# The role of heuristics in the search for LAUGHS IN TRANSLATION.

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## INTRODUCTION

- English linguistic humour is a rhetorical device-dependent humour whose foundation constitutes language form and cultural idiosyncrasies. Translating this brand of humour while preserving the integrity of its semantic content represents a challenge, as the replication of its linguistic features in different language families is thought to be nigh impossible.
- Although there is a vast literature dealing with the translation of humour as well as the translation of musicalized pieces, there is not much research done in regards to the overlapping of these two areas. The phonetic features coupled with the formal aspect that would be found in these examples of linguistic humour should prove to be not unlike a Herculean task for a translator.

## OBJECTIVE

This paper analyses the applicability of a formal approach to the translation of a particular language intervention in a humorous text from Spanish to English, as opposed to a purely heuristic approach to naturalize the translation of the source text to achieve its target effectiveness. A comparison is drawn between the General Theory of Verbal Humour[1] and the Complete Treatment to Verse Translation in Non-Literary Prose[2] to undertake the translation of a musicalized piece in Spanish chosen for its linguistic, cultural and thematic difficulty.

## OBJECT OF STUDY

- The versifying device known as double rhyme is the form of linguistic humour chosen as object of this study. It creates ambiguity in the rhyming scheme which allows for the deliverance of a punchline.
  - The piece chosen for this study is "*La yegua mía (triunfo/empate)*" by Les Luthiers, as performed in 1976 in the show *Viejos Fracasos*.
  - Les Luthiers is an Argentine comedy group renowned in many a Spanish-speaking country. Music and linguistic ingenuity constitute the cornerstone of their work as well as the informal musical instruments of their own creation (thus the name *luthiers*).

## METHOD

**General Theory of Verbal Humour[1]:**
- **Primary KRs:**
  - Script Opposition
  - Logical Mechanism
  - Narrative Structure
- **Secondary KR:** Effective Humorous Situation
- **Tertiary KR:** Primary Lexemes

HEURISTICS — Cognitive Shortcuts
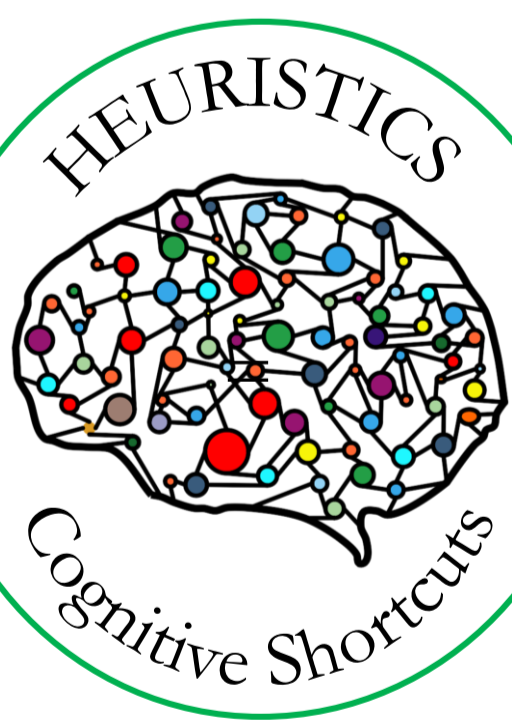
**The Complete Treatment[2]:**
1. Identification of the original.
2. Connection between the verse and the rest of the text.
3. Verification of lexeme meaning.
4. Linear translation.
5. Assessment of semantic content of lexemes.
6. Syntactic comparison of the verses.
7. Synonimization of high-ranking lexemes.
8. Rhyme protection.
9. Syllabic concurrence.
10. Rhythmic concurrence.
11. Syntactic and terminological changes.
12. Embedding of the poetic fragment in the TT.

## LAST STEP: MUSICALIZATION

**Spanish:**



**English:**
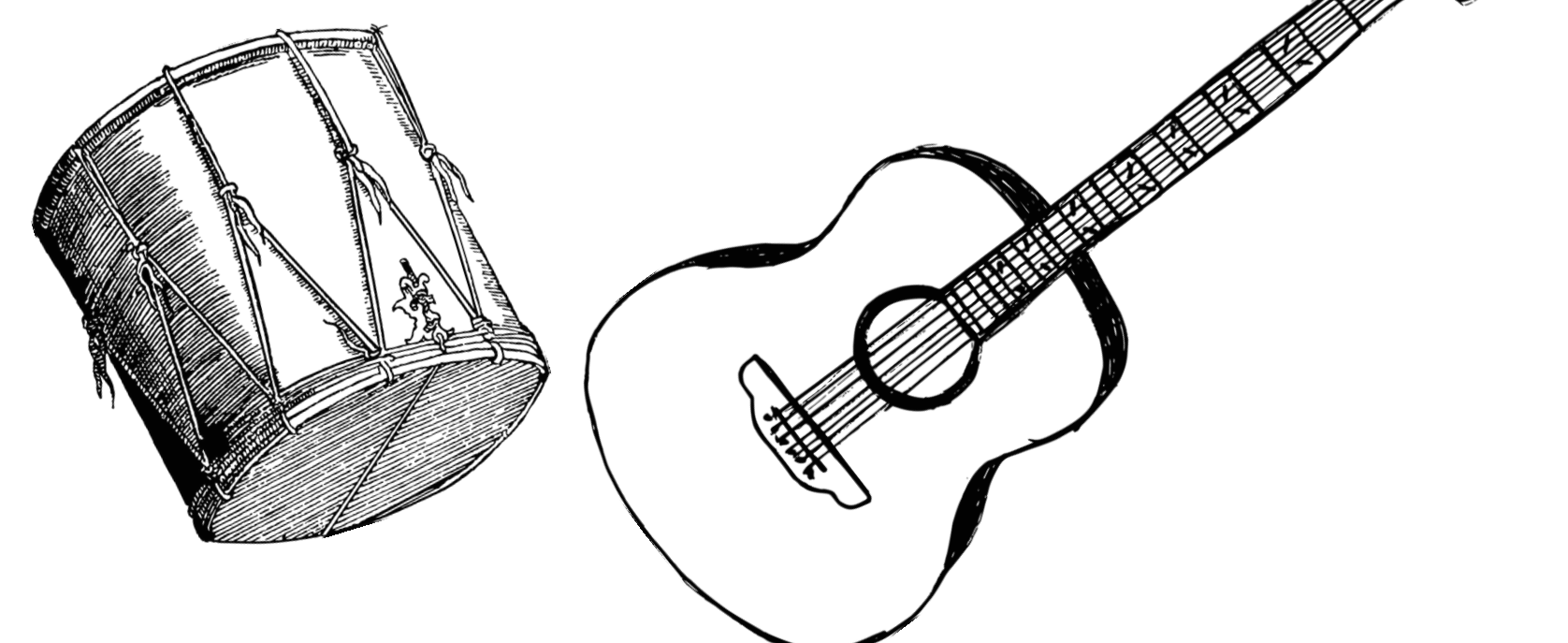


## RESULTS

### Fragment 1



| Spanish | | English | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Desde que era potranca | 7 | A Since a filly, all way back, | 7 |
| A salvaje y franca, | 5 | A wild spirit on track, | 5 |
| B relinchando se alegra | 7 | B neighing joyfully and bright, | 7 |
| B/A mi yegua negra/blanca | 5 | B/A that's my mare so white/black. | 5 |
| A Desde que era potranca | 7 | A Since a filly, all way back, | 7 |
| B franca y feliz, | 5 | B wild is her way, | 5 |
| B que viva la yegua gris | 8 | B long live our mare so gray! | |
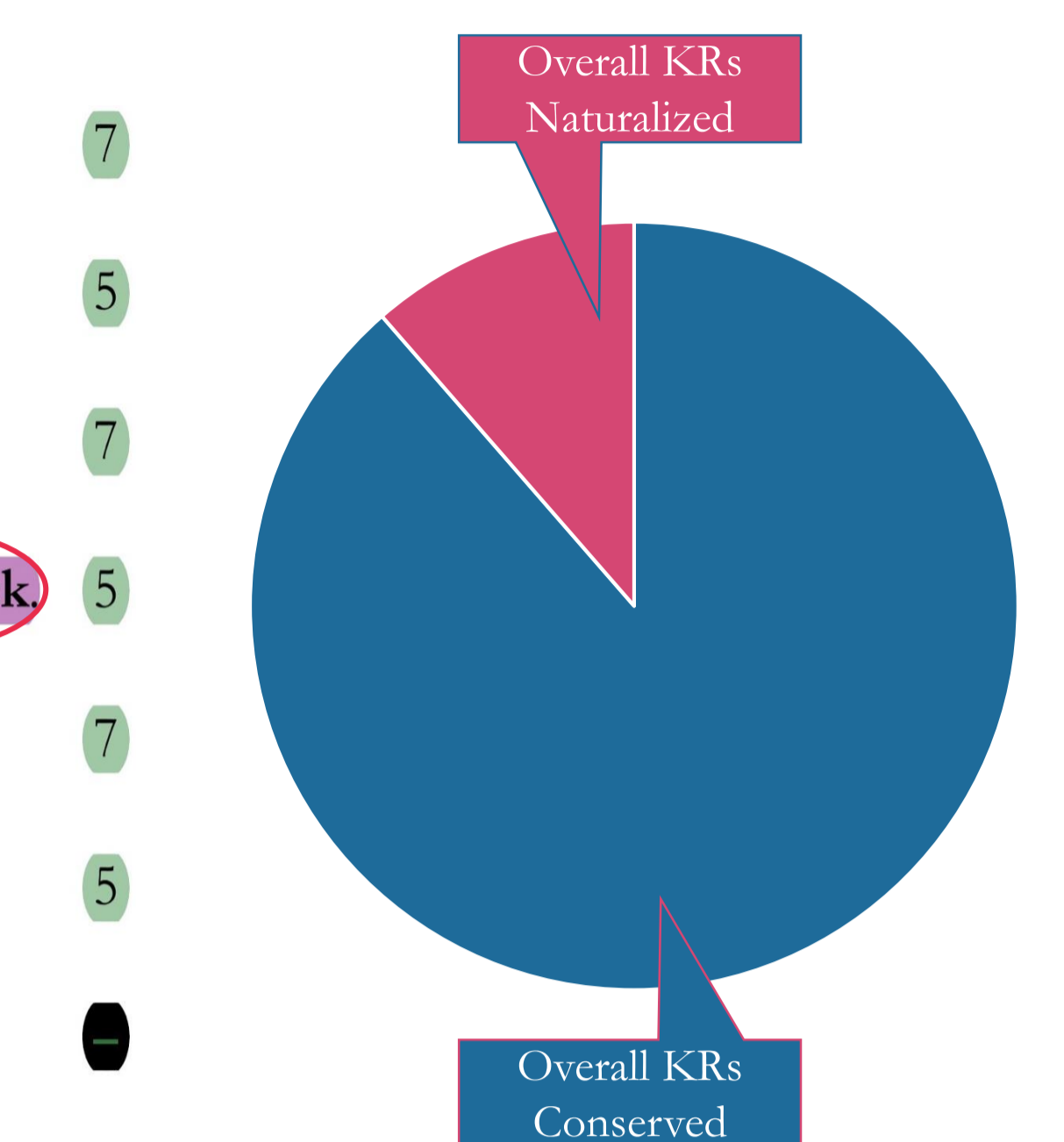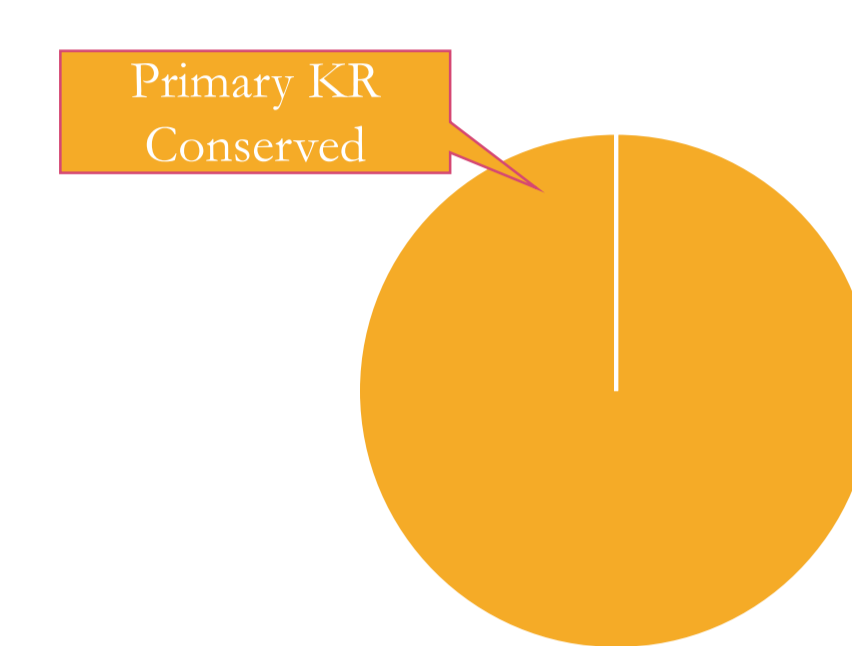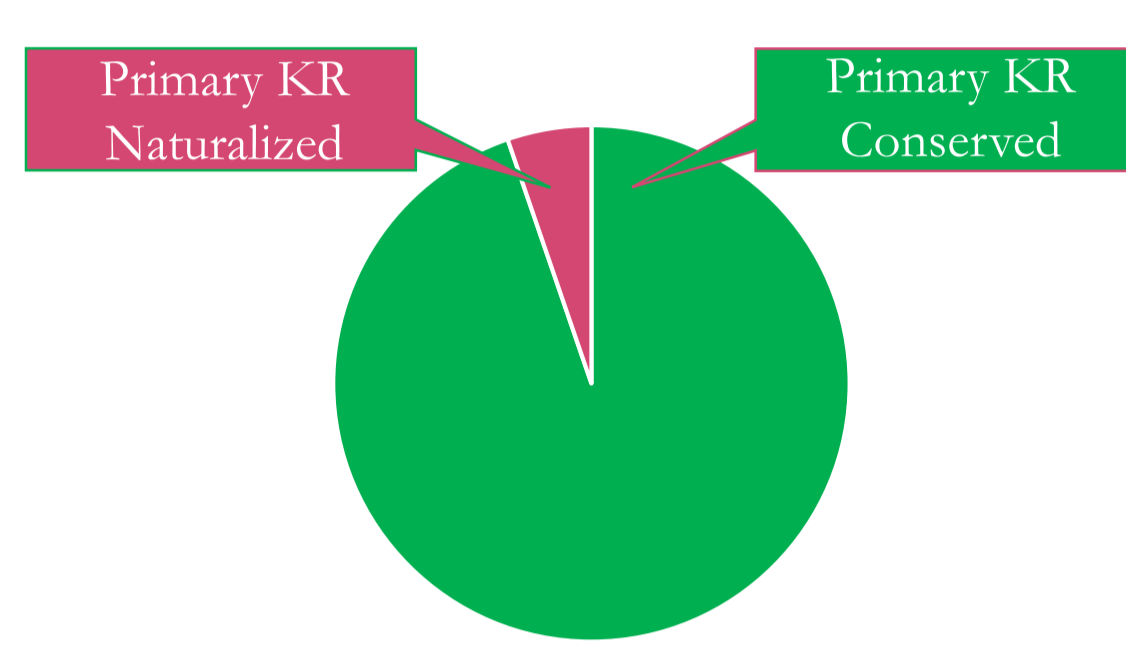
### Fragment 2



| Spanish | | English | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Qué vida placentera | 7 | A To no trouble I'm tied, | 7 |
| A y a mi manera | 5 | A and take it in stride, | 5 |
| B cuando solo me encuentro | 7 | B for I'm happy alone | 7 |
| B/A bien campo adentro/afuera | 5 | B/A living life at home/outside | 5 |
| A Qué vida placentera | 7 | A When I'm happy and alone, | 7 |
| B cuando uno va | 5 | B I'm sure you'll agree, | 5 |
| B al campo por la mitad | 8 | B the porch is the place to be. | 8 |
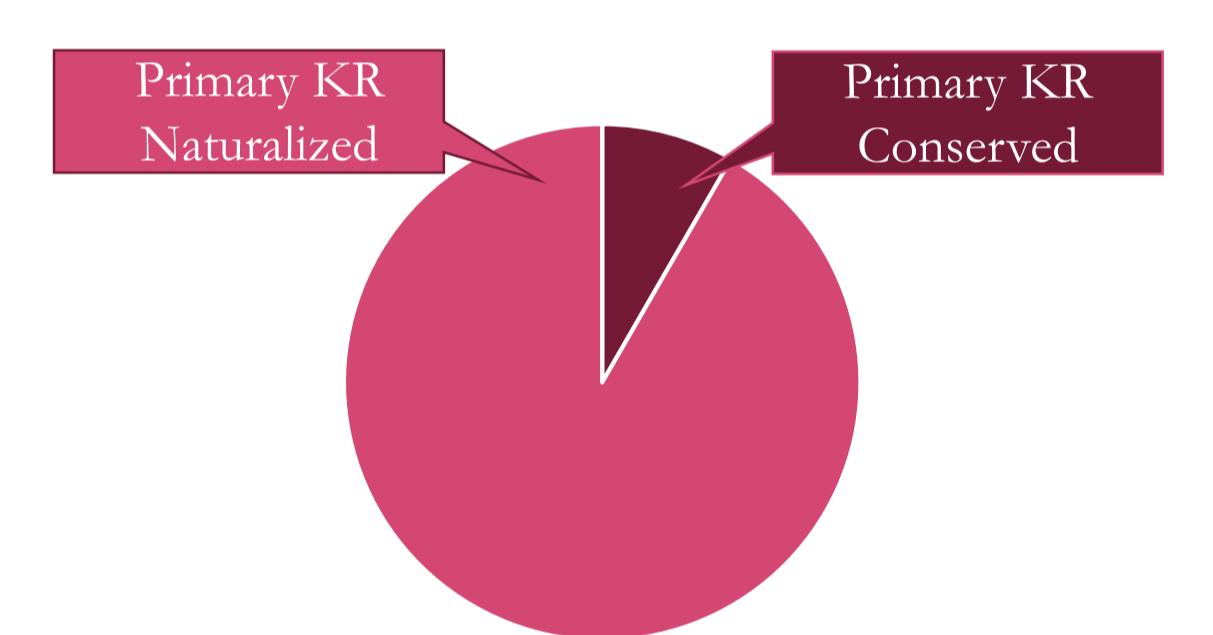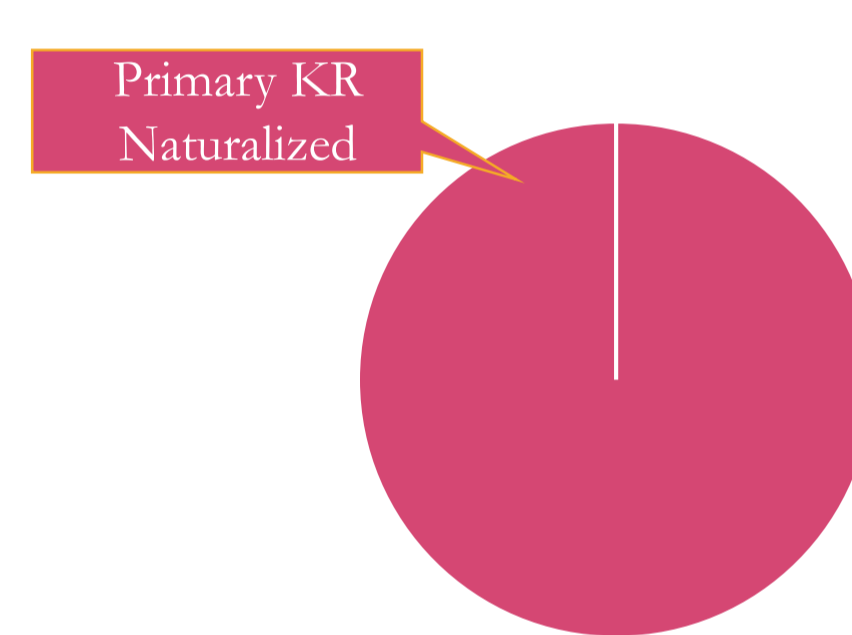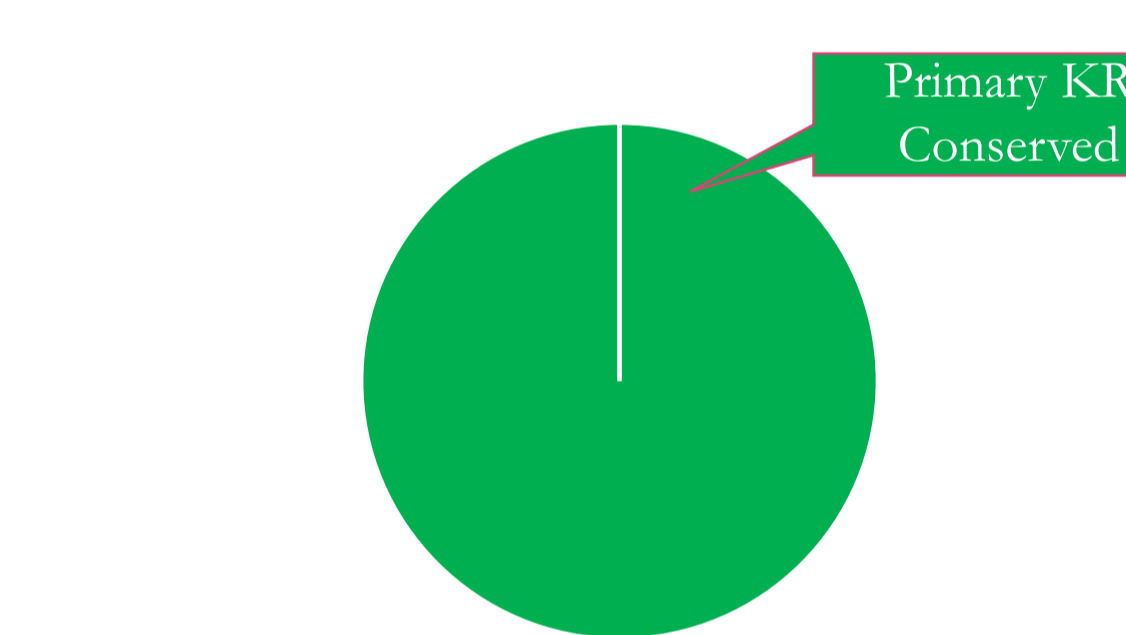
### Fragment 3



| Spanish | | English | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Si me dan un encargo | 7 | A Come an errand unbidden | 7 |
| A pesado y largo, | 5 | A and I feel beaten, | 5 |
| B nada hay que más me impulse | 7 | B with a mate I'm no quitter | 7 |
| B/A que un mate dulce/amargo | 5 | B/A if it is bitter/sweetened. | 5 |
| A Nada hay que más me impulse | 7 | A When I drink it, I don't quit | 7 |
| B y me aproveche | 5 | B and I feel free | 5 |
| B que digo que un té con leche | 8 | B if it is a milky tea | 8 |
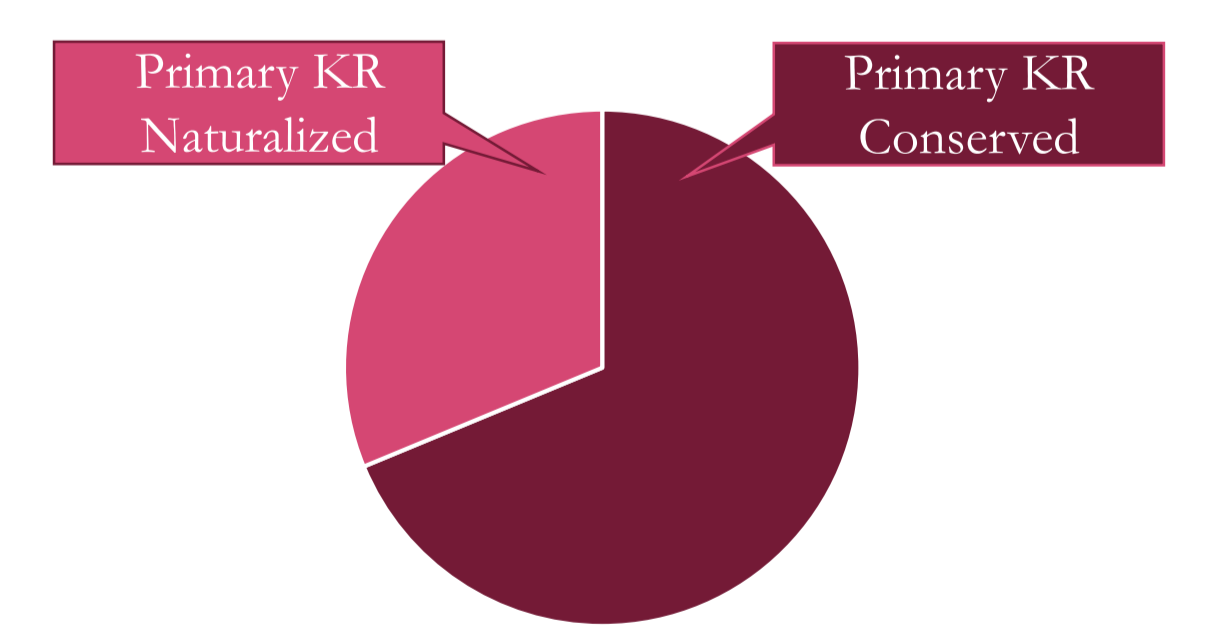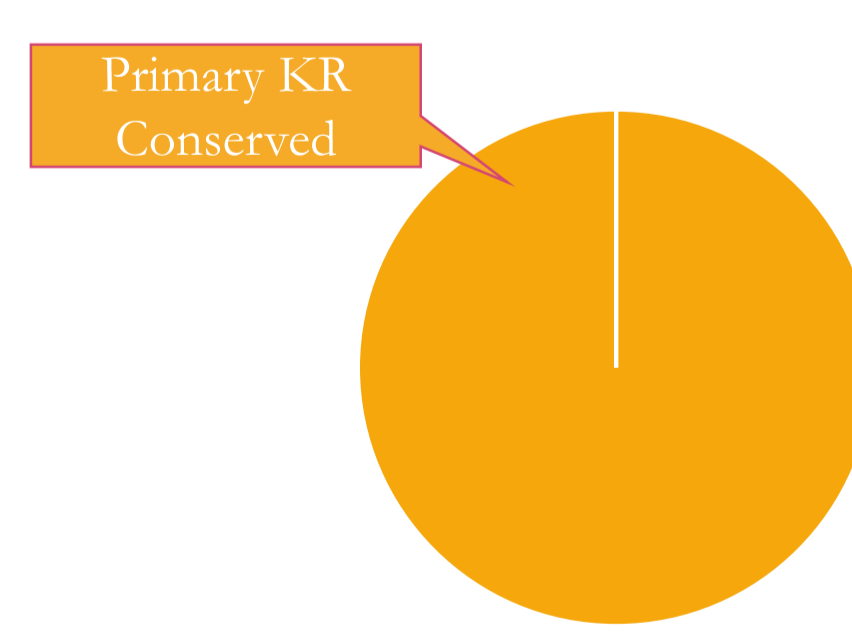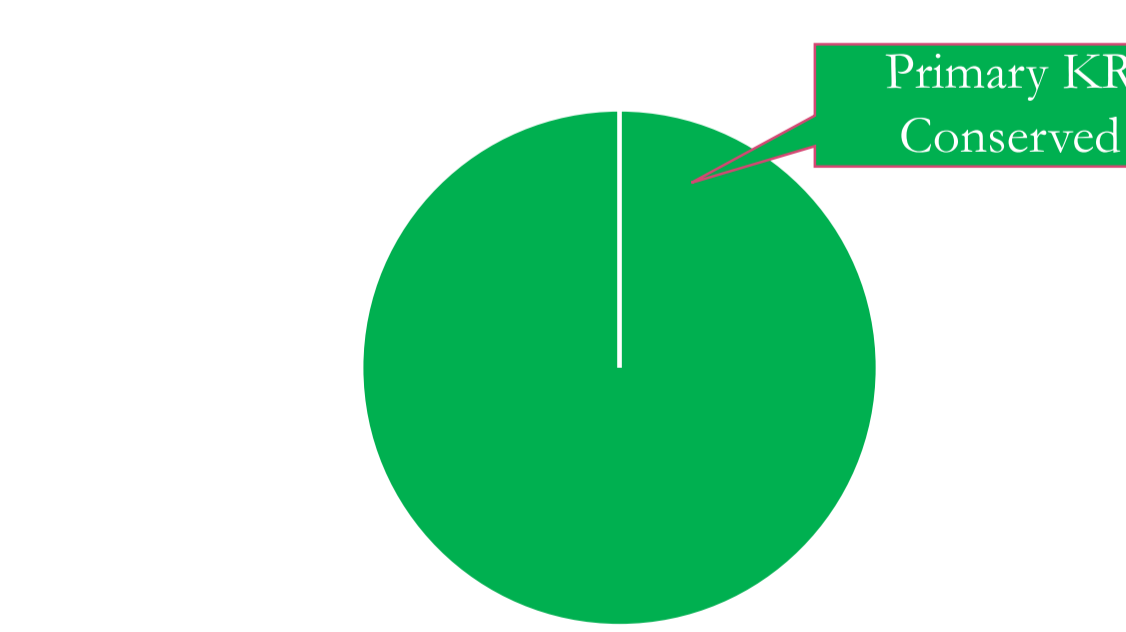
## CONCLUSIONS

- The nature of the parameters observed defines the effective humorous outcome, i.e. the punchline, not in a logical sense but in a semantic one.
- The overall conservation percentage of each fragment proves that lexeme conservation becomes subordinate to the factors establishing the essence of the unit of humorous meaning: both logic and formal structure.
- The microstructure is mostly naturalized while the macrostructure is preserved.
- The analysis indicates that even though a formal method may prove useful at an early stage in the translation process, its full applicability may find itself at variance with the translator's own experience-based approach in achieving an effective result.

## REFERENCES

[1]Attardo, Salvatore. "The General Theory of Verbal Humor". *The Routledge handbook of language and humor*, edited by Salvatore Attardo, kindle ed., Routledge, 2017.

[2]Benavides Segura, Bianchinetta. "El tratamiento completo: alternativa para la traducción del verso inserto en prosa no literaria". *Letras*, vol. 1, no. 39, 2006, pp. 183-203. *Dialnet*.