(Un)predictability in Verbal-Visual Interactions of English and French Caricatures Translated in the Greek Press

Evangelos Kourdis & Georgios Damaskinidis
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

This article investigates the political caricatures assembly of some major ‘players’ on the contemporary economic-political EU stage, and the semiotic-linguistic and visual rhetorical tools used to achieve this assembly. This is achieved through an intersemiotic analysis of the aspects of a small corpus of political caricatures in English and French newspapers that were republished in Greek newspapers in the aftermath of Greece’s first memorandum in 2010 and within the ongoing discussion about the (un)predictability of Grexit terror. A rationale for the combination of intersemiotic and interlingual analysis and a discussion of the nature and functions of the semiotic complexity of political caricatures are provided. The analysis, drawing upon the notions of intersemiosis and (un)predictability in translation, addresses the verbal and visual aspects of the caricatures against a cross-cultural background. The analysis of four caricatures elaborates on intersemiotic aspects of the sample, specifically on verbal-visual interactions as these are juxtaposed on both the source and target culture, toward an understanding of the messages of the caricatures, the tools used to convey these messages and how they contribute to the ongoing discussion about the (un)predictable roles of Greece in/outside Europe.

Keywords: intersemiotic translation, verbal-visual interaction, (un)predictable translation, political caricatures, economic-political crisis

1. Translation as a Connective Pulley

According to Lotman (1990, p. 2), translation serves as the “connective pulley” between a pair of mutually untranslatable languages. This pulley, based on the fact that translatability
and untranslatability coexist in translation, enables meaning preservation as well as meaning generation, both of which are equally important in terms of understanding verbal and visual interactions in the semiosphere. In the translatable parts between these two semiotic structures, translatability enhances mutual understanding and thus the transmission as well as the preservation of the message involved in the communication situation. The untranslatable elements bring about transformation of messages and innovative choices of ‘language use’ which lead to “an accretion of meaning in the process of such transformation” (ibid.).

There is a question of what happens when translation does work as a connective mechanism between cultures but at the same time raises further obstacles in cultural communication. Bearing this in mind, this paper examines issues of (un)predictability in the cultural translation of French and English caricatures that were reproduced in Greek newspapers from 2008 until 2015. Although on the interlingual level the translation could be considered as rendering the SL meaning literally, the choice of certain utterances poses risks for the translation process. In addition, these choices affect the intersemiotic translation in both the ST and the TT in various ways, and usually intertextually. When viewed through the lens of the visual, such as that provided by intersemiotic translation, political caricatures become icons that viewers analyze in context to understand complex social issues (Abraham, 2009).

Caricatures are important objects of semiotic study. According to Barnhurst and Quinn (2012, p. 286), they are defined as “distorted and exaggerated images, usually mass reproduced, which employ iconic types and visual synecdoche (the substitution of a whole image for a part, or vice versa) to affect power in society”. Drawing on El Rafaie’s (2003, p. 91) examination of political caricatures, we aim to contribute to her exploration “of the [important] relationship between a visual metaphor and its verbal context” by showing that the translation of the verbal part of a caricature would yield equally important findings.

An exciting aspect of caricatures is the fact that they can portray reality not only as it is but also as how it could be or how someone aspires to be. This feature allows readers to give multiple interpretations (Eco, 1992) and thus caricatures, as multisemiotic texts, lend themselves to intersemiotic transfer (Jakobson, 1959, pp. 232-233) that could be further extended and investigated in translation studies. This multiplicity in translation is related to its unpredictable and predictable nature. On one hand, we never know the exact final TT beforehand, while on the other hand, there is also an element of predictability about translations because something of the source text (ST) is expected (or predicted) to remain unaltered in translation.

Lotman (2013, p.52) argues that

[s]emiotics was created as a science of communication, which concentrated attention on iterative texts and their structures. Today there are two aspects to this field of study: the exchange of already-prepared messages and the production of fundamentally new messages. The latter introduced essential changes at the very core of semiotics.
At this core of semiotics we find Konstantinidou (2008) who, through a socio-semiotic analysis, provides an account of the way Greek press combines contradictory elements and assumptions (e.g. overpoliticization of the Greek public sphere by focusing on themes such as anti-Americanism, anti-globalization) to visually construct human suffering during the Second Iraq War. We aim to examine if analogous contradictions and assumptions (e.g. anti-Germanism) were the incentive in using caricatures published in non-Greek newspapers to accompany Greek press articles.

In this article we discuss the issues of translatability and untranslatability in relation to intersemiotic translation of caricatures. The article also addresses the question of how the cultural environment affects messages and how (un)predictability works in the cultural processes of text generation and reception in the form of caricatures. We aim to understand the economic-political crisis of Greece in the wider context of the European Union in the five-year period of 2010-2015. In particular, we focus on the various ways (un)predictability affects the transfer of informational content in the target language (TL).

The caricatures under scrutiny are iterative texts and at the moment when they are translated into another language, they should be considered as already-prepared messages which are converted into new messages. In addition, Lotman (2013, p. 63) states that “novelty is the result of an essentially unpredictable situation [...]. That which appears in a given situation to be fundamentally impossible is clearly excluded from the sphere of predictability”. It is true that caricatures break new ground, not by presenting new information, which is derived from everyday life or the collective memory of the readership (more or less well known in advance), but by presenting or distorting this information. It could be said that this distortion is caused by a kind of explosion of meaning which Lotman (2013, p. 69) relates to the “reinterpretation of memory” and, as it will be shown below, this type of memory is the basis of the unpredictability in reading caricatures.

2. The Intersemiotic (Un)predictability of the Visual in Interlingual Translation

The differences in the way the world is experienced and conceived by different language speakers are caused by the language itself (Cole & Scribner, 1974, p. 40). Therefore, untranslatability is unavoidable. Untranslatability can be classified into two situations:

[a]s a situation in which the linguistic elements of the original cannot be replaced adequately in structural, linear, functional or semantic terms in consequence of a lack of denotation or connotation [and] as a situation where the relation of expressing the meaning, i.e. the relation between the creative subject and its linguistic expression in the original does not find an adequate linguistic expression in the translation. (Popovič, 1976 cited in Bassnet, 2002, p. 42)

Untranslatability in the first situation is purely of a linguistic nature, while in the second situation it is beyond linguistics and therefore more problematic. This problem could be overcome through intersemiotic translation, where the target text carries
more information than the source text, although that information is not necessarily verbal. Lotman (1990, p. 2) interrelates the creation of new information provided by texts with unpredictability, which is important for translation since “[…] the moment of unpredictable explosion renders the incompatible adequate and the untranslatable translatable” (Lotman, 2009 [1992], p. 23). The question that arises is whether this untranslatability or difficulty in translating could be dealt with through the creation of new information provided by texts.

A translation that is considered accurate in one period of time may be criticized as being unfaithful and incorrect in another time under certain socio-cultural constraints. This is the case because signifiers have signifieds that keep on shifting. The challenge to the translator of a text that is accompanied by a political caricature lies in assessing whether the choices made in the source language text and its connotative dynamic can be transferred to the target language which has different cultural practices.

3. Political Press Caricatures: A Complex Semiotic System

Political caricatures are an extremely rich area of interacting semiotic systems that not only are created by various discourses but also create discourses. These types of caricatures may help oppressed people by criticizing the status quo and unjust political practices. This is possible because they can deal boldly with social problems while escaping censorship. Caricatures, consisting primarily of visual semiotic elements, have the potential to find solutions to problems faster than verbal texts (Hafiz, 2006). This visuality of the caricature allows it to bypass political arguments and gives it a peculiar immunity to the opponent’s easy challenge. In general, visuals have become central to political life, and, according to Rothstein (2008), “caricatured images are [now] joined by caricatures of ideas”.

Researchers in visual communication argue that the scientific study of political graphic satire is not an easy task. For example, according to DeSousa (1984, p. 205) “[t]he major function of cartoons for readers, however, is as a frame for encompassing complex issues and events”. In the same line of thought, Abraham (2009) approaches political cartoons through the lens of visual semiotics to conclude that they are icons that viewers analyse in context, in order to understand complex social issues. In earlier studies of political press caricatures, although researchers have used rhetoric to analyze editorial cartoons, no one has applied the classical rhetorical canon as a typology to critique a particular set of cartoons (Kenney, 2002, p. 56).

The complexity of caricatures could be due to several reasons. The caricature is a polysemiotic system where language, image, graphics, and colour coexist. This coexistence and interlingual translation make cartoons a true hyper-system of semiotic signs (Kourdis, 2009). The complexity of encoding and decoding of visual semiotic systems place them “outside the range of verbal language, [where] all iconological entities are the result of overcoding” (Eco, 1979, p. 134). Also, the press caricature, according to Charaudeau (2006), plays the role of the social catharsis and social challenge, which is not a
politically innocent one, and its humorous context cannot exonerate its producer. These arguments are corroborated by Barnhurst and Quinn (2012, p. 286), who claim that:

“Political cartoons and caricatures provide visual commentary on political culture, often grounded in theories of representation and identity, but only a few mainstream and visual or political communication scholars have taken up the call for research. Perhaps because the category is unusual—not a separate medium or formal component of politics.

In the context of our research, the question that arises is whether this sign category, which is unusual, is also unpredictable. This question will be discussed in relation to Semenesko’s (2012, p. 34) argument that “a text that is absolutely predictable is a text that is absolutely useless [and] a text that is absolutely unpredictable loses its value proportionally; it is on the brim of losing its textuality and risks being altogether rejected as a text”.

Our study follows the trend of “[o]ther studies of (political) cartoons [that] focus on what they can do” (Mazid, 2008, p. 437). It will be examined if caricatures, similar to cartoons, are capable of communicating “subtle, complex, multilayered messages about people and events in the details of how they are drawn—messages that would be difficult or impossible to express verbally” (Gilmartin & Brunn, 1998, p. 536). In addition, it will be examined if political caricatures allow the caricaturist to express views that would be too ‘extreme, mean-spirited’, or ‘politically incorrect’ to express in an essay column (ibid.). Therefore, the caricature is intended to say something, to stir the senses, and this is usually achieved when the meaning it conveys is unpredictable. Such types of caricatures will be analyzed in the next section.

4. The Translation of French and English Press Caricatures Into Greek

4.1 The sample and methodology
The small caricature corpus consists of four sketch caricatures that initially appeared in high-circulation English and French newspapers, and four complementary visuals that illustrate their analysis. The dates of publication were 2008, 2011, 2012 and 2015, that is, just before the outbreak of the ongoing economic crisis and during that period. These caricatures were reproduced in high-circulation Greek newspapers.

We chose caricatures that present political figures which have played a major role on the political stage of the current Greece-EU crisis, namely, George Papandreou (Greece), Angela Merkel (Germany), Silvio Berlusconi (Italy) and Nicola Sarkozy and Christine Lagarde (France). We have also chosen a caricature which, although it does not present a politician, provides an illustrative picture of the polarized situation between Greece and Germany from a third party. Although socio-semiotic analysis can be said to ‘suffer’ from a degree of ‘arbitrariness’, we chose these caricatures because, in our view, they stand out as representations of the causes of the Greek crisis and serve as a means of constructing sympathy for distressed Greek people, denouncing the “markets” and mobilizing against
the forces which waged financial war on Greece.

The SL is either French or English and the TL is Greek. The sentences in square brackets are back-translations of English/French into Greek. The analysis of the corpus focuses on the juxtaposition of the visual elements with the verbal ones both in the ST and the TT of the four main caricatures (Fig. 1, 3, 5, 7). The analysis examines their verbal, visual and cultural dimensions and their semio-linguistic features, taking a great deal of intersemiotic translation for granted. The discussion is illustrated by another four visuals (Fig. 2, 4, 6, 8) that provide a more detailed background of the context of production and reading.

Then, the entire caricature sample is located in its Greek socio-economic-political context, followed by a discussion of the major intertextual aspects of the caricatures and a wrap-up of the messages of the texts, that is, how they construct the political personae of Greece and its EU creditors. Finally, we briefly discuss some limitations that govern this article. In other words, the caricatures will be studied within their broader sociocultural context, as well as their spatio-temporal location.

4.2 Analysis of the caricatures
The first caricature (Fig. 1) was published in 2008 in the French newspaper Le Monde by Plantu. It depicts the (then) French President Nicolas Sarkozy with his wife Carla Bruni and his finance minister Christine Lagarde. Lagarde gives the French presidential couple, Nicola Sarkozy and Carla Bruni, a low mark and criticizes their excessive public exposure which does not allow the French president to focus on the economic issues that face his people. Lagarde’s utterance “Trop de Carla! Pas assez de pouvoir d’achat” is rendered as Υπερβολικά πολύ Κάρλα! Όχι αρκετή αγοραστική δύναμη (Too much Carla! Not enough purchasing power). This translation is preceded by the short sentence ένας χρόνος Σαρκοζί (One year of Sarkozy) in a bold font. The French “evaluation du president 8,5/20!”, which is not spelled out by Lagarde, is rendered by the explanatory description … διαπιστώνει η δημοσιογράφος (… the journalist ascertains by marking the French President 8,5/20 …) and not as a translation in quotation marks.

Figure 1. Ta Nea. 6 May 2008, p. 48
In this caricature, the unpredictable is the interrelation of three features: the woman playing the role of the journalist, her marking of the President and the black sunglasses of the Presidential couple. It seems that the Greek translator didn’t recognize Lagarde who is called journalist, although she is well known even to the wider Greek public after her involvement in the “rescue” programs for Greece. The President is under the “surveillance” of the finance minister while in the Greek political context, economic policy is the Prime minister’s responsibility. The Greek readership may not be aware that France has a semi-presidential system of government. Also, wearing black sunglasses is connotatively related to an easy-going lifestyle and to holidays in sun-bathed exotic destinations. In this case, the sunglasses are intertextually related to a specific trip of the presidential couple to Egypt (see Fig. 2). This trip became a popular story for the press, especially in France, which criticized the President for putting “pleasure before business”. This intertextual narrative, along with Carla depicted in a supermarket trolley playing the guitar to magnify this luxurious way of life, may not be easy for the Greek readership.

Figure 2. Sarkozy and Bruni in Luxor Egypt 27 Dec 2007 Photo © AFP

Similar to the first caricature, the second one also belongs to Plantu and was published in the French newspaper Le Monde in 2011 (see Fig. 3). It shows the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the French President Nicola Sarkozy and the Prime Ministers of Greece and Italy, George Papandreou and Silvio Berlusconi, respectively. The four last names have been blended to form two neologisms: MERCOZY (MERkel + SarKOZY) and PAPASCONI (PAPAndreou + BerluSCONI). The verbal message Après les MERKOZY les PAPASCONI, which has been translated in football terms as Μερκοζί εναντίον Παπασκονί 1-0 (Merkozy against Papasconi 1-0), is in fact a verbo-cultural palimpsest since its constituent parts have been deconstructed and reformed by changing one or more words to create an amusing or eloquent effect (Galisson, 1995).
The fates of the two couples are interdependent, as political analysts claim that Merkozy dominate Papasconi, thrusting the latter away from power in an effort to keep the eurozone alive. Merkozy, a verbal cultural palimpsest which is rendered interlingually, has become a political neologism in Greek. Such verbo-cultural palimpsests, according to Galisson (1995), are expressions that have been deconstructed and reformed by changing one or more words to create an amusing or eloquent effect.

The Greek prime minister Georgios Papandreou is wearing a *foustanela* (a Greek traditional men’s skirt) and tsarouxia (traditional shoes) while above the waist he is dressed in a westernized style. Both the Greek and Italian prime ministers hold a ragged national flag with the former carrying on his back his Italian counterpart. Papandreou is standing in front of Merkel, who is carrying Sarkozy on her back; they are holding their national flags, which are in mint condition. Like Papandreou, Berlusconi submitted his resignation in an effort to save his country, under strong political pressure from Merkozy.

From a semiotic point of view, we can see how the conflicting nature of the verbal elements is reflected in the visual ones: the French-German axis vs the South European axis; the former hold intact national emblems while the latter’s are worn out; the strong/rich euro nations vs the weak/poor relatives of the euro nations; the creditors vs the borrowers; the smart vs the stupid. These bipolar situations are enhanced by the creditors’ judgmental look and the borrowers’ apologetic one.

In Figure 3 there is a reflection of several standard features of caricatures, such as graphical inconsistencies and verbal puns that breach meanings, which is a typical feature of humoristic graphics (Morin, 1970). The rounded faces of Merkel and Sarkozy connote the wellbeing of their countries, while Berlusconi looks tired out and Papandreou seems “squeezed” by a tight rope. Germany has the upper hand on the French-German axis while Greece seems to be dragging Italy down to recession. It is noteworthy that the verbal palimpsest MERKOZY has been intersemiotically transformed into the visual palimpsest shown in Figure 4, which has been adopted by the international press. For example, the German tabloid *Bild* carried the headline *Merkozy—sieht so das neue Europa aus?*
(MERKOZY—is this what the new Europe looks like?) which justifies Giddens’ (2013) argument that commentators speak of a Europe being led by the political duet Merkel-Sarkozy.

Figure 4. Bild 1 Dec 2011

The third caricature was published in the German magazine Bild and republished as an accompaniment to a Greek article in the newspaper To Thema (Fig. 5). It depicts an Evzone (Greek military honour guard, colloquially known as Tsolias) marshalling with a Nazi swastika on his arm. Figure 5 is quite a realistic iconic representation of a Greek Evzone and the only thing that actually makes this artistic sketch a caricature (at least in the sense defined in this article) is the swastika on his arm. The swastika is simply the caricaturist’s addition, and not a standard element of his uniform, and thus it could not be caricaturized in the same way as other elements, such as the pompons on his shoes.

The satirical French message *Les Nazis font-ils moins peur en jupette?*, placed above the Evzone, plays the role of a heading that has been given by the caricaturist. In the Greek newspaper, the literal [back] translation [do Nazis in a short skirt cause less fear?], placed below the Evzone as a caption, is an unpredictable choice. The military uniform of the Evzones is the φουστανέλα (fustanela), a traditional men’s garment that looks like a Scottish kilt, which in the collective memory of the Greek people is the embodiment of heroism.
By choosing the verbal _jupette_ to describe the visual φουστανέλα (foustanella), although the French word _foustanelle_ appears in French dictionaries, and by rendering _jupette_ with φουστίτσα (short skirt), both the caricaturist and the translator have manipulated grammatical rules and cultural legacy for the same purpose. On one hand, the caricaturist’s decision to choose the feminine _jupette_ rather than the masculine-gender _jupon_ could be ascribed to an attempt to feminize the Evzone. In the French language, according to Corbin (1987), the use of the suffix -_ette_ shows an intention to degrade and connotatively to mock someone. The same intention applies to the Greek diminutive suffix -_ίτσα_ when it is added to “feminize” words. This degrading and diminutive intention has also been adopted by the translator who translated _jupette_ literally as φουστίτσα (short skirt), although the most obvious choice would have been φουστανέλα.

On the other hand, φουστίτσα is a derogatory term to render φουστανέλα since the latter connotes the bravery and sacrifice of the Greek people during the nation’s wars of liberation from 1821 (against the Ottoman Empire) to 1940 (against the Italian-German invasion). This attitude towards a cultural garment item is also shared by Lynch and Strauss (2015, p. 127) who argue that “[t]he fustanella, like the Scottish kilt, is a skirt designed to show off the strength and athletic powers of the wearer. Today, however, it remains unusual to see men’s skirts in popular fashion trends”. From a semiotic-spatial point of view, and in syntagmatic terms, the fact that the verbal φουστίτσα (short skirt) appears right next to the verbal ναζί [Nazi] increases the irony conveyed by the translation. By highlighting Germany’s dominance during the WWII occupation, metonymically connoted by the swastika on the soldier’s arm, we are reminded that Germany is the main creditor of Greece. The translation οι ναζί με φουστίτσα (Nazis in short skirts) hinges on the fact that although the swastika is not considered appropriate in Greek society, and as such generally detested, the translation is cognitive in nature because this utterance has conditioned the thinking pattern of the readers.

This manipulation of the translation also has an intertextual aspect. The image of Evangelos Kourdis & Georgios Damaskinidis
an Envoze with a swastika on his arm is not a new one. The French and Greek verbals intertextually evoke unpleasant memories from the German occupation. During the German/Nazi Occupation, the Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Rallis headed the third occupation government, to which he added a Greek security force by mobilizing four evzone battalions, known as *German Evzones* (colloquially known as *Germanotsoliades*), which were even more hated than the Nazis (Fig. 6). Lotman (2013, p. 166) suggests that we need to treat carefully such situations that recall historical facts, since “[…] in periods of gradual evolution (or in those spheres where gradual change dominates) the study of the past can play a constructive role. However in explosive moments such ‘historical memory’ can prove to be a poor guide and can lead to errors that are at times tragic in their consequences”.

Figure 6. German Evzone

Through the unpredictable transformation of the protector of Greece into its oppressor, the caricaturist and the translator metonymically connote the economic and political impact of German policy on Greece. This meaning is dispersed in the whole structure of the caricature due to specific cultural events. Such events are interrelated when “the text [is] regular and irregular, predictable and *unpredictable*” (Lotman, 1977, p. 76). The translator, in order to increase the unpredictability of the Greek translation, follows the pattern of the French text too literally, thus creating an awkwardness in the Greek which “increases the target receptors’ processing effort” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014 [1997], p. 141). This increase in the processing effort by the TL reader, especially in the context of interrelating visual to verbal information in a newspaper article, may leave little room for critical reading.

The fourth political caricature, drawn by Martin Rowson, was published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2015 (Fig. 7). It shows the French President François Hollande addressing the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to express his sympathy for the chaos and human misery in Ukraine while the latter looks disturbed by his ignorance. The caricature was reproduced about five months later in the electronic version of the
Greek newspaper Το Πρώτο Θέμα and the [back] translation of the dialogue is reproduced right below Figure 7.

Figure 7. The Guardian. 6 February 2015

Always go for the obvious joke. [Untranslated in Greek]

François Hollande: Mon Dieu! Just look all this destruction & desolation, chaos & mounting human misery! And all down to just one person’s caprice and ruthless ambition! We must act now to halt this unfolding tragedy in Ukraine!

Angela Merkel: Shut up idiot! This is Greece ...

(Reproduced from the caricature for reasons of clarification)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek translation</th>
<th>Back translation into English</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F.H.</strong>: Θεέ μου! Δες όλη αυτή την καταστροφή, την απόγνωση, το χάος και την αυξανόμενη ανθρώπινη δυστυχία. Και όλα αυτά εξαιτίας του καπρίτσιου και της αδίστακτης φιλοδοξίας ενός ανθρώπου. Πρέπει να δράσουμε ώστε να σταματήσουμε αυτή την εξελισσόμενη τραγωδία στην… Ουκρανία.</td>
<td><strong>A.M.</strong>: Σκάσε ηλίθιε, αυτή είναι η Ελλάδα...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A.M.</strong>: Σκάσε ηλίθιε, αυτή είναι η Ελλάδα...</td>
<td><strong>A.M.</strong>: Shut up idiot, this is Greece ...</td>
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In the Greek translation, certain non-verbal elements have been modified. In particular, the ampersand symbol & is rendered by its verbal counterpart the conjunction and, while the exclamation mark (!) (next to the word Ukraine) is rendered with suspension points (…), a common strategy of implicature. Also, while the words Ukraine and Greece appear in capitals and bold in the ST, in the TT they are written in small letters and in the font type of the text. As concerns the facial characteristics of the two human figures, while François Hollande’s are slightly deformed, the face of the German Chancellor has undergone a notable and unpleasant deformation. Based on Lotman’s (2013, p. 171) argument that a caricaturist who increases or decreases the proportions of the face makes “the neutral significant”, this choice seems to match the utterances—unpredictable and inappropriate for the leader of a friendly and allied nation—“shut up” and “idiot”. Their literal translation into Greek is quite shocking for the TL readership and it could be said that it fuels the anti-German sentiment in Greece. This shock effect could be attributed to the fact that “caricatures do not aim at the immortal art aspect of the cult of beauty but at influence and political practice, and, thus, political caricature includes debunking and downgrading prestige deflation.” (Streicher, 1967, p. 433)

In contrast to Bassnett (2011, p. 83) who argues that “[…] when characters in a novel
or a play insult one another, the translator has to find a solution that will work in the TL, and has also to find a solution that will render the degree of offensiveness with some precision”, the translator does nothing to mitigate the degree of offensiveness. No matter how unpredictable this translation choice it may seem, it could form part of a wider translation strategy to foreground the connotative submission of France to Germany’s political will.

In fact, Merkel’s answer “This is Greece” could be related intertextually with the film “300” (Director Zack Snyder, 2006). This film, based on the graphic comic series of the same name, was inspired by the historic battle of the Spartan King Leonidas and his 300 soldiers in Thermopyle (a place in central Greece) against a huge Persian army. Although the Spartans were outnumbered, the film shows Leonidas giving the emblematic answer “This is Sparta” to the Persian King’s messenger when the latter demanded “earth and water”, which is unconditional surrender. Figure 8 depicts a still frame from the film where Leonidas, only seconds after his answer, is kicking the messenger into a dark, deep well. The caricaturist reverses the roles of agency of the film’s dialogue to imply that Greece is thrown into a political abyss by her creditors.

Figure 8. Still frame from the film “300”

4.3 Discussion

Following Lotman (2009 [1992], p. 123) who argues that “each time we speak of unpredictability we have in mind a specific collection of equally probable possibilities from which only one may be realized”, there are two levels on which these possibilities could be realized in the political caricatures we have just analyzed: the linguistic level and the cultural one.

On the level of interlingual translation, there is a remarkable degree of predictability since the translations are quite literal. There has not been any obvious attempt to deviate from the linguistic proper or mediate in the translation process. Even in the case of the word *jupette*, it could be said that the translation (in linguistic terms) renders the origin of the Greek word: the word *φουστάνελα* derives from the Italian word *foustagni* and the diminutive suffix -ella is used to feminize the gender. Therefore, it is predictable (at least etymologically) to render the word *jupette* as *φουστίτσα* (short skirt).
However, as concerns the cultural context of the translations, there are several instances of unpredictability. The identity of the persons depicted does not impact on the verbal translation. The caricaturists fail to identify the connotations of particular selections of words as verbal utterances because they are unfamiliar with the cultural context. This inability blurs the translators’ ability to use these connotations in order to draw the attention of the TL readership. Also, both the caricaturists’ and translators’ choices seem to fuel rather than normalize the political upheaval in a Europe which has been built on the principle “different but equal”. In part, the unpredictability in the translation of the political caricatures derives from their intertextuality and consequently their intersemiotic power which are both cultural products. These textual features are not only interrelated historically (e.g. German-evzones) but also culturally (e.g. cinema films). This cultural effect could be ascribed to the fact that “[..] although caricature necessarily distorts and shows the negative side (by definition) it also presents an aspect of reality” (Streicher, 1967, p. 440). The verbal and visual use of the German-evzone is a way to underline the fact that a large part of Greek public opinion (at the time of publication of this caricature) labeled Germanotsolia any member of the Greek parliament that signed the memorandum with the austerity measures.

In order to fully appreciate this research, one would have to take into account some limitations, such as the SL and TL texts that accompany the caricatures and the potential bias of the researchers. Each caricature forms part of two different texts: one which was originally intended to accompany in the SL culture, and a second one in the Greek culture, which is not related to the ST. If the latter was a translation of the former, a type of relation would have been established. This interaction of the (non)verbal elements of the caricature with the verbal text would require an extensive analysis which goes beyond the scope of this research.

Our analysis was governed by what Barthes (1961) and Burgin (1976) call the structural autonomy of the image. They demonstrate the importance of analyzing polysemiotic texts by looking separately at images (highlighting their autonomy), by studying the verbal-only element, and then studying their combination. For example, the analysis of Figure 5, which accompanies a Greek text with the heading Το μετέωρο βήμα ενός Εύζωνα (The Suspended Step of an Evzone), would require two things. First, we would have to make an intertextual reference to the Greek cinema film Το μετέωρο βήμα του πελαργού [The Suspended Step of the Stork] (directed by Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1991). The relevance of this reference is further enhanced by the verbal-visual juxtaposition of the phrase “Suspended Step” and the Evzone’s raised foot which puts him in a cramped position. Second, we would also have to examine why the writer of the text chose this particular heading.

In addition, for a more complete analysis, it would be necessary to contact the caricaturists to interview them about their intentions in designing the caricatures and their potential collaboration with the writers of the SL texts. At the same time, we would have to contact the writers of the TL texts to examine the criteria for choosing these caricatures.
to accompany the Greek texts, as well as their translation strategies. Lastly, the very fact that we (as analysts) live in Greece and experience this socio-economic and political situation might have blurred our judgement. Although we have made every effort to remain impartial and critical, our research should be compared with the analyses of other researchers.

5. Concluding Remarks

The unpredictability of the caricatures is reflected in the wider cultural context, especially in that of the TL. In the past five years, Greece has faced several socio-economic and political problems and the element of the unpredictable runs through all aspects of everyday life. Thus, in the everyday life narrative, the creditors are called “partners” though Greek public opinion considers their behaviour inimical, the President of the European Parliament “points out to” the parties how they should form a new government, European politicians suggest putting cultural heritage sites such as the Parthenon, or national territory such as Greek islands, “on sale” etc.

In this small-scale study, Anti-Germanism and Euroscepticism have emerged as two political themes reminiscent of the Anti-Americanism that is a favorite subject of visual communication research. In addition, this research is in line with recent work that has turned attention to the visual representation of political dissent (Perlmutter & Wagner, 2004).

According to Waldstein (2008, p. 157), “[t]he need for such master-narratives emerge […] in the times of sudden social explosions or external interferences”. At these points, the complexity and unpredictability of a cultural space threatens to cross the threshold beyond which any sense of continuity and oneness loses meaning. At these moments, cultural elites produce unifying symbols, origin myths and nationalistic ideologies which serve as maps of the disintegrating landscape.

These suggestions of the political elite are characterized as unpredictable in a Europe that is sinking in uncertainty and social explosions. This unpredictability is best reflected by the mediating power of translation between the cultural systems. At the end of the day, Lotman (1988, p. 117) argues that “[...] predictability does not exist. Not in the history of mankind, not in the history of culture, despite several thousand years of experience”.

The images mobilized to translate the anti-Germanism and Euro-scepticism in the caricatures are shaped and cropped to cohere with current values, norms and ideologies in Greece. As such, the TT stereotypes are not just descriptive, but also prescriptive: the images illustrate how the host culture views the current socio-political period while simultaneously telling outsiders how they are perceived and how they should view themselves.

Notes
1 Cited from: http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/euro-krise/frankreich-und-deutschland-sollen-


4 It should be noted that there are several versions of the origin of the Greek word φουστανέλα and they cannot be covered adequately here.

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About the authors
Evangelos Kourdis (ekourdis@frl.auth.gr) is Assistant Professor in the Department of French Language & Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. His scientific interests are mainly in the fields of sociosemiotics, translation semiotics, sociolinguistics, language ideology and cultural communication. He is the national representative for Greece to the International Association for Semiotic Studies, vice president of the Hellenic Semiotics Society, the Hellenic Society for Translation Studies, and the International Scientific Committee and delegate in Greece of the Société d’Études des Pratiques et Théories en traduction (SEPTET, France), and an international collaborator at the Semiotics and Visual Communication Laboratory of Cyprus University of Technology.

George Damaskinidis (damaskinidis@hotmail.com) is an academic associate at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki where he teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the department of philosophy. His research focuses on visual literacy, intersemiotic translation, research methodology and English military terminology. He supervises master’s theses in the Faculty of Education at European University of Cyprus. He is the author of Joint Military English. A specialized language course (2008), by Tourikis Publishing, Athens and the first author of Η ερευνητική πρόταση στη μεταπτυχιακή και διδακτορική έρευνα (2014) [The research proposal in postgraduate and doctoral research], published by Epikentro, Thessaloniki.