

## WORDPLAY IN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE TONGUE TWISTERS

**Bobchynets L. I.**

*Kyiv National Linguistic University*

Tongue twisters are generally used to practise pronunciation in learning foreign languages as well as to master clear and distinct pronunciation in native languages. Perfect pronunciation is necessary to become a good orator, presenter, teacher, etc. At early stages of acquisition of native languages children can also practice telling tongue twisters to master their pronunciation.

According to the Diccionario de Real Academia Española, “a tongue twister (trabalenguas) is a word or phrase, difficult to pronounce, especially when it serves as a game, created deliberately for making the speaker to make mistakes while pronouncing” (Diccionario de Real Academia Española, 2020). The dictionary of Portuguese (Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa) defines a tongue twister (trava-línguas) as an oral exercise consisting in fluent pronouncing of phrases or sequences of words with difficult for pronouncing segments (Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa, 2008–2020). As we can see from the definitions above, the main aim or function of tongue twisters is that of practising distinct and correct pronunciation.

Tongue twisters have been usually the object of studies of logopedics and teaching methodology. The aim of our research is to analyse linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of tongue twisters which make them unique phrases with wordplay.

Tongue twisters are based on repetition of the same consonants (alliteration) or the same vowels (assonance). Alliteration and assonance may be combined in one tongue twister. For our linguistic analysis we have chosen Spanish and Portuguese tongue twisters in order to reveal common ways of wordplay in them.

Wordplay in tongue twisters may be represented by different criteria:

1. Repetition of the same letter, morpheme (including alliteration and assonance), word or word combinations:  
*Pica, pica, pica Perico.*  
*Pica, pica, pica la rana.*  
*Perico, pica, pica la rama* (Trabalenguas infantiles cortos, 2019, <https://www.bosquedefantasias.com/trabalenguas-infantiles-cortos>).
2. Paronymy, which implies the use of words with similar phonic form: *Pablito clavó un clavito. ¿Qué clavito clavó Pablito?* (Trabalenguas infantiles cortos, 2019, <https://www.bosquedefantasias.com/trabalenguas-infantiles-cortos>).  
*Um limão, mil limões, um milhão de limões* (Скороговорки на португальском языке, 2020, <https://ruportugal.ru/skorogovorki-na-portugalskom/>).
3. Homonymy, including homophones and homofoms: *Juan tuvo un tubo y el tubo que tuvo se rompió. Pero como se le rompió ese tubo, se tuvo que comprar un tubo igual al tubo que tuvo* (Trabalenguas infantiles cortos, 2019, <https://www.bosquedefantasias.com/trabalenguas-infantiles-cortos>).
4. Puns, mainly based on homonymy or polysemy. Proper names and common names with the same or similar sound form are used to make a wordplay. The

rhythm and the rhyme contribute to the funny effect: *Si Pancha plancha con cuatro planchas. ¿Con cuántas planchas plancha Pancha?* (Los 10 trabalenguas más difíciles del mundo, 2020, <https://www.pequeocio.com/trabalenguas-dificiles/>).

5. Creation of new words, absurd and non-existing words, as in the following example: *El rey de Constantinopla se quiere descontantinopolizar, el que lo descontantinoplice buen descontantinopolizador será* (Trabalenguas infantiles cortos, 2019, <https://www.bosquedefantasias.com/trabalenguas-infantiles-cortos>). *O original nunca se desoriginou e nunca se desoriginalizará.* (Скороговорки на португальском языке, 2020, <https://ruportugal.ru/skorogovorki-na-portugalskom/>).

6. Polysemy, as in the following example with the word ‘*contar*’ which has two meanings in Spanish: ‘*count*’ and ‘*tell a story*’:

*Cuando cuentes cuentos  
cuenta cuantos cuentos cuentas,  
porque si no cuentas  
cuantos cuentos cuentas*

*nunca sabrás cuántos cuentos sabes contar* (Los 10 trabalenguas más difíciles del mundo, 2020, <https://www.pequeocio.com/trabalenguas-dificiles/>).

One of the main features of a tongue twister is humour, created by absurd situations: *Concluímos que chegamos à conclusão que não concluímos nada. Por isso, conclui-se que a conclusão será concludida, quando todas tiverem concludido que já é tempo de concluir uma conclusão* (Скороговорки на португальском языке, 2020, <https://ruportugal.ru/skorogovorki-na-portugalskom/>).

As we observe from the examples above, the main ways of creating of tongue twisters are alliteration, assonance, homonymy, polysemy, paronymy, which are the same as for wordplay. This fact allows us to consider tongue twisters to be short lyrical genre with wordplay. The rhythmic form and rhyme make tongue twisters similar to poems. Tongue twisters are effective means for perfection of pronunciation, especially recommended to be used in teaching and mastering languages. Tongue twisters may perform multiple functions: expressive, aesthetic and practical.

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