ROTC guys...   | Novatos, rockeros... |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference, lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> According to Urban Dictionary, ROTC stands for “Reserve Officers Training Corps” and is a program for students who later would like to join the military once they graduate high school, and it’s a program that doesn’t exist in Spanish high schools.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Since there is no cultural equivalent of this concept in Spanish culture (students who attend this program go to military school) the translator used another type of ‘clique’ that can be found in Spanish high schools, even if they don’t have anything in common, which isn’t necessary because they don’t appear in the film.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

| Issue #13 (TCR 00:09:18)   |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation        |
| Preps, J. V. Jocks...  | Pijos, cachas de primero... |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference, style (formal)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> “Prep” and “preppy” would be the American equivalent to the English word “posh”, i.e. someone usually wealthy that dresses with expensive clothes. J. V. jocks stands for Junior Varsity Jocks, as in boys in 11<sup>th</sup> grade (Spanish “1º de bachillerato”, 16 or 17 year-olds) that play in the high school team.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The formality used in Spanish is also low, like the one used in the English version, and the translation maintains the same propositional meaning.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                             |

| Issue #14 (TCR 00:09:18)  |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| Varsity Jocks.  | Cachas de segundo.   |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Cultural reference</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> As explained before, male students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Spanish “2º de bachillerato”, 17 or 18 year-olds) who play in the high school team.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Makes a reference to the prior translation of “jocks” and transmits the idea that these students play sports (not in the high school team, since most of the Spanish high schools don’t have one.)</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

| Issue #15 (TCR 00:09:27)  |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation       |
| Unfriendly black hotties.   | Negras guapas pero bordes. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (formal), syntax</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> ‘Hottie’ is slang for an attractive boy or girl</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If there is a colloquial word for “unfriendly” in Spanish that is “borde”, but the problem lays in the existence of gender in nouns and adjectives in Spanish. You can say a “hottie” is someone “guapo”, but the clip show a mixed group of people and in Spanish they only refer to them all as females. It’s not an important issue, as one may think the girls are the “leaders” of the group, but the original English text is likely to refer to both genders.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “Negros guapos pero bordes.”</p> |                            |

| Issue #16 (TCR 00:09:32)  |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation              |
| Girls who don't eat anything.   | Chicas que no se comen una rosca. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional and expressive)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> This line comes right after Janis says "Girls who eat their feelings", to point out that they are the other extreme and possibly suffering from anorexia.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The expression "no comerse una rosca" has a sexual connotation, so rather than not eating anything at all, means not having any sexual relations and thus it doesn't make sense to show this group of girls all drinking from one Diet Coke.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Chicas que no comen nada", "Chicas que se niegan a comer"</p> |                                   |

| Issue #17 (TCR 00:09:36)   |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| Burnouts.  | Colgados.            |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (formal)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> According to Urban Dictionary, it is slang for someone who smokes a lot of marihuana.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> "Colgados" is the adjective you would use to call someone crazy and it's not really used to describe people who are high or consume drugs.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Fumados", "Porreros"</p> |                      |

| Issue #18 (TCR 00:09:38)   |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| Sexually active band geeks.  | Salidos sexuales.    |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is introducing the different cliques that she will find in the cafeteria.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (formal)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In America, or at least in teen films, it is a common believe that all the members of the school band are “geeks”, i.e. socially awkward kids that like to read comics or play videogames.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Since most Spanish high schools don’t have bands it is actually okay to omit that part. There’s a loss of the geek nuance, but then again “geeks” are not especially known for having sexual relations much often. Also, “salidos sexuales” seems redundant, as “salido” alone means “one who has a big sexual desire”.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “Salidos”</p> |                      |

| Issue #19 (TCR 00:09:53)   |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation     |
| Is your muffin buttered?   | ¿Te han comido la breva? |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Jason approaches Cady and asks her to answer some questions for a survey, and this is the first question.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (formal), lexical meaning (expressive)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Slang for “have you ever had sexual relations?”</p> <p><b>Note:</b> “Breva” is the fruit of the fig tree, and while the expression “¿Te han comido el higo?” is more common, it may be too obvious, so the use of the word “breva” makes Cady even more confused, which is the reason I think it works.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> “¿Te han llevado al huerto?”, “¿Has pasado por la piedra?”</p> |                          |

| Issue #20 (TCR 00:26:26)   |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation    |
| He's my first cousin.  | Es un primo muy lejano. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Karen tries to justify why it is acceptable to hook up with Seth Mosakovski.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Possible different meaning or terminology in both languages</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Karen's confusion is still present but for a different reason: in English Karen thinks it's ok to kiss her first cousin, but in Spanish Karen thinks it's ok to kiss her distant cousin, which makes more sense.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                         |

| Issue #21 (TCR 00:27:20)   |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| She has a huge crush on you.   | Está por tus huesos. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Regina warns Aaron about Cady because Cady likes him.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (time)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Stalker: "A person who harasses or persecutes someone with unwanted and obsessive attention." (Oxford dictionary)</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Maybe in 2004 was ok, but no one really says that nowadays in Spanish, sounds very old-fashioned.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Está colada por ti"</p> |                      |

| Issue #22 (TCR 00:27:42)   |  |
|--|--|
| Source text  | Official translation                             |
| I'm not saying she's a stalker.  | Lo que no estoy diciendo es que sea una buscona. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Regina warns Aaron about Cady because Cady likes him.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (time)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> The Spanish translation sounds dated, whereas the expression used in the original is still in use.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> As defined by the <i>Real Academia de la Lengua Española</i> dictionary:<br/> Buscona:<br/> 1. adj. Que busca.<br/> U. t. c. s.<br/> 2. adj. Dicho de una persona: Que hurta rateramente o estafa con socaliña. U. t. c. s.<br/> 3. m. y f. Méx. Persona pendenciera.<br/> 4. f. prostituta.</p> <p>In Spanish, "buscona" has a sexual connotation which is not present in "stalker".</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Lo que no estoy diciendo es que sea una psicópata/acosadora"</p> |  |

| Issue #23 (TCR 00:28:31)   |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| You're so hot.   | Estás como el queso. |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Regina says that she didn't break up with Aaron because he is very handsome.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Style (time)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> The Spanish translation sounds dated, whereas the expression used in the original is still in use.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Maybe in 2004 was ok, but no one really says that nowadays in Spanish, sounds very old-fashioned, and even for 2004.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Estás como un tren", "Estás buenísimo"</p> |                      |

| Issue #24 (TCR 00:29:18)  |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| She's a life-ruiner.  | Es una amargavidas.  |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis tells Cady she had to be careful with Regina because she's not a good person.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> It is a term that already exists in English, but doesn't have an exact translation in Spanish.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> While in English means that she wants to destroy someone's life, in Spanish means that she just wants to annoy her, make her life a living hell, but I think it's a very good equivalent, since it's a term that already exists in Spanish.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

| Issue #25 (TCR 00:29:18)   |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Source text  | Official translation |
| High-status man candy.   | Un guaperas.         |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is going through the list of resources that make Regina a successful dictator.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> There's a loss of the meaning.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> In Spanish they omitted the "high-status" meaning, but it's not very important since the viewer already knows that Aaron Samuels is a popular guy.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> "Un guaperas popular", "El guaperas más popular"</p> |                      |



| Issue #26 (TCR 00:29:48)  |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Source text   | Official translation |
| Army of skanks.   | Ejército de arpías.  |
| <p><b>Context:</b> Janis is going through the list of resources that make Regina a successful dictator.</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Lexical meaning (propositional)</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> While skank is used to describe a sleazy, promiscuous woman, “arpía” is used to describe an evil woman, it doesn’t have a sexual connotation (according to RAE.)</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Even though “arpías” doesn’t necessarily have a sexual connotation, what the viewer must understand is that Janis doesn’t hold a high opinion on Karen and Gretchen, so I think it’s a very valid translation.</p> <p><b>Suggestion:</b> -</p> |                      |

## 5. Conclusion

The aim set at the beginning of this TFG was to be able to analyse the Spanish translation of the film. The present proves to be the answer to that question: it is possible to do that combining the knowledge gathered through these four years of Translation and Interpreting studies. The method used to do so is the result of research into the works of other authors pursuing the same objective. One of the main challenges was to prove that *Mean Girls*, a shallow, comedic film at first sight could provide layers and layers of issues to take a look upon. Regarding this first statement, it is safe to say that this multimedia work includes topics studied by academics, from sociolinguists to linguists.

The two main topics covered are humour and cultural references, and while there are indeed several sources, analysis and theories included in the TFG, it almost seems impossible to encompass everything that has ever been written on them. Both are themes rather abstract and tightly bound to language and its continuous evolution and development. There is not any universal truth to them agreed by all of the theorists, consequently the possibilities can be endless. This dissertation is particularly centred in jokes, as their analysis was directly linked to audiovisual works. Nevertheless, other interesting branches to research would be the different types of humour there are (such as irony, satire or black/gallows humour) and their differences and uses. This is, of course, a door left open to further investigation in the following years of my career. Multimedia is also a medium in constant development, and new advances in the technologic field will also have a direct effect in film-making, and thus in film translation and all its stages too.

Since the film has had such a great impact in the English speaking world, another question raised in the first stages of planning of the TFG was interesting to see how the expressions used in the film had been translated to Spanish and whether they are also being used in the present and in which context. Just by taking a look at online communities in both Spain and United States one can realise that the impact it has not been the same, but the reason behind it seems to be a matter rather complex. It may be possible to obtain an answer to that through extensive field work and further

investigation on sociolinguistic matters. This is, again, an open road for myself or anyone willing to pick up the research right where I left it.

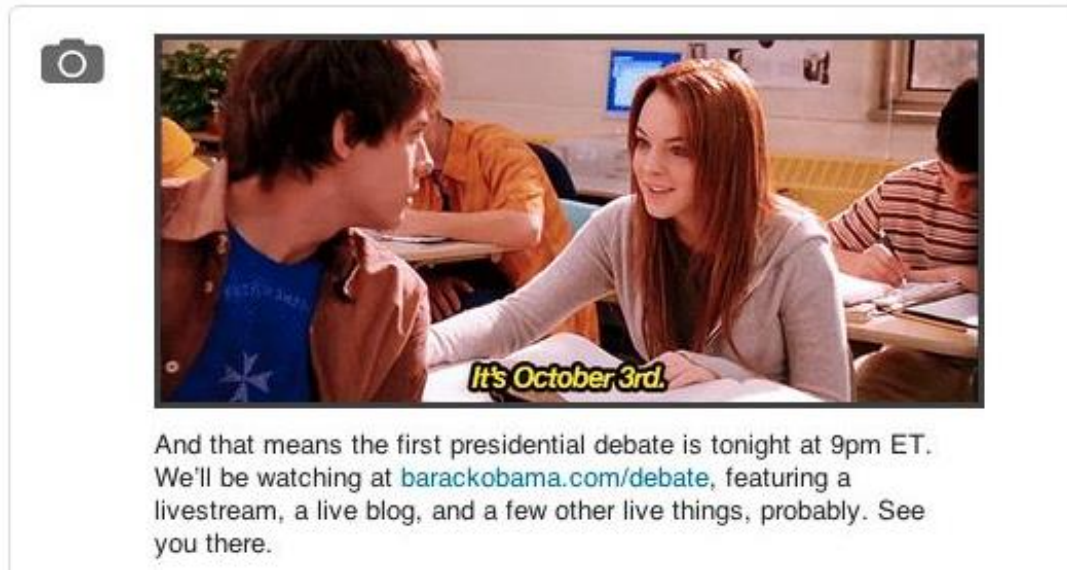
All in all, I can affirm that I obtained the abilities necessary to conduct a critical analysis on a translation work and give my own opinion from a critical and informed point of view as a translator myself.

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## 7. Appendix 1: *Mean Girls'* impact on mainstream media



 **The White House**   
@whitehouse

Bo, stop trying to make fetch happen.  
[pic.twitter.com/Ez6hWGFpFc](https://pic.twitter.com/Ez6hWGFpFc)

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More



112  
RETWEETS

72  
FAVORITES



Above: Fig. 1. Post on ex-President Barack Obama's Tumblr site. Source: Tumblr.com

Left: Fig. 2. Tweet from the White House's Twitter account. Source: Twitter.com



Fig. 3. Screenshot of Mariah Carey's "Obsessed" music video. Source: Rebloggy.com



Fig. 4. Jennifer Lawrence receiving the People's Choice Award for Favourite Movie Actress in 2013. Source: Popsugar.com